

# QUIET LUXURY

**I**N these enlightened times three litres is not very much capacity with which to lug around a ton and a half of car on a wheelbase of 9 ft 2 in. — or 110 in., an inch less than that of the XR Falcon. In anybody's language, the 180 cu in. and 128.5 bhp (net) of the Humber Snipe is hardly a match for 186 inches and 125 bhp (SAE) of a Holden. But somehow when you drive it the Snipe doesn't feel as underfed as all that. Rather it is a quiet, smooth car which — in the upper ranges at least — is quite accelerative, if fairly hungry for fuel, like most past Rootes products.

The hand of Chrysler has not yet fallen on the Snipe; in fact, the newest Rootes car, the Hillman Hunter shown at Earls Court, 1966 was laid down before the Chrysler merger. When Chrysler does do something with the Snipe in a year or two it will undoubtedly use one of its smaller American V8s. That should make a very nice car out of it.

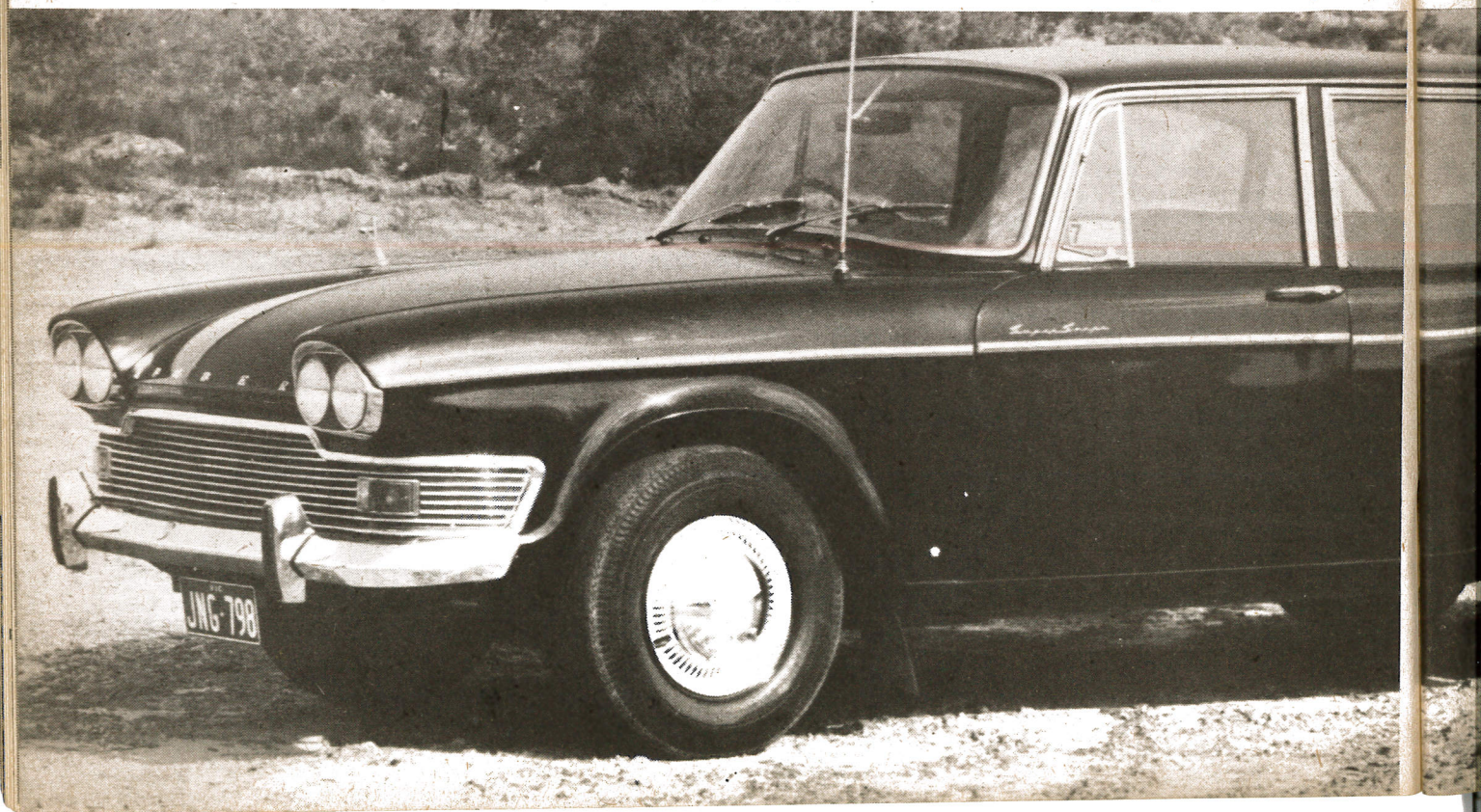
There have been very few changes to the Snipe in the last six years. The most recent one — brought in 1966 — involved lowering the roofline, flattening the rear window, and incorporating hinged

