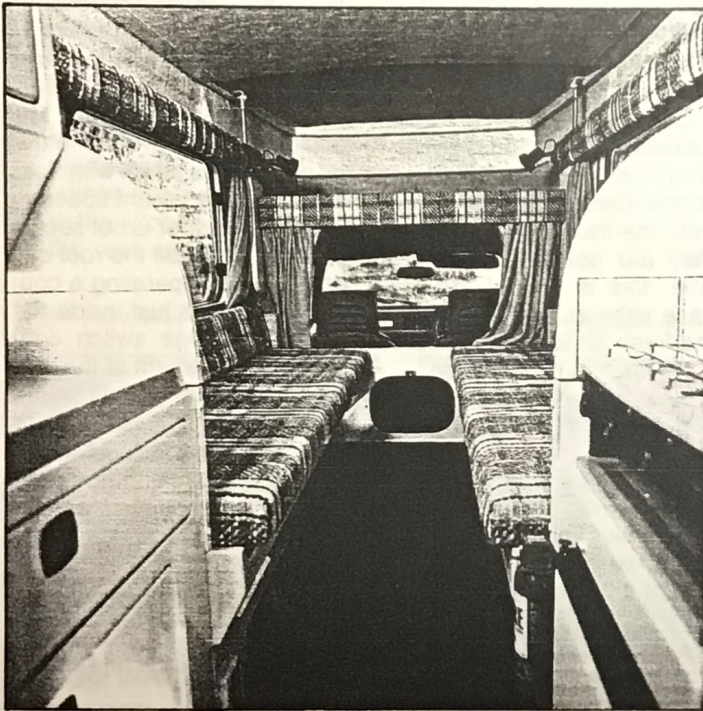


TEST EXTRA

Citroen Hylo Romahome

Latest version of this popular little motorhome features a roof section which is raised by a compressor. We report on the ups and downs



Rather than just a pop-top, as was generally expected, Island Plastics have gone the complete hog and designed a whole elevating roof section for the new Hylo. Introduced at last November's Earls Court Show, full production of this new model was only started in March.

The delay between first public showing and the first production run is due as much to the success of other vehicles in the Island Plastics line-up as the makers desire to perfect their newest model. However, they were generous enough to let us have a first road test on the prototype re-

Settees (left) combine to create double bed (below left), Sink cover/tray (below)

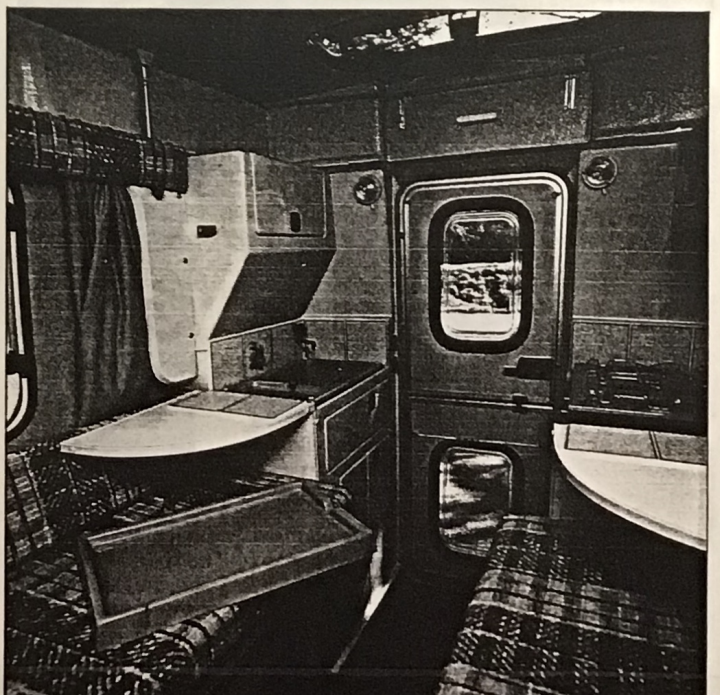
ular batches of the Hylo are produced.

The reason for an elevating roof version is no whim on the part of Island Plastics. Their research showed that prospective buyers like the look of the existing Romahome, but wanted something which was not as tall, for reasons of garageability and access to multi-storey car parks as much as anything else. The Hylo is 6ft 4in, that's 1ft 3in lower than a standard Romahome, and easily short enough to slip under those height barriers.

Taking the Citroen C15 as its base, it seemed logical to make this already car-like van more like a small car in its dimensions too. Appearances suggest otherwise, but this is exactly the same length as the original Romahome. The lower roofline gives the Hylo a flatter appearance with a cute turn up at the front.

