

A~S O C



Newsletter ~ ~ 3

Greetings,

Having read this before printing it, which makes a change, I have decided it is a "sorry" Newsletter, but you will have to read on to find out why. Are you sure you are up to it?

I have been wondering if I should change the salutation now we actually have paid-up Members but since the membership year starts on 1st January, 1989, I have put off the decision until next month! A kind of New Year Revolution...Sorry! But seriously, everyone concerned on this, the organising side of the Club, is delighted by the response we are getting. We are growing all the time. I wonder if I can describe the way it feels to be at the centre of things at this stage; you can guess I'm going to try!

I went to the Orchard on the afternoon of Thursday, 10th November to deliver the Newsletters, hot off the photo-copier, for inclusion in the mailing shot being sent out that day by A-S. I also had some late additions to the address list. Here I offer my apologies to the two people who each received two large envelopes due to a hiccup in the system. Sorry!

I was assured that the whole stack would be sent off that afternoon by first class post and I thought we might get some reaction the following week. Oh, how wrong I was; at about 7.03 on Saturday five well-filled envelopes landed on our hall carpet and each was found to contain a completed application form and a lovely cheque! The first one opened was from Mr Newton of Bristol. And did he become Member No 1? No, because we cheated! Sorry! John Cox had started it all and we felt he had to be Number One. (Frank Stinchcombe had actually paid up first but we twisted his arm.) Due to a quirk of computer talk, we had set up a three-figure numbering system, 001, 002 etc (some computers sort 19 before 9 because 1 is less than 9 but 019 comes after 009 - oh, forget it!) Anyway we thought, having warped minds, that Major Trevelyan just had to have membership no:007...and so he has. And he doesn't mind, much. But isn't it a blow to find, at the end of the day, cheating doesn't pay. We deprived Frank of No.1 and decided to miss out No.13 in case someone was superstitious but then Dilys tells us she and Frank wouldn't have minded No.13 at all since it has been a lucky number for them, they were married on 13th November several years ago, and then there are the thirteen grand-children. Or did I get that wrong? Sorry!

What I started out to say was that Saturday, 12th November was a date we will remember. Since then every post has brought more application forms and more enquiries, the latter boosted by the Show and again by the advert.

In MMM., so your Secretary & I have found a whole new way of life. What DID we do before ASOC happened? I vaguely remember home-brewing and Rita thinks she dabbled in watercolours, but not any more. However, by the time she had responded to Member number 50 (Mr & Mrs G T Willis of Great Malvern) we felt we probably had a Club. From then on telephone calls from friends and relations enquiring if we were still alive, were rather a nuisance since we had been expecting a call from John, or Frank or Charles...Sorry, relatives and ex-friends!

As at 30th November we had 73 Members who had already paid their 1989 subscription (which is more than a lot of clubs could say) and we also had a further 90 or so enquiries in process. Every day we get a few more completed application forms and even more enquiries so if, as I said in the first Newsletter, we had "GO for Launch" in October, we had "Ignition" in November with the despatch of details and now, in December, we certainly have "Lift-off". Not a Hold or a Technical Hitch anywhere. Well, none we are going to tell you about! So, congratulations all round and now with the Club going into orbit I promise to drop the Space-speak!

Your Committee met at Willersey on 29th November, got through a lot of business and stirred up so much more we decided we must call another meeting before Christmas. Since the First National Rally and the associated AGM is looming ever larger we decided to use our mobility and meet at the Cotswold Caravan Park, walk the site and sort out details on the spot. The item that threatens to take up a lot of time is the Constitution and Rules. We feel we should work our way through them, amending or adding as we go so that a revised copy can be sent to you before the AGM. If we have your comments prior to the meeting, even a brief "OK by me", it could save an awful lot of time later. Objections and suggestions made by letter would also smooth progress. At the moment we have no firm programme for the weekend but it looks as though the time available for the business part is going to be restricted to four hours or so. Makes you shudder, doesn't it! I would like to think we can get agreement on the Rules and elect Officers and a full Committee in 30 minutes but then, I'm a born optimist.

I am also a compulsive gun-jumper, if you know what I mean. Last month I said we are not a profit-making outfit; the Committee wanted to know who said so, apart from me? Sorry! It's your decision - do we set out to make a profit and if so, what do we do with it. Thoughts on the matter, please but don't lose any sleep over it. I also said quite a bit about "satellite groups" and got some response. Again, this is a fundamental matter that should be put to all Members for a decision. Sorry!

