

"Wheels"
WORK TEST
 and analysis of the

TRIPLE-PURPOSE



Driving compartment design, instrument panel, and front seat are identical to those of the sedan.



Tailgate and transom both open wide for easy loading. All fastenings are sturdy and rattleproof — but no provision is made for locking top portion with tailgate in down position.

TRIPLE-PURPOSE — how come? Well, the Roovers designers set out to convert their Minx into a double identity car, suitable for cargo or for passengers. But by stiffening the suspension and reducing the rear axle ratio, they also pepped the vehicle up into the sports coupe field.

With all respect in the world, we may say that this came as a major surprise. No one normally expects a semi-commercial to handle like a sports model. But we spent 350 miles convincing ourselves that this vehicle is one exception.

It will drift round gravel corners with serenity and complete stability. It pounds over pot holes without one iota of discomfort to the passengers. It rolls round tarmac bends with neg-

ligible body roll and nary a squeal from the tyres.

Even more interesting is the effect of reducing the rear axle ratio.

We found that the station wagon can clip two full seconds off the zero-to-50 m.p.h. acceleration time which we recorded with a Minx sedan. Top gear flexibility is likewise improved, and only mileage and outright top speed has suffered.

All this goes to show that the wagon has three distinct parts to its name tag. Treat it as a passenger vehicle, as a commercial, or as an excuse to indulge your motoring whims — it gains above average marks in all three. Of course, it has its share of faults — and we come to these later.

Here we can say that when we set

off on the test, we were just as anxious to test the differences in the "Jubilee" model as we were to sample what Hillman had to offer in the way of a station wagon.

In all respects, other than the rear axle ratio, stiffer suspension, and treatment of the rear end of the body, the wagon is the same as the recently introduced Jubilee Minx sedan.

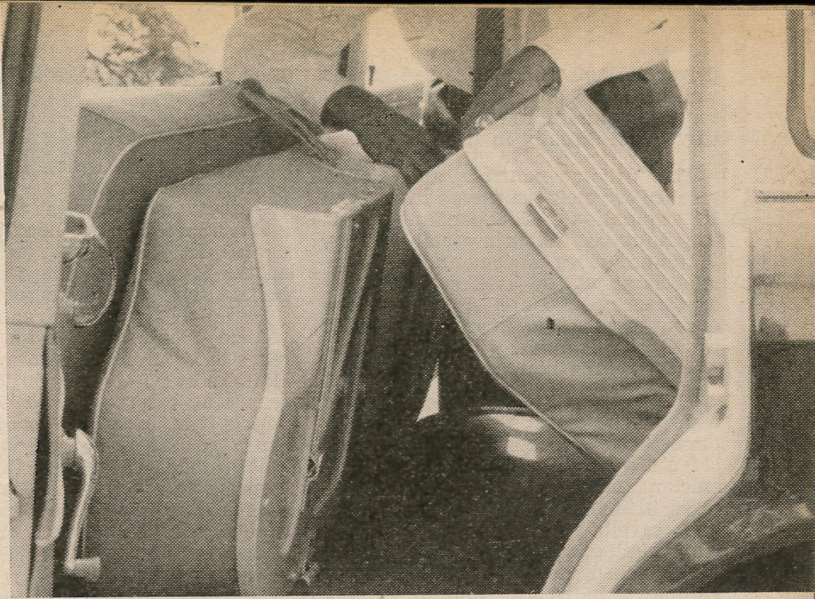
It therefore differs considerably from the Husky, both in appearance and mechanical specs.

Utilitarian . . .

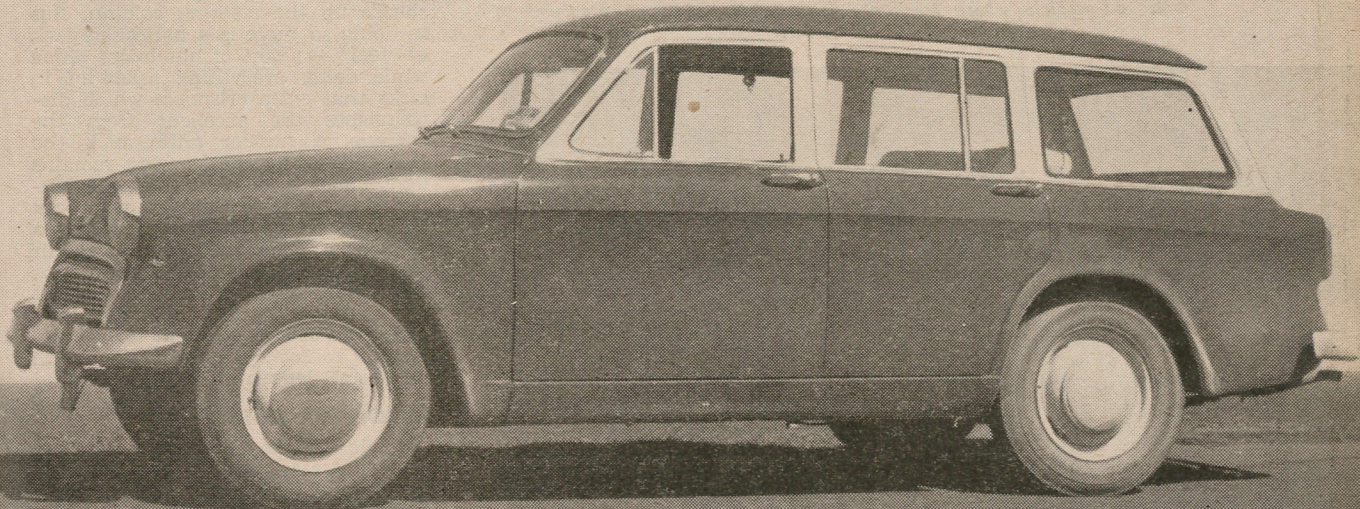
It is the latest effort in the current trend to produce a station wagon version of a popular light car. The Hillman stylists have, however, sensibly confined their changes to utilitarian advantages, rather than

