

Trials Car Trend

A Brief Survey of the Present-Day Approach to Slime Storming

IT is indeed unfortunate that the trials season should be stopped just as it was getting under way for the winter months, for the trend of the trials car was rapidly changing. It was not so very long ago when a standard sports model, such as the Singer, M.G. or Morgan, could be entered in trials without seeming to be out of place. This, however, is no longer the case and the standard sports car is rapidly disappearing from the entry lists, its place being taken by special trials cars, varying greatly in size and conception, but all nevertheless "specials." Up to the present there have been many ways of approaching this problem of a trials car that will beat all comers yet still be within the regulations.

Generally speaking, it has been tackled from each end of the capacity scale, that is to say, a vast amount of power, and consequently quite a large bulk of machinery, or a small amount of power and an absolute minimum of weight. At one end we have the Ford V8-engined "specials" as exemplified by Sydney Allard's productions and various home-brewed V8-engined cars such as O. Bartlett's Mercury, T. C. Wise's, C.W.8, the Price Special and Warburton's L.M.B., and at the other end the Austin Seven "Special" championed by people such as A. M. Mallock and H. Birkett, the former in supercharged form. In between these two extremes we have various versions of home-made specials and modified standard products. The two "specials" from Bristol, owned jointly by T. C. G. Butler and C. C. Evans are successful examples of home-brewed cars, retaining little if any of their original make. "Ophelia" comprising M.G. and Wolseley parts and a back end of the builder's own, and "DACY" mixing G.N.-Wolseley and A.C.; another "Bitza," as such vehicles are known in motor-cycling circles, is Woodall's car comprising Morgan and Wolseley parts, and a supercharged Ford Ten engine. Much modified standard products are very popular, and of these the Ford Ten is increasing in popularity, examples being T. C. Harrison's Harriford, C. Buckler's tubular-chassis "Special," using Ford Ten major components, the "specials" of the Hankins brothers and G. P. Mosby. Modified B.M.W.s have been built and G. Tyrer's very light 328 is an example, while F. A. Rhodes and D. G. Flather have modified Type 55s, and in Scotland, Alex Reid's Omega Special uses B.M.W. components. Cleeve's special Morris still performs well as does A. L. S. Denyer's modified "Hyper" Lea-Francis and G. W. Best has a very shortened J2 M.G., fitted with a blower, that does prodigious things on trials acclivities.

A cult which is becoming increasingly popular is that pioneered by Ken Wharton in his Wharton Special, namely fitting a Ford Ten engine and gearbox into an Austin Seven chassis. It has been shown for quite a while that the Austin Seven could be a very serious challenger to the Allard type of trials car and its only obvious failing was that

it usually ran out of power just at the critical moment. By introducing the Ford Ten power unit it was hoped to overcome this failing as the total weight did not differ greatly and the extra horse-power obtainable was considered just enough. If Wharton's successes and the increasing popularity of this idea are anything to go by it would seem that this was a wise step. Mallock has, however, shown that the same result can be achieved by supercharging the Austin engine, but a supercharger costs as much as a replacement Ford engine and supercharged engines can become temperamental. Others to follow Wharton's lead have been C. Yates, with his "Chummy" Austin and P. Hunter, both of the 750 Club, R. W. Phillips with his Fairley, although he replaces Austin rear springs by coil springs, J. A. Grout, Darrow, Lister and Findlay, the last-named taking the idea over the border into Scotland. Lloyd-Jones has used a similar idea for quite a while in his "Mausting," being a J2 M.G. with a blown Austin Ten engine.

Among the trials folk who support the manufacturer, probably the greatest number, who compete regularly in the sporting trials, stand by Mr. Godfrey and his henchmen. The 1½-litre Meadows H.R.G. in standard trim still puts up a magnificent show and holds its own against most of the specials, driven by V. S. A. Biggs, K. C. Delingpole and E. J. Newton, amongst many others. The H.R.G.'s blood-brother, the Frazer-Nash, is practically extinct in the trials world, where not many years ago it was invincible, now only F. Morrish with his early but highly-successful Meadows-engined car leaves the mark of the chain in the mud. M.G., once a name that filled the entry lists, is now sadly lacking; the "Musketeer" and "Cream Cracker" teams did not survive the war and in these days of hills that are favourable

to cars with high ground clearance and floppy suspension, the M.G.s of such die-hards as A. W. Morrish and D. Murkett are at a disadvantage. Jeeps, both Willys and Ford, have been tried, but what sufficed for the Army does not suffice for the average trials hill.

Finally, we come to the Allard, once known as the Allard-Special, which has caused more people to rush into print than almost any other car. It is not surprising that a car developed over so many years of trials competition, by its originator, should be successful to the point of monotony. In order to out-Allard the other Allard owners, Imhof, Burgess and Appleton fitted superchargers to their 4-litre V8 engines, while the two Mansells, Roberts and Asbury compete with standard post-war products. Of the supercharged cars, Burgess has proved to be most successful, due possibly to added adhesion brought about by extra ballast in the right place—a high-pressure air cylinder mounted on brackets about 12 inches behind the car—and of the pre-war Allards, Potter, Gilson, Pritchard and Wick used V8-engined models and McAlpine and Parker V12 Zephyr-engined cars. The original Allard Special CLK5, after a highly successful 1946 season by K. Hutchison, has now disappeared from the entry lists, although the two replicas are run by Potter and Pritchard, the former having had a very successful 1947 season.

Such then is the general position of the trials car; no longer an everyday sports model, but a car built essentially for competitions. Many people decry this trend, but many people decried one S. H. Allard in the mid-thirties, with his Bugatti-bodied V8; now the Allard is a production car that is being troubled by Ford Ten-engined Austin Sevens. If the Wharton or the Fairley become production models, what then? Improvement of the breed is surely an apt phrase.—D. S. J.



The older H.R.G.s still compete strongly against more modern trials-specials.