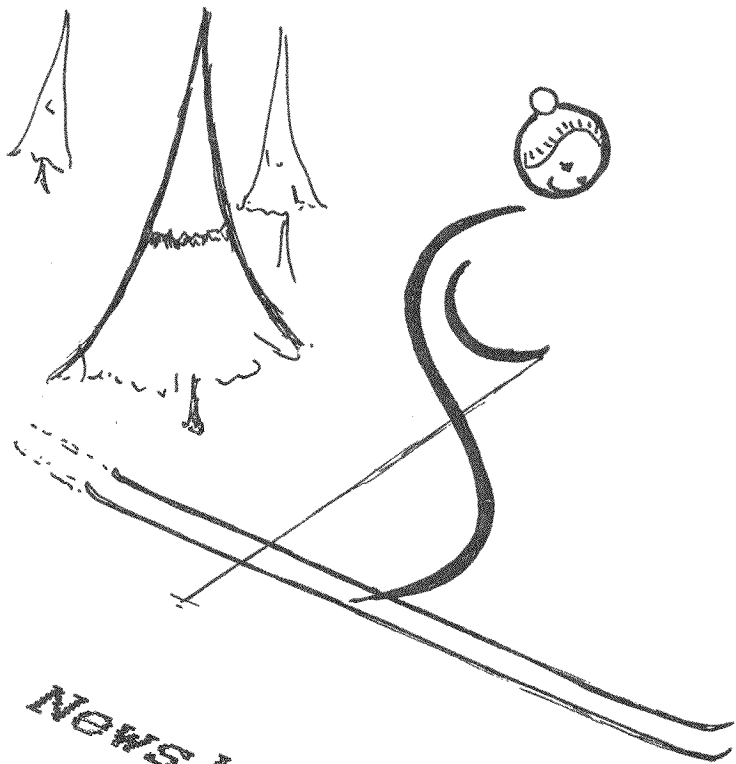


# *Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club*



*Newsletter No 16  
January 1990*

Greetings,

and a very Happy New Year to you!

As you can see, I am trying to improve the legibility of the Newsletter. In the past I have typed an A4 size page, using 12 characters per inch and had the page reduced to A5 size photographically by the Printer. This one has been produced using 17 cpi on an A5 sheet as the original. It results in fewer lines per page, so roughly the same number of words take up 15 pages instead of 11. More work for the Printer but if the result meets with your approval that's the way we'll do it. Until someone has a better idea!

The 1990 Rally Programme should have appeared in the December Newsletter but John Cox frightened the socks off us by proposing a rather large number of rallies with rather few marshals. So, the Committee asked him to prune it. He has and details are included this month. He has spread the rallies round the country pretty well, in the hope that every one will be within easy reach of thirty or so Members and will also appeal to a few others prepared to travel a distance to visit a favourite part of England (or Wales) or to have a first look. If that proves correct we should have between 30 and 50 'vans at each get-together which we feel is about the right number. I think a brief run round the venues would possibly be helpful so here goes:-

We start at Honeybourne, Worcs., in early April, perhaps too early for the best of the blossom but its a good situation, not too far for many of us and will provide an opportunity to air the vehicle. If you should consider combining this with a visit to the Orchard, please remember, its BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.

Two weeks later we have the National Rally at Billing Aquadrome near Northampton (20th-22nd April) and a lot more detailed information (and a booking slip) should be included with this Newsletter. The following weekend is the Brands Hatch Jamboree (27th-29th April) where we will have a Club section. We then go South-West to Exeter (4th-6th May). Those who find Exeter too far South have a site in the North a week later (11th-13th May) at Kirkhymoorside, ideally situated for the North Yorks Moors in Spring.

Then Swansea (18th- 20th May), as far West as we go this year. A fortnight later a weekend in the Cotswolds, near Wotton-under-Edge (1st-3rd June), followed by a mid-week rally at Trentham Gardens, just on the southern edge of the Potteries (11th-14th June). The Gardens should be marvelous and you'll have the Wedgewood Factory (guided tours) a mile or so away plus museums and other exhibitions in the Potteries. In my younger days the Ballroom at Trentham Gardens was quite something, I must find out what goes on there now for you dancing enthusiasts and let you know. Just a few miles away, near the

famed Alton Towers, is our weekend rally (15th-17th June) at Hale Hall, Cheadle so you can make a week of it & cut down on travelling! A day out at the Towers for the kids. (And Mum & Dad!)

We then squeeze one in at Bath on the following weekend (22nd-24th June), before the "Holiday Season" is upon us and we have to thin things out a bit. One in Essex, at Mersea Island (13th-15th July) about which I can say nothing, never having been there, so how about a write-up from a Member in the area? Quickly to Chester Southerly (20th-22nd July). What a city to explore; do the kids like a Zoo? - Chester Zoo is one of the best! Then a pause before diving down South to Moreton Glade, Dorset (17th-19th August). Across to Coberton in Cambridgeshire (31st August- 2nd September, which is NOT the Bank Holiday weekend), then way up North to the Wild Rose, Appleby-in-Westmorland (7th-9th Sept), a site enjoyed by many last year.

