The Motor Road Test No. 31/59

Make : Wolseley **Type :** 1500 Fleet Model

Makers : Wolseley Motors Ltd., Cowley, Oxford, England

Test Data

CONDITIONS: *Weather : Warm, dry, fresh wind. (Temperature 62°-71° F., Barometer 29.8–30.2 in. Hg.) Surface : Dry concrete banked track and dry tarmacadam. Fuel : British premium grade pump fuel (approximately 96 Research Method Octane Number).*

INSTRUMENTS

Speedometer at 30 m.p.h.	3% slow
Speedometer at 60 m.p.h.	4% fast
Distance recorder	accurate

WEIGHT

Kerb weight (unladen, but with oil, coolant and fuel for approx. 50 miles)	17¾ cwt.
Front/rear distribution of kerb weight	59/41
Weight laden as tested	21½ cwt.

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Timed lap of banked circuit	79.6 m.p.h.
Best one-way quarter-mile on straight	81.1 m.p.h.

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

Mean of opposite runs	77.6 m.p.h.
Best one-way time equals	81.1 m.p.h.

Speed in gears

Max. speed in 3rd gear	72 m.p.h.
Max. speed in 2nd gear	48 m.p.h.
Max. speed in 1st gear	30 m.p.h.

FUEL CONSUMPTION

43½ m.p.g. at constant 30 m.p.h. on level.
40½ m.p.g. at constant 40 m.p.h. on level.
36 m.p.g. at constant 50 m.p.h. on level.
31½ m.p.g. at constant 60 m.p.h. on level.
27 m.p.g. at constant 70 m.p.h. on level.

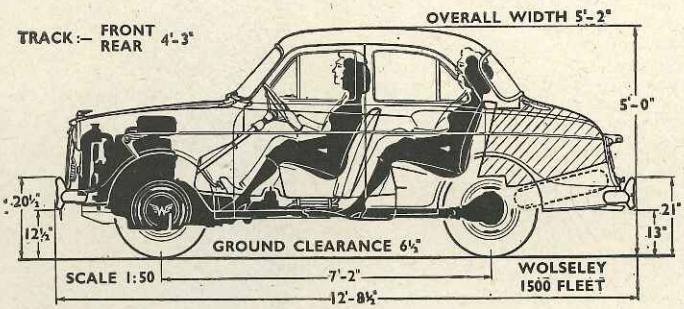
Overall Fuel Consumption for 1,341 miles, 50.25 gallons, equals 26.7 m.p.g. (10.6 litres/100 km.).

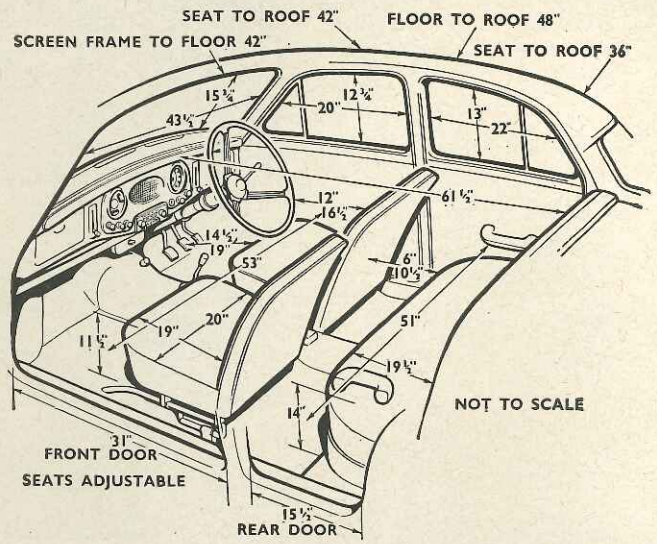
Touring Fuel Consumption (m.p.g. at steady speed midway between 30 m.p.h. and maximum, less 5% allowance for acceleration). 32.2 m.p.g.

Fuel tank capacity (makers' figure) 7 gallons.

STEERING

Turning circle between kerbs:	
Left	33 ft.
Right	31½ ft.
Turns of steering wheel from lock to lock	2¾





ACCELERATION TIMES from standstill

0-30 m.p.h.	6.0 sec.
0-40 m.p.h.	9.4 sec.
0-50 m.p.h.	14.6 sec.
0-60 m.p.h.	22.1 sec.
0-70 m.p.h.	31.7 sec.
Standing quarter mile	21.9 sec.

