

# Alexander's Band

## COOL CATEGORY CARS—HOTTER UNDER THE BONNET



**A**MONG the companies specializing in improving performance of production cars, Alexander Engineering is well known. Michael Christie, Chairman and Managing Director, has just presented his winter collection which, as well as eight familiar models, included a new two-seater sports car.

Engine conversions are tackled in stages, according to requirements, stage one being relatively simple and inexpensive, stage two more fundamental, and the full treatment producing a near racing car. Rather too high-spirited and short-lived for normal road-work, the fully modified cars are able to bring in prizes in production car races, as Geoff Williamson in the Alexander A.40 has been proving this past season. Competition cars may be fitted with any of a number of extras such as special camshafts, disc brakes, anti-roll bars, ZF differential and so on.

Full tests of several of the converted cars will follow in due course; in the meantime *The Autocar* has been able to try out on the road each car in the collection. All were running on normal premium petrol and had been fitted with electric rev. counters. Here are brief notes on their performances and modifications.

### Morris Mini-Minor

A quite marked improvement in acceleration and a crisper response add to the already attractive performance. The engine remains smooth and tractable, pulling evenly down to 15 m.p.h. in top gear. At 68 m.p.h. in third gear there was no valve bounce or sign of distress from the engine, and very little increase in noise. Maximum speed, two up, in stormy conditions was about 78 m.p.h. on the speedometer. (Road test of standard car 74.5 m.p.h. true maximum; speedo correct to within 1½ per cent.) Acceleration figures claimed are: 0-30 m.p.h., 4.9 sec; 0-60 m.p.h., 18.7 sec. These compare with road test figures for the standard car of 6.2 and 26.5 sec respectively.

(Modified cylinder head; comp. ratio 8.9; Twin 1½in S.U.s.; Kit price, £37 10s, fitting charge, £7 10s. Centre exhaust port adaptor. Price £2 10s.)

### Austin-Healey Sprite

Undoubtedly very much faster and more lively than in standard form. Owing to weather conditions and a suspected fault in the operation of the limited slip differential, the car was so unstable directionally as to preclude worth-while high-speed

testing. Top speed is in excess of 85 m.p.h. The engine revs freely to beyond 6,500 and there is a fair amount of mechanical and exhaust noise. The close-ratio box is pleasant to use. The front disc brakes were even and effective in operation. A pair of louder horns had been fitted.

(Alloy cross-flow cylinder head, comp. ratio 10.4; twin 1½in S.U.s.; close-ratio gears; Girling disc brakes front; larger rear brakes; wire wheels; front anti-roll bar; ZF differential. Kit price, £85.)

### Morris Minor 1000

Another car with marked improvement in performance, and giving it with greater refinement than most of the others. But for some resonance when cruising at around 70 m.p.h., there is very little noise or fuss. The engine spins effortlessly up to 6,000 r.p.m. and some 10sec have been clipped off the standard 26sec 0-60 m.p.h. figure.

(Alloy cross-flow cylinder head, comp. ratio 9.5; twin 1½in S.U.s.; centre exhaust port adaptor. Price £85.)

### M.G. MGA 1600

A feature of this car is its low-speed pulling power. The minimum top gear no-snatch speed was as low as 12 m.p.h. Third gear acceleration shows a marked improvement in the middle ranges, which is very handy for overtaking, and top gear also gets hold well from about 40 m.p.h. upwards. The maximum speed is comfortably over 100 m.p.h. and a 0-60 m.p.h. figure of 12.5 sec is claimed. For energetic driving the engine is much improved, and the harshness of the standard unit when pulling hard is somewhat reduced.

(Alexander H.R.G. B-series cross-flow alloy head £10 upwards; twin 1½in S.U.s.; oil cooler. Price £73, or £93 if twin S.U.s. supplied.)

### Triumph Herald 4-Seater

Pleasant handling and gear-change on the Herald invite fast driving but the single carburettor version has a relatively flat performance; this conversion is thus particularly rewarding. Flexibility of running is maintained, but cruising speed goes up to over 70 m.p.h. and maximum to over 80 m.p.h. The 0-60 m.p.h. figure is dramatically improved from 31.1 sec to a claimed 16.2. The car feels altogether more lively. Peak speed in second gear is still only about 35 m.p.h. but third gear pull is adequate at this speed to take over. The improved engine makes rather more roar, but not enough to be tiresome.

(Modified cylinder head and large valves; comp. ratio 8.9; twin 1½in S.U.s. Kit price £65, fitting charges £10 10s.)

Selection of family cars—and one or two production sports models as well—which have improved performance conversions and were the subjects of short trials. The photograph was taken at Weston Manor Hotel, Weston on the Green, Oxfordshire



### Simca Aronde (Flash)

An unexpected transformation of the 1,290 c.c. engine gives this car an over-90 m.p.h. indicated top speed and a most ready and smooth acceleration. There is a good deal of roar, largely, it seems, from the intakes and exhaust. The improved torque is specially noticeable at about 3,500 r.p.m. but the pull continues up to at least 5,500 r.p.m. In top gear, even running is possible down to about 18 m.p.h.

(Engine conversion; twin Solex carburetors; modified and polished cylinder head; comp. ratio 8.2. Price—engine conversion, £48 10s. Fitting charge £10 10s.)

### Hillman Minx IIIA New Car

This model is quite changed in character, assuming an alert, Rapier-like performance. Here again there is some additional noise which is not altogether welcome. The overdrive and power brakes make for more effortless driving, the brakes in particular feeling unusually powerful. The 0-60 m.p.h. figure is reduced by some 9 sec to 16.5 sec and the top speed is about 90 m.p.h.

