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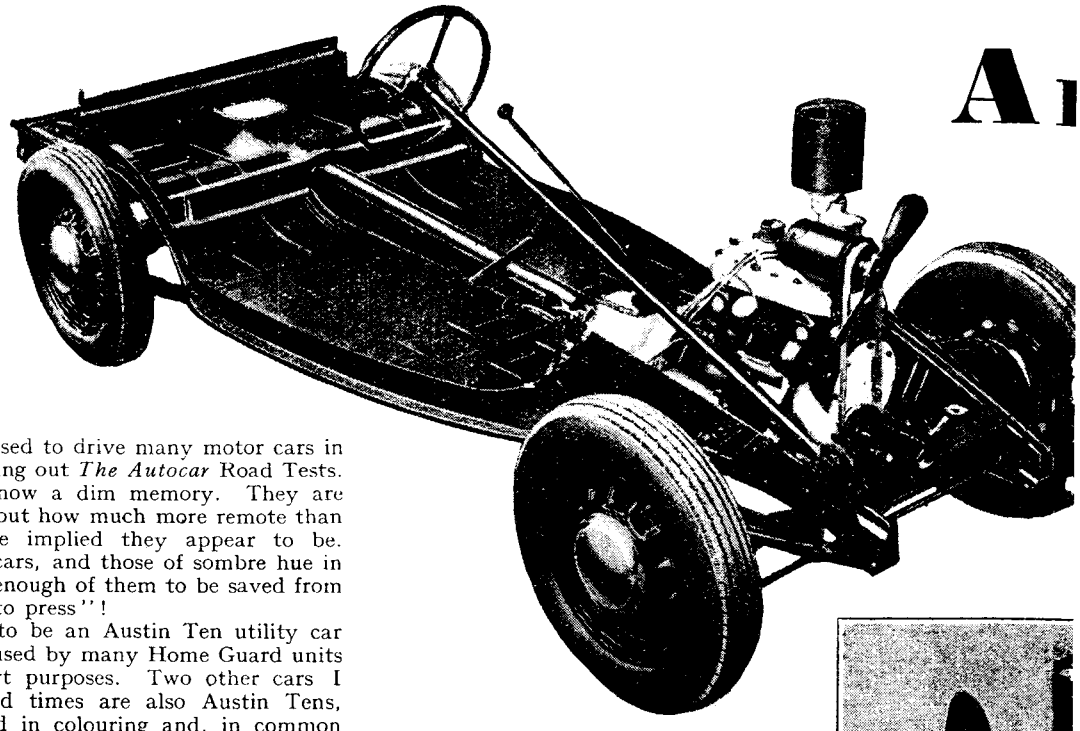


The chassis is in all major respects the same as that used for the normal Austin Ten. "Platform" construction results from welding a pressed steel floor to the frame members, giving great diagonal stiffness.

ONCE upon a time I used to drive many motor cars in the course of carrying out *The Autocar* Road Tests. Those days seem now a dim memory. They are but four years or so ago, but how much more remote than the bare period of time implied they appear to be. To-day I drive very few cars, and those of sombre hue in khaki camouflage. Just enough of them to be saved from forgetting "which pedal to press"!

One of these happens to be an Austin Ten utility car of the Army pattern, as used by many Home Guard units for a variety of transport purposes. Two other cars I sample in these restricted times are also Austin Tens, ordinary saloons disguised in colouring and, in common with the utility car, bearing military identification numbers in place of normal registration figures. And very serviceable they are. But that is by the way. It is the utility car with which I am concerned at the moment.

Valuable Contribution

Since the early part of the war the Austin Company have turned out to Service contracts a very large number of these vehicles. One sees them everywhere. Their total contribution to transport efficiency in many theatres of war, as well as in this country, must already have been enormous. As production became adequate to meet prior demands a quantity of these cars became available for H.G. units, with which they fill the useful rôle, as in the Army, of taking personnel about the place or moving equipment of the heavier kind.

