

MOTOR CARAVAN TEST

VOLKSWAGEN
DEVON
CARAVETTE

By Stuart Bladen

Conversion designed for use with optional side awning. Sleeping accommodation for two adults and a child, but two more adult bunks included with optional elevating roof.

SINCE their earliest days in motor caravan production, Devon Conversions have concentrated their main effort on models based on the Volkswagen, and the trade name Devon Caravette is almost as old as motor caravanning itself. The current model tested here is the intermediate one of the Devon range which was first introduced soon after announcement of the new Volkswagen Microbus in autumn of 1967. It costs £100 more than the Torvette, which is based on the cheaper Kombi version of the Volkswagen instead of the Microbus. The third model, £100 dearer, is the Eurovette, similar to the Caravette but with extra items such as crockery and cutlery, and including the side awning.

Generally we are against the idea of side awnings, which seem to introduce an element of camping into motor caravanning and reduce the convenience and mobility of the vehicle. But to some extent the design of the Devon caravan is tailored to the use of a side awning for additional space, and one can see that the caravan will prove most convenient when driven to a site and then installed with side door open, the tent annexe in use and some of the fittings, such as the cooker unit, moved out of the caravan for extra space. One would then have very spacious and comfortable living accommodation.

Including fixing channels for the vehicle, and ground sheet, the tent annexe is moderately priced at £46 5s. Another option is an elevating roof with "bellows" side pieces, transparent windows, and an insulated panel incorporating an opening skylight. Strong spring loading in the telescopic side struts makes it easy to push the roof up or pull it down, and holds it in the fully open position giving 6ft 2in. headroom over the main floor area.

As a package with the elevating roof are two roof bunks on tubular frames which clip into position at each end of the roof opening. The

bunks taper and are cleverly arranged sardine-wise to save space: the left bunk has its wide end at the rear, and the one on the right is wide at the forward end. When out of use, the bunks fold away and are neatly covered by plastic trim sheets with press stud fastenings.

The main bed is formed by drawing forward a wooden base frame revealed after lifting out the rear seat squab: two screw-in legs support the forward part of the platform, and the cushions then reposition forming a generously large double bed much higher than usual. It lines up with the rearmost cushion, in place over the rear-mounted engine. With the upper bunks, this large double bed makes total sleeping accommodation for four adults, and an optional child's bunk in the cab makes this a five-berth model. Big families could have additional beds in the tent annexe.

For daytime travel there are facing bench seats, in addition to the cab seats, and the table attaches to a beading on the side wall, and stands with a single leg in position for the dinette, or can be used as a free-standing table inside or out of the van, with four screw-on legs. As well as revealing the pull-out platform for the forward part of the double bed, removal of the rear squab discloses two secret drawers for clothes. In the same slot are another pair of drawers, accessible through the tailgate. There is no stop between them, so that if the drawer is pushed too far back from one end it pushes the other out at the opposite end.

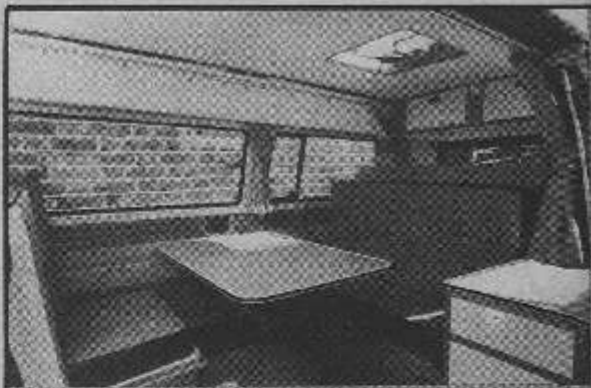
The forward bench seat, immediately behind the cab, is in three sections. On the right the squab pulls forward to reveal quite a spacious wardrobe. The centre section is removable, allowing walkthrough from the cab. The left section, near the side door, is removable as a unit, and incorporates the Easicool food storage locker and the 6½-gal tank for fresh water. The filler for the water tank protrudes through the side of the cabinet, and is conveniently accessible by the side door for topping up. However, although a push-pull pump and tap unit is fitted, farther back on the left, there is no built-in sink. A plastic bowl carried loose makes a poor alternative to the normal motor caravan feature of a built-in sink with runaway drain, as is standard on the Eurovette.

The cooker has two burners and a grill and is again intended primarily for outside use—carried out to the tent annexe, for example. A folding windshield is incorporated and there is also a folding frame to support the cooker. All this seems rather needless complication, but will perhaps be appreciated by some who do not like cooking in the confines of a small caravan.