rear quarter vents to cut down the rear blind spot. Other changes involved revisions to front and rear suspension for better and quieter ride, reshaping of the rear seat, and some minor engine modifying, including two Zenith-Stromberg carburettors, to give another 45 bhp.

The Snipe has always occupied a unique position in the Australian market. There is no other medium-large luxury sedan — British or American — available near its price, and certainly none that has such a limousine air about it. It is also available in Britain as the Imperial model, with black vinyl roof, Armstrong Selectaride adjustable dampers, leather trim, reclining front seats, radio, rear window demister, and auxiliary fog and driving lights.

But the Australian Snipe doesn't fall far behind in equipment. You get haircord carpet, rich walnut veneer panelling on fascia and window sills, individual folding tables in the rear with ashtray and cigarette lighter each, glovebox light, and centre armrests front and rear. It is quiet, even at high speed, and very restful — if not easy — to drive.

**The Humber Snipe fits the world of Peter Stuyvesant and the elegant life like a well-groomed aristocrat. An opposite to the rank and raw performance of its American counterparts, this thoroughbred was taught not to wheelstand in dignified company.**







*Hustling around a rough dirt corner the Snipe shows up its understeer, yet retains good balance.*

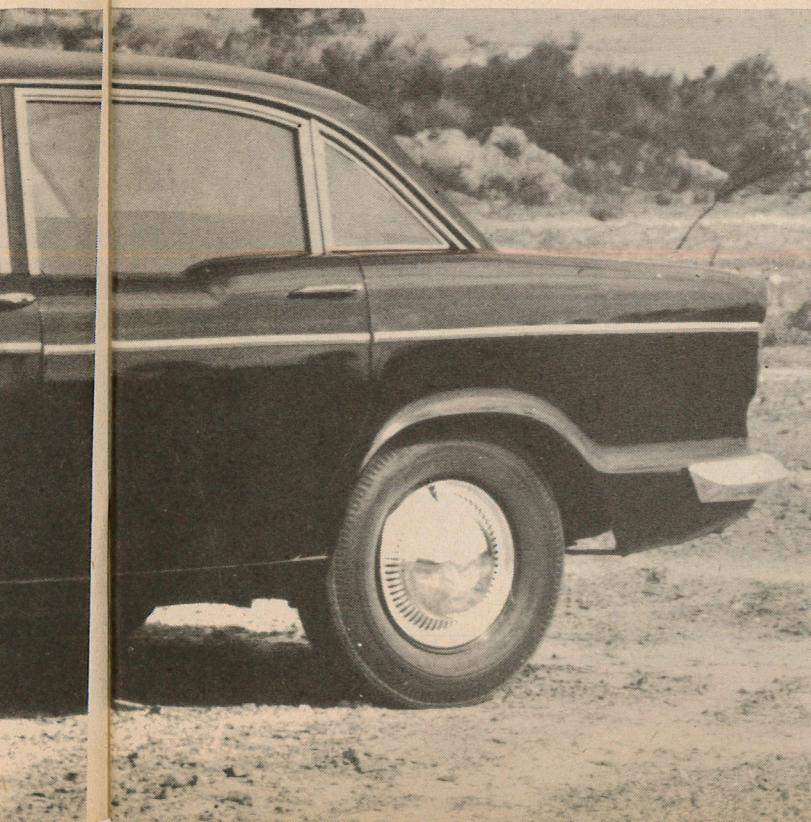
It does, however, have a slightly old-fashioned air about its body styling and handling, despite power-assisted steering. It needs a new body soon, and could use a suspension with less limited vertical travel, although it is helped by the new six-leaf rear springs and anti-roll bars front and back.

