THOMSON MINI-GLEN

Baby tourer for the mini-car market

It would be wrong to suppose that the Thomson Mini-Glen, introduced last autumn, is merely a minimum-price model designed for a period of economic depression in which, in one way or another, spending is restrained. Rather it is a serious attempt to extend the market downwards to cater for the small car owner and to offer the basic conveniences of a rigid van to buyers who might otherwise buy a tent trailer.

All eight T-Line models—which range from the Mini-Glen to the 16ft 6in Gleneagle—share a characteristic profile which makes them easily recognizable. Identical front and rear end treatment, with the roofline flowing down to the sharply ~pinched in' waist, makes the Mini-Glen one of the neatest and least boxy small tourers on the market.

Although it is not the cheapest 8-footer currently in production, the price has been kept as low as possible by concentrating on essentials. Thus the standard of construction and finish is the same as in the other models, the mattresses are 5-inch, and the van has a proper, if small, wardrobe, a good kitchen, and a toilet room.

Only in one respect does the design seem to us to misfire. Such a van is likely to be bought mainly by owners of small cars. Indeed, the wheels are interchangeable with BMC Mini wheels—an obviously good selling point. But with this in mind the 1cwt noseweight is a little heavy.

The editorial Morris Oxford used for most of the test was scarcely taxed by the Mini-Glen's 10cwt and not bothered by the noseweight, but the springs of the editorial Mini were rather severely loaded.

The main reason for the heavy noseweight is the placing of the kitchen and toilet room at the front end. This layout brings to the front the bulk of the weight, the hot-plate, closet, water carriers, food, etc, but even before the test team's gear was put in, the noseweight was higher than expected. One wonders why the reverse layout was not used, as in the Glendale I 2ft two-berth.

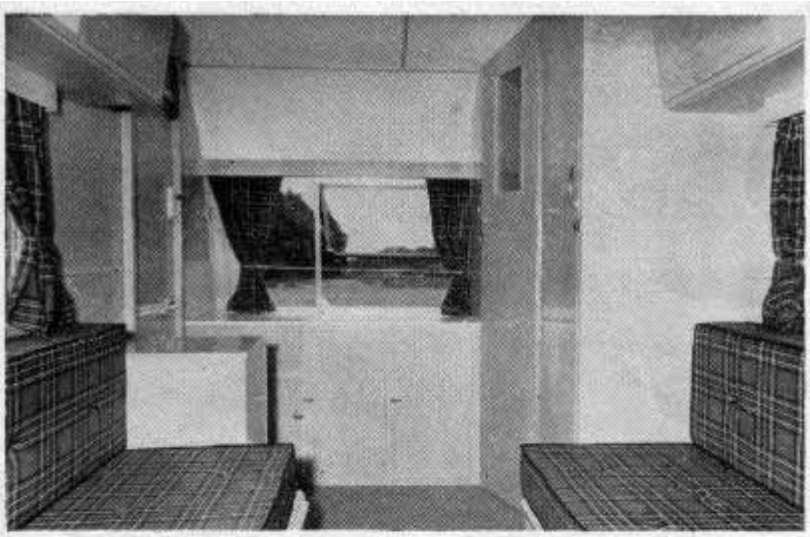
On the test track—behind the editorial Oxford — a maximum speed of 68mph was recorded, but this could easily have been higher with a more powerful car. Stability was good, despite a very nose-up attitude. For towing with the van level, the height to the centre of the ball on the towing car must be only 11in. This is in fact three inches below the newly agreed minimum. The small wheels undoubtedly contribute to the low coupling height, but they have the advantage of lowering the centre of gravity of

