

ROAD TESTS OF NEW MODELS

247 c.c. B.M.W. Model R26

A Quiet, Lively and Economical Roadster with First-class Springing, Steering and Braking, and a High Standard of Finish

INTRODUCED for 1956, the R26 B.M.W. model is fitted with a highly tuned version of the earlier R25 engine and pivoted-fork front and rear springing similar to that previously confined to the 494 c.c. R50 and the six-hundred R69. Outstanding characteristics of the two-fifty are its excellent riding comfort, superb steering, smooth, powerful braking, a remarkably high level of exhaust and mechanical quietness, good fuel economy and a fine standard of engineering, detail design and finish. And, as the data in the information panel show, the R26 possesses a high performance for a two-fifty.

On some modern machines a combination of a reasonably low seat and footrest setting with an ample range of wheel deflection results in a tendency for the footrests or other components to foul the road on corners. This is not so on the R26. The laden saddle height is low enough to permit a short rider to place his feet firmly on the ground when required and the footrests are sufficiently low to afford a comfortably wide knee angle; both front and rear springing systems allow ample wheel movement. Yet the model can be heeled over to an extreme degree when cornering without the footrests or other parts scraping the ground, for the width across the footrests is only 21in, while the silencer and centre stand are well tucked away.

Width of the tank between the rider's knees is also comparatively narrow (9½in), while handlebar width is only 25in. The resultant riding position proved extremely comfortable at all speeds within the model's compass, and many consecutive hours were spent awheel without a trace of fatigue. Another feature contributing to riding comfort is a four-position saddle-spring adjustment which caters for riders' weights from 132 to 220lb.

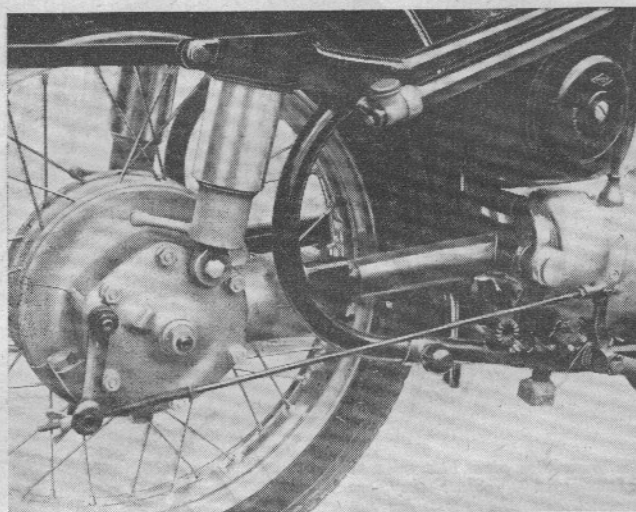
Grouped in two clusters clamped to the ends of the handlebar, the hand controls were all very conveniently sited and sweet in operation. Though not adjustable for position, the rear-brake and gear pedals were also ideally sited.

In both front and rear shock absorbers, spring and damper characteristics are extremely well blended. Both wheel suspensions responded remarkably well to all varieties of road shocks from small ripples to pot-holes, yet there was never any pitching. On full front-wheel deflection, caused by crossing a deep road hole at speed, the front number plate broke the headlamp glass. Mounting the plate an inch farther forward would preclude the possibility of its fouling the glass. (It should be remembered that front number plates are not used in Germany.)

Steering of the race-bred variety made cornering a sheer joy, whether the bend was fast or slow, smooth or bumpy. Unusually little effort was required to heel the model over. Indeed, once the banking was initiated the R26 seemed to take matters into its own hands with superlative results. Of an equally high standard was the braking. Used independently,

each brake could be made to evoke a protesting squeal from the tyre. Applied in unison, they would stop the model smoothly, safely and, if necessary, rapidly enough for any emergency. Although the brakes were intentionally not spared, no adjustment was needed during a test of just over 500 miles. Front-brake torque is transmitted through the pivoted fork so that brake operation tends to raise the front of the machine, but not unduly so, and certainly not enough to cause fork judder.

Whether the engine was cold or hot, a first-kick start could virtually be guaranteed provided the carburettor was not overflooded. If that was done the engine would fire readily if the kick-starter were operated with the throttle wide open. A



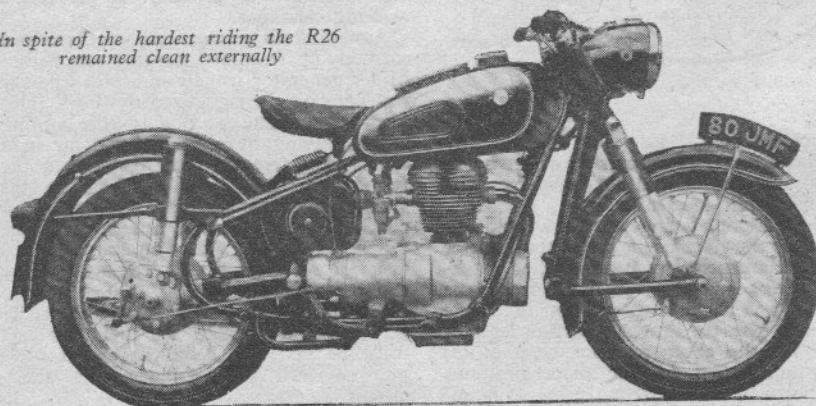
Final-drive unit with enclosed shaft. The levers protruding from the shock absorbers provide manual adjustment for load