A lot of space is wasted, compared with rival designs on other vans, in having the water tank, gas bottle, and spare wheel all in the rather limited caravan quarters. But some space is saved by the fitting of usefully large roof lockers at the rear, which do not obstruct through vision.

Compared with an earlier example of the latest Volkswagen Microbus tried in the winter of last year, this one seemed a lot quieter, perhaps gaining from the sound-damping effect of seat cushions above and ahead of the air-cooled rear engine. One can still hear the engine churning away, particularly at the rather high revs in the gears which have to be used for adequate performance. The gear change is very light and smooth in action, but it is rather springy—understandable in view of the remoteness of the control. The steering is also reasonably positive, but the vehicle is badly affected by side winds.

On corners the handling is much better balanced than the tail-heavy weight distribution would lead one to expect, oversteer coming in only in very hard cornering. Much is owed here



Additional legs are provided to enable the table to be used outside the vehicle. Twin bunks are provided if an elevating roof is specified. They are not uniform, as appears here, but taper and the interior is that beds will be at opposite ends.



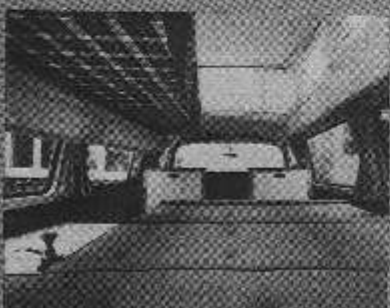
to the improved rear suspension, using trailing arms instead of swing axles. The ride is quite lively with a lot of plunge and recoil at the front. The vehicle itself feels rigid, and the conversion does not give rise to rattles.

Brakes require firm pedal loads, and bad slewing resulted with more than 80 lb on the pedal, when efficiency is still only 0.7g. The best braking obtainable was 0.85g, with a lot of steering lock to counter the tendency to slew. The handbrake on the test car may have needed adjustment, as it gave only 0.22g with the under-facia handle pulled out to the limit of travel.

Heating is standard, and is separately adjustable either side for hot or cold. Heat output seemed so ample that the earlier model tried, whose heater seemed so ineffective in winter, must have been faulty. A splendid blast of fresh air is available from facia inlets in hot weather, but by ram effect only—there is no boost. Trunking across the front doors pipes fresh air to the main compartment.

Maximum speed is 68 mph, and on a motorway the van can be kept almost permanently on full throttle, with speed varying quite appreciably according to gradient. It certainly has the Volkswagen characteristic of being designed for sustained full-throttle driving.

Import duty makes the Volkswagen Microbus expensive over here, and by the time the extra cost of an elevating roof has been added to the Caravette, its price is fully £300 more than equivalent British-based models; but no doubt the accepted reasons of quality, durability and reliability offset this in the minds of many buyers. This conversion by Devon will be particularly suitable for those with big families who like to spread out in a site when they arrive, and stay put for the main part of the holiday. □



A wide sliding door on the nearside of the vehicle is an excellent feature of the Volkswagen Microbus and allows full advantage to be taken of a side awning, available as an extra.

Above, left: The elevating roof is spring loaded and incorporates an opening ventilator. There is no sink, although a tap is fitted.

Left: The double bed is fairly high and extends clearwards over the engine compartment.

VOLKSWAGEN DEVON CARAVETTE

PERFORMANCE AND DATA

Motor caravan conversion of the Volkswagen Microbus by Devon Conversions, J. P. White-Sidmouth, Alexandria Works, Sidmouth, Devon.

PRICES	£	s	d
Devon Torvette	1,138	0	0
Devon Caravette (as tested)	1,238	0	0
Devon Eurovette	1,338	0	0

Extras	£	s	d
Side awning, complete	46	5	0
Child's bunk in cab	11	10	0
Camping Gaz and regulator	6	17	8
Melamine crockery for four	4	5	0
Stainless steel cutlery for four	3	17	8
Devon elevating roof, with twin upper bunks	130	0	0

ACCELERATION

0 to 30 mph	7.6sec
0 to 40 mph	14.1sec
0 to 50 mph	23.5sec
0 to 60 mph	41.9sec
Standing quarter-mile	25.7sec
Standing Km.	49.0sec
In top gear:	
20 to 40 mph	17.4sec
30 to 50 mph	20.7sec
40 to 60 mph	32.6sec

