

WHILE Jaguar Mark X's are making news in the big car world, the new *Bond 250G* is causing a stir in the three-wheeler field. Brief details were given last month, but now, having had a machine for road test, we can go into the matter more fully.

Body styling, particularly the inward-sloping rear window, is the most obvious improvement on earlier models, but this latest *Bond* also has bigger wheels, improved suspension and hydraulic brakes.

The power unit is an improved Villiers 246 c.c. two-stroke single cylinder engine, the Mark 35A. A ball-bearing thrust race has been incorporated in the clutch mechanism and the gear change mechanism has been slightly modified. A smaller, lighter crankcase is fitted and the toughened big-end has caged roller bearings.

Engine bore is 66 mm. and stroke 72 mm., and claimed power output is 11.5 b.h.p. at 4,500 r.p.m. There are four forward gears in ratios 1:1, 1.56:1, 2.18:1 and 3.6:1. Engine to wheel ratio is 5.47:1. Reverse is obtained by starting the engine backwards with the Siba Dynastart.

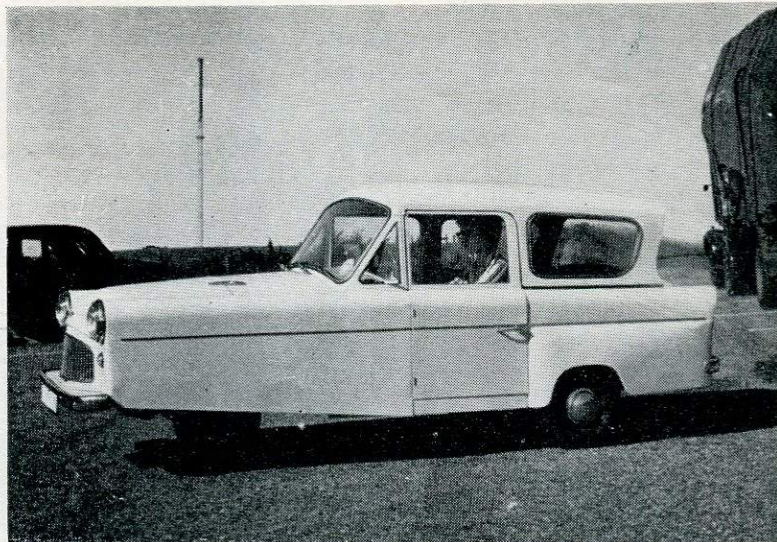
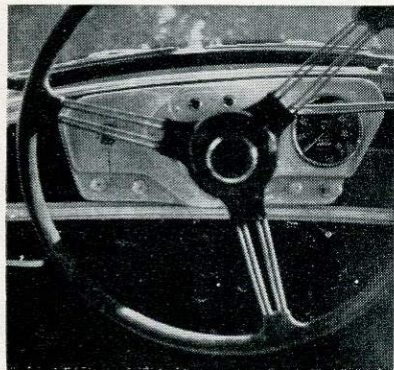
Final transmission is by chain to the front wheel.

Further improvements have been made in the suspension units. All three wheels are on trailing arms with hydraulically damped shock absorbers, the arms adapted to various positions in the car. The front swinging arm is pivoted near the final drive sprocket on the engine mounting, keeping chain tension almost constant.

The wheels on the *Bond 250G* are 10 inches (earlier models, 8 inches) with 4 inch tyres and all have foot-operated 7 inch hydraulic brakes. The handbrake operates the rear brakes only by lever arrangement.

The car body is built of aluminium alloy on a steel chassis with a glass fibre roof. The windows occupy almost as much area as possible, and

Don't write to tell us this photo of the neat dashboard is backwards—we know!



ROAD TEST REPORT:

New BOND 250 G

the backward-raked rear window, apart from looking attractive and giving excellent vision, can be wiped free of condensation from the driving seat. Quarter lights for ventilation are fitted and the two doors have wind-down windows.

Controls are more or less in normal car lay-out, the dashboard mounted gear lever being particularly well-placed.

Access to the luggage space is gained by folding forward the back of the rear seat, and to the engine by unlocking the bonnet and releasing a trip catch. The bonnet lid is held up by a self-fixing stay.

Accepting the fact that the new *Bond* is a vast improvement on earlier models and that it is an excellent minicar, a step-by-step account of our reactions to the car in use should give a more detailed picture.

The improvements to the starting controls had been made, we felt, half-heartedly. The petrol tap is only just inside the car, and one has to bend double and stretch way down under the dashboard tray to operate it. The decompressor lever, moved from the floor to bottom edge of the dashboard to allow choke and decompressor to be operated with one hand, is not quite close enough to do this comfortably. As the choke seemed necessary for most starting, these controls could well be combined.

The engine is started by turning the ignition switch hard to the right, and pushing the switch inwards before turning reversed the operation

and set the engine running backwards. Little trouble was had in getting the engine to fire even after nights in the open.

