

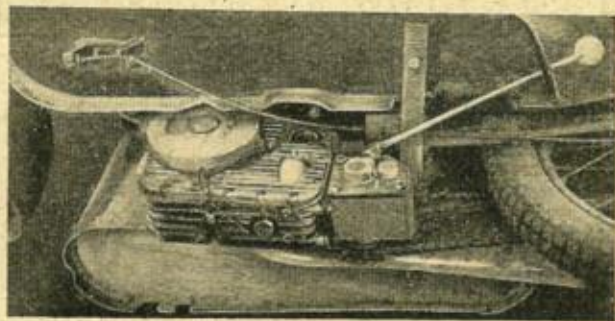
RIDING THE WILLING HORSE

An Impression of the 48 c.c. Britax "Scooterette"
Used by Arnold Jones in the Recent Exeter Trial

AMONG the entries for the recent Exeter Trial were two 48 c.c. Britax machines—surely an ambitious project for such tiny engines. One, ridden by Arnold Jones, was a Britax "Scooterette," the other a normal Britax cyclemotor. Each was powered by an Italian-built Ducati o.h.v. unit, and it is now a matter of history that the scooter completed the course, although it was late in arriving at the finish—a delay partially caused by a prolonged stop to aid the rider of the other machine, which suffered some slight trouble which, unfortunately, failed to respond to "roadside" treatment.

(Right) The "Scooterette" proved a useful around-town runabout which started easily.

(Below) Complete enclosure does not detract from the machine's good lines.



Worm's eye view! The "booster-box" fits neatly behind the engine unit and is operated by the long lever.

At the conclusion of this successful "trial," a *Motor Cycling* man borrowed the scooter, which had not received any attention at all other than having the fuel tank topped up.

The "Exeter" model was actually the original prototype "Scooterette" (described in our issue of November 4, 1954), to which a very old two-speed gearbox has been attached, so as to provide alternative ultra-low gears for use on the very severe hills at the tail end of the trial. The only other "mod." was a second head lamp, fastened on the front mudguard, to enable fast (relatively) speeds to be kept up on narrow, winding roads.

Much of the design is based on the successful Britax cycle. The "open" frame, for instance, is identical with that of the auto-cycle, as are the front forks and the wheel hubs. Small-diameter rims, however, are used, carrying 2.50-in. by 20-in. tyres. And, naturally, a different type of fuel tank is fitted. Bodywork consists of pressed-steel components. The forks are enclosed in a fairing which pivots with the suspension and is blended into the mudguard.

Of 48 c.c., the o.h.v. Ducati engine has a light-alloy cylinder with integral head and is unusual in that the valves are operated by pull-rods. Formed in unit is the two-speed gearbox, power being transmitted by primary gears to a multi-plate (some 24 in all!) metal-to-metal clutch, which runs in oil. Gear selection is by means of a pedal on

the right of the machine, working on the "up for up, down for down" principle.

Riding comfort is an important factor in the scooter field, and, notwithstanding its small tyres and rigid rear end, the "Scooterette" is well up to the mark in this respect. Possibly much of the comfort is contributed by the rubber-sprung, link-action front fork, which seemed to work more efficiently than some lightweight telescopic designs. The oblong-section seat proved to be more comfortable than it at first looked, and it was sufficiently low to enable the rider to place both feet on the ground. This proved a help in starting the machine, for no kickstarter is fitted to the prototype, and none is really required. Starting drill was a simple matter of turning on the fuel and tickling the carburetter (tap and tickler could be reached through convenient gaps in the shielding) and rolling the double-acting twistgrip right "off"—this operates the exhaust-valve lifter. With low gear engaged, the machine could be paddled or pushed forward, whichever method was preferred, and the grip opened. The engine, without fail, responded immediately.

Out on the road it was found that the machine handled well; steering at walking pace was of the "feet firmly on the footboards" variety, and it was the same up to the machine's maximum speed, which was in the 35 m.p.h. region.

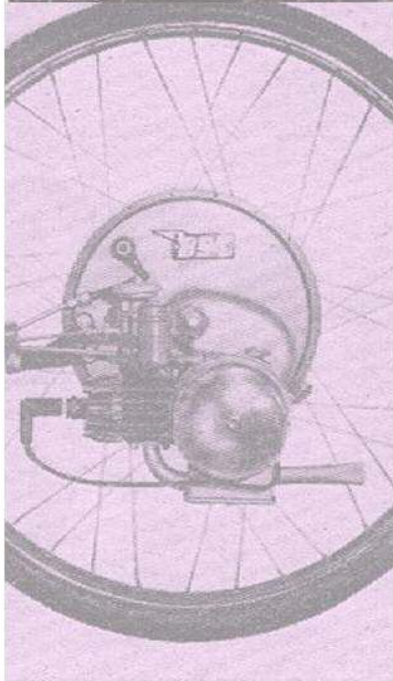
Tried experimentally, the second gearbox provided a set of ratios much lower than standard; "bottom twice"—low gear on the engine unit and low gear on the auxiliary box—proved to be extraordinarily low and enabled the machine to trickle along at almost nil m.p.h.!

No opportunity arose for testing the machine on any trials-type hills, but main-road gradients could normally be ascended in top gear (without using the auxiliary, of course) and low gear was only required on longish steep hills, or those with a more moderate gradient at which it was not possible to "get a run."

Throughout the test the rider wore a normal about-town raincoat, a scarf and thin gloves. Although some sections of road traversed were wet, no spray reached the rider, thanks to the very efficient shielding; in gentle rain, no more reached the raincoat than would have been the case if a bicycle was being ridden—and, of course, the lower half of the coat, and trousers and shoes were practically unspotted.

All in all, when the production version appears in a few weeks' time, the smart little maroon-and-chrome "Scooterette," with its moderate initial price of £99 18s., including P.T., and exceptionally low running costs, will represent one of the cheapest forms of "protected" motorcycling available today

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