

A stylish model from the home of mopeds — Holland

THE RAP IMPERIAL

THE women's magazine cliché "Love at first sight" can quite simply be balanced out by another banal statement to the effect that "First appearances are deceptive" and it is well that any moped reviewer should be conscious of this contradiction. The first ride on a new mount is often a pleasant and deceptive experience and it is only some hundred miles later on that true qualities begin to display themselves. Luxurious suspension proves to be a wallowing death-trap, an apparently high top speed proves to be nothing more than a combination of inefficient silencing and vibration, while a saddle which originally caressed now tortures.

In a sense such a reversal of face values occurred between the RAP and me, with one big difference—it was a case of vice versa.

My first ride on the RAP was unnerving. The twist-grip gear-change was completely out of alignment and it was almost impossible to reach first gear. Then the whole assembly began to turn round on the handlebar and the skin between my thumb and index finger become rawer and rawer as I attempted to steer a coherent course through the centre of London.

But all bad things come to an end and eventually I reached home and a screwdriver. A little experimentation was necessary but soon everything was put to rights and it is now hard to remember that agonising ride. I think it is fair to say that the RAP has the sweetest gear-change mechanism I have ever encountered on a moped and in London where constant changing is necessary this is a very important factor.

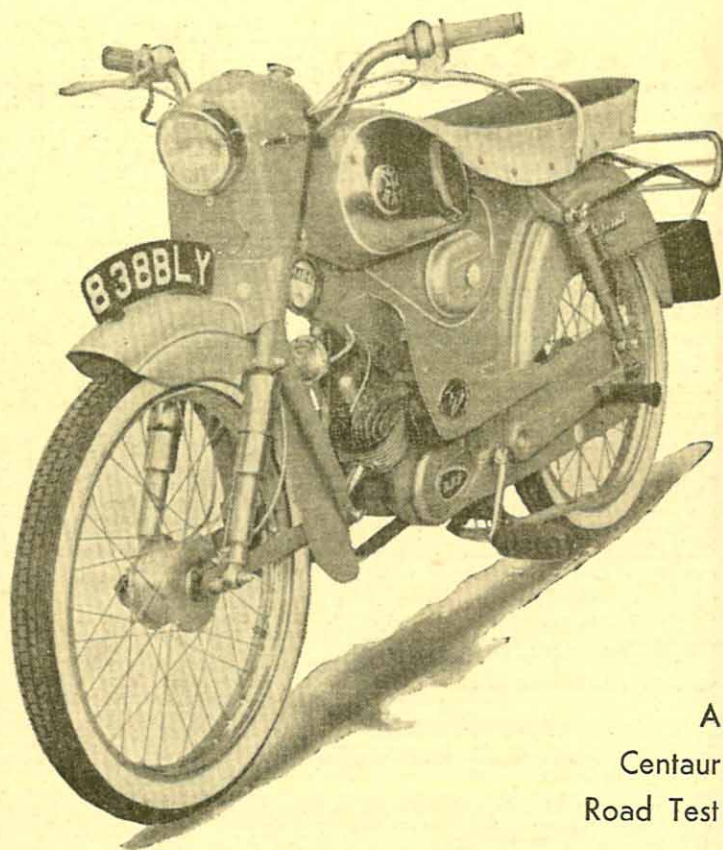
During that first ride I had little time to appreciate any of the RAP's finer points, but since then I have come to recognise it as a gentlemanly moped with above-average rider comfort and an impressive turn of both speed and acceleration.

As I get older I find that rider-comfort is of greater and greater importance. On journeys below ten miles, perhaps, most people may not detect the subtle differences but on a 20 or 30-mile trip these quickly become of major importance.

I found that despite the RAP's compact motorcycle design my 6ft. 1½in. were amply accommodated and I did not have to bend over the handlebars. Better still it was fitted with a dual seat which was both firm and comforting, spoiled only by a meaningless plastic strap. The front forks are of the relatively rare "Earles" design and are equipped with an even rarer device on a moped—an adjustable steering damper. As it was I found the RAP handled excellently as it stood, with or without a passenger, and I never found any use for the damper. The only faint criticism is that the fork mechanism was a little noisy at times.

The rear swinging arm suspension was an excellent compromise for one- and two-up riding and provided a Rock-of-Gibraltar sensation when ridden hard into a corner.

A further factor in connection with the ultimate comfort of rider and passenger was the silencer. The excellent and well-proved Frankfurt Topf unit reduces exhaust noise to a pleasurable minimum without any apparent loss of power to the engine. It is a pity that such a silencer design is not compulsorily fitted to every moped. They



A
Centaur
Road Test

would surely be less criticism about "popping two-strokes."

