

The Motor

## Road Test No. 29/60

Make: Skoda

Type: Octavia

Makers: Skoda Automobilove, Prague II, Czechoslovakia

Concessionaires: E.W. McKenna Ltd., Reidvale St., Glasgow, E.1

## Test Data:

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**CONDITIONS:** Weather: Showery with wind gusts up to 10-12 m.p.h. (Temperature: 60-62°F., Barometer 29.4 in. Hg.) Surface: Wet tarmac/adam. Fuel: Mixture grade pump petrol of approx. 90 Octane No. (Research Method).

## INSTRUMENTS

Speedometer at 30 m.p.h. ... .. 8% fast  
Speedometer at 60 m.p.h. ... .. 5½% fast  
Distance recorder ... .. 7% fast

## WEIGHT

Kerb weight (unladen, but with oil, water and fuel for approx. 50 miles) ... .. 17½ cwt.  
Front/rear distribution of kerb weight ... 51/49  
Weight laden as tested ... .. 21¼ cwt.

## MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Flying Quarter Mile  
Mean lap speed round banked circuit 75.2 m.p.h.  
Best one-way ¼ mile on straight ... 78.2 m.p.h.

"Maximile" speed. (Timed quarter mile after one mile accelerating from rest.)

Mean of opposite runs ... .. 72.4 m.p.h.  
Best one-way time equals ... .. 73.8 m.p.h.

## Speed in gears

Max. speed in 3rd gear ... .. 57 m.p.h.  
Max. speed in 2nd gear ... .. 37 m.p.h.  
Max. speed in 1st gear ... .. 22 m.p.h.

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

42.5 m.p.g. at constant 30 m.p.h. on level.  
40.5 m.p.g. at constant 40 m.p.h. on level.  
37.0 m.p.g. at constant 50 m.p.h. on level.  
31.5 m.p.g. at constant 60 m.p.h. on level.  
25.5 m.p.g. at constant 70 m.p.h. on level.

Overall Fuel Consumption for 1,494 miles, 47.8 gallons, equals 31.3 m.p.g. (9.0 litres/100 km.).

Touring Fuel Consumption (m.p.g. at steady speed midway between 30 m.p.h. and maximum, less 5% allowance for acceleration) 34.0 m.p.g.

Fuel tank capacity (maker's figure) 6.6 gallons

## STEERING

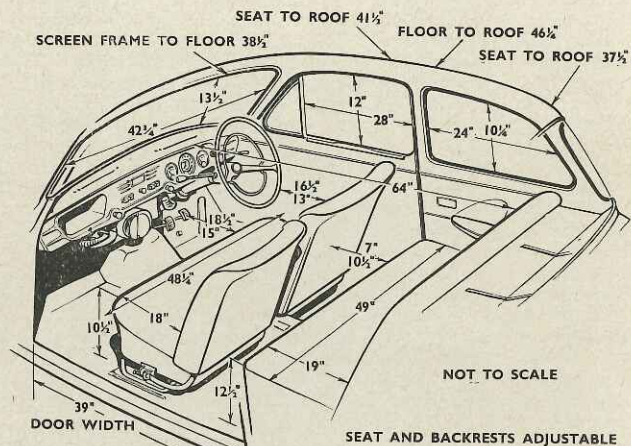
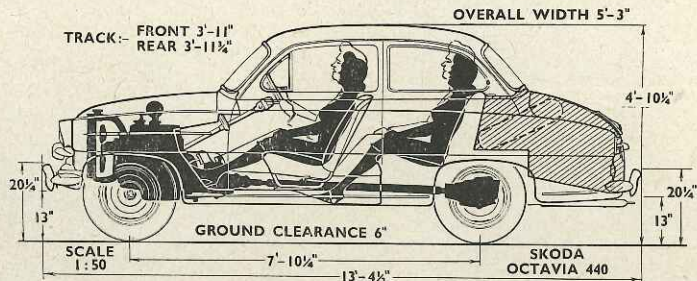
Turning circle between kerbs:  
Left ... .. 31½ ft.  
Right ... .. 30 ft.  
Turns of steering wheel from lock to lock 3

## BRAKES from 30 m.p.h.

0.22 g retardation (equivalent to 136 ft. stopping distance) with 25 lb. pedal pressure.  
0.67 g retardation (equivalent to 45 ft. stopping distance) with 50 lb. pedal pressure.  
0.82 g retardation (equivalent to 36½ ft. stopping distance) with 75 lb. pedal pressure.