This war car is close in general specification to the Austin Ten of peacetime which for the present it has superseded on the production lines. The important differences are that the engine bore is larger (66.65 mm. as compared with 63.5 mm. in the normal car), resulting in a capacity of 1,237 c.c. against 1,125 c.c.; the fitting of a water pump; lower gear ratios; a petrol tank holding 8½ instead of 6 gallons, and the use of tyres of "cross country" type in the treads and of larger section than the normal (16 × 6.00).

SUMMARISED SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 4 cylinders, 66.65 × 89 mm., 1,237 c.c., 11.02 h.p. rating. Side valves. Detachable head. Three main bearings. Compression ratio: 6.52 to 1. 28.7 b.h.p. at 3,600 r.p.m.

COOLING SYSTEM: Pump and fan; 2¼ gallons water capacity. FUEL CAPACITY: 8½ gallons. ENGINE SUMP CAPACITY: 7 pints. Zenith carburettor. AC mechanical petrol pump.

GEAR BOX: 4 speeds (three synchromesh). Overall ratios 6.14 10.50, 16.77 and 27.70 to 1. Reverse 35.50 to 1.

REAR AXLE: Threequarter floating. Ratio 6.14 to 1. STEERING: Worm and sector.

BRAKES: Girling. Hand and pedal operation on all four wheels.

SUSPENSION: Half-elliptic springs front and rear, with Luvax piston-type shock absorbers. TYRES: 16 × 6.00 E.I.P. on perforated steel disc wheels.

WHEELBASE: 7ft. 9¾in. TRACK: 4ft. (front); 4ft. 3in. (rear). OVERALL LENGTH: 13ft. HEIGHT: 6ft. 2½in. WIDTH: 5ft. 3in. TURNING CIRCLE: 35ft. 2in. (right); 36ft. (left). WEIGHT: (unladen, without equipment), 19¾ cwt. GROUND CLEARANCE: 8¾in. (at rear axle).

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT: Lucas 12-volt (wireless interference suppressors fitted to Service requirements).

From my own experience and the views of fellow Home Guards in a near-London unit I can say positively that driving the Austin utility car is enjoyed. For one thing, of course, it is a pleasure to be at the wheel again; but there is more to it than that. The example I have in mind always starts at once, though for a long while it stood in the open every night. It takes a little time to warm up, before the engine will pull really nicely on a cold day, wherein no doubt the water pump, valuable for arduous work, has a share.

The engine is smooth and willing, and on the low final drive of 6.14 to 1 (compared with 5.38 to 1 in the ordinary saloon) the top gear performance is particularly good. It seldom pays to change to third much above 20 m.p.h. The gear change, with synchromesh on three ratios, is pleasant to use. What appeals most, probably, in a car which has of necessity to be handled by a variety of drivers of different sizes and driving experience—and therefore confidence on the road—is that the position at the wheel is so good.

It seems to suit everyone without there being any adjustment for reach. One sits well up and has an excellent view, and feels in complete control. This is a very desirable point when faced with the responsibility of conveying personnel tightly packed in the back of the vehicle, especially at night. With two folding seats immediately behind the separate front seats the seating capacity is officially intended to be four, including the driver; but I have known this figure to be exceeded!

The brakes, too, which are Girling, inspire confidence. The steering wheel is in just the right place, and if the car has to be turned in an awkward place it proves very easy to manœuvre. In general it is light to handle and a thoroughly convenient little vehicle. You feel that if there is a hurry on you can "get places" with it, with due regard to official speed restrictions. In any event the comfortable maintained speed is naturally about 35 m.p.h. to any driver with an ear for an engine, since it is obviously turning pretty fast on the ratio adopted for all-round serviceability. At 19¾ cwt. the utility car's unladen

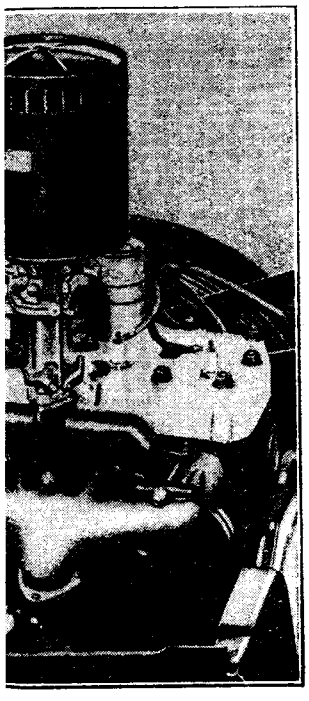
Austin in Khaki

Home Guard Drivers' Reactions to the Light Utility Car Made in Thousands for the Services

By H. S. LINFIELD

weight is almost exactly 2 cwt. above that of the Ten saloon in running trim, as tested in May, 1939. That is an increase which takes some coping with, quite apart from the weight which *can* be imposed on the Service car at times.

