

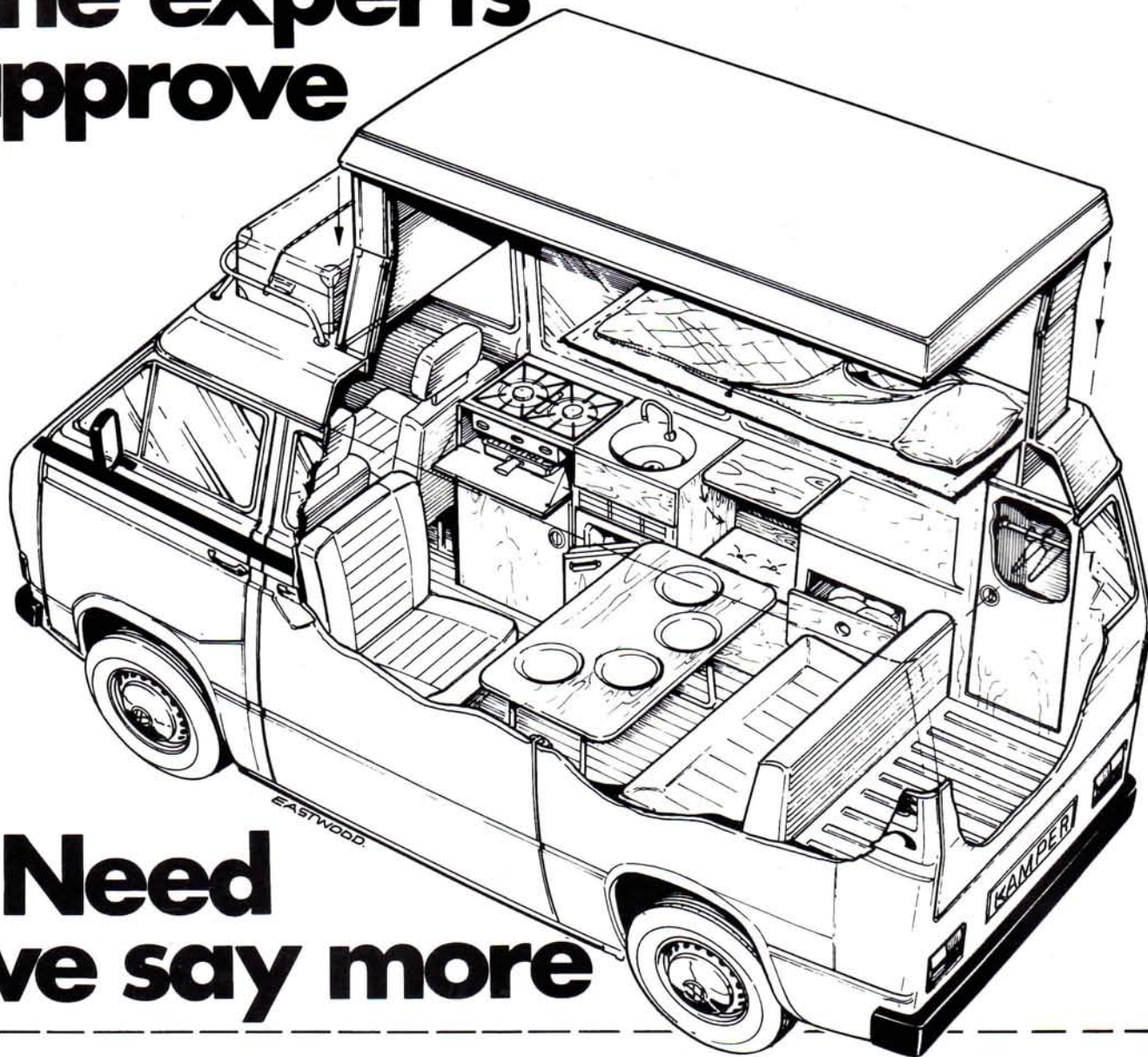
NUMBER ELEVEN — NINETEEN EIGHTY THREE

# AUTOHOMES WORLD





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# AUTOHOMES WORLD

Editor: Bob Griffiths

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Printed in England.

## Your most rewarding decision!

by Bob Griffiths,  
publisher Motor  
Caravan World

The fact that you are reading Autohomes World means you have taken a positive step towards owning a motor caravan.

Without doubt, your decision will be among the most rewarding you have ever made and, likely as not, will bring about major changes in the way you have previously used your leisure time.

### Twenty years

Despite the current recession, you are about to follow a path already trodden by over 100,000 other individuals and families who now own a motor caravan in Britain. Admittedly, not all of them are made by CI Autohomes Ltd, but a good many are and, like you, they have all benefitted from the knowledge that what the company makes is safe, made to exacting standards and is the result of over twenty years of manufacturing experience and continuous product development.

You have already decided that ownership is desirable, but motor caravanning is very much about improving one's quality of life. Ownership will open completely new dimensions and enable you to travel safely and comfortably to any part of Britain, Europe and even further afield. It is quite a common experience for us working on Motor Caravan World to receive letters from readers who have travelled to Greece, India, Australia and North America.

Once an owner, you will soon get used to the congratulatory remarks from friends and neighbours and you will find that every weekend will hold something special. Visits to national parks and gardens, fêtes and so on, will become so much more enjoyable knowing that you have a friendly environment as your base. This is especially so if you share interests of friends and children, whether it's horse riding, kite flying or even walking. Motor caravans are much like the people who use them — friendly, enchanting and comfortable.

Apart from all the obvious advantages, you will also like the idea of riding above the traffic. It's surprising what a difference it makes just a few feet above everyone else, revealing a new world of activity above the hedgerows. In traffic you will see situations developing which will enable you to make decisions well in advance of mere car drivers. Although you will be able to travel as fast as anyone else on the road, you will soon find that speed is a secondary consideration.

### Camping

It is perfectly feasible to free camp in a motor caravan — your life support system can last for up to a week. You will have the choice of staying at around 5,000 commercial camp sites in Britain, or more if you decide to join one of the leisure clubs. Motor caravanners have their own club which offers members special discounts on accessories and some ferries. They are organised on a county basis and run regular weekend meetings as well as annual holiday rallies. You can either mix or be a loner, whichever takes your fancy — nobody really minds, although the majority of motor caravanners are an extremely

obliging group and only too willing to offer help and advice if required. The Caravan Club, for example, also operate over 3,500 special sites which take no more than five to seven units at a time. So, if you are seeking the solitude of the countryside, you can join that club as well.

We started off commenting on the recession, but what about inflation? It might surprise you to know that a CI Autohome purchased in 1972 actually retails for more now than it did then. It is a fact that used motor caravans are worth more than their smaller cousins, the motor car. You will usually find that a CI Autohome main dealer is more than willing to take back one of the company's vehicles either as a direct sale or as a part exchange against a new model.

Whilst on the subject of new motor caravans, take our advice and place your order as soon as you can, because there will be a shortage of new models during 1983. Provided your main dealer, and CI Autohomes, know what you require, your preference will be met, but don't expect an off-the-shelf situation to be generally available, because demand is high.



## Listen to the experts

It would be easy for us to sound our own praises in this issue of Autohomes World, but you don't really want to know what we think, so read what the experts think of our motor caravans.

Britain's two foremost writers on the subject have test driven the Travelhome S, the VW Commercial Kombi Kamper and the Fiat Pandora. Read their unbiased views on the following pages.

John Hunt is with **Motor Caravan & Motorhome Monthly** and Sandy Burlace with **Motor Caravan World**. Both journals are published every month and are available from newsagents.

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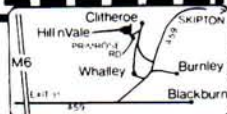
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# HILL N VALE



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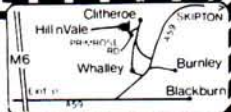
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### Supreme MOTOR CARAVANS

# Why choose an Autohome?

Thank you for reading Autohomes World which, if you are not already a motor caravanner, will I hope, help persuade you to become one in the very near future.

Our Editor, **Bob Griffiths**, has outlined in this issue some of the many advantages of motor caravanning and I would like to try and give you the reasons why, amongst the many other makes available, you should choose a **CI Autohome!**

Firstly, the company now known as **CI Autohomes**, has been around for a long time. We have been making motor caravans in Poole for well over 20 years and our first model first saw the light of day in 1958! We have a highly skilled and experienced workforce and a very professional design team, and through the years we have made more coachbuilt motor caravans than any other company in the world outside of North America. Unfortunately there are many disappointed owners of non-CI motor caravans who bought models manufactured by companies that have subsequently closed down.

We have not neglected van conversions either, our new **Volkswagen Kamper** and **Fiat Pandora** models with their patented double skinned and insulated elevating roofs are well on their way to becoming market leaders.

The elevating roof is a very important part of a van conversion and we believe



very strongly that if you want maximum comfort it is essential the roof is insulated to help protect against extremes of heat and cold and also to minimise condensation. We also think an elevating roof should be rigid so that it does not flap about in high winds, and adequate ventilation is also important. At the time of writing I know of no elevating roof made in Britain (except ours) that can truly claim to be rigid, double skinned and insulated.

