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FEBRUARY 14 1962

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# TWO / FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Motor Caravans are  
 not just holiday  
 vehicles. They can  
 also be  
 used as normal  
 everyday transport



Sold in probably greater numbers than any other, the Martin Walter Dormobile has a rising roof as standard and comes in no fewer than eight varieties.

IS a motor caravan an expensive luxury? Some people regard them as such but, provided you have something of the nomad in you, are not averse to doing your everyday travel in a vehicle that lacks the svelte lines of, say, a Jaguar E-type, and dislike contributing 50% purchase tax plus the current surcharge over and above the real price of a new car, there's a lot to be said for owning one, particularly from the economic point of view. Most petrol-driven motor caravans (there are diesel-engined ones too), will run perfectly well on standard grade fuel which in itself means lower running costs. Then, at weekends, at school half-terms and holiday times, the saving in hotel bills is quite something. And, of course, there is no purchase tax in your initial outlay.

There are, it must be admitted, a few things that come in on the debit side. For example, most motor caravans derive from light vans; you must, therefore, be prepared to travel on a rather more "commercial" level than in an ordinary car. Road performance will generally be less good; a higher level of mechanical and wind noise is to be expected, and there is less luxury of appointment in the driving compartment. Still, last year, over 4,000 new customers thought the advantages outweighed these debit items.

That there is certain divergence of opinion about what sort of conversion people most want to buy, is suggested by the fact that the 26 firms engaged in the business produce no fewer than 70 conversions on only nine basic vehicles. Some manu-

facturers whom we will call Group 1, see the motor caravan very much as a three-purpose vehicle—for load carrying and multi-passenger work as well as for mobile living. In this type, you will generally find that the seats are cunningly devised to go into all sorts of arrangements or fold back out of the way when lots of floor space is needed. You may also find, when you come to use such a vehicle for its nominal purpose, that there is precious little locker room for bedding and other caravanning necessities.

Another section (Group 2), place far greater emphasis on the living aspect and passenger use and practically none on load carrying. Without materially altering the basic structure of the selected vehicle, they plan the inside much more on the lines of a trailer caravan with beds made up from fixed settees and rigid seats (equipped with either plastic foam or interior sprung cushions), more comprehensive kitchen units, greater locker space and a generally less Spartan though more cluttered interior than those in Group 1. These vehicles can take the place of a six to seven-seater car, the inside passengers using the settee and seats just as they are.

Finally, in Group 3 come the designers with a sybaritic outlook who view the motor caravan more as a self-propelled bed-sitter than a vehicle with facilities for casual living. Such caravans embody little but the mechanical basis of the "converted" vehicle, have special, full-height bodies, luxurious "home-from-home" interiors and are motor caravans in the



truest sense of the word. This sort generally costs more than the others.

As mentioned earlier, a great point about buying a motor caravan is that you get full value for your outlay without contributing to the Exchequer, and have a vehicle which, if not exactly elegant, can be licensed as a private car and used as such. As an example of what can be saved in this direction *vis-à-vis* a normal car, let us consider a Ford Zephyr estate car and a Dormobile conversion of a Thames (Ford to you) 15 cwt. The basic price of the Zephyr is £810 but, by the time purchase tax and surcharge are added, you are faced with a bill for £1,182 9s. 9d. The motor caravan costs £811 10s. and nothing more. There is, of course, some difference between the performance and riding comfort of the two vehicles, but running costs in the way of petrol, oil, tyres and the like will not be widely at variance. Therefore, anyone to whom minimum capital outlay is a "must," who has need of the roominess both vehicles offer and takes into serious account the saving on hotel bills, may consider the caravan conversion the better bet.

A glance at the motor caravan section of the Car Price Index on page 36A of this issue will show that vehicles of this sort come in a fairly wide range of prices, from under £600 to £2,000. To save you the trouble of doing sums, here is a breakdown of them:—

Price Bracket	Models Available
Under £600	1
£601-£700	2
£701-£800	8
£801-£900	35
£901-£1,000	11
£1,001-£1,200	9
£1,201-£1,500	2
Over £1,500	2

The popular Devon Caravette conversion of the VW Microbus has an extending awning that clips over the side doors of the vehicle.

