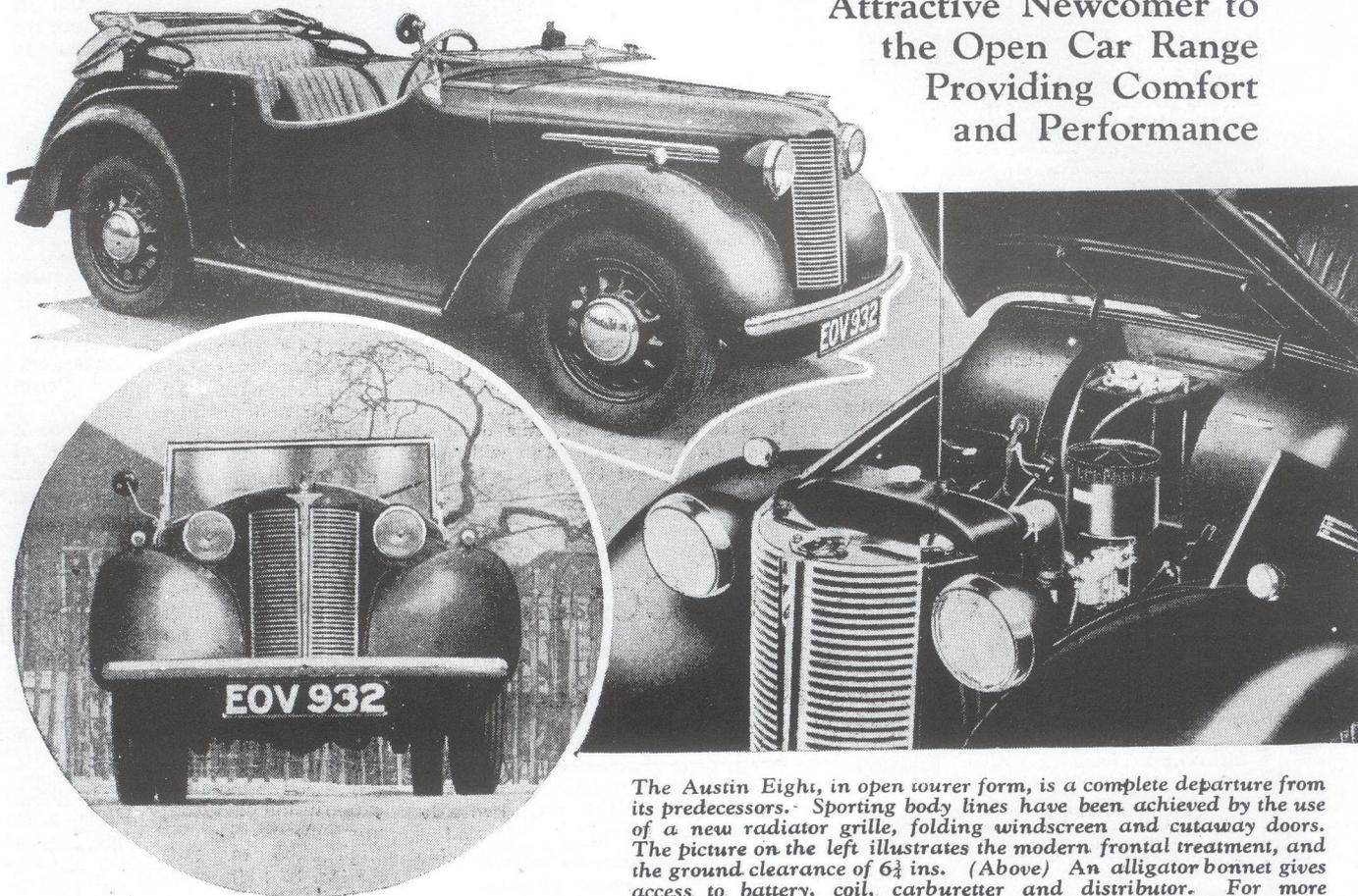


Road Tests of 1939 Models:**THE AUSTIN EIGHT OPEN TOURER**

**Attractive Newcomer to
the Open Car Range
Providing Comfort
and Performance**



The Austin Eight, in open tourer form, is a complete departure from its predecessors. Sporting body lines have been achieved by the use of a new radiator grille, folding windscreen and cutaway doors. The picture on the left illustrates the modern frontal treatment, and the ground clearance of 6½ ins. (Above) An alligator bonnet gives access to battery, coil, carburetter and distributor. For more detailed engine inspection the bonnet sides must be detached.

AT a time when the touring car is returning to favour, the Austin Motor Co. is marketing a model on its latest 8 h.p. chassis which may well rival the popularity of its famous predecessor.

In appearance, the car represents a complete breakaway from the traditional lines of the smallest of the Austin range. Nor is the departure from previous practice confined to the body. The chassis and engine have been redesigned and the transverse front spring of the older models has given place to the more orthodox semi-elliptic springing. The result is a car modern in every way—in appearance, in performance and road holding. The new chassis was fully described in our issue of February 24, 1939.

Sporting Coachwork.

The lines of the body are sporting without in any way sacrificing the comfort of the occupants. The large flowing wings, new style of radiator grille, and the downswept tail, all combine to make a striking little car, which everywhere arouses favourable comment.

First impressions of a car are usually permanent, and the Austin is a vehicle one immediately likes. The driving position is admirable. Controls are all within reach and the very comfortable bucket seat is instantly adjustable. Visibility, as on all Austin models, is excellent. One of the few small cars equipped with wing-mounted side lights, the Eight's near-side wing is just visible to the driver.

A 16-in. flexible steering wheel is fitted; on it are mounted the horn button and self-cancelling direction indicators. Immediately in front of the driver are two large instrument dials, one combining ammeter, oil-pressure gauge and petrol gauge, the other being the speedometer. In the centre of the panel are the ignition and light switch and the choke; the starter button is on the right of the speedometer. In addition, there is an instrument lighting switch and an ignition telltale. The head light dip-switch is foot-operated and mounted alongside the clutch pedal.