There are two other factors that are very important in motor caravans — **SAFETY AND SERVICE** — we pay a lot of attention to both.

As far as safety is concerned, all our conversions and bodies meet the exacting

standards of the respective motor manufacturer on whose van or chassis the caravan is based, and all gas appliances are fitted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. We are particularly fussy about the type of heaters we fit, and will *only* fit those types which have *both* the exhaust and air intake *outside* the caravan.

On the subject of service, we have at Poole a specialist repair workshop, a separate after sales store where we keep stocks of parts for current and obsolete models, and a Service Department, headed by our Service Manager, **Mike Herrington**, which deals with warranty claims, supply of parts and answers customers queries. In short, we believe our after sales service is the best in the industry.

If you are not already a motor caravanner, I do hope you will decide to buy a **CI Autohome** and enjoy the innumerable benefits a motor caravan provides. It's not just a holiday vehicle, but an every-day-of-the-week vehicle, and remember, if you're not yet convinced you can always hire before you buy!

Happy motor caravanning!

**Iain Macpherson** Managing Director  
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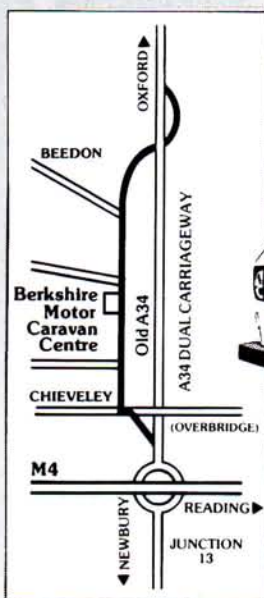
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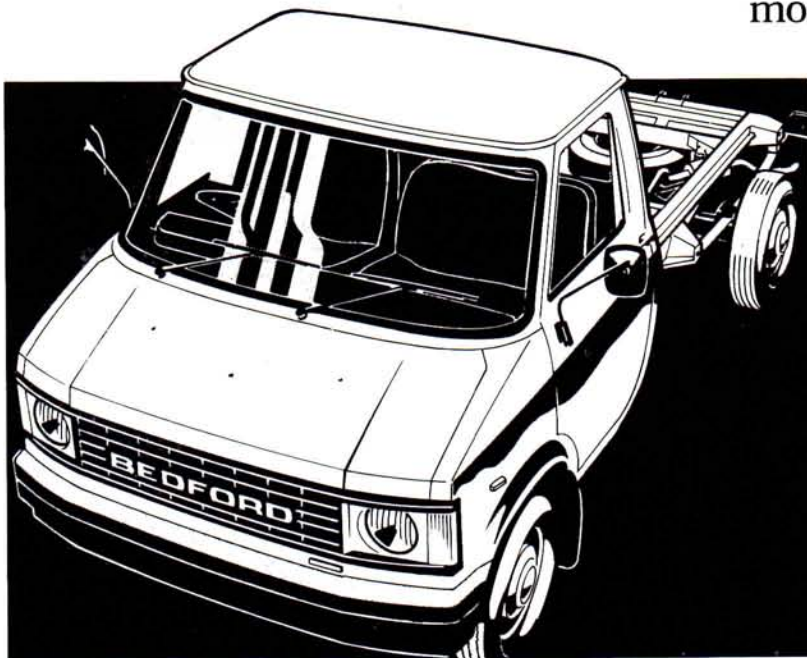
The rumble of the road and purr of the engine have been cut by nearly 50%. So you can now enjoy a peaceful break, right from the moment you leave your front door.

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# **BEDFORD**



**CI** Autohomes waved a magic wand over their coachbuilt models for last year's Caravan Show at Earls Court and transformed them from practical but ordinary 'vans into models with eye appeal and excellent specifications. Bowing to the pressures of the cold economic climate on themselves as manufacturers and on their customers, they also seized the opportunity to rationalise their model range. The Motorhome Mk III body, with no more than trivial cosmetic changes, was retained and used both for the Mk IV Motorhome and for a new Travelhome model, designated the 'S'.

Internally is where the major changes have taken place. The basic layout of the popular and successful Motorhome has been retained but there are major changes in materials, decor and design. The specification of the basic Motorhome has been improved, and the Travelhome is so comprehensively equipped as to have few if any rivals at its price. From CI's point of view, and from that of the customer, a major advantage is that the new Travelhome can be specified on either Ford or Bedford chassis; the old model was available only on Ford. At 16ft 2½in, the new Bedford 'S' model is some 2½ feet shorter than the old Ford Travelhome (the new Ford 'S' only 2ft shorter) and both models save around 2cwt in weight. Height and width of the new models are unchanged at 9ft 7in and 7ft 5½in respectively. There is inevitably some loss of living space in the new Travelhomes, but they are still comfortable 4/5 berth 'vans and the reduction in size and weight will pay dividends in handling and economy.

## **Travelhome~** Sandy Burlace **still luxurious**





It was the Bedford version of the Travelhome 'S' which I collected from CI's factory at Poole. Not only is it cheaper than the Ford model but I thought that the short, sloping bonnet line of the latest Bedford blended better with the CI body, which is a familiar sight on British camp sites, than does the longer, squarer Ford. The famous Motorhome body is virtually unchanged from that of the Mark III. There are detail alterations to the window arrangement, in particular eliminating the small Luton side windows, and a broad coachstripe now runs the length of cab and body at waist level helping to break up the flat expanse of the side. A detail which I quickly spotted was the lockable water filler to the rear of the driver's door, a welcome replacement for the inconvenient in-cab filler on the earlier model. Most noticeable, however, is the incorporation of fairings between the cab roof and the Luton and to the rear of the cab doors. These are standard on the Travelhome 'S' and an option on Motorhome models. Not only do the fairings greatly improve the lines of the new CI models, disguising the all too obvious step from cab to body, they also cut wind noise and must have a beneficial effect on drag and thus on economy.

In the factory at Poole I saw the main panels of Motorhome and Travelhome bodies being formed by the vacuum sandwiching process which CI pioneered. The aluminium/polystyrene/plywood composites are light and strong and provide good insulation. The distinctive Luton cap of the CI 'vans is a fibreglass moulding with insulating lining and there is also a thick insulating layer in the floor.



*Kitchen unit with oven, 212 fridge, eye level grill and the Carver SD2000.*

This makes a good foundation for a motor caravan which can be used all year round, and in the Travelhome the finishing touch is added by safety glass double glazing for side windows and those in the rear entry door.

The body of the Travelhome is constructed to a high standard. Thanks to the pressed construction method, I could detect no trace of ripple on the pre-painted aluminium outer skin. At corners I noted neat rubber seals forming good watertight joints between the panels and the aluminium cappings. Body skirts are of pressed aluminium and at their junction with the main side panels a rubber strake gives some protection against the car park menace of the carelessly opened door. Peering beneath

the rear of the Travelhome, I found a strong but light, cross-braced chassis extension to support the body overhang. The spare wheel, I noted, was still carried in a cradle at the end of the original vehicle chassis and not too easy to get at in the case of a puncture. Only on points of detail can one distinguish the Travelhome from its cheaper stable-mate. The give-aways are the rear roofrack and ladder, special wheel trims with the CI motif, and black feature panels with 'Travelhome S' markings set into the side window arrays.

After loading the Travelhome we set out through Bournemouth on the A35, making our way eastward to our chosen site at Bashley Park, which is conveniently placed for both the sea and

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the New Forest. First impressions of the caravan interior were of quality and attractiveness and by contrast the Bedford's cab, although the so-called high-specification version, was plain. The seats are adequate, cloth-faced, and the driver's seat has fore and aft and rake adjustment. There's a useful shelf across much of the fascia and the controls are handy enough, but the Bedford fails to match the Ford Custom cab on both layout and appearance. Ford's seats give all round better support and in addition have height adjustment, while I also much prefer the comprehensive heating and ventilation system of the Transit. With the Ford-based Travelhome one undoubtedly gets a superior cab.

The Travelhome immediately impressed me as a well balanced unit and the ride proved to be good on smooth roads and acceptable when the going got rougher. Isolated larger bumps or potholes, however, brought a juddering response from the suspension. Overall, the ride was better than the rather bouncy performance which I recall from the test of a Transit-based Motorhome Mk III a couple of years ago. On road-holding I could find little difference between the rigid axle Ford and the Bedford with its independent front suspension, and both provide good, progressive, power-assisted braking. Similarly, there is little to choose between the two on steering, both 'vans give a precise feeling and require little effort considering their size.

The corner of Hampshire between the Solent and Poole Harbour provides little by way of testing hills, so I diverted

towards the seafront in Bournemouth and put the Travelhome at some short, sharp climbs on minor town roads. As I expected, the Bedford Travelhome, with the benefit of an extra 300cc over the 2-litre Transit and around 12 per cent extra maximum torque, showed more verve than I would have expected from the Ford equivalent. Another plus point for Bedford — On traffic-free stretches of the A35 beyond Christchurch, I was able to put my foot down and found the Travelhome happy to bowl along, if required, in the sixties and with power in hand to be obviously capable of the legal limit and more.