Once started, the well-proven Villiers engine ran well, though the ear was constantly aware of its motorcycle origins. The makers claim that the larger silencer on the *G* model has greatly improved the noise muffling, but if this is so, we shudder to think what life must have been like in earlier models.

However, one soon becomes used to the sound of the engine and it should prove acceptable to ex-motorcycle riders.

Acceleration lively

The sturdy gear lever was most convenient to handle, giving swift, confident changes with a minimum of effort. Working on the motorcycle foot-change principle, it simply moved up and down a short way. One push up engaged first gear, and three downward movements engaged second, third and fourth gears progressively. A small green light on the dash-board indicated that the gears were in neutral, a feature that proved absolutely invaluable.

Acceleration was lively, though, with an increased load of two passengers it became noticeably less so, and one could soon run through the gears up into top. On many occasions we felt an urge to change up yet again (at about 35 m.p.h.) from top

gear, but the engine grew quieter as the speed rose to about 45 m.p.h. Above this speed, engine noise and body drumming became quite noticeable, though this may possibly reduce when the car is fully run-in.

Special claims made for the braking and handling capabilities of the *Bond* were proved when we drove the car at 40 m.p.h., carrying a passenger, and then stamped on the footbrake. It came to rest very rapidly without wavering from a straight course, and there was not the slightest tendency to skid.

Inspired confidence

On a quiet road we swung the car violently from side to side while travelling at about 30 m.p.h. and it stayed completely under control and on the ground the whole time. A strong pull is needed to turn the wheel at this speed but the car responds immediately.

Such was the confidence inspired by this demonstration of roadholding and braking that we drove the car for the rest of the test as though we were handling a full-scale four-wheeler. The only tendency to wheel-slip (front wheel only) came when, tail-end well loaded, the car was rapidly driven off up hill.

Suspension, too, was praiseworthy simply because of its unobtrusiveness. There was, of course, some jostling over poor surfaces, but in general the ride was level and comfortable. Slow-speed manoeuvring of the *Bond* just has to be seen to be believed. It can "loop-the-loop" on a horizontal plane, and wriggle its way out of awkward situations with an astonishing ease. Although its 11 ft. long, 5 ft. wide body needs normal car space for parking, it is possible to put the car into a space practically the same length. And should the switch-off-start-backwards technique of reversing make it too long a job to tuck the back end right in, you can always get out and lift it over!

So much for driving the *Bond*. Looking around inside, one once again got that "just like a normal car" impression. The body is a really well-finished piece of glass fibre and aluminium construction and of attractive and convenient design. The front seats are neat and sensible and, though separate, can be used as a bench seat for three adults. Seating at the rear, too, is spacious sideways and upwards, though knee room is only sufficient for children. However, we found it quite comfortable for short journeys to sit in the back turned slightly sideways.

The doors are far too small for graceful egress, this particularly being noticed at the front edge of the

front seats, where there is insufficient room for feet to pass between the edge of the door and the seats. Having sat down, though, headroom and leg room for front seat travellers is plentiful.

Other comments on the car interior are only ones of praise—we liked the exceptionally good vision all-round, the efficient items of equipment (windscreen wipers, map pockets, winding front windows, quarter-light ventilators, pleasant hooter), the commodious full-width dashboard tray, and the useful luggage space behind the rear seat.

Engine accessibility is a praiseworthy point—there is no frame or panelling around it, and with the whole unit turned to one side, you can even step under the bonnet and close the lid.

To sum up, Sharps Commercial have produced a well-built, attractive and comfortable car on three wheels. With the exception of engine noise, it is a thoroughly acceptable and delightful machine.

SPECIFICATION:

ENGINE: Villiers Mark 35A 2-stroke single cylinder 246 c.c. Bore 66 mm., stroke 72 mm., Compres-

sion ratio, 7.4:1. Claimed power: 11.5 b.h.p. at 4,500 r.p.m.

GEARS: Four forward, all usable with engine in reverse. Ratios: First, 3.6:1, second, 2.18:1, third, 1.56:1, top, 1:1. Final drive by chain to front wheel.

WHEELS & SUSPENSION: Pressed steel wheels with 10 in. x 4 in. tyres all with 7 in. hydraulic brakes. Suspension by independent trailing arms with coil springs and hydraulic shock absorbers.

ELECTRICS: 12 volt system from two 6v. batteries in series. Reversible Siba Dynastart generator and starter unit, two dipping headlights, separate sidelights, brake and rear lights, indicators front and rear, dash light, horn and self-parking windscreen wipers. Coil ignition.

BODYWORK: Aluminium alloy on steel chassis, with glass fibre top. Two bench-type front seats, small bench seat in rear with luggage well behind. Three gallon petrol tank in bulkhead, with reserve tap.

PRICE: Basic car, £395 8s. 4d. As tested, with reverse circuit and two tone body, £408 19s. 10d.

