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# Motorcaravan Motorhome

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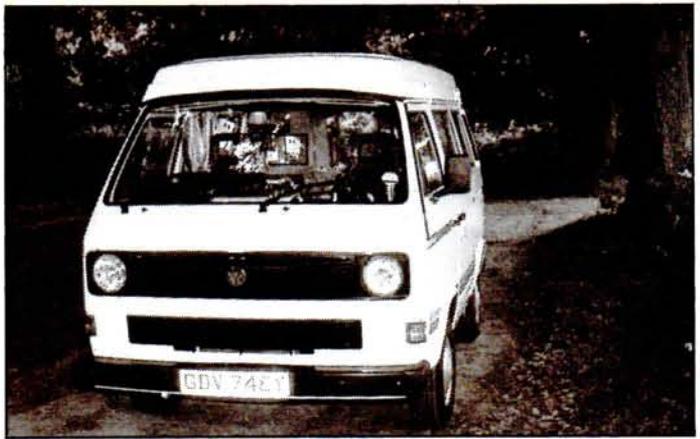
THE NEW VW DEVON SUNRISE

**VW DEVON SUNRISE** / THE COMPACT CARAWAGON  
**BEDFORD AUTO-SLEEPER UTOPIAN** QUICK TEST

MMM's summer of Volkswagens continues with the

# DEVON SUNRISE

by John Hunt



Smooth, clean lines and gently curved front and side windows distinguish the Sunrise on a Volkswagen Kombi. The all-over Double Top rising roof adds minimally to the overall height and produces very little wind noise at speed.

It wasn't planned in advance that way but when three major manufacturers produce new variations on the ever-popular Volkswagen Transporter, MMM is in duty bound to report on them.

Some time ago, I received a mild rebuke for writing: "We've recently done a road test on this base vehicle, so will concentrate solely on the conversion."

"Hard luck on new readers!" said an aggrieved correspondent. So, new readers begin here; regulars may jump to the next sub-heading (but probably won't, if only to test my consistency of reporting).

## The vehicle

The new breed of water-cooled VW Transporters and Kombis continues a tradition which goes back to early post-war years. Its essence is: don't make all the changes at once, rather introduce improvements gradually. So we began with a rear-engined van, with a flat-four-air-cooled 1200cc motor dreamt up in pre-war days and reputedly rejected as 'useless' by British and American car manufacturers when offered it as part of war reparations. The industrious Germans therefore manufactured it



One of the quickest and easiest of roofs to raise — and no flapping canvas to be tucked in when lowering. When down, the roof cap is secured by two toggle catches on the outside, plus one inside to prevent unauthorised opening.