(Modified cylinder head; comp. ratio 8.9; twin 1½in S.U.s.; Lockheed power brakes, £19 approx; Laycock de Normanville overdrive. Price £47 10s + fitting charge, £12 10s.)

### Austin A.40

Naturally this is rather a roty little car, having an advanced stage of tuning. Its engine revs very freely indeed, and acceleration through the gears is exhilarating yet the car remains quite tractable, though not exactly the thing for family shopping. The speedometer moves up fast between 70 and 80 m.p.h. and engine speed then reaches only a little over the 5,000 r.p.m. mark. The exhaust note is a la sports car but the engine is neither particularly noisy nor fussy. We were not able to obtain the best from this car owing to suspected excess of zeal by an earlier driver causing weakening of valve springs.

(Alloy cross-flow head; comp. ratio 10.5; twin 1½in S.U.s.; super sports camshaft; anti-roll bar on front suspension, £85.)

(Notes on the new Turner Alexander, with pictures, appeared last week.)

Listed Extras  
Power brakes, approx. £19.  
Alexander anti-roll bars, £6 17s 6d plus £1 10s.  
Overdrive unit (Hillman Minx), £68 + £12 10s fitting charge.  
Overdrive unit (Austin A.40), £10 + £3 18s.  
Centre gear-change conversion, £10 + £3 18s.  
De Carbon dampers, £16 plus £2 fitting charge.

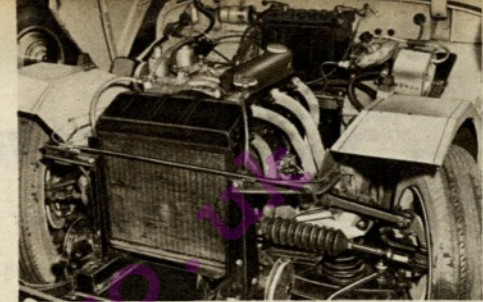
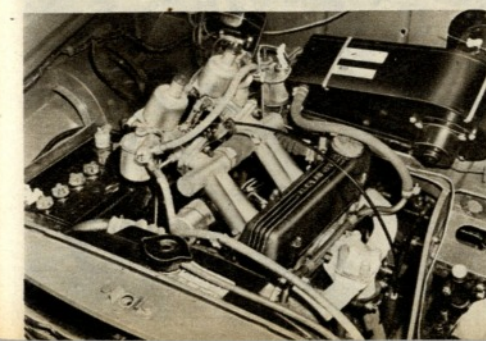
For complete details and prices of modifications and extras application should be made to the company, at Haddenham, Bucks.

Improved performance cars from various stables which have been tested during the last eighteen months are as follows:

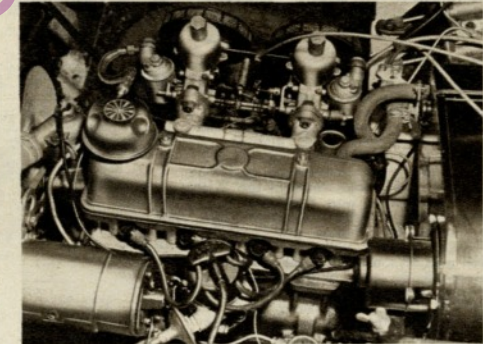
Austin A.35	Downton	25 July, 1958
Austin Healey Sprite	Downton	6 February, 1959
Austin A.40	Palace Gate Garage	3 April, 1959
Ford Consul	Raymond Mays	31 October, 1958
Ford Zephyr	Raymond Mays	31 October, 1958
Hillman Minx 1,390	Alexander	18 July, 1958
Hillman Minx 1,494	Hartwell	18 July, 1958
M.G. MGA	Performance Equipment	26 December, 1958
M.G. MGA	HRG-Derrington	12 December, 1958
Morris Minor 1,000	Yimkin	16 October, 1959
Renault Dauphine	Downton	27 June, 1958
Renault Dauphine	Alexander	27 June, 1958
Renault Dauphine	Performance Equipment	27 June, 1958
Renault Dauphine	Rudd	27 June, 1958
Riley 1.5	Speedwell	13 February, 1959
Vauxhall Victor	Rally Equipment	19 December, 1958
Vauxhall Victor	G.M. Carburettor	19 December, 1958
Vauxhall Victor	Alexander	19 December, 1958
Volkswagen	Rally Equipment	7 November, 1958
Wolsley 1500	Arden	27 February, 1959

A review of these tests to date appeared in *The Autocar* of 10 April 1959. Further reference to conversions will be made in the Racing Car Special number of 1 January 1960.

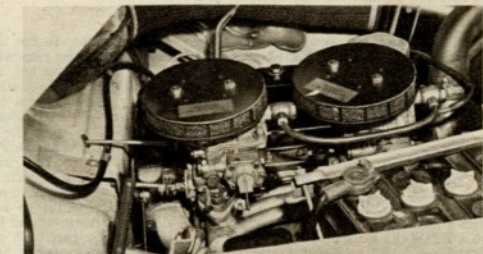
Below: Austin A.40—a full-scale conversion. Right: Morris Mini-Minor



In addition to an advanced tuning stage, this Sprite has Girling disc brakes in front, and an improved method of attachment for the anti-roll bar, intended to prevent it distorting the lower suspension member



Triumph Herald with improved breathing



Simca Aronde (Flash)—over 90 m.p.h.