Changes to exterior graphics are kept to Hylo decals on each side. Behind the wheel, there's little new to report since we last tested a Citroen-based Romahome in August 1988. We understand that diesel versions of the base vehicle are soon to have five gears as standard, as opposed to the four at present, and there's even rumour that the C15 will be available with the larger 1.9-litre diesel as fitted to the BX car range.

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Another standard fitting on future models will be a Philips radio.

In fact, the Hylo's reduced height seemed to have little effect on performance and economy. The 1769cc diesel unit cruises happily at 70mph and is only recognisable as an oil burner on starting and idling. Over the miles of our test run we averaged 40mpg, making 500 miles a possibility between fuel stops for the 10.3-gallon tank. This engine had done only 300 miles at the start of our test, so was some way to being completely run in. Therefore, an improvement on our fuel and performance figures can be expected.

The advantages of diesel

engines are of importance to motor caravanners – the fuel is often much cheaper abroad, diesel engines need less maintenance (in theory, at least), they last longer and the fuel is lead-free. Citroen quote a life of 150,000 miles for the diesel C15 in their brochure. Add to this the fact that the diesel option here is only some £650 more than the standard 1124cc petrol version and you can see why most Romahome owners opt for the former.

One disadvantage is poorer acceleration compared to petrol power. Over our test period the diesel unit proved itself no slouch: the Hylo will hold 70mph on the motorway as

well as keeping up with the flow of traffic in town. Acceleration may not be lively, but it is certainly adequate.

Putting in a diesel engine often means stiffening up the suspension too – although we've yet to test a petrol-engined C15 we doubt if the comfort of the ride could be bettered than the magic carpet qualities of the vehicle on test here. The C15 still offers a comparatively soft ride, soaking up any effects caused by uneven road surfaces; this is only offset partially by the amount of body roll induced by cornering.

To be honest, we could find little difference between the Hylo and the standard Romahome regarding driveability and the way it handled crosswinds; in both cases the driver is always in control.

On the road, wind noise from the roof section is minimal. In fact, the noisiest aspect of the Hylo at speed comes from the fresh air vents when they are open. On the plus side, this is one of the few base vehicles which can offer the fresh air to the face/warm air to the feet combination.

Standard equipment in the cab includes a cigar lighter, two-speed fan, headlamp angle adjustment, map pockets in each door, and two-speed plus intermittent windscreen wiper. A single wiper is one of a number of character-

istics of the C15, along with the single-spoke steering wheel so typical of Citroens.

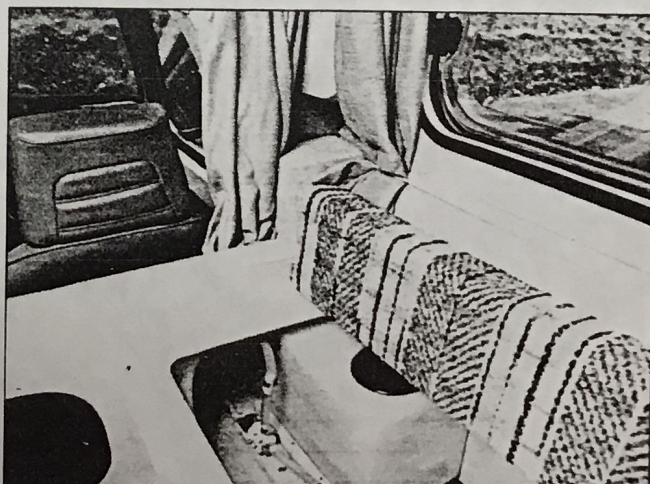
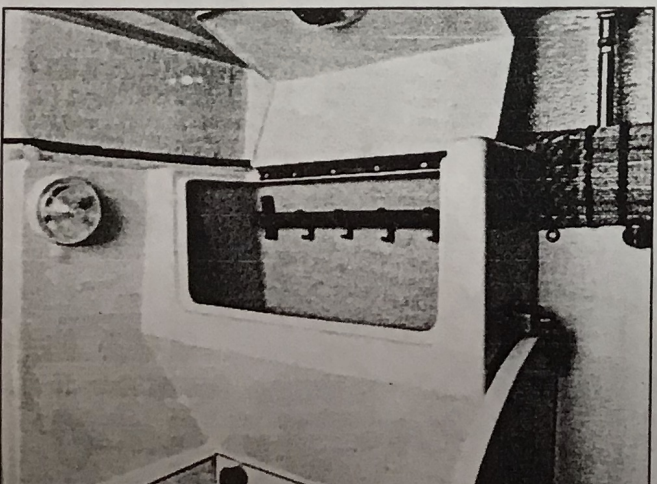
Cab seats are very comfortable, although the taller of our drivers felt the squabs lacked sufficient thigh support. For the driver, a slick gearchange adds to the pleasure of driving this vehicle. A rather obstructed view from the interior mirror is the only factor that detracts from the car-like feel of the Hylo, although the good view along each side from the door-mounted mirrors compensates for this.