In front of the passenger's seat is a capacious glovebox, and, on the model tested, the windscreen-wiper motor. A

large exterior driving mirror is fitted on the windscreen frame. Both doors are equipped with large pockets and are cut away to give ample elbow room. Adequate luggage space is provided behind the rear squab.

Passenger Accommodation.

There is plenty of leg room for the occupants of both front and rear seats, but more head room in the back seats would be welcome when the hood is erected. When the side screens are in position, the car is almost as snug and draught-proof as a saloon.

When not in use, the sidescreens may be carried in a special compartment behind the rear seat. The spare wheel is housed beneath the floor of the boot, access to which is gained by removing the number plate panel.

The hood can be erected by one person with reasonable speed, and the sidescreens are well made and fit rigidly in their sockets. Visibility is not sacrificed by the erection of the hood.

Considerable stiffness has been achieved by bolting the body sills to

the chassis frame, forming a sturdy box-section. Lateral rigidity has been strengthened by making the floor of the body integral with the frame; the body itself is of welded steel construction. Suspension is by long, flat, semi-elliptic springs all round, controlled by Luvax piston-type shock absorbers.

The latest Austin has an "alligator" bonnet, the sides of which can be removed without difficulty. For normal maintenance purposes, however, the engine components are accessible. The 6-volt battery is carried immediately in front of the engine bulkhead, and oil and water fillers, plugs and carburetter can be easily reached

Increased Power.

Departures from former Austin engine practice are to be found in the valve operation of the Eight. Large-diameter barrel-type tappets are used and the cam shape has been redesigned, resulting in very quiet operation. The compression ratio has been raised to $6\frac{1}{2}$ to 1, and a robust three-bearing crankshaft takes the added power. At 4,400 r.p.m. the 900 c.c. engine develops 27 b.h.p.