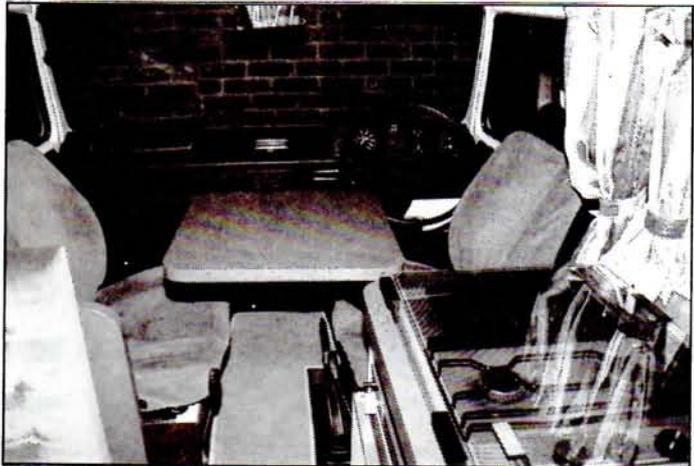
# SUNRISE



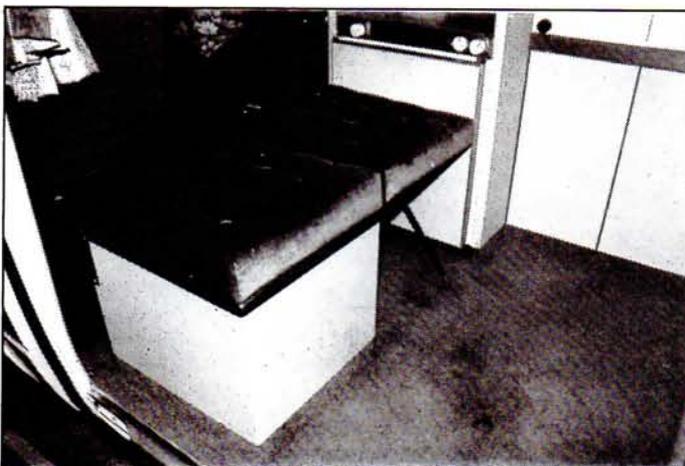
Neat, uncluttered cab has non-reflective instrument panel, three heater controls plus three speed booster fan and a generous parcel locker. Wide fascia shelf needs a rail to hold maps in place. We found VW's seats comfortable and to give good location.



If table support were positioned slightly away from its dead centre, we'd have been able to swing the table right outside the van. Arm rest (on top of table for photograph) replaces table on cranked support for travelling.



Optional-extra front seat swivel package includes a table with no legs, for it is supported by a cranked tube. Luxury cab pack provides seat covers, carpet and head restraints. Seats were easy to swivel, locking automatically in face-forward position.



Close-up of seat-Porta-Potti-base, located behind cab passenger's seat. Backrest has been removed from its locating slots (simply a matter of lifting it out) and placed in centre gangway as a free-standing stool on cross-over legs.



View through sliding side door, showing rear settee, cranked table (which would have been even more versatile with slightly offset mounting for the support) and single, rear-facing seat which hides a Porta-Potti.



The luxuriously upholstered bed is made up of three wide cushions, the two nearest the camera making the daytime settee. Bed is 4ft wide and does not narrow, like some, at front or back. Arm-rest on crank is just inside the door.

themselves, beginning work in a factory which had been destroyed by Allied bombs. The vans (and related 'Beetle' cars) were soon seen all over Europe, became a cult in America and finally developed into the most successful motor ever produced.

The van, with which we're concerned, began with a split windscreen and twin, hinged side loading doors. With its 10 hp motor (old RAC rating) and high ratio top gear, it purred along the autobahnen at a respectable cruising speed. The engine gradually grew in size to 1600cc (with variations offering 1700-2000cc), the rear window was enlarged, twin doors replaced by a noisy slider and the screen curved and in one piece. The

process took about 30 years.

The 'new shape', introduced in the late '70s, was really another update in line with current trends towards larger windows. Air cooling was retained until the early '80s, with the 1600cc diesel version being the first water-cooled available in this country. Now, in 1983, the petrol version is water-cooled and obsolescent air-cooled models are offered at attractive discounts while the irreplaceable stocks last.

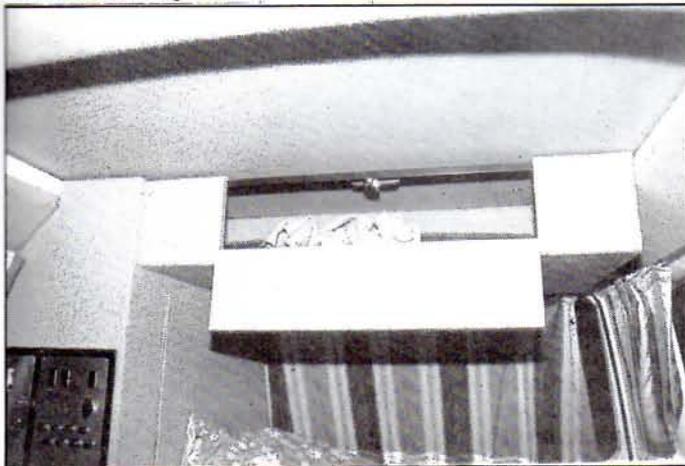
The current water-cooled petrol VW is of 1900cc, replacing the former 1600 and 2000 options. Although of the same cubic capacity, there are still two different engines: 60 bhp and 78



