

## ROAD TESTS OF 1932 MODELS

# The 499 c.c. RACE-BRED RUDGE

## The Latest "Special" Receives Full Honours for Speed and Handiness

AT the risk of repeating the remarks of thousands, we cannot refrain from again saying that it was a pity that the Show-going public were not able to see the 1932 Rudge under the Olympian roof.

Still, owing to the enterprise of the Rudge agents, Lawrence, Freeman (Motors), Ltd., of Hammersmith Road, W.6, the public was relieved from complete disappointment and it was through the courtesy of this concern that we were able to secure the loan of a 1932 demonstration 500 c.c. Special model for a test of several hundred miles both as a solo and a sidecar mount.

The machine, it must be understood, was not secured especially for the purpose, but was one actually chosen from Messrs. Lawrence, Freeman's stock by a customer.

This model may be summed up in two words—"controlled power." Few machines have given us the impression of such complete mastery.

The whole design of the machine is aimed at giving the rider clean, comfortable motorcycling, and every movement necessary in riding the machine was a perfectly natural one.

The twist-grip for the throttle control was hardly thicker than the "clean" handlebar upon which it was fitted, and in this connection a small item of interest was the neat ferrule which prevented the internal cable being chafed where it entered the handlebar.

Inverted levers have been dispensed with and straight-pull exhaust lifter, clutch and brake levers take their places. All are placed in handy positions and are long enough to give ample leverage.

The pedal which controls the famous proportionally coupled brakes is under the right foot—always. The

left foot is given charge of the gearbox by one of the finest examples of foot-change mechanism which we have tested.

Throughout practically the whole of our temporary proprietorship of the machine the roads were wet or greasy, but only once did this trouble us when riding the machine solo.

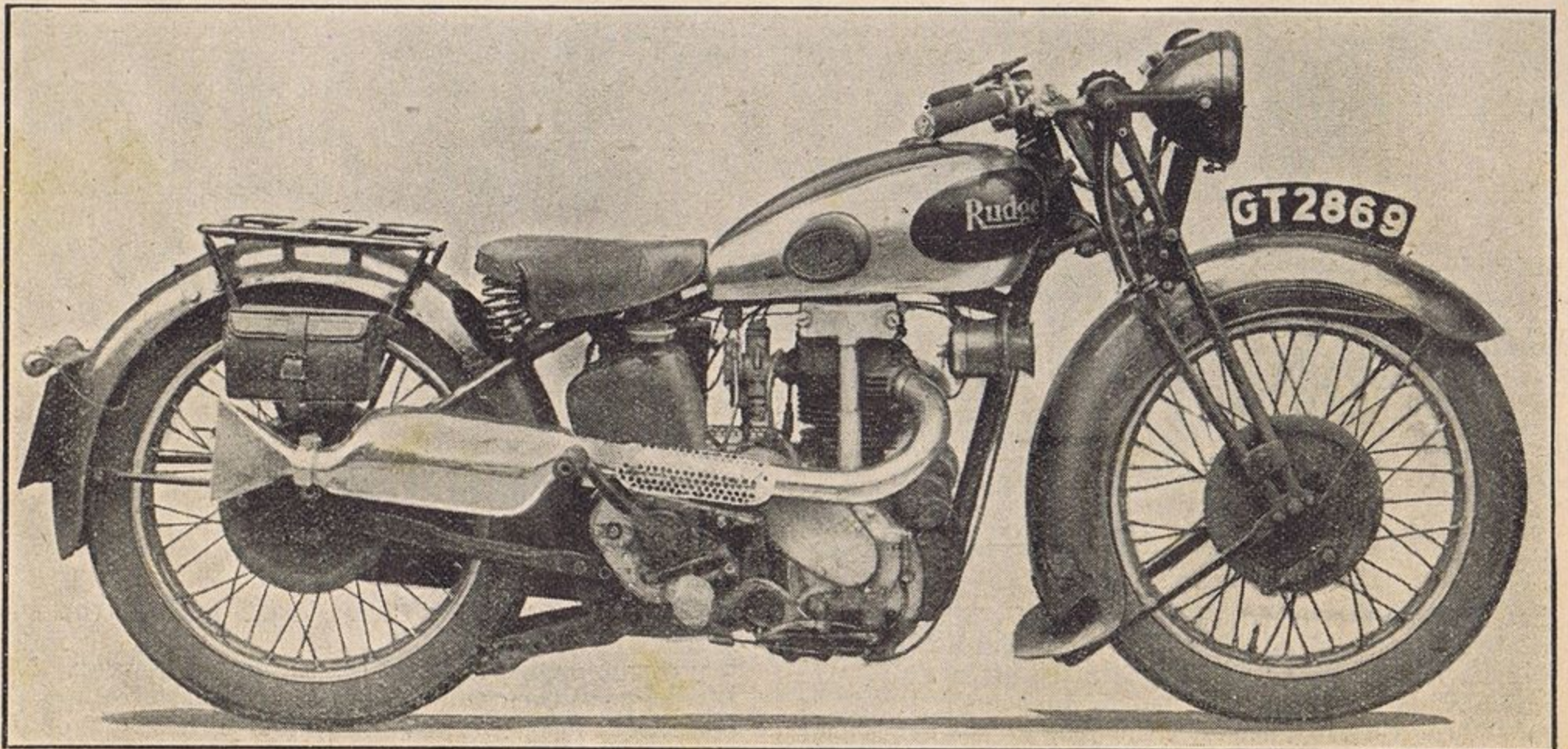
A little over-confidence, begotten of the Rudge's apparent inability to skid, caused us to underestimate certain notorious South London tramlines, and there it was that our only real criticism of the machine arose. The gear-change pedal was in rather an exposed position on the near side—and it suffered accordingly. In fairness, however, it must be admitted that this particular machine had upswept exhaust pipes. With standard pipes it is extremely unlikely that the pedal would have been damaged.

