

BMW Twins

THE best motor cycle in the world. Fact or exaggeration? It is all a question of what you mean by best. The BMW may not be perfect—but then, is any motor cycle come to that? The fact which emerges from this 1½-million mile test is that the BMW is only a couple of steps behind its reputation. It may not be as good as it is often made out to be—but it is probably better than most other machines.

Bee-Emming, more so than riding any other machine, is largely a matter of taste. Either you like 'em or you don't. Good as it undoubtedly is, the BMW is not everyone's idea of the ideal motor cycle—and not everyone's idea of the ideal price!

While many reporters point out that the BMW does not fully deserve its acquired reputation—enhanced, no doubt, by the duty-inflated price in this country—the majority learn to live with the few disadvantages and wouldn't change their flat twin for anything else. Take Mr Average BMW owner. He is aged 33 and has 14 years' experience behind him. In fact, if riding careers of reporters were to be placed end to end they would stretch back to AD466! A total of 1,500 years of experience—they should know what they are on about!

Very surprising is the extreme international flavour of the test. Letters have been received from Australia, the United States, Bermuda, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and, of course, Germany.

Machines covered in this report are mainly the R69S sports six-hundred and the touring R60 version. Five-hundred R50s and, to an even lesser extent, R50S sportsters, are poorly represented. All machines manufactured since 1960 were eligible—but the average year of manufacture of contributors' bikes is 1964.

Performance

MAXIMUM speeds are not outstanding. But when the weight of the machines is considered, their performance is surprisingly good.

A very important point for anyone weighing up relative performance is how close cruising speed is to maximum.

With the BMW it is, very close indeed. These twins will cruise effortlessly at near maximum and often put up far better averages over long distances than potentially faster machines.

Our figures show the R69S to be capable of a genuine 105 mph; this should be obtainable on any R69S—and some

owners have managed 108 or 110 mph. A couple of claims—116 and 125 mph—are so far out that they are discounted.

The touring version, the R60, is 10 mph slower at 95 mph, while another gap of 10 mph separates this model from the smaller, 500 cc R50. Sidecar outfits reported on are all R60s, and top whack here is 76 mph.

Says 40-year-old Denis Saunders of Chessington, Surrey: "The performance of my 1963 R60 is exceptional and deceptive. Exceptional for such a soft tourer to have so good a performance, and deceptive in the ease, smoothness and silence with which it accomplishes this.

"Cruising speed is anything up to maximum and can be maintained all day—the motor is virtually unburstable."

Another R60 owner, Ivor Lawrence of Beeston, is of like mind: "No matter how long or hard my outfit is driven the motor at the end of the trip has the same quiet tickover as when I started. It never seems to get out of breath at all."

Part of the reason for this unburstability and high cruising speed is the turbine smoothness expected from a well-balanced and well-cooled layout such as that of the horizontally opposed BMW engine. It can be buzzed in all gears—and, indeed, the machine thrives on such treatment.

As would be expected, the R69S is not so super-tractable as the R60. Yet it is probably very good in this respect when compared with more mundane machinery.