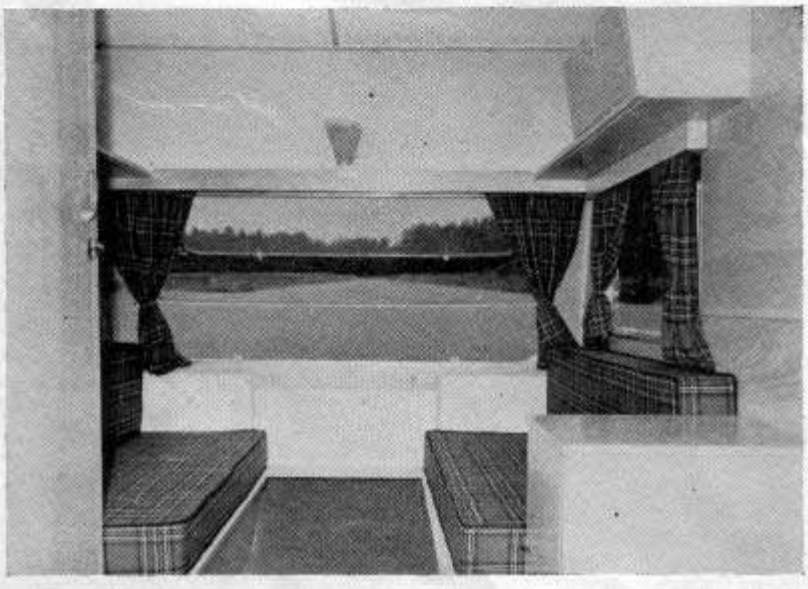
the van. This is particularly advantageous when towing with a light car, as the weight to weight ratios are not likely to be very favourable. A tendency to bounce slightly on rough patches of road and to rock when entered with the legs up was traced to the absence of shock absorbers. It is a pity that an economy such as this is so common in small touring caravans.

View through behind the editorial Oxford was one of the best we have experienced, but the driver of a smaller car would not be as lucky; with the Mini there is no view through at all. The handbrake held perfectly on a slope of 1 in 4, and the spring-controlled overrun brakes contributed 10 per cent of G in an emergency stop. With the brakes locked out, the outfit stopped in a straight line.

As the Mini-Glen is specially designed for towing with the BMC Mini, we put the test van behind the editorial Mini (standard 848cc, pre-hydrolastic model) to check its suitability as an outfit. Even behind this car the Mini-Glen rode very slightly nose up (no adaptor plate) but stability wise it was excellent apart from noticeable pitching. Behind the more modern Hydrolastic cars this would be very noticeable and only re-affirms our earlier statement that the nose-weight needs reducing.

On normal main roads the outfit could cruise comfortably at around 45mph in top gear, but attempts to maintain a consistently higher cruising speed necessitated constant use of the gearbox and long periods in third gear. The Mini and Mini-Glen are a perfectly suitable combination for all normal touring but not one that trans-Continental road burners will find particularly rewarding.

