

ROAD TEST REPORT:

Next step from a moped? The B.S.A. 125 c.c. BANTAM



AS some readers will remember, a few years ago a series of column advertisements appeared in *Power & Pedal* headed by the words "But It's a Motor Cycle!" and then going on to counter the surprise at its appearance in a scooter journal. This was completely logical, although many people take it for granted that mopedists graduating to larger machines should turn to scooters there is no rule about it and the light, cheap motor cycle may well be the appropriate next step.

The machine we have just tested is one of the best known motor cycles in the world and has been on the roads for many years in basically the same form, but the current model is quite modern in appearance and specification. This is the 125 c.c. *Bantam D.1*. It has a single tube loop frame with telescopic front forks and plunger rear suspension a

3-speed engine/gear unit with foot change and 2.75-inch tyres on 19-inch wheels. In its de luxe form as tested the specification includes battery lighting, dual seat and pillion footrests. In its simplest form with single seat and direct lighting the *Bantam* costs £108 17s. 9d. including P.T.

Controls differ from those on most scooters in that the gear change is by positive stop foot change lever kicked up for upward changes and down for down, while the footbrake pedal is on the left side. The kickstarter is on the offside. The silencer is demountable for decarbonisation.

Very Handy

For an ex-moped rider there is rather less difference in the feel of the *Bantam* than there would be in changing over to a scooter. The large wheels and the tank between the knees feel natural, the light weight (180 lbs. makes for easy manhandling and the central stand is easy to operate and quite firm standing, even

The trim lines of the Bantam are known the world over. Note unfussy handlebars and wide dual seat



on a camber.

Starting was easy and certain throughout the test. With the choke closed from cold or open when warm or hot, a first kick start was usual. Compression is moderate and no physical effort is needed to swing the engine over, but the kickstarter is so placed that the rider's toe meets the footrest just before the end of the kickstarter swing, a minor nuisance.

The clutch is light and smooth in take-up, the engine picks up well and no finesse is needed to get away smartly. The engine likes revs and the lower gears should be used fully to get best performance, but the unit is flexible enough to trickle along at 15 m.p.h. in top gear without snatch if traffic conditions demand. Designed as a genuine utility machine the *Bantam D.1* has no pretensions in the direction of high power output but it does a useful job without fuss.

Maximum one way speed under favourable conditions was a little under 50 m.p.h. but the best mean speed obtained, under windy conditions, was 42 m.p.h. Second gear proved extremely useful both in traffic and for climbing and 30 m.p.h. in this gear was smooth and comfortable.

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: Two-stroke single, 52mm. x 58mm., capacity 123 c.c. compression 6.5 to 1. Amal carburettor.
TRANSMISSION: Primary and secondary drives by chain, 3-plate clutch, 3-speed gearbox, ratios: 7.0, 11.7 and 22 to 1.
FRAME: All-welded single tube cradle type, telescopic front forks, enclosed plunger springs at rear. Dual seat and pillion footrests (£4 3s. 6d. extra).
WHEELS: 18-inch rims with 19-inch

x 2.75-inch tyres, 5-inch internal expanding brakes.
ELECTRICS: Wipac 6-volt, 30-watt magneto/generator, twin-filament headlamp bulb 24-24 watt. pilot bulb, illuminated speedometer dial, stop and tail lamps, electric horn.
PRICE: With battery lighting, dual seat and pillion footrests as tested, £117 19s. 4d.
WEIGHT: 180 lbs.
MAKERS: B.S.A. Motor Cycles, Ltd. Birmingham 11.

By scooter standards the exhaust is rather noisy although this appeared more so to the rider than to an observer on the pavement, probably because scooter engines are below and behind the rider and enclosed. No appreciable mechanical noise was noticed and the transmission is commendably quiet.

Gear changing is quick and easy but the small knob on the end of the lever made itself felt through the leather of an ordinary walking shoe rather uncomfortably. It is almost impossible to miss a gear and there is no difficulty about engaging Bottom at a standstill. Brakes are smooth, light to operate and adequate for the machine's performance.

Although sprung at both ends the *Bantam* seemed to feel major bumps quite a lot. The plunger type rear springing has only two inches of movement, enough to help to get good road holding but not making much difference to rider comfort. Against that, however, the dual seat is something that most scooter makers could study to advantage. It is big, well shaped and very comfortable indeed. Steering, despite the anti-scooter bias of most motor cyclists, differed little from that of a good scooter except that the machine could be cranked over on corners farther than scooter footboards would permit and, therefore, cornered somewhat faster. Hands off riding felt safe and comfortable at anything over 20 m.p.h. and the machine has a solid feel about it surprising in view of its light weight.

The battery lighting is first class and is something that all scooters should have. The battery itself is rather small and parking would run it down fairly quickly but the 30-watt magneto generator provides ample current for all road needs and the driving light from the headlamps is excellent. All this and a really bright stop-light too, for less than £5 is something that even many mo-ped owners would pay for cheerfully.

Comparison

So far as the readers of this journal are concerned the object of the test is to compare the *Bantam* with the average 125 c.c. scooter as a means of transport. To do this it should really be priced with legshields in addition to the specification as tested which would bring the total figure to £120 1s. 1d. At this price it certainly offers very good value for money.

On the counts of lighting, seating and accessibility the *Bantam* is a better proposition than most scooters anywhere near its price range, but it

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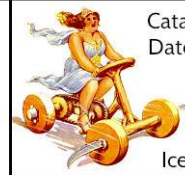
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... add that I look forward to reading *Power and Pedal* every month very much.

G. MELLOR

Rotherham.

(Bantam Road Test, continued)

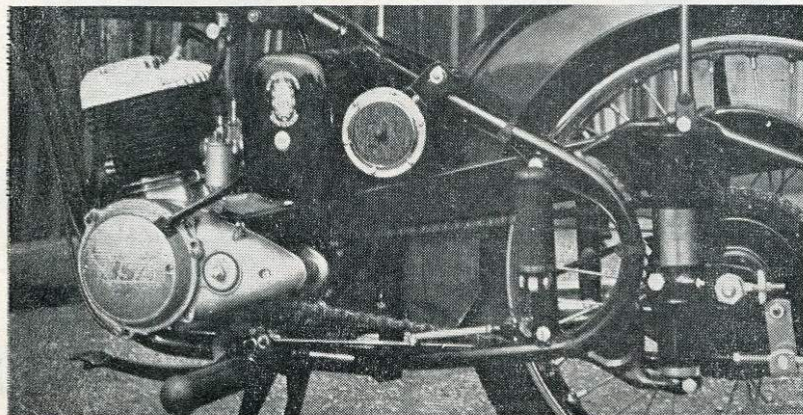
offers less weather protection (even with legshields), more noise and has an exposed rear chain that requires maintenance. All round performance is about the same as that of a similar sized scooter, suspension is not quite so comfortable but road holding and handling are very good.

In appearance the machine is attractive and the quality of finish is high. There is more to clean than a scooter's panels but it is easy to get at. Women can ride motor cycles in skirts but they cannot mount and dismount with dignity and grace by

cocking a leg over a highish seat, which is a disadvantage for everyday use.

For the male rider wanting a ride-to-work machine that is capable of longer range work on occasions, is mechanically sound and cheap to buy and run, the *Bantam* has many attractions that include a famous name and worldwide spares and service facilities.

Easy access to engine and chain adjustment are two good points of the Bantam. Note the plunger-type rear suspension



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