### Successful layout

The successful layout of the Mk III Motorhome is followed closely by the new models. To the rear of the cab on the nearside is the wardrobe and then the 7ft long worktop of the kitchen unit. On the offside a conventional 4-place dinette offers two forward-facing seats and two rearward facing immediately behind the driver's seat. The rear offside corner of the body is taken up by the toilet compartment, a very adequate 37in long by 27½in wide. The centrally placed rear entrance door is glazed, giving a reasonable view of following traffic in the cab driving mirror and in particular a direct view through the lower panel in the door of objects close to the rear when reversing. Heeding the fact that a motor caravan is not infrequently used to provide holidays for disabled persons, CI have also ensured that the rear door is wide enough to accept a standard invalid chair.

If the layout of the 'van is "as before", the appearance of the interior has been transformed out of all recognition. Gone are the dark, almost black, woodwork and the beige worktops. The cabinetwork is now of a rich, oak finish ply with a scratch resistant surface, edges are neatly finished with a let-in brown plastic edging which tones nicely with the woodwork. Corners are rounded for safety and there are smart recessed catches with a positive spring-bolt action. The long kitchen worktop is surfaced with a most attractive, basket-weave effect laminate and matching panels are used at the base of the high level lockers. These locker doors are themselves a feature with solid wood framing and inset plywood centre panels, strong spring stays are fitted to hold the doors up when open. The cabinetwork in the Travelhome has not only been improved in terms of eye appeal, it seemed better made. On the road I could detect only the inevitable rattle from the cooker and sometimes a chatter from the toilet compartment door.

The dinette seats are upholstered in a luxurious Dralon velvet, buttoned and patterned with red and brown flowers on beige. There are matching headrest panels above the seats and a padded "head protector" strip above the 3ft 6in high walk-through to the cab. Luton bed cushions are covered in a plain rust-coloured fabric. On the floor I found rust-coloured plain carpet in the dinette area and carried up the faces of the seat/lockers to resist scuffing; to the rear a practical, tile-effect brown vinyl flooring is

continued



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used. The carpet, which is carried through to add a touch of colour to the plain cab, unfortunately showed every speck which fell on it. A more neutral colour or a patterned carpet would be more practical.

Roller blinds are gaining in popularity in motor caravans, and are used for the rear door and the window adjacent to the cooker in the Travelhome. Other windows in the body of the caravan had both net curtains and lined, biscuit coloured curtains with red and brown hem detail. At the sliding windows the nets provide a useful barrier to the insects. Curtains fitted to the Luton windows were provided with clips to retain their bottoms against the slope of the Luton front, while there were the usual curtains to close off caravan area from cab and the main living area from the Luton "bedroom".

The Travelhome's walls are lined with washable vinyl wallpaper in an oatmeal shade, a suitable neutral background for the rich shades of cabinetwork and upholstery. In the toilet compartment by contrast there is a bolder decor. The walls are lined with a plastic wallboard with a pink, tile-effect pattern, the colour being matched by that of the shower curtain and the curtain for the fixed, frosted, double-glazed window. Further light, and ventilation, is provided by an opening rooflight with flyscreen. A standard fitting is the brown and cream Porta Potti 65 toilet, the brown matching the colour of the shower tray and the vanity unit with its mirrored cabinet and well-proportioned foldaway basin. Pipework from the basin is neatly hidden in a matching pedestal.

Returning each evening from our wanderings to Bashley Park we enjoyed the luxury and the convenience of the Travelhome and the tranquility of our surroundings (although the Park is undoubtedly a different place in July and August!).

The well established layout of the Travelhome complemented the site facilities in a recipe for comfortable and convenient living. There's plenty of storage space, the majority of it always accessible. Below the kitchen worktop are a couple of good cupboards, a couple of lockers with drop-down doors, and three drawers, one with a baize-lined cutlery tray. Overhead are three lockers, the centre unit fitted with a crockery rack, while there's a further overhead locker above the dinette. The wardrobe provides 4-foot hanging height and is 20in wide by 18in deep; hangers are orientated edge-on for ease of selection. Bedding, of course, goes up in the Luton where the bed space measures 6ft 9in by 3ft 7in. That's quite wide enough for two children and leaves them protected by the 8in high hinged edge of the bed base, which when raised also increases the space to move around in the caravan area. However, if more width is needed the hinged section can be dropped increasing bed width to 4ft 3in.

Much space below the dinette seats is taken up by the 18-gallon water tank, under the front seat, and the wheel arch (insulated I was pleased to note) and Shurflo water pump at the rear, but there is still useful storage space for less frequently needed items. This is the only storage space which becomes inaccessible when the main bed is in use. The dinette seating is 30in wide,



comfortable for two but leaving no spare should the complement of the 'van be more than four. However, it would be possible to gain more space by extending the seat bases into the "sleeping mode". I noted a change in the way that CI achieve the increase in width to 4ft for the bed. Instead of sliding the seat ends sideways into the gangway, a process which required a symmetrical pull on the end if jamming was not to occur, the ends now move out with a lift-and-rock-over motion. To complete the bed the 40in by 25in table top, carried on wall clips and a folding leg, is dropped together with a filler board into the space between the seat bases. The cushions rearrange, the rolled edges of the squabs which make for comfortable seating going to top and bottom of the bed, with the side cushion dropped in to fill up the increased width. The 5in thick cushions fitted snugly together and the high density foam I found provided a good night's rest.

Options for accommodation a fifth or even a sixth member in the Travelhome's complement are offered. A stretcher-type or solid-based bunk can be supplied to fit over the dinette, or there is a child's cab bunk, with which of course cab curtains must also be purchased as an extra. Slim stowage slots, which I discovered beside the dinette seating, are obviously intended to hold a folding bunk but if that is not carried they become available for other purposes.

Kitchen layout and equipment in the new Travelhome 'S' is likely to make it a favourite with the ladies, although one of the attractive features of the design which appeared at Earls Court has now been altered. The prototype was fitted with the Italian Inox sink and cooker in eye-catching, shaded brown vitreous enamel, but with these flush-fitting inset fittings there is no drainer. Conservative British taste demanded the usual stainless steel combination unit with 2-burner hob,

drainer and round sink bowl. That was the feedback from dealers and customers, so that is what the Travelhome now has.

At the lefthand end of the expanse of worktop a Valiant continuous flow gas water heater is neatly housed in a cabinet tucked into the corner of the 'van, its flue rising through the roof. This heater, efficient and easy to use in my experience, supplies hot water to the sink and to the shower rose in the toilet cubicle. The Shurflo pump delivers both hot and cold water at a good rate but I thought that it stood out as excessively noisy in a 'van of this quality. Cushion-type mountings or enclosure would probably stifle much of the noise. Waste water from sink and wash basin drains to an under-van tank.

The sink/cooker unit is revealed by hinging back the lefthand portion of the worktop, when it forms a splashback across the window. I was disappointed to find that CI have not lined the underside with aluminium to protect the top if lowered on to a still hot cooker. Below the cooker is an Eastham Maxol BG41 de luxe oven with three heat settings and glass-panelled door. I cooked nothing more ambitious than frozen "oven chips" in it, but they served at least to demonstrate an even heat distribution. Most impressive in the Travelhome's arsenal of cooking equipment, however, is the Optimus eye-level grill. No more damaged backs from crouching to cook the breakfast toast and this one browned the bread more evenly than any other grill I have ever used in home or caravan.

Equipment set below the long worktop is completed by an Electrolux 212B, 3-way fridge, and a Carver SD2000 heater with side inlet and roof exhaust, while the fittings of this luxurious 'van would not be complete without the glass-fronted cocktail cabinet set at the righthand end of the worktop.

Safety has been a primary consideration in the design of the Travelhome, and CI pride themselves in having produced a vehicle which meets all known European safety regulations. Set below the Optimus grill is a small cabinet with neatly grouped isolating valves for all gas appliances; it also houses the thermostat for the Carver heater. Gas bottles are stored in a metal lined locker behind the space heater and accessible only through a lockable external door, while all gas burners have a flame failure cut-out. On the electrical side, the mains input is via an overhead cut-out and earth leakage trip unit which is sited in the wardrobe. There are dual batteries to cope with the electrical load of the Travelhome's accessories and an electrical control panel is sited at the end of the high level locker array. It comprises a Zig unit with 12v system fuses, battery condition indicator, battery charging selector switch and 12v on/off switch, while there are separate pump switch, water tank gauge and 12v socket. A mains outlet is sited below.

Ventilation is an important part of safety as well as comfort and, as is usual with CI 'vans, the Travelhome scores well in this department. There are sliding windows, opening rooflights with flyscreens in the Luton, toilet cubicle, and above the kitchen area, the latter equipped with an electric fan to vent cooking odours, and several fixed ventilators in strategic positions. I noted that there were vents

continued



New Travelhome S

New Motorhome Mk IV

for the fridge's cooking coil as well as the usual, side-mounted flue.

We had enjoyed testing the Travelhome 'S' in the attractive countryside on its home doorstep. Our potterings had covered not much more than 100 miles, seldom exceeding 45mph and often trickling along at no more than thirty. The flexible Bedford engine was happy to pull away from about 25mph in top gear. We could not give an accurate assessment of consumption, but when we put fuel in the tank it was clear that the Travelhome was doing comfortably into the low twenties per gallon.