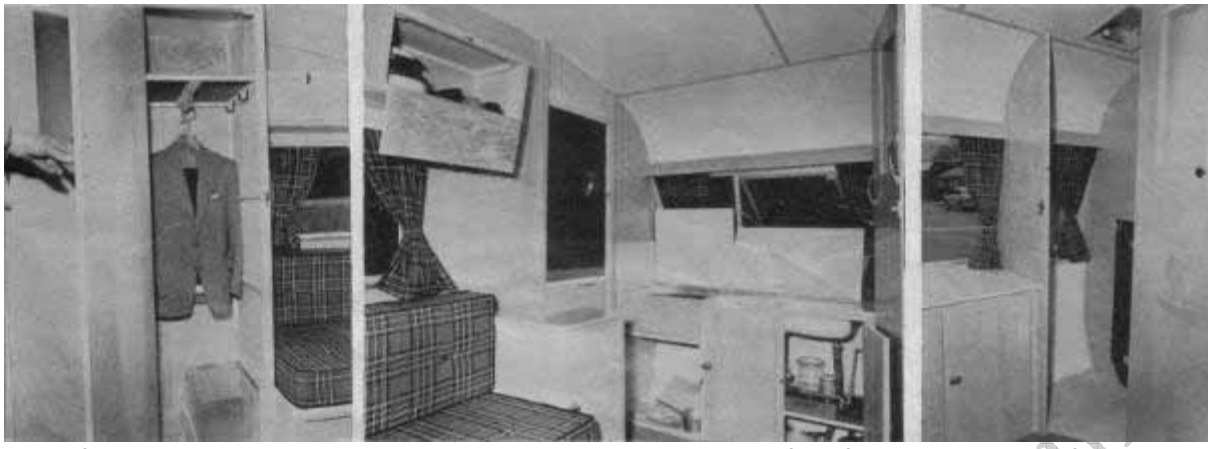




Above and below: rear and front end views of the Mini-Glen. The bold tartan upholstery and curtains are gay and certainly not overpowering in the small interior. Bottom row, left to right: the wardrobe has four coat hooks in addition to the hanging rail which would be better running parallel to the side wall. Ladies dresses could then hang right to the floor over part of the wardrobe. The front end kitchen is not short of storage space especially if crockery is stored in the amidships roof lockers. The self-contained toilet room in the front offside corner has its own rooflight and takes the table on tow.

The simple two-berth layout is both effective and neat. Basically, it comprises a rear-end double dinette and front-end kitchen. The wardrobe and toilet room are on the offside and there is a small chest of drawers next to the door on the nearside. There is a surprising amount of floor space, and the cramped feeling so often present in small vans is almost entirely avoided. This is mainly attributable to the general light colouring of the furniture and side walls, and to the white panelling of the roof and end walls. Fitted carpeting, not usual in the standard specification of an 8-footer, is an additional feature of the Mini-Glen which contributes to the 'big van' feeling.

The dinette converts into a double bed in the usual way with the table making up the



base of the centre section. As a bed, the size is adequate. There is a full 6ft length, but only 3ft 9in width. We found the Sin plastic foam mattresses rather too hard for real comfort. As mattress comfort is purely a matter of personal taste, manufacturers cannot be expected to please everyone. The same problem of personal taste applies to the colour and patterns of the mattress covers and curtains rather more than to the colours of the walls and furniture, which of necessity must be light and fairly neutral. In the Mini-Glen, Thomson's have taken a step which most manufacturers are frightened of and have made the mattress covers and curtains out of a very bold and highly coloured tartan cloth. The effect is striking and was appreciated by the test crew. The curtains, over all windows including the obscured-glass window of the toilet room, are carried on plastic covered wire strainers. This method of hanging is never very efficient. The material does not slide easily, and it is virtually impossible to open the curtains sufficiently. Overlapping wires enabled them to be closed completely. The sloping T-I.ine profile of the end walls necessitates the end curtains being held against the windows by wire strainers. This is unattractive but it would be far more annoying to have the curtains hanging loose away from the windows.

The bedding lockers under each side of the dinette are top-access, with lids hinged sufficiently far from the wall to allow them to be opened without completely removing the mattress. However it is difficult to get bulky items into the lockers as the lids do not extend the full length of the lockers. The lids are chipboard and would probably be strong enough to extend further. Ventilation is to the inside of the van via a top vent at the rear.

Storage for personal items comprises a small shelved cupboard, two roof lockers, wardrobe and a generous length of roof shelving. The shelved cupboard between the dinette and the door, serves as a useful retainer for the mattresses and as a small permanent table. In such a small van, space is greatly restricted if the table is left up all day. This small locker provides a place where odd items can be left without the table being needed. There is a single shelf in the locker, but the floor is obstructed by the wheel arch. The shelf is set l2in from the top of the locker, and so quite large items can be accom-modated.

The table, which has a neutral-coloured melamine covering, is rigid in use. The single leg cannot be fixed in the down position, and there is a danger that the table could be upset if the leg were accidentally kicked. When stowed, the leg can be clipped in the folded position.

