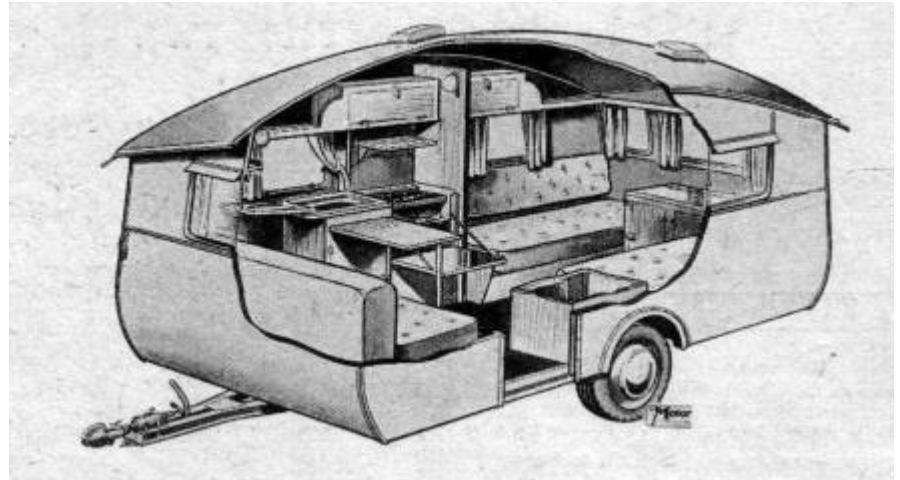


The Motor Caravan Test No. 2/54

The THOMSON "Almond Mk.V"

Latest Model of Famous Scottish Make Combines Much Improved Holiday Accommodation with Good Towing Qualities



It is almost four years since the Mk. version of the Thomson Almond caravan was tested by The Motor. In the interim there has been steady development and the Mk. V version shows a great general improvement. In shape and construction there is a strong similarity between the two caravans and the characteristic V-roof with marked fore-and-aft sweep has been retained. On the latest model, however, the roof is of aluminium, which probably accounts in part for a reduction in overall weight of ~ cwt. compared with the earlier version, despite more comprehensive inside equipment.

Measuring 13 ft. 6 in. in length and 6 ft. 7 in. overall width, the Mk. V Almond is a four-berth model of normal layout having a pull-out double-bed settee across the front end, two single berths running along the side walls at the rear, a centre kitchen with wardrobe opposite and sideboard between the two single berths against the end wall. A

modification on this latest type is a three-section window extending the full width of the rear end which provides greatly improved interior lighting during the daytime.

Quite obviously, the addition of certain interior furnishings has affected the balance of the caravan, which results in a nose weight saving of 21 lb. over the Mk. I version and this, in turn, makes for easier hitching, unhitching and manhandling in general. Such rebalancing, naturally, has its effect upon the general towing qualities and whereas the Mk. 1 version could be taken smoothly up to 50 m.p.h., whereupon a violent side sway occurred with little warning, the Mk. V version began to make its presence felt, but in a much more gentle manner, at a slightly lower speed, the

wander only increasing very gradually with a further increase of mph.

On corners, both easy and fairly acute, the Almond followed in an impeccable manner at all reasonable speeds and affected the car's steering very little indeed. At no time was pitching experienced nor snatch due to incorrect operation of the brakes. These components, which have a lining area of 84.7 sq. in/ton, do their job smoothly and very effectively; indeed, one can fairly say that the Mk. V Almond was one of the few caravans recently tested where, upon normal pull up, one felt that the caravan brakes really were doing a good job of work.

Ground clearance on the whole was

TEST DATA	
Test No. : 2/54.	Caravan : Thomson "Almond" Mk. V.
	Makers : Thomsons (Carron), Ltd., Carron, Falkirk.
	Price (as tested) : £298.

THOMSON "ALMOND"
SCALE 1:50

CHASSIS SPECIFICATION

Frame : Rolled steel channel section, welded and gusseted (Brockhouse).
Suspension : Semi-elliptic.
Track : 5 ft. 7 in.
Brakes (type) : Cable operated internal expanding. Diameter 8 in. Brake lining area 72 sq. in. Lining area per ton 84.7 sq. in.
Wheels : Pressed steel disc. Tyre size, 5.50 X 16.
Coupling : Brockhouse.
Corner jacks : Brace operated (Brockhouse).

BODYWORK

Outer walls : Aluminium (Fibreglass). **Inner** : (Hardboard).
Roof : Aluminium. **Type** : Fibreglass insulated.
Doors : 1. **Type** : 1 piece glazed top half.
Windows : Alloy frames. 7 (5 opening).
Berths : 4 arranged as 1 double, 2 singles.
Cooking : 2 burner gas hotplate with grill. **Lighting** : Gas. 2 points.

WEIGHTS

Kerbside (as delivered with gas cylinder) 17 cwt. 2 qr. 7 lb.
Nose weight (with cylinder in normal position), 126 lb.
Recommended minimum capacity of towing vehicle, 1,400 c.c.

OTHER DIMENSIONS

Minimum ground clearance 10 in. at corner jacks.
Locker and cupboard room 61.5 cu. in. (not including cylinder cupboard).
Height of ball hitch with caravan level 16 in.

EFFECT ON CAR PERFORMANCE	
(Towing car during test: Triumph "2000" Roadster)	
Fuel Consumption—Without caravan	33.7 m.p.g. at 30 m.p.h.
(Premium Grade) With caravan	29.8 m.p.g. at 30 m.p.h.
	Increase with caravan 14%

Braking—Pedal pressure required to maintain 20 m.p.h. in neutral on 1 in 12 gradient.	
Without caravan	9 lb.
With caravan	14 lb.
Increase per cwt. of caravan34 lb



MARK OF IDENTIFICATION.—The characteristic roof contour of the Thomson Almond, with its steeply-pitched V and marked fore and aft sweep are to be noted in this photograph, which also shows the new, full-width window arrangement at the rear end.

