Autocar
ROAD TEST
NUMBER 2069

M.G. MGB GT Coupé 1,798 c.c.

AT A GLANCE: Fixed top derivative of the 1·8-litre MGB; robust body, well planned and finished inside and out. 100 m.p.h. maximum, engine quiet and very smooth when cruising fast, unusually tractable at low speeds. High standards of control, but heavy brake pedal loads. Gearbox lacks synchromesh for first.

MANUFACTURER:
The M.G. Car Company Ltd., Abingdon-on-Thames, Berkshire

PRICES

Basic	£825	0s	0d
Purchase Tax	£173	8s	9d
Total (in G.B.)	£998	8s	9d

EXTRAS (inc. P.T.)

Overdrive	£60	8s	4d
Heater	£14	16s	1d
Wire-spoked wheels ..	£30	4s	2d
Ditto, chromium plated	£77	18s	9d
Dunlop SP41 tyres (5)..	£8	6s	2d
Fog lamps (each) ..	£4	9s	6d
Kangol seat belts (each)	£3	5s	0d
Radiomobile 970 (inc. aerial and fitting) ..	£28	11s	8d
Wing mirror	£1	7s	7d

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Mean maximum speed ..	101 m.p.h.
Standing start ¼-mile ..	19·1 sec
0-60 m.p.h.	13·6 sec
30-70 m.p.h. (through gears)	15·0 sec
Overall fuel consumption ..	22·8 m.p.g.
Miles per tankful	275

ONE of the "hits" of last year's London Show, the new MGB GT coupé makes friends right away through its good looks and the exceptional practicality of its body. Perhaps there is more to its looks than simple beauty of form, for the car has an air of robust build and fitness for the purpose which is borne out completely on the road.

By comparison with the MGB open sports car it is relatively costly, the extra £143 (including tax) bringing it almost to £1,000 without a heater or the other optional equipment fitted to the test car—wire-spoked wheels and Dunlop SP41 tyres, overdrive and so on. However, one does not have to look far to discover where the money goes, and to appreciate the fundamental differences between this volume production coupé and those produced by small specialist firms. The quality of the interior furnishing and the care with which all the detail work has been planned put this GT well into the upper middle class, so to speak.

Adding a metal top, with the extra glass and trim this entails, as well as insulating the interior with heavy sound-deadening materials, has put the overall weight up by about 1¼ cwt; yet the road performance is only marginally inferior to that of the MGB sports 2-seater tested just over a year ago. The mean maximum recorded in the coupé is slightly up in direct top, slightly down in overdrive top by comparison. This discrepancy may be the result of having to use the M.I.R.A. banked circuit for these figures in the case of the coupé, which may not have allowed the limit to be reached in overdrive. Since it took only 0·2sec longer to cover the quarter-mile from a standing start, it is evident that its acceleration is only slightly inferior "through the gears," although most of the times for 20 m.p.h. increments in individual gears are a second or two slower.

Fuel Consumption

Comparing the steady-speed fuel consumption figures, the later car was more economical in the all-important middle range, a little heavier at the lowest and highest speeds. Its overall consumption proved very much the same, at 22·8 m.p.g. (the open two-seater's was 22·0 m.p.g.), but one has to bear in mind that the current 70 m.p.h. limit is beneficial to this average.

Although the two models share a common mechanical basis, the differences in purpose and character between them are as between a sports and a sporting car. In the case of the coupé it is particularly important to relate the road performance in terms of figures to the manner in which they

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Autocar Road Test 2069

MAKE: **M.G.**

TYPE: **MGB GT Coupé**

WEIGHT

Kerb weight (with oil, water and half-full fuel tank): 21·2cwt (2,379lb-1,079kg)
Front-rear distribution, per cent F, 51·2; R, 48·8
Laden as tested .... 24·2cwt (2,715lb-1,231kg)

TURNING CIRCLES

Between kerbs .. L, 32ft 1in.; R, 33ft 4in.
Between walls .. L, 33ft 2in.; R, 34ft 5in.
Steering wheel turns lock to lock .. 2·9