## HILL CLIMBING at steady speeds

Max. gradient on top gear ... .. 1 in 15 (Tapley 140 lb./ton)  
Max. gradient on 3rd gear ... .. 1 in 8.4 (Tapley 265 lb./ton)  
Max. gradient on 2nd gear ... .. 1 in 5.8 (Tapley 385 lb./ton)

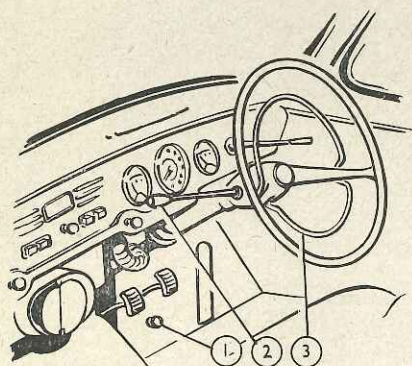


## ACCELERATION TIMES from standstill

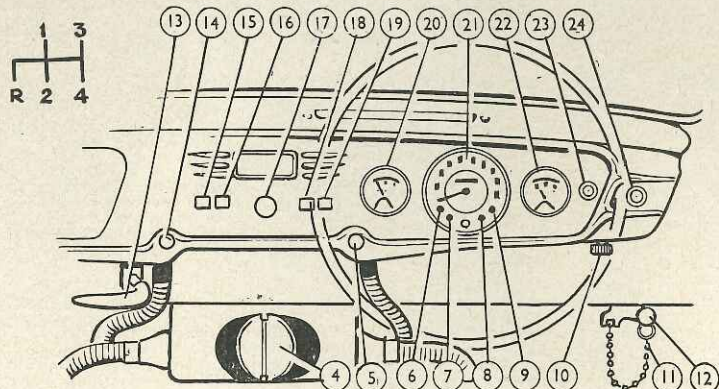
0-30 m.p.h. ... .. 7.4 sec.  
0-40 m.p.h. ... .. 12.9 sec.  
0-50 m.p.h. ... .. 18.7 sec.  
0-60 m.p.h. ... .. 36.6 sec.  
0-70 m.p.h. ... .. 60.4 sec.  
Standing quarter mile ... .. 24.3 sec.

## ACCELERATION TIMES on Upper Ratios

Speed Range	Top gear	3rd gear
10-30 m.p.h.	14.8 sec.	8.6 sec.
20-40 m.p.h.	15.3 sec.	8.3 sec.
30-50 m.p.h.	16.7 sec.	9.2 sec.
40-60 m.p.h.	22.7 sec.	
50-70 m.p.h.	37.3 sec.	



1. Dip switch. 2. Gear lever. 3. Horn ring.  
4. Heater control flap. 5. Starter. 6. Dynamo charge warning light. 7. Oil pressure warning light. 8. Headlamp high beam warning light. 9. Direction indicator warning light. 10. Panel