MAXIMUM SPEEDS IN GEARS

Mph	Mph
Top (mean)	67
(best)	68
3rd	61
2nd	40
1st	21

WEIGHT

With full water tank (8½ gals) and half-full fuel tank 29.0 cwt. (3,250 lb.)
Distribution, per cent: F, 42.6; R, 57.4

PETROL CONSUMPTION

Overall, for 1,501 miles 20.4 mpg
Normal range 19-22 mpg
Grade: Regular 2-star (90-octane RM)

BRAKES (from 30 mph in neutral)

Pedal load in lb.	Retardation	Equivalent stopping distance in feet.
40	0.30g	100
60	0.48g	63
80	0.63g	48
100	0.70g	43
120	0.80g	37.6
140	0.85g	35.4
Handbrake	0.22g	137

DIMENSIONS

Height, exterior, roof down	6ft 9in.
Headroom, interior, roof up	6ft 2in.
Length	14ft 7in.
Width	5ft 11in.
Beds: Main	6ft 2in. x 4ft 2in.
at rear, 3ft 6in. wide at front	
Folding bunks:	6ft 4in. x 1ft 10in.
tapering to:	1ft 3in.

TYRES

7.00-14 in. tubed.
Normal Pressures: F, 28; R, 35 p.s.i.

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Cylinders 4, horizontally opposed
Bore 85.5mm (3.37in.)
Stroke 69mm (2.72in.)
Capacity 1,584c.c. (96.6 cu.in.)
Compression ratio 7.7 to 1
Maximum power 47 (net) bhp at 4,400 rpm
Maximum torque 76.6 (net) lb. ft. at 2,200 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Gear ratios

Top 0.82
Third 1.26
Second 2.06
First 3.80
Reverse 3.61

Final Drive

Hypoid bevel 5.375 to 1

SUSPENSION

Front: Independent, transverse torsion bars, telescopic dampers, and torsion arms.
Rear: Independent, transverse torsion bars and trailing links; double-jointed half shafts and telescopic dampers.

BRAKES

Dimensions: F, 10 in. dia, 2.2 in. wide shoes
R, 10 in. dia, 1.8 in. wide shoes
Swept area: 252 sq.in. (total)

BATTERY

12-volt, 42 amp. hr. positive earth

FUEL TANK

Capacity 13 Imp. Gallons (60 litres)

