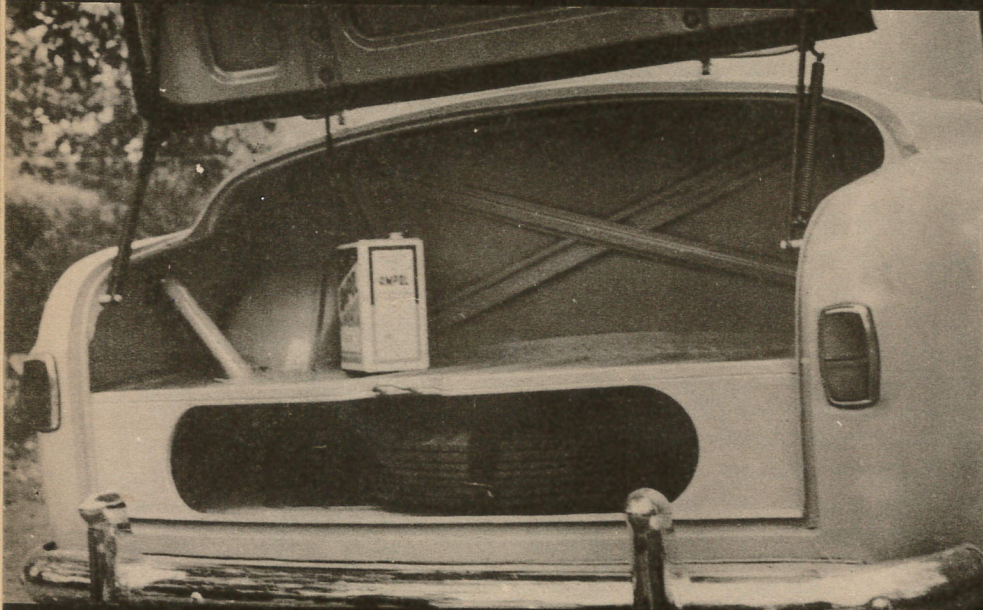
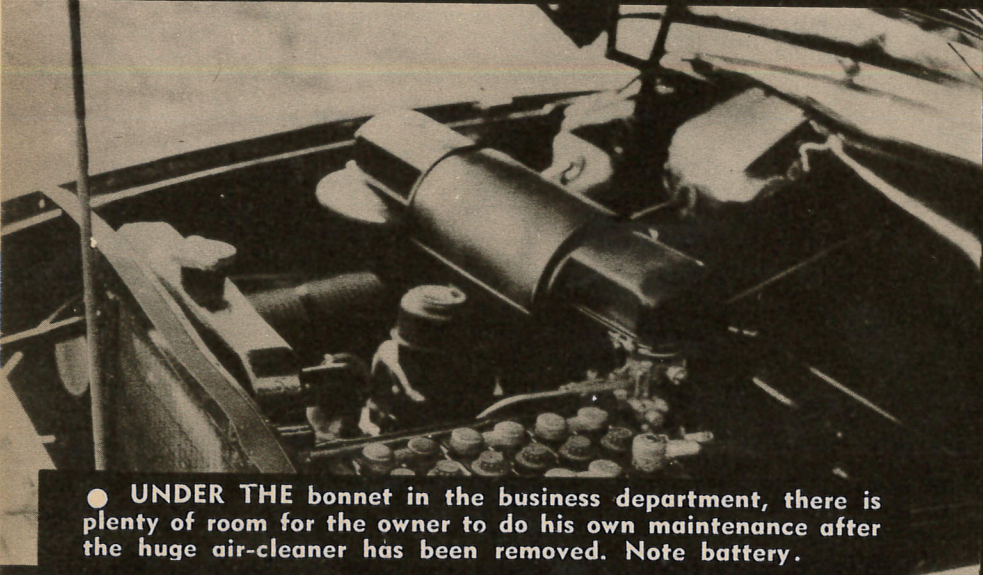


● ABOVE: LATERAL stability is good, even when the car is driven hard in small circles. Tyre squeal is limited to tight corners. Normal main-road bends can be taken at speed



● LUGGAGE SPACE is very good for a small car. Although not deep, the boot is wide, and full advantage has been taken of even the mudguards for extra space; a gallon can is dwarfed.