MANUFACTURERS: Sharp's Commercial Ltd., Bond Minicar Works Preston, Lancashire.

REVIEWS:

Books worth buying

Scooter Riding (3s 6d.) Educational Productions, Ltd. East Ardley, Wakefield, Yorks.

IN the interest of Road Safety and two-wheelers in general, Douglas Company of Bristol, last year made available a dual-control Vespa for Learner Tuition, to increase the scooterists' efficiency in driving and enable them to gain confidence on the roads. This scheme has been welcomed by Vespa Dealers, who are anxious to ensure that purchasers of new machines are confident to take the road, and by the R.A.C./A.C.U. Training Scheme.

Douglas have followed this up by collaborating with Educational Productions Ltd., and the R.A.C. in producing a book entitled "Scooter Riding". This book is extremely well produced and covers every aspect of scooter riding, from explaining how the scooter is controlled to taking the Test.

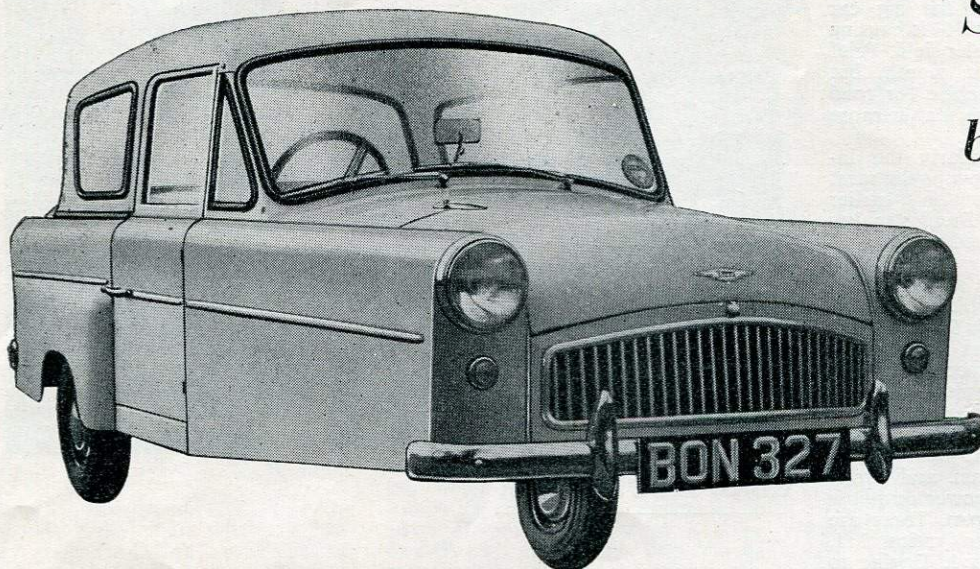
Workbench Wisdom (2nd Edition 5s.) Temple Press Ltd. Bowling Green Lane, London, E.C.1.

ONE of the most popular features of the motor cycling press for many years has been the "Hints and Tips" page which in some form or other has been a regular favourite with generations of motor cyclists.

This book, well produced with a wealth of line drawings, contains over 200 useful tips for the home mechanic all of which have appeared at some time or other in the weekly journal *Motor Cycling*. Most of them, of course, will be of interest to scooter and mo-ped owners who do their own maintenance and the range of information from swopping awkward control cables to building a side-car makes it well worth the five bob.

F.L.F.

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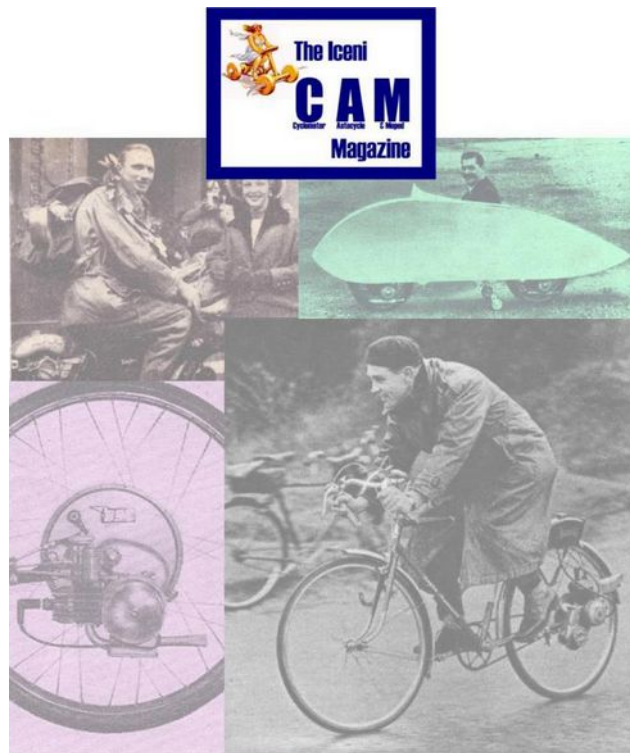
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