PERFORMANCE DATA

Overdrive top gear m.p.h. per 1,000 r.p.m. 22·3
Top gear m.p.h. per 1,000 r.p.m. .. .. 17·9
Mean piston speed at max. power 3,150ft/min.
Engine revs at mean max. speed (direct top) 5,640 r.p.m.
B.h.p. per ton laden 78

OIL CONSUMPTION

Miles per pint (SAE 20W/50) 350

FUEL CONSUMPTION

At constant speeds in Top

	Direct	Overdrive
30 m.p.h.	41·6 m.p.g.	43·5 m.p.g.
40 ,,	37·8 ,,	42·0 ,,
50 ,,	33·1 ,,	37·5 ,,
60 ,,	31·2 ,,	33·6 ,,
70 ,,	28·2 ,,	30·8 ,,
80 ,,	22·9 ,,	26·2 ,,
90 ,,	20·7 ,,	21·2 ,,

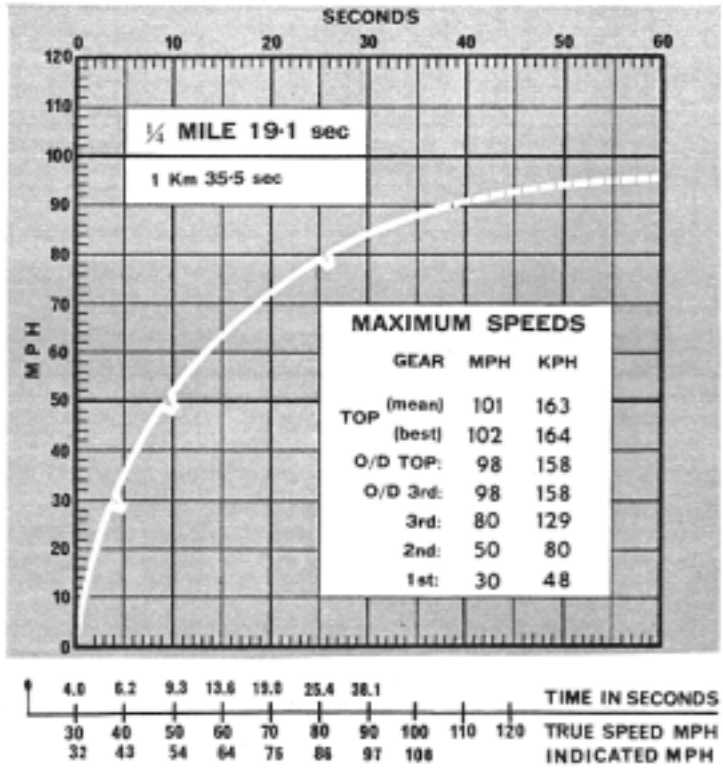
Overall m.p.g. .. 22·8 (12·4 litres/100km)
Normal range m.p.g. 21-25 (13·5-11·3 litres/100km)
Test distance .. .. 1,058 miles
Estimated (DIN) m.p.g. 25·6 (11·0 litres/100km)
Grade .. .. .. Premium (96-2-98·6 RM)

TEST CONDITIONS

Weather .. .. Intermittent light rain with 10-15 m.p.h. wind
Temperature .. .. 1 deg. C. (34 deg. F.)
Barometer .. .. 29·4in Hg.
Surfaces .. Damp tarmac and concrete