The improved mudguarding was a great boon during the wet and it was hardly necessary to wear waders, neither did the machine require more than a perfunctory wipe over with a rag after many dirty miles. The quality of the chromium plating and the enamel was certainly too good to be affected by wet or mud.

It was, however, on the open road that the Rudge showed its breeding.

Short and low, it was just the machine on which to dig in one's knees and bow to the god of Speed.

Cruising between 50 and 60 m.p.h. was comfortable motoring and, although no speedometer was fitted, it can be taken with a fair amount of assurance that the highest speeds attainable, without over-stressing the machine, on each of the three intermediate gears were 25 m.p.h., 40 m.p.h. and 65 m.p.h.



The 1932 Rudge Special is a machine the lines of which betray its I.O.M. breeding. Nevertheless, it is a road mount fit for the hardest work.



**BRIEF SPECIFICATION.**

**Engine:** Rudge 4-valve, 2-port, o.h.v., bore 85 m.m., stroke 88 m.m. = 499 c.c.; 2-ring aluminium piston; fully floating gudgeon pin. Roller bearings to big end and timing side crankshaft. Ball and roller bearings on driving side. Dry sump lubrication with separate 3-pint oil tank containing fabric oil filter.

**Frame:** Diamond. **Forks:** Totally enclosed central spring with hand-operated dampers.

**Wheels:** 26 ins. by 3.25 ins., quickly detachable and interchangeable; Avon Cord tyres; chromium-plated rims; coupled brakes, each 8 ins. by 1½ ins.

**Transmission:** Rudge gearbox; standard solo ratios, 4.6, 6.3, 8.2 and 14.1 to 1. Tankside control (foot change 25s. extra). Appleby roller chains. Primary in oil bath, rear cam adjusted. Shock absorber on crankshaft.

