

# SARACEN TRIALS

A Light and Powerful Hybrid Proves Its Mettle in a Grueling Test on the English Heathlands.

BY MAX KING

I RELISHED THE THOUGHT of testing this little bike—befitting a Saracen, it had a pugnacious look about it! But the main reason I was anxious to put this new machine through its paces, to be honest, was that I had little regard for anything less than a 200-cc trials model and I wanted to see what this 125 would do. Since 1958, I had not ridden a trialer with less than 250 cc, which I believed to be the right size engine for serious trials work.

To begin with, let us look at the bike itself. It is made by

Saracen Engineering, a small firm in South Cerney near Cirencester, a market town in Gloucestershire. This firm also designs agricultural machinery—but there is nothing agricultural about their trials motorcycle. In fact, it is very well made indeed.

The frame is made of T45 aircraft tubing and weighs a mere 16 lb. At first glance, it has a familiarity about it, but closer examination shows that its design is unique. The whole unit is jig welded and the general standard of workmanship is above average. It is a surprisingly strong looking little bike, yet its total weight is only 173 lb.

"Slimline" forks are used but the high-lift, braced handlebar makes the Saracen look a bit high in front. To my mind, the bracing is unnecessary and makes for top-heaviness; I raised this point with the makers and production models will not have braced bars. The fork action is first-class, although oil spurted out of the vent holes when pressing on over rough country—the fork legs were probably overfilled.

In my opinion, the 52-in. wheelbase was just right, and with a ground clearance of 10 in., there were no problems in climbing over roots and high rock steps. This is commendable, bearing in mind the comparatively low footrests. This also accounts, in part, for the ease with which the bike can be balanced. The rests themselves are tidy and tough.

For a long-legged person, the seat height, 28 in., is on the low side. On the other hand, it will enable a chap of short to medium build to bring full pressure to bear for footing out of trouble. The seat is neat, well made, but not very comfortable.

Very sensibly, a 1/2- by 5/16-in. rear chain is used, and adjustment by means of the eccentrically mounted swinging arm is simplicity itself. The alloy chainguard is somewhat meager, but it seemed quite adequate. The 'V'-shaped rear frame member, however, was a natural collecting point for mire; mud was also carried by the chain into the final drive housing. It would be an improvement if the timing case cover could be cut back to expose the sprocket, but the speedometer drive might present difficulties here.

Both mudguards are of aluminum but the top of the front one is much too close to the tire. This oversight will be remedied when production gets under way.

Another matter of detail which will be improved is the kick-starter; the cranked lever on the prototype was turned outward for some reason; this made gear changing awkward on the road and caused one's foot to slip off the rest. This was bad and future plans include fitting a straight starter lever.

Capacity of the fiberglass petrol tank is 1.5 gal.; it is exceptionally neat and low-slung. A good quality, quick action filler cap is fitted, and the bright red color of the tank contrasts well with the gold acrylic cellulose used on the frame to give the Saracen a smart, rather sophisticated appearance. All in all, it is a very cobby looking bike with an overall width—across the pegs—of only 15 in.

The engine is one of the machine's great assets. It is the Sachs 1251/5A oil injection two-stroke; bore and stroke 2.126 in. (54 mm); cubic capacity 123 cc; and output 12.5 bhp at 7300 rpm. This well-ried, extremely efficient and reliable German engine/gearbox unit impressed me immensely. Fitting snugly into the Saracen frame and equipped with a trim upswept, black finished, exhaust pipe, this little engine far exceeded my expectations.

In common with most modern two-strokes, the exhaust note is "rorty" but delightfully crisp sounding on sections. Restraint will be necessary, though, in built-up areas. The silencer is fairly well tucked-in but it requires a shield; more than once, I had the feeling that a hole had been burnt through my Barbour trousers!

