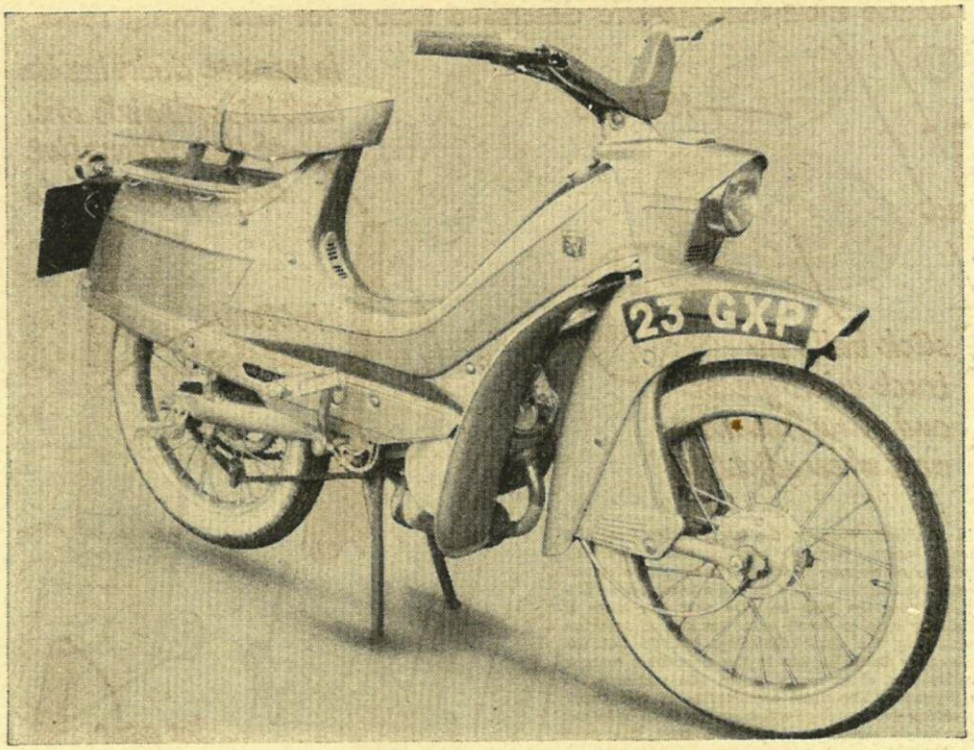
A French moped ahead of its time



SPECIFICATION

Engine: Single-cylinder, two-stroke. Bore 40mm., stroke 39mm., capacity 49c.c. Compression ratio 7.4 to 1.

Transmission: Automatic multiplate clutch to chain.

Frame: Pressed steel frame with leading link front forks and swinging arm rear forks.

Tank capacity: 1¼ gallons.

Wheels and brakes: Tyres both 2¼in. x 15in. Both brakes lever-operated and of the internally expanding hub type.

Lighting: Direct from flywheel generator.

Equipment: Tools, speedometer, centre stand, integral legshields, rear carrier, tyre inflator.

Weight: 100lb. approx.

Concessionaires: Layford Automotive Ltd., 134-136 King Street, Hammersmith, London, W.6.

Price: £89 18s. including tax.

CENTAUR TESTS THE

PEUGEOT BB.104

TAKE a look round the Design Centre in London's Haymarket some time. A lot of the articles on show are, of course, luxury goods but avoid these. Examine the items made for everyday use, such as knives and forks, kitchen chairs and cooking pans. It does not take long to realize that although they have been designed to perform their own particular function properly and easily attention has also been paid to the way they look. Some of the stainless steel cutlery for instance almost verges on the beautiful. These and many other displays are visible rejoinders to the old concept that because a thing was made for use it must not be decorative

Mopeds are not manufactured to be put up on a pedestal and admired, they are meant to be ridden and in most respects are the Cinderellas of the transport world. Ten years ago this Cinderella fixation was complete and the designers of heavy clumsy autocycles seemed determined to regard only the pre-Fairy Godmother phase of Cinderella's life. Nobody seemed to remember that she went to the ball and was a dazzling success.

All of this brings me round to consideration of the Peugeot BB.104 a moped which has received much consideration by its designer and looks the better for it. Enclosure is comprehensive and only about 50 per cent of the rear wheel is visible while the valances on the front wheel mudguard are also very deep. Shapely footshields give the moped a winged appearance while all else is contained in closely mated fairings.

External civilization, of course, is a mockery if there is mechanical crudity beneath but the Peugeot's bodywork does not conceal any hidden vices. For one thing the drive is through that most desirable and sophisticated of transmissions, the automatic clutch. The engine note is subdued and there is no panel-rattle.

Excellent Controls

Starting followed normal procedures but the excellent controls made it seem even easier. The fuel was turned on by a plastics knob situated low on the offside fairing The hands grasped the handlebars and under each grip was a small trigger, one operating the strangler and the other the decompressor. A few revolutions of the pedals with the latter depressed and the engine would start providing half-choke was engaged. Brake levers sprout from the same integral bases as the two trigger levers, while both horn and light controls are within easy distance for respective thumb operation.

Once the machine was moving the engine proved very tractable right up to the top speed of about 34 m.p.h. It is in fact one of the few "automatic" mopeds which offers instant engine response when the throttle is opened wide at about 20 m.p.h. and the old bogey of sluggish acceleration, common to this type of machine, seems to have been well and truly laid. Fuel consumption proved to be a shade over 130 m.p.g.

The one controversial point about the Peugeot to me concerned its handling. The very long leading link front fork together with the moped's low configuration combine to give a lengthy wheelbase.