The Bedford Travelhome was pleasant

and easy to drive. The exterior mirrors gave an adequate view of the rear corners for reversing, a not uncommon manoeuvre for the motor caravanner who really wants to explore, and frequently forced upon one by the inadequacies of British signposting! The width of the Travelhome, however, will preclude it (and most other coachbuilds) from venturing into lanes signed with the 6ft 6in width limit and into many other byways where observation counsels discretion.

In the living area one cannot help being impressed by the neatness and quality of the surroundings. But the beauty of the

new Travelhome is more than skin deep, it is a practical 'van in which the various functions of caravan living can go on without interfering with each other. Cooking can proceed while children are safely remote in the dinette seats or up in the Luton with its barrier to stop tiny ones falling out. The toilet compartment is sufficiently large that one does not have to put the Porta Potti out to make room at the basin. Those in the Luton berths can climb up and down the access ladder without disturbing sleepers below. Not least one can reach out of the lower bed in the mornings to light the Carver heater before facing the chilly air.

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**T**he British are not noted as a nation of linguists, but ask the man in the street what he understands by the word "amigo" and he'll tell you it's a word Mexicans use to each other in Western films. Ask a motor caravanner, on the other hand, and he'll explain that an "Amigo" is a Fiat-based motor caravan — very small, claimed to sleep five, but usually found to contain a pair of old age pensioners. Ask a scholar and he may even know "amigo" is Spanish for friend!

The Amigo has virtually had the field to itself at the bottom end of the motor caravan market for a number of years; it has been claimed to be the best-selling 'van in Britain. Now, at last, the Amigo, the pensioner's friend, has a rival, an enemy even, the CI Pandora. The new CI model made its sensational appearance at last year's Earls Court show. Like our old friend, it extends the very limited internal space of the little Fiat Citivan by having a large elevating roof which extends sideways beyond the limits of the base vehicle. Unlike the Amigo, however, the Pandora's roof has rigid, insulated sides and ends instead of an expanse of fabric. Down below there are strong similarities between the Amigo and the Pandora, not unexpected for, as in the Volkswagen, the rear engine configuration of the Fiat imposes severe limitations on design. In the spring, as production of the Pandora got under way, I visited CI's plant at Poole to take a close look at the newcomer.

Not having had my hands on a Fiat for a couple of years, I first took note of the improvements which have been made to the little van, only 12ft 23/4in long by 4ft 10 1/2in wide. They are largely cosmetic but worthwhile nonetheless. Plastic rubbing mouldings are fitted to the sides between the wheel arches to give some protection against minor knocks in car parks, there are bigger bumpers and, particularly welcome, larger door mirrors. A further aid to all round vision is the heated rear window, now standard. Inside the cab seats have been improved and the fascia and control layout altered to give a more up-to-date and car-like appearance. Instrumentation comprises speedometer, fuel gauge and water temperature/oil pressure warning lights, main electrical functions are catered for by three column-mounted stalks, and in the small cab (just about comfortable for a six-footer) everything is readily to hand.

In the caravan area I was impressed by the standard of trim with only a few square inches of painted metal visible, side panels and roof being covered with a warm, hopsack weave fabric. Furniture was constructed in oak veneered ply with neat plastic edgings, strongly made and attractive. I was pleased to see that in this, the smallest and cheapest model in the CI range, the standard of construction and quality of materials was every bit as good as in the revised Motorhome models. Complementing the furniture in quality and colouring, the seats in caravan and cab were upholstered in buttoned Dralon velvet, browns on a golden beige. Curtains in a toning striped fabric were fully cut and the final touch of warmth was added by a thick pile carpet on the floor (boots off before you step inside!)

Certainly the Pandora had eye appeal, and on quality and appearance I rated it well ahead of the Amigo, or the newer Caravelle, from the Spacemaker stable. But it is up aloft that things are really



## The magic box on top

different in the Pandora. The roof unit adds a full foot to the height of the Citivan, but at 6ft 5 1/2in it will still slip into most garages. Putting up the new and ingenious roof is a more involved process than with most elevating roofs, but not difficult and soon mastered. There are four external toggle catches to release and two internal bolts. The roof cap can then be eased up and the first of the cantilevered side panels pushed out. The top is then raised fully and the second side unit can be pushed out. The side panels are unfolded next and finally the end corner pieces hinge into place. One person can do the job in well under a minute but it's quicker with two. The top is well counterbalanced by a curved bar and a gas-filled strut front and a rear and is not heavy to lift.

The Pandora roof was well sealed and firm when up. Panels are of plastic coated aluminium, double-skinned with a core of

polystyrene and should provide insulation far superior to that of fabric-sided roofs. For an open air atmosphere in hot weather it's possible to leave a side of the roof open.

The main bed in the Pandora is a 6ft by 4ft double formed transversely across the front of the roof space. Three bed boards are dropped into place, two stored in the roof section and the third doubling as a shelf over the rear well behind the kitchen unit below. Mattress sections are re-arranged from their stowed positions on the side overhangs, which are themselves too narrow for sleeping purposes. Down below a single bed can be made up from the rear seat, the table top and the reversed driving seat, making a base 5ft 11in long by 1ft 8in wide. That completes the standard bed arrangements, for the Pandora has no pretensions to be a holiday home and dormitory for hordes. With three beds in

use there is still a little standing room below and access to the kitchen unit. Most probably the new CI Fiat will appeal as a relatively cheap, economical and easy to drive 2-berth for the retired motor caravanner; and just as much at home as an everyday vehicle as it is as a camper. However, for those who must (and only occasionally) pack in more, a 2ft wide single is an optional fitment across the rear of the roof.

Seating in the Pandora again does not cater for a crowd; four is a reasonable complement for a 'van of this size. There's a bench seat in the rear, in front of the engine compartment, which at 34in wide is adequate for two. For dining around the 29in by 19½in tabletop on its island leg the cab seats are easily reversed, forming very comfortable lounge seats and also utilising most of the cab space.

Seeing the interior of the Pandora in its various living modes, it is hard to believe that in the base vehicle there is only 5ft 6½ins from the rear of the cab to the engine compartment and that maximum internal height is only 3ft 11in. The illusion of space is due to clever design and choice of materials, but most of all space is created by that gigantic and ingenious roof which adds 76 per cent to internal volume.

The kitchen unit in the Pandora is the only place it can reasonably go in a Fiat, over the engine. There's a Leisure Princess combination stainless steel unit with 2-burner and grill cooker and round sink bowl with water supplied by electric pump from an 8-gallon inboard tank with external, lockable filler. A 3-piece worktop covers the kitchen unit, the outer sections hinging upwards against the side lockers and the centre section lifting off. There is further worktop space — a useful 17in by 16in — on top of the refrigerator to the rear of the Fiat's hinged side door. A standard fitting in the Pandora, the Electrolux 122 gas/12v unit, has its door panelled to match the cabinetwork of the 'van. To create easy access to the sink and cooker, a 12in section of the seat folds away leaving standing space, or leg room if one chooses to sit sideways on the remaining part of the seat.

With room to move and a reasonable level of equipment in such a small vehicle, it would not be surprising if there were only the barest minimum of storage space in the Pandora. Thanks to careful design, which has considered every available cubic inch, that is not the case.

At the front cutouts in the low bulkhead to the rear of the cab seats give access to the underseat space. There's a rigid "pocket" in the side door, discovering space otherwise wasted by the curvature of the side, and a companion pocket on the offside together with a niche to store the table leg. The table top, when not in use, also fits here against the offside. There is locker space beneath the fixed portion of the rear seat and a surprisingly large cupboard with double doors below the kitchen unit. For perishable foods, of course, there is a cubic foot of refrigerated space in the fridge.

Beside the kitchen unit the space in the curved sides of the Fiat is again exploited. Drop-down doors adjacent to the 3-piece worktop give access on the offside to a slim, 30in deep wardrobe and on the nearside to a small cupboard below which is the water tank. Above the

kitchen unit two roof lockers, in the style of many VW conversions, utilise the curved space below the roof. Again paralleling the VW, there is a well at the rear above the engine compartment which is eminently suitable for storing bedding. There it will be warmed by heat transmitted up from the engine, while at the same time helping to subdue the buzz of the 903cc, 35 horsepower engine.

The ventilated gas bottle compartment below the sink is reached through a door in the rear of the kitchen unit.

The Pandora makes the very best use of space, but if more than two are on tour, or in colder weather, I would expect it to be necessary to carry some possessions in

bags or boxes on the floor. Once on site these need prove no problem for they can be put out of the way on the shelves formed by the cantilevered roof sections.

The new Pandora conversion should give the Fiat a new lease of life in the motor caravan world, particularly in that sector where it has always enjoyed popularity. It could also win friends at the other end of the scale, with couples with one or two very young children; it is very much the 'van for the one-vehicle family who have any eye to economy.