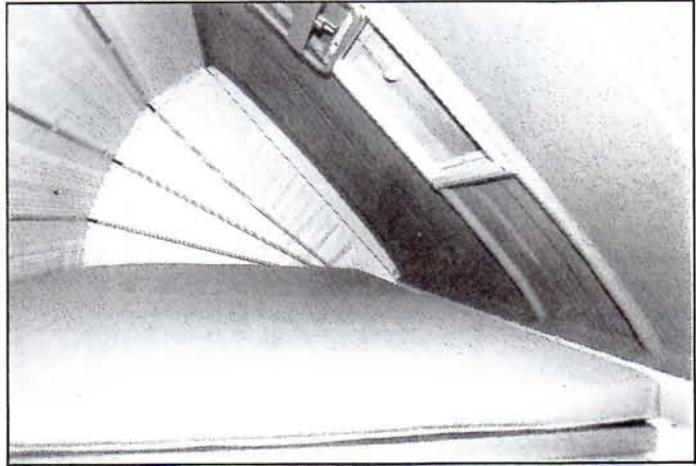
With the bed down, there are no extra supports to fiddle with and enough floor space is vacant for undressing and dressing. Cab seats and rear-facing single seat do not form part of bed and kitchen is useable with clear access to 'frig.



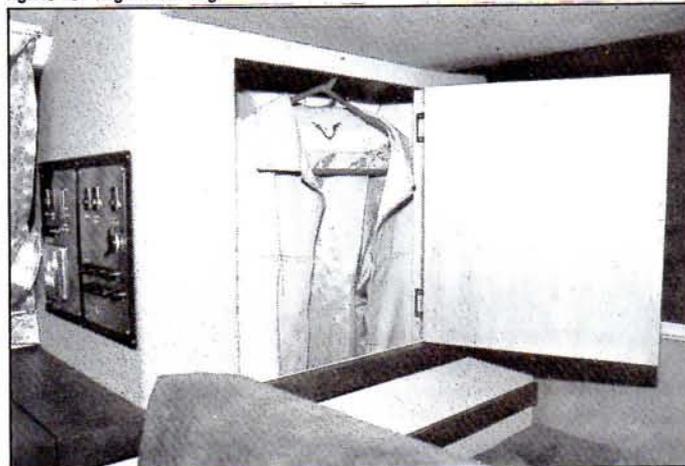
Roof bed(s) seen from floor level, arranged here as two small singles to give standing room over the kitchen area. Centrally placed in the roof cap is the popular 14-inch screened, wind-up roof vent. There's also a fluorescent lamp.



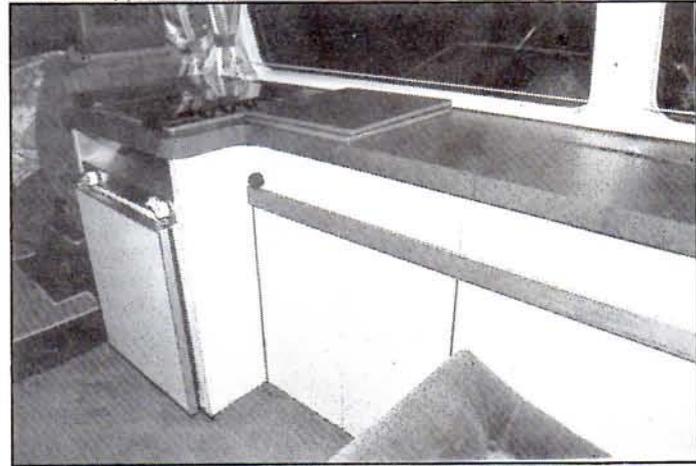
Above the head of the bed (if you sleep heads-to-rear as we did) there's a locker with door which, like all others, is held firmly closed by a clever catch, invisible from outside. We would have appreciated individual spot lights for night reading.



View from the rear of the roof bed arranged in its full-length form, extending over cab and living area — when occupants climb in from the main bed below. The pram-hood type supports for the (optional-extra lined) canopy are visible.



For a conversion — and a VW at that — the wardrobe is of generous size and is located by the side of the bed at the extreme offside rear. The door, like all others, has a catch invisible from the outside, is given a gentle push to open.



The neat kitchen, closed for travelling. Use of the big Electrolux 212B refrigerator (which boasts a two-star freezer compartment) necessitates an L-shape, which looks attractive. Opening above 'frig is the grill beneath the cooker.

bhp. Recent test vehicles have all been fitted with the more powerful motor, so I must rely on reports from others about the 60 bhp version. Consensus of opinion seems to be that it's roughly equivalent to the old 2000cc air-cooled but gives better fuel consumption.

