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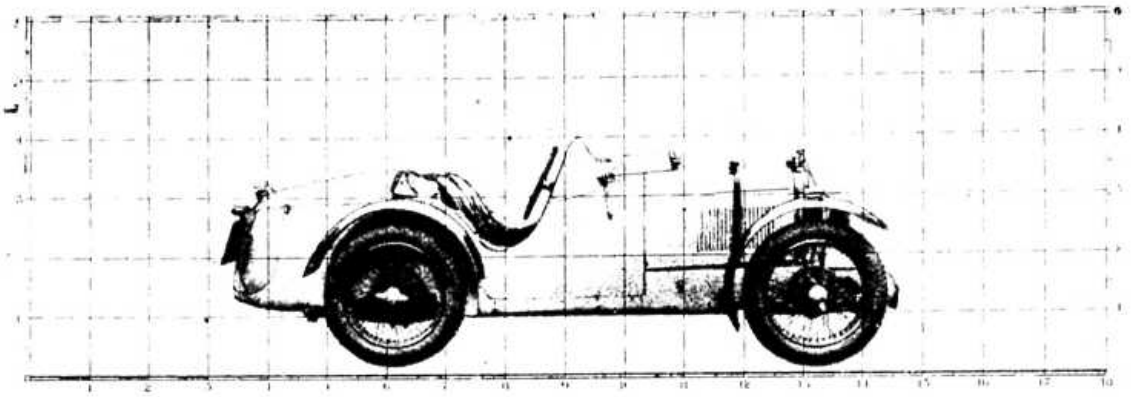
"THE AUTOCAR" ROAD TESTS



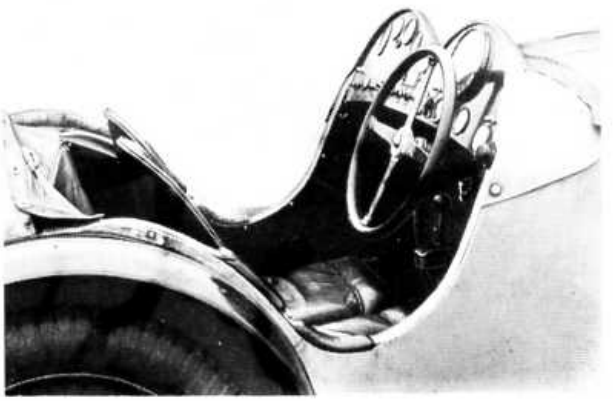
The illustration above represents the size, in feet, of the Montlhéry M.G. Midget two-seater

No. 678 (*Post-War Series*).—MONTLHERY M.G. MIDGET TWO-SEATER

WHATEVER one's experience of cars may be, there is a new thrill in handling the Montlhéry Mark II M.G. Midget, especially the supercharged model. It is not a question of how extremely well this small car goes, but, by contrast, how extraordinarily good is this car among cars as a whole. Apart altogether from the personal interest, great as that is, there exists as a background the fact that this particular model has become famous in about the shortest possible time on record, and has to its credit the winning of the three classic British races in 1931—two of them without being supercharged—as well as averaging over 92 m.p.h. for 500 miles in the last big race of the year. Few cars have achieved success so rapidly.

The point of the machine is that it is produced to be a competition car, and to that end is complete with every imaginable specialised fitting, and each machine is built individually and with an amount of painstaking hand workmanship of which the price of the complete car is a reflection.

The dimensions of the two-seater body conform to the international regulations, and one glance round the machine suffices to show that nothing need be added to enable one to take the car at once into a race. The instrument board has every conceivable gauge, the brakes can be adjusted while the car is moving, the back shock absorbers also; clip fillers are used for the radiator, fuel tank, and oil tank, the rear fuel tank is really usefully big, the bonnet has not to be lifted for oil replenishment since the tank in the scuttle supplies the engine as required, the wire mesh screen folds flat, there is a stone guard for the radiator, the wire wheels are of racing type, and the hand brake has a racing pawl mechanism.



It is extraordinarily interesting, first of all to test the car on Brooklands track for maximum speed and other data, and then to take it on the road for a long run. This impresses one forcibly with the fact that so many of the features at present regarded as racing practice are actually the best and most efficient for everyday work. For instance, nothing could be better than the big fuel tank, with its touring range of over 350 miles, the quick-acting filler caps, and the method of brake and shock absorber adjustment.

In spite of the fact that this is a proper competition car, there is nothing which makes the machine unsuitable for touring. The car, in fact, constitutes a concrete instance of the value of the developments that are encouraged by modern racing. The exhaust note means that one has to be careful in going through towns, but no trouble need be experienced with the authorities. One would not expect the slow running on top or even third gear to be good; but, in fact, no one interested in a car of this nature would want to make it run slowly on the higher ratios.

With touring plugs in the engine, all the speed that can be ordinarily used on the road is obtainable, and there was no suggestion of any plug oiling up, racing plugs being used only for the fast work on the track. As to the timed speed figure for the half-mile, it is obviously outside everyday requirements, yet is by no means a limit for the car as a type. It may be mentioned that the actual machine tested was one that ran unsupercharged in the Double-Twelve, and was a practice car for the Tourist Trophy, being an early example, used a good deal by all sorts of people. Something close on 90 m.p.h. is an amazing speed for a 750 c.c. car that is also a practical vehicle on the road; and for all its power the engine is remarkably smooth.

