



B.M.C.'S BIG SIX IS BEAUT . . .

After months of rumour and counter rumour B.M.C.'s "big six" has arrived. Many were a little disappointed with its appearance — a very slight rehash of the current four's but nobody could quarrel about the power, fittings or price. Use of a current body shape and engine design (the B type with two more cylinders) should mean that this new model will have few teething troubles.



For years one of the old faithfuls of the motoring world has been this question: When will B.M.C. bring out a six-cylinder rival to you-know-what?

At the end of the 'fifties rumor ran hot and strong that the birth was imminent.

Instead B.M.C. hopefully kept on producing the Farina quads — Austin, Morris, Wolseley and M.G. Magnette.

Finding them a home was none too easy — ask any salesman working under the Nuffield Rosette.

We like "Sixes"

Australians had been conditioned to six-pot motoring and few would settle for any less.

Good as it is the B.M.C. B series engines was no substitute for a six-banger in the minds of buyers.

The message got through to the top brass at Victoria Park in Sydney. And their ivory towers began to hum to a new tune. Six heats to the bar, of course,

You can see the results running about the streets now — the Austin Freeway and the Wolseley 24/80.

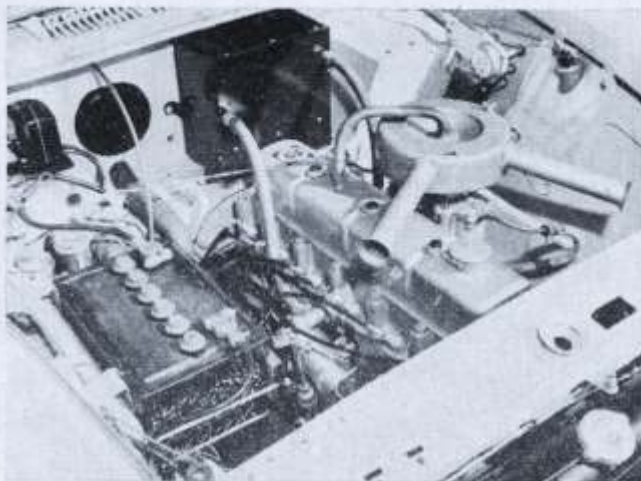
The Freeway is aimed at skimming off some of Holden-Falcon cream. The Wolseley is for people who want something a little better than the volume sellers, but without a whopping price tag.

Challenge to Holden, Falcon

By now every imaginable comparison among Freeway, Holden and Falcon has been made. Enough to say that their performances and fuel figures come within a whisker of each other.

In terms of roadholding the Freeway is probably ahead. In finish it comes third — although quality may pick up as production speeds up.

In braking it's neck-and-neck with the Falcon, but in the rough it really shines.



The B type B.M.C. engine has another two cylinders added to it to become the 65 b.h.p. "Blue Streak" unit. As this design is one where the tuning boys know all the head modifications off by heart (it's the same as the M.G.) competition potential is good.

Put that down to 14-inch wheels and European ideas about springing.

Luxury Wolseley version

All this — apart from finish — applies to the Wolseley. For £95 extra B.M.C. dresses up the Freeway in fine walnut-and-leather style, keeps the old 15/60 body shell and, voila!, you have the new Wolseley.

Most of our test time was spent in the Wolseley. For two reasons. First, it was let out for pre-release runs because the only give-away about its character was the 24/80 chrome lettering on the boot. The Freeway, it was argued, would be spotted too early.

Secondly . . . we're a bit snobbish at heart, and the call of hide and wood-work was pretty strong. It helps to impress the girls, too!

Engine note is hard

First twist of the key starter brought a surprise. The engine note was hard, almost a growl.

As one of the staff put it: "Last time I heard anything like that was a side-valve V8 suffering from machine gun tappets."

This is probably unfair, but the engine — optimistically named the Blue Streak — is undoubtedly harsh. We're told that the bearings are the bogey. Likely that B.M.C. will switch to different shells to overcome the problem.

Top gear pulls well

Torque figure is 123 ft./lb. at 1,650 r.p.m. which, combined with a rather low final drive ratio, means good top gear pulling and less fiddling with the column gearshift.

Gearbox is adapted from the B-series car, but carries one cog less. Low is not synchronised, but downshifts are quite painless.

Second gear, we feel, is on the low side. It winds out at 61 miles an hour. Pity.

Do-it-yourself doodlers will appreciate the room around plugs and distributor. The dipstick, too, doesn't need rubber arm to reach.

Now for a look inside the living quarters.