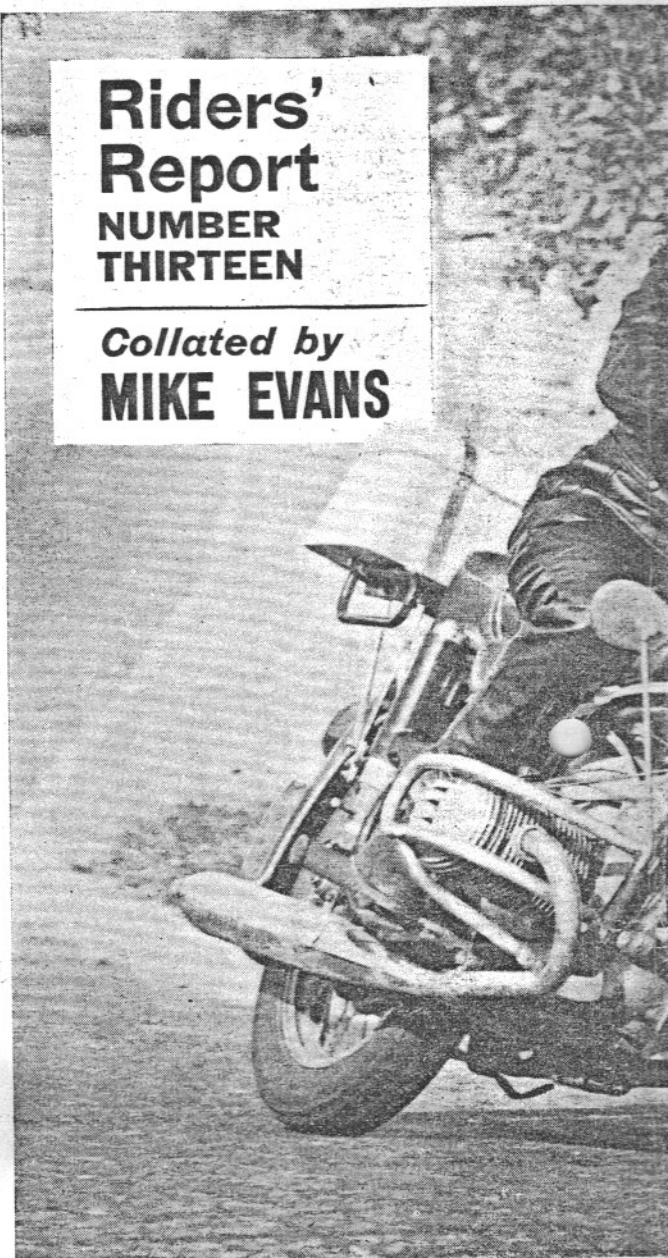
Starting

Exceptionally good, report the majority. One or two prods after tickling the twin Bing carburettors is sufficient in all weathers.

"Starting is first class. It always fires first kick whatever the conditions. I never have to use the air control, not even below 32 deg Fahrenheit, and she idles immediately with never a falter," Denis Saunders speaking.

Riders' Report NUMBER THIRTEEN

Collated by
MIKE EVANS



Fuel Consumption

AS WITH any twin-carburettor machine, fuel consumption is not a star point. R60 owners can expect an overall consumption of 60 mpg solo or 48 mpg sidecar. The R69S is good for 55 mpg in solo trim.

However, as many point out, when using the machine's potential to the full—and BMWs tempt riders to this—the consumption rises steeply.

J. M. Walker of South Africa writes with a strong Afrikaans accent: "My 1965 R69S is a real gas guzzler. Mit der fat vrou on der buddy seat giffs aboutt 30 mpg at

100 plus, against der cape howlers (vind). Und den comes der brainwave, der *fairing*. Now mit fat vrou und suitcase against same vind giffs 40 mpg at 100 plus on two-thirds throttle."

Handling

FOR SOME odd reason BMWs have a bad reputation for handling. Yet only one or two reporters, like John Neave, are dissatisfied. Most think the BMW, in spite of its weight, is well up to scratch.

The low centre of gravity of the flat engine provides a great degree of stability. The much-talked-about torque reaction is a story straight out of Grimm or Aesop.

The influence on corners is something that is noticeable only on first acquaintance with a BMW. A new rider can adjust himself to the BM within ten or twenty miles and from then on he has no bother whatsoever.