Apart from an inexplicable small pause in acceleration after an upward gear was engaged, I have nothing but praise for the RAP engine and gearbox. The gear ratios are sensibly chosen and second particularly impressed me as it allowed both a low non-snatch idling speed and 35 m.p.h. on the speedometer without any damaging over-revving.

Top speed was a fraction under 33 m.p.h., so that a rider can overtake most of the heavier vehicles on city roads. For an owner weighing less than my 220lb. top speed may well be more.

Hill-climbing was equally satisfactory and second had only to be used at the start of my 7/10th mile hill for the RAP to breeze up in a comfortable 1min. 44sec. On various other hills in and around London I used first gear fairly often when two-up, but I cannot recall a single instance where it was necessary when the machine was being ridden solo. Despite my frequent acceleration through the gears, and equally frequent starting and stopping my average fuel consumption was just a little under 130 m.p.g.

Although I have my reservations about the brakes they seemed to be in tune with the speed potential of the RAP. My criticisms are twofold. When I took over the moped there were under 800 miles on the clock and yet the front brake needed quite an appreciable amount of adjustment before it operated at top efficiency. The rear brake was always correctly adjusted and yet had a curious hard feel which I felt betokened possible wheel-locking after really hard application. As it was the braking was perfectly efficient and brought the RAP to an easy standstill in 11½ feet at 20 m.p.h.

Weather protection is excellent and both mudguards are deeply valanced. The chain is fully enclosed, a feature which is becoming more and more popular I am glad to see. The rear carrier is both strong and well-designed, and it is almost possible to carry a small case on it without any other securing. The centre stand is as good as I have seen on any moped and really supports the RAP even on a slight tilt.

"Tools" is hardly the word to describe the single plug-key with a couple of nut holes in the handle and a small screwdriver blade at the end. The latter unfortunately twisted when I attempted to rectify the gear-change fault on my first ride. There is, however, room for a few more oddments in a container in the centre of the frame which is held together by a sensibly-sized plastic finger nut.

I liked the solid-looking rubber pedals (which I never used apart from as kickstarts) and I thought the lighting above average. The tank is an intelligent 12-litre (approx. 2½ gallons) capacity.

In short the RAP is a speedy mount which hardly deserves the title of "moped" in view of the minimal amount of pedalling required in getting it around.

SPECIFICATION

Engine: Rex two-stroke; 40mm. bore X 39.5mm. stroke = 49c.c.

Gearbox: Three speeds: first, 29.4 to 1; second, 18.5 to 1; third, 15.6 to 1; pedal kick-start; cable-operated clutch. Final drive chain fully enclosed.

Frame: Rigid sheet steel design; "Earles" type front forks with adjustable damper, swinging arm rear.

Tank: 12 litres (approximately 2½ gallons).

Lights: Bosch 17 watt lighting coil built in with flywheel magnet generator feeding front and rear lights direct; dip control to headlamp.

Wheels and brakes: 23in. x 2in. x 2.25in. Vredestein white-wall tyres; both brakes in full-width alloy hubs, front cable-operated, rear back-pedal operated.

Equipment: Plug key and spanner screwdriver combined, speedometer, stand, rear carrier, dual seat and pillion footrests, integral tool-box.

Finish: Red / chrome, blue / chrome, grey/chrome.

Suppliers: R. S. Stekvis and Sons Ltd., Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

Price: £80 plus £16 purchase tax; total £96.



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TECHNICAL TOPICS

Centaur discusses some mechanical short-cuts

READERS of the RAP road test (CYCLING AND MOPEDS September 27) may well have been amazed to read that the machine could be accelerated to an indicated 35 m.p.h. This was in fact an error and should have read 25 m.p.h. However, it does allow this column to refer back to the RAP and note an interesting device which was not mentioned in the test.

As an aid to quick starting, a push-button on a ratchet is located on the twist-grip which allows the carburetter slide to be lowered more than usual, so that very little air is let into the carburetter, which gives a very rich mixture. When the twist-grip is returned to normal the cable slides past the ratchet which drops back into place, making it impossible for the carburetter slide to return to the low position without further depression of the button.

It works fantastically well and it is no exaggeration to say that every morning when this method of starting was employed, the engine started *first kick*, whatever the temperature. Like the Frankfurter Topf silencer and the Sachs quickly-detachable wheel, this device is one which advances the moped a step nearer perfection. Other manufacturers please note.