● UNDER THE bonnet in the business department, there is plenty of room for the owner to do his own maintenance after the huge air-cleaner has been removed. Note battery.

NEW MINX LIKES HILLS

AFTER 22 years of side-valve motors, Hillman fans will not be disappointed with the latest Mark VIII model's 1.4 litre o.h.v. workhorse. Although the car tested was not fully run-in, it was as lively as a bottle of champagne and just about as potent.

The Minx rockets up most main road hills in top gear, which will also give a maximum speed of better than 70 m.p.h. We have to take the maker's word for this, because it was not possible to give the car a flat-out burst. It had only 500 miles on the clock at the start of the test.

A stabiliser bar is now fitted on the front suspension instead of the rear, thus curing the earlier cars' oversteering habits on fast corners. Our test car could be pushed around curves on both loose and hard surfaces at high speeds with complete confidence and ease.

When it did skid, the back wheels broke away first, and cleanly. On one occasion things got a bit out of hand on a dirt road. Even then it was because the car corrects from a slide so quickly that it started a bigger and better one in the other direction.

Rough roads are a Minx specialty. No matter how hard I pushed her over rough surfaces, the springs refused to bottom, but at the same time my passenger remained firmly seated and was not bounced around like a cork in the Bay of Biscay.

With the Minx always under complete control on bad roads, no tail hop was noticed on corrugated surfaces, or any other surface for that matter.

CARS, June 1955

ROAD TEST

By IAN FRASER



● MAIN CHANGE in external appearance is re-designed radiator grille. The big parking lights also serve as blinking "trafficators" which work in conjunction with tail-lights.

Controlled through Burman worm and peg steering, the Mark VIII is a joy to manoeuvre in all conditions. Requiring only two turns of the helm to take the front wheels from one lock to the other, the whole car can be turned in 33ft.

Road shock was not rebounded up the steering column to the wheel, but there is still plenty of feeling, and the driver has a pretty good idea what the front wheels were doing.

Why Rootes exchanged that nice steering wheel with three spring-wire spokes as fitted to earlier models for the two-spoked, all-plastic job on the new car is one of the things we'll probably never know.

I like to drive with my hands in the "quarter to three" position, but the plastic spokes had sharp edges on the top which just caught my thumbs. Maybe this is not a big fault, but to me it was just plain irritating.

A chrome horn ring is fitted all

the way around the steering wheel. It operates Windtone horns from which a long blast will, on a country road, scatter the peasants for miles about. It was easy to knock the horn-ring with my elbow when alighting from the car, and, believe me, the effect was enough to make any driver jump out of his long underwear.

Dust-proofing in the Minx was excellent, even in the boot. After driving for 50 miles over roads covered in fine dirt, there was no trace of dust inside.

Forward visibility through the curved windscreen left nothing to be desired, although dozens of bugs chose it as a place to commit suicide. Both front mudguards were clearly visible, but a short driver may be struggling a bit to see them.

Biggest blind spot in the car was between the rear window and back door window; even so it was not a bad one.

