

Auto-sleeper Owners' Club.

NEWSLETTER



4

Greetings,

I am beginning to wonder if we realise just how lucky we are to be Auto-Sleeper Owners. Lest you get the impression I'm becoming an advertising copy-writer for A-S I had better explain:

Shortly before Christmas I went down to the Orchard to collect some items for the Newsletter. I took the opportunity to ask what tyres were fitted as original equipment on the various base vehicles, needing this in order to go back to the tyre manufacturers for their recommendations regarding pressures, as promised in the last Newsletter. "Oh!" said Charles, "No need for you to bother with that, we are already well into a programme of work on that subject, involving the weighing, front and rear, of completed conversions and then calculating the advised tyre pressures." It will take a little time to do but then we will each have the basic information, to amend to suit our own method of loading the 'van. Just see how hard we work to make you stop worrying, Mary! But you really must not have spoilers fitted just because you want to race HGVs up and down the Motorways. The very idea.

"FACTORY NEWS, by Charles Trevelyan.

Firstly may I begin by wishing you all a very Happy Christmas albeit somewhat late, and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Initially I had reservations about being able to tell you of our factory news each month since I felt that there would be some months when little had happened and thus some rather understandable waffle would fill that allocated space! However, you will be pleased to know that during the past month we have had several notable events about one of which I would like to tell you. We had a truly excellent Christmas party at the Dormy House Hotel and we danced well into the early hours amidst flashing lights, deafening music and a ready supply of Anadin. It really was the greatest of fun and without doubt, the most significant aspect of the evening was that we collected the sum of £506 for our official Company charity, The Cancer Research Fund. This, I may add, does not suggest that we are overpaid, simply that we are generous in the extreme. None of the tickets from my table were drawn from the raffle by myself (except, as misfortune would have it, one of my own tickets) and it was suggested by some that I had failed to put our tickets into the raffle drum in the first place. However, other than this the prizes were well distributed and ranged from £50 cash to a jeroboam of Moët et Chandon champagne, most kindly donated by our Sales Manager, Tony Johnson, who was unable to be with us that evening since, lucky soul, he was in Australia!

The New Year has seen us continuing a series of Dealer Workshop Familiarisation courses. These courses are designed solely for Dealer workshop

staff and cover all aspects of Auto-Sleeper construction and particularly the retro-fitting of equipment such as Hot-Boxes and second batteries. These courses have proved to be most successful and each of those attending leaves us with a comprehensive handout with precis and diagram together with a signed certificate confirming their attendance on the course. We are pleased to report that these courses have proved to be enormously successful and but one of the many aspects of the courses is the showing of the video entitled "The Making of an Auto-Sleeper". This video lasts approximately 25 minutes, covers all aspects of the production of Auto-Sleepers and will be shown at our Inaugural Meeting on 1st April.

We have several other exciting plans a-foot which we will tell you about in our next contribution. Last but not least, I am pleased to tell you that we now have our own Receptionist who very much looks forward to meeting you should you be visiting us at Willersey. Not only did she type this rambling contribution but her father has ordered a Legend GL which leads me to believe that something is seriously wrong. With again our good wishes from all at Auto-Sleepers and may you have many happy days camping throughout the coming year." (Lisa not only very much looks forward, she very much looks pretty, sitting there behind her typewriter. Ed.)

I was granted the privilege of a conducted tour of the new training facility mentioned by Charles. The lecture room is fitted out with all the electrical (240V and 12V), gas and water appliances, very much as they would be in a completed coachbuilt, all wired in, plumbed and working. The whole circuit is there, from alternator, rectifier, vehicle battery, diodes, second battery, mains hook-up, battery charger, etc. I was most impressed by the whole layout and the thought given to detail. For example, the 'fridge will not operate on the 12 volt supply unless the "ignition switch" is ON. The Vaillant water heater has all it's inner workings exposed to make adjustment easy. There is also a slide projector to show details of equipment in situ, how the wiring for a second battery should look, etc. I delayed my lunch considerably through beginning to watch the video, "The Making of an Auto-Sleeper" and just had to stay to the end. It is certainly one of the best of it's type I've seen, and I am sure you will enjoy seeing it at the National Rally. (I think you may even be able to buy a copy, VHS only.)

