

## ROAD TEST

# Devon Moonraker Caravan, 2000 c.c.

Last month, we looked at the technical aspects of the new Type 2 VW on which the Moonraker is based. This month, we will examine how Devon have utilised the space provided by the new vehicle to provide a mobile camping home.

### ELEVATING ROOF

The roof on the Moonraker extends virtually the whole length of the vehicle, certainly the whole length of the living space. It is hinged down the offside and retained by very strong over-centre clips along the nearside guttering. These over-centre clips have safety pins which must be removed before the roof can be elevated. Once the pins have been removed and the catches undone, one simply has to give the roof a firm push from within the vehicle. Gas struts then take over to remove the effort. The actual roof itself is a glass fibre moulding incorporating a neat ventilation panel and, when elevated, the front, back and side are of a strong plastic material.

Although the glass fibre moulding is effectively covered with carpeting material, we still think that the plastic material gives little protection against very cold weather. Not all motor caravans are used in the summer and we would like to see some form of insulation provided to this part of the elevating roof.

The edges of the glass fibre moulding are provided with a rubber seal which is pressed firmly against the vehicle's roof when in the lowered position and there is surprisingly little wind noise from this area.

### SEATING

All the seats are covered in a material which is attractive and hard wearing. A bench seat runs across the width of the vehicle just in front of the engine and it is this seat which can be easily folded into a double bed. An-

other seat, fitted just behind the front passenger, is held in place by means of an aluminium channel fitted close to the floor. Sliding the seat out of this channel allows you to put it in different places in the van, or to



The Moonraker with roof elevated. Gas struts make raising it an easy job.

remove it altogether. The top can be lifted off from this seat as a swing-out frame which supports a fourth seat when required.

All these seats were comfortable and grouped sensibly around the removable table in the middle of the vehicle. The retaining section for the individual seat is, we thought, a little flimsy and it is not too difficult to pull the seat away from its fixed position.

When not in use, the table top fits between the front passenger and his individual single seat. Its supporting leg is easily unscrewed and tucks away in one of the lockers.

### KITCHEN ARRANGEMENTS

Down the offside of the living space is a long covered unit with lift-up work tops in three sections. The worktop at the front lifts to reveal a stainless steel sink and draining



board together with a tap which is operated by an electric pump from a water container in the back of the vehicle. This water container, incidentally, has a very neat wheel arrangement which allows you to pull it quite a long distance without any great waste of energy. This is something which will please young children who usually get sent off to top up the water supply! The next section of the worktop lifts up to reveal the gas double burner and grill. This has a neat stainless steel splash-guard and we found it to be very effective. The third section of the worktop hinges up to reveal a storage locker. Each of

is on the move. When you are parked, it can then be switched over to the gas supply. It is a very convenient unit as far as operation is concerned but it does lack any proper retention for bottles. This is a sad omission; you really do need something which will keep a bottle of milk upright in a refrigerator when you are on the move. As it is, one's only option is to pack other things around the bottle when you put it in the refrigerator. This is something which Electrolux could easily remedy.

There is a good fluorescent lamp above the cooking area and we found the cooking and washing-up facilities to be very convenient.

### STORAGE

There is a full height locker to the offside of the engine compartment; this can be used as a small wardrobe. There are also lockers across the roof area of the engine compartment, underneath the double seat/bed, inside the single seat and underneath the work surfaces. In all, the Moonraker is well provided for storage, but we suspect that many owners, like us, found that there is insufficient for a long family holiday. This can only be overcome in a motor caravan by careful planning of all the items which you are going to put on board.

### SLEEPING

In order to convert the double seat into a bed you simply take hold of the front edge and slide it forwards and upwards. The double bed which is produced is extremely comfortable, providing that you ensure to camp on a level surface (something which every experienced motor caravaner will know!)

When the roof is raised, what would normally be the solid "roof" of the vehicle is seen to be a padded bed. This is in two sections, one of which can be slid along to make climbing up there easier. However, climbing up into the section is not the easiest thing in the world and one has to be a little athletic! Children will love it.

