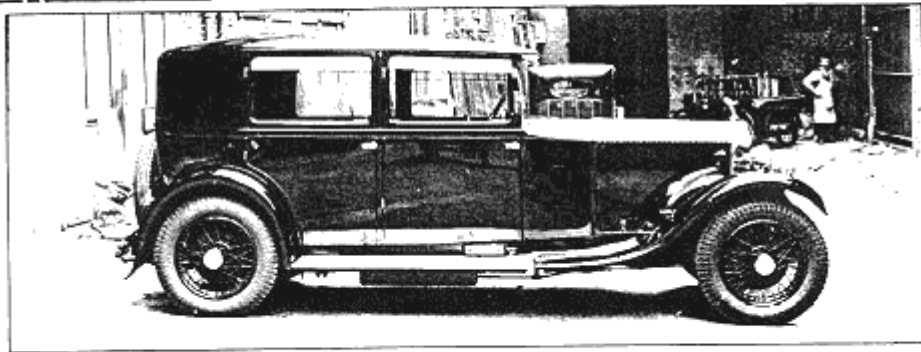


Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia Library

May 29th, 1931.

The Autocar

The AUTOCAR ROAD TESTS



The illustration above indicates the size, in feet, of the 25 h.p. Rolls-Royce saloon

No. 644 (Post-War Series).—25 h.p. ROLLS-ROYCE SALOON

IT is one of the strongest possible tributes to the Rolls-Royce that, much as one expects of it in advance, the fulfilment of those expectations because of testing the car is more complete than would be deemed possible.

The driver who has never handled a Rolls-Royce is likely to want to know wherein it differs from the general run of motor cars. That is a point it is impossible to deal with adequately in few words, but the principal impressions concern the extreme delicacy of control, the amazing flexibility on top gear, the silence and quality of the acceleration, and the fact that the engine is as quiet and smooth when the car is travelling at the maximum as it is at lower speeds. In addition, none of the hand controls requires more than the pressure of two fingers and the braking system is probably as near perfection as it is possible to attain.

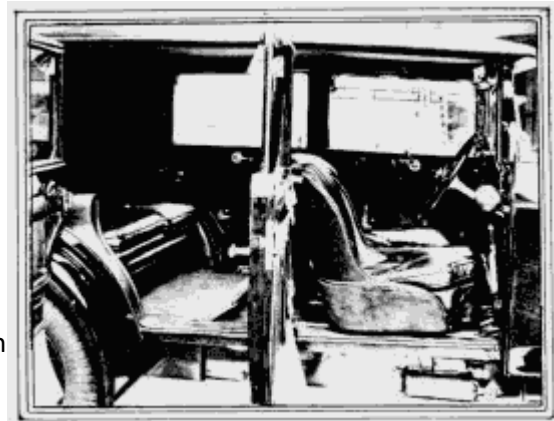
First, the flexibility of the engine: it is the normal and recommended practice to start the car from rest on third gear, which is affected without opening the throttle at all wide; and starting away on top on the level is possible without any suggestion that the clutch is being abused, so smoothly is the drive taken up. Top gear having been engaged, the car will run on that ratio almost the whole time, with a degree of flexibility that is unbelievable without trying the car, for it is possible to throttle down the engine to pull smoothly at so low a speed that the next stage is for the car to stop altogether. It is a feature of the acceleration that it is clean and free from trace of a flat-spot.



Thus, there is ordinarily very little need for a gear box, first speed being regarded purely as an emergency ratio and second as a gear for restarting on a gradient. But it is typical of the car that the gear change, when used, is delightful to handle, since the lever is exceedingly light to move. There is no suggestion of strong locking springs, yet the teeth can be felt with the utmost sensitiveness. There is an arrangement whereby the gear lever is automatically centred in the gate when in neutral position.

One of the most striking things is that as the throttle is opened and the car accelerated, the driver is unusually conscious of the sound of air rushing against the windscreen as speed is gathered - so unobtrusive is the engine that it cannot be felt during acceleration. Another interesting point is to judge the speed and then refer to the speedometer to check the estimate; in spite of practice with many other machines it is possible to underestimate the figure by as much as 6 to 8 m.p.h.

It is the manner of the car's behaviour which charms and its instant obedience to the driver's every wish as expressed through the controls, but the important point is that there is all the performance most owners can possibly want, for the average at which the Rolls-Royce can be driven comfortably is so much higher in proportion to the maximum than with the majority of ordinary cars, owing to the absence of sense of mechanical effort. Furthermore, as a matter of interest, 50 m.p.h. can be reached on third gear, 35 on second and 21 on first speed, and, although the gear teeth are of straightforward type, nothing above a faint, pleasing hum can be heard on any of the indirect ratios.



The steering is light and the thin-rim wheel comfortable to hold; there is exactly the right caster action and only occasionally, on poor surfaces, can the slightest movement of the road wheels be felt through the steering wheel itself. The brake operation is assisted by the Rolls-Royce mechanical servo, of course, but apart from the fact that the action is very light the driver is not conscious of the servo, since the shoes can be felt as the pedal is depressed; the braking instantly affords the greatest confidence.

On this car the suspension, with the special double-acting hydraulic shock absorbers, was set to provide an excellent compromise between the needs of what can be termed town carriage work, when softness at low speed is essential, and stability for fairly fast running on the open road. Greater stability is a question of further damping alone, at the sacrifice of a degree of the remarkable comfort at ordinary speeds, which would have the effect of making the car steadier on bends taken at speed, the softer setting allowing some roll.

As to the coachwork, little need be said, since the bodies fitted to Rolls-Royce chassis are invariably a question of individual choice. The body of the 25 h.p. car tested was a metal-panelled Mulliner Weymann four-door, four-light saloon, affording plenty of leg room and having, at the front, two separate and easily adjustable seats of a particularly comfortable type.

The grouped special instruments are indirectly lighted and among them is a fuel tank gauge of the hydrostatic level type. Also, there is an engine thermometer. The single-panel screen is made to open on this car and has two separate electric wipers.

All through the engine and chassis are exceptionally interesting points of design and, apart altogether from the performance, the detail work shows that wonderful care and forethought, and excellence of material and workmanship, which, in combination, help to explain why no other name has exactly the same meaning as Rolls-Royce to initiated and uninitiated the world over.

An example of characteristic forethought is the spare magneto, already in position and timed, which can be brought into operation in a matter of seconds in the unlikely event of the coil ignition system failing. All the engine components are remarkably accessible, while everything is beautifully finished, and the wiring and junction and fuse boxes are typical.

Beneath the bonnet also are the vacuum tank for the fuel feed and the reservoir for the centralised system of chassis lubrication. The latter is applied to certain bearings on the chassis, each bearing receiving a supply of lubricant graduated according to its needs, but is not extended to the axles, where relative movement between the axles and the frame might produce a breakage in one of the pipelines. Instead, on each axle is a single accessible nipple, to which lubricant is supplied in the ordinary way; thus, all the axle units, including brake and steering gear parts, are supplied from two points.

The brake adjustments, both back and front, are remarkably accessible, consisting of individual settings for each drum. The shoes for each wheel are compensated individually.

The radiator shutters are controlled by hand from the instrument board and provide a very sensitive means of regulating the engine temperature. In the instrument panel is a red tell-tale which lights up to give warning when a temperature of 95°C is reached, should the driver have forgotten to open the shutter control to the normal running position.

The Rolls-Royce has fascination beyond measure; every single feature spell durability, and the car possesses the modern performance: it is in the manner of delivering this performance that the machine is on a plane altogether superior to the normal style of motor car.

