



VOLVO

480
ES



YOUR
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VOLVO

DEALER

Perrys of Canterbury
Perrys (Specialist Cars) Ltd.
Island Road, Sturry,
Canterbury, Kent CT2 0EZ
Telephone: (0227) 710431
Facsimile: (0227) 712844

In a typical August day this year - grey, wet and chilly - a group of Volvo owners gathered at the Donington Park race track to look over the new Volvo 480

THE NEW 480 ES

Trial by Jury



Being members of the Volvo Owners Club, they were already aware of the advance publicity for the car and several had read press reviews of it. Nevertheless, on seeing the 480 for the first time, for most of them the initial impression was one of surprise at its size.

Their second reaction was also one of surprise at the spaciousness of the car - it is a real sports 4-seater and not, as many expected, a 2 + 2.

The group had been invited along by Volvo to put the 480 through its paces on the race track. Unfortunately appalling weather conditions and unfamiliarity with the left-hand drive the car had been specially brought across from Holland) meant few really tested the mettle of the car to its full extent.

The first to get behind the wheel of this latest addition to the Volvo range was Colin Moore, owner of a 360 GLT. What did he think?

"It handles very well. The controls are much lighter than my 360, particularly the steering and clutch. Obviously, the more you drive it the more confident you become - a couple of circuits of the track doesn't really give you time to get to know the car.

"I like the look of it - which I didn't think I would from the specification. The level of comfort is very good and there is remarkably little noise. There was certainly more room in the back than I expected."

Colin Moore bought his 360 three years ago - it was one of the first to be imported into this country. A veteran driver of Volvos, he has previously had three other models ranging from a 164E to a 240. His current 360 was a deliberate move to a smaller car, but one with a comparatively large engine - 2 litres. He and his wife find it ideal for both business and pleasure - particularly when it comes to towing their caravan. Would he buy a 480? "I doubt it, mainly because I'm not sure it would be suited to towing 18.5 cwt of caravan - but maybe it will. After all, they didn't think the 360 would make a tow car and that made the Caravan Club's Tow Car of the Year!"

Most of those who drove the 480 remarked on how light the controls were and how responsive they found the car. Without exception, they commented on the comfort. The front seat adjustments are located on the front rather than the rear of the seat, which most found handier. The seat position seems almost infinitely variable. A particularly attractive innovation is the adjustable angle of the entire driving seat, enabling individuals to select their preferred position - from upright to tilted back in the time honoured manner of the sports car driver.

An adjustable steering wheel adds to one's ability to find a driving position tailor-made for comfort.

Having noted the spacious interior of the car and boot, most were impressed by the rear seat configuration - two distinct seats that were extremely comfortable and did not appear to restrict the leg room of passengers - however tall.

The design of the 480 has clearly been well thought out-this is no conventional five-door hatch-back reduced to three doors. The two side doors are exceptionally large providing a wide opening which, in conjunction with the full forward-tilt of the front seats, makes it very easy to get in and out of the car without having to resort to grotesque contortions.

Several of the Volvo owners commented on the safety belt fixings. Not only do the belts come readily to hand, the design is such that they can be pushed completely out of the way to avoid the risk of tripping when getting in and out of the back seat.

Trevor Nettleton, current Chairman of the Volvo Owners Club, was next to take to the track. He felt that, in the time available and given the prevailing weather conditions, it wasn't possible to assess the car properly. Nevertheless, he voiced the opinion

Gillian said immediately that she was favourably impressed. She found the front-wheel drive a new experience for small cars of this type.

The good all-round visibility was worthy of comment, as was the comfort and the way the 480 picked up in 4th gear without complaint. She admitted the brakes had taken her by surprise -"I nearly stood it on its nose", she remarked. Safety? Yes, she thought it very safe but believes that it's only natural to conclude that, if it's a Volvo, it's a safe car.

Her husband, Tony, had expected the 480 to be a larger car. He particularly liked the look of it on the move and remarked on the very positive steering and brakes, as well as the road holding. Tony also said he couldn't fault the interior and driving seat.



that he did like what he saw. He believes the 480 to be solidly built and thinks it sits well on the road. His overall conclusion was that it is a good car that should sell well. Trevor would certainly like one, although, at present, he is not in the market for a new car.

His present model is a 1971 145 with 120,000 miles on the clock -and it's never had the cylinder head off! He has every intention of keeping it on the road for some time to come-"it's a good load carrier and totally reliable, even if it lacks the refinements of today's Volvos".

On the subject of the controls, most of the drivers were impressed with the layout although not all had time to familiarise themselves with precisely what is what, and where. Angled towards the driver, at first sight the console appears rather complex. In reality it is, like that of other cars in the Volvo range, remarkably clear and straightforward. Several were also moved to express appreciation of the use of "proper instruments" to give an accurate indication of the current condition of various aspects of the car - rather than flashing lights that merely indicate a problem.

A dedicated Volvo owning husband and wife team, Tony and Gillian Whitton, were next to get to grips with the 480. Between them, they now own 9 Volvos - including the 1800S-the previous sports car that shot to fame as "The Saint's" car.

How did the 480 compare with its famous forebear-the 1800? "There's no comparison", says Tony. "Modern cars have moved so far ahead. But I would be interested to see how it compares for reliability and fuel consumption. I expect to get 42 m.p.g. out of the 1800 on a long run and 35 around town. I wonder if this new car can match that!"

Mont Townsend and his wife Margaret tested the 480 simultaneously- he drove and she went along as a back seat passenger.

