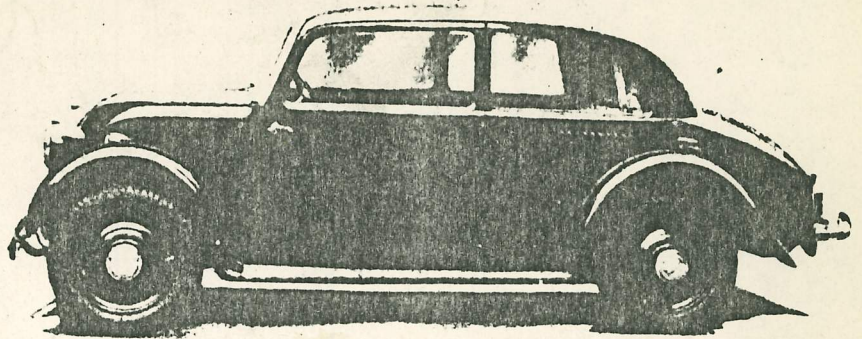


# The Autocar Road Tests

12 h.p.  
MERCEDES-BENZ  
SALOON  
No. 897 (*Post-War Series*)



**A Car Out of the Ordinary, With Independent Wheel Suspension and the Engine at the Rear**

ONE of the outstandingly modern designs among small cars, the rear-engined 1,300 c.c. four-cylinder Mercedes-Benz, is an exceptionally interesting car to try on the road and for its performance data, since it is practically a type on its own at the present time.

Its main features are a tubular backbone type of frame with no ordinary side-members, carrying the engine at its rear extremity, and independent suspension of all four wheels, the effect being finished off by a streamlined form of body which merits the term more than most so-called types.

It is so unlike other cars that in a comparatively short experience of it some part of the time is taken up by a process of mental re-adjustment to the differences, chiefly in feel, as compared with a normal small car. One of the principal points is that it does not give the impression of being a small car, and would do so still less if the "bonnet" ahead of the driver were longer.

One is not conscious of the engine, and can scarcely hear it. The effect at 45 to 50 m.p.h. is almost of gliding, an impression which is helped by the soft and extremely comfortable springing given by the independent suspension for all four wheels. With the car running at a round 50 you have the suggestion of a larger machine propelled as though by an invisible agency; it is not exactly that, but this seems to be a method of describing the effect.

The way in which the car will take bad stretches of road surface without any shock being felt, and without the body of the car being displaced noticeably, is altogether remarkable. It was found, too, that

on the worst parts of Brooklands, which can seriously disturb smaller cars at speeds between 50 and 60 m.p.h., the Mercedes-Benz floated over them as though the surface were normal.

There is a curious impression, less noticeable as one becomes used to the car, of a slight swaying motion, so

that the car does not appear to be following an absolutely straight course on a good main road; this is linked up perhaps with the suppleness of the springing, is more apparent than real, in all probability, and to some extent is accounted for by the unusually direct, quick-acting steering, which, however, is very light.

There is particular interest in the gear box, and in this connection the car again differs from general practice. There is a low emergency first gear, but on the level the car can be

started on second, and the next gear upward is the direct drive, intended for town running and acceleration. Fourth gear is termed an overtop, and is a geared-up indirect ratio. This is for faster running on the open road, to give the highest speeds of which the car is capable, at comparatively low engine speeds.

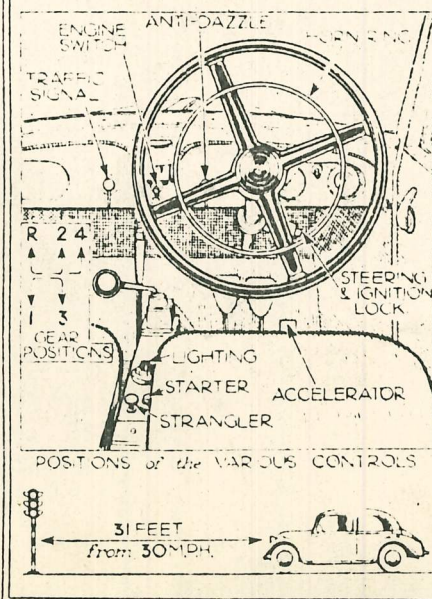
The movement of the gear lever is unusual: From first, when that gear is used, one passes across normally into second gear position, and comes back into third or direct drive. To engage the overtop, without the clutch pedal being touched the gear lever is moved sideways and forward, the throttle is released momentarily, and a synchromesh action brings in the overtop without any further movement being necessary by the driver. To re-engage direct drive the lever is pulled straight back from the overtop position, the

