

The Largest Morris Model



In the Welsh hills with the 1932 Isis Saloon

By
"Mileator"

DESIGNING the most expensive car in the Morris range must be a gargantuan task. When you think of what the purchaser of a Minor gets for his £125 and what the Cowley owner obtains for £185—what with Lockheed hydraulic brakes, sliding head and what not—when you are going to ask £350 you can scarcely provide anything but the most sumptuous, up-to-the-minute motorcar the enthusiast can dream about. And this, let me tell you, is precisely what the Isis saloon is.

A Standard, not a Price

As is now common knowledge, when it was first designed there was no question of price considerations entering into the calculations. The instructions were to produce an accredited luxury car and the costing department would see what could be done about price afterwards. It wasn't until the designers had produced something which could take its place in the best company, both as regards appearance, performance and finish, that a battery of calculating machines was let loose upon the price, and came out with a figure which surprised even the Morris concern itself.



Observe the wide body, luggage grid, window louvres, and that the doors all open to the rear.

The Isis before the ruins of an erstwhile Norman stronghold, Chepstow Castle.

In short, the Isis gives to the man who is more than comfortably supplied with this world's goods the same outstanding value for money offered in the lower priced Morris models.

One of the first things that impressed me on taking over the wheel was the ease of the seat adjustment;

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a touch of a lever and you can slide the seat back to the exact position to suit your reach. This is, of course, a point common to practically the whole range of Morris cars, and is a very small matter when you are talking about an Isis, but as I have upon occasion spent an uncomfortable journey in quite expensive cars on which changing the seat position was a very uncertain business, I mention it because it appeals to me.

As soon as you have let in the clutch you realise that the Isis has the feel of an expensive car. The lever glides through the four-speed gearbox noiselessly, and if you want to you can linger on the lower of the two top ratios for an indefinite period without dawdling and without having the engine turning round noticeably fast.

Gilding the Lily

This four-speed gearbox was indeed the last touch required to bring the Isis to a state as near perfection as can be imagined, although it is only fair to add that the powerful 17.7 h.p. engine, which, incidentally, comes within the £18 tax class, with its overhead



This frontal view gives an idea of the attractiveness of the new radiator, which has chromium finished shutters automatically operated.

descend, even a big engine will not pick up readily on a 4.72 top gear, whereas the next ratio down would be on the low side. The second of the two top ratios enables one to shoot ahead in a forthright manner with no nonsense about it.

A Silky Engine

One delightful aspect of the car's running is the manner in which the weight of the body, perfect balance of the engine and the freedom of the transmission combine to give you the gentlest ever over-run. If you are cruising at fifty, for instance, and you take your foot off the accelerator pedal, it is quite an appreciable time before the car slows down to forty-five if the road is at all level.

Perhaps at this stage I ought to say where the Isis went on the day upon which it was in my hands. For it isn't the easiest thing in the world to find a testing ground in these days of congested roads for a car which will do an honest - to - goodness 65 m.p.h. and cruise at between 50 and 55 indefinitely. However, finally we decided upon Wales as providing a miscellany of conditions

and, moreover, a fair run from Oxford, which was our headquarters for the night.

Three hours accounted for the journey, so although we did not leave until ten o'clock in the morning,



Above is the easily-operated Fytchley sliding roof, and on the right we see one of the cubby holes, which now have covers. A larger one still is available on the passenger side of the car.

camshaft and superlatively accurate balance, will do nearly everything on top gear, whether it be threading one's way through traffic or climbing main road hills. Therefore, on this large car the greatest value of this additional gear is the certainty with which it enables you to pass everybody else when ascending a steep hill. If one has to slow down momentarily to allow another car to



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we were having words with a Cardiff policeman who said we could not leave our Isis outside a restaurant, indeed, by one o'clock sharp.

This average, I should add, was never at a risk of a cross-road or inconvenience to any road user, or, more important still, to ourselves.

Now, I don't want you to think that from the whole of England we chose Southernmost Wales as a touring centre. Obviously, no one goes there without a good reason, preferably that somebody owes you some money. The passengers, however, were of the opinion that Wales is Wales, whatever may be said to the contrary, and expected the South to be much the same as the North. The narrow streets and bleak hillsides weren't a bit what they expected to find. I mention this in order that any who follow in our wheel tracks may not be disappointed at the end of what is undoubtedly a pleasant run.

Wild Wales

After lunch, therefore, rather than see my passengers despondent, I consented to push upwards to Llandoverly, via Pontypridd, Aberdare and a succession of villages with names that only a native can write on the signposts.

Llandoverly was chosen, I might say, because it was the only place one could pronounce with any certainty, and the fact that it was sixty-five miles from Cardiff was not of great moment to the Isis, representing only two hours' run over roads which have improved tremendously during recent years.

On the not very wide Welsh roads with a succession of acclivities, we realised the utility of the second top speed for the first time. Even with a powerful engine, one comes across numerous hills which on a three-speed gearbox would leave you in a state between slightly labouring on a top gear, or turning over a little too rapidly on second speed. The lesser twin admirably fulfils the bill on these occasions, and one can keep on a very high average speed without using top for long distances at a stretch.

But it was on the return journey—through Brecon and Monmouth—that the new third speed demonstrated its value. Gloucester, as you all know, lies in a hollow, and it is a clearing house for all the fogs in the West Country. It rolls down the hills

in chunks and I believe on weekdays is cleared from the streets with a fog plough.

We, however, having chosen a Sunday, descended into a dense blanket of almost impenetrable mist, which rendered a speed at which the speedometer failed to record a mileage at all the only means of progress. And in order to add to the gaiety of such an occasion, the road out of Gloucester has a single line of tramways on the wrong side of the road, with the tramcars coming against you for most of the time. For over an hour, however, we drew consolation from that second top speed which enabled us to crawl with never a snatch and never a falter from the engine, yet free from the mild discomfort of a long period of second gear.

Fog

I don't suppose the idea of fog ever entered the heads of the people at Cowley who made the first four-speed box, but, believe me, it is a better contribution to the fog question than all the yellow masks ever devised.

Despite dallying by the wayside, and a solid hour lost owing to the fog, we were back at Oxford on the right side of midnight after a run of just on three hundred miles upon a pleasant day's outing. Not as a record breaking tour, blinding from point to point, but as a comfortable journey for all concerned, especially for that very important person, whatever passengers may say to the contrary, the driver.

The specification of the Isis includes everything the most fastidious can demand. Among other things it has a breather fume consumer to the engine, also an ingenious device for automatically adjusting the camshaft roller chain, full forced-feed lubrication, calorstat-operated radiator shutters, stop and reverse lamps (very useful this last), Lockheed hydraulic brakes that pull you up in 37 yards from 50 m.p.h., and of course a Pytchley sliding head, which you can slide back or close with two fingers. The interior upholstery is the highest grade leather, with an arm rest that disappears into the roomy rear seats, and suspended head rest cushions. With outstandingly capacious bodywork, the Isis is a full-sized family car with a place all its own in the British market, even disregarding the attractive price at which it sells.



EXPRESS POST.—A fleet of twelve Morris five-hundredweight vans recently completed to the order of His Majesty's Postmaster-General, awaiting inspection at the Cowley Works.