

"THANKS for the HORSE-POWER!"

A Confirmed Cyclist's Impressions of His First Minimotor

HEARKEN to a convert! For 14 years I have been an ardent pedaller not exactly scorning the power of petrol, but feeling that, in some way, it had no possible attractions for me. Came the war and I drove Service vehicles. After the war I went happily back to my bicycles, and although not what might be known as a sporting cyclist, I regarded myself as a man whose bicycle represented a chosen form of transport and pleasure. I would average 12-14 m.p.h. according to conditions and would often knock up 80-100 miles in a day.

Then I got married. My wife, a keen cyclist, was not always able to keep up with me in comfort, so we exchanged our two single machines for a tandem. For a short while all went well, although we found that my customary "single" average dropped somewhat on the double seater and I often felt that it was asking a lot of my wife to contribute her share of the work involved in getting the tandem along.

Then my partner heard of the Minimotor—that 50 c.c. two-stroke attachment which fits on to the back of a bicycle and drives the rear wheel through the medium of a carburettor roller. We investigated, decided to invest and one Saturday morning a box arrived from my local dealer containing the Minimotor and full fitting instructions.

Now, I had no previous mechanical experience beyond that necessary to maintain a pedal cycle and look after the lawn mower. Nevertheless, with the instruction book in one hand and a spanner in the other, I fitted the Minimotor in 1½ hours, dead. It is a potent fact that it took me half an hour longer than the fitting time to get the licences, etc., to enable me to take the tandem and its motor attachment on the road! Thanks to the foresight of the agent who supplied the engine, the necessary number plates, licence holder and red learner plates arrived with the unit and so there was no delay in getting these laid on. Insurance for 23s. 10d., covering my own and my passenger's liability and protecting us against third-party claims and loss from fire or theft, was quickly obtained through the Royal Exchange Insurance Co.; the provisional driving licence, of course, cost 5s. and six months' tax 9s. 3d.

We were now ready to take the road. I had no tuition available save that given in the instruction book but this was enough, and in 100 yards I felt that I had my powered tandem well under control. What a difference there was between driving the tandem and the only other kind of driving that I had done on Army lorries! But a mile or two with an empty rear saddle engendered sufficient confidence for me to essay a trip with my wife.

I was due to pay a visit to a friend 17 miles away. Normally, by pedal-power that journey took us an hour and a quarter, but the Minimotor knocked 15 minutes off that time. Then we drove from our home, at Nottingham, to Wallington, through Croydon's busy streets, and our average speed was pushed up to 15 miles an hour with the throttle never more than two-thirds open. It rained that day but I had no uneasy moments; tramlines, wet wood blocks held no more terrors for me with the Minimotor in action than they did as an ordinary cyclist. In traffic I found that I could disengage the drive and, leaving the engine murmuring quietly to itself, pedal the tandem as an ordinary machine.

Our first long run was undertaken a day or two later. We set off for Eastbourne at 8 o'clock in the morning and arrived at 11.30. At reasonable intervals, bearing in mind that the Minimotor was brand new, we stopped to have a smoke and let the engine cool, and at the end of the 52 miles we certainly did not feel that we'd had any work to do at all. Normally the journey would have taken us, on a tandem, 4½ to 5 hours. We had to get off and walk over the last stages of the notorious River Hill. The Minimotor had already been working hard for an hour and this measure was purely a precautionary one and when the engine is run in I should not feel it to be necessary.

We have covered now some 300-odd miles under power. The engine is feeling a great deal more free and the general impression gained by myself and my wife is that, with the aid of this cyclemotor, average speeds which would otherwise be well beyond us can be maintained without effort. The tandem is equipped with a three-speed gear; we use second for starting off, seldom use bottom at all and employ the top gear on the occasions that we have to aid the willing little motor. Petrol consumption is working out at 200 miles to the gallon. For



