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AUTO SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB.



RETTBLZVEN 2

Greetings,

This is something new. In our constant search for perfection we leave no stone unturned. As the Club grows day by day, we find all sorts of things have to change to keep pace with developments. If only the content can keep up with the technology.

I am going to pass on some more information on Insurance since I have received two comments following my report last month on the potential saving I would make by changing to the Prudential. The first is from the man who has now found out how dangerous it can be to make a casual remark when writing to this address! :-

"Hi there all you fellow motorcaravaners! My name is Frank Lavercombo and for my sins, I am a District Manager for The Prudential Assurance Company in Exeter, and own a 1988 Legend. On applying to the Club for membership for Brenda and myself, (mustn't forget the hound, Gemma, a miniature dachs, as wide as she is long, like the two owners!!) I received the questionnaire, duly completed same and sent it back to the Sec with a note to the effect that our rates for motorcaravans were really good. You can see from the last news bulletin, that the Sec found it so. However, as a result of that note, the Sec asked if I would be prepared to write an article on Insurance as it was not understood by many, due probably in the main to jargon that Insurance people use. Honest, I will try to make it as simple as possible, without breaking into jargon. OK here goes:-

"First, if you accept that insurance companies rate motor vehicles, using many factors, into groups, normally these are 1 to 9. The lowest group rating, being cheapest, like a Mini, and the highest group being the dearest, like the high performance BMW, etc.

"With my company, motorcaravans (Auto-Sleepers and the majority of other makes, except Americans and high-value Europeans) are rated more or less like a Mini, (i.e. group 1) but charge a little more for the value, which is almost unnoticeable. For an example: If it is just HUSBAND AND WIFE driving, and you have the maximum No Claim Discount (normally 4 years without claim), you would probably qualify for a "Top-Drivers" policy (protected NCD, allowing 2 or 3 accidents, provided that you were not charged by the police with any offence, over a 2 to 3 year period, without the loss of No Claim Discount). This contract is for the over 30's with a clean licence, and free of conviction. It will give you one month's free continental cover (how much did you pay for your Green Card last year?) and a few other advantages, too many to go into in the space allocated. One that might appeal is, you receive a voucher to have your windows etched with your registration number. Only one disadvantage, you have to pay the first £50.00 of any claim other than for fire or theft, this is reduced to £25.00 for any

windscreen breakage. If the fault is not yours, you can recover this from the other person's Insurance. The price of this Insurance depends on where you live but for me living in rural Devon the cost would be £126.88 but if I lived in Plymouth it's slightly more. However, if I lived in London SW1 the premium would be £216.00. This again is based on Areas which are numbered 1 to 6, rural Devon being 1 and London SW1 being 6.

I do hope this has helped to clear up some of the mysteries of Motor Insurance and that you will be able to benefit from any savings. Naturally, it is up to you. If you feel like finding out then contact your local office, or if you prefer, contact me direct; my office number is 0392-50581 or 412427-412428. My staff and myself will be only too willing to deal with you via the post if necessary. My full address is M.J.Lavercombe, District Manager, The Prudential Assurance Co.Ltd., Prudential Buildings, Longbrook Street, Exeter, Devon. EX4 6AA. We are also fortunate to have a fax machine and this number is 0392-412429.

Happy Motorcaravanning,
Mike Lavercombe."

So there you have the good news. Now do you want to hear the bad? I must be seen to be impartial, it says here. One Member followed up the tip in the Newsletter and was very disappointed by the quote he got from the Pru. The circumstances were somewhat different from those mentioned by Frank Lavercombe in that there were three drivers, one elderly, but the quotation of just over 300.00 compared very unfavourably with the premium actually paid for an Avon policy arranged by the Motor Caravan Insurance Agency, of about 130.00. I guess the old saying, "Shop Around" is still as true as it ever was. Do I need to disclaim any and all responsibility for anything arising from a change in Insurers? Sounds thoroughly irresponsible to me but grown up people have to make their own decisions, don't they?

After that rather weighty stuff lets have something lighter. My little throw-away comment about Founder Members has been taken up by Gerry Woolley who feels just as I do about the dangers of splitting the membership by sticking one "title" on some and another on the rest. Actually our Committee Chairman solved our difficulties with a decision worthy of his military training; "WE are the Founder Members, we did it". I felt I could almost hear the continuation "so let's have no more of this time-wasting nonsense!", but I didn't and I'm sure he, being Charles, wouldn't have, anyway. So there it is, Founder Members, in alphabetical order, are:- John Cox, Rita & Phil Daley, Neville Jelfs, Frank and Dilys Stinchcombe and Charles Trevelyan. Problem solved with the minimum of schism. And stand to attention when a Founder Member speaks to you!! After that, it only remains to ask, "Any complaints?"

Should the register of names and addresses be made available to all Members? "Yes, as soon as possible," seems to be the majority decision. We hope to have a small stack of copies of the first list available at Cotswold.

IMPORTANT: IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO APPEAR ON THE REGISTER FOR CIRCULATION TO OTHER MEMBERS, PLEASE WRITE TO SAY SO!

Your wishes will be respected, obviously, but YOU must let us know what they are!!

