carry out the conversion to a camper for us. After all, Leisuredrive had converted our previous VW Camper and six years of use had seen nothing break, come loose or fall off! And that’s where this book began.

There was once an advert for razors where some smug-looking feller held up a razor to the camera and said something like, “I tried this razor and liked it so much, I bought the company.” Well, I’m fortunate enough to test drive quite a few vehicles in the course of my work as a motoring writer and I can honestly say, “I test drove the van and liked it so much, I bought one!” Not as spectacular a claim, perhaps – but at least it’s true …

1-1-3. A van with high mileage but lots of regular maintenance and a full service history will generally be more desirable than one that shows a lower mileage but which has been knocked about and not properly maintained.

1-1-4. The window van which has windows behind the cab but not at the very rear could be a good basis for a conversion, but this is the Shuttle which has a sliding door on each side that makes it unsuitable.

1-1-5. This cutaway of the Caravelle’s internal components gives a good idea of the vehicle’s structure.

SECTION 1. MODEL TYPES
Ninety-six models – which is right for you?

A VW press release of 2006 posed the above question of the T5 Transporter – and it wasn’t even including the Caravelle MPV range! However, it’s not as daunting a choice as you might think and, buying second-hand, you won’t have the detailed choice that the new vehicle buyer enjoys. However, there are several major categories of Transporter available at the time of writing and you’ll need to know which version you want before you start looking because their detail characteristics are quite different.

All the engines are powerful and economical TDI engines and feature Volkswagen’s ‘Pumpe Duese’ (PD) unit-injector technology. Other main features include: long service and maintenance intervals; independent suspension on all four wheels and agile handling; superb, slick gear change; ergonomic cab design with car-like qualities and comfort levels.

Gross vehicle weights, at time of launch, ranged from the T26 (2.6 tonne); T28 (2.8 tonne); T30 (3.0 tonne) to T32 (3.2 tonne). The vehicle we chose is a T28, to provide 200kg more carrying capacity than the base vehicle, plus, we assumed, more resilient suspension for a vehicle carrying the kitchen sink around with it the whole time but at very little extra cost.

All have:

- two wheelbases: 3m or 3.4m.
- three roof heights (only one for the Shuttle).
- VW’s designated model types are currently:
  - The Transporter Panel Van.
  - four gross vehicle weights.
  - load compartment volumes of 5.8m³ to 9.3m³
  - seating for 3

- The Transporter Kombi
  - designed to carry up to 6 people in comfort, and a sizeable load at the same time.
  - two gross vehicle weights.
  - payloads of 1200kg or 1400kg.
  - a range of door and window options.
  - rubber flooring in load compartment.

- The Transporter Window Van
  - Volkswagen’s heavy duty answer to passenger-carrying for up to nine people.
  - range of seating up to nine, arranged in up to three rows.
  - a range of door and window options.
  - tough rubber flooring.
  - suitable base for conversions.
2-5-A12. Those cut lines are now connected up, across the back of the roof …

2-5-A13. … following this rib down the length of the roof …

2-5-A14. … and across the front, just behind the front door. Anyone carrying out the work for the first time will need to refer to the Reimo fitting instructions and the dimensions of the reinforcing sections supplied, as well as noting the variations that Barry built into this particular job as shown later in this chapter.

2-5-A15. Barry used his drill to make a series of holes which he then linked together by pushing sideways carefully on the drill (if you’re not careful the drill will break!). Note that in this instance, where he needed to begin cutting through a double-sided panel, a slot needed to be made in both sections.

2-5-A16. Barry pointed out that the jigsaw blade he used had to be long enough to cut through the widest box section.

2-5-A17. Barry started at the front …

2-5-A18. … and cut straight across to the other side.

2-5-A19. He cut down the length towards the back …
Leakage Circuit Breaker), 15 amp main switch and double-pole, 13 amp MCB (Miniature Circuit Breakers) to protect the mains electrical circuits in your vehicle.

The charger-and-voltage transformer unit provides the link between the mains and the 12 volt system. It is fed from the 230 volt Consumer Unit, which is normally fitted in the base of the wardrobe or bedbox and which must be earthed to the chassis to provide the correct protection.