The Snipe driver sits in, rather than on, a big bench seat with thick rolls right around its edges — and so deep in the squab that it comes right up behind the shoulders. It is very comfortable, and gives surprisingly good location. However, the largish steering wheel is set far too high, so this good seating is not helped by a tendency to hang on to the wheel for balance when cornering. There is good fore-and-aft adjustment, but the wheel height and the altogether too-vertical squab angle cancel out a lot of this. There is a full horn ring, with a neatly padded boss. On the

left is an old-fashioned lever controlling the selector quadrant, and on the right a combined trafficator/headlamp flasher stalk.

Traditionally, the big range of instruments is set in very pukka treewood panelling, with swivelling fresh air vents at each end; these, however, do not admit a big enough volume of air for local summers. The glovebox is lockable, and lit, and the white-on-black instruments have metric calibrations as well as the normal ones. Most of the warning lights have eyelid lenses for dimming, while you get speedometer, clock, and gauges for fuel, amps, oil pressure and water temperature. Thrown in for good measure are a fuel reserve warning light and handbrake warning

*Rear seat passengers each get a folding walnut table, plus ashtray, cigar lighter and big central armrest.*





light. The choke is a lever set in a horizontal slide, and also has a warning light — albeit a dim one. No complaints here. All the controls can be used while wearing a belt. About the only things we don't like about the interior are awkward-locking quarter vents and an ugly fibre-board finisher panel under the fascia. The window winders are properly high-geared and the handbrake, at the right of the driver on the floor, works like all Rootes handbrakes — it will lock the rear wheels anywhere, anytime.

There are acres of leg room in the rear seat, although the car is happier carrying two in the front and three in the rear rather than acting as a true six-seater. This is mainly because of the very large front transmission hump. The boot lid opens with a key and press-catch affair, and uncovers a comfortably large space with the spare wheel mounted vertically to the right, locked by its own webbing strap. However, the boot is finished-off fairly crudely, with one of those Rootes patent woven fabric/rubber mats. The 16-gallon fuel tank still has the cap disguised neatly as the right rear reflector, although this makes it a little hard to fill without getting blow-back.

The view from the bridge in this car is quite impressive. You sit behind a massive bonnet, but the corners are well defined and it is not hard to park. The four headlights throw quite a good spread of light, but lack real high-speed penetration. All round vision is good, with big glass areas, although the sills are a little high all round.

Little can be heard of the engine at any time, pointing to good underbonnet insulation and a very efficient exhaust system. It can be heard if you lock the car in the intermediate gears and rev it right out, but not otherwise. The standard Borg Warner transmission is not adequate to the engine's smoothness, and there is a noticeable and annoying thump with almost every change. Normally, of course, you leave the car in Drive, and it shifts itself at most of the right points except in traffic, when it tends to hunt between the gears. For a lower gear one can use the kick-down or go back to the Lock position. Using this manual hold the car can be kept in second to almost 70 mph.

While it is no fireball, the Snipe punts along quite handily, and by using the transmission selectively you can make quite an impression on average speeds. It takes a while to wind up to its top speed, and our test car just refused absolutely to go over 90 mph, although we are certain it will go close to 97-99. There

is no sign of axle tramp under acceleration, but you can induce wheel hop on corrugated surfaces.

The car is quite nose-heavy, and even the good power steering does not minimise the effect of the understeer. It needs quite a lot of lock when motoring quickly, but conversely is extremely stable for a big car on greasy roads. It understeers consistently, and some lost motion in the straight-ahead position of the steering is not much help. However, there is absolutely no reaction transmitted to the hands, and the car runs arrow-straight in cross-winds.

To balance this out the ride is first-class over all types of roads, with no pitching, no harsh suspension reactions, and fairly low tyre noise level. Once you get the car wound up to its natural cruising speed of around 75 mph, get the radio tuned and adjust the fresh air system you can whistle along in utter calm over most roads.

The only exception to this is very bad dirt roads, where the suspension with its limited vertical travel can produce quite a harsh ride if you get very silly and thrash along as though it were a trials car. But this doesn't matter very much, because the lack of fore-and-aft pitch balances out reasonably well, and there is little actual noise from the suspension. In any case, the car was not originally designed to go haring around the back-country roads, although a lot are sold in Australia to graziers, we understand. And they are notorious presser-onners.