**12 h.p. MERCEDES-BENZ REAR-ENGINED SALOON**  
**DATA FOR THE DRIVER**

12:15 h.p., four cylinders, 70 85 mm. (1,308 c.c.).  
Tax £13 (1935, £9 15s.).  
Tyres: 4.75 17in. on bolt-on steel disc wheels.  
Engine—rear axle gear ratios. Acceleration from steady speed. Timed speed over 1 mile.

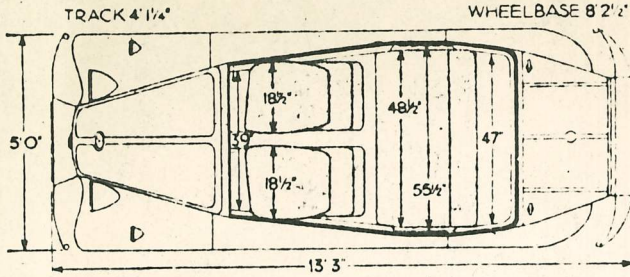
ratios.	10 to 30 m.p.h.	20 to 40 m.p.h.	30 to 50 m.p.h.	over 1 mile.
24.9 to 1	—	—	—	—
11.81 to 1	—	—	—	—
6.75 to 1	9½ sec.	14 sec.	—	—
4.35 to 1	—	—	29½ sec.	55.56 m.p.h.

Acceleration from rest through the gears to 50 m.p.h., 37½ sec.  
Speed up Brooklands Test Hill from rest (1 in 5 average gradient), 9.17 m.p.h. (on first gear).  
Acceleration up 15 yards of 1 in 5 gradient from rest, 4½ sec.  
Turning circle: 33ft.  
Tank capacity 7½ gallons, fuel consumption 30 m.p.g. (approx.).  
6-volt lighting set; constant voltage dynamo.  
Weight: 16 cwt.  
Price, with two-door saloon body, £425.  
*(Described in "The Autocar" of January 28th, 1934)*





## "THE AUTOCAR" ROAD TESTS—(continued)



throttle is again released, and the synchromesh completes the movement.

The travel of the lever, because it is unusual, is slightly confusing at first, but one soon becomes accustomed to it, and then the movement between the direct drive and the overtop is a rapid process. The action is preselective in a sense, too, for until the throttle is released these two gears do not engage, so that the lever can be moved between direct drive and the overtop in anticipation of requirements.

The change down to second is assisted also by synchromesh, and second gear and direct drive are quiet-running; only the faintest hum is noticeable on the overtop gear.

It is a car which for several reasons does not lend itself well to the ordinary routine of test figures. Its gears are laid out with different intentions from those normally applying, so that the limit on first, the emergency ratio, is not above 10 m.p.h., and on second not more than 25 m.p.h., whilst direct drive allows speeds up to about 48 m.p.h. Again, the geared-up ratio is not intended for low-speed acceleration.

A very strong wind was blowing when the car was taken to Brooklands, and the car was not fully run in. In more favourable circumstances speeds close to 60 m.p.h. should be reached.

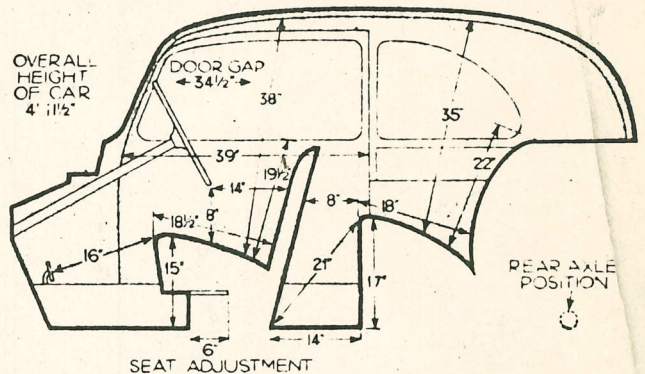
The speedometer, also, was not ideal for taking acceleration figures, as the needle was erratic in its behaviour and it was difficult to make sure when an exact speed had been attained. The highest speedometer reading was 62 when the car was timed to be travelling at 55.56 m.p.h.

