THE SUPERC

Impressions After a Day With
Drove in the Mannin Beg

S. C. H. Davis at the wheel of G. E. T. Eyston's Magnette at Brooklands.

THE Magnette, with its 1,100 c.c. supercharged engine, is one of the most interesting cars that has been produced for some time, and is really one of the direct results that come from the Tourist Trophy type of race as opposed to the more spectacular but far more expensive product of Grand Prix racing.

Whether a supercharger is actually required for ordinary everyday use, whether, in fact, we should be better or worse if the supercharger had never been adopted for competition work, are questions it is not in the least necessary to discuss or to decide; but this at least can be said, that there is something alive, almost animal-like, wholly desirable, about the small, very fast little car with a supercharged engine, especially when it is being used for racing, and the very "feel" of the car, its tremendous pulling power, and its general fascination alone justify the existence of the type for anyone who realises that a car is something more than just a collection of machinery to carry one from place to place.

Individualism

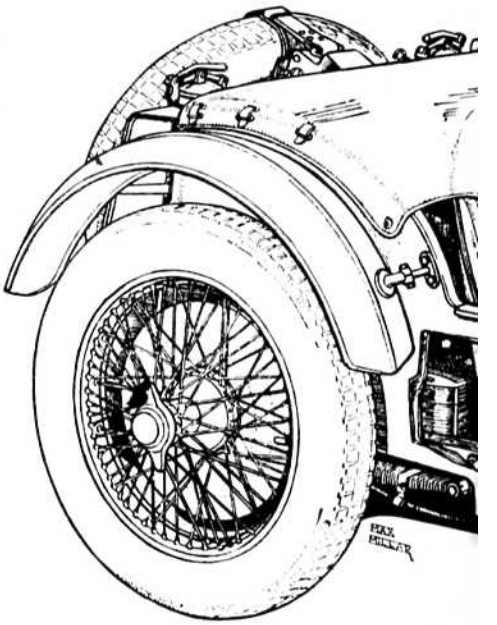
So long, therefore, as there are enthusiasts in the land, cars of this type will be developed and their development will lift motor car manufacture a little out of the set, and rather tiring, routine which is governed almost entirely by analyses of the cost of production. Be it noted that the Magnette is not, strictly speaking, a racing car, but will give you the joy of a racing car without the latter's expense, for a racing car of the true breed is designed on the drawing board from the very commencement and in every detail for one thing, and one thing only, speed, speed unlimited by considerations of expenditure, unhampered by the necessity of making the machine reasonably suitable for numerous purchasers. As it is, the speed that is possible with the Magnette varies with the purpose for which it is intended, but what can be done is shown by a lap speed of 115 m.p.h. recorded for one of these machines during a recent race.

The actual car which I drove had been Eyston's in the Isle of Man race, was, in fact, in the condition in which it was prepared for that race, with a low top gear of 4.89 to 1, with a starting motor, but without the battery and most of the other electrical equipment, since the starting motor was arranged to allow the battery to be in the pit and the connection to be made between it and the starting motor in the same fashion that we used to employ with old No. 1 six-cylinder Bentley in the "500."

"Not Easy to Handle" Rumours

Even without this equipment the car is not very light, a material fact when its performance has to be judged, and the performance was interesting, bearing in mind certain rumours that the car was not easy to handle and must necessarily be kept high on the banking. This proved so little true that, at its lap speed of 104.8 m.p.h., the car could be kept almost anywhere on the banking above the sixty-mile-an-hour line, and would actually cross the fork with ten or fifteen feet between it and the near side of the blue line without pulling out of a natural course.

Actually, the maximum reading on the rev counter, which, because of



wheel slip, is optimistic, meant 114 m.p.h., the probable actual maximum being between 108 and 110 m.p.h., at which speed the engine had the perfect note of a machine going easily at its best, which, at 6,200 r.p.m., is, to say the least, interesting.

Now, it is curious how cars differ, for not ten years have passed since a car of 1,500 c.c. felt, when lapping at over 100 m.p.h., a he-man's job, and

HARGED MAGNETTE

the Car Which George Eyston Race in the Isle of Man

by

S. C. H. DAVIS

it is a bare three since a lap at 110 with 1,100 c.c. was certainly like hard work, yet here was a car which seemed relatively as though it were lapping at 90 m.p.h. Unfortunately, a small difficulty with the revs-speed chart made it impossible to get some of the figures that I had wanted, for taking stop-watch readings from the rev counter of a racing machine is an extremely difficult job, and the faster the car the worse it becomes, with the result that the 10-30 m.p.h. acceleration times were obviously inaccurate.

This had its point of interest also, for the moment the engine really got hold on first the rev counter needle moved at such a pace that accurate timing on first gear was impossible, but on second, to give you some idea of the car's powers, it took 12⅕ sec. to change from 26 to 66 m.p.h. on third, while the most convincing run of all was from zero to 75 m.p.h. in 14⅗ sec. That showed where the self-changing gear comes in, for, by a little trick with the lever, one can select second while the car is ready to move off on first, and the run from gear to gear is altogether happy and beautiful.

Changing down brings in the controversy as to whether the effect of the self-change box is devastating for the transmission, and from what I tried I should say it might be if the driver took the drastic liberty of using second or first as an exceptionally violent transmission brake by engaging either gear at impossible engine revs. Anyhow, if one uses the throttle with the heel of the right foot while braking with the toe of that foot, and obeys the ordinary rev limit, the change down is not only lightning quick but quite smooth.

