

ROAD TEST REPORT**The VINCENT "FIREFLY"**

It has become increasingly difficult to make objective assessments of attachment engines because of the competition of built-in-one-piece light autocycles which set high standards, not so much in performance, as in comfort, silence, appearance and ease of handling. This is particularly true of the high performance types of which the Vincent *Firefly* is definitely one. The unit we have just tested has been improved since our last report was published eighteen months ago, but the improvements are less noticeable now than they would have been then.

Low speed pulling is definitely better and both climbing and acceleration are of a high standard. The ability of the engine to maintain 25-30 m.p.h. for long spells on undulating main roads remains its best feature. The tank filler-cap is more accessible than on the earlier models and the engaging gear more positive in action. The silencer too, was more efficient and less "tinny" sounding than of yore, although the *Firefly* still cannot be called a quiet machine.

At really low revs, up to 6/7 m.p.h., the power fell off sharply and hills of worse than one in ten called for more leg work than we liked, but above this figure the range of power was effective right up to the mean maximum of just a trifle under 30 m.p.h. A favourable grade or wind would see the top speed well above 30, but we found ourselves cutting back almost unconsciously whenever this happened, to reduce noise and vibration. Vibration on the over-run at anything over 25 m.p.h., was enough to be disturbing although no apparent damage resulted and we could find nothing loose, except the carburettor top which worked

loose several times in the course of the test.

The general performance and the 5-pint petrol tank suggest, as we have remarked before, that the unit was designed mainly for longish distance main road cruising and this impression was borne out in the course of test. At about half throttle a speed of around 22-25 m.p.h. could be maintained indefinitely with ample power reserves in the engine and complete comfort on the part of the rider.

At this speed the exhaust is not unduly loud and the note quite pleasant to the rider's ear, but at higher revs, both exhaust and mechanical noises became obtrusive.

Some at least of the latter seemed to be exaggerated by the resonance of the new-shaped fuel tank as it was noticeably worse when the tank was under half full, but the whine appeared to originate in the gear drive to the roller.

This geared roller with its integral "cush-drive" grips the tyre cleanly and firmly without having to be squashed hard into the tread. In wet weather the slip was negligible and in dry there was none at all. The advantage of this, freedom to use all the power available all the time, was much appreciated and even more so was the fact that the tyre could be run at a reasonable pressure for comfort and safety without loss of performance. On the wrong side is the engagement control by cable and lever which, although lighter and more positive than on the machine previously tested, was still too heavy for comfort under continuous use in traffic, and even so provided very little clear movement so that the roller sometimes touched the tyre when it should have been free.

Most interesting design feature

of the *Firefly* is the ignition system which embodies an A.6. generator in the roller drive gear and has its high tension coil separately mounted in a recess in the bottom of the tank. In terms of results this system pays off well. The low speed spark is a perfect beauty and it is this that guarantees a start within a few feet in any weather. The generator also affords ample lighting current over its full speed range with no blacking out on corners.

In appearance the unit earns high marks for finish, but the test unit leaked oil at several points. Ground clearance can never be good on the under-bracket engines but in this case the only thing that could sustain damage by grounding is the comparatively expendable silencer.

The test unit was fitted to a *Phillips* cycle with the well-known re-inforced front forks, oversize tyres and hub brakes. It handled well and comfortably, both cruising fast and wiggling through traffic, and the brakes proved quite exceptionally smooth and nice to use. The advantages of the "clip-on" were well demonstrated in heavy traffic conditions when the simple act of releasing the engagement lever left a normal handy cycle with the light, low hung engine quite unnoticeable. We are, however, of the opinion that open frames are preferable for cyclemotor work because of the ease and safety of mounting when wearing full length top clothing.

To sum up, the Vincent *Firefly* is a very good example of the under-bracket attachment unit that is specially suitable for serious, mainroad travel. So long as there is a market for attachment engines this one will command a leading position for its good performance and interesting and practical design.

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