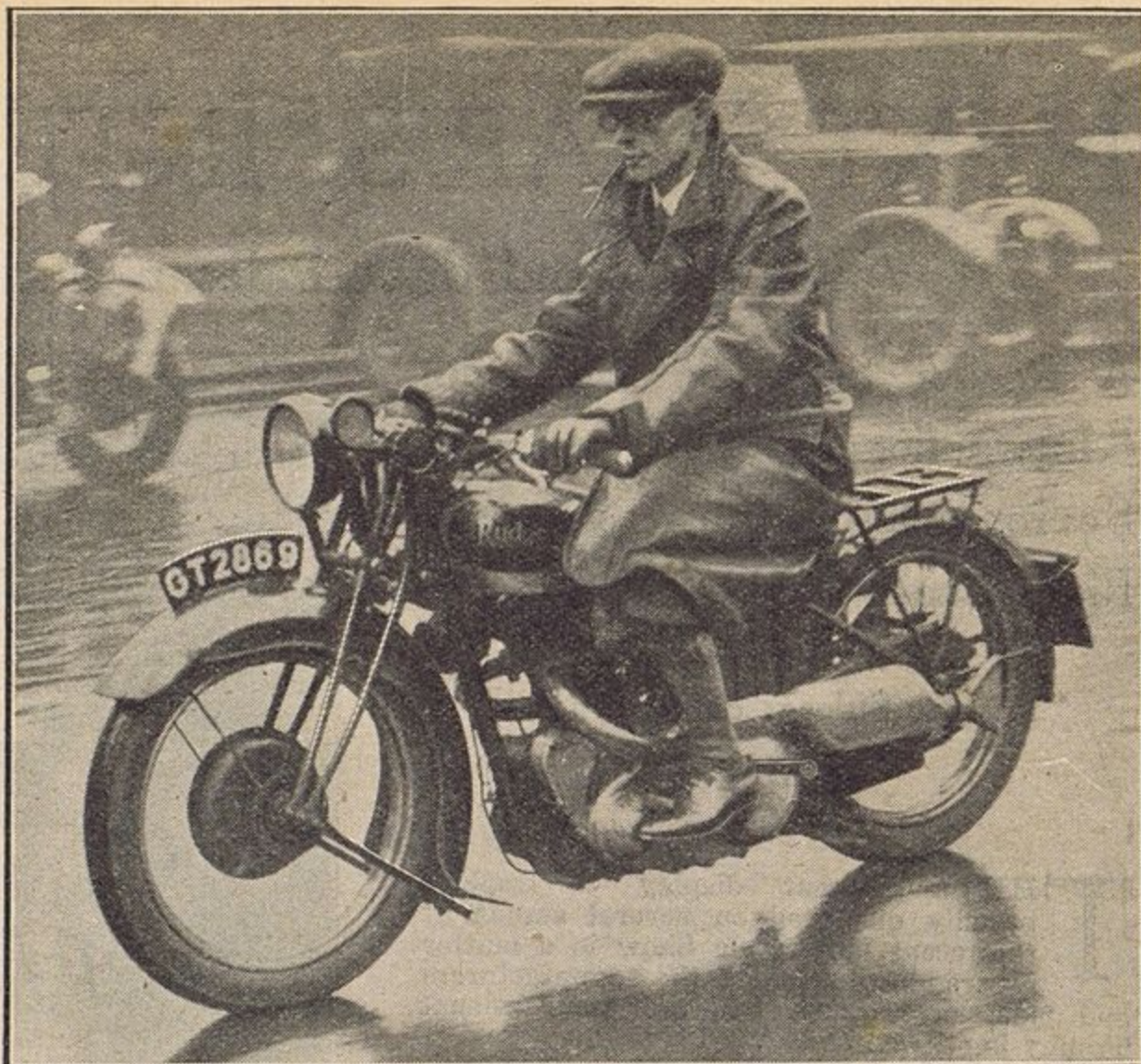
**General:** Amal carburetter with twist grip. M.L. magneto and Miller separate dynamo, both driven by chains working in oil bath case. "Clean" handlebar. 3-gallon petrol tank. Front and hand-lever-operated central stands. Valanced mudguards, rear hinged. Detachable carrier.