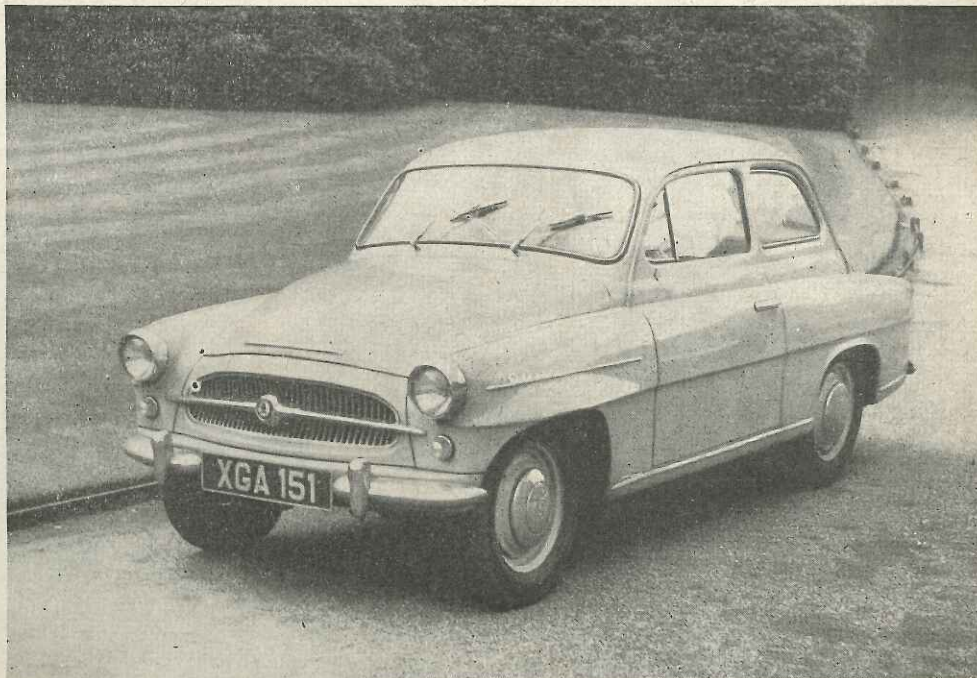


light rheostat. 11. Radiator blind chain. 12. Bonnet release catch. 13. Hand brake. 14. Choke control. 15. Fog lamp switch. 16. Windscreen wiper control. 17. Light switch. 18. Heater fan

switch. 19. Interior light switch. 20. Water temperature control. 21. Speedometer. 22. Fuel gauge. 23. Direction indicators. 24. Ignition switch.

# THE SKODA OCTAVIA

## A Lively Czechoslovakian Economy Car

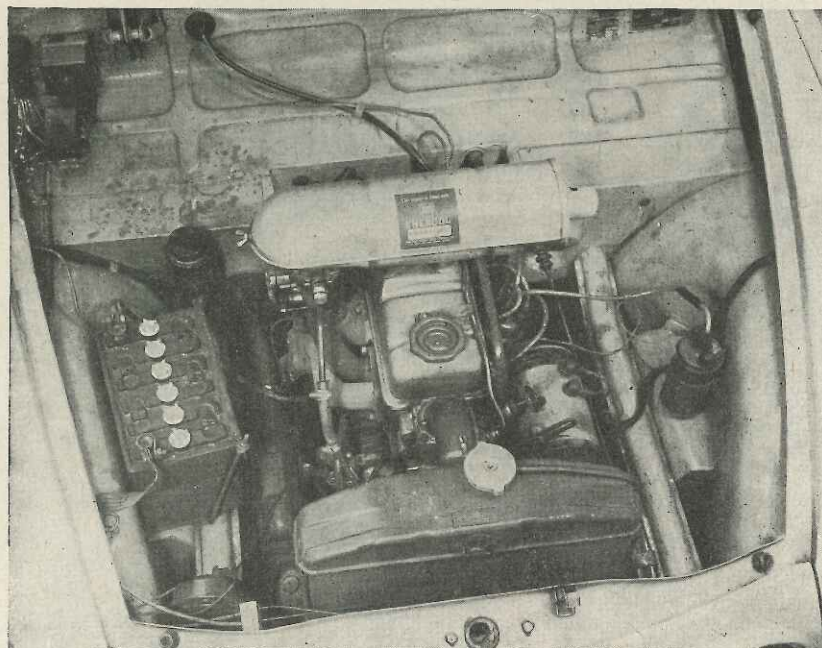


**M**ADE by a long-established engineering company with considerable experience of making cars, the Skoda Octavia, which is basically not a new design, was expected to have certain characteristics accentuated by long development to suit a rugged national environment. In fact, however, it appears that motoring conditions in Czechoslovakia are rather different from those which many Britons preconceive.

A network of very well-surfaced roads makes no demand for exceptional suspension nor for unusual qualities of structural sturdiness and durability, but filling stations are far apart by our standards and

garages with proper servicing facilities are very scarce. For this reason it is surprising to find that 17 grease nipples need attention every 300 miles, apart from other fairly frequent lubrication demands, and it can only be assumed that in a country where possession of a car is a rare and expensive privilege, owners are prepared to go to some trouble to maintain them in good order. In turn this implies that the manufacturer expects the driver to play a more active part in operating his vehicle than is common further West; as an example, he is allowed to command a radiator blind to supplement the standard water thermostat.

A straightforward 4-cylinder power unit in an engine compartment of ample size, with a minimum of auxiliary equipment, gives accessibility to which this view hardly does justice.