The First National Rally is getting organised. The ground work has been done. We have been allocated a field with 105 pitches, all with hard standing and electricity. Three Dealers are interested in joining us to display their wares; there may be a strong VW presence; A-S will send, quite apart from the display of models you would expect to see, some experts on all things mechanical and electrical (with tool kits) so that that annoying little problem you have had for months can be cured on the spot; they also

promise to bring a whole box full of goodies in the way of out-of-date and superseded fittings, fixtures and general bolt-on, screw-in gismos that you just can't find in the Dealers stores any longer. Bring a list and a cheque book! The 105 pitches are reserved for Club members on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 31st March, 1st & 2nd April. There should be about the same number available in a second field but if the number of those wishing to attend gets to over 200 - and it begins to look as though it may - we will have to make use of overflow accommodation at other sites nearby. I am not going to talk about those contingency plans until we have a much better idea of numbers. We are also doing our utmost to make sure pet-owners can come. More news soon.

The site is the Cotswold Caravan Park (now Cotswold Hoburne), Broadway Lane, South Cerney, Cirencester, Glos. (Tel:0285 860216). Club pitches will be available from early afternoon on Friday to 6pm on Sunday, involving a two-night charge of £7 per van, (£3.50 per night) including electric hook-up, free hot showers, use of indoor swimming pool and all the other site facilities, including temporary membership of their club so that you can use the bar, PLUS a free buffet lunch by courtesy of Auto-Sleepers Limited on Saturday. More details to follow but a brief outline of the programme looks like this:-

Arrival Friday afternoon/evening or Saturday morning, get set up on your pitch, view the facilities and meet your acting Committee who will be found where you would expect to find them.

Saturday lunch-time - meet in the Lakeside Club Bar Lounge after your swim. Move into the Lakeside Lounge at about 12 - 12.30 (The buffet will be served there between 12.30 and 1.30). The staff will clear the buffet before the AGM starts at 2.00 prompt. We have the use of the Lakeside Lounge until 5 pm so, in the unlikely event of there being any incomplete business, the new Committee will deal with it. A rough idea (mine, NOT official) of the agenda for the AGM would be something along these lines:-

Official welcome from the Chairman, introduction to the acting Committee and a summary of progress, election of Officers and Committee, reading and approval of the draft Constitution and Rules followed by Any Other Business. As I said in an earlier letter, we should get through that little lot in thirty minutes! But, to be serious for a moment, I know that this meeting is important to all Members and to the future of the Club. I hope we can smooth the way to a satisfactory outcome by giving you notice of the things to be discussed, such as the Constitution & Rules (being revised by the Committee at the moment) so that you can come prepared with your ideas - or write in to the Secretary earlier. If you have already written, thank you, your comments are before the Committee.

After the AGM your time is your own but I understand we will find our evening enlivened by the annual reunion dance of the St. Helena Association

which is taking place in the Lakeside Lounge from 7pm 'til late, as they say! Steel band and all. Should be fun. "E" field is some way from the Lakeside Lounge...

On Sunday morning we expect to be served coffee on the terrace, (if wet, in the lounge) round the fabulous Flag Pole.

Since this site is open from Easter to October there is no reason why anyone wishing to do so should not get there earlier and/or leave later, making their own booking for the extra nights direct with Hoburne (Normal rate £4.25 per night until 22nd May) but CLUB PITCHES at the special rate will only be available from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening. Equally, anyone pressed for time can book just one night through the Club and anyone staying elsewhere overnight can park for the duration of their attendance at the buffet/AGM either in the car parking area or in a part of the site not fully equipped for tourers but please let us know beforehand - if we know ten vans are coming for the daylight hours only, we can fix it with the Site Director; if 20 vans are coming for the day only, we may have to make other arrangements; if 20 vans arrive without warning we may have a problem and, more important, some unhappy Members!