Starting is particularly easy, and calls for very little manipulation of the choke. The four-speed gearbox provides rapid changes of ratio. Top gear, of course, is dead silent; on the lower ratios there is a slight transmission hum.

The flexibly centred single-plate clutch, controlled by a pedal mounted on the power unit and connected to the clutch withdrawal mechanism by a link is very sweet in operation.

Undoubtedly, the outstanding feature of the Eight is its suspension. Both riding comfort and stability are equally praiseworthy. Over any but the worst roads the car provides the comfort of a much larger vehicle, and at all times is notably free from roll. There is a certain type of ridged road surface which causes some pitching at the front end, chiefly noticeable at night in the very efficient head-lamp beam, but vibration is not transmitted to the steering wheel.

Performance on the road leaves little to be desired. The open tourer is not intended to be a sports car, but the driver may be forgiven if he regards it as something almost akin to it. Its acceleration through the gears, its lively response to throttle openings throughout the speed range and its cruising speed, all combine to make the Eight a most entertaining car to drive.

Performance Figures.

At Brooklands a standing quarter-mile was covered in 26 secs. and the "flying-quarter" in 15.4 secs., an average speed of 58.44 m.p.h. With the hood down and windscreen flat, this was improved to 59.60 m.p.h. Girling brakes are fitted and the figures obtained on dry concrete could hardly have been bettered. From 30 m.p.h., the stopping distance was 30.6 ft., which represents a Ferodo-Tapley efficiency figure of 99 per cent. Petrol consumption averaged 42 m.p.g.

Under the more normal conditions of road driving, speedometer readings of 65 m.p.h. can be attained. The engine seems perfectly happy when cruising between 45 and 50 m.p.h., and there is plenty of top gear acceleration when required. On hills the engine maintains its speed admirably, and even on the trials type of muddy gradient the car pulls heartily and displays excellent wheel-grip.

Surprisingly high average speeds can be maintained over long distances without the necessity of hurrying. Light steering, a really comfortable driving position and plenty of leg room, all combine to reduce fatigue to the minimum. This comfort is not confined to the driver, but extends to all passengers, and is maintained throughout the speed range. Indeed, the rear seat width of 48 ins. is particularly notable.

The Austin Eight open tourer will make a strong appeal to the driver who demands lively performance with a degree of comfort rarely associated with an open car.

IN BRIEF

ENGINE: Four cylinders; side valves. 56.8 mm. by 89 mm. = 900 c.c. Tax, £6. Power output, 27 b.h.p. at 4,400 r.p.m.

TRANSMISSION: Dry, single-plate clutch. Four-speed gearbox, with synchromesh on second, third and top. Ratios, 5.36, 8.23, 13.1 and 21.6 to 1. Reverse, 27.8 to 1. Final drive by open Hardy-Spicer propeller shaft to spiral-bevel rear axle.