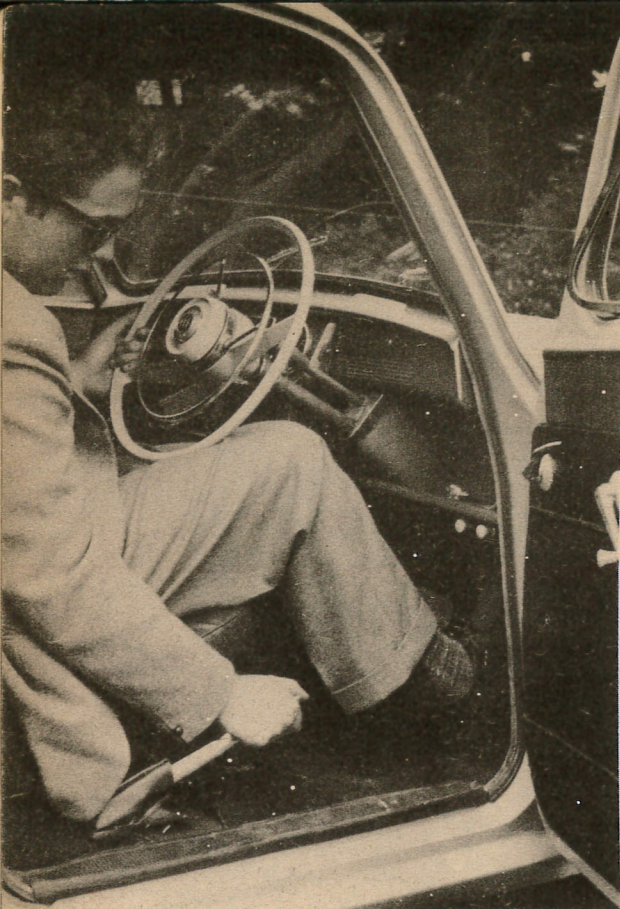
The rear-vision mirror was

mounted above the windscreen, and however much I adjusted it I could not see more than 20 feet behind. A slightly longer arm would cure that complaint.

Outsize drivers would appreciate a seat which would give more support. With the bench seat adjusted right back I found the driving position was very good, but a little more support under the legs would have been a big improvement.

I had my doubts as soon as I saw the driver's side window wind lever with its sharp edge. Sure enough, my right knee rested against it. The same thing happens in almost every car I sit in. A foot support can ... ner switch was situated next to the clutch pedal and proved to be most useful on a long trip.

No arm rests were fitted and the



● ABOVE: ALTHOUGH the Hillman's hand-brake is placed on the right-hand side of the driver's seat it is easier to use than many situated under the fascia panel. It holds the car on steep hills.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: Four-cylinder with detachable cast iron head and push-rod operated overhead valves; three bearing counter-balanced crankshaft; mechanical fuel pump; rotary oil pump; Zenith down-draught carburettor. Bore and stroke; 3.0 x 3.0 in. (76.2 x 76.2 mm.). Cubic capacity: 85 cu. in. (1390 c.c.). Engine develops 43 b.h.p. at 4400 r.p.m.

CLUTCH: Borg and Beck single dry plate. Chain linkage to pedal.

GEARBOX: Fourspeed with control ring synchromesh on top, third and second gears, and finger-tip lever on steering column. Overall ratios: Top 4.778:1; Third: 7.126:1; Second: 11.807:1; First: 17.045:1; Reverse: 22.726:1.

REAR AXLE: Spiral bevel final drive. Ratio: 4.778:1.

FRONT SUSPENSION: Independent with silico manganese coil springs with Armstrong hydraulic double action piston type shock absorbers. Torsion bar sway eliminator. **REAR SUSPENSION:** Semi-elliptic springs with automatic variation to load and road surface.

TYRES: 5.60 x 15 in.

BRAKES: Lockheed two leading shoe hydraulic. Cast iron 8 in. (203 mm.) diameter waterproof brake drums.

STEERING: Burman worm and peg.

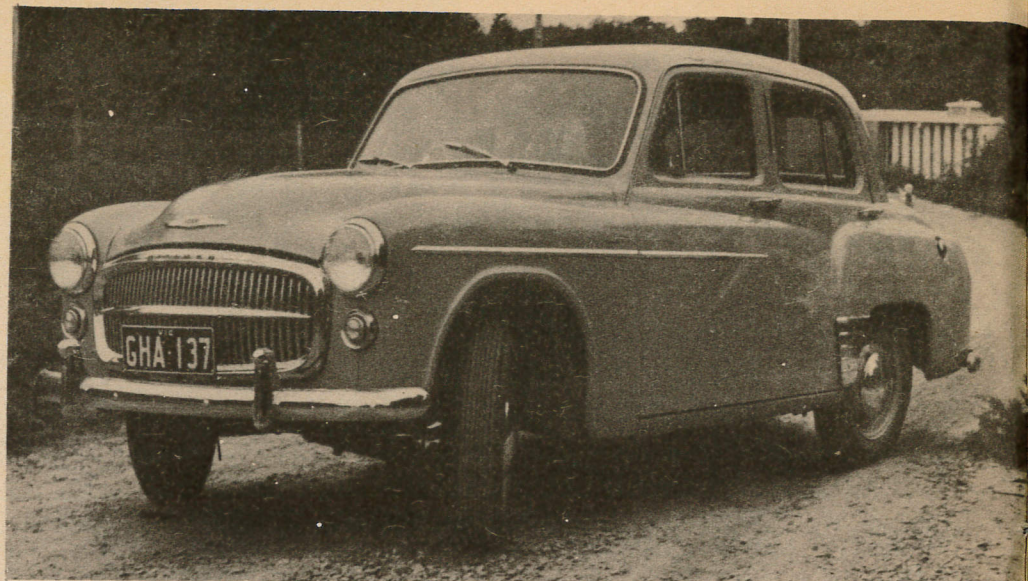
PETROL TANK: 7½ gallons capacity at rear of chassis.