HILLMAN

A sound, honest little car with better - than - sedan performance, good fuel economy, and pleasant handling characteristics. Is serenely indifferent to road surfaces.



20 cu. ft. additional load space is obtained by tilting seat squab forward and folding the back down. Note metal skid-strips which protect floor and assist loading.



Elegant and compact, the Hillman gave near sports car performance; would comfortably carry four adults plus weighty luggage.

wallow in the "glamour" excesses afflicting most of the Detroit waggon designs. Viewed from any quarter, the Hillman is sleek, pleasing, and wholesome.

Obviously, the design is based upon the latest Minx, so, first, a few words on how this differs from the former Minx. The grille is new and is rather more attractive. The gearshift has been modified, an interior courtesy light is standard equipment, the engine has been worked over to produce its maximum torque lower down in the r.p.m. range, an ash tray has been added for the rear seat passengers and crash padding is now featured on the dash panel.

These features are carried on into the waggon. It differs from the Jubilee Minx by having stiffer springs (and

improved ground clearance) and a rear axle ratio which reduces the road speed from 15.3 to 14.25 m.p.h. at 1000 r.p.m. in top gear.

This change in overall gearing has two important effects. First, it provides snappier acceleration than that available on the sedan. The difference is appreciable — and we tested the waggon carrying three adults and 2 cwt. of luggage.

Secondly, it is no longer necessary to use first gear to start, except in exceptional cases. Top gear also becomes so flexible that main road hills do little to impede progress.

Because of the similarity between the sedan and the waggon, there is no need for an expansive description of the interior. It is perhaps sufficient to say that there is ample room for

four adults, but that five people may find themselves a little crowded. The interior details are all well thought out, with washable plastic trim, rubber floor mats, two large parcel shelves, a small instrument panel in the centre of the fascia, and a commendable absence of austerity.

Alternative Instruments . . .

It is interesting to note that Hillman are the only manufacturers we know of who offer alternative instruments as optional equipment. In their stock models, the instruments include a fuel gauge, temperature gauge, and large speedometer. However, provision is made to allow the fuel and temperature gauges to double up as oil pressure and ammeter indicators if required. Normally, though, the

driver is kept fully informed of the well-being of oil pump and generator by a pair of warning lights on a tiny panel directly in front of him.

The driving controls are distinguished by their neatness rather than by originality. The pendant pedals are hung so that they call for the minimum of leg movement. The gear-shift is about the liveliest and lightest steering column shift we have encountered, and it can be operated by finger tips alone, without the driver moving his hand from the wheel.

The handbrake is placed to the right of the driver's seat, and is both unobtrusive and easy to operate. Incidentally, this is one of the most efficient handbrakes we have encountered in many a year. With the waggon travelling at 30 m.p.h., and the transmission in neutral, the handbrake locked the rear wheels, and the Hillman skidded to a halt in 4.2 seconds, leaving a trail of rubber to testify that it serves both as a gen-

uine emergency brake and a parking brake.

Fired Immediately . . .

Another point which impressed us is that on a cool, very wet morning, the engine started first touch of the starter button — without use of the choke! No warming-up period seemed necessary, and the waggon was immediately all set to go.

So much for its design as a motor vehicle. Now what of its ability to carry loads? As a station waggon, the Hillman is purely conventional. The rear seat can be folded forward to double the available loading space. Entry to the area behind the rear seat is made through a tailgate and transom (a rather technical term for a flat rear window). Both tailgate and window are held securely in place, so that they are rattle-free even under bumpy conditions.