Summary: You will receive a form from the Secretary asking for details of your requirements for Nights, Nosh & Natter. Return it soonest and all, hopefully, will be well!

What do YOU expect to get out of the Club? After all, the committee has asked you to put in £10 of your hard-to-come-by so there must be some return. One of our Members, who had better remain nameless for the present, works for the Prudential Assurance Company and he asked if other Members were aware that the Pru had a favourable method of calculating insurance premiums for Motor Caravans. No, I said. If they were like me they hadn't given the Pru a thought along those lines but perhaps they should. Being thoroughly sneaky and exercising Editor's privilege (droits d'editeur?), I telephoned the local office and was told I could save almost £40 a year by insuring the 'van with them rather than with my present insurers. So, subject to a satisfactory proposal, I have paid £10 subscription and saved £40. Can't be bad. Do I have to suggest a course of action to those who are not already with the Pru? Please don't rush in because I haven't yet negotiated my commission!

I think only one other Member, Mrs B. Lynne Lewis, has mentioned insurance and she suggested contacting MCIA of St. Neots; perhaps the Pru is even better? Lynne is another VHT enthusiast, reporting an overall average of 36 mpg on the first 10,000 miles with their turbo-diesel "driven on roads as diverse as continental motorways and Welsh valleys". She would like to

know if anyone has found a really good use for the attractive but impractical roofrack, too small for picnic chairs; any firsthand experience of awnings for VHTs, good or bad, would be welcome. Is there a case to be made for the compilation of a list of Members, Name, Address, Telephone No. and Model owned for distribution to all Members to facilitate correspondence on such topics? In the meantime your comments will be relayed as quickly as possible. May I be forgiven for taking so long to get this into the Newsletter. I must try harder.

Do YOU think all Members who have paid their 1989 subscription should be awarded the title "Founder Member" or should there be some other criterion? That is the sort of thing that takes up a lot of your Committee's time after lunch at the Little Chef in Cirencester. I must confess to being unworried about that particular item but I can see that in years to come some of us would like to look back and say, "I was a Founder Member of the Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club, and look at it now!"

For the record, on 31st December, 1988, 120 Owners had signed up and paid up. I feel proud to have been associated with that little fact which will certainly never get into the Guinness Book of Records but looks like a pretty firm foundation on which heaven knows what may grow. One fascinating thing about the Club is the way it grows, from day to day. Ever since the big Mallshot in November we have had something like three new Members every day, post permitting, and three, four or five enquiries. It just keeps on growing. Back in September several of us said to John Cox, "Do you know just what you have started?" and, of course, none of us knew but I think John had set his sights on a four-figure membership even then. I must ask him one day.

Which raises a point: do we go on recruiting Members for ever or do we set a limit on numbers? My own view is that the more we have the better it must be for all of us. At the very least it should keep costs down but apart from that we should be able to do so much more for ourselves when we have a large number of members. Already we have such a wide range of specialist interests within the Membership that we can only find one deeply involved with stationary steam engines, one with building and flying radio controlled model aircraft, one with vintage motorcycles, two with inland waterways and so on, but as we get to know one another better and swap notes all sorts of contacts will grow. This is by way of being a plug for the questionnaire - almost everyone has filled one in - because it IS helpful, not only to the organisers but, given time, to you as well. We have already had one little success in assisting contact: Duncan and Jean who live on Deeside asked if

we had heard from Fred and Freda, also A-S owners, who they had met on a camp site in Saumur four years ago. Since then we have been able to put them in touch. I knew it would work. I have also had the following contribution from Duncan:

"Seven years ago in March I was made redundant so, instead of being miserable about it, Jean and I decided to drop out for two months. Jean had eight weeks leave of absence from her job.