**Sandy Burlace**



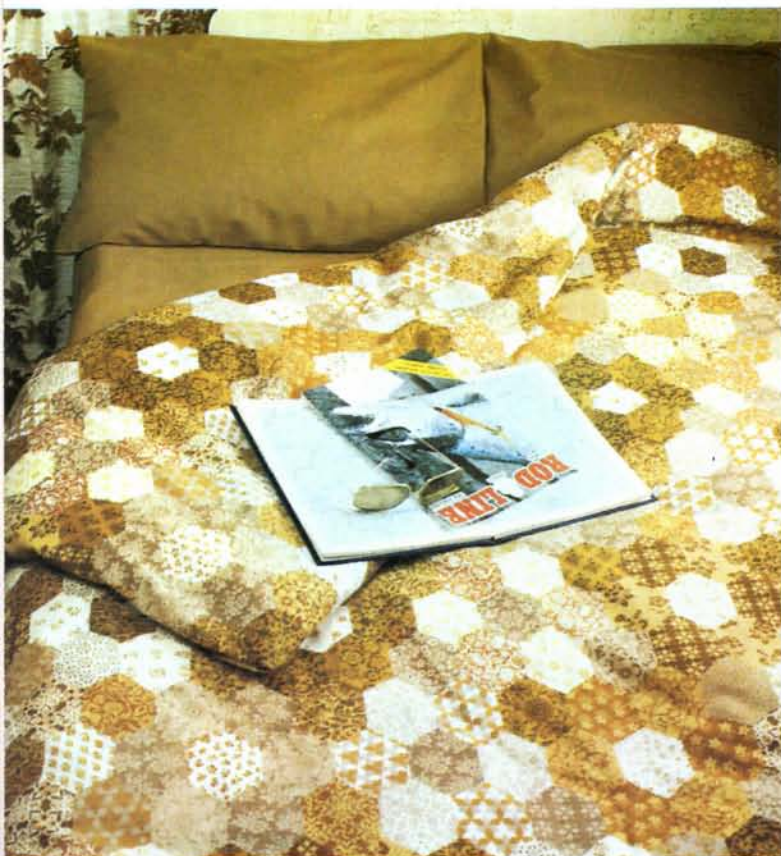
Fiat Pandora

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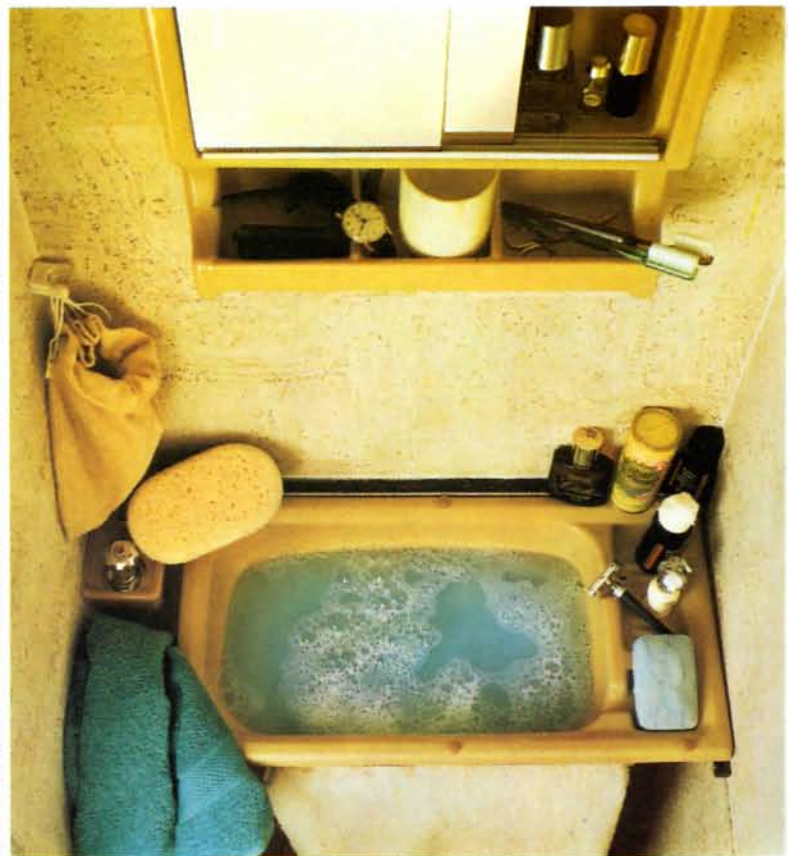
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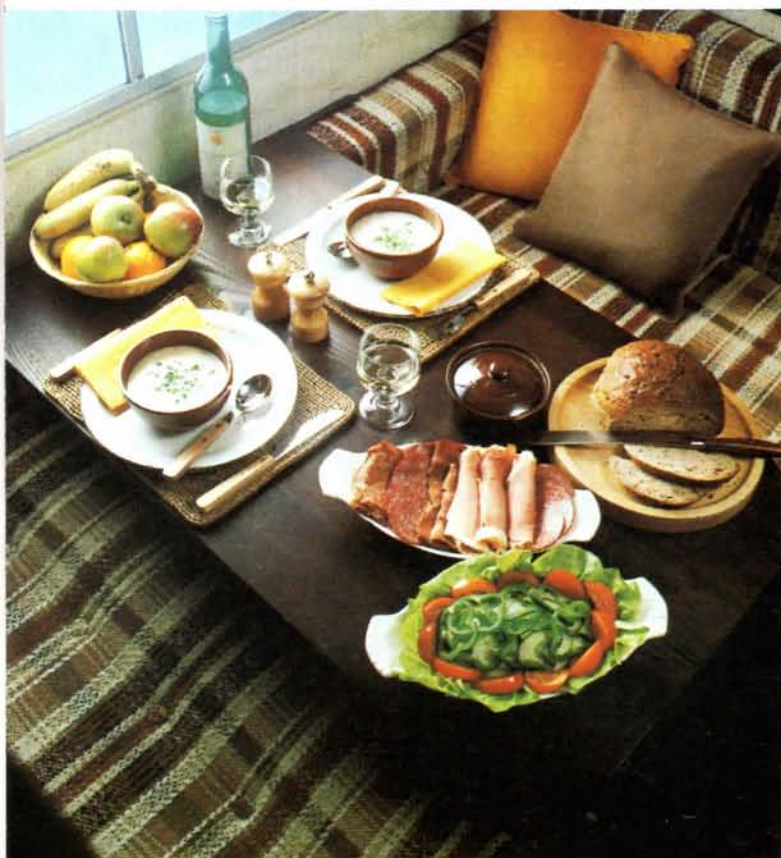
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# Worth waiting for

John Hunt

# CI VW Kamper

"Not another Volkswagen!" Yes — and no apologies, for the new Transporter is becoming one of the most popular base vehicles with converters and customers.

That's hardly surprising — and easy to understand once you've driven one. It is, without doubt, the most car-like multi-purpose vehicle around and this latest conversion by CI Autohomes is one of the best.

Many manufacturers beat CI to the post with their versions of the new Volks. Wisely, I think, CI took their time, did some thorough research and development before the launch. And it shows. It is, in fact, difficult to fault their latest product.

## On the road

The new Volks, as regular readers will be fully aware, is THE most pleasant and relaxing van on the road. It's completely unfussy, with no apparent vices, so easy to drive, so untiring to motor in hour after hour. This conversion by CI is one of just about the quietest motorcaravans we've ever tried, and I'm including the American giants.

We purred along, with only the slightest chatter from the grill pan, which needs the usual tea towel as a silencer. There

were no body rattles and the smooth 2 litre motor at the back was barely audible. Almost impossible to believe that it's cooled by old-fashioned air. There was a bit of wind noise at speed from, I'd think, the roof's plinth or the roof rack.

This Volks, with less than 1000 on the clock, was not the fastest we've tried. We didn't push it, out of consideration for its future owners, but found we could cruise happily at 50-55mph. When loosened-up, we know the 2 litre will reach 80mph indicated. Fuel consumption was around 24mpg, which included several short trips as well as some good runs.

Starting was always instantaneous, even after an all-night soaking during this glorious English "summer". The automatic rich mixture device allowed unhesitating entry into the traffic stream with a cold engine. As usual, with the so-quiet 2 litre VW, I sometimes forgot to change into top gear when leaving towns. (Urban areas and 30mph limits are best tackled in third, when there's much more flexibility available instantly to the driver).

We drove over familiar roads that are suffering from East Sussex County Council's policy of false economy (they'll have a terrific bill when eventually maintenance is resumed). The Volks

sailed over the corrugations that shake lesser breeds to the core. She cornered well, too. Directional stability was excellent, although the steering, through that big wheel, was light enough for effortless parking.

She was at her best on the open road, took long gentle climbs in her stride. It was only on steep, winding hills, such as abound in the Sussex-Kent coastal area, that we could have done with a bit more punch. Overtaking crawling commercials on the few stretches of straight was a hazardous occupation. First was too low, second gave a too-gentle surge forward for peace of mind. We found the velour-covered front seats gave good support and fitted our anatomies. The rear seat is a pleasant place to travel; although perhaps the backrest is a little too upright, there is lots of legroom and very good, all-round vision. The swivel seat can be pushed back on its runners and faced forward for a fifth passenger.