ACCELERATION TIMES on upper ratios

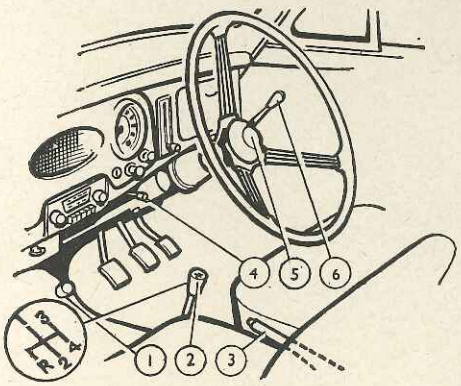
	Top gear	3rd gear
10-30 m.p.h.	13.8 sec.	9.3 sec.
20-40 m.p.h.	12.6 sec.	8.2 sec.
30-50 m.p.h.	13.0 sec.	9.4 sec.
40-60 m.p.h.	15.0 sec.	13.3 sec.
50-70 m.p.h.	20.1 sec.	—

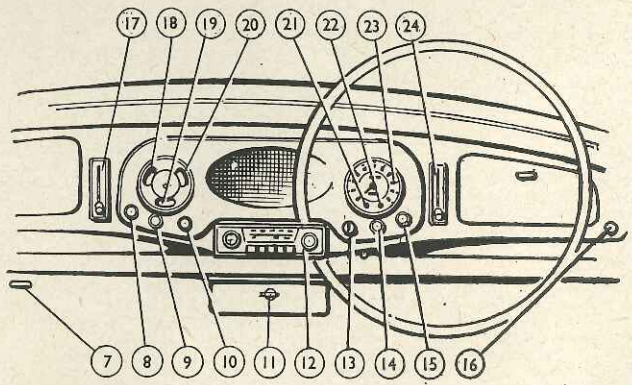
Brakes from 30 m.p.h.

0.87 g retardation (equivalent to 34½ ft. stopping distance) with 100 lb. pedal pressure.
0.78 g retardation (equivalent to 38½ ft. stopping distance) with 75 lb. pedal pressure.
0.56 g retardation (equivalent to 54 ft. stopping distance) with 50 lb. pedal pressure.
0.26 g retardation (equivalent to 116 ft. stopping distance) with 25 lb. pedal pressure.

HILL CLIMBING at sustained steady speeds

Max. gradient on top gear	1 in 11.7 (Tapley 190 lb./ton)
Max. gradient on 3rd gear	1 in 7.5 (Tapley 295 lb./ton)
Max. gradient on 2nd gear	1 in 4.8 (Tapley 455 lb./ton)





1, Headlamp dip switch. 2, Gear lever. 3, Handbrake. 4, Trip adjuster. 5, Horn button. 6, Direction indicator and warning light. 7, Bonnet catch release. 8, Panel lights switch. 9, Windscreen wipers switch. 10, Lights switch. 11, Heater/demister air distribution control. 12, Radio. 13, Ignition switch. 14, Choke control. 15, Starter switch. 16, Windscreen washer button. 17, Heater temperature control. 18, Oil pressure gauge. 19, Fuel contents gauge. 20, Water thermometer. 21, Headlamp high beam indicator. 22, Dynamo charge warning light. 23, Speedometer and distance recorder. 24, Heater air intake control.

The Wolseley 1500 Fleet Model

An Inexpensive 1½-litre Saloon with Compact but Well-furnished Bodywork

FOR the ordinary family motorist the generation of medium-powered cars to which the Wolseley 1500 belongs is almost bound to set a problem by its lack of variety. Performance, carrying capacity and comfort in many cases are so equally matched that the deciding factor may well be individual taste in styling—as all American and some British manufacturers realized some time ago.