AUSTIN FREEWAY



ENGINE: Six cylinders in-line o.h.v.

Bore and Stroke: 75 x 89 mm.

Capacity: 2433 c.c.

Compression Ratio: 7.7 to 1.

Carburettor: Zenith downdraught.

TRANSMISSION: Three speed with synchromesh on top two ratios and dog-clutch engagement on first.

Clutch: Single dry plate.

SUSPENSION:

Front: Independent by coil springs and wish-bones.

Rear: Semi-elliptics.

BRAKES: Hydraulic.

Lining Area: 146.5 square inches.

STEERING: Cam and peg.

Turns lock to lock: 2.8.

TYRES: 5.90 x 14. **CHASSIS:** Integral.

BODYWORK: 4 door, 5-6 seats.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase: 100 ins.

Track: Front, 4 ft. 2.5 ins. Rear, 4 ft. 3 ins.

Length: 14 ft. 10 ins. Width: 5 ft. 3.5 ins.

Height: 4 ft. 11.75 ins.

Ground Clearance: 6.25 ins.

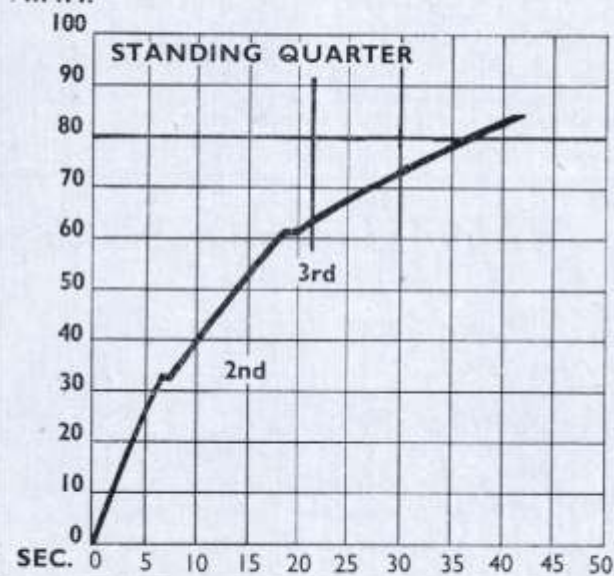
Turning Circle: 37 ft. Curb Weight: 23½ cwt.

PRICE: £1,130.

OTHER MODELS: Wolseley 24/80 — £1,225.

Station Sedan — £1,225.

M.P.H.





For those who want comfort with carrying capacity there is the Freeway station wagon. Styling changes from the A60 are slight but enough to make this one of the prettiest units available.

Seats are deep, well-padded and comfortable for four. Any more who try to hog in are unwelcome.

Front seats are separate and have plenty of adjustment for the six-foot brigade. They give good shoulder support, too.

Back seat has a central armrest and two others on each door.

Woodwork is spread along the dash and window sills and crash padding covers the fascia top and leading edge of the parcels shelf.

"Idiot lights" are gone

Angle of the big, dished steering wheel is good, pedals are nicely placed for a spot of heel and toe and instruments are grouped ahead of the driver.

No idiot lights for the Wolseley buyer—just simple easy-to-read gauges for fuel, oil pressure and engine temperature. A clock and trip meter complete the set-up.

Now for a black mark. Toggle switches for lights, wipers and so on are not marked. Confusing.

Heater is standard

And another . . . window winders on the front doors are too far away. If the driver is wearing a sash-type safety belt, he can't reach them.



Styling inside is neat and uncluttered. The only point where things fall down is the low position of the window winders. A complete set of instruments lets the driver know what's going on.

A heater-demister is standard, complete with booster fan to please the most thin-blooded of us.

Boot space is big and square. The spare has its own wind-down compartment. But the tools—few, but welcome—are just wrapped up in a paper bag and left to lash about the boot. Tut ,tut.

Handling is good

The Wolseley's handling, even in the wet, is good. There is a fair bit of body lean, but none of the frighten-'em-to-death stuff.

Steering is accurate, but heavy at low speed—although this may have been a fault of this particular test car.

Brakes are effective

Brakes take a lot of punishment without fading. However, they need a hefty boot to get the required result.

Cruising speed is in the 65-70 mile an hour bracket, which, unfortunately, coincides with a decided rise in engine roar.

Off the bitumen performance is particularly good for a car with cart-sprung rear ends. An enthusiastic dab on the throttle makes the live axle hop a bit, and there is some steering wheel shake.

But, generally, the Wolseley will make its competitors bite its dust.

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