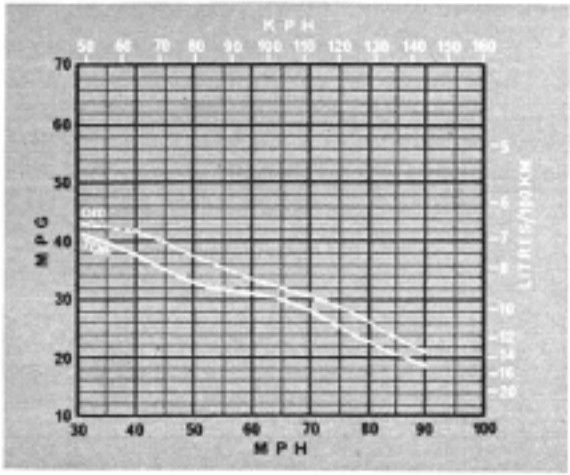
Speed range and time in seconds

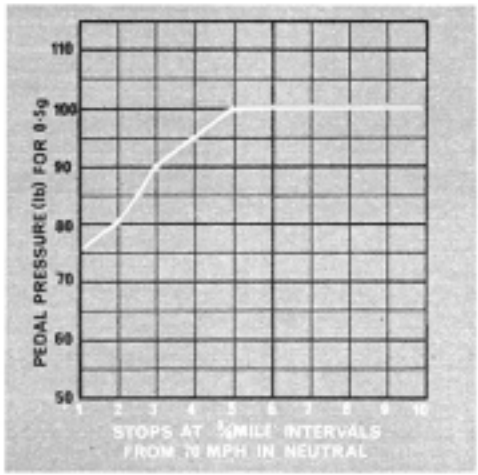
m.p.h.	O.D. Top (3·31)	Top (3·91)	O.D. Third (4·31)	Third (5·37)	Second (8·66)	First (14·21)
10—30	—	—	—	8·1	4·7	3·3
20—40	17·5	11·1	10·2	7·0	4·5	—
30—50	17·1	10·8	9·4	7·1	5·2	—
40—60	17·0	10·8	9·8	7·6	—	—
50—70	18·2	12·6	11·6	8·4	—	—
60—80	24·9	15·3	14·6	11·6	—	—
70—90	38·7	20·4	19·4	—	—	—

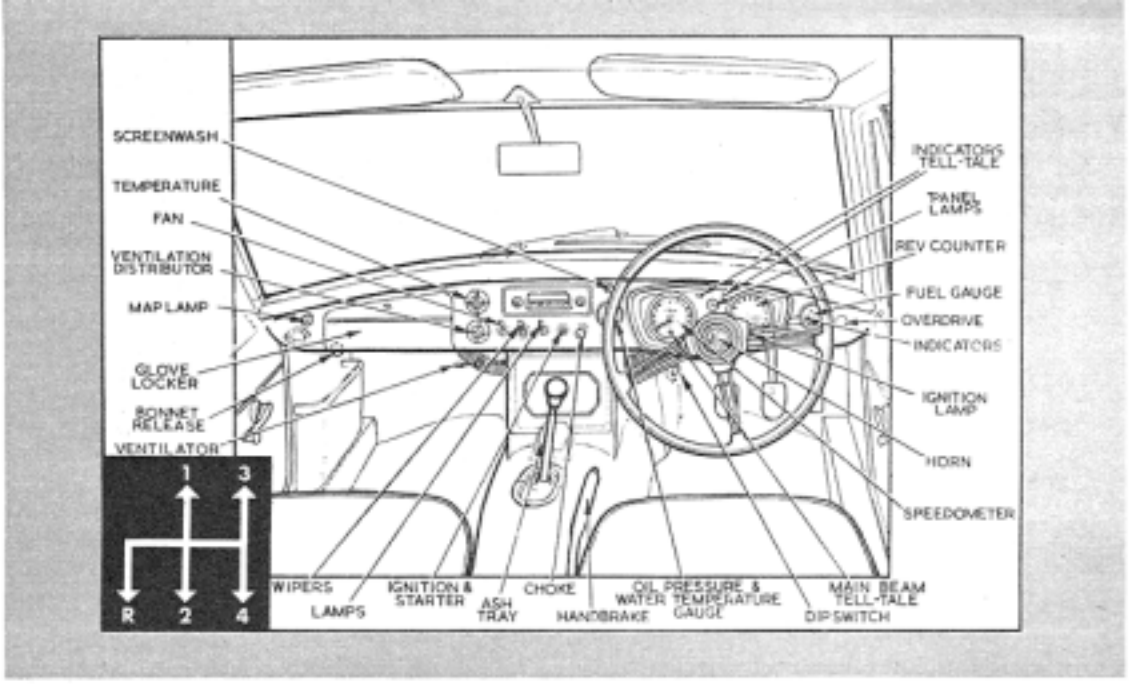


BRAKES (from 30 m.p.h. in neutral)	Pedal load	Retardation	Equiv. distance
	25lb	0·20g	150ft
	50lb	0·35g	86ft
	75lb	0·55g	55ft
	100lb	0·75g	40ft
	125lb	0·90g	33·4ft
	Handbrake	0·20g	150ft

