

# DO YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO DRIVE A MOTOR CAR ?

## PROLOGUE

*Not long ago, a high-spirited boy of 15 was before a juvenile court in the South of England for joy-riding. The car which he had appropriated from some street or car park had been driven adventurously and alarmingly at 60 or 70 miles an hour until a spill ended the escapade.*

*To safeguard the public against such irresponsibility the magistrates banned the boy from driving until he is 21.*



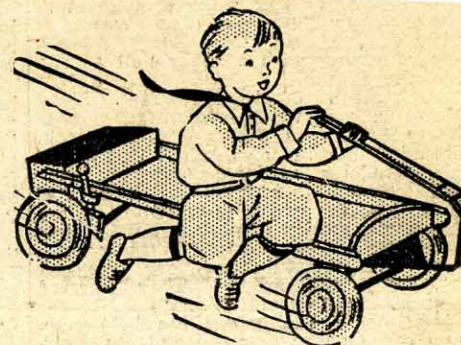
ONE day just before the schools broke up for their summer holiday, a sporty little two-seater "job" (as those who like to be colloquial and "knowy" find it pleasant to refer to motor cars) was running up and down imaginary streets which were well cluttered up, as are most of our town streets, with traffic signs, in one of the school playgrounds in the borough. Alternately, a boy and a girl of about 14 sat in the driving seat.

This was an experiment — the first locally—on the idea of providing for the young, by means of a motor vehicle in miniature, an approach to motoring which will make a proper sense of both the legal and ethical codes governing the use of mechanically propelled vehicles a matter of instinct when the times comes for them to have the control of vehicles on the King's highway.

## The Thing They Sigh For !

THE little car with which the experiment was conducted on behalf of the Doncaster Education Committee, is now being marketed in England and is being recommended to local education authorities by the makers for such use as this, and to well-to-do parents who can afford to spend £35 on a baby car on which their children can learn to drive in the grounds of their own homes.

The car is to all intents and purposes a replica of an ordinary tourer. Standard controls are provided according to current manufacturing practice.



*This sort of fun  
may soon be . .  
very tame . . .*

*Doncaster Gazette  
24th August 1939*



A one horse power two-stroke petrol-oil engine gives a maximum speed of eight to 10 miles an hour, and there is one forward speed and a reverse.

The car will run an hour on a pennyworth of fuel.

The weight is just under a hundredweight and a half, and weight distribution is such that it is well-nigh impossible to turn the vehicle over.

Like its modern grown-up brother, this little trainer has a steering column (steering is by direct drive, by the way) which is variable both for length and rake. To be able to lift the body clear of the chassis it is necessary to undo only a dozen nuts. The chassis then becomes a useful model for lessons on engine and chassis design.

With an open body seating two children side by side, shiny bumper bars back and front, black wheels and mudguards, and the whole appearance enhanced by chromium plated windscreen frame, radiator grill, hub caps and other parts, the car is just the sort of thing children sigh for. With one of these motoring will be the best lesson in the school curriculum.

So much for the car.

## A Lord's Committee Said . . .

A Select Committee of the House of Lords which inquired into road accidents, published opinions regarding the education of children in road safety which the makers of this trainer-car quote as follows :

It is obvious that one of the most important of remedial measures lies in the education of children. Their minds are more malleable and receptive than the mind of the adult. Young children should be so thoroughly grounded at home in good road behaviour that it becomes automatic on their part.

Instruction in road safety should later form part of the school curriculum, which should include talks by the police, safety-first films and posters, and experiments with model traffic lights and pedestrian crossings.

Education of road users should also be thorough in private and in public schools. The conduct of all classes of adults who have been educated in road behaviour when young should gradually tend to make the whole population more "road-minded."

The Committee hope that the attention of those in charge of preparatory and public schools will be directed toward the consideration of this important problem.

Q UITE a long time ago now, the local authority in Doncaster, in conjunction with the police, took steps in the council schools to provide the training envisaged by this Select Committee. Members of the motor patrol section of the



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Borough Police Force gave safety-first lectures, and lectures on the duties and obligations of users of the road, whether pedestrians, cyclists or motor vehicle drivers. These lectures will be resumed again this winter, when use will no doubt be made of an admirably-devised observation test issued as a supplement to the " Child Safety " bulletin.

A bird's eye picture of a section of a town is reproduced, and 64 faults against the recommendations of the Highway Code are numbered. Children are told to specify the faults of which the particular vehicles and pedestrians are guilty, and to spot other faults which are not indicated.

In addition to the lectures which have been given in the schools, instruction has taken a practical form. In playgrounds miniature streets have been marked out and the multifarious traffic signs--robots and all--have been provided, and the school children have been given object lessons in conducting themselves properly both as pedestrians and cyclists.

Further, children have been made to pass a cycling test before being allowed to take their cycles on to school premises, and such has been the good effect of the road sense and road manners which Doncaster's cycling scholars have acquired that many of them show more appreciation of safety principles and more consideration than many of their elders.

All very commendable.