Please don't get the impression I have been set upon by furious Committee members and beaten about the head, it wasn't like that at all; I just don't sit down much now. Sorry! Actually, I heard other points of view and was persuaded that while we are working hard to get the Club to grow, to start hacking off little bits was not helpful and could prove fatal. What you decide should be done next year or thereafter is another matter that could well be discussed over a coffee or tomato juice in the lounge at the Cotswold C.P. - 31st March to 2nd April.

So, to progress from the past to the present and even to get up to date, eventually. Last month I promised to use contributions when there was less activity to report. This month I can let you have two items by A-S, one of which is also a report from the Earls Court Show (remember, this is where you read the latest news, soonest! Reserve your copies now! Only 10 00 per annum, post free to be read in the comfort of your home!! Sorry!) Since I know you all get bored stiff over the long holiday, this extended edition also includes a light item from a potential Member, Mr. Caldwell of Kirkcaldy. I enjoyed it. Over to Jim:-

"We had a bit of trouble with ferries this year!

Having decided to spend most of the month of May touring in Ireland, we booked to sail with P. & O. from Cairnryan on Monday 2nd May - but the crews at Cairnryan joined the seamen's strike on Saturday 20th April; our travel agent immediately got us a booking to travel by Sealink from Stranraer on the Monday morning; we drove over on Sunday 1st May, only to discover that by the time we arrived, Sealink crews had also joined the strike! So, after spending a couple of days at Portpatrick waiting to see if sailings would restart - and watching fishing boats reaping a rich reward taking stranded travellers back to Ireland - but with no sign of anything happening on the strike front, we set off and toured in East Anglia instead! It was an area we had not previously visited.

Ah, but we're not finished with ferries yet!

We had arranged to take two friends over to the Outer Hebrides in early June, to tour from Barra in the south, to the Butt of Lewis in the north, then return to the mainland from Stornaway to Ullapool. Our first sailing was to be from Oban to Castlebay on the Island of Barra, on Monday 6th June. We arrived in Oban in good time for the ferry and were about to settle down to a quiet lunch, parked on the pier, when we discovered that the hoist on the ferry was faulty and that we had to go on to Mallaig from where a special sailing on another ferry would be made in the evening.

Perhaps I should explain: The piers at Oban and Ullapool and on all the Outer Islands except Barra have RORO facilities, but at Castlebay on Barra offloading is by hoist. Cars, vans, etc. are driven onto a section of the deck which is then raised to the height of the pier deck and the vehicles drive off; the reverse procedure is used for loading. So, having driven about 90 miles to Oban, we now had another 90 miles to drive to Mallaig before sailing to Barra; we got to Barra about midnight. Our friends had booked B & B in advance, so 'phoned from Mallaig to explain they would be late in arriving; although the house was some little way out of the village, we had no trouble finding it in the dark, so many lights had been left on it stood out like a beacon.

Wait for it, that's still not all!

We had only intended spending two days on Barra and sailing on to Lochboisdale in South Uist when the ferry came in on Wednesday evening. It duly arrived so we assumed all was well - but there seemed to be nothing happening at the pier head after the ferry had docked; the hoist had jammed again!! The Captain eventually decided that he would sail on to Lochboisdale, clear the decks by getting all vehicles off by the ramp; fix the hoist, and come back to Castlebay at 0600 hours on Thursday morning! Accommodation was found for stranded motorists and our friends were picked up and taken back to their digs for the night, while we slept where we were on the pier - one advantage of a motorcaravan.

On our last morning on the Islands the A.A. Road report on BBC Radio Scotland advised that a Wallaby had escaped from Edinburgh Zoo and cautioned drivers in Edinburgh to be on the look-out; reports on Air and Rail services followed, then the studio announcer advised the Ferry Companies reported no problems this morning, then he added "But just wait 'till that Wallaby gets to Oban" - he must have had experience of the Outer Island ferries!

During our twelve days on the Islands, we had only one slight shower of rain - and we never saw a midge!

J. Caldwell."

Dare I say, we love the West Highlands in late May, early June. It may not be hot, but it is often very pleasantly warm and the long hours of daylight have to be seen to be believed. Our first trips, in a hired Commer motor caravan, were to that part of the world:- Bute, Oban, Fort William, Mallaig and what used to be known as Sutherland. Absolutely super.

Back to earth and a very serious report from A-S Ltd:-

"EARLS COURT CARAVAN SHOW.

As usual, the Auto-Sleeper Stand at the Caravan Show was most prestigious and praised by the Organisers for the colour co-ordination and the fluted muslin ceiling.

The ambience that the Stand created undoubtedly helped to show the vehicles to their best possible advantage and resulted in a record value of orders being taken. The total sum was over 2.3 million.

