

**Some notes by the Editor on a variety of subjects. The new M.G. shows its paces in the Western Highlands. A post-war paddle steamer is examined and the threat to Scotland's great tourist industry is discussed.**

At this time of year my friends the travelling showmen are very busy. As the autumn nights grow darker and the first chill of winter blows across Northern Europe, you will find from Amsterdam to Aberystwyth a chain of country Fairs supported by the agricultural community, whose heaviest task is accomplished and to whom the winter nights spell a measure of well-earned relaxation.

For the showman, the back-end run, as he calls this autumn tour, represents his final opportunity of earning a little more money before he, too, is closed down by wintry conditions. It is, in fact, for him, the gilt on the gingerbread, and there is a kind of jovial atmosphere around these fairgrounds which makes them perhaps the most pleasant of the few forms of old-time entertainment still remaining in our midst.

When the abolition of the basic ration was first announced, I had intended to take an autumn holiday, and it seemed clear that here, for me also, was a chance to enjoy a "back-end run." For not only was a non-motoring winter about to descend upon us all, but no man knew when the curtain of prohibition would be raised again, nor could there be any certainty as to whether holiday touring, either at home or abroad, would recover its

accepted form for a very long time to come. It seemed wise, therefore, to make this holiday an occasion to realize all possible ambitions, and predominantly, as far as my personal aims were concerned, these amounted to three in number. In the first place, a great curiosity had for some time possessed me regarding the 1¼-litre MG. saloon. I had been constantly asked my opinion of this new model, and the few miles of driving in the London area which constituted the sum of my experience had

## The BACKEND RUN

By Christopher Jennings



All this and four passengers too! The luggage accommodation of the M.G. is adequate for prolonged touring

not seemed adequate grounds for any form of comment. The question as to whether the latest product of the MG. Car Co. would add distinction to a great name, or whether it was, in fact, tainted by too much concession to the saloon—car motorists, was one which needed an answer, and I was, therefore, glad to borrow one of these cars for my planned journey.

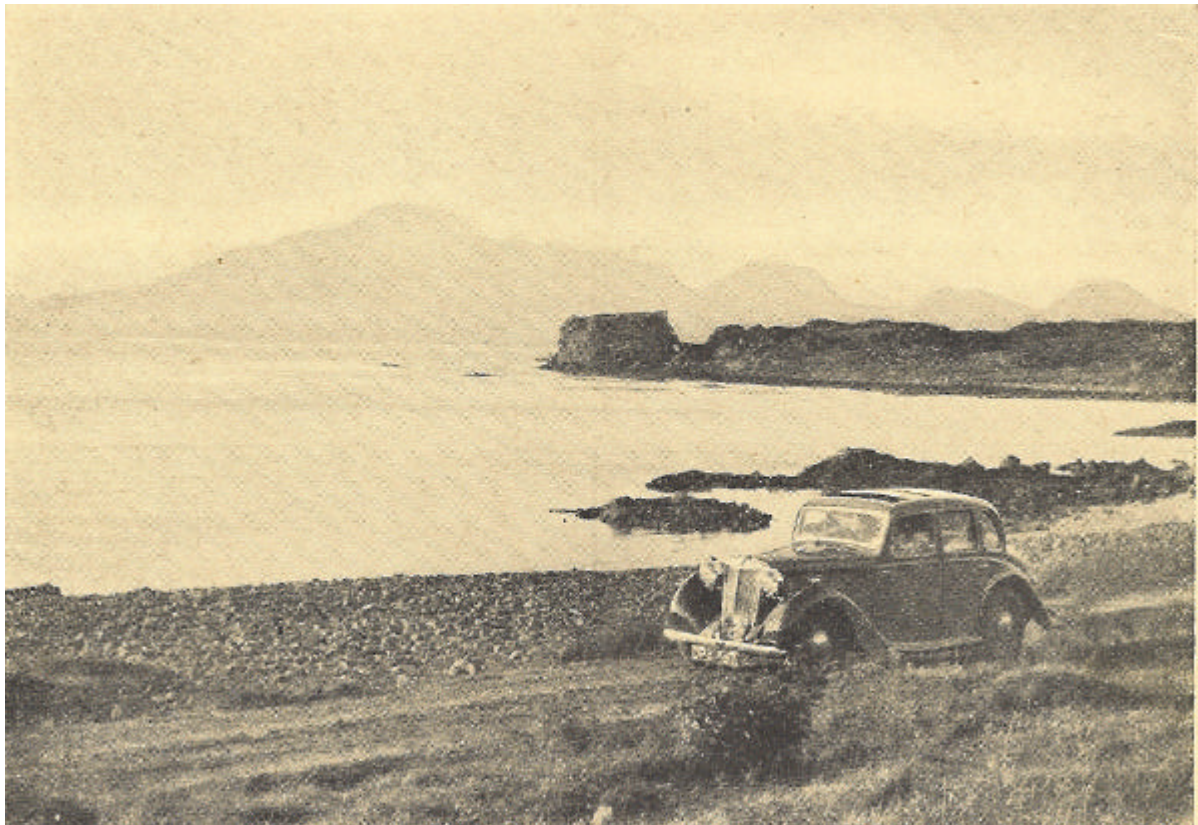
The second object of the tour which I had in mind involved a journey to the Island of Skye, because several years prior to the war I had firmly intended to sail in those parts, and also explore the centre of the Island. Hitler wrecked these plans at a time when they were just about to bear fruit, and I felt that the petrol crisis might well put paid to the chance of even motoring in Skye unless I carried out my journey before the basic ration terminated.