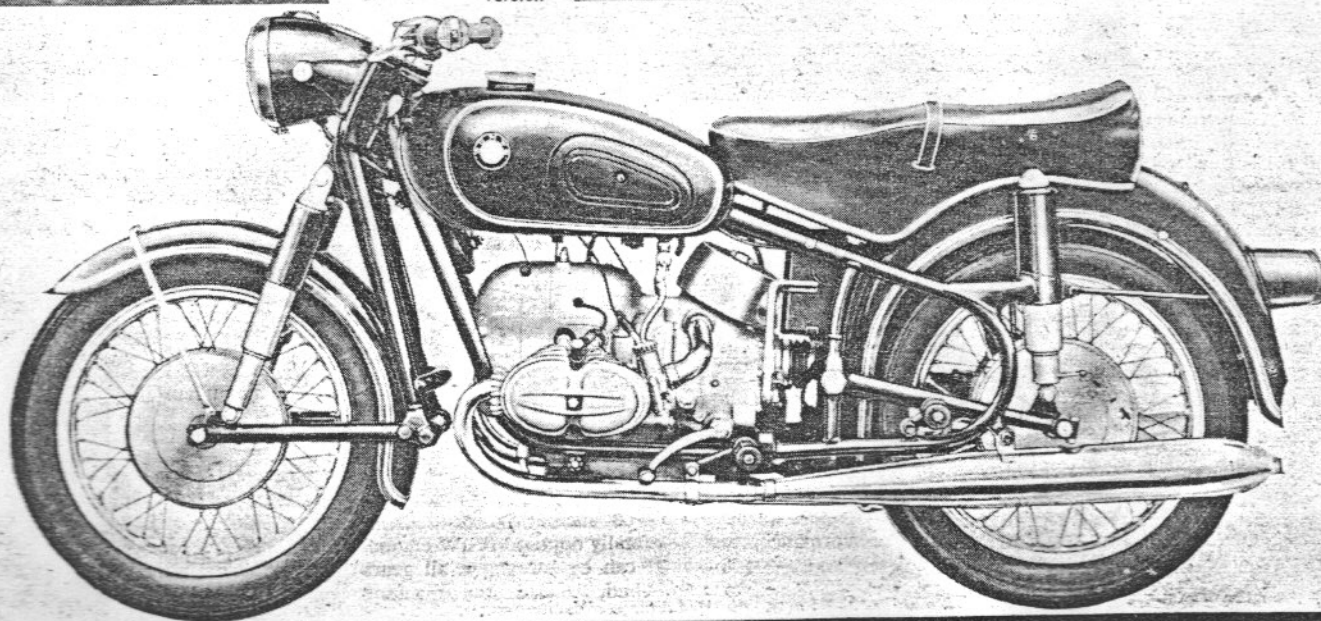
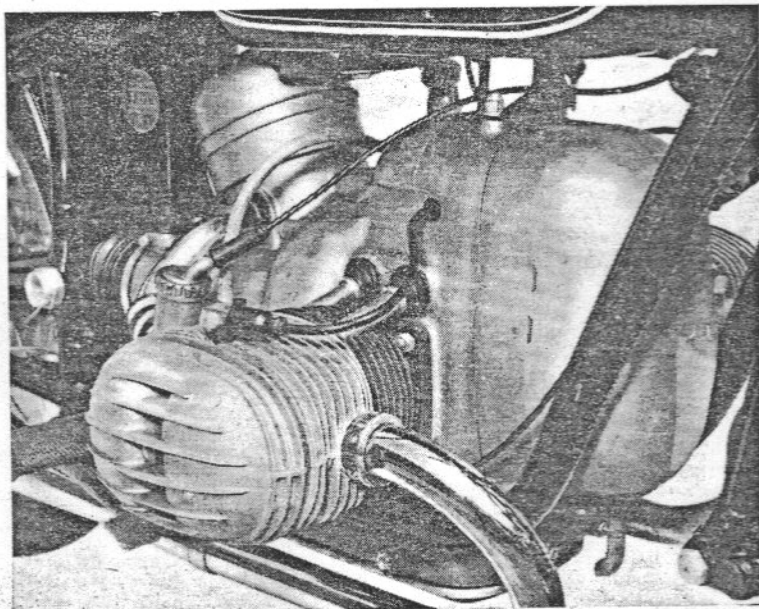
Nevertheless, although riding comfort and braking are excellent, handling *could* be bettered.

Says Björn Agnarsson of Karlstad, Sweden: "Being a real heavyweight fitted with an Earles-type front fork, it behaves accordingly. It does not like rippled curves and you have to allow a good safety margin when cornering."

Several mention that the front end becomes light when a passenger and laden panniers are carried.

Left: Most reporters rate handling as good—but not perfect. Here Mike Evans tries his R60 for cornering style

Below: The sporty R69S can be detected mainly by its two-rib rocker-box covers and the massive air cleaner on top of the gear box. Right: The R50 and R60 engines have six rocker-box-ribs and an air cleaner incorporating a choke lever. Also, they are slightly narrower than the sports version



Braking

"**BEAUTIFUL**, both front and rear. I particularly appreciate the Earles fork which does not dive on hard front-wheel braking. No complaints, only praise." That's from Joseph L. Katz, a space programmer, of De Land, Florida.