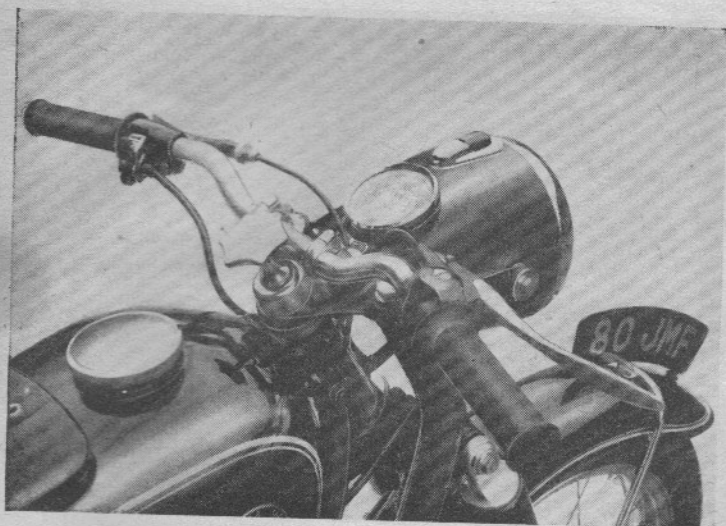
throttle setting as for a fast tick-over was normally required for starting, in conjunction with momentary operation of the float tickler when the engine was cold or none at all when it was hot. Whatever the temperature of the engine, it would idle very slowly and reliably when the throttle was closed.

Incorporating bevel gears which actuate the throttle cable through the medium of a cam, the twistgrip has a differential action giving a slow rate of throttle opening in the lower ranges and a progressively faster rate as the grip is rotated farther. This delicate control, in effect, enhanced the natural docility of the engine for traffic work and, in conjunction with a low bottom-gear ratio, smooth transmission and high flywheel inertia, made it easy to ride the R26 at a slow walking pace with the clutch fully engaged, and to accelerate sweetly from that speed.

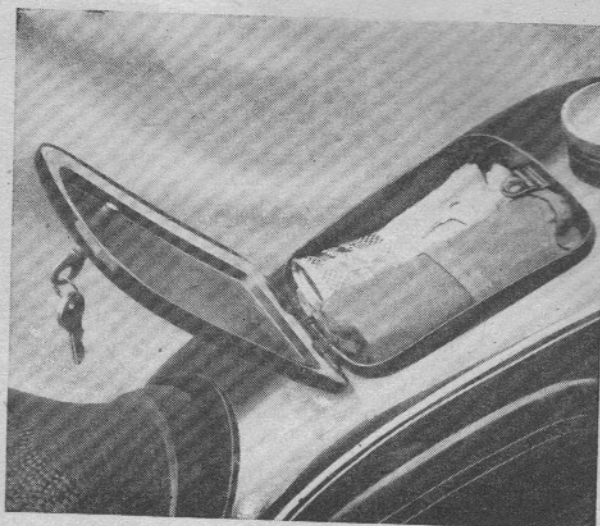
With the exception that slight vibration was perceptible between 44 and 48 m.p.h. in top gear, and again at an indicated 60 m.p.h., any speed between the minimum non-scratch figure and maximum was equally pleasant to use. On long main-road trips 50 miles were often packed into each hour by cruising on half-throttle or just over. This setting gave an indicated

In spite of the hardest riding the R26 remained clean externally





Left: The handlebar controls are neatly and conveniently grouped.



Right: The tool compartment is waterproofed by a sponge-rubber strip in the lid.

speed of approximately 70 m.p.h. under windless conditions on level roads; but speedometer flattery was about 10 per cent throughout the B.M.W.'s speed range. When tested for stamina the R26 was ridden for several miles on end on full throttle without the least sign of distress. Hill climbing was excellent, thanks to the engine's high torque and flywheel inertia.

An engine-speed clutch and widely spaced gear ratios do not make for the best in gear changing. Upward changes on the R26 could be made with lightning speed provided some clashing of the dogs was tolerated. Alternatively, noiseless changes could be effected by means of a pause in pedal movement. A slight click accompanied all downward changes. Engagement of bottom gear with the engine idling was almost noiseless; neutral selection was child's play and was indicated by the illumination of a green light in the headlamp shell. Clutch engagement was smooth but because of the high flywheel

inertia, the lever was best released gently if a slight lurch was to be avoided.

