

Car-type Seating

MAJ.-GEN. H. J. PARHAM

Recounts His Experiences

after Covering 6,000 Miles

THE only person seriously to tackle the problem of building a car on two wheels was the late Sir Alliott Verdon-Roe. It is a fascinating problem which may be approached in two ways: either by making a fairly heavy and expensive machine using indirect steering or by making a much simpler, lighter vehicle with direct steering. My conception of such a vehicle is that it should be cheap and *small*, since anything large is apt to defeat the "object of the exercise" by making garaging, manhandling and parking difficult.

Nearly two years ago Maj.-Gen. Parham forecast that the two-wheeler of the future would be a scooter-type vehicle with low seating. His article appeared in *The Motor Cycle* for 23 May 1957. Since then he has adapted a 125 c.c. Piatti scooter to his special ideas. Here are his findings.

to be a good test of the soundness (or otherwise) of a rather drastic new riding position in which one's feet are way ahead of the seat. I had one fall early on, which I do not think was due to the layout but to an outside cause! Since then all has gone well and, having covered more than 6,000 miles, I feel competent to express some seasoned views on this approach to more comfort and more convenience on a two-wheeler. I propose to make no com-

seating dimensions must be roughly as shown in the sketch. The problem, then, is how to fit your simple direct-steering layout into such a pattern while keeping the overall length compact. It can be done only by having the feet astride the front wheel. And if the width of the machine is not to be greater than about 25 inches (which I think is the widest one dare make it and still keep it of handy size), then you must have small-diameter wheels.

That constituted the first debatable point, and I confess that I bought my Piatti with the gravest suspicions both of its wheel size (3.50 x 7in tyres) and its very short wheelbase (three feet). But neither factor has presented any serious trouble. Indeed, the rear tyre surprised me greatly by still showing all its tread pattern when, at 6,000 miles, I changed over to the spare wheel.

Obviously, with small wheels there must be less tyre in contact with the road and therefore greater chance of inadvertently locking a wheel. However, the very low centre of gravity and good weight distribution seem to make up very adequately for this fact. Nevertheless, I would like wheels at least of 10in diameter, and I believe one could have them and still keep inside my width limit of 25in. Also one could have a longer wheelbase without having to abandon direct steering.

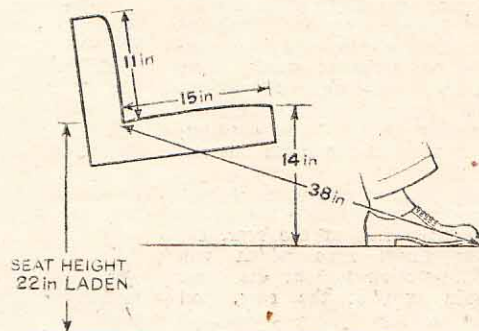
Now for the seat. It is large, wide, deeply upholstered and very comfortable, especially on longish runs of over 100 miles. But its main asset is quite unexpected, namely, much increased comfort due to the way the backrest keeps one warm in the small of the back.

And the luggage problem? It is quite a revelation not to have to think about how to bring home parcels and shopping. No panniers, however big, can equal one large boot for just chucking things in. And two car-size cubby holes ahead of my knees take the smaller items. It is all just too easy.

No one who has ridden the machine has anything but praise for the general layout. Passers-by on the pavement often stop to



Left: The author demonstrates the riding position of his modified Piatti scooter: note the roomy parcels box behind the seat back. Below: Diagram showing the main seating dimensions employed.



Having for many years wanted to build a miniature car on two wheels, I had no chance till two years ago when scooters had become firmly established. I took the Piatti as being the smallest, lightest and easiest to convert, and I took the Austin A40 car as the yardstick for the seating position.

At my age, and after over 40 years of conventional motor cycling, it was going

ment on the Piatti, as it was just a convenient peg, so to speak, on which to hang the experiment. To be quite clear before starting, the object was to get a light, easily housed, easily parked machine with car seating and reasonable luggage capacity without careful packing being needed.

Straight away one runs into the human factor, which in this case is the shape of the human body. It means that the main

inquire about it and make favourable comments on the "nice little thing." It could so obviously be easily made into something with a bit of streamlining and yet retain its essential smallness and lightness (it weighs 200 lb).

There are several possible constructional layouts, all quite conventional, which any competent engineer could easily use. How I wish some firm would try!

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