

THE PENNINE 'AZTEC'

A. C. Bush

We wanted a Trailer Tent. We knew exactly what we wanted and set about finding it. Every Camping Exhibition was visited and a good many camping equipment distributors as well.

It took quite twelve months before we saw something we thought filled the bill.

Our requirements were: —

One double bed.

A fixed kitchen unit.

Comfortable seating.

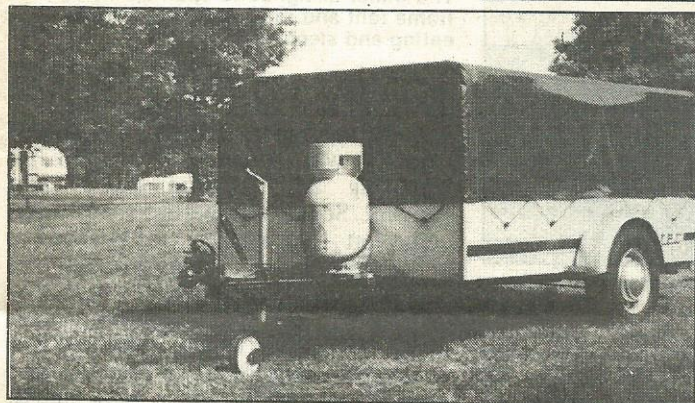
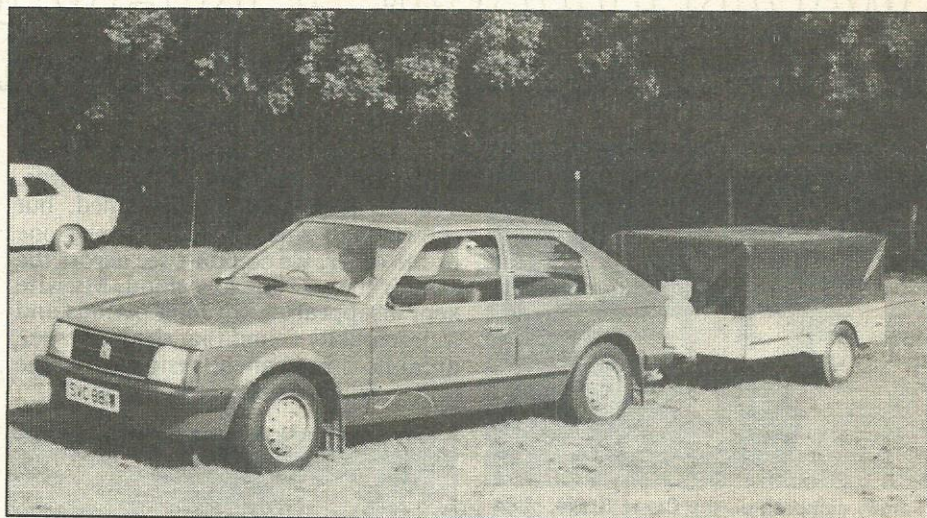
Detachable canvas.

Trailer as narrow as possible on the road.

Strong "A" frame towbar.

Over-run brakes.

No pegging.



Some trailer tents open up to give two double beds and not much more whilst others involve quite a lot of pegging and guying.

At the 1980 Feast of Lanterns at Peterborough, Pennine Engineering were showing the prototype of their new "Aztec" trailer tent which had many of the features we wanted. Whilst the basic version provided for two 4ft. beds and two inner tents (with possibility to convert mattresses to bench seats) we did find a variety of options were available and Pennine were ready to listen to customers own ideas and to make further suggestions. I feel this is one of the benefits of dealing direct with the manufacturers.

My wife then produced a sketch of her ideal trailer tent which covered the "Aztec" with one 4ft. bed and inner tent on one side of the trailer, cupboard and kitchen unit in trailer itself and one upholstered seat and backrest on the other side of the trailer. A special roof lining to be extended over seat and finish at a curtain dropping behind the seat to give ample "out of sight"

storage for suitcase, clothes and the usual odds and ends.

Pennine were able to agree to all these requirements, offering one solid mattress and one split mattress to make a comfortable 6ft. bench seat and backrest and in addition suggested fitting a small Viking Catalytic Heater. We ordered all this in February 1981 and delivery was promised on May 8, 1981.

By this date we had taken delivery of our new tow-car. A Vauxhall "Astra" 1300S Hatchback and motored the 140 miles to Accrington to collect our trailer tent. It was ready as promised and looked better than we had imagined.

We had previously been tent campers and were a little scared at the thought of towing but our fears disappeared after the first few miles.

The ex-works weight of the "Aztec" is 279 kgs. and maximum gross weight is 509 kgs. The kerb-side weight of the Vauxhall "Astra" 3-door Hatchback is 855 kgs.