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase 93 in.
Front track 48½ in.
Rear track 48½ in.
Ground clearance 7 in.
Turning circle 33 ft.
Overall width 63½ in.
Overall length 159½ in.
Overall height Saloon 61 in.
Overall height Convertible 60 in.
Overall height Californian 60 in.

UNLADEN WEIGHTS: (approx):

Saloon 2170 lb.; Convertible 2198 lb.; Californian 2268 lb.



● AT ALL times the Minx's handling is impeccable. When it does slide, the tail breaks away first and cleanly, and the skid can be corrected easily.

front door window ledges were high with finger grips stuck on top. The glass did not disappear from sight completely, either. All this discourages the bad habit of driving with one elbow cocked out the window.

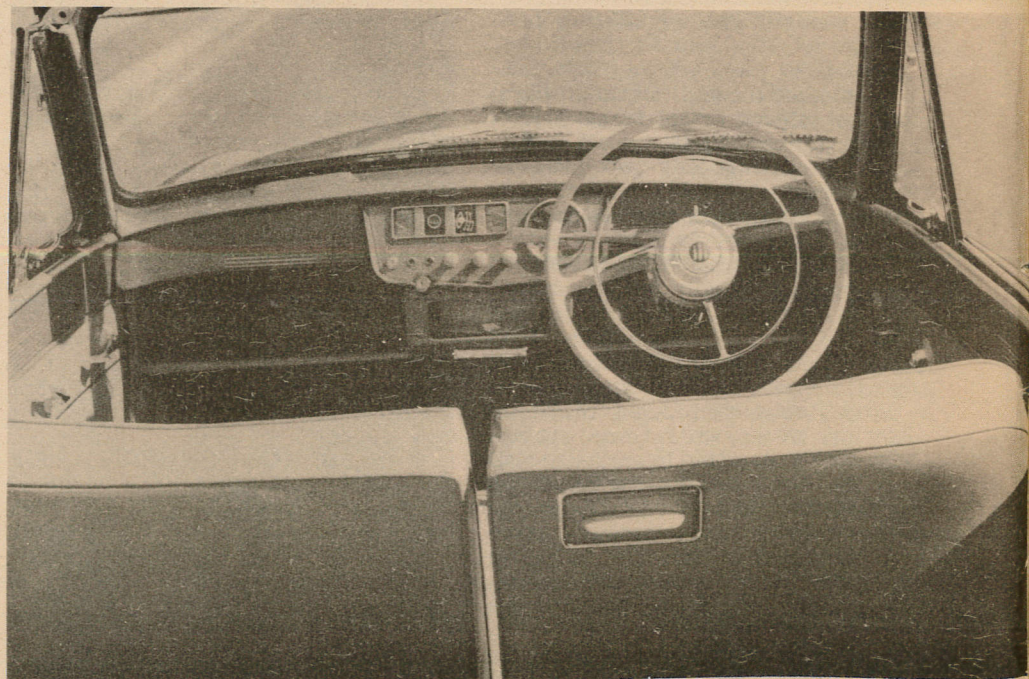
The steering column gear shift and the gear box both earn top marks. Cog changing, especially from first to second and third to top, could be done as quickly as I could move the handle. There was no scream for mercy from the synchromesh however hard I tried.