For some reason which escapes us altogether, the designer deliberately made things so that the vehicle can

be driven with the tailgate down — but made no provision for fastening the window in position when the tailgate is lying flat.

Thanks to the stiff springing, the waggon will carry either four adults plus 400 lbs. of luggage, or two adults and 700 lbs. Loading is no problem, as the tray is lined with metal skids and the tailgate opens to the full width of the body.

The stronger springs also improve ground clearance by an inch, making the vehicle slightly more mobile on off-beat surfaces.

Perfect Behaviour . . .

On every type of road surface from immaculate tarmac to soul-jarring pot holes, the Hillman behaves perfectly. We found that the laden vehicle will bottom on really bad patches, but at no time did the pounding on rough roads throw it out of control. The general riding qualities on rough roads came as a major surprise, and the car's roadability on tight tarmac corners defies criticism.

The steering is the one feature that falls a little below expectations. In its favour goes the fact that it firmly resists any urge to send road shocks up the steering column. But in doing so there is a noticeable lack of "feel" — a sort of numbness which while doing everything asked of it, lacks that extra crispness which distinguishes the excellent from the average. A further criticism is the fact that while the steering remains light under most conditions, the tendency is for it to tighten up as lock increases. Thus the driver, making a U-turn in the road, finds a fair amount of elbow work necessary. As a last word on the steering, we might call to mind the 31 ft. steering lock. This is of course excellent for a commercial vehicle; particularly one with an overall length of 13 ft. 4½ ins.

23 Grease Points . . .

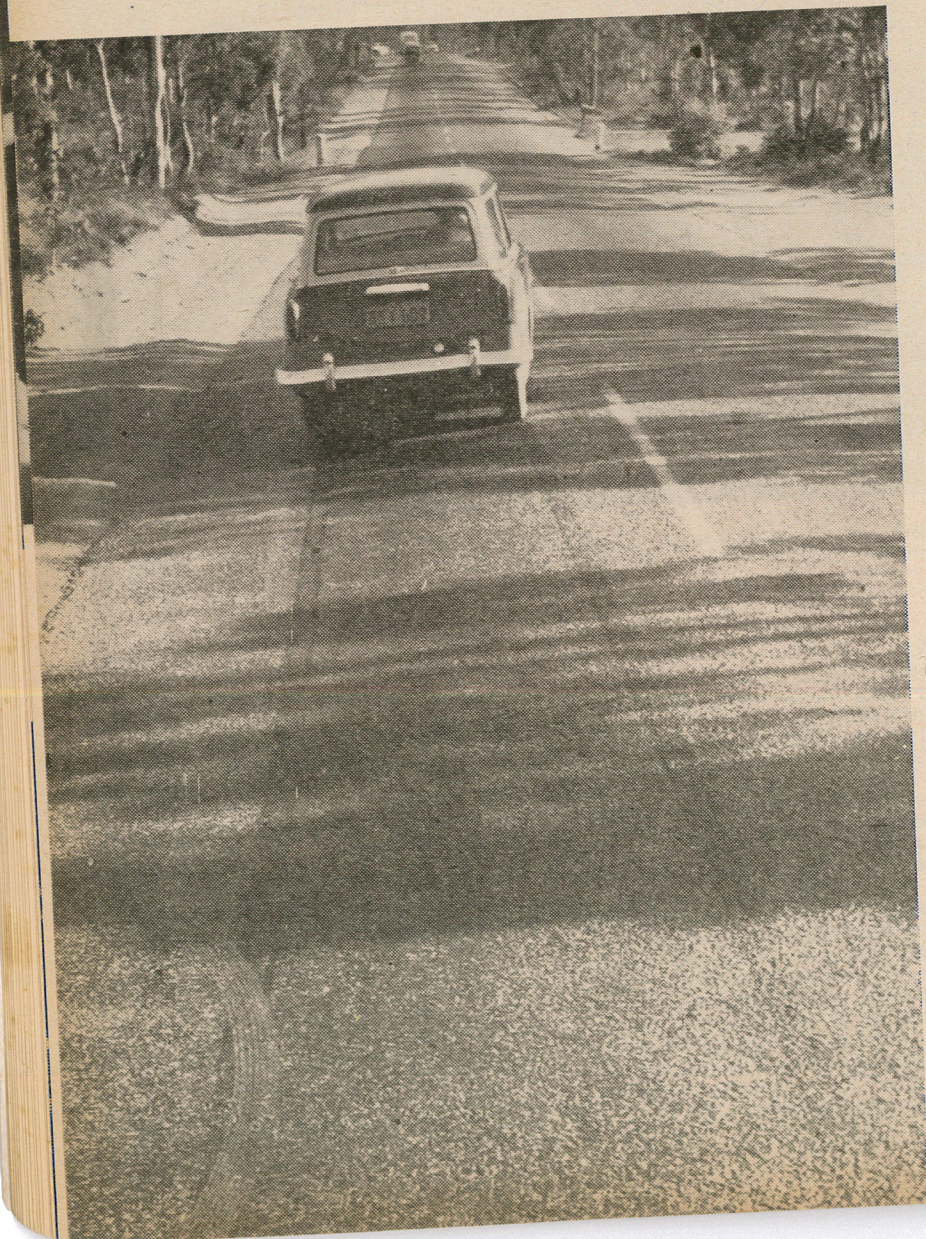
While on the subject of criticism we might also mention the maintenance angle. How many owners would want to grease 23 separate nipples every 1,000 miles? Not many of course; but that is the procedure laid down by the service manual!