The third object of this holiday was one which is unlikely to be appreciated by anyone not concerned with ships. I happen to be extremely interested in the paddle steamers of Great Britain, and a fine new ship of this type which was launched just a year ago had now come into commission on the Clyde, and thus awaited inspection.

But to return to my means of transport. The general appearance of the 1¼-litre M.G. suggests that it fills the gap between the pure sports car and the family saloon. With the object of treating it in this manner, I set out with a passenger load consisting of three adults and one child, plus all the luggage necessary for a three weeks journey. I felt that if the car acquitted itself well in these circumstances, and



The steep and beautiful climb above Loch Duich.



Looking west towards the Cuillins from the coast of Sleat, Isle of Skye.

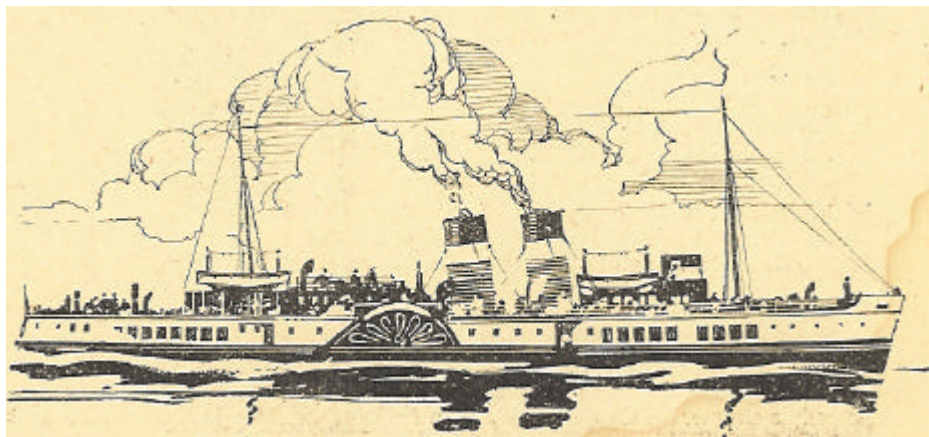
yet lived up to my previous impression of good handling when driven in an enterprising manner, considerable credit would come its way. Soon we were darting up the Great North Road with the luggage platform crowded with some of the heaviest suitcases imaginable, and the inside of the car very fully occupied. It should, in fact, be emphasized that, whereas an overloaded tail finds out many a small car, the M.G. appeared to revel in the extra weight, and even on wet, slippery surfaces, the road-holding characteristics seemed to be very little impaired. In fact, on roads with a soft foundation, and wavy surfaces of the type so often found in the Highlands, the M.G. rode amazingly well, and I do not know of many small saloons where it is possible to do 327 miles in one day "en famille," and discover that everyone felt fresh and happy at the journey's end.