When it came to adding the caravan quarters, a design problem was the rear stable-type door. Chopping the roof level by some 1ft 3in meant that a full height door could no longer be fitted. This is not as serious a problem as the large gap that is left above the door when the roof is raised. The designers have overcome this by providing a panel with bolts which fills the vacant space.

The short door is not such a problem because the roof can be put up by operating a couple of switches just inside the back door. One switch controls the movement of the roof while the other operates the compressor. The compressor runs off its own 12v battery – both are located towards the front of the dinette in the near-side seat base – and once the pressure is up to 97psi a flick of the other switch is all that's needed for the roof to rise. The roof goes up to give standing heights of 5ft 10in



Fold-down shelf (left) provides work surface. Roof lockers (below left) are top hinged. Inboard water tank and storage space (below) in seat base



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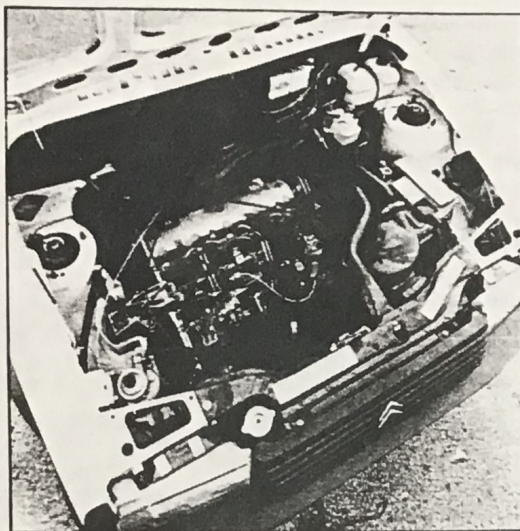
These images were kindly shared by Small Motorhome Forum member Cornishman
www.smallmotorhome.co.uk

and 4ft 11in in the kitchen and lounge areas respectively.

Putting the roof up leaves a gap along each side which is filled by slotting in specially made boards. Production models will hopefully have more lining on the upper walls to add to what is already a good level of insulation – expanded polystyrene lines the walls and roof, caravan windows are all double-glazed and the floor has a ply lining.

There's no danger of the roof falling down or of it being forced up while driving along – in both cases the pressurised system is in control. A number of other minor modifications are to be made, including a failsafe device to prevent the opened rear door impeding the roof when it is being lowered.

The Hylo retains the same interior layout as its high-roof predecessor – inward facing lounge seats with a step down to the kitchen at either side of the rear and a small overcab



Citroen diesel engine produced good performance



Compressor and separate battery stored in seat base

bed/large storage area measuring 4ft 7in x 2ft 9in.

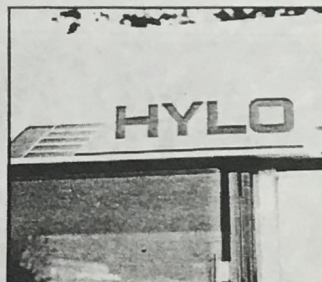
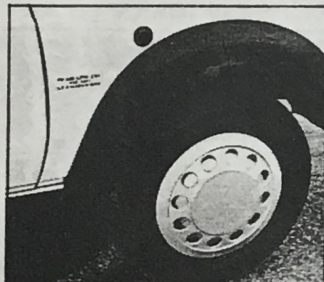
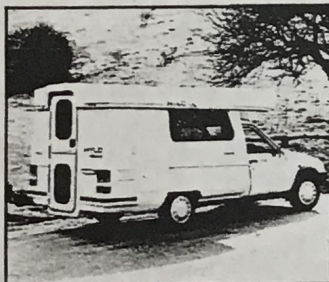
Upholstery in our test vehicle was Harvest Bracken woven material matched by a mid-brown gelcoat finish to the GRP-moulded furniture. In the day time, large side windows (each of which can be opened when the roof is up) and an

overhead sunroof prevent any feeling of claustrophobia. The (optional) sunroof is preferred to a skylight which would otherwise add 4in to the height of the vehicle.

There's plenty of room for two people at mealtimes, when a 35in x 18in free-standing table, normally

stored in the overcab area, is easily set up. The beauty of this type of table, as opposed to a single-leg pedestal type, is that it can be used outside the van when the weather permits.