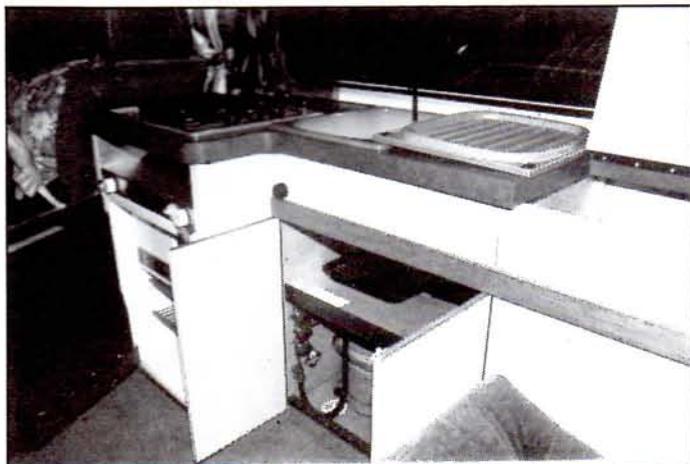
The 78 bhp version performs better than anything previously fitted to a Volks. It can be considered as virtually silent for a little tyre hum and wind rush is all that's heard in the cab when motoring in top gear — and Devon's Double-Top roof produces very little wind noise even at speed. This Volks is quieter than many cars and can leave lots of them standing when the driver

wishes it that way.

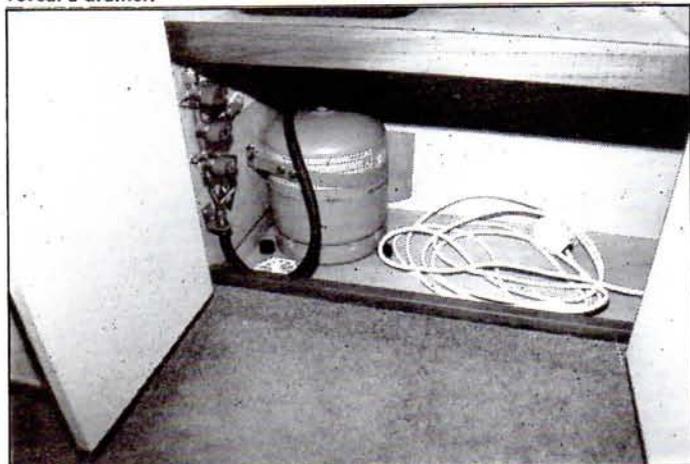
Having several times broken the legal maximum of 70 mph (unintentionally) on motorways in a previous VW 78 bhp, we took the opportunity to amble around some tortuous Devon lanes this time — little roads that would have been embarrassing in the editorial coachbuilt. Keeping mainly in the so-flexible and quiet third gear, driving was relaxed and effortless, with light steering, positive controls and a high seating position that revealed so much of the beautiful countryside — and often enabled us to spot an oncoming car around the next bend.