The Cotswold is a relative newcomer. The roof of the basic Austin van is removed and replaced with a plastic structure that gives full inside headroom.

So you can see that, unless you are satisfied with a very limited choice, you should be prepared to lay out between £800 and £1,000 in the acquisition of a new vehicle. And, strangely enough, a majority of the caravans available in this price range fall into Group 2 category as regards inside layout.

The light vans used as a basis for conversion are all in quantity production, although one cannot really classify the Land-Rover, which has only recently started to be used for the purpose, as a van. Brief specifications appear in an accompanying table and it will be seen that there is, in several cases, a choice not only of petrol and diesel engines, but of compression and final drive ratios to suit various needs and conditions.

**What Will They Do?**

In considering the sort of performance to be expected from vehicles of this sort, one must remember the function for which they are primarily designed and adjust one's outlook accordingly. Indeed, by the time some of the conversions have been carried out there is still a fair amount of load carrying being done. So, although once "wound up" many motor caravans will cruise comfortably at 55-60 m.p.h. on reasonable

Over ●●●●●▶



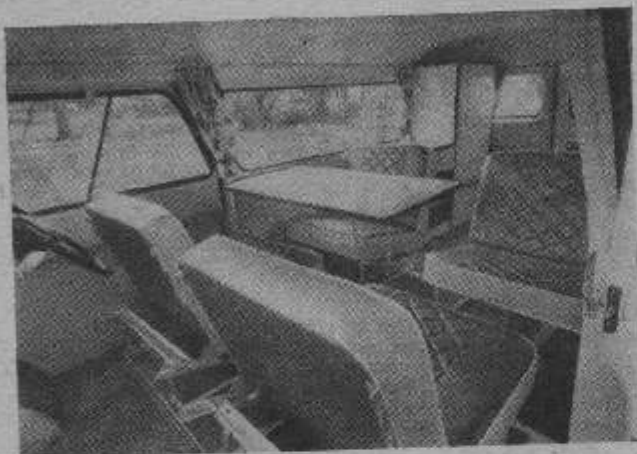
Extreme left: This view into the latest Airborne model shows the double bed made up from fixed furniture units.

Left: In addition to two straight van conversions, Bluebird offer this coach-built "Highwayman" caravan on a B.M.C. basis.

Calthorpe were the originators of the elevating roof and all their seven models are fitted with it as standard.



Commer is the only vehicle producer that makes its own motor caravan. Here is the current model arranged for night use.



The Kenex "Siasta" is one of the conversions with multi-adjustment for the seats. Here they are in the dining and lounge position.

## WHO MAKES THEM

### AIRBORNE

Airborne Service Equipment, Ltd., Arterial Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. (Based on Thames 10/12 and 15 cwt.)

### AUTO SLEEPER

Auto Sleepers, Ltd., Orchard Works, Willersley, Nr. Broadway, Worcs. (Based on Commer, Austin and Morris.)

### BEDMOBILE

Taylor Motor Body Conversions, Sedgeford, King's Lynn, Norfolk. (Based on Thames and Standard Special.)

### BLUEBIRD

Bluebird Caravans, Ltd., Parkstone, Dorset. (Based on Austin/Morris and Commer.)

### BUCCANEER

M.T.S. and Co. (Coachbuilders), Ltd., Browells Lane, Feltham, Middx. (Based on Thames and Standard Atlas.)

### CALTHORPE

M. Calthorpe (Home Cruiser), Ltd., 449 Oxford Street, London, W.1. (Based on Standard Atlas and Major, Morris J2, Thames 10/12 and 15 cwt.)

### CARAWAGON

R. J. Searle, Ltd., Thames Street, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middx. (Based on Land-Rover Mk. III.)

### CAR CAMPER

Auto Conversions, Ltd., Nansen Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham 11. (Based on Austin/Morris and Commer.)

### COMMER

Commer Cars, Ltd., Devonshire House, Piccadilly, London, W.1. (Based on Commer 15 cwt.)

### COTSWOLD

Kingscote and Stephens, Ltd., London Road, Gloucester. (Based on Austin.)