Don Amott has very kindly given us a free site (rally fee only) for the weekend of 14th-16th September at his Showground at Hilton, Derby (the Bass Museum in Burton, Tutbury Cut Crystal nearby, come early). The peace of the Shropshire countryside at Wem, (21st-23rd Sept) is followed by anything but peace at the Bath & West Show, Shepton Mallet (28th-30th Sept), once again a Club area in the midst of the huge gathering of motor caravans. So we slip into October and a quiet weekend at Curry Pools, near Bridgewater, Somerset (5th-7th Oct), recommended and marshalled by John & Brenda Slater. Jim Henwood & Company, who did so well for us at St Helens in the Park, (Wykeham, nr Scarborough) last year have secured another date, 19th-21st October, on the same site. I forgot to mention, they are running the one at Kirkby Moor, too. Can't be bad!

It may seem to you that the rallies are spaced out round the edge, so to speak, with none right in the middle. The idea is to get some new marshals to choose a central site and, if approved by the Rally Officer, fix a date and run a rally, with help from a committee member or experienced marshal, if help is requested.

Those are only the bare bones of the Club programme; John Cox would like to lay on an end-of-year "do" somewhere and is looking for ideas, John Normandale wants to repeat the Christmas Shopping Spree at Abbey Wood, (Nov 30th-Dec 2nd), Reg Rogers has had an enthusiastic response to his proposal for a Wagon Train Abroad, eight phone calls before Christmas, and we will arrange a place & time for a meeting of the Wagon Train at the National Rally. Watch this space!

It is just possible we may get our Certificate of Exemption from the Department of the Environment sometime in 1990, opening up all sorts of delightful prospects, if we can find volunteers to do the work involved...

"The following article is in response to my being "chatted up" by a charming gentleman over the phone one evening just before Christmas:-

Would you like an expenses-paid weekend in friendly surroundings during 1990?  
- really its an offer you can't refuse from the A-S O C.

Interested? - skip the next two lines and read on.

Not interested? - go back and read the previous lines again, you must at least be curious by now.

Your Club is looking for marshals to run your rallies and they want your help. Having been persuaded to marshal a rally last year, we can say its not arduous, its a great way to meet more Club members and it has an amusing side to it. Mind you, we did have two keen young helpers - our children aged 6 and 7 - and if we can do it with them around we are sure the rest of you can manage it! (even though it will be a bit more complex in future).

Last year much of the organising was kept in the control of the committee. This meant the marshal only had to turn up on The Day to collect the list of expected arrivals and book them in, answer their queries or direct people to those who could supply the answers. Some marshals obviously did more than this and when they did it was clear it was appreciated by all.

This year only the site and date will be the responsibility of the committee, the marshals will receive bookings and run the whole rally. This, in our opinion, makes marshaling a far more satisfying job and relieves our hard working committee of some of the burden which falls on them. In order to organise a rally it is advisable to visit the site well in advance (we were certainly made welcome when we did this at Hurley) to find out which part of the site will be used, where the facilities are, what other amenities are close by - shops, pubs, milk, papers, local attractions, etc. Ideally it would be very helpful to other members if any special problems (e.g. Toilet block "half-a-mile" away - difficult access for disabled, etc.) or features (e.g. boating, interesting walks, etc.) were to be made known in the Newsletter before the event and preferably before the final booking date. This early visit allows you to plan where you want to site your van for ease of booking in and to decide if you want to plan any other activities for the weekend. You are not obliged to organise activities but they do help to draw members together - even if it is only because they can't find the answer to a treasure hunt clue or they sit and natter after coffee.

To summarize what you as a marshal will need to do:

- a) Find a convenient rally and offer to marshal it - any committee member

will help you do this!

b) Visit the site if possible - as mentioned above.

c) Receive bookings.

d) Confirm expected numbers with site - usually about a week before the rally.

e) Arrive at site, book members in - collect any unpaid fees.

f) Provide information about what's on over the weekend.

g) Persuade other members to help organise coffee, raffle etc. (There are always willing helpers!)

h) Answer 101 questions, the first 100 are usually easy and you can always refer the odd awkward one to a committee member.

i) Settle site bill from fees received.

j) Take out own expenses for rally.

k) Hand over balance to Treasurer.

l) Sit back and enjoy chatting to members - yes, you do have time to do this.

We hope this will persuade some of you to offer to marshal a rally - its not difficult and it is enjoyable.

Heather & John Tidbury."