There is a roof locker above each side window. The fall-front doors are not stayed, but there is no strain on the hinges if they are allowed to drop right down. The catches worked very well, and neither locker came open on tow even after some fairly rough rides. A large expanse of roof locker adds considerably to overall weight and cost, so roof shelving is used as an alternative. The Mini-Glen roof shelves run from the roof lockers to the rear wall. They are 8in deep, and generous lapping means that they can be used on tow without everything falling off. There is a small pelmet shelf above each window.

Additional shelving and storage space is provided in the wardrobe. There is a top shelf but clothes hanging room is greatly restricted due to the rail running from front to back, it is almost impossible to get clothes from the back of the wardrobe when it is full. The rail could be run from side to side without enlarging the wardrobe. The wheel arch makes a useful shelf for shoes, etc, but clothes should be kept away from it as it is uninsulated.

The front-end toilet room is used for storing the table when on tow and, as in most small tourers, all heavy items such as water carriers seem to find their way into it. The table is clipped to the wall by means of a wooden turnbuckle. Because of the cutaway corners the table has to be clipped in upside down. A permanent floor vent and a roof vent provide ample ventilation. Light at night is borrowed from the rest of the van via a frosted glass panel in the toilet room door. The curtain pelmet and window sill are the only shelves, but they are deep enough to accommodate many of the small items which can find no permanent home.

For the size of van, no cook could complain of lack of room in the kitchen. The hotplate and sink unit have separate melamine-faced hinged working tops, and with a certain amount of organisation meals can be easily prepared. The large front window, with a centre opening section, provides ample light for daytime cooking, but with the only gas light at the rear of the van, at night the cook stands in his own light. Curtains in the kitchen always present a problem, as they must be adequately protected from the hotplate to prevent any risk of fire. In the Mini-Glen, the hotplate working top hinges back against the curtain and is fastened to the wall. The working top over the sink unit rests against the frame of the centre section of the window. There is no positive clip to hold it back, and there is a danger that with the window open the wind might catch it and blow it shut.

Storage for food, pots and pans comprises a large unshelved cupboard with permanent floor vent under the hotplate, and a shelved cupboard under the sink. A small top shelf is provided under the drainer, suitable for cutlery and other small items. There are no cutlery or plate racks, and no water pump. The cupboard under the sink is obstructed by the rubber waste pipe, which at first glance seems ridiculously long, if it is fully extended, the end easily reaches the road. The reason for the apparently excessive length became obvious to the test team when we tried to get a bucket under the van for the waste water. The chassis and bodyline are so low that the only place to put the bucket is at the side of the van, hence the length of hose. It is a nuisance to have to pull the hose up through the floor when leaving site, especially as it means repacking the cupboard to accommodate it, but if it is left out, the road soon wears down the end.

Ventilation in the kitchen is not good if the weather demands that both the window and the door be closed. The only escape for cooking fumes is through the roof light in the centre of the roof. A door adjacent to the hotplate can sometimes be a nuisance as draughts tend to upset the direction of the gas jets and blow most of the heat away from the hotplate. If the bottom half of the stable door of the Mini-Glen is kept closed when cooking, the hotplate is kept reasonably free from draughts.

The only source of artificial light is a No 1 Morco unit above the dinette. This provides excellent light over that end of the van at the expense of enough light in the kitchen. The piping to the light runs between the roof and the inner panelling, and is only accessible if the panelling is removed—a costly and time-consuming job. The cylinder connection is outside

THOMSON

MINI-GLEN

recommended price £265

Thomsons (Carron) Ltd., Skaithmuir Mill, Carron, Falkirk

DIMENSIONS

Length body *net*	.. ..	8ft 6in
overall	.. ..	9ft 1in
shipping	..	11ft 10in
interior	..	8ft 10in
Width *overall*	.. ..	6ft 5in
interior	.. ..	6ft 0in
Height *overall*	.. ..	7ft 5¼in
Maximum headroom	..	5ft 11½in
Floor height	.. .. ..	13¼in
Window sill height *front*	..	42in
rear	..	42in
Height to centre of coupling ball for level ride	.. ..	11in
Weight *ex works*	.. ..	9cwt
as tested	.. ..	10cwt
Noseweight	.. .. ..	1cwt