Advantages for Racing

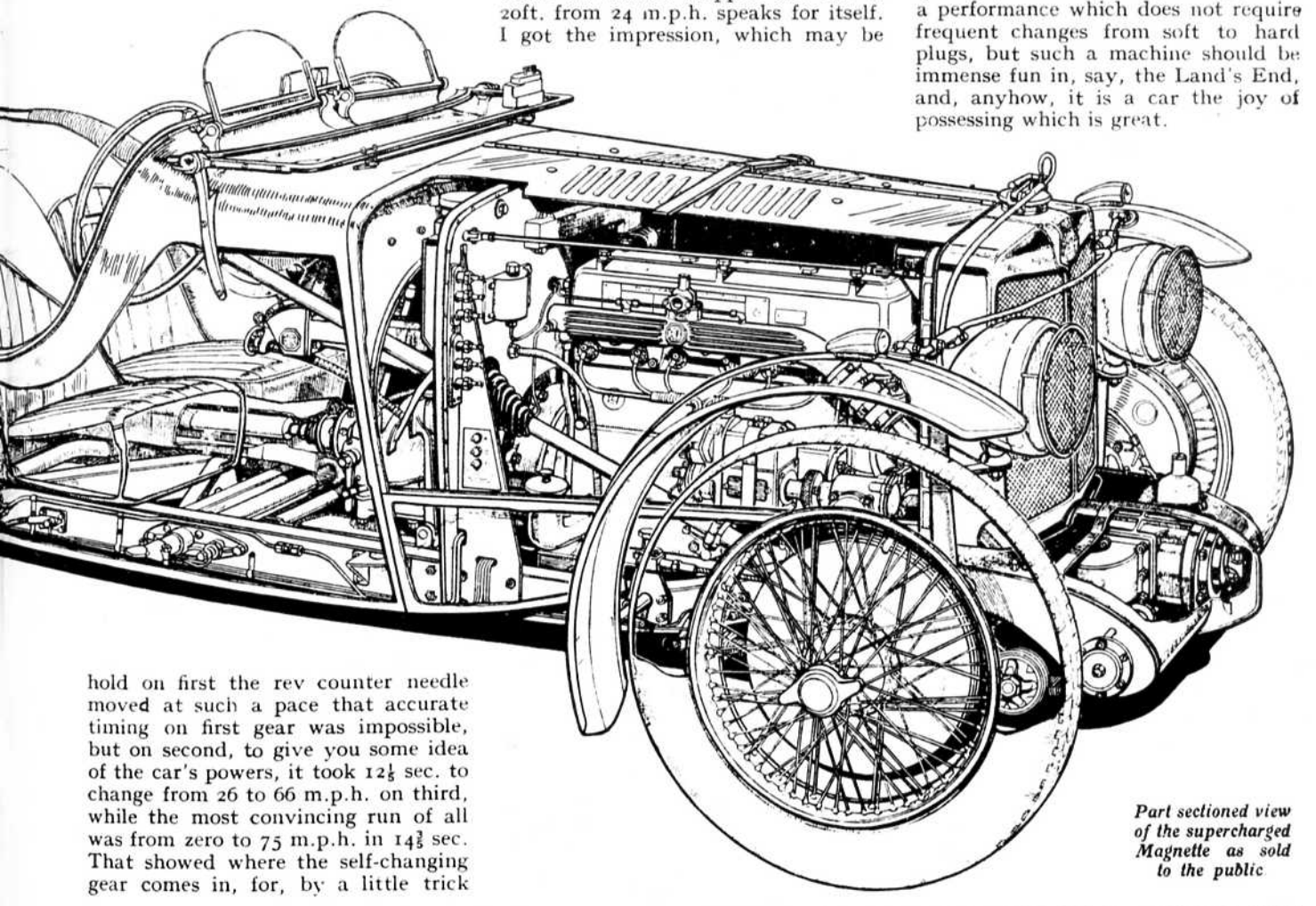
I have not the slightest doubt that the gear has great advantages for racing, and the only criticism I would make is an old one, in that I want the gear lever in a gate and not in an ordinary quadrant, especially when the lever has to be used quickly and often. That the brakes stopped the car in 20ft. from 24 m.p.h. speaks for itself. I got the impression, which may be quite wrong, that for road racing the car is a little heavy in front, and the steering slightly on the springy side, but that is an opinion given without being thoroughly accustomed to the machine, a thing which is necessary for accurate judgment.

Altogether it is a most fascinating little car, and I should think exceptionally interesting on a very twisty circuit. It is easy to drive, easier than most cars, and, because of the very smoothness of the engine, probably quite easy to over-rev.

Constant Performance

Certainly it is the sort of car which one would like in a long race most of all, and there's something to think about when you come to realise what reaching 75 m.p.h. from a standstill in under 15 sec. really means, remembering also that it is easier to repeat that performance on this car than on most, because of the gear change.

The ordinary version of the car, of course, includes lamps, wings, proper upholstery, and such-like touring requisites; obviously, also, that type has a performance which does not require frequent changes from soft to hard plugs, but such a machine should be immense fun in, say, the Land's End, and, anyhow, it is a car the joy of possessing which is great.



Part sectioned view of the supercharged Magnette as sold to the public