What a lovely lady Heather is. Not only did she agree to run the Bath, or to put it another way, did she and John agree to marshal the Club rally at Bath for and on behalf of the Club, AND to write the article I requested but she also delivered it, by hand on Saturday, 30th December, all the way from Radley, Oxon, because she knew I wanted to get it into the January Newsletter. Well, with all of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day stretching ahead of me, practically untouched, there was plenty of time to re-edit the 15 pages I had already sorted out and to add three more pages, because most items needed to be included NOW! The things we do for some people!

Still on the subject of rallies, a Press release has reached me from the Moray Firth Cavalcade (there's fame for you!) and since it could well be of interest to some members, here it is:-

"Auto Sleepers members often travel to special interest rallies such as vintage and steam shows to enjoy the atmosphere and look at the many exhibits, but there could be a new angle in 1990.

The Highland Autofest '90 takes place in the beautiful Scottish Highlands capital of Inverness between September 5th and 9th and promises something different. Owners of older motor caravans built before 1969 such as Bedford CA caravanettes, VW campers etc will be most welcome for Scotland's first gathering of pre-1969 Motor Caravans with awards for different classes and

long distance attendance.

But there will be much more to highland Autofest '90 with Tours on the "Whisky Trail" and the "Road to the Isles" followed by the weekend show with hundreds of vintage and classic cars and motor cycles plus lorries, fire engines, military vehicles, agricultural and steam engines, farm tractors and much more.

During two evenings there will be a Country & Western festival for entertainment.

Of course all owners of auto campers are welcome and not just the owners of the older models. Full details are now available from Highland Autofest '90, Unit 13, Alness, Ross-shire, IV17 0XS"

Now you know as much about it as I do. My first thought was, "I wonder if Aldo will still have his 1966 Commer Auto-Sleeper, now that he has joined the jet-set with his Turbo-Diesel Rambler! Would Harry-the-Minuteman Henthorne be setting out for Scotland with some of his vintage motor cycles?"

In the meantime, having asked the computer which Members were interested in "steam" and being presented with eleven names and numbers, I wondered if those Members would like to be put in touch with fellow enthusiasts? To give a lead, the following are interested in "Steam":-

- 54 Wally & Betty Deacon of Berkhamsted,
- 71 Graham & Sylvia White of Abertillery,
- 127 Brian & Dillis James of Leighton Buzzard,
- 256 Tony & Daphne Niles of Guernsey,
- 274 Peter Boreham of Cheltenham,
- 290 Peter & Sylvia Cook of South Harrow,
- 398 David & Petina Simner of Great Alne,
- 403 Sqd Ldr & Mrs Morris of Carterton,
- 426 Ken & Eileen Shakesheff of Bromyard,
- 490 Tony & Jill Malkin aforesaid,
- 506 Arthur & Margaret Fairburn of Chesterfield.

Over to you. Would You like to be contacted by other Members, either direct or via the Club? You will have to give your permission before your "particulars" are passed on to anyone else.

I have been suggesting we could have groups of about 60-70 Members, each with a Contact to whom enquiries could be addressed. A certain amount of candle-burning has produced some facts. If we move round the country clockwise, starting at the Thames or the bottom right-hand corner, we find we

have 56 Members in Kent, Surrey, both Sussexes and a little bit of South-east London, 57 in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire & Isle of Wight. If we call the first, "South-East Group", the second, "South Group" and go on clockwise, we get to "South-West Group", made up of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Avon with 57 Members. "West Group" could be Gloucestershire, all South Wales, the southern part of Herefordshire & Worcestershire with 57 Members. Problems start with a possible "North-West Group" which I feel is too big geographically because, to get the numbers somewhere near right, it would stretch from Welshpool to Grange-over-Sands. Too far and only 33 Members. Similarly, if the "North-East Group" stretches from Jim and Marion in Middlesborough to John & Barbara in Chesterfield its a long way and we have only 25 Members in the area, so far! Thoughts, please. If I add in those who live north of Grange-over-Sands and Middlesborough we have only a few more members and a very big area... Perhaps we should try it out and see what happens? Or, try smaller areas?

"East Group" would then run from the Humber south to the Thames and have 61 Members. That leaves "Central Group", made up of the southern parts of Staffs, Derbys, Notts, all West Midlands county, Warwicks and the northern part of Herefs & Worcs with 68 Members, and "South-Central Group" with 64 Members spread over Oxon, Herts, Bucks and Berks and the western parts of Greater London. It sounds horribly disjointed but like that but pencilled in on a map it begins to make some sort of sense.

If Rita & I were to be a focal point for "Central", I might have been tempted to ask you-know-who to do something similar for South-Central but I really can't risk any more suggestions of chatting up...

Since I am writing this in December, without being able to tell who will renew membership for another year I do not intend to produce anything other than rough drafts until March but I thought it would be of interest to you to know where we all lived in 1989!