The hydraulically operated brakes are powerful. A particularly noteworthy point in the control of the car is the very good steering lock.

The finish throughout is characteristic of the makers, and the equipment is of a high order among small cars. Two instances are one-shot lubrication for the chassis, and, in the body, a twin-blade electric screenwiper. The seats are very comfortable, and vision is good, though not allowing a full unobstructed view of the near-side wing.

There is a controllable system of leading warm air from the engine into the body, since no heat is derived from the rear engine to give desirable warmth in cold weather.

It is the comfort of riding, and the remarkable ease with which this car travels at speeds which are quite high for one of its size, that single it out from the ordinary.



## THE GREAT NORTH TRAIL (Continued from page 929)

From Ullapool there stretches to the north a rugged and inhospitable coast; barren rocks descend to the sea, which is almost always inaccessible from the road.

We passed tinker caravans; some of those nomads were fair, others swarthy. They were courteous in giving way, and local opinion has it that they are amiable. There was something Biblical in the masses of giant boulders piled on the mountain sides as the sun crowned them with gold.

So we came to Achiltibuie. The wind had changed, it was drizzling, we dined at an hotel, the food was indifferent. Pitching camp in the rain was a damp job. The west coast on that wet evening appeared dismal. Out of the gloom there came a very charming Samaritan. His camp consisted of two tents, a Humber, a Morris, and his family. They had camped for five weeks on this coast for the sake of a change from their house in the New Forest.

## Breakfast In a Cottage

In the morning we had breakfast in a cottage, where porridge and eggs were prepared over a peat fire. The bay was looking lovely in clear sunshine; two whales floated about in the distance, like apturned boats. This was a station of the Salmon Fisheries, and we heard stories from the fishermen about basking sharks, seals, and whales, all occasional visitors from the Gulf Stream and the Arctic. In this little outpost of the north-west they do not keep to Summer Time, because they believe that man should not interfere with the time of God. They keep the salmon they catch in underground ice-storage houses, where the ice that they get from the lochs in winter does not melt all through the summer. On one Sabbath morning we wandered into the little Gaelic kirk. As the service proceeded the minister, turning to one of the congregation, said

simply, "Miss Ross, ye will lead the Psalms, and ye may maintain your sitting posture." They get few strangers on that coast, and it is refreshing to find a corner of Great Britain that is not too accessible.

But it is not a coast where most people would wish to linger. On the debit side the weather is more uncertain than almost anywhere else in the British Isles; according to all accounts June and September are the best months.

The return journey can include what we found to be the best part of the whole trip as regards scenery. Going up by Grantown, just off the Great North Road, one may well wonder why folk go abroad for magnificent scenery.

## Up To Two Thousand Feet

One crosses the Spey, and a mountain road branches off towards Tomintoul and Balmoral. The famous Loch road climbs to 2,000 feet, and a section of it is of the trials variety, not unlike Beggats' Roost for steepness, with a surface of projecting rocks. It is like that only for a mile or so. The shade of General Wade, who built many Scottish roads by apparently following sheep tracks, seems to smile approval on motorists who can top his masterpieces.

Continuing the run south, we ascended towards the Devil's Elbow along a good main road that suddenly plunged from 2,200 feet downwards towards Glenshee. "The Elbow" used to be, until not so long ago, of about 1 in 3 gradient, but the outer edges of the hairpins have been widened and the gradient is more like 1 in 6.

Then to the Border, following the Esk. At Langholm one might be in the heart of the Highlands themselves. Here the wide salmon river swirls underneath the stone bridges, flowing towards the English cornfields.