**Finish:** Black, gold lined, and chromium.

**Dimensions:** Wheelbase, 53½ ins.; saddle height, 25 ins.; ground clearance, 4½ ins. Weight, 310 lb.

**Price:** £59. (Electric lighting £5 10s. extra).

**Makers:** Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd., Coventry.



*Confidence in the Rudge on greasy streets is not misplaced. The rider's foot is seen ready for changing down in an easy and natural position.*

It will thus be seen that there was no need to slog along in top gear on very twisty roads. The high speeds obtainable on third gear enabled us to go curve-swerving when necessary without constantly changing down, as the flexible engine could be throttled down to about 10 m.p.h. on this ratio.

The standard rear tyre did not give the Rudge a fair chance to show its paces over Colonial going, but one fact stood out a mile. Whether the back wheel writhed in mud or loose stones, greasy cart ruts or slimy city wood-paving, its partner at the front never deviated from its course. It was positively uncanny, the way in which that wheel held the road, which all goes to prove that you cannot race motorcycles round the Island without learning how to make them steer.

An evening trip of 32 miles was accomplished in 51 minutes and the average speed reveals, when one considers that part of the riding was done in semi-darkness and through busy suburban streets, that the Rudge is not merely a main-road burner. On this occasion it is estimated that the maximum speed of the Rudge must have been about 72 m.p.h. The petrol consumption worked out at about 65 m.p.g.

The forks now have a big hand-wheel adjuster and can be set to a nicety. The steering damper's job is a sinecure and there is not an atom of tail bounce or wag at any speed.

### Super-Safety.

No machine could have been safer to drive. Those big brakes pinned the Rudge down at the slightest touch of the pedal. There was no snatching or locking—just the feeling that a giant hand was gripping the machine and pulling it back.

It should be almost impossible to drive this Rudge badly, particularly as regards the usually difficult art of gear changing.

The gear-change pedal was fitted by means of the splines familiar on Ridges, and its position could be adjusted in a moment to any required angle. The travel in both directions was small and the gear could be changed up and down at any speed without lifting the foot from the footrest—a wonderful advantage.

A lift of the shoe and "first" was engaged from neutral. A slide of the foot backward on the rest and the gear pedal was then lying beneath the toe. Three downward flips, one after the other, and we were in top, the pedal always returning to its normal position

after each movement and simply inviting us to use the gearbox. One changed gear often, because it was a pleasing thing to do and it increased one's feeling of utter control.

Pottering along on top at under 30, with the ignition lever half retarded, nothing but the subdued exhaust note could be heard. Of mechanical noise there was none—and the machine had had some pretty hard usage by many indifferent drivers before arriving in our hands! Tappets, rockers, timing gear and transmission were equally silent, and a word of praise must be said for the magnificent oil-bath case, of cast aluminium, in which live the primary, the dynamo and the magneto driving chains.

The battery was mounted in a most sensible position—above the gearbox—where it was certainly not likely to be jarred.

### An "Automatic" Stand.

Riders who dislike hauling their mounts on to the stands should try this Rudge. The novel lever which projects up on the near side solves the difficulty immediately, and the machine seems to climb up on to its legs by itself. The lift, although quite adequate, is not great and when starting one just sits aboard, pushes down the lever and, rides away.

"Gutty" though the motor is, with the decompressor in action starting is simple and certain. The kick-starter, of course, has a folding pedal.

Great care has obviously been exercised in the design of this latest Special and there has been considerable attention to detail. The "stop" lamp switch, for instance, which controls the standard fitting embodied in the tubular rear lamp, is incorporated as part and parcel of the brake pedal mounting.

After testing this Rudge, we came to the conclusion that it is a very good example of a sports machine which *anyone* could use for *any* purpose. As a solo it is safe and easy to handle and it has a high performance. Fitted with a sidcar, its capacity for collar-work is amazingly good (we tried it "3-up"), and if we were not to say that the 1932 Special was one of the nicest, quietest and best-looking models which we have ridden we should be doing it an injustice.