

# RUMBLINGS

What with the Eclipse of the Sun on the last day of June and the British debut of the Spaghetti on July 1st we have been having quite a time. Seriously, the premiere of the Doretti sports car was an interesting occasion for those motoring journalists who availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by the Swallow Coachbuilding Company to try the car round the Silverstone Club Circuit.

As **MOTOR SPORT** announced last February, the Doretti represents a return to car manufacture by a firm well known in the past for its sidcar bodies and special coachwork on Austin Seven, Standard, Wolseley Hornet and Fiat chassis. More recently it has been associated with aircraft matters, but now introduces the Swallow sports, or Doretti, to the home as well as to overseas markets.

A North American distributor placed a considerable order and advised in respect of the design, and in consequence his request that the new sports car be called after his daughter, Doretti, was adopted. She is reported to be a good-looking girl.

Before the preview of the car lunch was taken very adequately at the White Hart at Buckingham, and in the course of his speech Mr. E. Sanders, C.B.E., managing director of the Swallow Coachbuilding Company, told us that Doretti in all her naked loveliness would be available for inspection in a tent at Silverstone. This sounded too good to be true; and turned out to be a chassis, in exhibition finish!

Mr. Sanders also said his company's aim is to produce an essentially-safe 100-m.p.h. car and to this end a frame built of 50-ton tensile steel tubing is used, which in the unhappy accident to a Doretti that resulted in Sir John Black leaving the motor industry showed its strength by not telescoping or becoming unwelded. He remarked that the car had been tested in Canada against all the world's sports cars in its class and had proved itself definitely superior, besides being some  $\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. lighter than most (19 cwt. 28 lb. ready for the road).

In this frame of mind we went out to inspect and try the Doretti. The power unit is the Standard Vanguard and much of the basic engineering is also Standard. Someone has said that the best part of the Vanguard car is its engine, which is certainly true of the Morgan Plus Four. This splendid and universal 85-mm.-bore "big four" holds its tune for impressively long periods and, of simple design, is commendably reliable even if its claimed output of 68 b.h.p. is perhaps optimistic by a "gee-gee" or two. (The engine in the writer's Morgan has done something like three years' hard service with no attention to the contact breaker points or electrics, without even shedding a fan belt, and still uses practically no Castrol; its only maladies being a couple of blown gaskets. It has been given only one set of new (Lodge) plugs.)

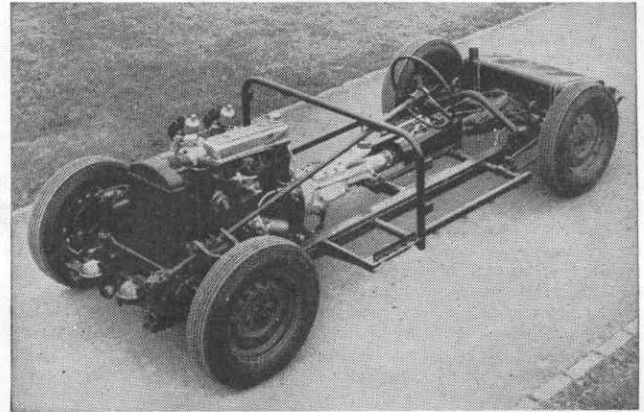
The Doretti uses this fine power unit in twin-carburettor 2-litre form, with 8.5 to 1 compression ratio, for which 90 b.h.p. is claimed at 4,800 r.p.m. It is attractively turned out with a polished, ribbed valve cover.

The gearbox, with short central lever, provides ratios of 12.5, 7.4, 4.9 and 3.7 to 1. The aforesaid tubular chassis has a wheelbase of 7 ft. 11 in., front suspension is by coil spring and wishbone, rear suspension by underslung  $\frac{1}{2}$ -elliptic springs, having radius-arms above which run from axle to the front spring mountings, while the brakes are Lockheed hydraulic, 10 in. at the front, 9 in. at the back. The pull-up central hand-brake has a fly-off action.

The body is a very smart all-enveloping two-seater, tastefully appointed and provided with a heater, a good hood, tonneau cover, detachable windscreen, very easily-adjustable bucket seats, 5-in. diameter tachometer and a speedometer to match, water thermometer and oil gauge, and lockable luggage boot, etc., imparting a sense of the highest quality.

The idea of booking the Silverstone Club Circuit for the demonstration was an admirable one and provided the assembled journalists and distributors with excellent opportunity for really trying the Doretti. We hope other manufacturers will follow the lead of Mr. Perry, Swallow's publicity executive, in this respect.

From driving several laps of this circuit it was immediately apparent that the Doretti has very comfortable seats providing adequate support for fast cornering, and that its big windscreen provides excellent protection from the wind at high speed. Those who were well acquainted with the circuit's rather elusive corners turned on the taps and pronounced the speed to reach 90 m.p.h. up the straight, the brakes to be fade-free in spite of cast-iron drums



**DORETTI CHASSIS.**—This photograph of the 2-litre Vanguard-engined Swallow Doretti shows the tubular chassis. The radius arms above the back springs, which have such a good influence on the back-axle, can be seen.

shielded by disc wheels, the cornering qualities to be very good indeed, with flat, roll-free characteristics, and the gear ratios ideally suited to the power unit.

On a longer straight, speed would no doubt climb to well over 90 m.p.h. and 100 m.p.h. be exceeded in the 3.03 to 1 overdrive top gear which is an optional extra.

As it was, 5,000 r.p.m. was attained very rapidly in the lower gears, the engine smooth, willing and feeling "burst-proof," and showing no desire to run-on. The gearbox transmitted a good deal of heat and under "racing conditions" the change from second to third could be muffed by inadvertently lifting the lever against the rather light reverse-gear safety spring. The cam-and-lever steering was quick and responsive and the Doretti very stable through the corners, although its tyres naturally sang a song of protest.

On the Club Circuit third gear was used for Copse, Maggots Curve was taken flat-out, Beckett's taken in second, and top was selected towards the end of the straight, before going into third for Woodcote.

During the afternoon the four Dorettis present were set to run a sweepstake race at the instigation of the Swallow directors. Two drivers were allocated to each car, drawing lots to decide which car they drove and the starting position. Don Truman and the Editor of **MOTOR SPORT** were paired off and Truman got a sufficiently good lead over John Bolster in the three laps before the changeover for your Editor, without professing to know his way round the circuit, to be able to retain this advantage for the remaining couple of laps, so that the black car won—this was popular, as apparently it had been the favourite!

That the Doretti can be set to such tasks in the hands of experienced and inexperienced drivers without disaster or ill-effects is something of a tribute both to it and to the confidence its sponsors have in it.

The price of the Doretti, which comes out to just under £1,200 inclusive of p.t. (basic price, £777), is somewhat higher than that asked for other Vanguard-powered sports models, but the Swallow people have no intention of instituting production on a considerable-number basis. Consequently, they will be in a position to expedite delivery of cars finished and possibly modified to customers' individual requirements; already aero-screens, overdrive, knock-on wire wheels (which appreciably enhance the appearance), radio and a high-speed tuning-kit are listed as optional extras.

A noteworthy feature of the chassis is the manner in which the simple radius-rods used in conjunction with the back springs obviate wheel patter when accelerating hard. This Swallow Doretti 2-litre is an interesting newcomer and it is to be hoped that the Swallow Coachbuilding Company will enter it in forthcoming competition events, for it has the qualities which should enable it to do well, and from success in competition results the most valuable publicity of all. [And they have, Truman driving one at Silverstone on July 17th; moreover, it beat an Austin-Healey.—Ed.]