There are many improvements over the old Volks. The spare wheel, for instance, is easily accessible from its storage in a pan beneath the front floor. The pull-up handbrake is less of a stretch than the old umbrella handle. The rear engine deck has been lowered to give converters more



room and the window area has been increased. But, in some respects, motorcaravanners have been ignored. The side sliding door still awakens half the camp site when you try to close it quietly at night and the centre bow in the roof (which may not be removed) imposes severe restraints on interior layout.

### The beds

So, we'll deal with beds first, and see how CI have got around the restricting roof bow. Quite ingeniously, in fact. The rear 4ft of the upper double bed is a permanent fixture. The front 2ft, in two sections, slides into a recess over the cab, pulls out like a drawer. CI suggest that you enter the upstairs bed thus: arrange sleeping bags on the fixed rear section. Pull out half of the front base, climb up, using the stool supplied. Pull the rest of the bed base into position and arrange cushions and sleeping bags on the front end. Fortunately, the high roof makes this operation a lot easier than it sounds. Once up there, you have a 6ft x 4ft bed with its own fluorescent light and room to sit up or crawl around. There's still a gap of 11 inches at the foot and I found that I could quite easily squeeze my bulk through.

The upper bedroom — for such it can be called, being almost isolated from what's going on downstairs — would be an ideal place for youngsters, who could go to sleep or play games, irrespective of what their parents might be up to below. And there's little chance of their falling out.

The main bed, downstairs, is more conventional, although CI have chosen to design their own seat-to-bed conversion

system rather than copy the rock-and-roll idea originated and copied by others. It works easily, although seat cushions must be removed to get the bed into position.

We Hunts, when in a Volks, like to sleep with our heads to the rear, finding it easier to shuffle in and out of bed this way. In the Kamper we couldn't, because part of the wardrobe projects over part of the end of the bed, leaving room for feet but not hands. We both agreed we'd have preferred a slimmer wardrobe and more bed room at the rear.

The downstairs bed was extremely comfortable, with mattress nearly 5 inches thick. (The upper mattress is 2 inches. It's not too hard because CI have chosen a foam that's fairly dense, and sharp bones don't "bottom" too painfully).

There's enough clear floorspace at the foot of the bed but I'd like to be able to remove the single swivel seat completely (and easily) for occasions when only two are camping.

A couple have the choice of sleeping downstairs and preserving full headroom over the kitchen or sleeping upstairs and leaving the seats as seats downstairs.

### Roof

It's fairly high, even when lowered. When you put it up, you understand why, for it gives more headroom above the upper bed than any other all-solid, insulated rising roof.

To raise the roof, an internal catch is released and the cap pushed up — not hard work, for gas-filled struts assist. The operator then stands on the stool and closes the side flaps. The first time we

tried it, we'd left the instructions at home but experienced no difficulty.

We could detect no signs of rain seepage anywhere. CI seem to have got it right first time. It's a very good roof and there's no doubt that the double-walled and insulated cap and panels give a feeling of snugness and security. No flapping canvas here. In hot weather, the upper side panels can be opened fully for full ventilation. I'd like to see some provision for propping them slightly ajar, particularly as the two acrylic windows are fixed. There's a substantial, flyscreened roof ventilator which adds about three inches to overall height. Other ventilation is provided by a sliding window near the kitchen and, of course, the cab windows.

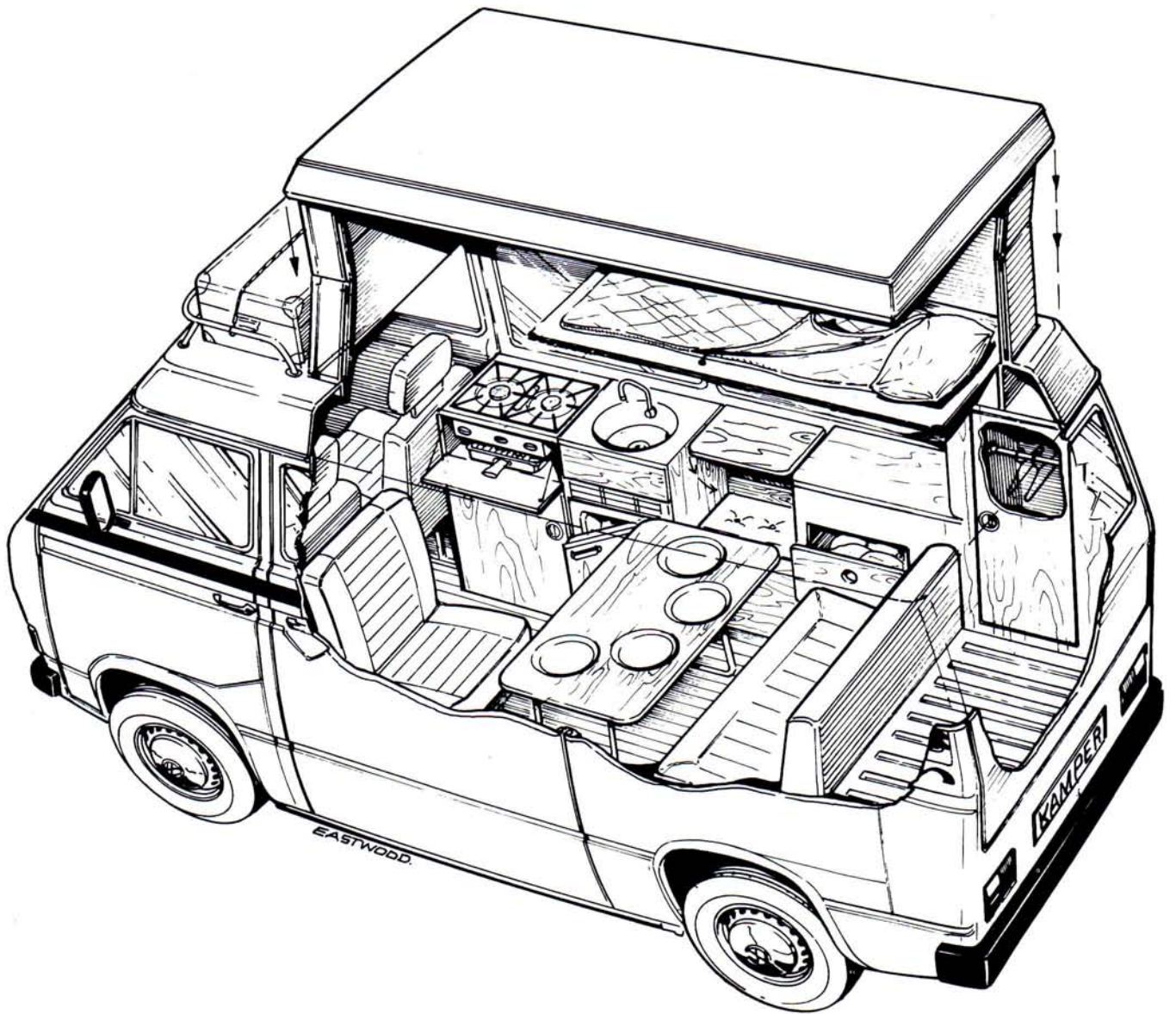
### Cooking and eating

There's a reasonable amount of work space for the cook at and around the two-burner-and-grill cooker and integral stainless steel sink and drainer. The top of the storage unit next to the wardrobe provides a horizontal surface, as does the raised backrest of the small seat next to the kitchen. Then, there's the big, free-standing table. (We two found it over-large but no doubt a family of four or five would need it).

For dining, five can sit at the table: two on the big, forward-facing bench seat, one on the small seat, two on the swivel seat with backrest horizontal and supported by the stool. There's no backrest for the last two, though.

Storage space for kitchen equipment and food is generous. There's the

Continued



Continued from previous page

cupboard under the cooker, the 'fridge' itself, the locker beneath the small seat (which will take a small chemical closet) and the deep locker, with top or front access and a removable shelf, next to the wardrobe. Other small items will go beneath the swivel seat and in the stool/step. There's a shallow overhead locker at the rear.

Bulky items like blankets and sleeping bags are harder to dispose of, for their traditional place in a VW (beneath the rear seat) is fully occupied by a large water tank. There's the "boot" over the engine deck (where the table is stored as a shelf to hide contents) but it's mostly occupied by cushions for the beds. On holiday, I suspect this would be crammed full and the table stowed elsewhere. (We discovered later that all upper bed cushions could be stored beneath the lowered roof).

Opening the tailgate gives access to the 'boot' and a couple of large drawers. It would be advisable to remove table, cushions and drawers before sending the Kamper for service. If you don't, the mechanic will have to do it to gain access to the engine, and his time is money and his hands are dirty! Fortunately, routine oil check and top-up are achieved

through the hole behind the number plate.

The battery is beneath the driver's seat, tools and "nasties" beneath the passenger seat. The roofrack over the cab would take an annexe or a large suitcase. There are no cleats for strapping down small items, which could slip through the bars.

#### Gas and electricity

A ventilated locker beneath the small seat takes two Camping Gaz 907 bottles. All gas services have separate, clearly labelled, isolating taps. The optional extra Zig unit gives full control over electrical systems and allows charging of the second battery (when fitted) by the mains.