When sampling the comfort of the rear seat (and, though rather high, it definitely lends itself to pleasant motoring) we found that the door handles are placed so far forward that the passenger has to tuck his hand between the body post and the back of the front seat in order to operate them. The front seat, in turn, offers a rather limited range of adjustment; and yet a further point of criticism is the fact that the vehicle cannot be refuelled while the tailgate is down — nor can the spare tyre be removed while luggage is stowed on the load tray.

Points which keep the ledger fairly balanced, however, include the dustproofing, which is excellent; the door lock design which allows the doors to close — firmly — with only the lightest of hand pressure, the absence of rattle on bad roads, and the good all-round vision.

Certainly no one could criticise the willingness with which the engine performs. It revs freely, and is with-

Another pleasant shock: a positive skid stop from 30 m.p.h. using handbrake only. The tyres lost some rubber, but at least the Hillman is one vehicle whose handbrake is more than just an ornament or hill-holder!





Tremendous stability on gravel came as a major surprise. Tail slides can be corrected with a flick of the wheel, while the suspension takes all that is coming—and then some.

out fuss or vibration. When peak r.p.m. is reached (corresponding to 76 m.p.h.) the noise level is quite high. But the engine itself seems as happy as a sewing machine.

The brakes are also well up to their job. We were rather surprised to read on the specification sheet that the friction area is only 90 square inches. On paper this is too small for a vehicle which can weigh laden, up to 32 cwt. Even so, we found that fade was of normal proportions and recuperation was above average.

Summing up, we may as well paraphrase our opening remark. The Hillman Station Waggon is a triple purpose vehicle — compact, smartly styled, and offering satisfaction in three distinct worlds.

Just by the way of comparison, we were able to drive a normal Hillman Minx sedan immediately after testing the Station Waggon. The difference between the two was startling.

Having become used to the near neutral steer characteristics of the latter, it came as a shock to find that the sedan was prone to heavy understeer, particularly on tight corners. No doubt this was caused by the different weight distribution and the slightly heavier suspension of the Waggon.

All the good points were still there, though, including the sturdy hand brake and general comfort.

PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

Test vehicle: Hillman four-door station waggon. Supplied to "Wheels" by John McGrath Motors, Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Price £1241. Immediate delivery.

Maximum speed: With 3 passengers and 2 cwt. of gear, best time equals 76.0 m.p.h. Speedometer reading 5 per cent fast.

Acceleration: With same load, standing $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, 24.1 seconds; 0-30 m.p.h., 6.1 secs.; 0-40 m.p.h., 10.9 secs. 0-50 m.p.h., 16.1 secs.

Maximum speeds in gears: 1st, 25 m.p.h.; 2nd, 38 m.p.h.; 3rd, 62 m.p.h. Recommended shift points: 1st, 10 m.p.h.; 2nd, 24 m.p.h.; 3rd, 35 m.p.h.

Best pulling range: When laden, top gear, 30-35 m.p.h.

Brakes: Footbrake from 30 m.p.h. with transmission in neutral, stopping time 1.8 seconds. Fade average, recuperation good. Handbrake exceptional, with 4.2 seconds to stop car from 30 m.p.h. with handbrake in neutral.

ROAD BEHAVIOUR:

<i>Type of surface</i>	<i>Behaviour</i>
Bitumen highway:	Excellent. Cornering power surprisingly good. Body roll negligible.
Unsealed roads:	Above average. Stability good, response to slide corrections very good.
Corrugations:	Body drum less than average. Suspension excellent but will bottom.
Pot holed road:	Laden vehicle will bottom on both front and rear springs. Less than average road shock up steering column.
Loose sand and dust:	Good.
Mud:	Normal.
Cross country:	Normal, ground clearance 7".
General riding comfort:	Excellent.
Dust proofing	First class.

Fuel economy: Driving hard, including performance tests, average mileage 27.6 m.p.g. At normal touring speeds, mileage 34 m.p.g.

Test weight: With 3 passengers and 2 cwt. load, total weight 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. Distribution 50 per cent front, 50 per cent rear.

Conditions: Fine moderately warm weather, little wind.