



THE SCIMITAR at Bruntingthorpe with the electronic test gear attached to the boot-lid.

## Reliant Scimitar SS1 Turbo

AMIDST general approval, a comment which has been made more than once about Reliant's new small open sports car is that the chassis could handle more power. In other words, it is not quick enough, even with the 1600cc engine, to satisfy the sporting instincts of some of its potential purchasers. This criticism has already been tackled by Robin Rew, whose Silverstone-based Rooster Turbos firm specialises in Scimitar and AC tuning.

Since the SS1 1600 uses a standard Ford XR3 engine (the injected version will not quite fit) which has already been the object of various tuners' attentions, Rew was able to benefit from the experience of Northampton firm Turbo Technics in turbocharging this unit, and the two

companies have collaborated over certain changes needed to install the kit in its new home. These involve a new exhaust manifold, intercooler and carburettor plenum, and the system is claimed to push power up by almost half as much again, from 96 to 140 bhp.

We took the turbocharged car to the Bruntingthorpe test track to measure the increase in performance, and discovered that, rather like the AC 3000 ME turbocharged by Rew that I tested in December 1983, curious sounds issue forth as the throttle opens and closes. What with the whistle of the turbine and the chuffing of the waste-gate, it reminded me of Ivor the Engine hauling the milk train, which was a pleasant image as the countryside rolled

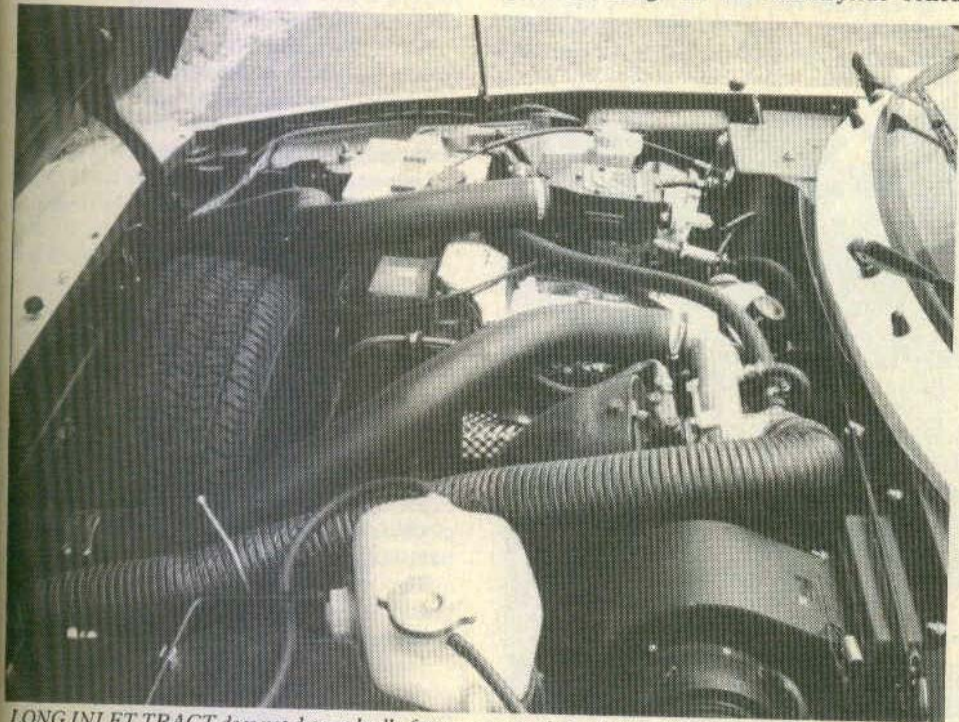
past. In fact I rather like to hear the turbo — it acts as an audible rev-counter as one prepares to pass slower cars.

The performance figures we achieved were disappointingly short of what we had expected, but they were notably faster than those put up by the unblown Scimitar tested earlier. About two seconds came off the 0-60 mph figure, giving a best in rainy conditions of 9.3 sec, and exactly 10 mph went on to the top speed, putting that to 113 mph with the top up. However, these results are in no way damning, because no turbo is at its best off the line, and where the installation really shines is in its proper habitat, the open road. Mid-range acceleration is astonishing in third, and more than once I reached for fifth gear to discover I was already in it, such is the effortless surge available for passing. The time taken to achieve full boost is probably no more than the time it would take to drop down a gear in the standard car, and the result is even better, although on the 185-width tyres, care is needed to avoid spinning them when sprinting out of roundabouts.

With the turbo, the Scimitar feels like a much larger capacity car which will probably surprise the average GTi driver, even along a winding lane, providing its driver uses a bit of cunning and forethought to keep it on the boil. With its pleasant steering and its habit of using the inside wheel as a safety valve to dissipate excess horses, the package is much more satisfying than many turbo conversions, but could not be called "budget priced" at £1,495 plus VAT; it would probably hurt less to buy a new SS1 already converted, which is possible through Will Sparrow Ltd of Alcester. — G.C.

## Vintage in August

APART from the VSCC Race Meeting on August 25th, referred to elsewhere, the VSCC Prescott speed hill-climb takes place on August 4th, over the short course at the Bugatti OC's delightful venue not far from Cheltenham. Edwardian, vintage, pvt, and historic cars will make two ascents each of the famous hill, commencing around 12-noon. Public admission costs £2 a head, Paddock tickets an additional £2, but car-parking and entry for accompanied children under 14 are free. On August 11th, on the second day of the Newton Oils and Forward Lubricants National Speed Hill-Climb at Shelsley Walsh, near Worcester, the 80th anniversary of the Midland AC's venue will be suitably celebrated, it being the oldest British speed course still in regular use. Appropriate cars will make ascents and others will form static displays, including, it is hoped, the Bolster Special "Bloody Mary" from the NMM. As at Prescott, children under 14, accompanied by an adult, are admitted free; public admission otherwise costs £2.50 a head, Paddock transfer £2. — W.B.



LONG INLET TRACT does not detract badly from response; plain pipes lead from turbo near camera, through front intercooler, back to carburettor opposite.