The short holiday was a leisurely amble, with an occasional

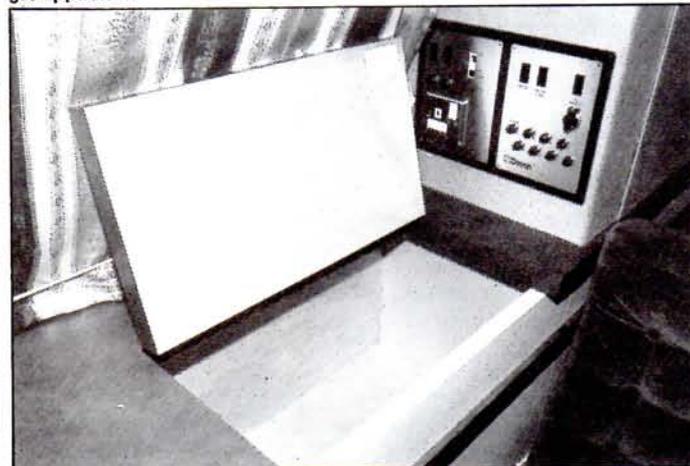
# SUNRISE



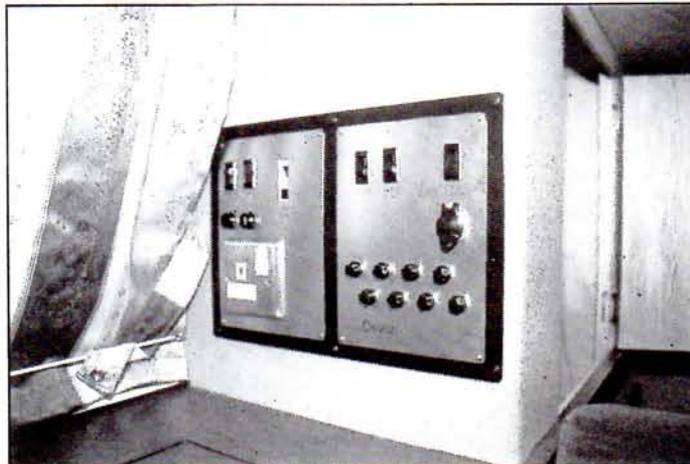
Kitchen opened up for use. The modern, brown-enamelled gas hob has a glass cover, two burners and a hotplate above the grill for keeping pans or non-plastic plates warm. Sink cover has been removed and inverted to reveal a drainer.



Ventilated gas bottle locker beneath kitchen unit, with secure fastening for the Camping Gaz container and room for a spare. Mains lead and battery charger are options. Separate shut-off cocks supplied for each gas appliance.



A popular feature borrowed from Moonraker — the big, top-opening storage chest at the rear of the kitchen unit. There's a glimpse of the quality, regency-striped curtains which ran freely on tracks and had fasteners to eliminate gaps.



On the outside wall of the wardrobe, above the storage chest, is Devon's own electrical systems monitor, providing both mains and 12 volt outlets, mains trip cut-out for complete safety, indicator lights, master switch and several fuses.



The 'airing cupboard' as some Volks owners call it, beneath the rear settee and backing on to the engine deck. Devon provide a fall-front here for easy access, though you can lift the seat if you'd rather. Floor carpet continued on front.



View through the wide rear tailgate, to show water container, behind wardrobe on right. Lifting the rear of the bed mattress reveals another large storage compartment, which in turn is removed for access to engine.

burst of speed on the fast dual carriageways and motorways between Newton Abbot and Exeter. Here, we passed scores of cars; one passed us, but he was breaking the law.

Gentle (not slow) motoring, produces fuel economy in line with previous, air-cooled VWs (around 25 mpg). Pushing up the speed pushes up the consumption to not much better than 20 mpg — that's our experience after trying three samples of the same base vehicle.

For motoring, as far as I'm concerned, there's now nothing to touch the 78 bhp VW. I'm waiting eagerly (but not hopefully) to be offered a test of something superior in the same class.

## The caravan

Devon, like Volkswagen, have not discarded what has proved to be a successful formula. They have carried out modifications and improvements but the Sunrise is essentially an up-market Moonraker, which continues in production and is expected to remain Devon's most popular model.

Sunrise has been well named, with bright, cheerful colour scheme which manages to avoid being gaudy. The long, offside kitchen, storage and wardrobe unit stretches the length of the vehicle from behind the driver's seat. The main bed, with thick foam cushions, is 4ft wide throughout its entire length and



The big water tank, turned sideways to show its wide wheels. A handle is supplied for trundling it to the water tap, though it's heavy to lift when full and I'd elect to use a hose. Water is fed to sink by a submersible pump.

#### I liked:

Lively, quiet motoring  
 Good road manners  
 Comfortable cab seats  
 Light steering  
 Excellent brakes  
 Reasonable fuel economy  
 Comfortable ride on rear seat  
 Cheerful caravan décor  
 Good storage space  
 Easy rising roof  
 Comfortable main bed  
 Adaptable table(s)  
 Swivelling cab seats\*  
 Safe mains electricity\*  
 Dual battery system\*  
 Adaptable roof bed (or storage space)

#### I would have liked:

Seat restraints for rear passengers  
 Opening window as standard  
 Spotlights for reading in bed  
 Non-rattling gas hob  
 Waste water tank  
 Quieter sliding door

All-round insulation  
 Insulated roof cap  
 Lined roof skirt\*  
 Interior roof lock  
 Porta-Potti storage  
 Large 'frig-freezer  
 Sink cover/drainer  
 Isolating cocks for gas appliances

Removable water tank  
 Good all-round finish  
 \*Optional extras fitted to test vehicle

extremely easy to make up, thanks to an effortless rock-and-roll mechanism. The occasional (or children's) bed in the Double Top roof has a solid base, a mattress that's firm but not hard and generous headroom. The roof is one of the easiest to raise and lower in a single action and has, for security, both inside and outside catches.