“The 12 volt system is the heart of the vehicle’s conversion. The connections for the vehicles existing battery, the one it uses for starting the engine, will be referred to as ‘AUTO’ or ‘B1’ on the control panel. It is best not to connect any ‘caravan’ items to this battery because if you drain it, you will be unable to start your engine.

“You must install a second battery which will be referred to as ‘LEISURE’ or ‘B2’ on the control panel. This can be one battery of between 75 and 110 A/hr or for bigger electrical needs, a pair of 110 A/hr batteries in parallel, which means connecting positive terminal to positive terminal and negative to negative. By joining them this way you double up the batteries’ capacity (such as 2 x 110 A/hr) but retain the voltage at 12 volts. (If you join them in series positive to negative you will get 24 volts!).

“You will “split charge” your leisure battery by connecting a relay (R228) between B1-and-B2 and the relay signal wire to the D+ terminal on your alternator. When the engine is started and the alternator is charging, both the vehicle battery (B1) and the leisure (B2) battery will be charged up via the relay but the vehicle battery will not be drawn down for appliances in the caravan-section of the vehicle.

“The main 12 volt system needs to be monitored and controlled from a control panel and distribution system (C860, PC100 or PC200). The system has control switches and built-in circuit protection fuses to protect key equipment. All items and their cable runs must be fused to the correct rating. Additional fused circuits can be provided using the blade fuse holders (BFH4, 6, 8 and R420/421). This system also has a charger to charge the leisure battery from the mains 240v connection – see above.

“To ensure the auto battery remains topped up when stationary for long periods or when using cab fitted equipment such as radio, DVD player or Sat. Nav. unit, use a CAK Battery Charge Manager (BCM12) which trickle charges excess charge from the leisure battery back to the auto battery when the leisure battery is being charged. For ‘wild camping’ the most effective way maintain charge in your batteries is by fitting a solar panel on your roof.”
6-5-12. He used the tyre fitting machine to push the tyre down sufficiently to insert one half of the Tyron band, ensuring that it was the correct way up, as described in the excellent instructions.

6-5-13. This tyre compression device is available from Tyron. Fitting and removal is a two-minute job, compared with the 15 minutes or more it can take when you have to struggle with the tyre fitting machine.

6-5-14. With both band-halves in place and the opposite joint symmetrically placed each side of the tyre valve, Mick fitted the screw-up clamp to each side.

6-5-15. After tightening evenly by hand, using the long-reach Allen key supplied by Tyron ...

6-5-16. ... he used this lovely little Britool torque wrench to tighten the screws to the specified low torque figure of 7.5Nm.

6-5-17. The tyres were to be inflated with Nitrogen, for reasons fully explained in the main text. If an already inflated tyre was being 'converted' to Nitrogen, ATS first jack up the vehicle, so there will be no weight on the tyres, then let all the compressed air out.

6-5-18. Mick inflated our new Michelins to the prescribed pressure using a gauge that looks identical to one used for compressed air but which is, in fact, attached to ATS's nitrogen pump and reservoir. (You will need to call ATS on the number given at the end of this manual to see where this service is offered.)
6-19-19. In the case of a Leisuredrive conversion, there isn’t enough depth for the standard water outlet (held in left hand) to be used so an elbow has to be fitted in its place.

Top tips!
- If the pipe needs to be straightened and rebent, it will work harden. In this case, scrap the pipe and use new.
- You may be able to use an automotive brake or fuel pipe bender if you don’t have access to the correct plumber’s tool.

6-19-20. You can carry out this part of the work yourself but you should not make the final gas fittings. The gas pipe will have to make some tight bends in order to fit neatly within the cupboard space.

6-19-21. If you do fit the pipe temporarily in place to check its position, don’t tighten the union or the olive will be squashed onto the pipe. Leave that to the professional fitter.

6-19-22. With the pipe in place and taken in this particular direction, it was necessary to open out and, in one place, to cut away part of the casing.

6-19-23. The casing is simply screwed onto the back of the unit.

6-19-24. You should use reinforced good quality hose. Note that the HOT and COLD connections are clearly marked and it’s essential that they are connected correctly.

6-19-25. The electrical cable, not to be fully connected unless you are a qualified electrician, can be held in place with cable clips.