Autocar RECOMMENDED NEW CAR PRICES

	UK List £	Total Inc. P.T.I. £	Max. Speed mph	0-60 sec.	Typical mpg
BOVER					
2000CC	1,100	1,204	1,078	102.5	15.1 25
automatic extra	76	98	1,078	94	15.3 23
2300TC	1,200	1,368	1,078	107	11.2 25
2600 (A)	1,400	1,630	3,329	114	10.5 18
2.8 litre (A)	1,700	2,222	3,329	108	12.4 20
3.5 litre Cooper (A)	1,775	2,318	3,329	108	12.4 20
Land-Rover 11 88in* from Land-Rover 11 109in* base	750	—	—	—	—
	880	—	—	—	—
BAAB					
66 V4	694	837	1,498	82	18.5 29
80 V4 de base	704	818	1,498	82	18.5 29
85 V4 Estate car	782	835	1,498	—	—
SIMCA					
1000LS	553	665	844	83	18.6 34
1000BL	546	715	844	83	18.6 34
selective automatic (1000BL)	73	98	844	—	—
1000SL	595	795	1,118	83	18.5 34
1000 Special	808	707	1,118	—	—
1100LS 3-door	824	817	1,118	81	18.6 34
1100LS Estate car 2-door	871	876	1,118	81	18.6 34
1100LS 5-door	879	885	1,118	81	18.6 34
1100SL 5-door	874	885	1,118	81	18.6 34
1100SL 5-door	703	911	1,118	81	18.6 34
1100SL Estate car 6-door	703	911	1,118	81	18.6 34
selective automatic extra	78	102	1,118	—	—
1200S Coupé (144)	1,143	1,485	1,204	—	—
1301GL	742	971	1,290	80	21.8 30
1301BL	820	1,073	1,478	—	—
1301 Special	863	1,154	1,478	—	—
1301 Special Estate car	871	1,277	1,478	—	—
SINGER					
Chassis	638	701	875	74	25.2 38
Chassis Sport	986	778	875	80	18.3 36
Chassis Coupé	534	785	875	78	22.1 35
Super	732	958	1,458	84	18.5 28
automatic extra	85	111	1,728	—	—
Vaguet V	818	1,070	1,728	80	14.8 28
Vaguet V Estate car	818	1,202	1,728	80	14.8 28
automatic extra	75	98	1,728	80	17.4 26
SKODA					
1016MS	460	503	588	75	30.8 34
1000MP 160	487	630	658	—	—
1000MP de base	495	648	658	75	30.8 34
1000MP de base 160	612	671	688	—	—
1100MS de base	633	696	1,107	—	—
1100MP de base 160	680	721	1,107	—	—
Detachable Cabriolet Car	512	671	1,221	—	—
STEYR-PUCH					
850 TR 8	868	742	880	80	15.0 25
SUNBEAM					
101 Sport	640	732	875	80	18.3 31
Stylaris	620	812	875	87	17.6 34
Regal	1,234	1,362	1,735	103	12.0 23
automatic extra	35	46	1,735	—	—
Regal 1170	1,230	1,634	1,735	105	11.1 24
TOYOTA					
Corolla 1100	611	788	1,077	85	16.3 33
automatic extra	70	107	1,077	—	—
Corolla 110 de base	648	848	1,077	85	16.3 33
Corolla 1500	885	910	1,480	87	17.2 30
Corolla 1500 de base	752	984	1,480	87	17.2 30
Corolla 1500 Estate car	748	978	1,480	87	17.2 30
Crown 2300 de base (A)	1,148	1,487	2,263	89	18.0 19
Crown 2300 Estate car (A)	1,168	1,623	2,263	—	—
TRIUMPH					
Herald 1200	524	684	747	77	25.8 29
Herald 1300	581	781	1,288	84	17.7 30
Herald 1300 Convertible	628	820	1,288	84	17.7 30
Herald 1300 Estate car	643	840	1,288	84	17.7 30
1300	102	917	1,308	84	18.0 30
1300 TC	734	898	1,308	83	15.9 33
Vitesse 2-litre Mk. 2	743	870	1,881	—	—
Vitesse 2-litre Mk. 2 Convertible	780	1,018	1,881	—	—
Spitfire 4 Mk. 3	587	780	1,288	—	—
Spitfire 4 Mk. 3 Coupé	625	816	1,288	—	—
GTB V6 11	379	1,148	1,688	107	0.0 26
TR	1,020	1,314	2,438	120	8.6 24
TR Coupé	1,055	1,350	2,438	—	—
2000	393	1,287	1,988	82.8	14.1 25
2000 Estate car	1,203	1,671	1,988	83	15.0 23
automatic extra	78	102	1,988	—	—
2.5 P	1,133	1,486	2,488	108	10.4 25
automatic extra	78	102	2,488	—	—
TVR					
Vaux 52	1,150	1,487	1,598	100	10.0 28
Vaux 52 Sport	1,288	1,888	1,808	—	—
Vaux 52 Super Sport	1,582	1,782	1,808	—	—
Tascat V5	1,452	1,530	2,384	—	—
UREN					
Seagee V6 2-door	1,298	1,210	2,994	—	—
Seagee V6 4-door	1,310	1,238	2,994	—	—
Seagee V6 E	1,351	1,647	2,994	107	9.2 22
Seagee V6 Estate Car	1,382	1,548	2,994	—	—
Seagee 3000 L	1,488	1,734	2,994	—	—