Another suggestion is contained in a letter from Bolsover:-

"Dear Phil,

Thank you for your interesting Newsletter. With regard to contact between members perhaps the format used by our motor-cycle club will be of interest to you. They print a complete membership list of surnames only (it doesn't matter how many members are under one surname) with the town and phone numbers alongside, this list is then circulated annually. This gives us contact with members everywhere not just locally. Also the idea is to offer assistance and/or overnight stop in the course of our travels.

We enjoyed reading about Bruce Cunningham's travels and feel, as he does, that its a pity to restrict the magazine to A-S info only. Who knows, with enough interesting articles we may not have to buy the glossies at £1.40 a

time!

We have made a little adjustment to our Rambler. John has, with the aid of a fine saw-blade, cut a four and a half inch square out of the wood under the seat adjacent to the gas-bottle. With a little magnet catch to hold the flap in place we now have a very convenient access to the on/off tap without removing the cushions, etc.

After Christmas we are off to find the sunshine for a couple of months. Our travels will take us through France, Spain and eventually to Morocco so we shall certainly be looking out for A-S members en-route.

Happy New Year to you all,

Barbara & John Dyer. (468)"

Have you any thoughts on such a list of All members? I hope Gordon has noted the Mod for his records!

Soon after the letter from Alan Wheeler regarding roof-lights appeared in the Newsletter I had another from George Hawke on the same subject. It raised some points which I thought should be discussed with Auto-Sleepers before publication and it's just as well I did because the situation has changed considerably, making a large part of George's letter inapplicable - and the same applies to some of the comments I was about to make! I think the best thing to do is to reproduce the letter from the Company, dated 18th December -

"Dear Phil,

I notice that there has been correspondence from Owners' Club members regarding the failure of the earlier type domed Chantal roof light vents and furthermore that some members have expressed concern at the difficulties in obtaining spare covers.

We first became aware of this problem on the 18th September when we received a letter from a Club member stating that the plastic covers on his roof lights had become extremely brittle and had a tendency to crack. This was occurring on vehicles that were approximately three years old.

We immediately brought this to the notice of both the importers and manufacturers of the roof lights who reacted most promptly by re-manufacturing replacement roof light covers of the old type pattern. We now have received 25 of these covers and are therefore in a position to replace under extended warranty any roof light covers that may have prematurely deteriorated.

We feel that Chantal have reacted most quickly to this problem, not least by re-manufacturing parts that have hitherto been obsolete.

I trust this clarifies any doubts that members may have had.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

A C Trevelyan, Director."

Having done that, I am going to take the last paragraph of George's first letter, out of context but following on, and make some comments in the hope that they will be of interest and, perhaps, some help. He says,

"May I through the magazine suggest to A/S that A/S employ one or possibly two more men. This would not only give them cover against sickness etc it would enable them to put right the defects which occur. It would also enable them to fit Porta Pottis of the cassette type to older vans. From letters in various magazines I get the impression that many Manufacturers go to great lengths to help customers with problems. The A/S product is often praised - quite rightly but to date I have never seen a word written in praise of their after sales service - perhaps I have missed it.

Yours sincerely  
George Hawke."

Perhaps I am too closely involved to make an objective assessment of the sort of service the Company gives to owners so I won't try, but the important point is this - neither you nor I bought our vehicle from Auto-Sleepers Limited. We, if we bought a new one, placed an order with a Dealer who then obtained the vehicle and sold it to us. That was the Point of Sale and that is where the responsibility for after sales service lies. That is why the Company have about 24 Dealers. It probably costs them a bit more than employing two extra people and gives a better service to us. We don't expect to take our Talbot Expresses back to the factory in Italy, our VWs to Germany nor our video recorders to Japan; we go back to the supplier, who is responsible for the condition of the products he sells.

From Roger Slim of Loughborough:-

"It took a reminder from the Editor to make me realize I had done twenty eight modifications to our Auto-Sleeper, not including those done by the Willersey team on two occasions. Anything I have attempted has had a lot of deep thought and been accomplished slowly and carefully, without spoiling the looks either inside or out of a very attractive conversion. The Auto-Sleeper in question is a 1985 V.M. VH7 78 B.H.P., fondly known amongst family and friends as "Admiral" and subject to more love and attention from myself than our house - and wife (Carol) for that matter.

Right, time to stop waffling and get down to business. The best modification was the fitting of a cruise control. I chose the Econocruise unit simply because it was the only one available for D.I.Y. fitting in 1982. An absolute must for long motorway journeys, it enables you to concentrate on driving without watching the speed all the time. I have driven 400 miles non-stop using this device and arrived feeling as fresh as when I set out.