Making the double bed is simply a matter of putting two batons across the gangway,



CITROEN ROMAHOME

£13,167

Manufacturer

Island Plastics Ltd, Edward Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight
 PO33 2SJ. T0983 64911

BODY

Type: coachbuilt with elevating roof section.

Berths: two.

Construction: Citroen C15 chassis cab with glass-fibre reinforced plastic coachbuilt body and roof.

Insulation: 1in expanded polystyrene in walls and roof, roofing felt material and 1in ply in floor.

Doors: twin cab doors, rear stable-type door.

INTERIOR

Gas system: key-lockable external compartment holds two 6lb cylinders.

Lighting: two spotlights in dinette, two kitchen lights, cab courtesy light.

Standard equipment

includes: rear corner steadies, two-ring hob and grill, sink and drainer, in-board tank with exterior lockable filler and in-line Whale pump, free-standing table, wardrobe, under-seat storage, compressor for elevating section.

Factory-fitted options:

second battery, split relay, wiring etc £77.28; mains hook-up package £80.90; Electrolux RM122 refrigerator £338.10; fire extinguisher £15.76; extra

standing awning £220.80; toilet tent £26.45.

BASE VEHICLE

Model: Citroen C15 van.

Engine: 1769cc, 4cyl in-line; max power 60bhp at 4600rpm, max torque 82lb ft at 2000rpm.

Transmission: four-speed manual, front-wheel drive.

Steering: rack and pinion. Turning circle between kerbs 36ft 2in.

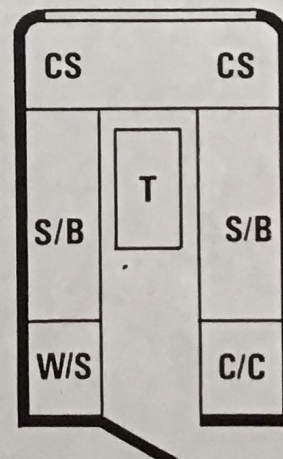
Suspension: all-independent by coil springs and telescopic dampers. MacPherson strut type steering geometry and anti-roll bar at the front; independent trailing arms, coil springs and telescopic damping with anti-roll bar at the rear.

Brakes: hydraulic dual circuit,

Tyres: 155 R 13.

Engine options: 1124cc or 1360cc petrol engines.

Overall length 15ft 7in, overall width 5ft 4in, overall height 6ft 4in



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pulling each seat squab towards the centre and dropping in the backrests at each side. It's a task which is easiest to do when just one person is in the living quarters. Curtains extend across the cab bulkhead and over the large side windows. Although generously cut, the unlined material is rather thin to act as adequate blackout.

Night time lighting comes from two spotlights for the dinette, and twin lights on each side of the rear door, all of which operate on a 12v system supplied by the base vehicle's battery. Optional is a mains hook-up package which includes an earth leakage trip and a 13amp socket in the van, as fitted to our test vehicle.

Another option which came with 'our' Hylo was a 1.2cu ft refrigerator, fitted below the cooker on the galley offside. The kitchen is 'enlarged' by the provision of fold down flaps which give some worktop space adjacent to both the cooker (on the offside) and the sink (nearside).

Otherwise, kitchen facilities are kept fairly basic, as befits a vehicle of this size. We liked the practicality of the GRP moulded units – the finish gives a surface which is easy to wipe clean and looks good. Another fitted option was a fire extinguisher – here located on the unit below the cooker.

The sink is deep enough but would benefit, we feel, from a larger plughole. A useful feature is the sink cover which doubles as a tray.

The Hylo also uses the same GRP for the cupboard doors at head height – in the standard Romahome a wood-style finish is preferred. Locker space in the kitchen area comprises a cutlery tray behind a drop front flap which covers gas isolator taps, shelved cupboard at floor level, cupboard over the cooker, and a mini wardrobe.

Accessible from the outside, and both key lockable, are the gas locker (which takes two 6lb cylinders – one in-line and one reserve) and a similar size locker on the opposite side of the van. The overcab area can also act as a large storage



Cab is comfortable and controls light and easy to operate

area when the Hylo is used as a two-berth; even with the roof down there is room to stow bedding etc.

Further storage is available in a locker in the bulkhead between the cab and the caravan and in both seat bases, although some room is taken up by the compressor system on the nearside and the fresh water tank on the offside. As well as a lockable exterior filler, the tank has a larger aper-

ture which makes it easier to clean out when necessary.

As a vehicle offering the combination of car-like qualities and roomy living quarters as well as a generous dose of character the Romahome has few equals. The Hylo increases its appeal simply because it has all the design qualities of its fixed roof stablemate without too much loss of storage room inside – its success seems assured. □