Apart altogether from the maximum, the car has

fascination beyond the measure of cold words, for it handles beautifully, is as steady as the proverbial rock, is comfortably sprung as well, possesses a gear change that is a delight in consistency, meaning that the same treatment produces similar results each time, has brakes which recorded the shortest stopping distance during the past twelve months, steers literally to an inch, almost irrespective of road surface, and has terrific acceleration.

Acceleration figures have not been taken for top and third gears for the reason already indicated, and that on second from 10 m.p.h. gives but the slightest impression of the capabilities. It is over the middle range of speed, say from 20 to 50, or 30 to 60, that the car literally shoots away, of course using the indirects, and in the circumstances something rather unusual may be introduced as conveying an idea of what the car can do. From a standing start, going through the gears, it is possible to reach 60 m.p.h. in 20⅘ sec. A normal limit for the engine is 5,500 r.p.m., and at that the equivalent road speeds on the indirects are 20 on first, 40 on second, and 60 m.p.h. on third. Far higher revs are possible, and during the test the engine held 5,750 r.p.m. on top gear, going actually to 6,200 when entering the timed section.

The car is compact, meaning that it can be slipped in and out of traffic with the greatest of ease, but the impression gained from the solid, steady feel is of a machine far bigger than the actual dimensions. The performance is a combination of opposing qualities. With the car once under way at a steady pace it is possible to climb most main-road hills on top gear, even accelerating up them, so considerable is the power developed; but the real joy of the machine lies in employing the indirects to the proper extent, and on a long run one finds one is maintaining in this way a steady speed, whether the road happens to be level, downhill, or ascending, all of which helps in giving a good average.

Of mechanical noise there is remarkably little, and except at quite low speeds the blower can scarcely be heard at all, while the exhaust possesses a remarkably satisfactory crackle to delight the ear of the enthusiast. Perhaps the most striking thing of all is that the car feels safe, so absolutely steady is it under all conditions, taking corners with very little diminution in speed, answering at once to the wheel, and never deflecting from the straight even when the brakes are applied hard. As another aspect of this machine—one able to win races, as has been amply demonstrated, and a practical touring car as well—there is the further point that it is perfectly capable of shining in a reliability trial, since first gear is low and there is sufficient power to take the car up the fiercest gradients. Further, the engine runs very cool.

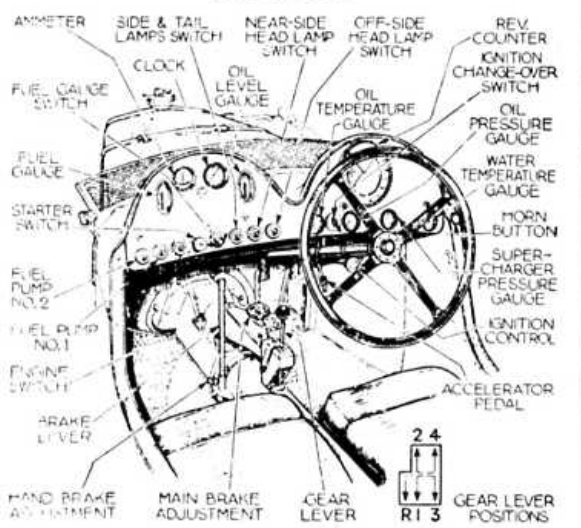
The equipment has already been mentioned—in fact, it is this which appeals, next to the performance. The instrument panel is entirely free from unnecessary decoration, and carries a most imposing array of dials and push-and-pull switches. Both ignition and fuel supply systems are duplicated. In view of the way in which the car can be used, it should be worth providing a speedometer and lighting for the instruments.

The bucket type seats give support exactly as they should, that for the driver being adjustable; accessibly behind the passenger's seat is the battery; behind the driver's seat is space for oddments and small baggage, whilst in the tail, where the spare wheel is carried, there is additional space. There is a hood of the type fitted to the larger-engined Midgets, which, with its supports, is also stored in the tail.

Starting from cold is easy when the carburetter has been flooded; the fuel used is an 80-20 per cent. mixture of benzole and petrol. Unsupercharged, the machine costs £490.

Using a much misused word, the Montlhéry Mark II M.G. Midget is unique—and is a development that is essentially British.

SUPERCHARGED MARK II MONTLHERY M.G. MIDGET TWO-SEATER



DATA FOR THE DRIVER

8 h.p., four cylinders, 57 × 73 mm. (746 c.c.).
Tax £8.
Wheelbase 6ft. 9in., track 3ft. 6in.
Overall length 11ft. 6in., width 4ft. 4in., height 4ft. 1in. (with windscreen raised).
Tyres: 27 × 4in. on detachable racing wire wheels.

Engine—rear axle gear ratios.	Acceleration from steady 10 to 30 m.p.h.	Timed speed over ½ mile.
21.5 to 1	—	
10.75 to 1	5 sec.	
7.3 to 1	—	
5.37 to 1	—	87.80 m.p.h.

Turning circle: 36ft.
Tank capacity 17 gallons; fuel consumption 27 m.p.g.
6-volt lighting set cuts in at 25 m.p.h., 4 amps. at 30 m.p.h.
Weight: 13 cwt.
Price, with sports two-seater body, £575.