CLUTCH Pedal load and travel—35lb and 5in.







are accomplished. Thus, although 95 net b.h.p. for a 1·8-litre engine is quite a healthy figure, it is unremarkable for these days, and the M.G. can be out-accelerated by touring saloons with engines no bigger. But none of these could better the M.G. for sheer tractability at very low engine speeds, nor for the cleanness of its pick-up even from 500 r.p.m. in top gear. Indeed, it is a most docile beast, utterly free from any temperament; in this respect—and others—it should be very suitable for the woman driver who appreciates a chic line but is not prepared to suffer for it in other ways.

However, she would discover that the brakes call for a somewhat hefty push on the pedal, that to press the gear lever against a spring-loading before pulling it back into reverse is likewise no light task, and that the interior door handles are clumsy to use; pull-out triggers would be much nicer. *Autocar's* staff would all prefer a smaller steering-wheel; a reduction in diameter from 16½ to 15½in. should still allow sufficient leverage as the mechanism is reasonably light, even at a walking pace.

Starting

In this particular car, at any rate, the starter motor was exceptionally noisy, but the engine starts easily and, once running, is not prone to stalling or erratic firing. Within a short distance the mixture enrichening knob could be pushed right in, and warmth from the interior heater becomes effective. Apart from passing through a slight period at 1,200-1,500 r.p.m. the engine is smooth and sweet up to the limit in direct top—equivalent to about 5,600 r.p.m., and thus just beyond the peak of the power curve at at 5,400. The practical limit is about 6,000 r.p.m., just where the orange-coloured quadrant on the rev-counter gives place to red; at this point the engine has become somewhat more obtrusive to the ear, while remaining smooth and free from thrash or audible valve bounce.

In the lower gears 6,000 r.p.m. takes one to 30 in 1st, 50 in 2nd, 80 in 3rd and nearly 100 in overdrive 3rd. There is thus a considerable jump in ratio from 2nd to 3rd, but the engine's full torque curve takes care of this satisfactorily. The Laycock-de Normanville overdrive is exactly that, providing a "cruising" step-up from top that really cuts the revs down and enables high speeds to be maintained with little engine fuss, as well as reducing the fuel consumption by a very worthwhile percentage. For example, at a steady 80 m.p.h. our electric meter recorded 22·9 m.p.g. in direct top, 26·2 in overdrive. Overdrive 3rd and direct top are very close, but in certain circumstances the extra speed and convenience of the electric change can save vital time. One must haul the manufacturers over the coals for the erratic speedometer, that would cause a law-abiding citizen to obstruct his fellow motorists by cruising at 65 m.p.h. in 70-limits.

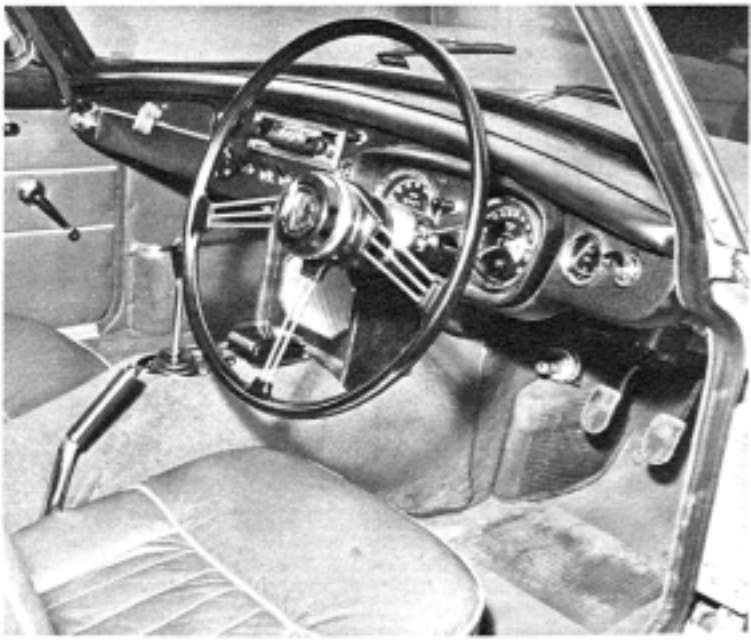
Purely as a demonstration of tractability we took acceleration figures in overdrive top (in which 1,000 engine r.p.m. are equivalent to 22·3 m.p.h. road speed) from 20 m.p.h., and were astonished by the manner in which the car gathered speed without snatch or hesitation. An inhibitor switch prevents the overdrive from disengaging on the overrun, thus sidestepping a source of jerk and strain on the transmission. As it is, the changes are extremely smooth.