There was work to be done in the Glasgow area, and as bed and breakfast even in the autumn, on the Great North Road is not yet particularly plentiful, accommodation was booked at the Three Arrows Hotel at Boroughbridge. This hotel, protected from the highway by pleasant grounds, is consequently free from noise at night. As to comfort, service and administration, these must be classed as above reproach. The following day gave us our only unfortunate hotel experience of the entire journey, when an inn at Abington branded with A.A. and R.A.C. signs refused to consider serving any

lunch at all, even though it was not then 1 p.m. No other cars were present, but a motorbus stood outside, and there is very little doubt that the food had gone to the occupants of this coach, because the dining-room looked fairly full. Whereas quite obviously motorcoach occupants have every bit as much right to their meals as any other road user, it does seem that motoring organizations should withdraw their patronage when not even one table can be allocated for the private motorist. Perhaps this point rankled the more because of the appalling weather, and the fact that there was no other lunch apparent for several miles in either direction.

Two days' work being successfully accomplished, we left the grime and smoke of Glasgow for the autumn greenness of the hills, which had received their first rain for many weeks. Staying near Hunters Quay, I was able to renew my acquaintance with the many ships that ply between the piers of that wonderful stretch of water leading down to the Firth of Clyde.

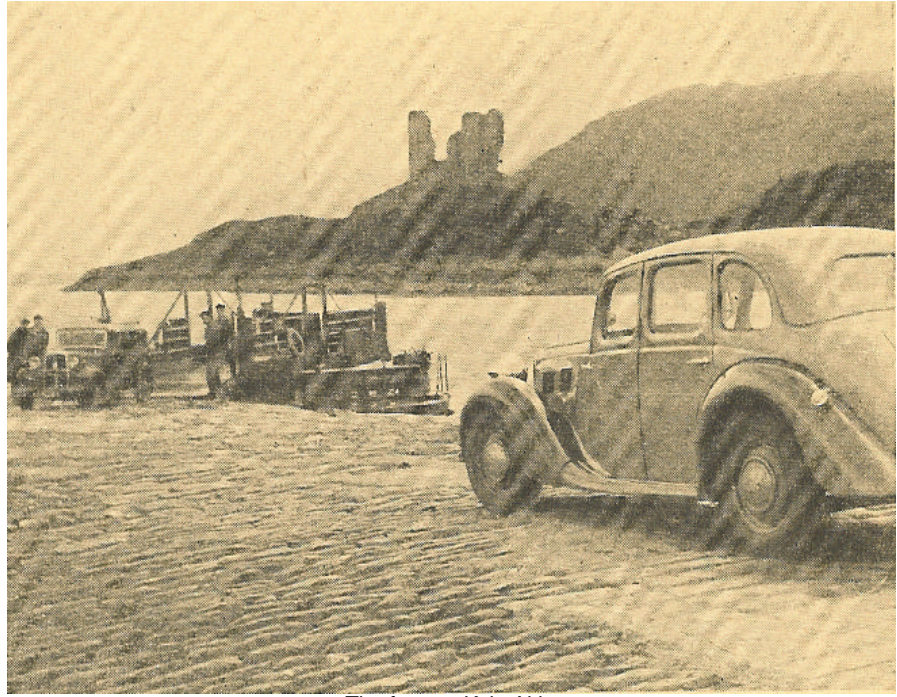
To the Scot, these steamers offer escape from the



P.S. Waverley, built since the end of the war, is now maintaining a regular service on the Clyde.



harsh ugliness of industrial Clydeside. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that almost every citizen that one encounters has a more than personal interest in the ships which he has known in such happy circumstances. You will find that within a few minutes of leaving the shore it is customary for the passengers to go below and inspect the engine-room, and this tendency is recognized and encouraged by those whose business it is to design, build and operate what is probably the most efficient short-distance steamer service in the world.