## Is This As Commendable?

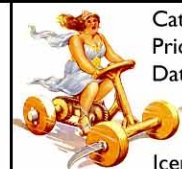
NOW someone is evidently thinking of the possibilities of teaching our schoolchildren to drive cars. What would this tuition achieve? Children would acquire road sense and know how to control a power-propelled vehicle at an age which would make these things matters of instinct in years to come, the makers of the trainer-car claim, and one can readily see that this would be the case.

While the Lords Select Committee emphasise the importance of making road-minded and make certain recommendations, they do not, however, actually recommend that children should be made road-minded by being taught to drive cars.

Road sense, rather than the technical knowledge of how to manage a mechanically-propelled vehicle, is the all-important thing, and experience in the Doncaster schools has shown that road sense can be conveyed without putting children at the wheel of a car in miniature.

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MORE important, perhaps, than the question: Would this tuition achieve something desirable? is the question: Would it produce anything that is undesirable?

One of the problem cases of panels of magistrates for juvenile offenders is that of car-crazed boys of 14, 15 and 16—and sometimes younger even than 14—boys in whom the desire for the exhilaration of speed from power has developed several years before they are legally entitled to drive a car.

The problem is not one which concerns juveniles alone: quite a number of those there are who have reached the age at which they can obtain a driving licence in whom the car-craze can have no outlet other than through illicit joyriding.

Would the appetite for these illicit thrills, either in those who are under 17 or in those who are over, be whetted by teaching them to “play at motors” when they are 14 or less?

This is a question which should be well pondered before an authority encourages the children for whose education they are responsible to become car-minded at an age at which there will not be, for several years, a legal outlet for satisfying desires which may very well be created in them for the real thing.



### EPILOGUE

Anyhow, we have this comforting thought: if we do teach our schoolchildren how to drive cars, at least we can expect that the joy-riders of to-morrow will know how to handle the cars they commandeer every bit as well as the speed cops who are chasing them; and, less comforting thought, they may thereby be all the better able to show a clean pair of back tyres to the pursuing wheels of the law.

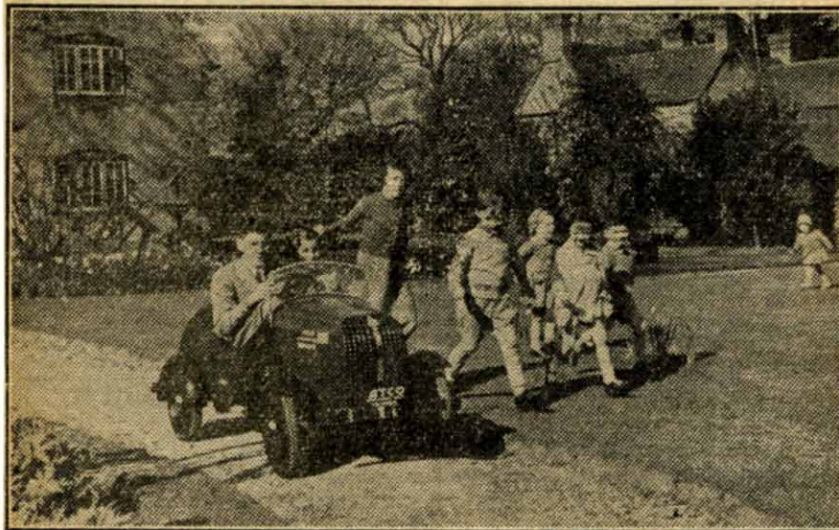
S. Houghton



24 Août 1939

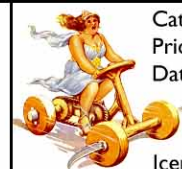
## UNE ÉDUCATION MODERNE

**Pour habituer les enfants aux difficultés de la circulation, on les fait circuler sur une automobile minuscule qu'ils conduisent**



A CHACUN SON TOUR DE PILOTER LA PETITE AUTOMOBILE

*L'Argus de l'Automobile  
24th August 1939*



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### EXEMPLE A SUIVRE

Les deux scènes d'éducation moderne dont nous publions ci-dessous les photographies n'ont pas, hélas ! été prises en France.

C'est en Grande-Bretagne et en particulier dans la région de Birmingham que des éducateurs avisés se sont mis en rapport avec un industriel qui a construit une automobile minuscule qui a nom « Atco ». Cette auto possède un moteur miniature placé à l'arrière de la voiture. Sa puissance est de 1 cheval. C'est un deux temps à refroidissement par air, équipé d'un ventilateur.

Deux enfants peuvent s'asseoir côte à côte. Celui qui conduit dispose des deux pédales classiques d'embrayage et de frein et celle d'accélération. Le levier des vitesses est au centre. Enfin, le prix est de 35 livres, soit environ 6.300 francs.

Tel est l'amusant petit engin dont se servent plusieurs écoles. Le fabricant de la petite auto a adopté le slogan suivant : « Apprenez-les à conduire quand ils sont jeunes. »

Verrons-nous pareil engin en France, dans des institutions modernes ?

(Documents C.H. Pught Limited, Whitworth Works, Birmingham 9, Grande-Bretagne.)



ESSAI PRATIQUE : PIETONS, PASSAGE CLOUTÉ ET UN « USAGER »