

## 40,000 MILES WITH A 1 ¼-LITRE M.G. SALOON – and how a Supercharger was Added

YOUR road test of the 1¼-litre M.G. saloon in your April issue prompts me to write to you about my 1950 VA series saloon in the hope that a description of its behaviour over 40,000 miles may be of some interest.

It started off by my reading in one of the motoring papers an announcement and description of an entirely new model to be introduced by M.G. From the photographs and technical details it seemed to be just the sort of car I had been waiting for — compact, nice looking, lively—so I dashed down to the local Nuffield agents, sought out the Sales Manager, and said “Please put me down for one of those new M.G. saloons. I’m first on the list aren’t I?” Whereupon he laughed and told me I was fourth, three people having been down that morning before me. A few months later a demonstration model arrived at the agents; it was new and barely run-in, but even making allowances for all that, I was not greatly impressed it certainly looked nice, but the performance did not appear to be anything out of the ordinary and the front seat did not seem to fit my rather peculiar anatomy. However, rather than lose not a bad place on the waiting list (by then increased considerably) I let my order stand, saying to the agent that I didn’t suppose I had any choice in the matter of colour, but when mine came along could it please be maroon, black, bronze, grey, or even pure with orange stripes so long as it was not green. In May, 1950, my car arrived—a green one! No, the agent had no idea when he’d get another — it might be many months, and anyway there was nothing to prevent the next one being green, too.

Thus it was that I took delivery and became the by no means proud, but rather somewhat disgruntled, possessor of this motor which, during the first few weeks of my ownership, hit back at my lack of enthusiasm (thereby, incidentally, showing herself to be a lady of spirit) by being just about as irritating as a car can be e.g., the boot lock took hold of the key between its teeth and wouldn’t let go, the starter pull-knob came out by the roots and the starting handle was then found not to fit, the windscreen joint let about an egg-cupful of water accumulate in some secret place and then discharged it suddenly over my legs, a direction indicator stuck in and then out, and so on and so forth. During this initial and most trying period the M.G. agents exercised a lot of tact and patience with both of us and gradually the teething troubles were overcome and the car and I settled down to the running-in period—both a bit suspicious and on our guard but both prepared to forgive and forget and start a new life together.

It was not long before I found that if the driving seat and the telescopic steering wheel were adjusted just so, the driving position was extremely comfortable and I could accommodate my 6 ft. 2 in. length with considerable ease; that corners could be taken fast, safely and accurately; that it had to be a really atrocious road surface to make itself unduly felt that the most shattering pot holes and gullies the byways of North Wales could provide produced not even a suspicion of a rattle and that great strength was not required to close the doors. Moreover, rear passengers (at least those not unduly long in the leg) spoke well of the comfort of the back seats.

At about 1,500 miles the head was taken off and the valves lightly ground in, and at 2,000 miles I felt the engine was free enough to drive normally. It was then that I really started to appreciate the car and realise that it was quite prepared to take anything I was able to give it in the way of sheer hard work. During the time that has since elapsed I have used the car for puttering around, going to and from my office, for fairly frequent long and fast runs anti for a certain amount of competition work of all sorts from hill-climbs to occasional rallies, with a bit of mud plugging thrown in for good measure.

The car has not been entirely trouble-free, but troubles so far have been few and, with three exceptions, trivial—these exceptions were (1) At about 25,000 miles a reluctance on the part of the foot brake to return to the off position, due to the bearing for the foot brake cross-shaft binding; this is housed in the box section chassis member and no provision is made for lubrication. This proved to be a very tiresome matter to put right and if the makers will forgive me for saying so (and even if they won’t) it’s a damn silly arrangement. It is now showing signs of doing the same thing again, which is irritating. I understand, however, that this fault has been rectified in the YB model (2) the clutch became rough at about 27,000 miles and the clutch plate had to be replaced I cannot however but admit that if I had been treated as the clutch had, I would have got a bit rough too and (3) fairly recently a half-shaft went — but here again, having regard to the unusual strains it has been subjected to, I feel I cannot complain. Another minor annoyance is the way the edges of the boot lid and spare-wheel locker cover rust, due it seems to the channels into which they fit being sealed with sponge rubber which holds rainwater for days on end. On the other hand, what a comfort it is to have a boot lid which opens from the top and can be used as a platform for outsized luggage — on one occasion I carried a light motor bike, and on another a grandfather clock, and I do not think that would have been possible with a lid of the “modern” upward-lifting scalp-splitting type which I regard as entirely devilish contraptions.

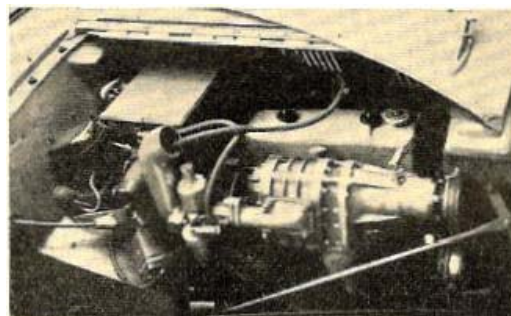
I found the general maximum speed on top (proper allowance being made for an optimistic speedometer) to be about 70 m.p.h. (with a breath of wind behind something in the region of 75), but she would cruise all day at 60 to 65 without the slightest signs of distress. On third, just short of 60

m.p.h. was the absolute maximum with 50 really useful, while on second the absolute and useful maxima were nearly 40 and 34 m.p.h. In this connection, Mr. Editor, may I respectfully suggest that if you could only get 52 on third gear and 30 on second out of the car you tested, then either it was decidedly off colour, or the editorial right foot is throttle-shy which I feel is highly improbable!

Acceleration was perfectly adequate and if full use was made of the gearbox it was quite brisk though hardly of sports-car standard—though there are some so-called sports cars I would have taken on at any time.

Personally, I like the steering immensely—some say the YA series oversteer too much; mine certainly does if the back tyre pressures are not kept 2 or 3 lb./sq. in. (according to load) harder than the front, but if this is done the oversteer is negligible. The car comes round fast bends with the lightest pressure on the wheels and if I overdo it and the tail starts breaking away, it comes back again with a minimum of correction, and moreover the “directional stability” (if that is correct jargonese) on the straight at all speeds is very good—and what more can one want than that?

I have never driven a car which is less tiring on a long run—to give an example, in June last year I started from the Midlands at 4.30 a.m. and clocked in at Inverness at 5.38 p.m. the same day, stopping a total of two hours 24 minutes for meals and feeling perfectly fresh at the finish and not at all cramped—and I am not in the flush of energetic youth. For the statistically-minded the distance (actual, not speedometer) was 425 miles and the running time, after deducting stops was 10 hours 44 minutes, giving an average running speed of 39.5 m.p.h.; not a record, of course, but not bad considering there were two up and the car was packed tight with heavy luggage and camping equipment.



*BOOSTER. – The Marshall-Nodoc low-pressure supercharger installed beneath the M.G.'s bonnet*

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