The M.G. gearbox has no synchromesh for 1st gear and is very noisy in 1st and reverse, but otherwise quiet except for some hiss from the constant mesh pinions. The synchromesh ▶

The engine compartment is tidily arranged, and the bonnet lined with sound-deadening material. Flexible pipes passing around the radiator are to and from the engine oil cooler, out of view here

Above: Small express with built-in platform; this is the way for maximum luggage with minimum children
Right: Instrument and control layout is neat and businesslike, with a matt black background. Ahead of the gear lever are the ashtray and radio speaker

Below: Pre-teenage back seat drivers can be accommodated



between 2nd and 3rd was not quite up to scratch in this case. Clutch action is sweet and progressive and the pedal load moderate. There was plenty of "bite" for our restart on the 1-in-3 test hill, although the clutch had to be slipped a bit deliberately due to the relatively high first gear.

For our standing-start acceleration figures the road surface was damp but there was no apparent wheelspin; this, together with the car's very secure and stable behaviour on the M.I.R.A. road circuit in that condition, led one to appreciate the outstanding wet weather performance of the Dunlop SP41 radial ply tyre. The MGB could be taken through the corners with the tyres squealing, and no sudden breakaway. It has near enough neutral characteristics with just a touch of initial understeer, and a fine fore-and-aft balance right to the point where the tyres really lose their grip, when the tail tends to slide most.

At just under three turns lock-to-lock for compact turning circles the steering is reasonably high-geared and the rack-and-pinion mechanism provides reassuring precision with strong caster action, and practically no feedback of shocks from the road wheels. No concentration is needed to aim the car, and its directional stability at speed is beyond criticism.

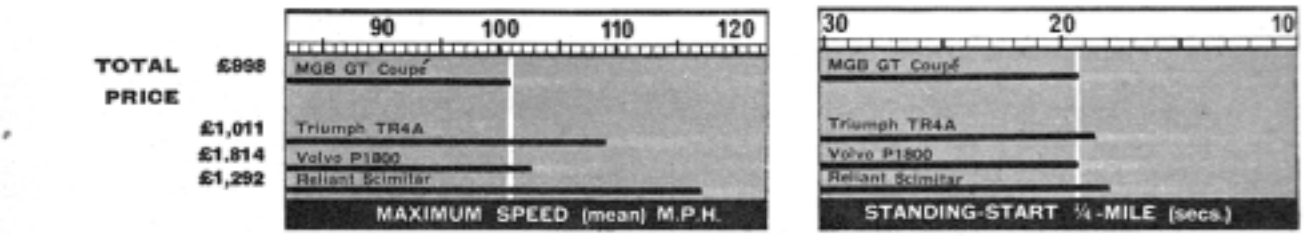
Springing

As for suspension, from every standpoint the engineers at Abingdon have done a good job for an essentially conventional layout, achieving the high standard of roadholding expected of an M.G. without sacrificing ride comfort. It is, in fact, a reasonably soft springing system, with excellent damper control which avoids recurrent pitch without producing harshness, and an anti-roll bar (standardized in this model) has improved the controllability of the car as well as holding it almost upright.

