

THE RALEIGH AUTOMATIC

Centaur examines the fast and stylish moped from Nottingham in a new-style series of road tests

A NEW series of road tests begins with this article on the Raleigh moped, in which we hope to bring you a more general, even more practical picture of a machine's capabilities. As you will probably have noticed the performance data is no longer a separate feature but is incorporated in the text. Whereas in the past fuel consumption figures have been obtained with a consumptometer over set distances they will now be made during the complete duration of the test period.

The Raleigh Automatic is no doubt the moped many people have been waiting for. Equipped with an automatic clutch and bearing the Raleigh crest it offers a distinct temptation to those hardy patriots who have held out from buying such a machine until it was available from a British company, even though a small plate riveted to the top of the forks proclaims that it has been built under licence from Motobecane of France.

How good is the new Raleigh? Apart from a few niggling faults, it is, to this writer, a splendid buy which may well amaze owners of former models from this marque who have become accustomed to a simpler machine offering a somewhat more rugged ride.

It Looks Right

There's an old saying that if it looks right, then the chances are that it is right. The new Raleigh certainly looks right and sitting on the saddle for the first time will probably cause the rider to say that it feels right. I am a tall person and frequently have to bend over the handlebars of more squat mopeds. On the Raleigh, however, the "cowhorn" bars were in just the right place and the widely flared brake levers were easy to reach. Both these are important points for someone like me, who does much traffic riding. Well-placed steering means no aching back at the end of the day while well-placed brakes might mean the difference between hitting the car in front and not hitting it.

The saddle is a cross between a dual seat and the more conventional type, but as such fails to take advantage of either design. It is neither well-sprung nor commodious and I think on a journey of over 50 miles, these facts would make themselves felt.

The engine is the familiar Mobylette power unit, already well-known for its willingness and lack of complaint, and it gave me a top speed of 31 m.p.h. and a fuel consumption figure of 120 m.p.g. It bore me comfortably round London which, contrary to Northern opinion, does not merely consist of flat roads. It was, in fact, the ideal "traffic dodger" moped engine and I found myself negotiating the great

and complex streams of vehicles in the Hammersmith area with enthusiasm. The bus journey from the office to my flat normally takes at least 20 minutes. The Raleigh reduced this to seven or eight minutes.

I was converted to the automatic clutch before I met the Raleigh and I find that there is nothing lacking in this department. If I let it, the engine would pull me away from a standing start without any assistance. In view of my 220lbs., I thought it advisable to give some help with pedals and found that a couple of turns produced a start swift enough for any moped. Even on the 1 in 10 test hill no pedalling was needed.

My only grumble at this point was that it seemed to take the clutch some time to engage when starting from cold, and I often found myself pedalling hard over distances of sixty to a hundred yards before the engine fired. This may be due to some lack of adjustment on the clutch, a fault which any dealer would see to if the machine were returned immediately after purchase.

I found the brakes, which operate in full width hubs, first class. Apart from being well positioned, they had the power to bring me to a tyre-screaming halt, and frequently did so during my "traffic dodging." In fact, I could pull up in 12ft. from 20 m.p.h. or 35ft. from top speed. I particularly liked the fine adjusters in easy reach on the brake levers. I am not afraid of getting dirt under my fingernails, but I thoroughly applaud a system which makes this unnecessary when tightening up the brake-cable.

Good Roadholding

There is no rear springing but I did not find this particularly noticeable for, apart from the comfort angle, the machine handled well when banked over on a maximum speed corner, when the sturdy-looking front-forks are a distinct advantage. I do not remember their bottoming at any point—and there are quite a few devastating bumps going over Hammersmith Bridge. At all times they behaved perfectly—soft enough to iron out corrugations and firm enough to give good handling characteristics.

My major criticism concerns a point which is not found on the Raleigh alone. The throttle twist-grip, when reversed, operates another cable which depresses the decompressor. This means that there is no damping down action on the throttle return spring, and thus when right hand is taken from the grip to signal the engine shuts off. This certainly complicates manoeuvres and some nicety of judgement is required to ensure that the moped will continue to coast to a turn while the signalling arm is still out. I would very much like to see an improvement here.

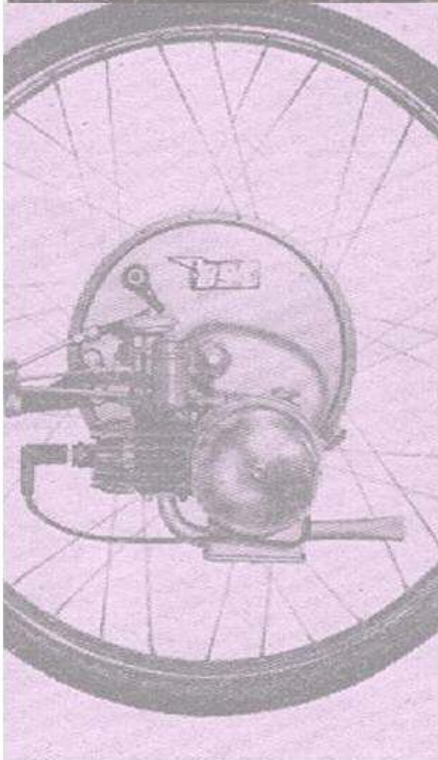
But I enjoyed my miles on the Raleigh and I would not like to end on a note of carping criticism. Let me commend, for instance, what looks like a fairly comprehensive tool-kit, wrapped in a stout canvas hold-all and carried in an easily accessible blister box beneath the saddle. The blister box has a twin at the other side of the moped which can be used to carry spare plugs, a cleaning rag, etc. It was with pleasure too, that I noted the care taken in routing the cables in an unobtrusive manner, thus improving the general lines of the machine.

The Raleigh is a good, trim moped, with performance to match its looks. For anyone who has been teetering on the brink of buying a British "automatic" it seems an obvious choice.

SPECIFICATION

Engine: Raleigh RM4; 39mm. bore x 41.8m.m. stroke = 49.85c.c.; effective power 1.39 b.h.p. at 4,500 r.p.m.	tyres; 4in. diam. rear brake, 3½in. diam. front in full width alloy hubs.
Gearbox: Fully automatic clutch, 13.8 to 1 ratio; pedal start; grease nipple on clutch shaft; lever on pulley renders engine independent of cycle.	Equipment: Comprehensive tool kit, in twin tool boxes, pump, number plates, stand.
Frame: Pressed steel construction, rigid rear end, telescopic front forks.	Finish: Charcoal and pearl grey.
Tank: 1½ gallon, including half-pint reserve.	Weight: 90lb.
Lights: Direct lighting from fly-wheel magneto generator, 6v. 15w. front, 6v. 3w. rear.	Manufacturers: Raleigh Industries Ltd., Lenton Boulevard, Nottingham.
Wheels and Brakes: 23in. x 2in.	Price: £49 17s. 6d. plus £10 19s. 5d. tax, total £60 16s. 11d.
	Extras: Speedometer £2 0s. 6d., legshields £3 9s. 6d., wind-screen £3 9s. 6d., panniers £2 11s. per pair.

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