The Octavia has a plain interior with hard-wearing rubber floor covering, a non-washable headlining cloth and a visually prominent re-circulating heater under the dashboard with exposed air ducting. The rather hard seats are upholstered in a plastic material with a coefficient of friction so high that it might almost be described as sticky, but which serves to anchor the occupants against the cornering forces which the seats are not shaped to resist. Separate backs are fitted to the front bench seat. They are quickly adjustable for rake by means of threaded abutments and fold forwards to provide access to the rear compartment. With his seat at the extremity of its adjustment a driver of average height can attain a good driving position, and there is still adequate accommodation for two people in the back, but a tall driver finds himself short of leg room.

The dashboard layout is simple and neat with clearly legible circular instruments but the hammered "gold" metallic finish is not very attractive. On the right of the steering wheel, a long slender stalk projects from the facia towards the wheel rim and operates the flashing direction signals. This switch is arranged so that the knob is moved upwards for left hand turns and

### In Brief

Price (as tested) £525 plus purchase tax  
£219 17s. 6d. equals £744 17s. 6d.

Capacity ... .. 1,089 c.c.

Unladen kerb weight ... 17½ cwt.

#### Acceleration:

20-40 m.p.h. in top gear ... 15.3 sec.

0-50 m.p.h. through gears 18.7 sec.

#### Maximum direct top gear

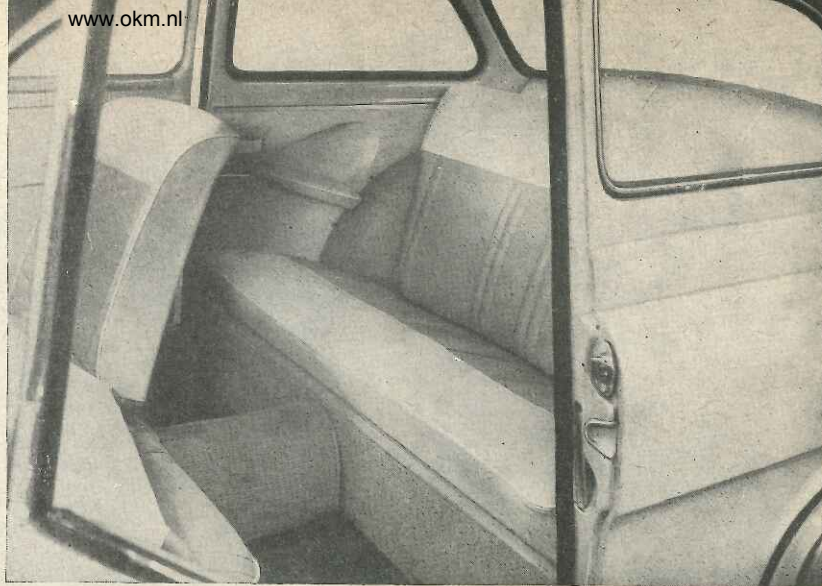
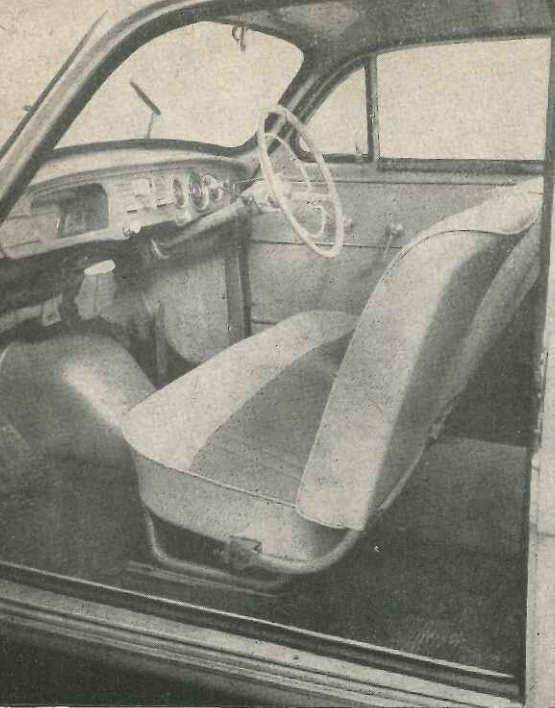
gradient ... .. 1 in 15

Maximum speed ... .. 75.2 m.p.h.

"Maximile" speed ... .. 72.4 m.p.h.

Touring fuel consumption ... 34.0 m.p.g.