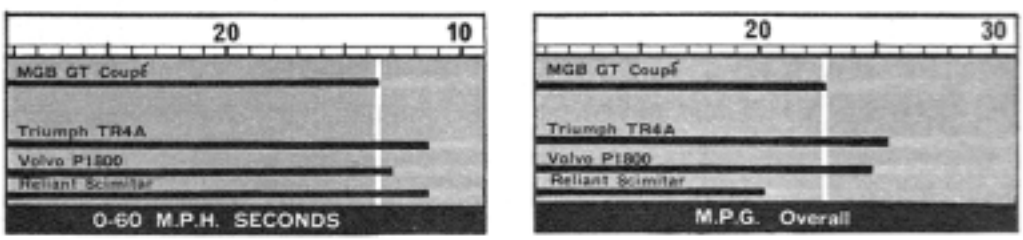
Over the special washboard surface the car rode level, but generated a disturbing noise through the body structure which could be very tiring. However, probably one would not find that sort of surface in Europe. On *pavé* the body remained free from shake or rattles, confirming its fundamental rigidity, and the ride was quite reasonable; above 40-45 m.p.h. the limiting factor was directional float which made it tricky to keep the car on course.

Before the advent of the modern radial ply tyre one would not have contemplated taking braking figures in the rain; the MGB on its Dunlop SP41s recorded 0·9g in these conditions, a result that speaks for itself. Up to this point there was no skidding, but beyond it wheel locking increased the stopping distances. Clearly a 1g stop would be possible in dry weather. During the fade resistance tests the pedal load for a 0·5g stop rose to some extent and then stabilized, the braking remaining balanced and progressive. As men-

M.G. MGB GT Coupé



HOW THE M.G. MGB GT COUPÉ COMPARES:



tioned earlier, though, one needs to push hard for a quick stop, and a servo to assist would-be appreciated by many drivers accustomed to to-day's generally lighter pedal loads. After a few miles on drenched roads, one had to be prepared for a stronger pull from one front brake than the other. It would seem that the parking brake needs more leverage, since it could not hold the car on 1-in-3, nor manage better than 0·2g with the car moving.

While the leather-trimmed front seats could do with more lateral support in the backrests, they are otherwise comfortably shaped and resilient without being springy, proving restful on long runs. The cushions are carried on rubber diaphragms and are sufficiently long to support the thighs unobstrusively. Adjustable stops enable the backrest rake to be altered a few degrees. The seat runners provide enough range to suit those with extra long legs, but the short-legged find themselves rather near the wheel when seated far enough forward to reach the pedals properly.

Two small children can sit behind on a flat, detachable cushion, with just room for legs—but no fidgeting—and a bolt-upright backrest that, alternatively, can be folded forward to lengthen the luggage compartment. This backrest has positive catches to hold it upright, and a substantial lip when folded to prevent luggage sliding forward. Above it, the tail door hinges are concealed behind thickly padded trim. Whereas the front floor has moulded rubber mats, the rear floor and luggage platform, wheel arches and even the half-hidden corners behind the lighting units are very neatly carpeted. Not only is the carpet on the platform felt-backed but so, too, is the plywood floor—hinged for access to the spare wheel.

The pedals are offset considerably to the right owing to the width and bulk of the transmission tunnel, and quite widely spaced with their pads all about level; but the lamps dipping button is set too high and too close to the driving seat. The layout of instruments and minor controls is shown in the accompanying artist's sketch; we would prefer to have the tumbler switch for the driving lamps remote from the other two to avoid confusion, and none of these has an identity tag. The overdrive switch is placed very conveniently to the far right of the dash. Rotary knobs for the heater temperature and air distribution are all very well in daytime, but it is difficult to remember or discover which does what at night—the more so because there is no roof lamp in the car, only a small map-reading lamp for the passenger.