By contrast the Wolseley 1500 which is part of a huge range of models produced by the British Motor Corporation has several characteristics of its own, some good and some arguable, but mainly suited to a particular kind of driver. Externally it suffers from too little styling rather than too much, although the single-colour scheme is welcome; inside it is styled and trimmed in the traditional school, with polished wood, black control knobs, circular instruments, and carpet on the floor; it has a large engine for a small car; and the surplus torque thus gained has been harnessed to easy fast cruising rather than ultimate performance, by using a very high rear axle ratio. More importantly, in relation to all these features it is cheap; in high gearing alone it is almost without a rival at a basic price in Britain of less than £500.

If a single comprehensive definition had to be given, the Wolseley might best be described as a "big" car for a small number of passengers. Without neglecting its usefulness as a transporter of well-packed families to the seaside, the car is much more effective when considered as a roomy two-seater, effortless on long journeys and compact for city traffic jams.

Continuous Speed

Many small saloons, of course, are little more than two-seaters. But the smallest and cheapest are generally limited to a cruising speed of 70 m.p.h. or less with engines turning at 5,000 r.p.m. or more, and most of those in the 80 m.p.h. class reach their maximum at about the same engine speed. Anyone who has experienced the silence and ease of motoring with an overdrive will appreciate the benefit of a "maximum and cruising speed" of 80 m.p.h. at only 4,300 r.p.m. Several times in the course of its testing this car was driven about as hard as possible for long stretches—an hour or more—with no ill effect at all, in spite of the fact that there were only 1,000 or so miles on the mileage recorder. While a more powerful version of the same basic car is available as the Riley 1.5, the engine of the Wolseley has been restrained in the interests of economy, although by comparison with the first production models this Wolseley proved slightly faster and a good deal more accelerative at the higher speeds.

There are some corresponding penalties of high gearing. Acceleration at very low speeds in top gear is so insignificant as to encourage proper use of the excellent gearbox, and second-gear starting is likewise a severe handicap to rapid progress. Main road cruising fuel economy was not quite as good as might have been expected.

In spite of high gearing the engine is docile in performance, and it is quick to start. In summer weather the rich-mixture control of the S.U. carburetter was not needed at all, but on very hot days restarting with a warm engine is sometimes impeded by temporary over-richness. Normal premium fuels cause no pinking, a virtue for the long distance traveller in Europe where octane ratings are not always as high as their British counterparts. It is in these conditions that top gear comes into its own, enabling the car to be driven untiringly for hours on end. Third is high and silent enough for use as a "town top"; and to be preferred for smoothness as well as torque below 30 m.p.h.; the synchromesh

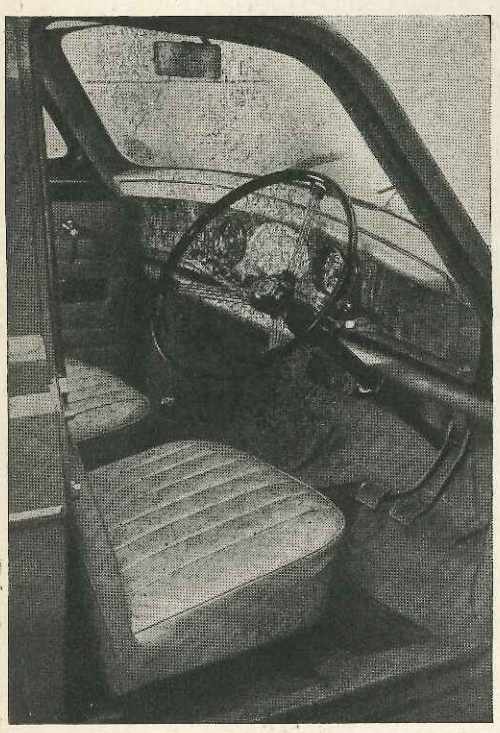
In Brief

Price £497 plus purchase tax £208 4s. 2d. equals £705 4s. 2d.	
Capacity	1,489 c.c.
Unladen kerb weight	17¾ cwt.
Acceleration:	
20-40 m.p.h. in top gear	12.6 sec.
0-50 m.p.h. through gears	14.6 sec.
Maximum direct top gear gradient	1 in 11.7
Maximum speed	79.6 m.p.h.
"Maximile" speed	77.6 m.p.h.
Touring fuel consumption	32.2 m.p.g.
Gearing: 18.6 m.p.h. in top gear at 1,000 r.p.m.; 31.8 m.p.h. at 1,000 ft./min. piston speed.	