### DEVON CARAVETTE

Lisburne Garage, Ltd., Babbacombe Road, Torquay, Devon. (Based on V W Microbus, and V W Kombi.)

### DORMOBILE

Martin Walter, Ltd., Utilicon Works, Folkestone. (Based on Bedford, Thames 10/12 and 15 cwt., Austin, Morris, Commer, Land-Rover.)

### HADRIAN

Motor Caravan Bodies, Ltd., 2-26 Benwell Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, 5. (Based on Bedford, Commer, Austin and Morris.)

### HIGHLANDER

Ryan Motorised Caravans, Oxford Road, Worthing. (Based on Bedford, Austin and Morris.)

### KENEX

Kenex Coachworks, Ltd., 54 Castle Street, Dover, Kent. (Based on Atlas/Atlas Major, Bedford, C.A.S./C.A.L., Austin/Morris, Thames 10/12 cwt.)

### LAND-CRUISER

Land-Cruiser, Ltd., 32 Donovan Court, 69 Drayton Gardens, London, S.W.10. (Based on Commer 30 cwt., Commer B.M.C.T.200., Bedford 6-cyl.)

### MOORTOWN

Moortown Motors, Ltd., Regent Street, Leeds. (Based on V W Microbus and V W Kombi.)

## •••• Caravans

roads, once an obstruction or twisty section calls for a reduction in speed it will take a little time to return to one's previous gait.

From time to time, *The Motor* undertakes performance and usage tests of various motor caravans and a fair idea of the sort of average performance to be expected can be obtained therefrom. Let us consider the mean of 10 tests made on five sorts of basic vehicle. Acceleration through the gears from 0 to 30 m.p.h. averages 10.4 sec., and that from 0 to 40 m.p.h., 19 sec. But it is only fair to point out that a 0-30 figure of under 9 sec. stands to the credit of a Bedford-based Dormobile and two Thames-based vehicles—a Kenex "Carefree" and a Calthorpe Home Cruiser, and both the Dormobile and the Kenex bettered 15 sec. from 0 to 40 m.p.h.

The average maximum speed obtained from the 10 was 58.6 m.p.h., but no fewer than half of the vehicles tested—the Calthorpe, Dormobile and Kenex mentioned above, plus Commer's own caravan conversion and a Car Camper of the same breed, topped 61 m.p.h. over four runs, two in each direction.

So far as fuel consumption is concerned, the average for the 10 vehicles works out at 23.2 m.p.g.—and it must be remembered that the figures include the acceleration and maximum speed tests where the vehicles are driven as hard as they will go, which is not the most economical form of running. Three of the motor caravans returned good, above-average figures; the Moortown "Autohome" showed 25.0 m.p.g., an Austin-based Cotswold 27.5 m.p.g., and the Bedford Dormobile 27.8 m.p.g. Here again it should be noted that some of the remaining vehicles came to us for test before they had been properly run in, and would probably have given a more economical account of themselves with a greater mileage on the odometer.



The Moortown conversion of the VW Microbus carries its cooker and hand basin on the side-opening doors, where they can be used from either inside or outside.

Specifications on page 43 •••••▶

### NOMAD

Nomad, Roxalina Street, Bolton, Lancs. (Based on Austin 152/Morris J2, Commer 15 cwt.)

### PARALANIAN

Central Garage, Ltd., Parry Lane, Bradford. (Based on Austin 152.)

### PITT

Pitt Moto-Caravan Division, Canterbury Sidecars, Ltd., South Ockendon, Essex. (Based on Thames, Commer, Austin 152.)

### SERVICE

Service Garages (South Eastern), Ltd., Service House, 83, 84 and 85 East Hill, Colchester, Essex. (Based on V W Microbus.)

### SLUMBERWAGEN

European Cars, Ltd., 129 Old Brompton Road, London, S.W.7. (Based on V W Microbus.)

### TOURISTE

Coachwork Conversions, Ltd., 282 High Street, Berkhamsted, Herts. (Based on Renault Estafette.)

### WESSEX

Wessex Motors Limited, New Street, Salisbury. (Based on Morris.)