In this the brakes are a great help, for despite the car's weight the big front discs will do anything demanded of them. Pedal pressures are always progressive, even through the servo, and we couldn't catch them out at any time. It could use a little more rubber on the ground, as a 6.75 tyre is only just adequate for a car of this weight and wheelbase.

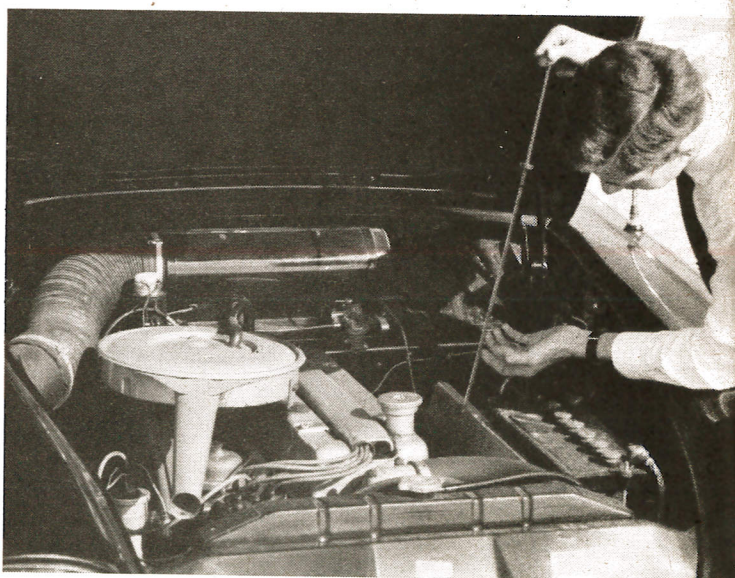
We were, however, disappointed with the fuel consumption. The best we ever returned was 18 mpg, and cruising around 70 mph cut our fuel average down to 14 mpg and the tank range to a little over 210 miles, which is not good in Australia. Mind you, this was making full use of downshifts in the transmission; leaving it in Drive on a trip would up the figures quite markedly to perhaps 20 mpg.

Overall, we liked the big car quite a lot. It seems to us to represent better value of a more realistic character than do the equivalent American sedans, although it is down on performance. It has quite a lot of prestige; and if you want to emphasise the fact you can always buy yourself a chauffeur's cap and put mother in the back seat.

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Boot has capacity of just under 20 cu ft, most of it usable. Spare wheel is easy to dismount quickly.



Under the bonnet is well filled, but dipstick and other items like battery and coil are completely accessible.





## TECHNICAL DETAILS

**MAKE** ..... Humber **OPTIONS** ..... nil  
**PRICE** ..... \$4298 **BODY TYPE** ..... Sedan  
**MODEL** ..... Super Snipe V **COLOR** ..... Black  
**MILEAGE** ..... Start 1862 ..... Finish 2756  
**WEIGHT** ..... 31.5 cwt  
**FUEL CONSUMPTION:**  
 Overall ..... 15.1 mpg  
 Cruising ..... 16-18 mpg  
**TEST CONDITIONS:** Weather fine, Temperature 68 deg F,  
 Surface bitumen bonded gravel, Fuel premium grade.

### PERFORMANCE

Piston speed at max bhp ..... 2708 ft/min  
 Top gear mph per 1000 rpm ..... 18.3  
 Engine rpm at max speed ..... 4900  
 Engine rpm at cruising speed ..... 4350  
 Lbs (laden) per gross bhp ..... 27.4