Practical rather than aesthetic considerations govern the body, which fits four good-sized doors and a big boot within small outside dimensions.

The Wolseley 1500 Fleet Model

Cheap though it is to buy, the Wolseley is trimmed with traditional polished wood, while the floor is carpeted throughout. Instruments and switches are spread across the central section of the facia panel, flanked by two lidded cubby-holes, and there is a crash pad along the top edge. Below the facia is a padded transverse structural member—not a parcel shelf as it appears to be. The stubby central gear lever controls a delightful gearbox.



mechanism allows drivers in a hurry to change quickly with a slight crunch, a preferable alternative to the completely effective but more obstructive baulk-ring synchromesh when allied to a positive remote-control lever on the floor. The only serious fault to be found with the gearbox is frequent difficulty in selecting bottom gear with the car at rest. Impatient motorists could do with less slip in the clutch when it is really abused in a snatched change, and a lighter operating pressure would be an improvement.

Handling

Extremely front-heavy weight distribution gives the 1500 just the characteristics that might be expected of it. Riding is good for a small conventionally-sprung car, more so with a light load than with a heavy one, and there is very strong understeer with the recommended tyre pressures on dry roads. Rather narrow for its height, the car has a tendency to roll on most corners which is more apparent from outside than from in, and does not much impair the cornering ability. The rack and pinion steering is ideally accurate and sensitive without kicking back harshly on rough surfaces, so that a driver is quickly confident. The advantage of understeer, of course, lies in stability and straight running, but small adjustments to the tyre pressures have a comparatively important effect on the handling. Raising the pressures all round lightens the steering considerably and almost eliminates tyre squeal at the cost of a firmer ride.

Light at the Rear

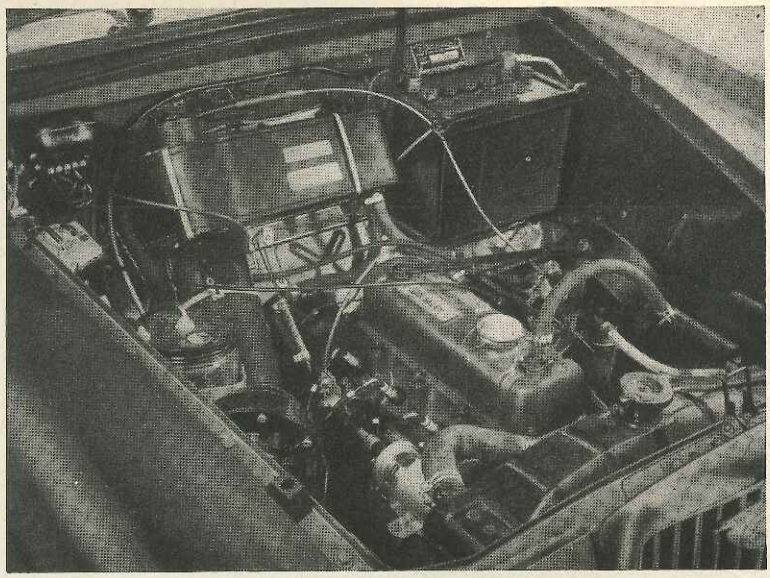
Greasy roads show the suspension to less advantage, for the lightly laden rear wheels are very prone to slide on a corner and any attempt to beat neighbouring cars away from the traffic lights ends more often than not in wheelspin. Weather conditions also have rather more effect than usual on the braking performance, the limited effectiveness on test being due to some extent to premature locking of the back wheels on tarmac made very hot by the sun. The pull-up handbrake is convenient to operate and is powerful.

Fast, long distance driving and quick control are favoured by the driving position. Since the early edition of this model was tested a small but vital improvement has been made for the comfort of front passengers by altering the seat adjustment to allow some additional leg room. With the extra inch which can still be won by moving the anchorage to an alternative hole in the floor pressing it is now possible for six-footers to sit in straight-armed and almost straight-legged comfort. Under these conditions passengers can, but are not encouraged, to sit in the back which has ample width but not much length. As an incidental result of standardization, the front seats can tip forward even in this four-door car. Although simple they are well designed anatomically and untiring to sit on for long periods. The front doors, sensibly, are much wider than the back ones, making this an easy car to get into and out of. Each front door has a catch of the kind which can be locked with a key or from the inside by the handle but will not slam-lock. A very welcome feature are window winders with a light and unusually quick action.