Next on the list comes the intermittent wipers. John Cox is quite correct

in Newsletter 15 on the fitment of this, but fails to point out it only applies to V.W.s with the blade type fuses, earlier models (up to 1986 approx) had the older style ceramic fuses and there is no wiring present, however the plastic "plug" is present in the switch. To convert these vans it is necessary to follow the wiring diagram in the Haynes Workshop Manual (No. 638), page 236. Note wiring colours may vary so take care. A plus point on having intermittent wipers is that upon operation of the screen washers the wipers automatically give three wipes of the screen. Finally on this subject I have replaced the standard intermittent wipe relay with a Dudoco Interval Chip relay, which gives a variable interval of between 2 and 45 seconds. No extra wiring is necessary, and it is available for most vehicles. Phone suppliers on 052-554019 for more details.

I was surprised to find no courtesy light switch on the front passenger door when we took delivery of the Admiral, but soon remedied this by drilling the necessary holes in the front door post (see driver's side for pattern), obtaining a switch from a scrapped V.W. Golf and running one wire from the rear of the new switch to the rear of the original switch and connecting it to that switch's wire with a Scotchlock. Not satisfied with that I then purchased a Linwood courtesy light delay (approx £4 from car D.I.Y. shops) and wired it into the rear of the driver's door switch. The instructions are easy to follow and it takes about five minutes to fit. The benefits however are well worthwhile as I can now place the key in the ignition and not everywhere else first. It also provides illumination on leaving the van, useful if parked in a dark driveway etc.

The next modification involved the conversion aspect of the Admiral. The drain tap for the water tank is situated on the pipe leading to the pump and is difficult to get at being on the far side of the tank. Whenever I came to drain the tank either the underside of the van was dripping wet or the drive was wet. Being of a comfort loving nature (Carol calls it laziness) I decided to remedy the problem. A trip to my local boat chandlery saw the purchase of a Transom Drain socket and Screw-in bung (approx £1). I then carefully drilled a hole in the side of the tank at the lowest point and within easy reach. In fact it is on the rear face by the nearside on the VHT. The tank was then dried around the hole with large quantities of paper towel and the socket fitted with plenty of mastic sealant. The result is an easy reach drain tap which does not protrude more than half an inch and can drain a full tank in 5 minutes. Please note: to drain the whole water system it may be necessary to use the original drain tap as well because of any non-return valves fitted in the water pipes.

Finally for now, it seems the simple and cheap solutions are always the hardest to think of. Carol wanted a mirror in the living area of the van. It had to be at the correct height, a certain size, and safe. First obtain a

mirror 9" x 6" from a glazier (£1), second make a frame for said article out of plastic tile edge surround (50p?), thirdly obtain two packets of sticky back Velcro (£2) and stick the "hooked" tape all over the rear of the mirror. Finally place the mirror on the carpet lining in the van. A good place on the VHT is above the side roof window. I must warn you the fixing of the mirror is a once-only application as the Velcro is too tenacious for me to get it off.

That's covered seven of the twenty eight mods on the Admiral. Some are suitable for other types of van, but I have no personal experience so cannot guarantee success, however if the Editor wishes I will write more about mods for the future.

Happy travels,  
Roger & Carol Slim (17)"

Oh, Yes, the Editor most certainly wishes, as I am sure most V.W. Owners do too. Thank you very much, Roger not only for the content but also for the promptness of your response. I am not going to hold you to any deadlines but whenever you have the next instalment ready, just let me have it. I feel I should say, regarding John Cox's mod., it is entirely possible I took his telephone message down incorrectly but thank for putting things right.

And a day or two later, from Bill Clarke of Letchworth:-  
"Dear Phil,

It is very seldom that I see my name in print, especially in such an auspicious Magazine as the A-S O C, but Issue No 15 did just that, so I felt this honour must not go unanswered.

Since Gordon Rollinson's original idea was suggested, of having a co-ordinator for each model, I had intended offering my services for the Talisman models. However, a recent holiday in Spain, not in my van, sort of delayed the offer but the thought was there before your slight prod! I think it's a great idea and I'll "have a go" at helping with various models of the Talisman.

I feel inclined to keep information to two main areas,  
(a) General Talbot information - this would apply in most cases to the other models based on the van and chassis cab.  
(b) Talisman I, II, GL only information.

Collection of information could come from you, from members direct and possibly from A-S direct. I would then collate and file it, and try and write some small entry into the Newsletter when something new appeared which would interest the readers. It would be helpful if you could let me know if you printing arrangements can accept small sketches which may be of interest and assistance to members when describing possible alterations/improvements. (Yes, from now on! Ed.)