From second to third, the change had to be slowed down because of a tendency to pick up first instead of third, but this was probably due to the car's newness.

Reverse gear refused to engage just after I got clear of the city because of small wire in the mechanism which persisted in bending instead of remaining straight when the reverse position was selected. The usual type of safety gadget to prevent accidental engagement was fitted to the gear-change lever knob.

Bottom gear was not needed for the usual give-and-take rat-race in the city and suburbs, unless it was necessary to convince a side-valve Minx that o.h.v. motors have advantages even when they are not run-in.

Maximum speed in the gears is open for debate, but I should say the Mark VIII could do 35 m.p.h. in



● HILLMAN'S INSTRUMENTS are well laid out and easy to read. Switches are convenient, too, although the horn ring is doomed to be knocked every time a clumsy person climbs out.

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● **UNDER HARD** braking the Hillman did not nose-dive to any real degree; at the same time the springing is soft and really comfortable.

second, 55 in third and upwards of 73 m.p.h. in top. Acceleration to 30 m.p.h. should take six seconds or maybe less and 50 m.p.h. in about 20 seconds.

Normal changing speeds in the gears were 20 m.p.h. in second and 30 in third.

The clutch was light and smooth to operate and would pull the car off in top gear from 15 m.p.h. without too much judder or shake.

Like most small cars, there was a shortage of instruments, but those fitted worked well. The speedo was only one m.p.h. fast at 30 and the petrol gauge for the seven and a quarter gallon was very accurate.

Bigger tyres and smaller wheels than previous models were fitted and the tyres screamed a little on sharp corners, but not enough to frighten passengers and aged pedestrians.

Brakes, or rather, lack of them at times, was the Hillman's biggest fault.

After strenuous driving they overheated and faded away, only to recover soon afterwards. Motorists who make a habit of hard and fast pedalling would be well advised to fit different linings.

"Normal" motorists would find them extremely efficient. We stopped from 30 m.p.h. in just over 30½ feet.

Please don't misunderstand about the brake fade. They worked very well under normal driving conditions even in hilly country. The stoppers faded because the car was slowed from 50 m.p.h. to five m.p.h. three times in succession. These brakes may upset a trials driver, but certainly not the ordinary driver—that is, if such a driver exists.

The hand brake works through a mechanical mechanism on the rear wheels and is a parking brake. I pulled the brake on at 30 m.p.h.,

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● **BOTH** the drophead coupe and Californian hard-top have two doors, but accessibility to the rear seats is good through the large doors. Front seat is bench type, with squab for easy folding, but I soon got tired of waiting for the car to stop.

The motor of the Mark VIII has a capacity of 1,390 c.c., but develops only 43 b.h.p. Rootes engineers claim that this will give their car a maximum speed of 75 which is quite fast enough for any small car. Running on a 7:1 compression ratio, and with a cylinder bore and stroke of 76.2 mm. by 76.2 mm., the motor turns out its horses at 4,400 r.p.m.

Basically the same car as the side-valve version, the Mark VIII has a slightly larger radiator and a higher ratio rear axle, giving 15.3 m.p.h. per thousand revs. in top gear compared with 14 m.p.h. in the other car.

Sensibly laid out under the bonnet, the engine is nicely accessible and the battery was at the side of the motor for easy servicing.

Luggage space in the boot was

good. The spare wheel and tools, which were in very short supply, were mounted in a separate shelf below the luggage.

Blinking trafficators worked on the tail lights and the parking lights on the front, and could be switched on by moving the knob on the steering wheel hub.

To sum up, the Minx is just the car for the man who wants a five to six seater with good handling and performance. On the test, which covered more than 100 miles, the average petrol consumption was 34 m.p.g. That is not a fair figure because the car was only half run-in and still stiff.

Selling for £1,004, including tax, the Hillman range includes a drophead coupe and two-door hardtop.

The test car was made available to us by Neal's Motors Pty. Ltd., in Melbourne.

Footnote: Although body and chassis were of unitary construction, I noticed none of the road noises often associated with this type of construction. ●