Confirmation comes from Bob Pilkington, 32, of Royston, Herts: "Without doubt the most powerful and yet the most controllable of any motor cycle I have ridden. The twin-leading-shoe front brake is immensely powerful."

Transmission

"**WHAT** is there to say?" asks David Dumble of Victoria, Australia. "All you ever do is change the gear-box, shaft and crown-wheel-housing oils every 8,000 miles and check them occasionally. Dead smooth at all times—and there is nothing to adjust."

While the transmission is utterly reliable and sturdy, the gear box annoys most riders. Clonky changes are the rule.

This is caused, to a large extent, by the engine-speed clutch and gear box input shaft. In addition, the progressive-action twistgrip makes synchronization of revs difficult.

Nevertheless, the BMW gear box is something you learn to live with. Upward changes are best made slowly

—allowing plenty of time for the revs to sort themselves out.

When changing down a hefty handful of twistgrip is necessary to obtain the sort of blip normal with any conventional machine. Even then, there is a clonk as the cogs are engaged. A way round the problem is to double declutch—cumbersome but effective.

In spite of the rough action, however, the box is sturdy and there is nothing to indicate that it suffers from mechanical troubles.

Electrics

"**LIGHTING**, with a good dip which does not dazzle others, is good enough for 70 mph cruising. The horn is a real instrument and not a pip-squeak affair as on many machines." Chris Haddon's view is indicative of the general feeling.

The Bosch electrical equipment is thoroughly reliable and of excellent quality.

One snag mentioned by several reporters is that the Bosch sparking-plug covers allow bad shorting in rain. Many, like David Dumble, have replaced the standard metal-shrouded caps by Lodge rubber ones.

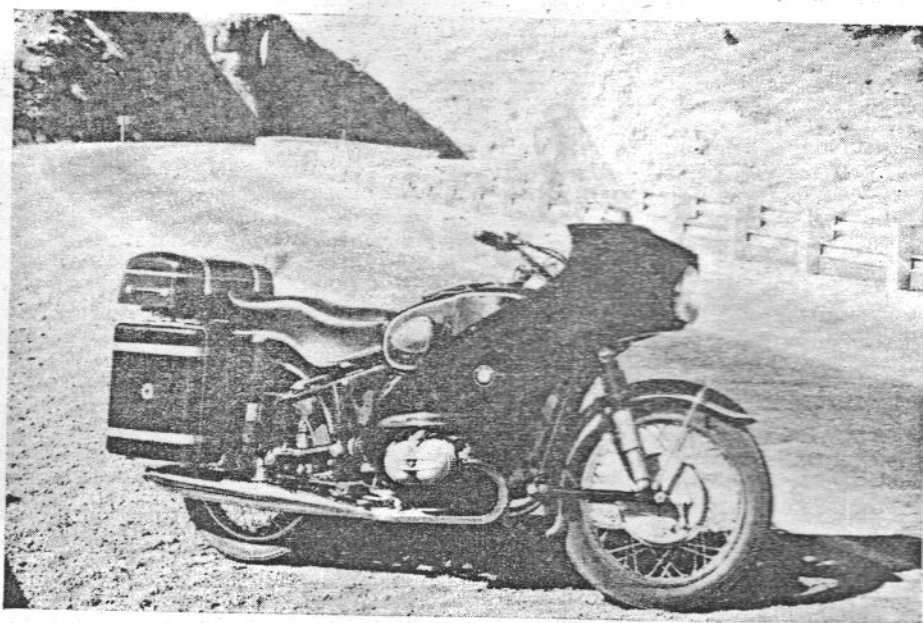
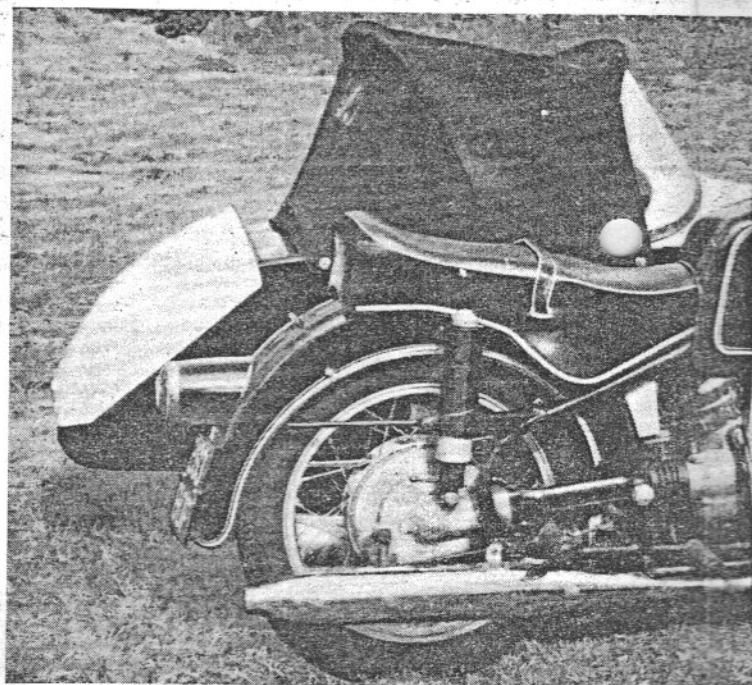
Detail Finish