Gerry Woolley makes some interesting comments in his letter dated 27th January, 1989. He is in favour of a register of Members, with the proviso mentioned above, and goes on to say, "Surely one of the main aims of the Club is to help and assist each other and to create a comradeship between all Members. It would be very reassuring if I had a problem on my vehicle, if I could look up the nearest Member to me with the same vehicle, to see if he had experienced the same problem, and if so, how did he overcome it. As it would appear we shall not be holding many rallies during the year, how do we keep in contact and help each other". (A list of rallies is enclosed).

We all know motorcaravanning has its ups and downs, usually rather funny in retrospect, but Harry Henthorne and friends seem to have had more of a laugh than most of us:-

"In 1988 we changed to a 1985 Clubman. The story behind the changeover is (now) quite a laugh although there were times when we would rather have cried. The previous van was obtained very, very cheaply as it was not in the best of conditions. It had started life as a recovery vehicle and the ramp etc., were still in position. To this had been added an aluminium body with the necessary van interior. With double glazed windows it was quite warm. First things first.

Having got the running gear sorted out, the interior was rebuilt. Mistake number one. The use of chipboard for the rear, C-shaped, bed is NOT recommended. More of this anon. A chapter of incidents ensued which were a nuisance and caused many returns home on the end of a tow-rope or on the back of a relay vehicle. First the radiator burst. Then the core-plug blew, about three times in all! The engine, being a V with the carburettor in the middle of the V, burned the petrol feed tube and caught fire. The oil pump packed up. Even the battery decided to give up the ghost when the whole thing overheated and stalled in the middle of rush-hour traffic.

Things then seemed to go well until we got to a weekend rally. On going to bed I rather 'flopped' onto the sleeping bag - and the bed flopped under

me (see mistake No 1). The screws had worked loose in the chipboard and fallen out at the wrong moment. A rebuild was indicated, this time using plywood. We thought that we were now set for a little while. But early in 1988 we were on our way to visit friends in Cornwall. As we arrived in Oakhampton the engine 'fell off'. The mounting bracket is held at each end by one HT bolt and one had sheared! Luckily we were in a traffic jam at the time and only about 50 yards from a helpful garage. A new bolt was inserted, the radiator which had been punctured by the fan was patched up, and we were able to continue.

But this was the last straw (but one). On the way home the oil pump started misbehaving (yet again) so we decided that 'the time had come'....

The hunt began for a replacement. We decided that we would go for a reasonably young second-hand van. But which? We had been to the Earl's Court show and liked the look of perhaps five or six. Some were too small, some too big, some too costly, some wrong layout - you know what we mean. We started the tour of the dealers. Several of the vans we saw 'would do, but...' so we carried on looking. An invitation then arrived from G. Wells & Sons of Rochester to visit their show weekend. Off we went on the Sunday to see a very good display of vans. In a very short time our choice narrowed down to two, the Clubman and another which lost out because the access from van to cab was a bit difficult if your back doesn't bend!

Agreement was reached, money changed hands and the following Saturday we collected the van. Back home to load up with all the necessary because on Sunday we were off to Scotland on holiday. A good test for the van!

Sunday morning, the van waiting, weather good, all four of us get on board, us and two cats. The van had, of course, to be thoroughly explored and all corners were duly sniffed. As we got under way we discovered that A-S had built better than they knew. The rests upon which the over-cab bed runs are purr-fect for travelling. The slit windows for that bed are also ideal to look out of if you don't want dogs or people to see you.

The holiday proved a success. The van contributed very much to that success as the driver could relax and not worry about what would go wrong next. There were only three minor causes for concern. The battery seemed to be the worse for wear (Wells changed it when it was mentioned) and the water had a nasty taste. This is getting better but there is still a residue. The third? Having changed from a van where 50 mph meant the inability to talk in the cab because of the noise and the rattle, we now find it a bit difficult to keep down to 30mph where we are supposed to. 70 mph is easily attained although we tend to keep to around 50-55 mph. In one trip on the motorway (which we usually try to avoid) we were passing a lorry which pulled into the centre lane without warning. We went into the offside lane and had to accelerate to get past. The speedometer then indicated 78 mph before we could get back and slow down again.

So far we have spent around thirty nights in the van and we still have another week on holiday in late October. We've been very happy with the change which was definitely for the better!"

I'm afraid the last paragraph gives the game away as far as I am concerned, but I enjoyed the story so much I wouldn't alter a thing, (except one date).

Mention of the motorway reminds me of a snippet I extracted from someone who spent several years policing the Midland Links Motorways and prefers to remain anonymous. I asked for pet hates or what heats up a police driver more than anything else, but the line he has taken is milder than I expected. He calls it "THE LEGAL SIDE", and I hope to get more contributions.

"My own pet hates to start with:-

MOTORWAY DRIVING.

There is no such thing as a fast lane. The legal speed limit of 70 mph can be maintained in all three lanes. Please keep to the nearside lane except when overtaking. It is possible to be prosecuted for driving without reasonable consideration for other road users if you remain in lanes two and three.

TAILGATING!