**The Thomson "Almond"
Mk. V. - - - Contd.**

adequate for practically any cross-country going in which the average caravanner is likely to indulge, but the corner jacks which, in the up " position, protrude some distance below the chassis members, may get entangled in hummocks which the 'van would otherwise clear.

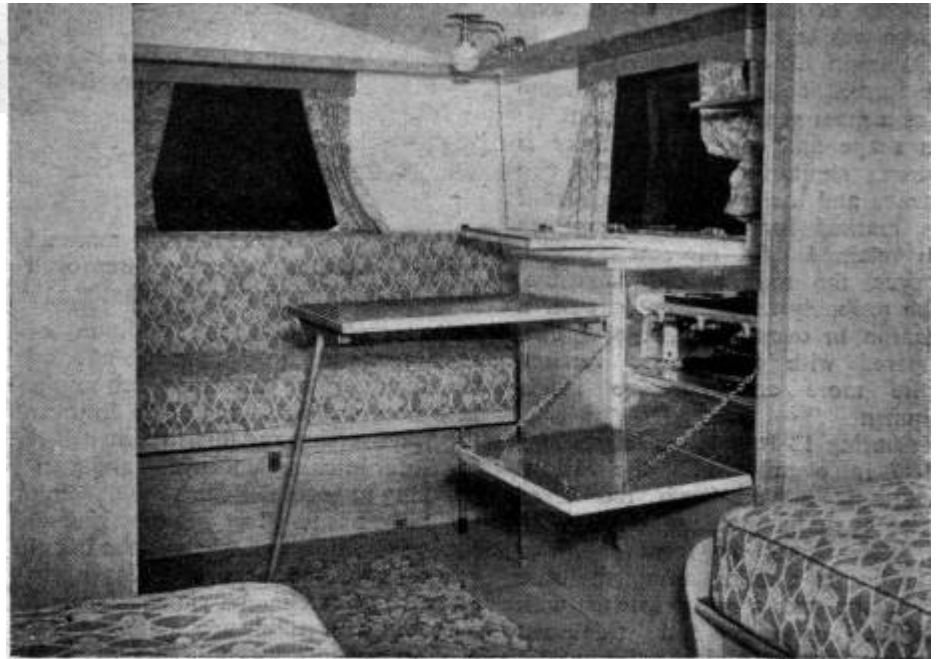
Practical Planning

Inside, the Mk. V Almond provides very pleasant and comfortable quarters for holiday caravanning and the comment made on the somewhat stark furnishings of the Mk. I model no longer applies. Both on the pull-out double berth and the single berths, the spring interior cushions have been increased in width and now provide really comfortable sleeping quarters; the centre kitchen unit with its wide, drop-down front and additional clip-on table (which would be better still with a heat-resistant top), cutlery drawer and full complement of pots and pans and a plate rack, which although flimsy-looking, does its job satisfactorily, is one of the most practical of its type we have encountered.

The cooker, in particular, deserves mention in that it is of ample dimensions, has air adjustments to each burner and a grill-pan rack high enough to bring whatever is being cooked within close proximity of the heating element. Like so many other caravan cookers, however, it has taps which make flame graduation very difficult.

Lighting is by two gas points, now set in positions where they are not likely to be knocked. In the 'van tested, there appeared to be some restriction in the flow to the light at the rear end with the result that only sub-standard illumination was obtainable.

The sideboard between the two single berths has a lift-up lid and shallow tray at the top to serve as a dressing table. but the main portion constitutes a food cupboard and is ventilated for that purpose. With the large dining table clipped on to it, access is not very easy, although the designers have made the best of a bad job by arranging each of



WORKING SURFACES.—The centre kitchen unit provides plenty of working surfaces, particularly when the small table seen in the photograph is clipped on at the front of the sink. Also to be seen, above the cooker, is the folding plate rack. A Perspex clip holds the curtain up out of the way when the kitchen is being used.

the two doors to open from the outside edge.

Bedding is carried in the usual lockers beneath the berths but access to these compartments, instead of via lift-up lids, is through apertures in the front face. While this does away with the necessity of wrestling with mattresses it does mean that one has to grovel on the floor to get at the contents, and stowage is made more difficult by having to slide the pieces in a few at a time.

For its size, the Almond is well equipped with capacious roof lockers, and there is also plenty of open shelf space sensibly provided with a lip.

In all 61½ cu. ft. of cupboard and locker space is provided, an increase of 10% over the earlier model, which brings it up to slightly above average for caravans of similar size so far tried out by *The Motor*.

Our test was carried out at the height of the recent cold spell with the thermometer outside registering several degrees of frost, so that the following comments should be read with these conditions in mind. It was possible to raise the interior temperature to a reasonable degree above waist level by

leaving one of the gas rings burning, but an ill-fitting bottom batten at the front of the end cupboard admitted a piercing draught at foot level from the outside ventilator. The adjustable Perspex roof ventilators were effective when open but one feels that there is a case for the inclusion of two additional fixed ventilators.

With the extreme weather conditions encountered and the efforts on the part of the crew to maintain a fairly high inside temperature, condensation on the windows was extremely heavy and the outline of the roof frame could at times be traced by patches of moisture on the inner roof lining. Nevertheless it is unlikely that there would be trouble in this direction under weather conditions anywhere approaching normal.

These points notwithstanding, this latest product from the well-known Carron concern is an attractive little caravan and will, one feels, enhance still further the good name which the Almond has already earned, particularly as it has been found possible to provide the greatly improved amenities without increasing the price from £298.