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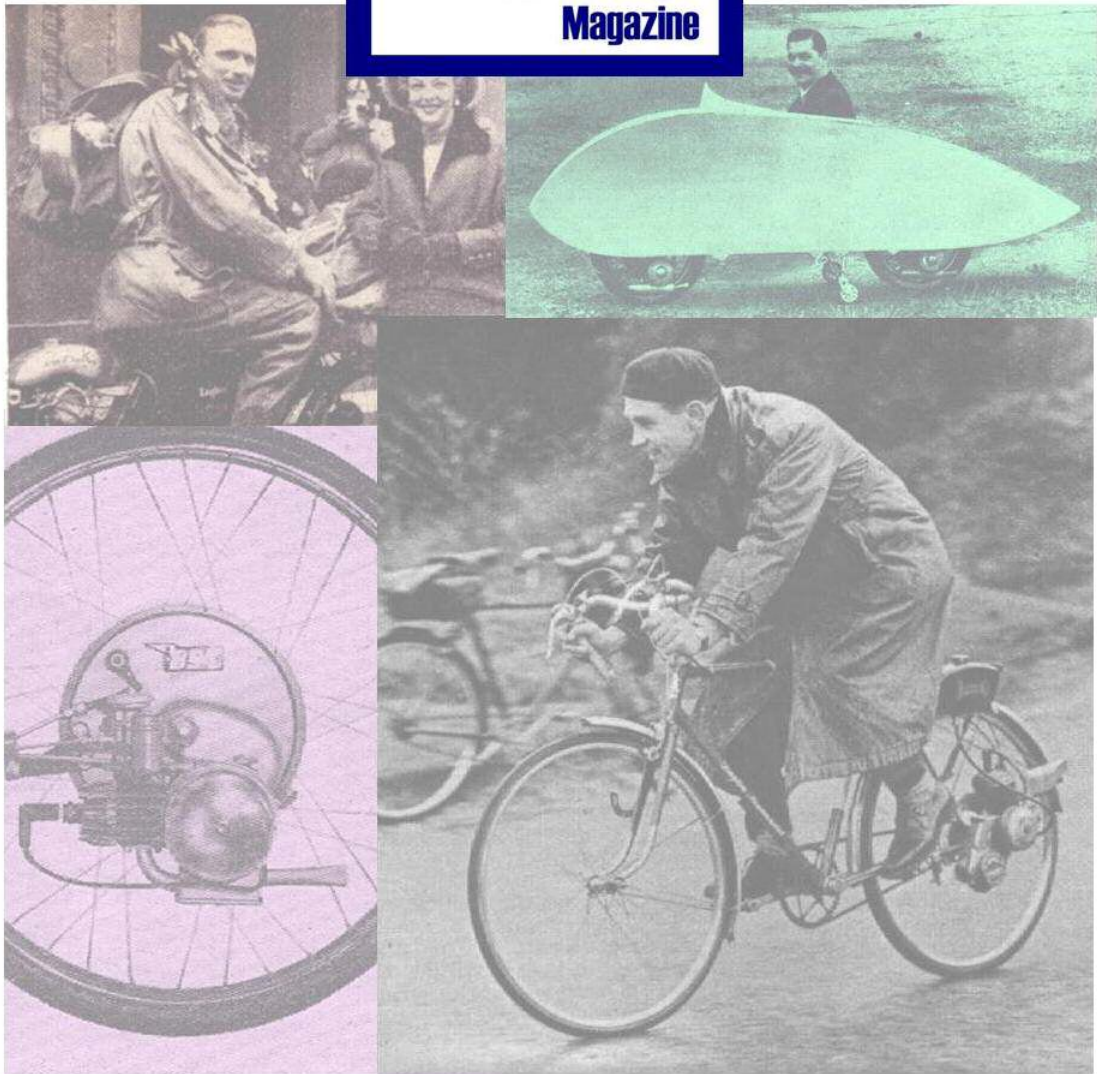
the utilitarian cyclist I would strongly recommend the use of a cyclemotor if he would eliminate practically all the physical effort entailed in cycling and at the very minimum of expense. When I pass my driving test, in a few weeks' time, I shall have paid out another 10s. and then my new "full" licence will cost me a further 5s.

Of troubles, we have, so far, had none. A minor criticism is that in heavy rain there is a slight tendency for the roller to slip on the tyre and a certain amount of vibration is felt at the rear of the machine which makes it necessary for us to keep a wary eye upon such clipped-on parts as rear lamps, etc.

I am still a cyclist and I do not regard myself as anything else, but experience has taught me to say "Thanks for the horse-power" when I need it.

E.W.

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