

Driving what may well turn out to be a small Valiant.

FORGETTING all you have ever known, heard or read about Hillmans is the best way to prepare for the new Arrow and Hunter series. They have practically no relationship to the staid and not-greatly-admired Super Minx series they replaced. Styling is completely different, for one thing. So are the mechanicals, with the exception of the engine. And even that has been heavily revamped by the use of a new cylinder head to counter the older 1725 cc engine's formidable thirst for fuel.

Despite all this, the Hunter ends up as a conventional car. Apparently the Chrysler-Rootes amalgamation prefers it that way both for cost and service reasons. Its size has risen to that of a full five-seater with very good luggage space. It is 14 ft 3½ ins. long on a 98.5 ins. wheelbase and weighs just on 19 cwt at the kerb.

To keep the bonnet line as low as possible, the engine has been tilted over 10 degrees so that the carburettor — a CD Stromberg — is on the upper side and the distributor on the underside. Don't worry about accessibility. You have to look twice

to notice the inclination, anyway, and all the bits and pieces tacked on to the engine are easy to reach. There is nothing remarkable about the engine except that Chrysler has seen fit to cure the fuel consumption troubles by redesigning the head and manifold. Maximum power for the slightly undersquare (81.5 by 82.5 mm bore and stroke) is 74 bhp (net) at 5000 rpm. Torque is listed as 96 lb/ft at 3000 rpm. Compression ratio is 9.2 to 1, but we could detect no pinging under load during our short impression run in a 600-mile-old, unprepared Hunter.

No one really seems to know what's been done to the manual gearbox, except that it is much smoother to use than any previous

Hillman box and does not have that marrow-massaging harshness of old.

The ratios are very good, but obviously need to be used. Second gear starts on the flat are only just available and first makes a better fist of it. Third is acceptable from 10 mph, top from 20 to 25 mph. The engine is very flexibly mounted.

With a final drive ratio giving 18.3 mph per 1000 rpm, the Arrow and Hunter should be pretty good open road cruising cars, specially as their clean lines seem to keep wind noise to a very low level.

After all these years of battling with a coil-and-wishbone front end that was dating faster than last week's television set, the new Hillmans have got MacPherson strut

HOME IS THE HUNTER



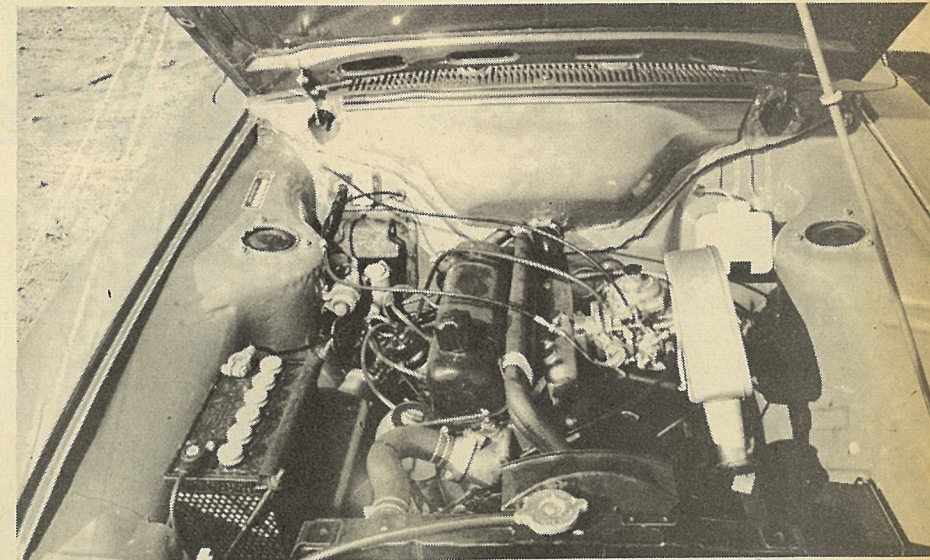
front suspension. At the back, the semi-elliptics and beam axle persist. MacPherson struts were the best thing that could have happened to the Hillmans. The system has less unsprung weight, is more efficient, gives vastly better handling in the case of the Hillmans, and chops a mere eight feet from the turning circle. I did not measure it, but the factory claims the Arrow and Hunter turn in 28 feet. And that, believe it or not, is about two feet better than the Imp's circle. Lock to lock takes 3.3 turns.

Over rough surfaces the suspension felt fine and seemed to be well insulated from the cabin. Even if it were not for that, I would vote the change worth the fortune that was spent on it just for what it has done to the handling. At last, here is a Hillman that does not have monumental understeer. In fact, the Arrow and Hunter point tolerably well even on unevenly surfaced corners.

For \$2100 the Arrow is a pretty spartan sedan, although it's just all heart once you get past the trim and rubber floor mats and so-so finish. The Hunter is a different story. It has all the gear, like heater, carpets, fancy paintwork, and so on. But for \$2250 I would have expected that both front seats would have reclining backrests, not just the passenger's.

However, these new cars may well become "little Valiants" to compete against the cheaper Holdens and Falcons — a bracket into which Chrysler has never been able to venture because of the price structure of its sixes. #

Frontal view of Hunter emphasises International styling similarity to that of coming Cortina and Volvo 144. However, overall effect is neat. Brushed metal panel at rear gives a big lift to car and emphasises the big change in Hillman styling for this car. Note very big rear window.



Engine is 1725 cc unit introduced two models ago, is canted for better bonnet line. Carburettor is now CD Stromberg, as on Hillman GT.

Hunter has more lavish interior of the two, includes reclining seats, tree-wood facia and carpeting. Facia layout is excellent, finish well up.