I have, as you know, fitted a number of mods to my own van, the majority

of these were picked up by talking to other van people and copying/modifying their ideas. We were "Tuggers" for twenty years and never went to Rallies. We have now been to three A-S rallies, thoroughly enjoyed them, particularly the friendliness, informality, and the fun of meeting and talking to people who all have a common interest. It is amazing how much one learns, i.e., at the beginning of this year I had considered having a couple of bicycles so that we could do a few short runs from sites both here and abroad. After talking to many kind ralliers, having demonstrations and riding their various types of bikes, I have now decided on two normal size bikes. I have nearly finished making a bike rack to fit on the back of the van, and purchased two s/h bikes to start the experiment in 1990.

As a start, I'll now briefly describe a few mods that I've done for my Talisman, and then gradually add to them as contributions come in in 1990.

1) Retractable Step. The step up to the side door is quite high, and when on a slope with the rear wheels chocked, getting in and out without a step is a hard slog for those who are now not quite as nimble. A separate step as normally carried by Tuggers is a nuisance in a M/V as it's always in the way. I fitted a "Morco All Weather Foldaway Step". This can be purchased at Caravan Accessory shops, and when fitted under the van step, is very simple to use, and most effective in operation.

2) Kitchen Work Surface. In the three M/Vs which I have had, and probably in many of your own homes, the kitchen never has sufficient work surfaces. In my previous M/V, a CX1000, it was difficult, and entailed a double hinged concertina type. On the Talisman it is very simple. A piece of A-S faced ply, large enough to just more than span the side door opening is fitted between the underside of the draining board and the cupboard top under the drinks cabinet. The sink end slides in a length of Vitesse Strip Table Attachment, and the other end just rests on the top of the cupboard. When not in use, it can be clipped against the side of the cupboard as you enter the doorway, on the left-hand side.

3) Radio aerial. The normal place for fitting an aerial on a Talbot is on the top edge of the nearside bonnet. There is a problem however with regards to a van with a GRP Luton body. I spoke to Alan Major, as well as a number of people who specialize in fitting car radio equipment. The general opinion was that the aerial would be best fitted on the roof of the Luton, with a metal plate underneath of an area of at least two square feet, this being earthed direct to the battery, or a good earth in the bonnet compartment, using a screened lead. I pulled the head lining away in the Luton, fitted an alloy plate as directed with a screened lead, and then replaced the lining. The plate cannot be seen and I have so far no problems with reception.

4) In Line Tap on Shower Tray Waste. In Newsletter No 12 I wrote of my

experiences with my "Loo compartment". To stop any further problems with the surge of waste water into the shower tray, I obtained a 22mm in-line brass tap (wheel valve will do), fitted a short length of copper pipe in each end of it, cut out a section of the shower tray plastic waste pipe, and inserted the tap. The waste pipe fits nicely over the 22mm copper pipe and is secured with a jubilee clip at each end. The copper pipe must be kept as short as possible to enable the assembly to fit under the back of the van. Thereafter, the tap remains closed, and is only opened when using the shower unit. Any surge of waste water from the tank up the pipe is stopped at the tap.

In my next letter, Phil, I'll add a bit on Ferries and Foreign Touring. Congratulations to you, and your hardworking Committee for such a successful year, and all our Best Wishes for 1990.

Happy Xmas & New Year,  
Bill & Barbara Clarke." (264)

My sincere thanks, Bill. We'll work out the small details as we go along.

It may not come as a surprise to you to learn that the Mods we talk about not only come to the notice of those concerned at the Orchard but the more likely ones are looked at very seriously with a view to incorporation in future production.

Now, as they say, for something completely different. A letter from Burgh Heath:-

"Dear Phil,

Some of you may be interested in my thoughts on vehicle security which may stimulate further discussion. You will see that I disagree with Barry Crawshaw about not reinforcing doors or windows, and I agree almost totally with the correspondents in Newsletter No.8.

A) Two categories of vehicle theft:

- 1) Theft of vehicle.
- 2) Theft from vehicle.

B) Two categories of thief:

- 1) The professional, who makes a living from it.
- 2) The amateur, apprentice, "toe-rag", joyrider, opportunist.

C) "Our" type of vehicles are not attractive to joyriders, but our car stereo and items on display are attractive to opportunists, etc. Similarly the value and type of our vehicles may make them desirable to the professional, perhaps "stealing to order" or maybe to export, but also to the holiday gangs stealing from the vehicle. Therefore our efforts should be separated into two categories:

- 1) Leaving nothing to interest the amateur/opportunist.

2) Making the professional's task too protracted/noisy/difficult, etc.  
D) Virtually nothing (nothing practical that is) will stop a professional, BUT a determined effort by you on several fronts will hopefully make him give up before he achieves success.

#### REMEDIES.

E) The Amateur. Keep everything out of sight. A small blanking panel can be bought to cover the stereo. Conceal aerials within the fibreglass roofs, etc. Not only alarm the vehicle, but make the potential thief aware of an alarm's existence with stickers, etc. Some alarms are pathetically easy to disable, so

1) Do not identify your make of alarm (a simple "This vehicle is alarmed" will suffice.)