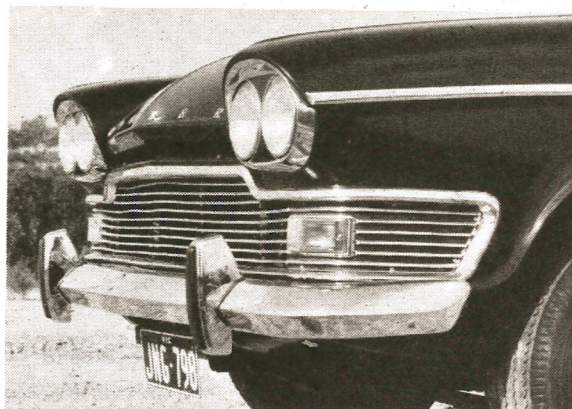
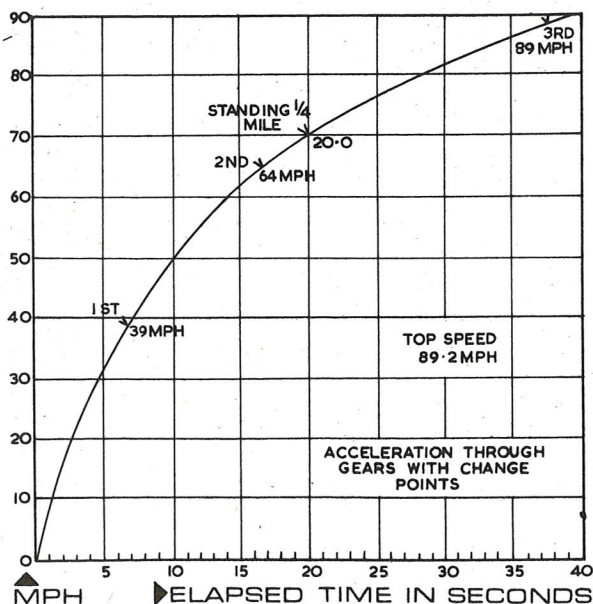
#### MAXIMUM SPEEDS:

Fastest run ..... 92.4 mph  
 Average of all runs ..... 89.2 mph  
 In gears:  
 1st 39 mph, 2nd 64 mph, 3rd 89 mph

#### ACCELERATION:

	Through gears
0-30 mph	4.8 secs
0-40 mph	6.9 secs
0-50 mph	9.8 secs
0-60 mph	14.2 secs
0-70 mph	19.2 secs
0-80 mph	28.5 secs
0-90 mph	39.8 secs

	Third Gear	Top Gear
20-40 mph	5.3 secs	6.5 secs
30-50 mph	6.3 secs	8.7 secs
40-60 mph	8.1 secs	10.1 secs
50-70 mph	9.4 secs	13.9 secs



#### STANDING QUARTER MILE:

Fastest run ..... 19.9 secs  
 Average of all runs ..... 20.0 secs

#### SPEEDO ERROR:

	30	40	50	60	70	80 mph
Indicated	30	40	50	60	70	80
Actual	27.4	37	46	56	65	76

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### ENGINE:

Cylinders ..... six, in line  
 Bore and stroke ..... 87 mm by 83 mm  
 Cubic capacity ..... 2965 cc  
 Compression ratio ..... 8.0 to 1  
 Valves ..... overhead, pushrod  
 Carburettors ..... 2 Zenith  
 Fuel pump ..... AC mechanical  
 Power at rpm ..... 129 bhp at 5000 rpm  
 Torque at rpm ..... 167 lb/ft at 2600 rpm

#### TRANSMISSION:

Type ..... automatic, 3-speed Borg Warner  
 Gear lever location ..... column  
 Ratios: 1st ..... 11.84  
 2nd ..... 6.13  
 3rd ..... 4.22  
 Final drive ..... 4.22 to 1

#### SUSPENSION:

Front ..... independent by coils and anti-roll bar  
 Rear ..... semi-elliptic leaf spring  
 Shock absorbers ..... telescopic

#### STEERING:

Type ..... recirculating ball  
 Turns, lock to lock ..... 4½  
 Turning circle ..... 38 ft

#### BRAKES:

Type ..... disc front, drum rear  
 Dimensions ..... 401 sq in. total rubbed area

#### DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase ..... 9 ft 2 in.  
 Track, front ..... 4 ft 8½ in.  
 Track, rear ..... 4 ft 7½ in.  
 Length ..... 15 ft 7½ in.  
 Height ..... 4 ft 11½ in.  
 Width ..... 5 ft 10 in.  
 Fuel tank capacity ..... 16 gallons

#### TYRES:

Size ..... 6.70 by 15  
 Make on test car ..... Goodyear G8

#### GROUND CLEARANCE:

Registered ..... 7 in.