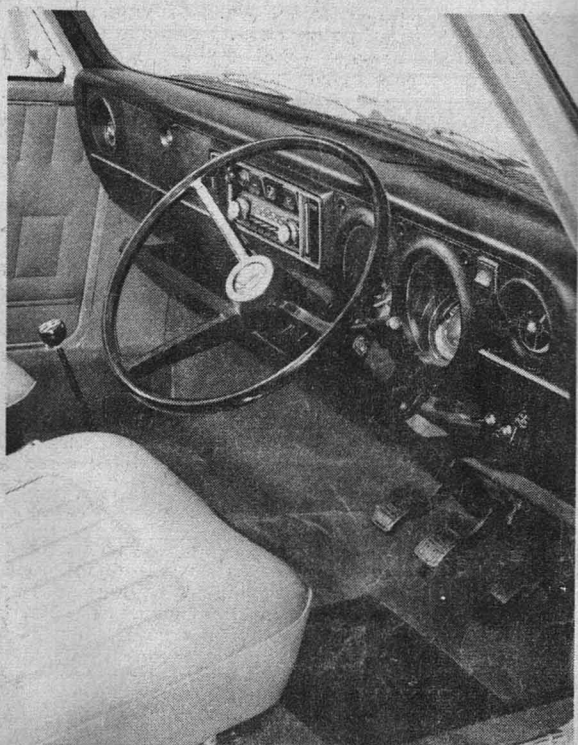




We lift the lid on British Leyland's interesting new ohc six, due for release here about the end of next year

ABOVE: Profile of Mk. II 1800 gives some indication of improvements wrought on new car. **BELOW:** Interior of Maxi gives clue to control layout of new six. Our spy who took local pictures said interior of new car looked a lot like this. That's another improvement.



ABOVE: Neat frontal styling is partly hidden by insect screen which suggests radiator is relocated at front of engine bay in the six. **BELOW:** The rear end styling is superficially similar to the Hillman Hunter.



SCOOP REPORT:



ABOVE: Looks of new six cylinder are improved enormously over Mk II 1800. Features are simple grille treatment, clean overall styling, improved rear end. Prototype was running conventional tyres, not radials.

BRITISH LEYLAND'S NEW SIX

ABOUT this time next year, or perhaps a little earlier, British Leyland will introduce the car pictured on these pages.

It is the Austin 1800-based six cylinder model which has been rumored for some time and it will replace the four cylinder 1800.

Like the 1800 it uses a transversely located front engine driving the front wheels, the engine being a six cylinder version of the sohc four introduced on the Morris 1500.

By the simple expedient of adding two cylinders of the dimensions used on the 1500, capacity goes up to 2250 cc. If there is sufficient meat in the block to allow boring — and we believe there is — a capacity of 2.5 litres should be easily attainable. We think the engine should be capable of developing around 100-110 bhp — a healthy increase on the 1800's 87 bhp.

Our pictures—snapped by an observant reader as the car passed through a NSW country town, apparently on proving trials—show an insect screen fitted to the grille, suggesting that the radiator on the six is located in front of the engine, not in the nearside of the engine bay, which has been the practice with previous "east-west" BLMC cars. The reason for this is simple enough. The six-cylinder engine, being considerably longer than a four, occupies the full width of the bay, forcing engineers to find another location for the radiator.

The pictures also suggest that very few of the original 1800s panels remain.

Only the doors, windscreen, screen pillars and rear window look to be un-

changed. All other panels on the car are different.

Close scrutiny reveals some Austin Maxi touches. For instance, the full width air scoop under the front bumper bar, and the parking light/directional flasher cluster also mounted under the bumper bar.

The door handles are new too. They look like the fully recessed units used on the Morris 1500.

Grille treatment is a simple, horizontal bar arrangement, merging into single brushed aluminium headlight surrounds.

The bonnet has twin air scoops—not for the carburettor as many people might suspect, but simply as a source of air for the heater/demister system. The present Austin 1800 has a single bonnet scoop for this purpose.

Around the rear C pillar the car bears the unmistakable stamp of British designer Roy Haines, who joined BLMC briefly a couple of years ago, from Ford of Britain.

The similarity between this new car and the current Zephyr/Zodiac which Haines designed is most pronounced around the C pillar.

A feature of the car's rear quarters are the extractor vents mounted on the C pillar. Their presence has rendered unnecessary the hinged quarter vents fitted in the rear doors of the 1800, and these have been dropped.

Let's hope the new arrangement is as effective as the old—which worked really well. One point that will suffer is rearward vision.

The boot and tail treatment of the new vehicle have a startling superficial resemblance to the Hillman Hunter, but under closer scrutiny subtle differences appear.

However, we have our doubts about the tail-light clusters, which look to be pinched direct from a Hunter.

The rear fender has a tiny hip just behind the rear window, and rear end treatment generally, is much cleaner than anything we've had recently from BLMC.

The photographs also suggest that the prototype was running on conventional tyres, whereas the 1800's suspension is set up specifically for radials. This could be the result of pressure from country owners who feel that radial tyres just aren't tough enough in the walls to withstand constant pounding over unmade roads.

Austin 1800 utilities are equipped with conventional tyres as standard.

Our observant spy told us that instrumentation in the car was circular—which suggests to us that part of the Austin Maxi's panel has been incorporated.

From pictures we've seen, the dash/control layout on the Maxi is first class.

We understand that this car was designed in Great Britain, but will be unique to Australia. The parent company has no plans for it outside Australia, although there is a possibility that the local division of BLMC might try for some export markets of its own—possibly even England!

The car is, we're told, only an interim model, and will be followed a couple of years later by what has been described as a "really sensational sedan".

Unlike this new car, and its 1800 predecessor, the "sensational" job will be conventionally engineered with a north-south V8 engine of Rover origin, and rear-wheel-drive. •