A wide, powerful headlamp beam made daylight speeds safe on unlit roads after dark. Mudguarding efficiency was above average. At the conclusion of the test which included much hard riding, no oil had leaked from any part of the mechanism.

A fine-quality toolkit and good accessibility render maintenance easy. But it is necessary to remove the tank to gain access to the valve adjustments and this involves draining the fuel. However, adjustments are unlikely to be required except after decarbonizing the engine. The R26 bristles with attractive features such as quickly detachable, balanced wheels with polished, light-alloy rims, steering and toolbox locks and rubber sealing of the tool and battery containers. In its performance, unobtrusiveness, finish and detail design, the R26 cannot fail to engender great pride of ownership.

Information Panel

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: B.M.W. 247 c.c. (68 x 68 mm) overhead-valve single with fully-enclosed valve gear, dynamo and ignition equipment. Aluminium-alloy cylinder head. Light-alloy connecting rod; plain big-end bearing. Crankshaft supported by three ball bearings. Compression ratio, 7.5 to 1. Pressure lubrication; oil compartment in crankcase, capacity 2½ pints.

CARBURETTOR: Bing with twistgrip throttle control. Air filter.

IGNITION AND LIGHTING: Coil ignition with auto-advance. Noris 60-watt dynamo with automatic voltage control. Bayern 6-volt, 9-ampere-hour battery. Bosch 6½-in-diameter headlamp with pre-focus light unit and 35/35-watt main bulb.

TRANSMISSION: B.M.W. four-speed gear box in unit with engine; positive-stop foot control. Gear ratios: bottom, 22.17 to 1; second, 12.56 to 1; third, 8.49 to 1; top, 6.41 to 1. Single-plate dry clutch incorporated in engine flywheel; fabric friction material. Final drive by enclosed shaft and helical bevel gears. Engine r.p.m. at 30 m.p.h. in top gear, 2,630.

FUEL CAPACITY: 3¼ gallons.

TYRES: Metzeler 3.25 x 18in front and rear.

BRAKES: 6½in diameter x 1½in wide front and rear; finger adjusters.

SUSPENSION: B.M.W. pivoted-fork front and rear springing employing multi-rate coil springs and hydraulic damping. Two-position manual adjustment for load on rear shock absorbers. Two-position load and trail adjustments on front fork for sidecar duty.

WHEELBASE: 54½in unladen. Ground clearance, 6in unladen.

SADDLE: Pagusa cantilever type, pivoted at nose; rubber top. Four-position adjustment for rider's weight. Unladen height, 31in.

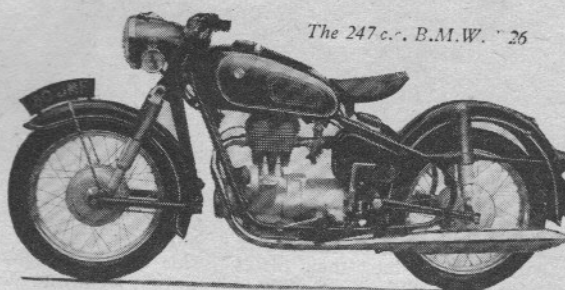
WEIGHT: 330 lb fully equipped and with full oil container and one gallon of petrol.

PRICE: £207. With purchase tax (in Great Britain only), £256 13s 7d.

ROAD TAX: £1 17s 6d. a year; 10s 4d a quarter.

MAKERS: Bayerische Motoren Werke A.G., Munich, Germany.

BRITISH CONCESSIONAIRES: A.F.N., Ltd., Falcon Works, London Road, Isleworth, Middlesex.



The 247 c.c. B.M.W. R26

PERFORMANCE DATA

MEAN MAXIMUM SPEED: Bottom: * 23 m.p.h.

Second: * 41 m.p.h.

Third: * 60 m.p.h.

Top: 72 m.p.h.

* Valve float occurring.

HIGHEST ONE-WAY SPEED: 73 m.p.h. (conditions: moderate side wind; rider wearing two-piece plastic suit and overboots).

MEAN ACCELERATION: 10-30 m.p.h. 20-40 m.p.h. 30-50 m.p.h.

Second ... 5.2 sec 4.8 sec

Third ... 8.0 sec 7.6 sec

Top ... 11.5 sec 13.4 sec

Mean speed at end of quarter-mile from rest: 62 m.p.h.

Mean time to cover standing quarter-mile: 20.5 sec.

PETROL CONSUMPTION: At 30 m.p.h., 120 m.p.g. At 40 m.p.h.

100 m.p.g. At 50 m.p.h., 80 m.p.g. At 60 m.p.h., 67 m.p.g.

BRAKING: From 30 m.p.h. to rest, 29ft (surface, dry tarmac).

TURNING CIRCLE: 13ft 6in.

MINIMUM NON-SNATCH SPEED: 15 m.p.h. in top gear

WEIGHT PER C.C.: 1.34 lb.