We went to France and Italy, stopping where we fancied and for as long as we felt like. It was a great experience and unforgettable, something we would encourage other people to do. Although we didn't have a television we didn't get bored with one another, life was so slow and easy-going.

Whilst we were away we were phoning home from time to time and about six weeks into our adventure I had been offered another job which I'm still doing. But we are looking forward to the next redundancy as an excuse to drop out once again!" There speaks a man after my own heart; it is fun.

Did you think I was joking when I said we should have a French Section in 1991? M. & Mme. Touffet of Nogent-le-Rotrou did not - at least they have asked for information about the Club so, if we can find some way to involve them in our activities, perhaps they will become our first French members. I do hope so.

If you are going to France or even further afield you may be interested in details of the BBC World Service, published monthly in London Calling. Write to "London Calling", PO Box 76, Bush House, Strand, London WC2B 4PH. Address the letter to Rosemarie Reid, and ask for a free copy & subscription form. They have also been known to send a photocopied list of programmes for a specific month, if this is all that is required.

I have a feeling Neville was a little under the weather on New Year's Day but then, after such a party, who wouldn't be!

"FROM THE FACTORY.

On returning from our Christmas break everyone seems to be on a fitness and slimming campaign, the visit of the tuck wagon each day laden with cakes and rolls does not seem to help matters.

Our annual Stocktake threw up one interesting fact: we hold in our stores 880 different parts. Each item is given a part number and daily stock levels are printed out by the stores computer. Despite all this wonderful technology we still had to manually count each item, with spot checks carried out by our less-than-understanding company auditors.

While Auto-Sleepers are a well known company in the Motor Caravan Industry, most people who live in Willersey know very little about us, they just know us as the 'Dormobile' factory at the bottom of the village. Well, things are about to change and by the time you read this Newsletter we will have been invaded by the thirty-five members of the local Women's Institute, who we hope will leave a little more knowledgeable about 'Dormobiles' and especially Auto-Sleepers Limited!"

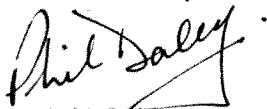
I have mentioned before Frank's connection with the Post Office but you won't know that he practically runs a large part of Gloucestershire single handed. Being Chairman of the District Council forms only part of this, other activities are legion. For instance, you will know how the EEC try to reduce the Beef & Butter Mountains each winter by offering it, free, to County Councils, neatly packed. Most counties reject the offer on the grounds of cost of storage and distribution, plus administration, but not Frank's Gloucestershire! They do seem prepared to help themselves in that part of the country and, better, to help others less able. So, due to voluntary effort, 20.9 tonnes of butter and 20.5 tonnes of tinned beef arrived at Birds Eye Walls and the Co-op in Gloucester in mid-October and was then distributed by the Co-op and volunteers to people on Income support or family credit. Let Frank take up the tale:

"The Auto-Sleeper Legend was used for the distribution of approximately eight tonnes of butter and the same amount of beef. The beef was in one-pound tins, each 'Customer' received one tin of beef and one pound of butter. The use of the Legend turned out to be a great success. The weather was not very warm but we were able to brew a cup of tea and have some heat on when required. Quite a lot of people took the Mickey by asking for hot dogs, ice cream, etc. Even one person thought we were collecting blood for the National Health Service! The handout of the free food was carried out over two weeks by Frank & Dilys Stinchcombe who own the Legend, very ably assisted by Ray & Ruby Brinkworth. The towns and villages covered were Kingswood, Wotton-under-Edge, Cam, Wickwar, Hillesley, Alderley, Charfield and Lynwell. It turned out to be a great success all round."

Comment from me would be superfluous.

With sincere good wishes for the New Year,

Your Editor,



Phil Daley.

January, 1989.