As it falls also to our lot to maintain the vehicle its general accessibility and sensible layout are similarly appreciated. The engine is sufficiently getatable through the one-piece bonnet for top attention to be carried out, and the application of the sixteen-task system as practised by Army M.T. units is a great deal more straightforward on this utility car than on some other vehicles I have experienced under H.G. conditions. If carried out conscientiously this task system covers in an orderly sequence the whole of the external attention needed by a vehicle, short of actual repair shop work. One wonders whether many of the thousands who have learned its routine during the war will be impressed by its logic and put at all events a modified version of the plan into effect on their own cars. It would pay.



The well-known Ten four-cylinder side-valve engine is externally as used in the car, except for the addition of a water pump, though the bore dimension has been increased for heavy duty.

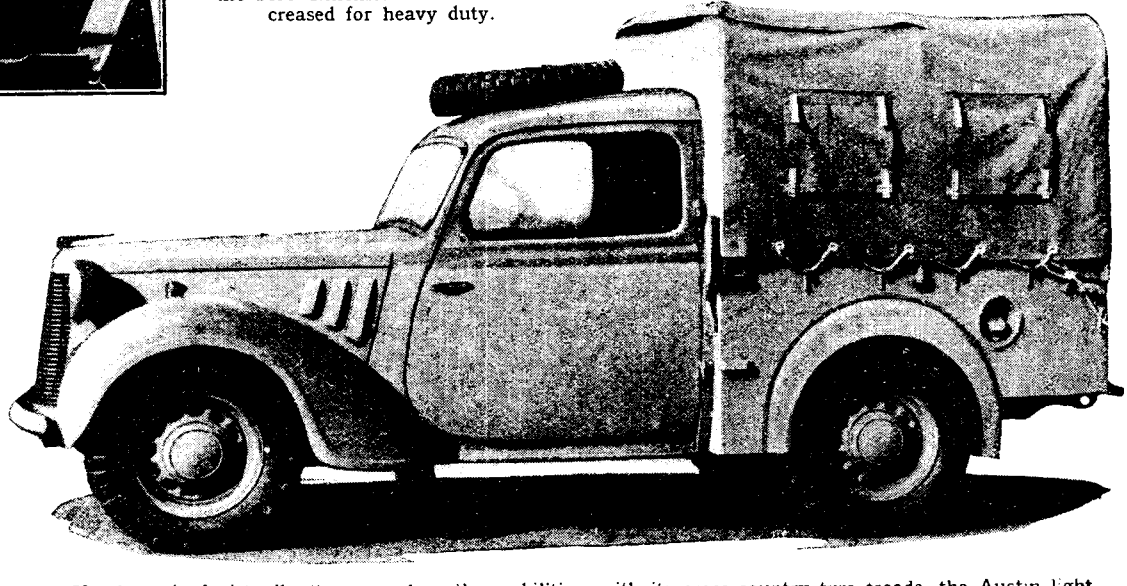
I have not gone into the full details of the car's specification, which, as has been pointed out, conforms closely to that of the ordinary Austin car. The main features are set out in the accompanying panel. A small point of difference in the equipment which has struck me as having value under certain conditions is the arrangement of the main lighting switch on the instrument board. This has an additional position giving the tail lamp only, which could be useful on occasion by saving the battery when parking. Its purpose for Service use is presumably to avoid using the side lamps when a convoy is halted at night, whilst on some of these cars this position of the switch brings on a rear axle flood lamp, as used in the Army for convoy work when it may be necessary to drive without lights visible from the air.