The beginning of the 1981 camping season was pretty wet and we experienced some very heavy rain and

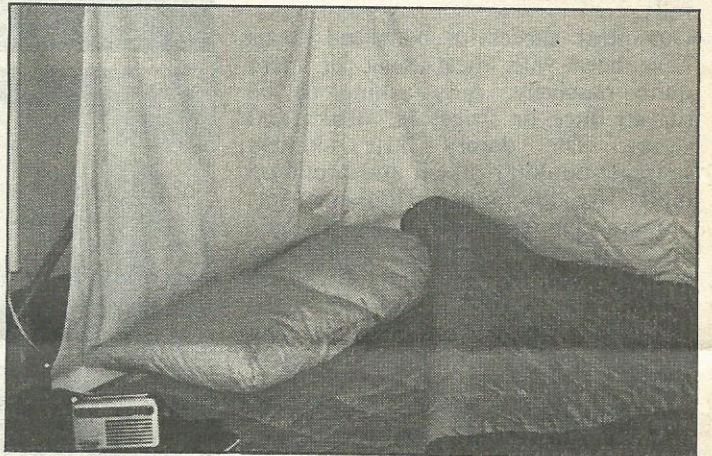
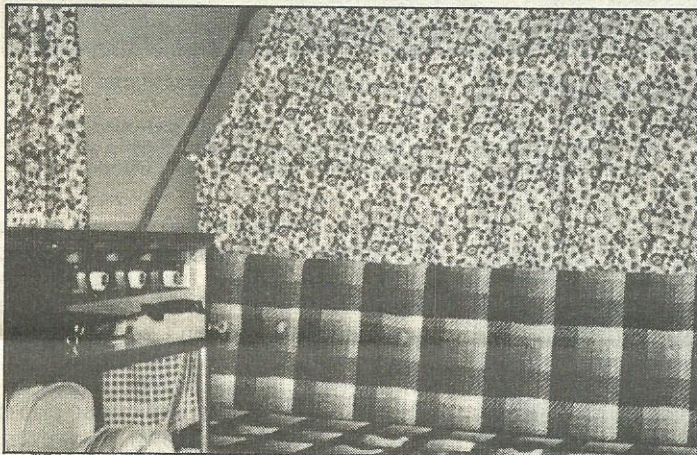
quite strong winds but were quite happy to be "off the ground" in the "Aztec".

The "Aztec" is very easy to put up. After getting the trailer level by means of the height adjustment on the jockey wheel and the two screw down jacks, the waterproof cover is removed, the two side flaps are folded out and their supports locked. This automatically opens up the canvas and the tubular frame can then be pushed up from the inside. The bottom edge of the canvas is firmly fastened by means of press studs and Velcro to give a draught-proof interior. Once inside and under cover, the inner tent, roof lining and kitchen unit can be put up.

The kitchen unit consists of a stainless steel combination sink unit with drainer and a double burner cooker unit with simmer taps and an efficient grill. I added a towel rail at each end of this unit. The store cupboard which is under the kitchen unit holds an adequate quantity of food, etc. and on top of this unit we keep our crockery, cutlery etc.

As standard, this trailer tent does not have a water pump and tap but I pro-

TRAILER TENT TEST



pose to fit this as I feel that everything else about the "Aztec" is of such a high standard that a loose water container is just not on. No doubt, if I had asked Pennine at the time they would have fitted the pump, etc. which is standard on their larger "Alpine" unit. Ample ventilation is provided by a large mesh-covered window behind the kitchen unit and the plastic lining to this can be raised and lowered as desired by zips on the inside. Camping Gaz or Calor Gas cylinder mounted on the "A" frame supplies the cooker and heater.

The floor of the trailer is firm and is covered with cushioned vinyl flooring but we bought a carpet remnant to give added comfort.

One or two skirts can be supplied to provide underneath storage. I ordered one of these but I must admit I rather shy away from using it as a few pegs are necessary and I am quite enjoying camping with no pegging. It will, no doubt, be useful on the longer holiday sites. A detachable awning is available to give extra living room but, of course, this involves extra poles and pegs.

When packing up wet there is a risk of

getting the mattress wet but polythene sheets are supplied which can be strapped on before folding-in the canvas but I have found it easier to use a 4ft. waterproof sheet with elastic corners which I saw advertised in a daily paper.

Winter storage is sometimes a problem but it should be pointed out that storage of the "Aztec" on its side or on end is not recommended.

In conclusion, the outfit has been used every week-end since delivery (including holidays) and no problems have arisen.

The principal dimensions are:

Exterior body length 6'3½" (1.91m)

Exterior body width 4'6" (1.37m)

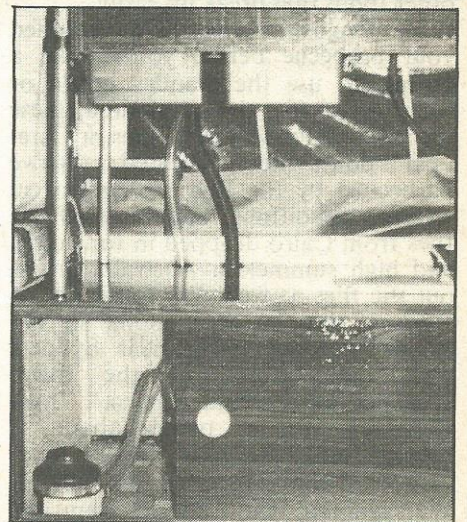
Overall trailer length 8'10½" (2.7m)

Overall width (over wheels) 5'8" (1.72m)

Exterior height closed 3'8" (1.12m)

Height at ridge in trailer 6'4" (1.93m)

Overall interior area 12'3" x 6'3¼" (3.73m x 1.91m)



Facing page, top, Vauxhall "Astra" 1300S towing "Aztec" Trailer Tent.

Bottom left, "Aztec" with Calor gas bottle on carrier.

Right, Trailer unhitched and cover removed.

This page, top left, Front view of "Aztec".

Right, Rear view.

Centre left, 6ft. bench seat, curtain screens-off hanging clothes, etc.

Right, Bed made up.

Bottom right, The Whale GP51 foot pump fitted inside bottom cupboard is ideal.