Both were enthusiastic about the quietness of the car - especially noting the lack of wind noise. Again, comfort came high up on their list of commendations-Margaret expressing the opinion that two adults could travel all day in comfort in the back seat without arriving at their destination travel sore and weary.

Mont was very taken with the road holding, gear box and brakes, he was also impressed with the instrumentation. The Townsends are a two Volvo family at present, driving a 245 and a 165.

Continuous rain during the day did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the group as they examined the 480 from all angles. Discussing the merits of the car and comparing it with other Volvos they had known and loved, what conclusion did they come to about the new Volvo 480? To summarise in just one word - "surprising".

DEREK BELL



As a leading British motor racing driver Derek Bell was invited by Volvo to test the new 480 at the Chobham Test Track.

The results and his comments have been recorded on a video film shortly to be released through the UK Volvo dealership network.

Is it possible for a small production car to have any appeal for a man who successfully earns a living hurtling round a race track in a vehicle that bears little resemblance to the cars most of us drive?

Driving the 480 may not be an everyday experience for a man such as Derek Bell- but equally, few 480s will ever be handled by such a virtuoso.

What did he think of this new departure for Volvo- a distinctly sporty-looking little hatchback?

"It didn't have any vices, it's an honest little car that handles very well. It's consistent, comfortable - and it stops well! It's not a sports car and doesn't pretend to be-but it has a sporty image which I think will be very worthwhile for Volvo - it should certainly enhance sales.

"I really found the handling very good-as my day at Chobham with the 480 progressed I could start to throw it about. It was exciting and I was able to do a lot with it. But the 480 is easy to drive which is important for a production car-there's no point in having another 30 horse power if it's an animal to drive!

"Today the market demands cars that are comfortable, not hard-work, but that have a bit of 'snap'. The 480 cruises at a nice speed - it won't compete with a GTI - but then it's not intended to.

"As a racing driver, I suppose I look for different things. Performance is important and I don't just mean speed. A car needs to be quiet, comfortable and smooth at 60-70 m.p.h. It mustn't be either too soft or too hard a ride. The 480 stops very well and accelerates neatly. It doesn't make you nervous. It does all the things right that I look for- I think the 480 is a delightful little car."

Off the race track, Derek Bell usually drives a selection of Porsches - he doesn't have a saloon car but thinks the Volvo Turbo Estate would be a fun car for the family. In a recent "Showroom Stock" race in the US, he encountered a pair of 760 Turbos competing in a 24-hour race against Porsches. "They were very impressive and kept on going throughout the race. Both Volvos went like lunatics!" he exclaimed.

Racing drivers seem to have the ability to extract from any car far more than most of us -even from a vehicle we think we know inside out.

Are racing drivers born or made? "Born", says Derek Bell with conviction. "It may seem we're giving a car a thrashing but in reality drivers like myself are probably being far more gentle than most road users. We're often engaged to take people round race tracks in their own cars and they are amazed at what it is capable of doing. Either you've got that ability or you haven't. Surprisingly few have. You may see a lot of fast drivers on the road - but they're not necessarily good.

"Most people don't have either the knowledge or confidence - they never drive to their limits as do those of us earning a living by it. I believe a lot of people think they are better than they are. The car will take anything - the limitations are the driver and how far he can go safely. But a good car will give you feedback -tell you what it does and doesn't like. This new Volvo 480 does just that."

Derek Bell enjoys his "hospitality" days out with companies on the race track. He is certain that at the end of the day, most motorists end up driving substantially better than when they arrived. "They gain some knowledge, have fun and, hopefully, drive more safely. Most people just don't believe how smooth their own car can be at high speeds."

Inevitably he admits to getting frustrated with general road users - particularly those who form a slow moving queue unaware of the needs of others. He particularly likes the German style of driving - fast but observant on motorways.

As a driver, Derek Bell is internationally rated as a champion. But what sort of passenger does he make? "I think I'm pretty good. I'm sure it must be a bit unnerving to have me in the car. I'm very calm and don't show any impatience, although I get edgy with those that want to overtake, then get their timing all wrong. General road users don't look far enough ahead. Racing drivers see much further up the road, they are more observant and anticipate better. We have to be-on the track at high speed you constantly need to be looking out for other cars and debris on the road.

"You need good reactions, it's when the adrenalin is pumping that you'll anticipate something going wrong. When anyone drives on the road, even professionals, the adrenalin isn't going so there's never total attention-that's when accidents happen.

"In a race I'm very calm, my heartbeat hardly varies, but on the road, exposed to the same situations as everyone else -a child stepping off the kerb, a dog dashing into the road - my heart will go like mad."

Can he define what sets the racing driver apart from the rest of us? "No. There's something, but I don't know what-there's no typical driver, we all have different temperaments."

Listening to Derek Bell, he appears to be very tolerant and considerate of ordinary mortals on the road, he's relaxed and quietly sure of his own ability. How does he feel before, and after, a race? "Most racing drivers become very quiet - some, particularly in Formula 1, isolate themselves completely. I may get a bit touchy before a big race -particularly if someone does something stupid-but I try to bite my tongue. During the race itself the competition is exciting, it's exhilarating-the thrill of the chase, or being chased. Le Mans is physically and mentally draining - I just slump, it can take 2 or 3 days to adjust. There's not the same sort of anti-climax as after a shorter race."

Derek Bell has been racing cars now for 21 years - recently gaining for the 2nd time in a row, the sports car world championship. Derek Bell is obviously very much a man in his prime.