Talking of lamps, I am convinced from driving the Austin utility at night that the single-slot head lamp mask, of Army pattern, with only one lamp in use, gives a better driving light than any civilian masks I have sampled. What the comparative lighting values actually are I have no idea, but it is noticeable that cyclists and others approaching are apt to become voluble.

Possible Peacetime Uses

All in all I shall recall with pleasure my wartime driving of this Austin utility car. It occurs to one that there are many civilian owners to whom such a vehicle would be ideal after the war, more especially for country use. I understand that a vehicle of this type could have been available to the public in August, 1939, at approximately £165. In considering a similar vehicle after the war account has to be taken of the fact that increased costs arising from the war period would probably raise the figure by 40 or even 50 per cent., on top of which has to be reckoned the purchase tax at 33⅓ per cent. The last-mentioned is apt to receive less attention from those who discuss post-war taxation than the horse-power tax, but until repealed it clearly represents a heavy burden.

Incidentally, the increased engine bore adopted for the utility car provides an interesting example of the working of the horse-power tax as at present calculated. The Austin Ten of peacetime was rated at 9.996 h.p., clearly having its bore-stroke ratio designed to the finest limits to keep the engine within the 10 h.p. class. Putting up the bore by 3.15 mm., giving the capacity increase of



Handy and of virtually "go anywhere" capabilities, with its cross-country tyre treads, the Austin light utility car has innumerable Service uses.

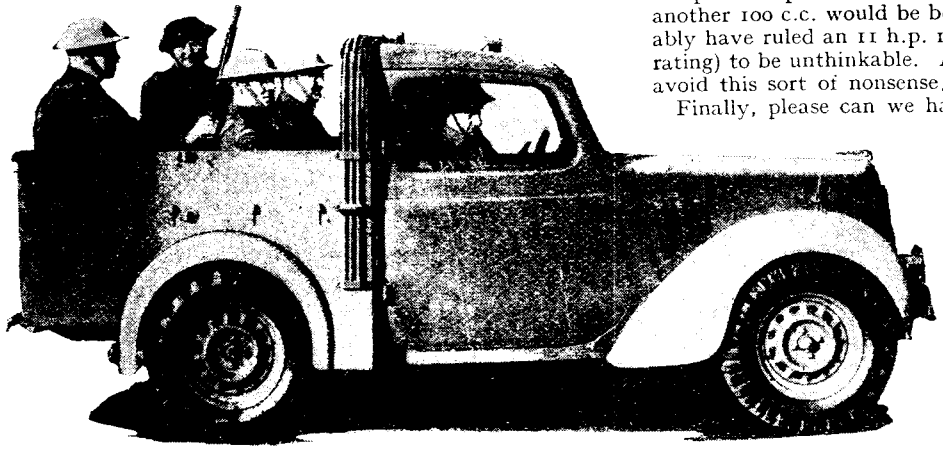
AN AUSTIN IN KHAKI (CONTINUED)

112 c.c. already referred to, has the effect of increasing the rating to 11.02 h.p. on the current formula. This has no present significance for Service purposes, of course, but it does go to show how arbitrary is the system, and that engine designers had imposed upon them rigid limits of size if they were to keep within certain "popular" taxation categories.

Design v. Sales

I am not suggesting that the Austin Ten of peacetime wanted that extra 100-odd c.c. which has been provided to take care of heavier loading—its performance was good; but a small car can nearly always gain all round from having a "bit more engine." The pre-war Austin Ten was an example of a car in a class where the keenest competition prevailed. Even if "Design" had felt that another 100 c.c. would be beneficial, "Sales" would probably have ruled an 11 h.p. model (on the taxation formula rating) to be unthinkable. A more flexible tax basis would avoid this sort of nonsense.

With a water pump as well as a fan fitted a radiator muff is a valuable adjunct in cold weather.



Personnel carrying is one of the valuable uses of the Austin utility car, in the Home Guard as well as in the Army. The canvas tilt is normally fitted.

Finally, please can we have after the war maintenance manuals of the kind issued with this particular war vehicle? It runs to more than 100 pages, and embodies really detailed information. I need scarcely add that the example to which I refer is only for Service use. There will be many car owners mechanically knowledgeable as a result of war experience, who could make good use of such information, and who would be willing to pay a reasonable sum for such a book.