UNDERGEAR

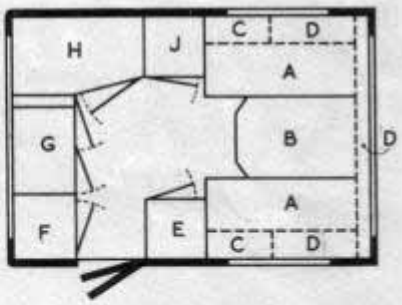
B & B welded steel chassis. A 2½ x 1½ x 10g channel. B 2½ x 1½ x 10g angle. C 2 x 1½ x 10g angle. B & B independent suspension by transverse swinging arms. Coil springs. Brakes 7in Lockheed, rod operated. Wheels 4 stud, tyres 5.20 x 10. Coupling 50mm B & B Beta IV, jockey wheel. Four brace-operated legs.

next to the drawbar. When the chassis was sprayed, the brass union was also sprayed. Connecting and disconnecting the cylinder resulted in some of the paint chipping away from the union and disappearing up the pipe. In time this may easily result in the gas taps becoming jammed, and leaks developing. Masking while spraying the chassis would lessen this possibility.

The standard of workmanship and finish in the interior is high. Piano hinges on most of the inside doors not only mean extra strength in the units, but are considerably more attractive than individual hinges. It is pleasant also to come across door and cupboard catches which work positively and easily, and are in no danger of jumping open on tow.

With the Mini-Glen, Thomson's have produced a good-looking and eminently workable van. For a van with a body length of 8ft 6in, the amount of room inside is remarkably good. A specification not cut to the bone and a good standard of workmanship have inevitably led to rather a high price for an 8-footer, but as with any consumer goods, quality has to be paid for. It may well be that the market for this van will extend to the larger car man, and to this end it is a pity that the drawbar is so low that considerable adjustment is likely to be needed before getting a really satisfactory towing height.

LAYOUT



A dinette double bed, B hook-on table, C roof locker, D roof shelf, E shelved locker, F hotplate, G sink and drainer, H toilet room, J wardrobe.

BODY CONSTRUCTION Framing meranti, joints halved, screwed and glued. Exterior panelling 20g aluminium. Insulation 1in mineral wool. Interior panelling Japanese sen, roof and end walls pre-painted hardboard. Floor ¼in softwood, tongued and grooved, treated. Unglazed stable door 60½ x 19in, lever-handled rimlock. Windows by Elbee, round cornered, polished alloy frames telescopic self-locking stays, all opening except side sections of front window. Two 30 x 20in, one each 60 x 25in and 60 x 25in including 30 x 25in opening centre section. Two amber Perspex roof lights 9in square, scissor-type stays. Awning channel. Two grab handles.

EQUIPMENT Dinette double bed 72 x 45in, mattresses 5in plastic foam, buttoned. Top access bedding lockers. Furniture Japanese sen. Hook-on table 36 x 24in, melamine faced. Wardrobe 19 x 18in, hanging space 54in, partly obstructed by wheel arch, shelf, four coat hooks. Roof lockers and shelves above dinette. Shelved locker, 12½ x 18in. Kitchen: plastic sink and drainer, Argyll two-ring hotplate and grill. Individual melamine-faced lids. Ventilated larder, shelved cupboard. Toilet room 34 x 22½in max, floor area 30 x 22½in. Floor vent and roof light. Curtains on overlapping wire strainers, plywood pelmets. Fitted carpet. One Morco No 1 gas light, gas fire point optional, outside cylinder connection. Full road lights and indicators, 7-pin plug and socket.

TOWING CARS FOR TEST BMC Mini, 848cc, weight inc crew 15cwt. Morris Oxford Mk VI automatic, 1622cc, weight inc crew 25¾cwt.