The Kamper is a fairly complete motorcaravan in standard trim and there are not many optional extras offered. The most intriguing is an unique space heating system developed by CI Autohomes which takes up absolutely no room in the caravan, for it uses the VW heater ducts which serve the body as well as the cab. The gas heater and electric blower are situated out of the way behind the front grille. Ignition is completely automatic, just a matter of turning a tap and pressing a switch. Demand for this unit has outstripped supply and, unfortunately, the demonstrator had to go without.

But, unusually, this demonstrator was fully equipped for use, with a set of pots

and pans, crockery and cutlery, for the ladies and gentlemen of the press. That's not all: full documentation was aboard, not only the comprehensive instruction manuals supplied by VW, but also CI's own 16-page folder about the caravan. This, in our experience, is unique (it's not often we can use that word twice in one report). This is no mere rehash of a sales brochure, but a document which tells the owner how to operate and care for all aspects of his caravan. It's published in five languages: fortunately, we had the English version.

CI gain full marks here. It's a feature which should be considered when awards such as "Motorcaravan of the Year" are being made.

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## TALBOT EXPRESS

# CI at work

Bob Griffiths

There are basically six operating departments within CI Autohomes Ltd, each of which has its own management structure and administrative back-up. The divisions which receive less publicity than they deserve are probably R & D Repairs, Factory Fitting and After Sales. The R & D team consists of five very skilled people headed by George Badger. The team developed the very successful roof system

for the incredibly spacious Fiat Pandora. The company believe they are the only manufacturers of motorhomes in Britain that finances its own separate R & D team, housed in a separate building beside the main factory.

Repairs are undertaken by a small team that can handle any type of repair, whether it is structural or just replacing panels. Customers can book their motor caravans in by appointment and often

these are completed the same day. The company also handles a great deal of insurance work.

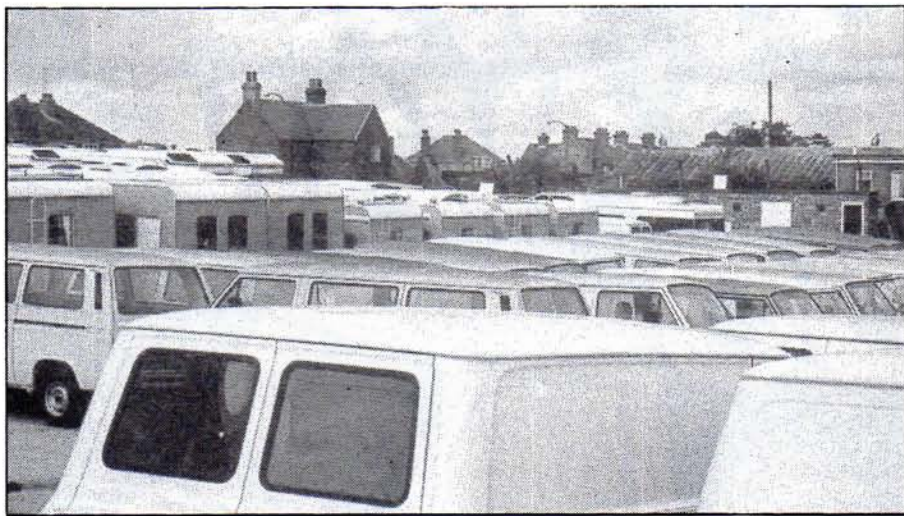
The staff handling the repair side are very highly skilled and can solve the most difficult problem. Frequently when customers take their motor caravans in for repair the staff will put right something the customer has missed and they don't even know it's been done. Moreover, they are never charged for this.

A new development by CI Autohomes Ltd is to make their unique roof designs available to owners who wish to have them fitted to their own vans. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this should contact the Service Department direct and obtain a quote for cutting and fitting.

According to Iain Macpherson, CI Autohomes Ltd managing director, one of the most important departments is After Sales.

A huge range of parts and panels from models years old are stocked behind special security screens in one of the factories at Poole. Owners of CI motor caravans bought years ago can still order up spares which are sent all over the world or collected by customers.

To highlight just how important after sales is to the company, an Italian couple arrived as I was about to leave at 6pm. They had driven all the way from Dover with a letter of introduction from the company's agents in Italy, Messrs Fantelli. It was too late to sort out the problem there and then, so off went Iain Macpherson to find them a pitch at a local camp site, at the same time arranging a time for them to return the following day. It is this attitude that owners like and probably explains why they keep coming back.



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ADDRESS .....

CIA

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Garage Ltd  
MOTOR  
CARAVANS

# Four for the road.

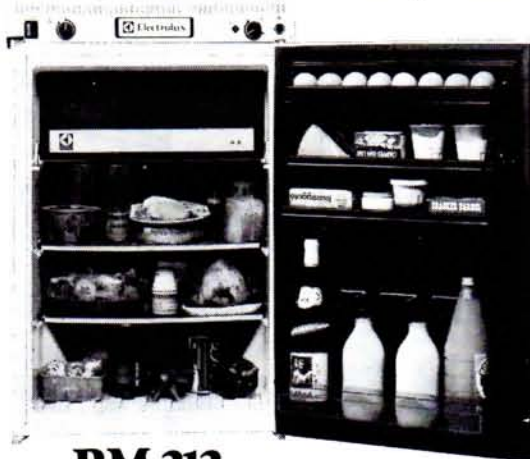
Small, medium, large, and portable,  
there's an Electrolux Touringlux® refrigerator  
for every size of caravan.



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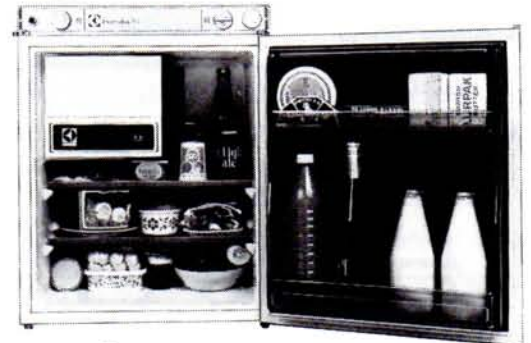


## RM 400

with 2-star frozen food  
compartment, holding 3½lb (1.6kg)  
●3.6 cu. ft. gross, 3.25 cu. ft. net  
●H. (inc. controls) 31½" (800mm)  
(inc. fascia plate) 32¾" (835mm)  
●W. 20½" (525mm) D. 21¼"  
(539mm) ●Weight: approx. 77lb  
(35 kg)

## RM 212 (right)

●with 2-star frozen food  
compartment, holding up to 2.6lb  
(1.2 kg) ●2 cu. ft. gross, 1.7 cu. ft. net  
●H. 24¼" W. 19¼" (486mm) D. 18¼"  
(457mm) ●Weight: approx. 56 lb  
(25.3 kg)



## RM 122 (below)

●1 cu. ft. gross, 0.8 cu. ft. net ●Light  
- only 32lb (14.5 kg) ●Fits standard  
recess ●H. 23¼" (586mm), (with  
upper grille), 25¼" (659mm) W. 15"  
(380mm). D. 16¾" (417mm)



## Camping box refrigerator

RC160 - the portable  
fridge for holidays - an  
extra fridge at home!  
●1.25 cu. ft. gross, 1.2 cu.  
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W. 19¾" (505mm). D. 16½"  
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35lb (16 kg)



RM400, RM212 and RC160 operate on bottled gas,  
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RM122 - bottled gas or 12v car battery

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Camping Box  (tick as applicable).

Name .....

Address .....