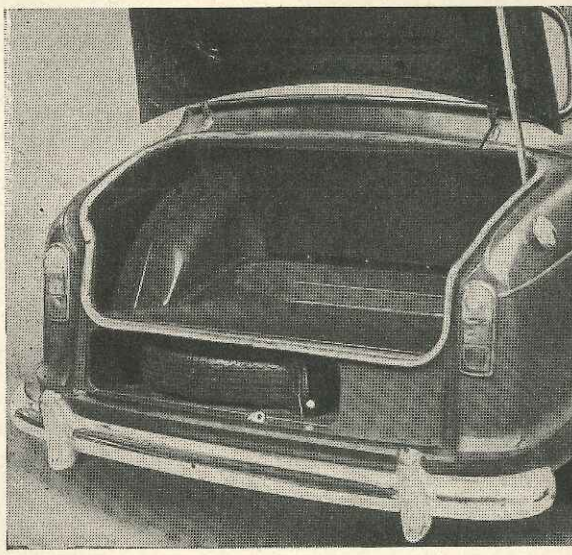
Good Parker

Vision fore and aft is good except for the blind spot of windscreen pillars which now appear unfashionably thick. The short bonnet slopes away while remaining agreeably in sight for aiming; a drooping tail offers no possibility of using the rear wings as corresponding marks for reversing into tight corners. On the other hand a very real advantage is the tightness of the corner in which it is possible with practice to fit the Wolseley with its small dimensions and good steering lock, for very few towns in Britain now are without a parking problem.

The instruments and minor controls are arranged tidily, though a trifle widespread, holding to the traditional symmetry which places the speedometer on one side of the central radio speaker with the ignition key, choke and starter (three separate controls in a row), and the ammeter, oil pressure and fuel gauges grouped on a matching dial more remote from the driver who must



Big for a small car, the engine earns average marks for accessibility. Quite a lot of the under-bonnet space, however, is taken up by the optional heater and windscreen washer.



Luggage space is large and useful, with the spare wheel entirely separate underneath.

also stretch to operate lights or windscreen wipers. The speedometer is round, legible and more truthful than most. Mild weather during our test made it difficult to judge the capacity of the heater and demister, but the blast of air from both outlets is powerful and winter experience on a staff car confirms the good impression. Sliding knobs on the facia adjust the temperature and air supply (including an electric booster), while a control on the heater unit itself which is visible near the floor enables some of the air to be diverted from the feet to windscreen. An ashtray is most sensibly fitted on the transmission tunnel, where it can be reached by front or rear passengers (so that only one emptying is necessary), and is out of the way of draughts from the windows. Flashing, self-cancelling indicators are worked by a finger-tip lever on the steering column with an amber warning light in the knob.

Luggage space is good, parcel space moderate. The boot, below which the spare wheel and tools are accommodated in a separate shelf, is wide and flat-floored, while the absence of a solid bulkhead between it and the back seat means that much larger objects—travellers' samples, for example—could be carried after a comparatively small operation on the interior. The shelf under the back window is big enough to be useful and deep enough not to throw things off under sudden braking. Two closing, but not locking cubby holes in the facia will each absorb bits and pieces of the dimensions of, say, the A.A. handbook and Michelin Guide together, the lid on the passenger's side opening flat for use as a tea tray. What appears to be a parcel shelf running the width of the car under the instrument panel, however, is only a strengthening bracket covered, like the scuttle, with softish crash padding.

The designation "Fleet" applied to this lower-priced version of the smallest Wolseley explains—and justifies—itself; some of its particular virtues for commercial travellers, both in cities and on long journeys, have already been mentioned. Cheapness does not only appeal to large companies, however, and many individuals are glad to keep up appearances at the right price. To them good accessibility under the bonnet and a greasing schedule kept down to nine points at 1,000-mile intervals should be welcome (the standard service charge is fixed at 14s. 9d.), and the elementary tool kit can be forgiven as a sensible way of cutting first cost. Whether bought for business or private use the Fleet model, with its unique set of qualities, is remarkably good value.