We also achieved the ultimate accolade in that two of our new vehicles announced at the Show, came First and Third in the Caravan Industry Motor Caravan Awards. Overall winner was the Talbot Talisman Grand Luxe, which was closely followed in Third place by the Talbot Rhapsody.

The range of vehicles displayed on our Stand was the Talisman GL, Rambler, Rhapsody, Legend, Flair, Frisky, Rimini, Rapport, Trooper and Trident.

Thanks to the support of existing and new owners, our Dealers were able to sell more vehicles than any of our competitors thus, yet again, confirming our belief that we are the leading manufacturer of quality motor caravans.

There was an exceedingly good response to the display for the Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club and not only were many application forms taken by existing owners, but first-time purchasers of Auto-Sleepers were also encouraged to join.

All in all, an extremely successful Exhibition for both Auto-Sleepers and, equally important, the Owners' Club.

A.T."

Which I feel makes jolly good reading. It does, at least, confirm our wisdom in making the choice we did when we decided to buy an Auto-Sleeper! It might even help the second-hand value...

Right from the start of things, and I mean from the time John's letter appeared in Motorcaravan Motorhome Monthly, letters have come in with suggestions and questions and we - I - have done nothing about them. This has been a worry to me, at the very least because it was impolite but possibly more because the Club is only in existence to give - not just offer - assistance. In self-defence I must state that straight-forward queries such as requests for wiring diagrams, sources of touch-up paint or even polyester resin for body repairs were passed to Willersey and received immediate attention. There are others which seemed simple but have proved to be not only complicated but of very great general interest to Members. For example, Mrs Mary Colling said she was finding it very hard to get answers to even the most basic queries, "for instance I have been given four different suggestions for the correct tyre pressure to run my VW on!" Simple? Don't you believe it! For a start you can interpret "correct" in at least four different ways:-

- 1) Giving the most comfortable ride.
- 2) Safest, i.e., giving best road-holding.
- 3) Giving best mileage.
- 4) Conforming to legal requirements.

Hands up those who knew that motor caravans are Light Commercial Vehicles and therefore get involved in a whole lot of legal definitions which do not apply to Private Cars? It opens up a whole new can of worms, involving make of tyre, ply rating and load, etc. Having a fairly technical background and an enquiring mind I am getting stuck into this one. Further news will follow but please don't hold your breath. In the interim, please drive safely, Mary, and rest assured, you are not a dreadful worrier! Well, if you are, it's not without cause. On the second point you raise, I'm going to do something uncharacteristic and stick my neck out: spoilers come and spoilers go but when you drive something with the aerodynamic properties of a breeze block and seldom exceed 70 mph., ask yourself how much fuel you would have to save to recover the cost of the spoiler (and fitting). But they do look nice, don't they, especially if you like that sort of thing!

A lot of people have suggested a visit to the factory. This is being arranged but, for a whole lot of reasons, is not likely to take place until after your summer holiday, possibly in September. It will not be forgotten and further details will be given from time to time. Since parking space in the Orchard is almost non-existent it is thought that a bus could be laid on from some nearby site.

Group touring overseas has been suggested by several people and I am glad to be able to report that John has found a way to organise this, he hopes. He is going to look further into the whole thing and let us know.

Mrs Lillian Forbes of Bridge of Don requests an article on quick & interesting meals and the adaptation of certain household equipment to the needs of living in a small space. Help!

"FROM THE FACTORY:

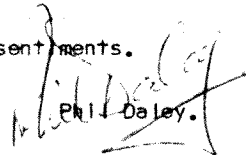
This will be a regular feature in the A.S.O.C. Newsletter where, as well as general information, we will be keeping you up to date with all of the latest modifications and tips on how to keep your Auto-Sleeper in top condition.

The factory continues to operate at maximum output with all 1989 models in full production. Despite what most people believe, we at Auto-Sleepers do not have quiet and busy times, production is maintained at the same level throughout the year. Many of you who have visited the factory will have noticed that we have a young, enthusiastic workforce with many employees joining us on recommendation of family and friends, a fact borne out by us having six sets of brothers, three fathers and sons, and countless cousins and uncles. We have factory skittle and cricket teams, the latter being more enthusiastic than talented. Many of the workforce took advantage of the coach we ran to the Caravan Show and came back well pleased with the way our vans were finished and presented, and of course everyone gave the opposition a thorough examination.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year from everyone at Auto-Sleepers.

N.J."

Your Committee would like to echo Neville's sentiments.



Phil Daley.

Just one last item. As mentioned last month, you should drain your water heater. The method suggested certainly works with the CX1000, but not, apparently, with some other models. Instructions are now put in your Van Pack, and I strongly advise draining, as the first week we owned our vehicle the water heater froze, and it was messy.

December 1988.