FROM twin-leading-shoe front brake to the distinctive circular tail lamp, the BMW is a quality built machine.

Our Test View

	R50 (September 1963)	R69S (March 1961)
Highest One-way Speed	92 mph	108 mph
Mean Maximum Speed	90 mph	104 mph
Standing Quarter-mile	75 mph (speed) 17s (time)	88 mph 15s
Fuel Consumption	110 mpg (30 mph) 84 mpg (40 mph) 68 mpg (50 mph) 64 mpg (60 mph)	100 mpg 90 mpg 75 mpg 66 mpg 28ft
Braking (from 30 mph to rest)	28ft	28ft

Bob Coley of Small Heath gets 70 mph out of his 1960 R60 and BSA sidecar. Fuel consumption is only 50 mpg—but that extra-large German tank helps cut down stops on long journeys



Here's a smart R69S in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Owner Peter Betz has fitted a large-capacity fuel tank, Avon fairing and Craven panniers

The enamel is universally acclaimed, although some are dissatisfied with a standard of chrome work.

Typifying the attention to detail is the toolkit. Listen to David Dumble: "You get a set of first-quality chrome vanadium spanners to fit nearly everything, a set of feelers, good pliers and even a puncture repair outfit with two tyre valves, all in a neat tool roll. There is even a BMW-monogrammed dust-cloth and a lapel badge. British manufacturers, please copy."

Riding Comfort

OF above-average standard, as will be seen from the table of percentages.

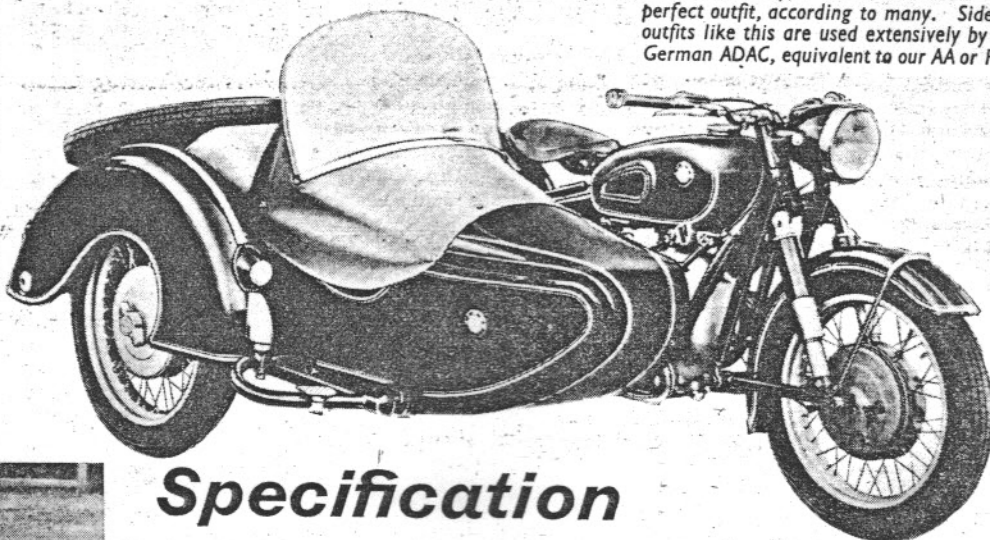
Brian Smith, 24, of Appleton, Cheshire, says that with

the fully adjustable footrests and alternative handlebar mounting positions, the riding position can be adapted to suit anyone.