# NORTHAMPTON MOTORCARAVAN CENTRE

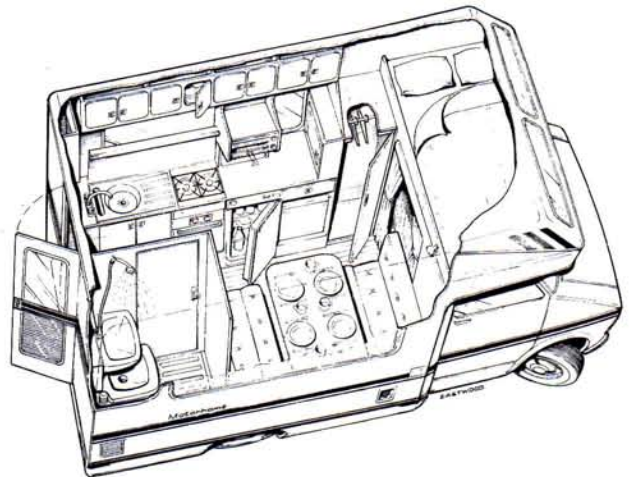
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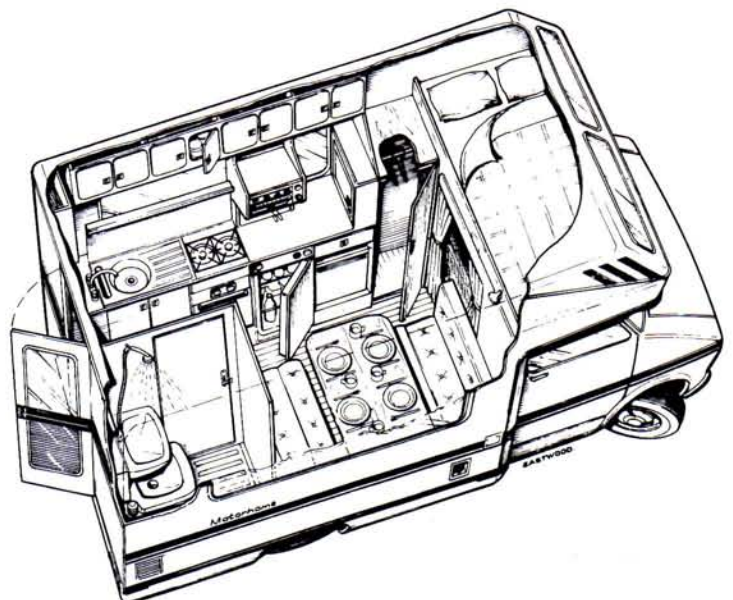
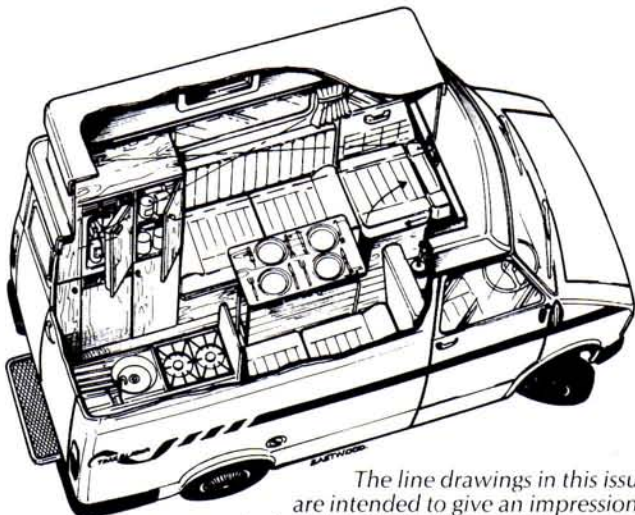
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# Specifications

	Fiat Pandora	Volkswagen Kamper	Bedford Trailblazer	Ford Trailblazer	Sherpa Trailblazer
Overall length	3728mm (12'23/4")	4570mm (15'0")	4525mm (14'10")	4700mm (15'5")	4635mm (15'21/2")
Overall width	1486mm (4'101/2")	1850mm (6'03/4")	1930mm (6'4")	1960mm (6'5")	1735mm (5'81/2")
Overall height roof closed	1969mm (6'51/2")	2293mm (7'61/4")	2200mm (7'21/2")	2215mm (7'31/4")	2260mm (7'5")
Transverse double bed	N/A	N/A	1829mm x 1168mm (6'0" x 3'10") Plus 1455mm x 955mm (4'91/4" x 3'11/2") Or 2032mm x 654mm (6'8" x 2'13/4") Or 2032mm x 1829mm (6'8" x 6'0")	1829mm x 1168mm (6'0" x 3'10") Plus 1400mm x 930mm (4'7" x 3'01/2") Or 2032mm x 654mm (6'8" x 2'13/4") Or 2032mm x 1829mm (6'8" x 6'0")	N/A
Childs Bed in cab	N/A	N/A			N/A
Lower single beds	1 off 1803mm x 508mm (5'11" x 1'8")	N/A			2 off 2032mm x 654mm (6'8" x 2'13/4")
Lower longitudinal double bed	N/A	1855mm x 1220mm (6'1" x 4')			2032mm x 1638mm (6'8" x 5'41/2")
Upper double bed	1829mm x 1200mm (6' x 4')	1829mm x 1220mm (6' x 4')	N/A	N/A	N/A
Upper single bed (Option only)	1829mm x 610mm (6' x 2')	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2 Rollaway tapered bunks	N/A	N/A	1829mm x 635mm Max (6'0" x 2'1" Max)	1829mm x 635mm Max (6'0" x 2'1" Max)	1829mm x 635mm Max (6'0" x 2'1" Max)
Childs Rollaway cab bunk (Option only)	N/A	N/A	1450mm x 839mm (4'9" x 2'9")	1450mm x 839mm (4'9" x 2'9")	1450mm x 839mm (4'5" x 2'9")
Base vehicle	Citivan 900E	Transporter Kombi	CF230 (CF 250 Option)	Transit 100 Custom Van	Sherpa 230 De Lux Van
Gross Vehicle weight	1540kgs, 1.52 tons	2360kgs, 2.33 tons	2340kgs, 2.30 tons	2400kgs, 2.36 tons	2300kgs, 2.15 tons
Kerb weight	1176kgs, 1.16 tons	1780kgs, 1.75 tons	1715kgs, 1.70 tons	1660kgs, 1.63 tons	1600kgs, 1.57 tons
Load capacity	364kgs, 0.36 tons	580kgs, 0.57 tons	625kgs, 0.60 tons	740kgs, 0.73 tons	585kgs, 0.58 tons



The line drawings in this issue are intended to give an impression of the interior of CI Autohomes, but cannot be relied upon to be 100% accurate. They are artist's impressions.



# Specifications

	Ford Motorhome IV		Bedford CF 250 Motorhome MK IV	Ford Travelhome 'S'		Bedford CF 250 Travelhome 'S'
	Transit 100	Transit 120		Transit 100	Transit 120	
Gross vehicle weight	2400kgs 2.4 tons	2550kgs 2.5 tons	2570kgs 2.53 tons	2400kgs 2.4 tons	2550kgs 2.5 tons	2570kgs 2.53 tons
Kerb weight	1847kgs 1.8 tons	1940kgs 1.9 tons	2020kgs 1.99 tons	1897kgs 1.9 tons	1990kgs 2.0 tons	2080kgs 2.05 tons
Load capacity	553kgs 0.54 tons	610kgs 0.6 tons	550kgs 0.54 tons	503kgs 0.5 tons	560kgs 0.55 tons	490kgs 0.48 tons
Overall height	3004mm (9'10¼")	2990mm (9'9¾")	2920mm (9'7")	3004mm (9'10¼")	2990mm (9'9¾")	2920mm (9'7")
Overall length	5115mm (16'9¼")		4880mm (16'0")	5157mm (16'11¾")		4945mm (16'2½")
Overall width	2270mm (7'5½")		2270mm (7'5½")	2270mm (7'5½")		2270mm (7'5½")
Lower double bed	1867mm × 1219mm (6'1" × 4'0")		1867mm × 1219mm (6'1" × 4'0")	1867mm × 1219mm (6'1" × 4'0")		1867mm × 1219mm (6'1" × 4'0")
Upper double bed	2057mm × 1295mm (6'9" × 4'3")		2057mm × 1295mm (6'9" × 4'3")	2057mm × 1295mm (6'9" × 4'3")		1057mm × 1295mm (6'9" × 4'3")
Optional tapered bunk	1829mm × 711mm max (6' × 2'4" max)		1829mm × 711mm max (6' × 2'4" max)	1829mm × 711mm max (6' × 2'4" max)		1829mm × 711mm max (6' × 2'4" max)
or Optional rigid bunk	1829mm × 610mm (6' × 2')		1829mm × 610mm (6' × 2')	1829mm × 610mm (6' × 2')		1829mm × 610mm (6' × 2')
Optional child's cab bunk	1450mm × 839mm (4'9" × 2'9")		1450mm × 839mm (4'9" × 2'9")	1450mm × 839mm (4'9" × 2'9")		1450mm × 839mm (4'9" × 2'9")

CI AUTOHOMES LIMITED reserve the right to alter specifications, equipment and prices without prior notice. All measurements and weights are approximate only. For details of optional extras, please consult your Dealer.

## Owners club

The Sprite Motorhome Owners Club was formed by Ken Lobley in 1980 to try to trace owners and help them to preserve the breed.

The Sprite was produced between 1966 and 1969 and only 200 units were built. The Club believes that there are now only about 35 left and 26 are members of the Club. Naturally, Ken Lobley is keen to trace the remaining owners and encourage them to join the Club.

Membership used to be free but, like most things, the high cost of postage of the regular News Sheet and similar expenses have forced the introduction of an annual subscription — a modest £2.

The first Club rally was held at Tuxford in 1981 and this year's rally was at Stratford-on-Avon racecourse. Members are widely scattered about the country and stretch from Scotland to the Channel Isles.

The Sprite must now be almost a collector's 'van and each one seems to differ in small ways. There appear to be two types of interior layout and, although some have been altered to suit the

changing needs of a family, most are as originally built.

Any Sprite owners who are not already members of the Club should contact Ken Lobley, 16 Eagle Street, Todmorden, Lancs OL14 5HH (Tel: 070 681 2780).



Now you know more about CI Autohomes you may wish to have more detailed information about the model of your choice. For your FREE technical brochures, which contain specifications, simply complete and return the form below. For the name and address of your nearest CI Main Dealer, please consult the list published in this edition of Autohomes World.

Please send full details of  
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 Trailblazer Range  VW Kamper  
 Fiat Pandora  
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Tel: 02302 4466.

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Tel: 01-977 2117

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