Gearing: 15.55 m.p.h. in top gear at  
1,000 r.p.m.; 31.6 m.p.h. at 1,000 ft./min.  
piston speed.



In the foreground (left) can be seen one of the threaded adjusters by means of which the rake of the seat backs can be altered. Control pedals are well placed but the heater installation is rather untidy. The large tunnel dividing the floor is the chassis backbone tube and main structural member. As this is strictly a four-seater car, it need cause no inconvenience to rear-seat passengers.

## THE SKODA OCTAVIA

downwards for right turns in conformity with the motion of the adjacent part of the wheel rim.

The engine always started from cold immediately with use of the choke which was required only for a very short time. Tolerably smooth, though not mechanically silent, it passed through slight noise and vibration periods in running through the speed range but proved very flexible and gave an unexpectedly lively performance for an engine of only 1,100 c.c.; some of the credit for this can be attributed to the Skoda's modest unladen weight of 17½ cwt. Although tested on mixture grade fuel to be sure of adequate octane rating for the low speed acceleration tests, some makes of regular grade petrol satisfied it completely whilst others allowed only a marginal trace of pinking. The design of the engine with its pushrod operated overhead valves is straightforward and conventional, and it conveys a remarkable and old-fashioned air of accessibility traceable to the absence of the elaborate installation which accompanies modern fresh air heating systems.

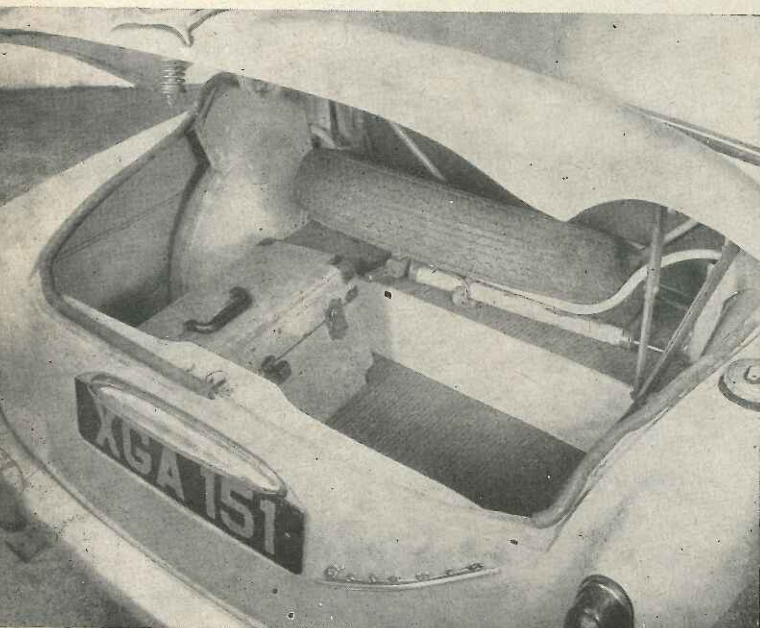
The clutch was far from smooth for starting in reverse gear except in favourable circumstances. Any attempt to back up even a slight gradient caused a transmission shudder which rocked the engine to the limits of its flexible mounting, and to start in reverse up a steep gradient was virtually impossible. In the forward direction it was always entirely smooth but appeared to have only a marginal reserve of grip so that rapid upward changes invariably resulted in clutch spin which could only be stopped by releasing the throttle. The performance figures through the gears naturally suffered from this inability to make the usual racing getaway and snatched upward changes, and are therefore even more creditable than they would appear.

The steering column gearchange mechanism was rated well above average although unconventional in that the movement through the gate was strongly spring-loaded into the plane of first and second gears. It controlled a wide ratio gearbox with powerful synchromesh on second and third, weak synchromesh on top gear, and a plain bottom gear which was relatively easy to engage on the move.