However, the BMW usually demands a slightly forward lean of its rider—and Eric Springall, for one, objects. The riding position, he says, is the one fault with the BMW. The too-bent-knees and weight-on-wrists attitude of the BMW rider has to be got used to.

The dualseat is extremely

Classic lines of a BMW and Steib—the perfect outfit, according to many. Sidecar outfits like this are used extensively by the German ADAC, equivalent to our AA or RAC



Specification

R69S

ENGINE: BMW 595 cc (72 x 73mm) overhead-valve, horizontally opposed twin with needle-roller rocker bearings. Crankshaft supported in ball and roller bearings; roller big-end bearings. Aluminium-alloy cylinder heads. Compression ratio, 9.5 to 1. Wet-sump lubrication; sump capacity, 4 pints.

CARBURETTORS: Bing with progressive-rate twin-pull twistgrip. Single air filter.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT: Rotating-magnet magneto with auto-advance; separate 60/90-watt dynamo; both enclosed by crankcase front cover. Six-volt, 8-amp-hour battery. Headlamp, 6½ in diameter with prefocus light unit and 35/35-watt main bulb. Detachable ignition and lighting switch.

TRANSMISSION: BMW four-speed, foot-change gear box in unit with engine. Ratios: bottom, 13.03; second, 8.53; third, 6.07; top, 4.82 to 1. Single-plate dry clutch in engine flywheel. Final drive by enclosed shaft and helical bevel gears.

FUEL CAPACITY: 3½ gallons.

TYRES: 3.50 x 18 in front and rear.

BRAKES: Both approximately 8 in diameter x 1½ in wide; twin-leading-shoe front; finger adjusters.

SUSPENSION: BMW pivoted front and rear forks controlled by multi-rate spring-and-hydraulic units. Manual two-position adjustment for load on rear struts. Two-position fork-trail and load adjustments at front.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase, 55½ in; ground clearance, 6½ in; seat height, 31 in. All unladen.

WEIGHT: 445 lb without fuel.

CONCESSIONAIRES: BMW Concessionaires (England), Ltd, Victoria Road, Portslade, Brighton, Sussex.

R60 (where different)

Compression ratio, 7.5 to 1; smaller-bore carburettors, fitted with choke on air cleaner. Weight, 436 lb without fuel. The five-hundred R50 and R50S models differ from the bigger models only in details such as compression ratio and gear ratios.

comfortable, and the suspension irons out the bumps in true Rolls-Royce fashion.

Reliability

"THE machine can be caned unmercifully with no protest whatsoever," Brian Smith.

"My 1960 R60, which I have owned since new, has done 60,000 miles and has proved thoroughly reliable." Norman Sharp of Sowerby Bridge, Yorks.

"The only mechanical trouble I have had with any of them at any time is that the rear main bearing of the last one died after 23,000 miles. It gave due warning.

"I also had a little bother with plugs on the R60 when riding to Australia and back!" Eric Springall is a top-line

BMW enthusiast and, as you have seen, thinks nothing of visiting the antipodes on his bike!

It is the nonchalant way in which Eric takes BMW reliability for granted that is the outstanding feature of the above three quotations.

The average BMW twin is reliable—and comment could be left at that.

But since no machine is perfect, it is only to be expected that one or two reporters have suffered uncharacteristic troubles. Some have had repeated (and with the Bee-Emm, expensive) troubles right from new.

Buying a BMW is no guarantee of trouble-free motor cycling. But it is probably the best form of insurance you can take out at the present time. Major engine breakdowns are very rare, and

usually occur only after the sort of mileage that would have reduced lesser breeds to the scrap heap.

Even minor repairs can cost a great deal of money—as any BMW owner will confirm. Parts are expensive and advanced maintenance requires special tools.