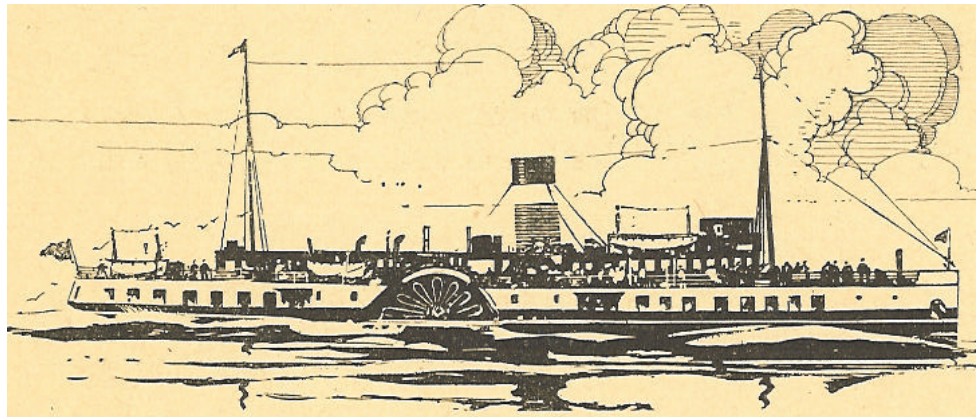


The ferry at Kyle Akin  
Isle of Skye.

### Paddles for Power

It may, in fact, surprise many readers to know that the latest vessel operating on the Clyde is propelled by paddles, but this form of propulsion offers a degree of acceleration and braking (to use motoring terms), coupled with shallow draught, which is invaluable

for the job in hand. A surprising number of people suffer from the illusion that this type of steamer can operate its paddles independently and thereby turn in a remarkably small space. This is untrue, in so far as it concerns the normal sea-going paddle vessel, and many a pint of beer can be won on arguments about this subject, when once this fact is realized. Technically, perhaps the most interesting ship on the Clyde is the Diesel-electric paddle steamer "Talisman," which is a 17-knot, 215-ft. vessel, launched in 1935 and now back on duty after strenuous war service. This vessel is powered by four eight-cylinder oil engines of 400 b.h.p. each, coupled to 250-295-volt, 248-kW, direct current generators which supply their power to a 1,300 b.h.p. electric motor. Outwardly, in common with other L.N.E.R. ships, she is a handsome vessel, making no concession to deplorable attempts to conceal the paddle boxes by pseudo-streamlining, and although the impressive sight of the more usual steam engine is denied to the passengers, there are excellent facilities for viewing the extensive electrical installations. It is, however, interesting to observe that after prolonged experience of this ship, the



P.S. Talisman is powered by a Diesel-electric plant weighing about 110 tons. The four motors total 1,600 b.h.p. and give a speed of 17½ knots.

L.N.E.R. have returned to the reciprocating steam engine for their latest type, and it was this vessel, the "Waverley," which I had really come north to see. Technical details of this ship might prove wearisome, but one small incident gave me a clue to the reason why the Scot succeeds so well at sea. Not only does he ally great natural courtesy with an understanding of ships and their working, but I found that a deck-hand on the "Waverley," when I staggered up the gangway carrying an outboard motor, took upon himself duties which would have done credit to any host entertaining an honoured guest, and it is probably this treatment of their ordinary passengers that makes the Glaswegian venerate his steamers in a manner reminiscent of a vintage motorist and his most treasured possession.