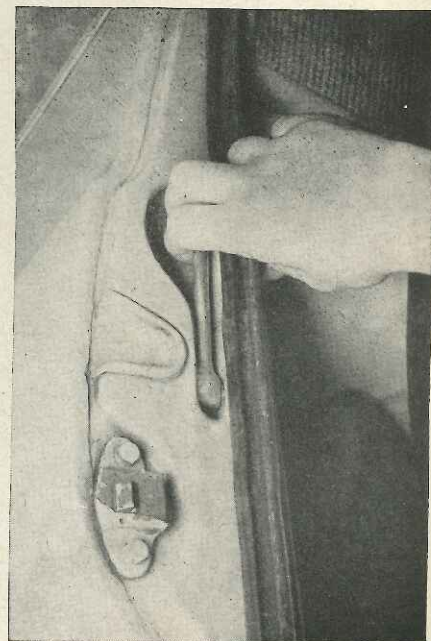
The brakes were found to respond powerfully, although with a slightly springy feel, to quite light pedal pressures. A force of 50 lb. gave a retardation of  $\frac{2}{3}$  g but also caused the nearside rear wheel to lock so that the car pulled to one side. Nevertheless, higher pedal loads continued to produce greater deceleration although this excess of braking effort on the rear caused some slewing of the car. The hand-brake, of the pull and twist variety, was effective but was situated rather inaccessibly far to the left, a relic of the conversion from left hand drive.

The chassis of the Octavia is built to an advanced design specification. All round independent suspension is by unequal length wishbones and coil springs at the front and by a transverse leaf spring and swing axles at the rear. A backbone chassis frame, which bifurcates at the front to contain the engine, joins the two and telescopic dampers are fitted all round. In spite of this, the Octavia does not compare well in respect of suspension, steering and roadholding with many contemporary vehicles.

Unladen, there is a considerable tendency to pitch and bounce, although the



The boot is deep and fairly commodious but the position of the spare wheel creates rather a bottleneck when large pieces of luggage have to be lowered in. The ingenious positioning of the boot release catch so that it can only be operated when the nearside door is opened, is shown on the right.





Some idea can be gained of the good fore and aft visibility provided by a quickly falling bonnet line and a very large rear window.



suspension improves progressively as more load is added and is at its best in the fully laden condition. The front springs of the test car were conspicuously underdamped so that indifferent road surfaces caused a bouncing motion to build up which at times reached the limits imposed by the front suspension stops. At a speed in the region of 60 m.p.h. some shake could be felt from the front end even on smooth roads; this was confined to a narrow speed range of some 3-4 m.p.h. and it was quite easy to accelerate through it. This period, which would almost certainly have been suppressed with better damping, gave an impression, which was probably quite misleading, that the structural stiffness of the car forward of the scuttle was barely adequate. Certainly the rest of the car felt rigid enough and the body was free from shakes and rattles.

Around the straight-ahead position the worm and nut steering was light and pro-

vided satisfactory directional stability and control, but as the wheel was turned in either direction the growing intrusion of friction in the mechanism made control rather heavy and eliminated the usual feedback from the road which imparts "feel". Indeed, on full lock the car could be driven in tight circles without holding the wheel and with no attempt for it to straighten out.

With weight distributed equally between front and rear wheels, and an anti-roll bar at the front, moderate driving and cornering methods revealed only a small amount of roll coupled with entirely acceptable handling characteristics. Faster cornering, however, uncovered a degree of oversteer which arises from the swing axle rear suspension and which increased rapidly as the car was harder pressed. The resulting rear end breakaway occurred with adequate warning and would be unlikely to lead the experienced driver into difficulty,

but limited the speed at which a twisty road could be negotiated with confidence, particularly in the wet. As usual with this kind of handling, best results were obtained by cornering with the power on.

Over nearly 1,500 miles of fairly hard driving, the Skoda averaged over 31 m.p.g., mostly on regular grade petrol. For a full sized 4-seater family car offering this degree of economy together with a reasonable amount of luggage accommodation, a maximum speed of 75 m.p.h. and brisk acceleration, this car is fundamentally surprisingly cheap. Unfortunately, the imposition of substantial import duty brings price equality with basically more expensive British cars designed and finished particularly to appeal to the home market, so that Skoda sales here must inevitably be limited to those who seek something different and unusual.