One common moan is that the silencers—costing over £10 each—corrode from inside and are ready for discarding within 12 to 24 months.

Reports Denis Saunders: BMs aren't suitable for town transport. Because of the low operating temperature of the engine the corrosive acid products of combustion condense inside the silencers and rot everything. We get through a pair of silencers every six to nine months.

However, the factory acknowledge that their

machines won't reach proper working temperature if ridden at 30 mph in top gear. First and second are the only gears to use in town—and the absolute smoothness of the bikes makes this possible.

If the machine is ridden as it is intended—and as most Germans ride it—the silencer trouble is much minimized.

Many people are put off by the initial cost of a BMW. But the machine lasts so long that even a five-year-old (at about £200) is still a good buy.

Service

"THOUGH the cost of spares may be higher than for British equivalents, bits are readily available," says Robert Freeman of Hatfield.

As he says, the price of spares is in proportion to the

original cost of the machine. Good BMW service is not available all over the country.

Most owners seem to have patronized MLG Motor Cycles in London—and they have been well satisfied. Several mention favourably another Shepherds Bush specialist, Ron Perkins.

Accessibility

FOR routine maintenance, marvellous. But for major overhauls, difficult. That is the sum of opinion. Since the BM is so reliable, however, accessibility for big jobs is not over-important.

Everything that needs to be got at regularly is easily reached. Tappets, contact breaker, sump drain plug, gear box and final drive level plugs—all are readily accessible.

Sidecar

"THE R60 must be the best sidecar machine available. Its lusty, smooth pulling makes driving a joy." Bob Pilkington speaking.

No one objects to this view. The R60 is admirably suited to sidecar work. The steering is light and positive—by virtue of the readily adjustable front fork trail.

One snag to fitting a chair is the fact that to lower the gearing it is necessary to change the crown wheel and pinion in the final-drive housing. The cogs alone cost nearly £19 and when various oil seals, a new speedo head and new springs are taken into account, a conversion costs about £30.

Naturally, however, sidecar gearing can be specified as original equipment on a new machine.

Overall View

"IT IS so easy to gild the lily," reports Denis Saunders, "but this is a beautiful motor cycle. Your readers should be warned that once they possess a Bee-Emm they will never be happy or contented with any other make."

"They will want to sell the furniture, dress the wife in rags and starve the kids in order to buy spares and replacements rather than return to an old banger."

As you are aware, this Munich-built twin inspires enthusiasm of the most noble order. It is good. And critics should bear in mind the fact that in Germany, without crippling import duties, it costs no more than one of our six-fifties does over here. A sobering thought, surely.

The machine is probably not worth the money asked for it in England. After all, £600 to £700 is a lot of lolly.

But since value, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, enthusiasts are prepared to pay for what they consider to be the ultimate available today.

"Extremely smooth, turbine-like performance"—that's the quality admired most by Mike Norman of Chippenham. "I know I can go from A to B and back again week in, week out, as long as I fill it with petrol."

"I don't have to stop to adjust anything. I'm not knocking the British machines, but I have ridden both and if I ever do buy another bike it will be a BMW."

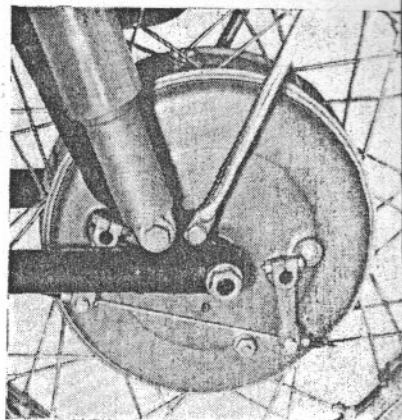
Eric Springall sums up: "I think that riding a BMW makes one behave oneself like a little gent. Even the most extrovert of us seems to realize that by precise, courteous and above all, silent

riding—which the BMW almost insists on—he's putting himself on a plane infinitely above the proletarian masses!"

Contributor Harvey Hoar, who is a bit of a German scholar besides being a BMW enthusiast, adds the final touch, appropriately, in the mother tongue:

"Begeistert durch die Landschaft flitzt, "Der, der auf einer BMW sitzt!"

which, roughly translated, means that he who sits on a BMW "flits" enthusiastically through the countryside. Seconded by all!