2) Invest in a decent alarm (or don't bother to waste your money on one that won't do the job, will constantly give false alarms and gives you a totally false sense of security.)

Fit an extra lock to each door. Standard manufacturers locks are often a "doddle" to jiggle, sometimes with nothing more sophisticated than an old worn key or a nail file. And a thief with a wire coat hanger can open most doors in a trice.

Glass can be protected with a security film inside but this is horrendously expensive.

A very heavy chain (inside a bicycle inner tube, perhaps) with a good padlock, entwined round the spoke of the steering wheel and the seat frame or hole through the base, will make a "Krooklok" type of device seem like just so much Meccano.

Visible deterrents will discourage the casual thief.

F) The Professional. A combination of several sensible measures will deter even a professional thief. Speed and lack of noise is what he desires. Deny him both and you will hopefully deter him. As all of the foregoing measures will deny him speed, the more the merrier. Fit a security safe to keep valuables in, particularly when on holiday, passports, jewelry, travellers cheques. I use an old Chubb wall safe coachbolted to a seat base. It's capacious and impregnable.

Self-powered alarms will keep sounding when the car battery cable has been cut, indeed they are set off by the disconnection of the battery (it is a simple matter to roll under a vehicle and "bolt-crop" the cables).

A lock to secure the gear lever in 1st or Reverse gears and (of less use) a combination handbrake lock. (handbrake cables can be cut easily).

A separate, hidden, ignition immobilization switch.

G) To deter the individual who would brave a quick entry, ignore an alarm sounding, quickly rummage through belongings, quickly snatch anything of value, then quickly exit, I have fitted a 125 dB self powered alarm inside my Talisman. On two occasions I have inadvertently set it off whilst inside the

vehicle. The effect is almost paralyzing, and so totally disorientating that it will ensure that no thief, relying on speed alone to search the interior, could possibly stay in the vehicle for more than mere seconds (unless of course he be totally, completely and utterly deaf!) This alarm is in addition to the under-bonnet alarm intended to alert passers by. (Auto-Sleepers' insulation ensures that most of the interior sound stay there!) I can wholeheartedly recommend this approach for motor caravanners as I believe we possibly suffer most from this type of theft, particularly when abroad. I have spoken to several people who have returned to ransacked vans.

Finally, cocooned within your vehicle in some remote spot, you will greatly appreciate a "panic button", close at hand and sounding the outside alarm with flashing hazard lights (it's flashing headlights that are illegal), which will deter a prowler outside intent upon an easy robbery. And for those reading this with growing dismay, fear not! I have never ever experienced the slightest need for a panic button, and I have travelled abroad for 40 years.

So, there we have it... A motorcaravan, parked, with nothing apparent to steal, no obvious fitted car stereo, everything (including expensive coats) out of sight, valuables in a concealed security box, the biggest lock and chain you ever saw round the steering wheel, the winking red warning light of an active alarm backed up by warning stickers (not only on the quarter lights but also on the back door), an extra, non-standard, high security lock on each door that is going to be a swine to try and defeat, plus goodness knows how many other devices not immediately obvious. If I were a thief I think I'd try somewhere else - wouldn't you?

Kind regards to you all for the New Year.

Barry & Sue Brown."

No comments from me here but straight on to the second half of Bruce Cunningham's article on their French trip, which had to be left out last month. It seems to fit in, somehow:

"SECURITY.

We are now able to endorse from personal experience, the opinions of an Owner regarding security in an earlier Newsletter.

Despite a sophisticated infrared alarm, additional deadlocks on the front doors, an additional Chubb lock on the rear door and extra catches on the quarter lights, our Talisman was broken into in a busy public car park in Bordeaux, resulting in the loss of some of my camera equipment, which I had put out of sight in the wardrobe. The loss has since been made good by the Insurer, but the inconvenience of reporting to the police, and subsequently tracking down replacement items, is most aggravating. Especially when the French police (when eventually located) have just closed for a two-hour lunch. The alarm worked perfectly but no one took any notice, not even an elderly

French couple in an old V.W. motor-caravan nearby! So the recommendation stands - don't leave anything of value in your 'van, however well you think it is protected. For any Talisman Owners particularly interest, I will explain on a personal basis how easily the break-in was effect but do not wish to broadcast this information. The repairs cost £113.00 but were not possible until our return to the UK, as the local Peugeot-Talbot dealers did not have the parts available. A temporary repair was simply made (free of charge), by the local P-T dealer, who seemed to regard it as a normal occurrence. Of course, the 'van was then no longer "secure", whatever that may mean! WE have since heard of a chain of robberies from a fenced caravan site at Bordeaux so perhaps this is an area to be avoided.