The heating and demisting are powerful, and one can add to the air flow within the car by opening the hinged back windows, although this adds to wind noise. All-round visibility is good although the screen pillars are not specially thin, and the rear view mirror is set too high to give much range. We wonder how

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much longer manufacturers of cars in this class will continue to provide no reversing lamps except as extras. The test car had European code head lamps with the wrong asymmetry when dipped, to the understandable annoyance of other road users; otherwise the lighting is excellent with plenty of beam and spread, and the main beams can be flashed for signalling purposes. The wiper blades sweep right to the top of the screen and remain in contact at high speeds, but the wing mirror on its spring mounting was so displaced at speed by wind pressure as to become useless, jumping back into place as the car's speed dropped.

One key serves the ignition, both front doors and the tail door, but the glove locker in the dash has its own key. When the passenger's door has been locked from outside, it cannot be unlocked from inside; anxious girl friends should take note.

This smart newcomer from Abingdon should go far—and fast. ■

SPECIFICATION: M.G. MGB GT COUPÉ, FRONT ENGINE, REAR-WHEEL DRIVE

ENGINE

Cylinders	4 in-line, vertical
Cooling system	Water: pump, fan and thermostat
Bore	80·3mm (3·16in.)
Stroke	89·0mm (3·5in.)
Displacement	1,798 c.c. (109·6 cu. in.)
Valve gear	Overhead, pushrods and rockers
Compression ratio	8·8-to-1; Optional 8·0
Carburettors	2 S.U. HS4
Fuel pump	S.U. electric
Oil filter	Tecalemit full-flow
Max. power	95 b.h.p. (net) at 5,400 r.p.m.
Max. torque	110lb. ft. (net) at 3,000 r.p.m.

TRANSMISSION

Clutch	Borg and Beck 8in. dia., diaphragm spring
Gearbox	4-speed, synchromesh on 2nd, 3rd and top
Gearbox ratios	Top 1·00, Third 1·37, Second 2·21, First 3·64, Reverse 4·75, O.D. Top 0·80, O.D. Third 1·10
Final drive	Hypoid bevel, 3·91 to 1

CHASSIS AND BODY

Construction	Integral steel structure

SUSPENSION

Front	Wishbones and coil springs, lever arm dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear	Live axle, half-elliptic springs, lever arm dampers

STEERING

Type	Cam Gears, rack-and-pinion. Turns lock-to-lock, 2·9
Wheel dia.	16½in.

BRAKES

Make and type	Lockheed, front discs, rear drums, no servo
Dimensions	F, 10·75in. dia.; R, 10in. dia., 1·75in. wide shoes
Swept area	F, 203 sq. in.; R, 107 sq. in. Total 310 sq. in. (260 sq. in. per ton laden)

WHEELS

Type	Ventilated steel disc, 4 studs, 4in. wide rim. Optional wire-spoked centre-lock, 4·5in. wide rim
Tyres	Dunlop C41 tubeless. 5·60—1.4in Optional Dunlop SP41 with tubes, 165—14in.

EQUIPMENT

Battery	12-volt 58-amp. hr.
Generator	Lucas C40/1 22-amp.
Headlamps	Lucas 50/40-watt
Reversing lamp	Extra
Electric fuses	2
Screen wipers	Single-speed, self-parking
Screen washer	Standard, manual plunger
Interior heater	Extra; Smiths 3·5kw, single-speed fan
Safety belts	Extra; built-in anchorages
Interior trim	Leather seats, washable p.v.c. headlining
Floor covering	Front, rubber mats; rear, carpets
Starting handle	No provision
Jack	Screwed pillar with winding handle
Jacking points	1 each side under body sill
Other bodies	Open 2-seater

MAINTENANCE

Fuel tank	12 Imp. gallons (no reserve) (55 litres)
Cooling system	10 pints (including heater) (5·7 litres)
Engine sump	7·5 pints (4·3 litres) SAE 20W/50. Change oil and filter element every 6,000 miles
Gearbox and overdrive	5·5 pints SAE 20W/50. No oil changes
Final drive	1·5 pints SAE 90EP. No oil changes
Grease	7 points every 3,000 miles
Tyre pressures (SP41)	F, 21; R, 24 p.s.i. (normal driving). F, 27; R, 31 p.s.i. (fast driving). F, 21; R, 26 p.s.i. (full load)