Praise from all quarters for the powerful twin-leading-shoe front brake—one of the star features of the BMW twins

PERCENTAGE VOTE

■ After sending in their reports, readers were asked to complete a questionnaire in which they answered specific questions according to the formula good, middling or poor.

In calculating these figures we have allowed two points for good and one point for middling. Poor got nothing.

The marks below are given as percentages of the total possible marks.

	R69S	R50/	R60	R69S	R50/	R60
		R60 Side-	car		R60 Side-	car
ACCELERATION	75	68	77	QUALITY OF FINISH	84	90
FLEXIBILITY	83	94	98	LIGHTING	88	90
SMOOTHNESS	98	99	93	HORN	76	83
STARTING	89	92	92	OTHER ELECTRICS	92	96
OIL TIGHTNESS	97	97	97	TOOL KIT	92	90
RELIABILITY	97	99	88	SPARES FROM CONCESSIONAIRES	58	72
CLUTCH	75	75	86	SPARES FROM DEALER	80	82
GEAR BOX	48	56	43	OVERALL MARK	84	88
DELIVERY TUNE	56	88	88	GOOD BUY? (PER CENT YES)	97	94
ACCESSIBILITY	86	93	98	WOULD YOU BUY ANOTHER? (PER CENT YES)	95	90
HANDLING	78	85	92			
FRONT SUSPENSION	92	93	95			
REAR SUSPENSION	98	95	98			
SMOOTHNESS OF CONTROLS	90	93	98			
RIDING POSITION	84	90	91			
BRAKES	94	94	93			
MUDGUARDING	97	95	95			
WORKMANSHIP	100	97	97			

■ FAIR SECONDHAND PRICES (for machines in average condition)—1960 R60, £190 (R50, £182; R69S not in production). 1961 R60, £230 (R50, £220; R69S, £260). 1962 R60, £276 (£266, £314). 1963 R60, £328 (£316, £372). 1964 R60, £386 (£372, £440). NEW PRICES: R50 not fixed; R60, £597 10s 5d; R69S, £694 9s 9d. (These new, higher prices came into effect on January 1 and will affect secondhand values).

WRITE NOW

NEXT? On the boil at the moment is the report on AMC (AJS or Matchless) two-fifty singles. You should send in your contribution immediately—if you have not already done so.

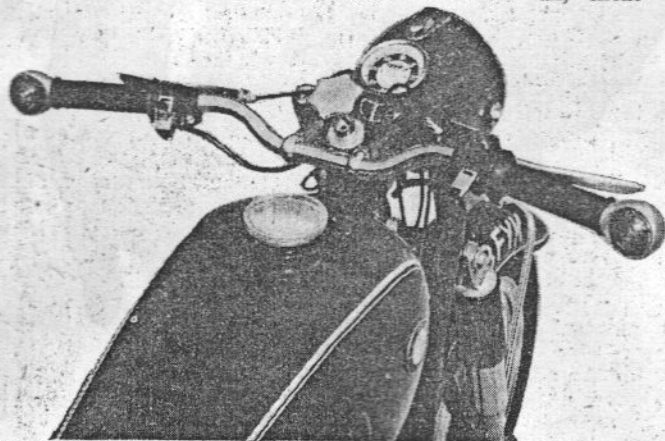
Following this will be a round-up of the famous Triumph Thunderbird, touring version of the six-fifty Bonneville reported on last year. For simplicity, though, we are limiting the feature to unit-construction models, introduced late in 1962.

Get writing now! The sooner we have sufficient reports, the sooner we can go to press.

Questionnaires will be sent to all contributors; but if you are unable to send a written report in the first instance, please drop us a postcard requesting a form.

Remember, however, that the questionnaire is intended only as a supplement to the written report. We do prefer to have your comments in letter form so that suitable quotations can be extracted for the report.

All correspondence should be addressed to Riders' Reports, Motor Cycle, Dorset House, Stamford Street, London, SE1.



The stately handlebar layout of all Bee-Emms. On the left-hand side are the horn button and dip switch while opposite numbers on the twist-grip side are for headlight flasher and indicators. The sturdy Hella indicators are clearly visible from front and rear.