UK List £	Total Inc. P.T.I. £	Max. Speed mph	0-60 sec.	Typical mpg	
VANDEN PLAS					
Process 1300 automatic extra	822	1,088	1,275	88	17.3 33
	75	38	1,275	—	—
Vauxhall					
Viva 2-door	673	812	1,158	78	19.1 21
Viva de base 2-door	657	728	1,158	78	19.1 21
Viva de base 4-door	682	775	1,158	—	—
Viva de base Estate car	621	812	1,158	—	—
Viva 30 de base 2-door	687	789	1,158	83	17.8 28
Viva 30 de base 4-door	622	814	1,158	—	—
Viva 30 de base Estate car	651	852	1,158	—	—
Viva SL 2-door	595	728	1,189	78	19.7 21
Viva SL 4-door	630	825	1,189	—	—
Viva SL Estate car	670	873	1,189	—	—
Viva 30 SL 2-door	625	819	1,189	83	17.8 28
Viva 30 SL 4-door	660	854	1,189	—	—
Viva 30 SL Estate car	700	894	1,189	—	—
automatic (de base 20 SL)	58	85	1,158	—	—
Viva 1500 de base 2-door	622	814	1,558	—	—
Viva 1500 de base 4-door	657	850	1,558	—	—
Viva 1500 de base Estate car	688	880	1,558	—	—
Viva 1500 SL 2-door	680	804	1,688	—	—
Viva 1500 SL 4-door	695	810	1,688	—	—
Viva 1500 SL Estate car	735	852	1,688	—	—
automatic extra	88	89	1,688	—	—
Viva GT	830	1,038	1,875	107	11.3 25
Viva	885	857	1,588	90	18.3 26
Viva Estate Car	780	856	1,530	—	—
automatic extra	88	116	1,575	—	—
Viva	705	822	1,675	85	16.0 24
Viva Estate car	780	1,021	1,675	—	—
Viva 2000	780	886	1,375	95	15.0 24
Nova 2000 Estate car	835	1,092	1,375	—	—
automatic (2-litre and 2000)	68	88	1,375	—	—
Viva 3000 Estate car	925	1,211	3,294	—	—
automatic extra	80	104	3,294	—	—
Vivina	905	1,184	3,294	103	11.8 18
automatic extra	80	104	3,294	—	—
Opera	846	1,107	3,294	—	—
Opera de base	814	1,183	3,294	—	—
automatic extra	85	111	3,294	100	14.0 17
Vauxhall (A)	1,275	1,804	3,294	97	15.9 16
Vauxhall (normal transmission)	1,203	1,573	3,294	—	—
VIGNALE-FIAT					
500 Camino	538	701	800	—	—
850 Special Coupé and Sedan	848	1,103	843	—	—
850 Special SL Coupé and Sedan	938	1,228	843	—	—
124 Coupé Lucerne	1,209	1,571	1,438	—	—
124 Coupé Savanna SL	1,281	1,668	1,438	—	—
126 Coupé Savanna	1,484	2,212	1,808	—	—
VOLKSWAGEN					
1200	523	685	1,182	71.7	27.1 33
1200 automatic	558	731	1,182	71.7	27.1 33
1300 de base	685	788	1,285	75	23.0 31
1300 de base automatic	827	812	1,285	75	23.0 31
1500 de base	821	812	1,405	81	21.1 30
1500 de base automatic	858	868	1,488	81	21.8 30
selective automatic extra	70	92	—	—	—
1500 Volkswagen SL Coupé	931	1,262	1,493	—	—
1300T	788	1,026	1,634	—	—
1500T automatic	842	1,101	1,684	—	—
1500T	893	1,128	1,684	83	20.3 28
1500T automatic	818	1,202	1,684	83	20.3 28
1500 Variant L Estate car	836	1,224	1,684	—	—
1500 Variant L Estate car automatic extra	882	1,297	1,684	—	—
411 2-door	114	148	—	—	—
411 2-door automatic	808	1,224	1,678	88	16.5 25
411 2-door de base	892	1,297	1,678	88	16.5 25
411 2-door de base automatic	1,010	1,308	1,678	88	16.5 25
411 2-door de base automatic extra	1,058	1,381	1,678	88	16.5 25
411 4-door	881	1,282	1,678	—	—
411 4-door automatic	1,036	1,295	1,678	—	—
411 4-door de base	1,047	1,368	1,678	—	—
411 4-door de base automatic	1,103	1,442	1,678	—	—
automatic extra	114	148	—	—	—
VOLVO					
111 Coupé	828	1,210	1,771	80.6	17.8 28
130	918	1,275	1,771	—	—
129ST	1,110	1,452	1,771	—	—
142	1,120	1,405	1,988	—	—
142S	1,170	1,630	1,988	—	—
144	1,180	1,604	1,988	—	—
automatic extra	75	86	1,988	—	—
145 Estate car	1,250	1,634	1,988	—	—
144S	1,280	1,588	1,988	88	12.8 20
145S Estate car	1,380	1,700	1,988	88	14.8 24
1800S Coupé	1,550	2,020	1,988	117	11.8 14
184	1,400	1,820	2,070	—	—
automatic with power steering extra	180	238	2,070	—	—
WARTBURG					
Right	518	380	881	77	20.1 28
Estate car	565	740	881	—	—
WOLSELEY					
Rover Mk. II	525	701	898	77.2	24.1 40
1300 Mk. I	630	803	1,213	80	17.3 31
1400	810	1,170	1,758	—	—
automatic extra	77	107	1,758	80	16.0 25
1600	708	882	1,822	—	—
automatic extra	68	89	1,822	—	—