Remember the vast majority of motorway accidents are caused by travelling too fast, too close. No matter how frustrating and slow the vehicle in front might be, particularly after a long haul on the motorway, you may need the room. Once again, driving without reasonable consideration.

Now follow that, but not too close!

So, back to the rallies. John's object has been to arrange meets in all parts of the countryside, on a monthly basis, with the popular months having two, so that at least one will be somewhere near you. And this is where we start asking for your assistance. Up to now we seven have felt competent to get things established for all of us. We have now reached the stage where there are more than seven tasks and we are remembering the offers of help made long ago in some cases. Since then, circumstances may well have changes, so we are not writing to those who offered, but putting out a new call. What do we want? About six or seven volunteers to act as rally marshals at the Inaugural Rally. Nothing very complicated, but important to the smooth running of things. Between 12.00 and 20.00, on the Friday and during Saturday morning Members will be arriving and we want to make sure they are met by a marshal who will know which pitch they have been

allocated, where it is and how to get there. She/he will have a box of large envelopes with the NAME and PITCH No. scribbled on the outside and lots of important papers on the inside. If eight people could do one hour each, we would be grateful. There should be a bit of paper in the envelope this lot arrived in, especially provided for volunteering.

We will also be looking for two or three people to act as Stewards at the entrance to the lounge where the buffet will be held, to check tickets. A nice, guaranteed warm and dry job, not far from the bar. I might even be persuaded to remedy the dryness. Can't say fairer than that. If we can have some names please..

That was the easy bit. Now, John has worked hard at a job he didn't want and only agreed to do until the AGM. So we now want a RALLY OFFICER, please. Next, the RALLY OFFICER needs a RALLY SECRETARY, on to get right down to it, the Club Secretary needs a Rally Secretary to take some of the load. It is unlikely to be an arduous task, writing to caravan sites, drawing up rally programmes, making and confirming bookings, collecting fees and a little bit of book-keeping, but mainly, as I see it, working with the Rally Officer. Could it be a husband-and-wife team? An important job on which a lot depends. Go on, you could do it!

Do not forget either, that we have to form a Management Committee. Volunteers please.

In an effort to save time at the IGM we seven have spent a lot of time sorting out, vetting and generally tidying up the draft Constitution and Rules. (A copy herewith). If such things interest you, please peruse same and let us have the benefit of your considerations in writing before long so that your observations can be put before the meeting for discussion. In other words, I hope you will find the revised draft near enough correct so that we don't spend a lovely Saturday afternoon dotting i's and crossing t's. But, of course, if you feel strongly.....

We have run into other problems, too. We booked the site without reading the small print. Specifically, No Pets. Can't move the Site Director on this one. Ermin Farm, two miles or so away, east of the A 419, and Mayfield Park C.P., two miles North of Cirencester on A 435 (Cheltenham Road, Perrotts Brook, Cirencester. Glos. Tel: North Cerney (028583) 301) will take pets, and the big Caravan Club site, Cirencester Park, re-opens on 22nd March. It has 120 pitches but is for CC Members only, early bookings made through East Grinstead House. If you want assistance on this, ask and we'll see what we can do.

The catering staff at Cotswold can manage a buffet for 250 and that's a big number when you have five Members. It isn't big enough now, but A-S are working on it. The Lounge that seats 400 looked huge to the seven of us, but will prove to be cosy on the day! It is possible that some Members will wish to go shopping, leaving their companion to attend, see fair play and report back.

This month I am letting Neville have the last word:-

"FROM THE FACTORY.

According to the figures released by Volkswagon, Swindon, Auto-Sleepers sold more Volkswagon Motor Caravans than any of their competitors during 1988, with 38% of all VW Motorcaravans being Auto-Sleepers.

Our Globe-Trotting Sales Manager, Tony Johnson fresh from his Christmas holiday in Australia, reports that demand for new Auto-Sleepers is still very high, with dealers crying out for more stock. Tony will be back on his travels this month, representing our Company at the Scottish Motor Caravan Show which is at the Scottish Exhibition Centre, Glasgow, from February 8th to 12th Inc., then he travels south to the Birmingham Boat and Leisure Show at the N.E.C. from the 18th to 26th of February.

Our plans for the Inaugural Rally are going on strong. We have now organised for a large marquee to be erected, which will house a range of the latest new Auto-Sleepers, a spares and accessories shop, the ASOC regalia stand and facilities to view the Company video. Outside will be a selection of second-hand vehicles, whose supplying dealers will be in attendance to tempt you to buy both new and used Auto-Sleepers.

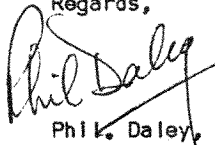
Also at the rally will be factory staff who will be on hand to give expert advice and help on your DIY requirements. Any customer requiring specialist parts which are not on our accessory stand but are in stock at the factory will be guaranteed delivery by Sunday lunchtime!

Finally, please note that the factory will be CLOSED for the week leading up to the rally, i.e. March 14th onwards, to re-open on Monday April 3rd.

(P.S. We will need another holiday to get over the week-end).

Neville Jelfs."

Regards,


Phil. Daley,
Editor.

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