Specification

Engine

Cylinders	4
Bore	73.025 mm.
Stroke	88.9 mm.
Cubic capacity	1,489 c.c.
Piston area	25.97 sq. in.
Valves	Pushrod o.h.v.
Compression ratio	7.2/1
Carburetter	S.U. type HS2
Fuel pump	S.U. electrical
Ignition timing control	Centrifugal and vacuum
Oil filter	Tecalemit or Purolater full-flow
Max. power (gross)	50 b.h.p. (43 net) at 4,200 r.p.m.
Piston speed at max. b.h.p.	2,450 ft./min.

Transmission

Clutch	Borg and Beck 8 in. s.d.p.
Top gear (s/m)	3.73
3rd gear (s/m)	5.12
2nd gear (s/m)	8.25
1st gear	13.56
Reverse	17.73
Propeller shaft	Hardy Spicer open
Final drive	Hypoid bevel
Top gear m.p.h. at 1,000 r.p.m.	18.5
Top gear m.p.h. at 1,000 ft./min. piston speed	31.8

Chassis

Brakes	Lockheed hydraulic (2 l.s. front)
Brake drum internal diameter:	
Front	9 in.
Rear	8 in.
Friction lining area	93.5 sq. in.
Suspension:	
Front	Independent (wishbones and torsion bars)
Rear	Semi-elliptic
Shock absorbers	Armstrong lever type
Steering gear	Rack and pinion
Tyres	Dunlop 5.60—14 tubeless

Coachwork and Equipment

Starting handle	Yes
Battery mounting	On scuttle under bonnet
Jack	Screw pillar, with ratchet handle
Jacking points	One each side, externa
Standard tool kit: Phillips screwdriver, grease gun, starting handle and wheelbrace, tyre pump, screwdriver, pliers, jack, distributor screwdriver and gauge, tyre valve tool, rear axle drain plug key, hub cap remover.	
Exterior lights: 2 head, 2 side/indicator, 2 stop, 2 tail, rear number plate, radiator badge.	
Number of electrical fuses	2
Direction indicators	Flashing, self-cancelling (white front, amber rear)
Windscreen wipers	Lucas electric
Windscreen washers	Optional extra
Sun visors	2
Instruments: Speedometer with decimal trip distance recorder, oil pressure gauge, fuel gauge, water thermometer.	
Warning lights: Dynamo charge, headlamp main beam, flashing indicators.	

Locks	
With ignition key	Ignition switch, both front doors, boot lid
With other keys	None
Glove lockers	Two in facia
Map pockets	None
Parcel shelves	One behind rear seat
Ashtrays	One on transmission tunnel
Cigar lighters	None
Interior lights	One with courtesy switches on front doors
Interior heater	Optional, Smiths fresh-air heater and de-mister
Car radio	Optional, H.M.V. Radiomobile
Extras available	Heater, radio, windscreen washer
Upholstery material	Leathercloth
Floor covering	Carpet
Exterior colours standardized	Six
Alternative body styles: None (1500 saloon with fuller equipment also available).	

Maintenance

Sump	7½ pints, S.A.E. 30
Gearbox	4½ pints, S.A.E. 30
Rear axle	1¾ pints, S.A.E. 90 Hypoid gear oil
Steering gear lubricant	Hypoid 90
Cooling system capacity	12¼ pints (2 drain taps)
Chassis lubrication	By grease gun every 1,000 miles to 9 points
Ignition timing	6° b.t.d.c.
Contact-breaker gap	0.014-0.016 in.
Sparking plug type	Champion N5
Sparking plug gap	0.025 in.
Valve timing: Inlet opens t.d.c., inlet closes 50° a.b.d.c.; exhaust opens 35° b.b.d.c., exhaust closes 45° a.t.d.c.	

Tappet clearances (hot):	
Inlet	0.015 in.
Exhaust	0.015 in.
Front wheel toe-in	Zero
Camber angle	¾°
Castor angle	3°
Steering swivel pin inclination	9°
Tyre pressures:	
Front	24 lb.
Rear	24 lb.
Brake fluid	Lockheed 70 R.1
Battery type and capacity: Lucas BT 7A, 12-volt, 43 amp. hr.	