

Crisis? What crisis?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the motor caravan industry's performance during 1991 more or less mirrored that of the market for private cars. A drop in sales of 21% to the end of September last was reported by Anthony Trevelyan, chairman of the Motor Caravan Section of the SMMT, in his 'state of the nation' speech at last November's Earls Court Show.

The increase in VAT in the March budget was seen as 'unhelpful'. Coupled to the special car tax of 5% for motor caravans, it adds a massive 23% to the price of a new model.

In the face of all this, however, the industry is rightly taking an aggressive attitude to current trading conditions. In addition to the rash of new launches at the show, several manufacturers introduced new models during 1991. Specifications,



Anthony Trevelyan, speaking at the Caravan Show

both from base vehicle suppliers and converters, continue to be improved, as do standards of quality and after-sales service from the industry and its dealer network.

The theme at this year's Master Dealers Association convention was 'The quality of service', clearly an area which the association sees as deserving close attention. Also high on the agenda was dealer discounting – something that remains a problem at shows such as Earls Court.

My only comment is that if you buy a motor caravan from a dealer whose premises are 200 miles away, just because he offers you £100 more on your part exchange than a local dealer, then don't complain to me if

you have to undertake the return journey to the selling dealer to get any 'niggles' sorted out. You should have thought of that when you signed on the dotted line.

Sad for Joy

Just before this issue went to press, I

received the sad news from Joy Dawson of the demise of her company Dawson's Danbury Conversions.

Danbury Conversions was founded in the heady 60s by Joy's late husband George and, specialising initially on the Volkswagen Transporter, flourished in the ensuing years. Along with such famous names as Devon and Dormobile, Danbury made up the third member of the 'three Ds' – all producing 'VW-recognised' motor caravans and leading converters at the time.

Following the untimely death of her husband, Joy took up the reins and, as a result of sheer hard work and knowledge of motor caravanners' needs, succeeded in creating many popular conversions, latterly based on the latest generation of compact vans. Dawson's Danbury Conversions were regular exhibitors at Earls Court and at most, if not all, of the outdoor shows that come round every year.

Danbury is the last of the 'three Ds' to disappear from the motor caravanning scene – Dormobile stopped motor caravan manufacture several years ago and the original Devon company sold off their interest in motorvans towards the end of the 80s.

Apart from admiring Joy's sheer enthusiasm and guts, I was sorry to learn about her company's troubles and the fact that it has ceased to operate. Although no longer in the mainstream of motor caravan production, Dawson's Danbury had created a niche in the market for their compact but cleverly designed conversions.

On the box

If you want to find out more about the benefits of motor caravanning from the comfort of your armchair, then look out for the *Holiday '92* programme on BBC1 on 21 February.

Presenter Sue Cook, a total newcomer to motor caravanning freedom, took off to the West Country in a Holdsworth high-top Fanfare and reports her impressions of both driving and living with this popular conversion from one of the country's leading manufacturers.

It should make interesting viewing for both beginners and existing motor caravanners alike.

Paul Cook