

BEE TLING

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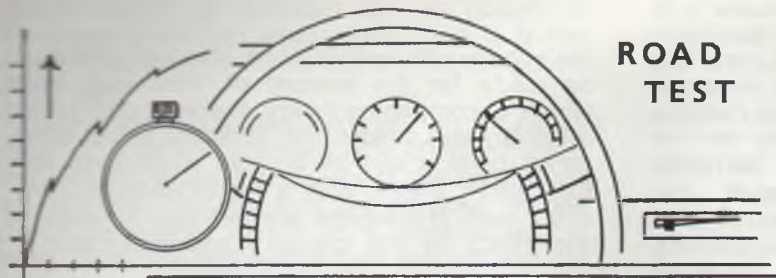
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Forty Pence



Devon Moonraker

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ROAD TEST

Devon Moonraker Caravan, 2000 c.c.

Apart from Chris Barber's road test of the diesel Type 2 bus, we have yet to publish a full article about the new Type 2. We were very pleased to take advantage of Devon Motor Caravan's offer of a test on their well known Moonraker; this gave us an opportunity of trying out the new Type 2, on this particular vehicle, fitted with the Type 4 two litre engine, and to re-assess Devon's Moonraker conversion. We have divided our road test into two parts. This month we will deal with the basic Type 2 vehicle itself; next month we will talk about the Motor Caravan conversion.

INSTRUMENTATION AND CONTROLS

The dashboard of the Type 2 is quite different from its predecessor. The instruments now sit in a binnacle on top of the main fascia. This binnacle includes, on the left, a 0-100 miles per hour speedometer, with decimal but not trip mileage recorder, and which is also calibrated, albeit with rather small numbers, in kilometers. It also has red dots to indicate suggested change up points for 1st, 2nd and 3rd gears. The right hand instrument is, optionally, a clock. On most vehicles, including the test version, however, it is simply a blank dial with the fuel gauge for the 13 gallon tank fitted into the bottom. Both of these instruments are concealed behind reverse slope plastic lenses and their illumination is direct from lamps concealed behind these lenses. Between the two instruments is a bank of warning lights, once again sited behind a sloping clear plastic lens. These include : direction indicators, high beam, generator and oil pressure. There are also two more warning lights, which, unless optional equipment is fitted, are not connected up. Also in the binnacle are the rocker switches for lighting, hazard warning and fog lamps and a knurled control for panel dimming. There are blanks

for an additional switch and for brake warning lights if fitted.

The steering wheel is still large, although it is rather more car-like than its predecessors. There are steering column controls for trafficators, dip and flash and, on the right, for the two speed wipers and washer. The hand-brake lever is neatly positioned to the left of the drivers seat and the gear lever is heavily raked across towards the driver. The gear change is certainly much more positive than we remember from the earlier Type 2's.

The passenger's grab handle is high on the left hand screen pillar; we suspect that many



The latest Devon Moonraker.

who sit there won't be able to reach it. Perhaps it is more use for climbing in and out.

ROAD HOLDING AND HANDLING

The test vehicle was shod with 185SR14 Michelin XZX radial tyres, these being fitted to the standard 5½" rims. Although, with its elevating roof and fitted furniture this vehicle

carries a lot of weight high up, it certainly handles very well indeed. When one becomes accustomed to the degree of roll; one realises that the tyres are staying very firmly on the road and the vehicle is reluctant to slide about at all. As you grow used to it, you begin to exploit the road holding more and more and, coupled with the very commanding driving position, this allows you to travel at much higher speeds than you would expect from the vehicle's actual performance.

PERFORMANCE

This particular vehicle had an accelerator pedal which needed tremendous pressure and to begin with we thought that the performance was very lacking indeed. It was only when one's full weight was pressed on the accelerator pedal that the vehicle really showed what it could do. This is certainly no sports car, but it can cover the ground in a very impressive way indeed. We have already remarked about the very commanding driving position; this, combined with the amount of power which is available, does allow you to drive through traffic and cross country very rapidly indeed.

Most owners of motor caravans will not be driving their cars particularly quickly. However, there may well be the time when you want to get down to the South of France as quickly as possible and will cruise at perhaps a constant 70 miles an hour on autoroutes. In just such conditions the vehicle returned an overall fuel consumption of 21 miles per gallon. More steady motoring easily achieved 26 miles a gallon. These are very good figures for such a large vehicle.

If you wish to make use of the facility, the 2 litre engine will allow you to cruise at speeds up to 85 mph. Needless to say, fuel consumption increases dramatically if this sort of cruising speed is indulged in, but it is always pleasing to have the power on tap.

We suspect that the very heavy accelerator pedal is not typical. However, providing your leg muscles can stand the strain, it acts as a very effective economy device!