What difference does this make? At speed and in a straight line the Peugeot behaves like any other moped except that rough surfaces seem to be smoothed out much better than usual. At slow speeds and in a straight line steering is almost unnaturally straight and one gains the impression that a majority of people could ride this machine "hands off" under such conditions.

But when cornering, particularly at top speed, I felt there was a tendency to take unexpected lines. Cornering at slow speeds the steering tends to twitch. This latter point is a pity since the excellently flared control levers, the optimum width handlebars and the tractable and willing engine would otherwise make the Peugeot an excellent tool for just this purpose.

Never Uncomfortable

Although the seating position was a bit low for me I was never uncomfortable due to an excellent dual seat. The suspension, already mentioned, also contributed to my wellbeing.

The brakes proved to be perfectly efficient and after several attempts from 20 m.p.h. I took an average of my braking distances which came out at 11ft. I might add that efficient brakes are not everything if the levers do not come readily to hand. It was a pleasure to use those fitted to the BB.104.

There is no doubt that in the last six months or so CYCLING AND MOPEDS has received road test mopeds with a much better standard of lighting than was previously the case. I would like to think that the pleas for more effective lighting made on these pages have had their effect. Perhaps the ones on the Peugeot show the beginning of a very welcome trend. They have good penetration.

The deep valancing was effective at keeping spray at bay but I never had the opportunity to test the legshields or special foot platform in anything more than just damp conditions.

The tool-kit contained a puncture outfit with instructions written in French, a point which the manufacturers would do well to change. The tyre inflator is neatly tucked away beneath the offside engine fairing.

The centre stand worked effectively and I liked the fitting of the petrol gauge (i.e., a length of thin plastic attached to the filler cap).

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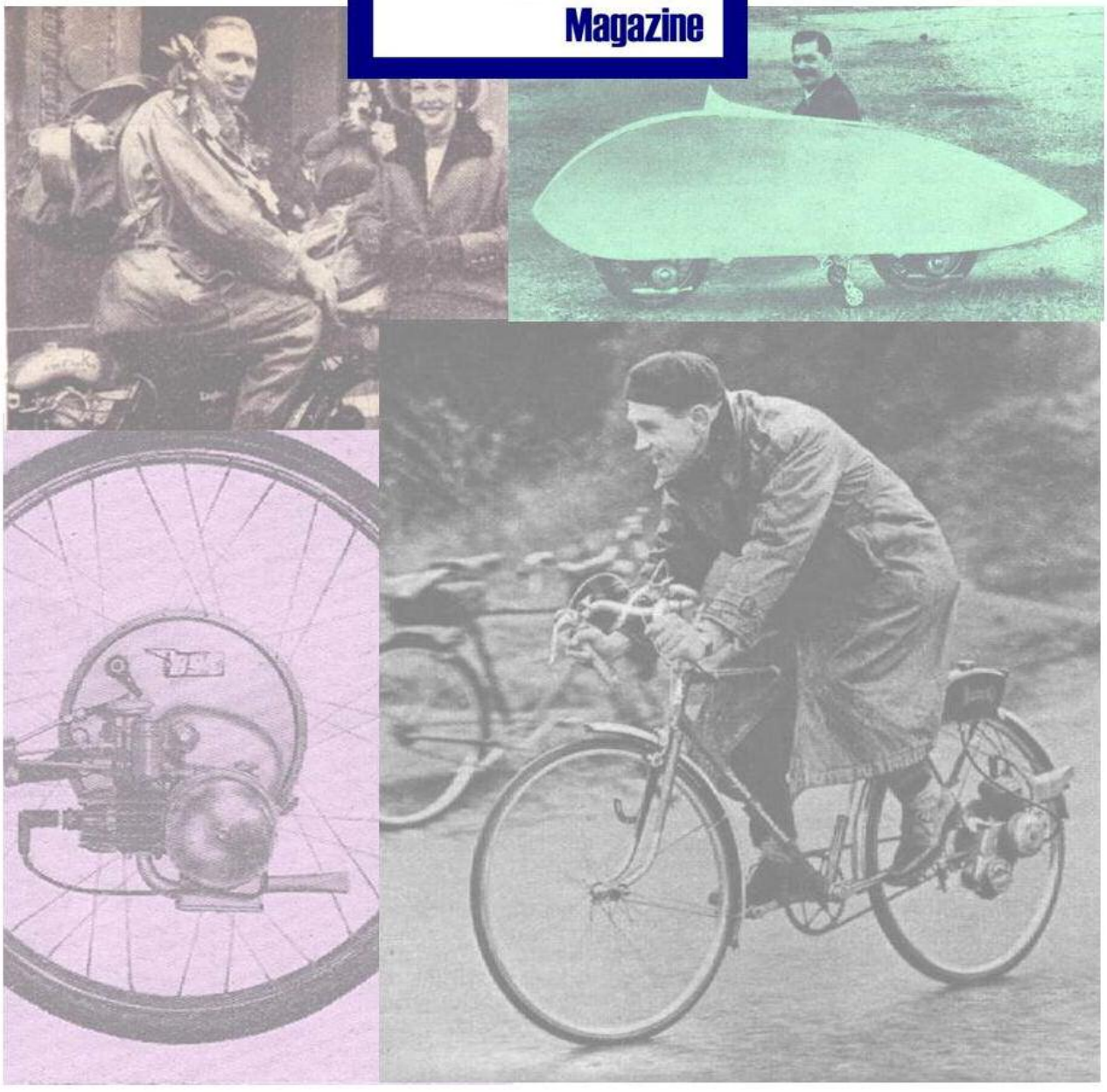

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