The roof bed offers three options: a longitudinal double, two transverse singles for small children — or complete removal for those who don't need it.

Downstairs again, there's a single rear-facing seat just inside the side door. The backrest can be removed to provide a fourth seat, free-standing on simple cross-over legs. The base of this seat will accommodate a Porta-Potti. Other storage arrangements are generous and are shown in the photographs.

The table deserves a paragraph to itself. It is supported by a cranked leg pivoted just inside the side door and is completely independent of the floor. It can be positioned inside, for four diners at the two rows of seats, or swing outside where, although too high for sitting at, it serves for drinks or snacks in fine weather. A similar, smaller table serves the two front seats, when these are ordered in swivelling form. When travelling, the front table support tucks behind the driver's seat (with the table) whilst the rear doubles right back and becomes a padded arm rest for rear seat passengers. Most ingenious.

The swivel cab seats package is one of the several options available at extra cost. Others include luxury cab trim, two-battery system, underfloor heater, insulated roof skirt (the cap is always insulated) and opening window. I thought the near-essential latter should have been included in the basic specification of this luxury motorcaravan.

The price of the cheapest Sunrise is quoted in five figures, which seems rather a lot for a van conversion. It will appeal to Volkswagen enthusiasts who are prepared to pay a little more to own something a little better. Devon Conversions have never attempted to offer 'cheap' motorcaravans. "We just wouldn't be happy doing it," said marketing manager, Lorna Cauldwell. She told us that every vehicle is subjected, on completion, to a six-hour inspection, when all systems are tested and any minor faults corrected. Devon's aim is to produce the best in its class, not the cheapest. The new Sunrise is a worthy addition to a range which dates back to the 1950s and has, like the base vehicle, been consistently improved over the years.

#### Colour scheme

Gold Dralon buttoned upholstery; gold and white Regency striped brocade curtains; pale fawn cupboard doors and toning, darker laminate tops; gold floor carpet and lighter carpet wall covering; chocolate lining to roof cap and white lining to skirt; white exterior with yellow and orange striping.

#### Dimensions

Overall length 15ft 0 in (4.57m)  
 Overall width (excl mirrors) 6ft 0 $\frac{3}{4}$  in (1.85m)  
 Overall height 7ft 3 in (2.21m)

Main bed 6ft 0 in x 4ft 0 in (1830 x 1220 mm)  
 Roof bed (6ft 2 in x 3ft 10 in (1880 x 1170 mm)  
 (or two 3ft 10 in x 3ft 1 in (1170 x 940 mm)  
 Max headroom 3ft 0 in (915 mm)

Table 2ft 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  in x 1ft 7 $\frac{3}{4}$  in (795 x 500 mm)  
 Cab table 1ft 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  in x 1ft 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  in (500 x 500 mm)

Storage beneath single seat 1ft 5 in x 1ft 3 in x 1ft 0 in deep  
 (430 x 380 x 350 mm)

Wardrobe hanging depth 3ft 3 in (990 mm)  
 Chest storage 1ft 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  in x 2ft 1 in x 1ft 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  in deep  
 (370 x 635 x 370 mm)

#### Prices of Sunrise (rounded to nearest £)

With 60 bhp engine £10 164  
 With 78 bhp engine £10 394  
 With 78 bhp automatic £10 900  
 With 1.6 diesel engine £10 670

#### Optional extras

Five speed gearbox (with 78 bhp) £200  
 Luxury cab trim £101  
 Swivel cab seats and table £235  
 Mains electricity, second battery £415  
 Riviera underfloor heater £266  
 Insulated roof skirt £105  
 Sliding window £73  
 Louvre window £91  
 Plus standard national delivery charge £178.

Devon Sunrise conversion of Volkswagen Kombi  
 Converted and supplied for evaluation by Devon Conversions Ltd,  
 Vulcan Works, Water Lane, Exeter, Devon, EX2 8BY. □