



# John Wickersham

What service should we expect when collecting our new motor caravan?

**T**O RETAIN HER ANONYMITY, I'll call this first-time motor caravan owner 'Elaine'. Like many people, Elaine had come to the conclusion that although hiring leisure vehicles was a good way to experience motor caravanning, it was time to buy one of her own.

That was two years ago and through family connections, Elaine called to ask for advice. The trouble is that modern motor caravans can be complicated things. Come to that, you don't want to waste money on a vehicle that doesn't turn out to be quite what you'd wanted.

To ensure that Elaine purchased a vehicle to suit her unique holiday requirements, we visited both indoor exhibitions and outdoor shows to compare the models on offer.

Hiring coachbuilt motor caravans had revealed that these types of vehicle were often too large for her love of rural retreats and Highland hideaways. A van conversion was better suited to her holiday habits and could be parked outside her Nottinghamshire home.

So time was spent comparing van conversions, agonizing over the preferred type of roof construction, and tracking down a layout with two single beds of adult dimension. Now I ought to point out that this lady is tall, at over six feet. That posed a problem in many conversions.

The cost of new vans also exceeded her budget. That's when we came across Middlesex Motorcaravans who undercut others in price. I confess it took several minutes to spot that the registration plates on the company's shining VW T5 base vehicles revealed they were 18 months old. Typically, they also had around 8000 miles on the clock whereas the conversion itself was brand, spanking

new. It also transpired that Graham and Hilary, who own the company, will tailor a conversion to suit clients' needs... and the headroom issue was easy to solve.

Many months later, Elaine went to collect her new high-top and Hilary had the difficult job of explaining to a new owner how everything worked. I was the fly on the wall with a camera.

Two-and-a-half hours later, Elaine tentatively left the Company's base in Edgware and headed for Nottingham with a smile on her face. It had certainly helped to deal with a couple who are motor caravanners themselves. That was immediately apparent when Hilary explained the mysteries of gas cylinders, cassette toilets, battery charging, mains consumer units, swivelling seats and bed erection.

Graham reckons that most new owners phone back within a couple of days to seek further advice on a point they'd forgotten. There's simply too much to absorb in just one session.

Anyway, I gave Elaine a copy of *The Motorcaravan Manual* which will help her learn more about cylinders, use a fridge to best effect, couple-up to mains supplies and check for reverse polarity.

All-in-all I was impressed how this converter had built a personalised vehicle with an extra high roof and then spent so much time teaching a newcomer how to enjoy their new purchase. As I left this family business, I wondered if other dealers are as helpful and thorough at 'handover time'. ■

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*The Motorcaravan Manual* and *Build your own Motorcaravan***

## HEADROOM AND HANDOVER



Built to order with a special high-top roof for an owner who wanted more than the usual headroom



'Girls' talk' on how a swivel-bowl Thetford cassette toilet was shoe-horned into a private, curtained corner



Fortunately a ZIG CF8 fused distribution unit is one of the easier control panels to understand



The four belted travel seats are served by two folding tables which were duly demonstrated

'Most new owners phone back within a couple of days to seek further advice'