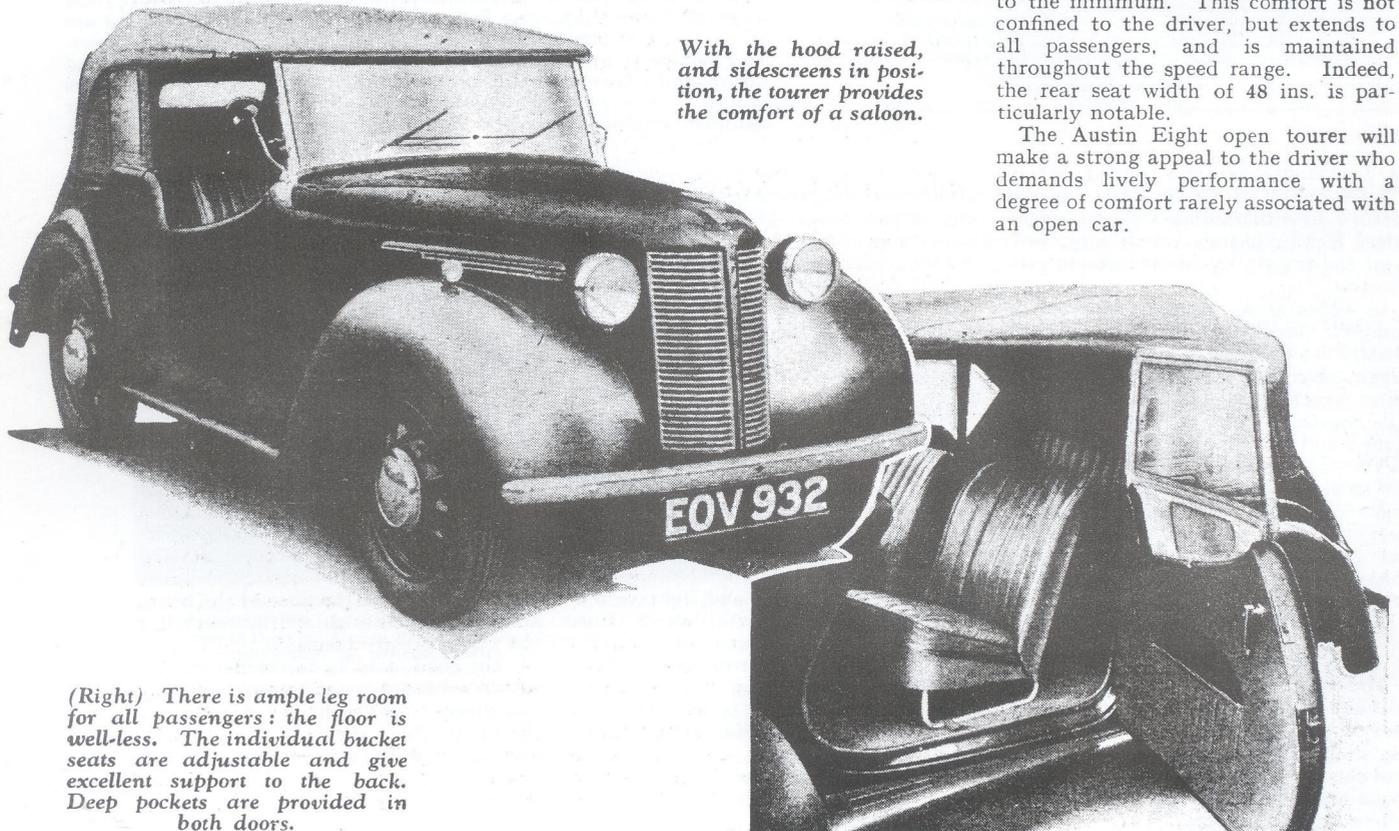
GENERAL: Girling mechanical brakes with spring compensator between front and rear. Semi-elliptic springs, front and rear, with Luvax piston-type hydraulic shock absorbers. Six-volt electrical equipment with c.v.c. Six-gallon rear petrol tank.

DIMENSIONS, ETC.: Overall length, 12 ft. 5 ins.; overall width, 4 ft. 8 ins.; wheelbase, 7 ft. 4½ ins.; track (front), 3 ft. 8½ ins., (rear), 3 ft. 9½ ins.; turning circle, 37 ft.; weight (unladen), 14 cwt. 3 qrs.

PERFORMANCE: Flying quarter-mile (best), 59.60 m.p.h., (mean), 58.44 m.p.h.; standing quarter-mile, 26 secs. Braking (by Ferodo-Tapley brake-recording meter), 99 per cent. Petrol consumption (average), 42 m.p.g.

PRICE: £135.

THE AUSTIN MOTOR CO., LTD.,
Longbridge, Birmingham.



With the hood raised, and sidescreens in position, the tourer provides the comfort of a saloon.

(Right) There is ample leg room for all passengers: the floor is well-less. The individual bucket seats are adjustable and give excellent support to the back. Deep pockets are provided in both doors.