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## Specification

<b>Engine</b>	
Cylinders ... ..	4
Bore ... ..	68 mm.
Stroke ... ..	75 mm.
Cubic capacity ... ..	1,089 c.c.
Piston area ... ..	22.5 sq. in.
Valves ... ..	Overhead (pushrods)
Compression ratio ... ..	7/1
Carburettor ... ..	Jikov CSN
Fuel pump ... ..	Jikov mechanical
Ignition timing control ... ..	Vacuum
Oil filter ... ..	By-pass
Max. power (net) ... ..	40 b.h.p.
at ... ..	4,200 r.p.m.
Piston speed at max. b.h.p. ... ..	2,070 ft./min.
<b>Transmission</b>	
Clutch ... ..	Single dry plate, 7.9 in.
Top gear (s/m) ... ..	4.78
3rd gear (s/m) ... ..	7.60
2nd gear (s/m) ... ..	11.76
1st gear ... ..	20.40
Reverse ... ..	26.82
Propeller shaft ... ..	Enclosed
Final drive ... ..	Spiral bevel
Top gear m.p.h. at 1,000 r.p.m. ... ..	15.55
Top gear m.p.h. at 1,000 ft./min. piston speed ... ..	31.6
<b>Chassis</b>	
Brakes ... ..	Hydraulic
Brake diameters ... ..	9.06 in.
Friction areas: 91.7 sq. in. of friction area operating on 157 sq. in. of swept drum surface.	
<b>Suspension:</b>	
Front: Independent by wishbones and coil springs with anti-roll bar.	
Rear: Independent by swing axles and transverse leaf spring.	
<b>Shock Absorbers:</b>	
Front ... ..	Telescopic
Rear ... ..	Telescopic
Steering gear ... ..	Worm and nut
Tyres ... ..	5.50—15

## Coachwork and Equipment

Starting handle ... ..	Yes
Battery mounting ... ..	Under bonnet
Jack: Screw side jack operated by wheelbrace	
Jacking points: Under doors on either side of body.	
Standard tool kit: 3 o/e spanners, 3 box spanners, hammer, screwdriver, adjustable spanner, pump, jack, wheelbrace/starting handle, oil can, grease gun, 2 tyre levers.	
Exterior lights: 2 headlights, 2 sidelights/flashers, 2 stop/tail/flashers, number plate illuminating lamp.	
Number of electrical fuses ... ..	6
Direction indicators ... ..	Non-cancelling flashers
Windscreen wipers ... ..	Twin electrical, self-parking
Windscreen washers ... ..	None
Sun visors ... ..	2
Instruments: Speedometer with non-decimal total mileage recorder, fuel gauge, temperature gauge.	

Warning lights: Oil pressure, generator, main beam, and flashers.	
<b>Locks:</b>	
With ignition key ... ..	Ignition only
With other keys ... ..	Door and petrol cap
Glove lockers ... ..	One on left of facia
Map pockets ... ..	None
Parcel shelves ... ..	Behind rear seat
Ashtrays ... ..	One on dash, two in rear compartment
Cigar lighters ... ..	None
Interior lights ... ..	Roof light
Interior heater ... ..	Recirculating heater fitted as standard
Car radio ... ..	Ecko, optional extra
Extras available ... ..	Radio
Upholstery material ... ..	Plastic leathercloth
Floor covering ... ..	Rubber
Exterior colours standardized ... ..	10
Alternative body styles: A Convertible with twin carburettor engine is available.	

## Maintenance

Sump ... ..	5 pints, S.A.E. 20/40
Gearbox: 1½ pints, S.A.E. 140 in summer, S.A.E. 90 winter.	
Rear axle ... 2½ pints, S.A.E. 140 in summer, S.A.E. 90 in winter.	
Steering gear lubricant ... ..	S.A.E. 90 oil
Cooling system capacity: 11 pints (1 drain tap).	
Chassis lubrication: By grease gun every 300 miles to 17 points.	
Ignition timing ... ..	13° before T.D.C.
Contact-breaker gap ... ..	.016 in.
Spark plug type ... ..	PAL 14/195
Spark plug gap ... ..	.024 in.
Valve timing: Inlet opens 3° b.t.d.c. and closes 45° a.b.d.c.; exhaust opens 47° b.b.d.c. and closes 9° a.t.d.c.	

<b>Tappet clearances (cold):</b>	
Inlet ... ..	.006 in.
Exhaust ... ..	.008 in.
Front wheel toe-in ... ..	.08 to .12 in. toe-out
Camber angle ... ..	1 deg. ± ½
Castor angle ... ..	3½ deg. ± ½
Steering swivel pin inclination ... ..	8½ deg.
<b>Tyre pressures:</b>	
Front ... ..	20 lb.
Rear ... ..	24 lb.
Braze fluid ... ..	Lockheed No. 5
Battery type and capacity ... ..	12 v. 33 amp. hr.
Miscellaneous: The clutch thrust bearing is lubricated externally.	