### PRIVACY

We are glad to say that the curtains of the Moonraker work very effectively indeed. On so many motor caravans that we have tested in the past, the curtain material is flimsy, the runners inadequate and very often the curtains have failed to join up properly. None of these criticisms can be levelled at the Moonraker



Moonraker interior. The seat nearest the camera is removable and a swing-out frame on the far side provides an additional seat when needed. The double seat folds very easily to provide the double bed. Sink is in the cabinet above the 'fridge (switches control 'fridge operation and pump for tap), cooker is behind darker section. Wardrobe can be seen behind double seat.

these worktops is retained in the raised position by a strap which snaps onto a press-stud above the windows. Whilst this is fairly convenient, some simple catch system which would allow them to be raised and latched in position automatically would be preferred.

Beneath the worktop is, at the front, an Electrolux gas/electric refrigerator and then a series of storage cupboards. These storage cupboards all have doors with rounded corners and recessed handles which makes them very safe when people are moving about inside the van.

The refrigerator can utilise the electricity generated by the alternator when the vehicle

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### QUALITY

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### LIVING

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and, once the curtains are drawn, one is completely secluded inside the van.

One feature which tends to affect the seclusion of others, particularly late at night, is the amount of force which is still needed to close the traditional VW sliding door. We have never criticised the effectiveness of this door; when it is closed it fits perfectly flush and it doesn't rattle. However, it still has to be closed with a very substantial thump, and on a camp site at night, it can be very annoying for other people.

#### QUALITY AND FINISH

We have nothing but praise for the way in which the Devon Moonraker is finished and the materials from which it is constructed are of very high quality. We have criticisms about one or two small features; one we have already mentioned, the channel which retains the individual seat. We were also unhappy about the lugs which allow the table to be secured in a vertical position. These small criticisms apart, the standard of construction and finish is very high indeed.

#### LIVING WITH THE MOONRAKER

The use of two good fluorescent lamps, one on either side of the vehicle, makes living in a Moonraker when it is dark very easy indeed. The table, when it is erected, does prevent a certain amount of circulation inside the van, but presumably it will be used mostly at meal times. Certainly, the long worktop down the nearside provides very adequate surface space at all other times.

The floor is covered with good quality carpeting which makes padding about the car very pleasant. However, if it is very muddy outside one will need to cover it with something less prone to get dirty.

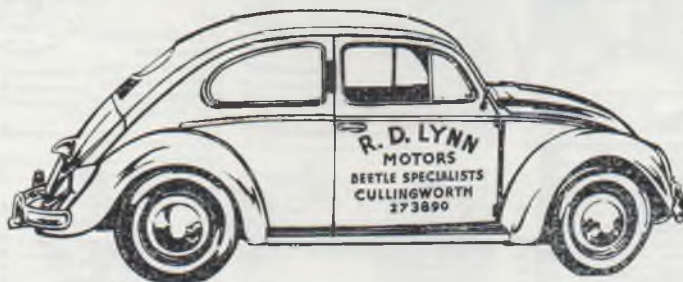
The generous length of the elevating roof means that one can walk about most of the living space of the van without any trouble at all, however tall you are. The removal of the spare wheel from over the engine compartment has certainly eased the designers' job. We are particularly impressed at the easy way in which the double seat converted into a bed and at the comfort provided.

#### SUMMING UP

When we discussed the new Type 2 last week we said that our over-riding impression was of a gradual improvement rather than of sudden dramatic changes. Exactly the same thing can be said about the Moonraker. This conversion has been on the market for a good many years now and this latest version shows the same trend as the Type 2: a steady improvement in quality and in attention to detail. It provides an excellent camping van and will also double very effectively as a big family car. Certainly, the quality of the interior fittings is well up to the quality of the rest of the vehicle and, if you invest in one, you know that every part of the vehicle is going to last you a good long time.

#### PRICES

The Moonraker which we tested, with elevating roof and the 2000 cc engine costs a total of £8,982 including delivery. This can be reduced to about £8,514 if you go for the 1600 cc engine and to £7,984 if you do without the elevating roof. It should be noted that, as we mentioned last month, the 2000 cc engine package includes servo brakes and radial tyres. When you order this package you can also specify automatic transmission for an additional £471.



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