On the subsequent drive north and the visit to Skye, the M.G. really came into its own. The compact overall dimensions and independent front suspension, coupled with the featherweight steering and controls, rendered this little car an absolute joy, especially when the excellent all-round visibility and the comparatively high seating position gave glimpses of views such as only the Highlands can produce. Incidentally, having regard to the

controversy on sunshine roofs, it was pleasant to record that even with the autumn chill already in the air a draught-free form of ventilation could be achieved by closing all the windows and opening the roof. With mountains all round and snow on the peaks of some of them, there were many wonderful moments that might have been missed in a car with a fixed head.

### Overseas Visitors

Wandering through the West Highlands, it was noticeable that the lists of 1947 guests in the various hotel registers contained a high percentage of American, Dominion and other overseas addresses. In fact, it should be recorded that the West Highland hotel has done a marvellous job in catering for the post-war visitor. New equipment, paint and polish abound, and no one can say that the Scottish hotel keeper is not making every effort to bring the foreign tourist to Britain. As a means of acquiring dollars and equally valuable goodwill, such hotels represent one of our strongest hopes, and it is all the more tragic to record that these enterprises are now faced with disaster as a result of the abolition of the basic petrol ration. It is true that the foreigner can still motor freely in Great Britain, but without the support of the home tourist industry, such outlying hotels cannot possibly stand economically.

Throughout the Highlands, speaking to garage proprietors, hotel keepers and men and women who earned their living in dozens of different ways, I found that people who till quite recently had never thought much of the idea of Scotland as an independent state now talk openly of such a break as a desirable thing. The outlook is not particularly tempered by any shade of politics, but it does seem as if the petrol cut has turned out to be the last straw, not only to millions of people living in England and Wales, but to the far-seeing Scot, who foresees in the loss of the tourist industry a disaster which hits hardest the man who might otherwise soon recover from the lean war years which, in most cases, were spent in the service of Great Britain.

The Island of Skye in the autumn is a very attractive place. We crossed by the ferry at Kyle

Rhea and returned by the rather more elaborate affair at Kyle Akin.

The latter kept us waiting for an hour-and-a-half on account of the low tide, but we were rewarded by a good lunch at the Railway Hotel on the mainland at Kyle of Lochalsh.

While in Skye we explored the southern tip of the island in particular and stayed at the hotel at Duisdale. Perhaps the most astonishing thing about our arrival at this most comfortable and hospitable place was the fact that within an hour or two we discovered that two other guests had 1¼ M.G.s on order, and another had heard that his new M.G. had been delivered and awaited his return home. Thus there was great interest in the little car, coupled with a certain measure of relief when we were able to hold forth on its many merits. Curiously enough, we did not see a single sister car on the entire journey to Scotland and back, with one exception, and this was an exactly similar model painted in the same way which was waiting to cross from Skye on the ferry. It was, we felt, particularly significant that the MG. went on and off various ferries and over the most improbable surfaces without grounding at any vital point, and it would seem that here is a car very well suited for export, and one which will surely do us the greatest credit overseas. In the subsequent journey, which took us to many of the most attractive points of the western coast, there was always admiration from enthusiasts who came and asked to be allowed to examine the car in detail. I think this is because the M.G. Car Company have avoided the pitfall of trying to make the smallest concession to the modern bulbous tendencies. I am a great admirer of the properly streamlined car. I can also give credit to the vehicle built to approach a good aerodynamic form, but which makes some small concessions to all-round visibility, headroom and the like. But the MG. Company have stuck to their guns and produced a typically British small car which is uncompromisingly functional from its self-jacking gear to its vast luggage-carrying capacity, and when at the end of my travels I handed it back to the factory at Abingdon-on-Thames, it was with the realization that the missing link between the small family saloon and the all-out sports car has at last been placed firmly upon the markets of the world.



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