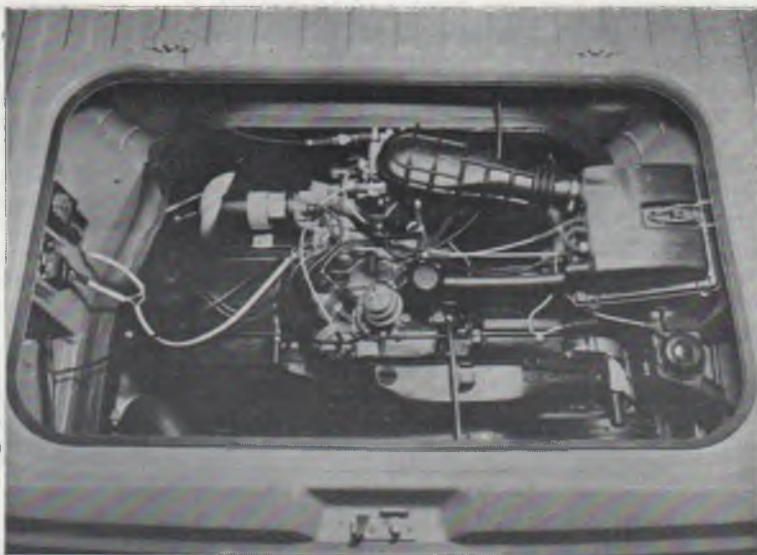
BRAKES

With the two litre engine, one gets servo brakes. These really are a very necessary feature on this big vehicle and we would not be happy driving it without power brakes. They stop

the vehicle very well indeed, although one must be ready for the amount of front end squat which accompanies heavy braking, due to the relatively soft suspension. With the servo, emergency braking can be brought about with very little pedal effort; with a motor caravan, however, such procedures are avoided because of the effect on the crockery and supplies!

HEATING AND VENTILATION

Heating and ventilation are now controlled



Access to the engine is now via a horizontal inspection panel, like the old Type 3 and 4 Variants. The tube passing through the rear panel houses the very flexible dipstick. Battery is now front mounted. This is the 1600cc unit, not the 2 litre version which we tested.

from a small dashboard panel, close to the driver; this has three sliding levers. The upper one controls the flow of air between the screen and floor, the middle one controls the temperature of the air and the bottom one controls the amount of fresh air admitted. These levers control two main screen outlets, demisting outlets at the ends of the fascia, and the footwell ducts. In addition, there are two cheese cutter grills, one at either end of the dashboard, which admit only fresh air. When heating for the footwells is selected, hot air is also pumped out into the back of the vehicle through slots just behind the front seats.

Once the engine has warmed up, the flow of hot air is quite sufficient for front seat passengers. However, the van has a great deal of space inside it, and it is really too much to ask the engine heat exchangers to bring the temperature of the whole vehicle up to a very high level on very cold days. We note that a

central heater is available as an option in European countries; what a pity that it is not fitted more frequently in the United Kingdom.

SEATING

The front seats are certainly an improvement on their predecessors. We often criticised the lack of support and, whilst the new seats are far from perfect, they are as good as one could reasonably expect in a commercial vehicle. Both are adjustable fore and aft and for backrest rake. This latter adjustment is carried out by depressing a lever at the outside edge of the seat; this releases the lock mechanism and one simply pushes the spring loaded backrest to the appropriate position. A neat system, but we did find that sliding off the seat inevitably depressed the lever and caused the backrest to jump to its forward position again.

STORAGE

We will deal with the storage facilities offered by the Devon conversion next month. The basic vehicle does come with a dashboard locker which is not nearly as convenient as its predecessor. This is now a shallow and rather flimsy bin which hinges open beneath the dashboard. Safer, perhaps, for the passenger's legs, but far less use as a storage place.

Behind each of the front seats is a hinged plate which gives access to the enclosed spaces beneath them. That behind the driver houses the battery, whilst tools are stowed beneath the passenger. Ingenious owners will find that plenty of use can be made of this space.

FUEL AND OIL

The fuel tank is filled via a simple cap just below and behind the driver's door. Many owners would wish to replace this with a lockable cap.

Oil can be checked or topped up once the hinged number plate support at the rear of the vehicle has been opened; there is no separate engine room door as in the past. The flap is not too large, but the oil filler pipe has a sliding extension which makes topping up a little simpler.

The long, flexible dipstick is inserted over the top of the engine; not the easiest of tasks!

SUMMARY

The new Type 2 is not dramatically different from its predecessor, but almost everything about it proclaims good VW practice : steady development and improvement.

In the past, our biggest complaints have been about imprecise gear changing and poor front seats; both of these features have been much improved. The lower engine compartment line and the transfer of the spare wheel

to a wind-down position beneath the cab have combined to offer much more internal room and we will discuss how Devon have made use of it in their Moonraker conversion next month.

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