#### CRITICISMS.

The view was expressed in an earlier Newsletter that printing of criticisms of some items in Auto-Sleepers should not take place - at least that was how I understood the phraseology - I hope this will not be the case because only in this way can we all avoid problems and improve our vehicles. Obviously minor unwarranted criticisms are to be excluded, but items such as the problems with "flooding" arising from unprotected electrics on the Porta Pottis in certain 'vans are obviously of value to others with similar equipment.

Bruce Cunningham, 16th November 1989."

Thanks again, Bruce. A lot of food for thought! Taking the last item first, my ideas are necessarily simple - if a problem is reported by a Member, try to find the answer then print both. I will say here that my search for the answer invariably starts at the Orchard, and usually ends, successfully, there too.

Would Bordeaux, and other wine-producing centres, be best avoided during the grape harvest - casual labour flocks in and some find "pickings" other than fruit more rewarding? On the subject of Security - while I don't think my criminal tendencies are particularly well developed - I have to say that, when walking through the Jewelry Quarter of Birmingham, it is the cars with two locks on the boot and/or doors that strike me as being the worthwhile ones, if I were to consider a robbery. My approach to life's little problems has always been a low-profile one. However and none-the-less, other points of view are not precluded. On the score of panic buttons, I have found one fitted by Peugeot-Talbot; it is a disc, in the centre of the steering wheel, which activates the horn when pressed! There is also a knob on the panel which activates the hazard warning lights and we prefer a portable, hide-able, short-wave receiver so that we can listen to the B B C World Service from time to time when we are far from home.

### "CHAIRMAN'S CHAT.

A very happy and successful New Year to you all! By the time you read this Christmas will be over and I hope that it was an enjoyable festival. Speaking personally I have never known such a busy December - nothing to do with A-S D C I hasten to add but, and don't tell the children, I was working in Allders Department Store in Bromley as one of their Father Christmasses. I now understand why they need four to share the responsibility - four hours in the red uniform dealing with a seemingly endless queue of children aged, in my case, between 11 days and 15 years really is exhausting.

At the beginning of the month we had the Abbey Wood Christmas Shopping rally. This was very different from all the other rallies organized during the summer in several ways. Firstly it was much smaller, only eight Auto-Sleepers in all, and secondly the shorter days made a different type of social programme necessary. You may remember that the few days leading up to Friday, 1st December were pretty chilly with some heavy frosts. Just to be on the safe side I decided to change over from Camping Gaz (Butane) to Calor Gas (Propane) at some expense as the deposit on the cylinder is substantial. I needn't really have bothered as it turned out because the weather was much milder and we had no frosts. In fact after a nasty foggy start on the Friday the weather for the weekend wasn't too bad - no rain, no frost and no wind. As I mentioned earlier there were only eight vans present including those of two "first timers", Don and Anne Scaplehorn from Bristol and Arthur and Jean Hitchcock from Bognor Regis.

On the Friday evening we had the use of a clean and comfortable room at the Abbey Wood Community Centre. This was very close to a good Chinese Takeaway and most people seemed to enjoy the Oriental fare. It turned out to be a jolly evening but we had to be out at 9.30pm so it was early to bed for the majority. No bad thing with a long day in London ahead. We had originally planned to have an informal "noggin and natter" on the Saturday evening for those back from town in the Harrow pub, but several people said we would find it too noisy so it was a case of seeking a last minute alternative. We were lucky to discover the "Jolly Marshman" not far away and that proved ideal for those who had returned from London by early evening. Coffee and raffle draw was earlier than usual at 10.30 on Sunday so that those with a long way to travel, notably Don and Sylvia Gale from Solihull, could complete most of their homeward journeys in daylight.

From all reports it seems to have been a successful experiment and, subject to Committee agreement at the January meeting, it is planned to repeat it in 1990 - November 30th to December 2nd will be the dates. The new Caravan Club site at Crystal Palace was considered as a possible alternative but Abbey Wood has certain advantages - a very nearby railway station with frequent service and the small room which will be available again. For those who prefer

not to travel up to London there is Greenwich nearby and from there you can walk under the Thames to Dockland! Ask Don and Anne Scaplehorn, they did it.

A closing reminder - have you filled in and posted to your Bank the Standing Order form enclosed with the December Newsletter? If not, please do so NOW!

All the very best to you all for 1990 -

John Normandale."

You will need John's address if going abroad so that you can ask him for details of "Europ Assistance" insurance policies, remembering Club members get 15% discount on standard rates. Makes some policies most attractive.

C J Normandale, 87 Lower Camden, CHISLEHURST, Kent. BR7 5JD.

I have a lot of notes about ferries to the continent (and Ireland, too) and will try to get the essence of them into the Newsletter before its out of date or too late. The letter from Jack Dawson of Hardingham is worth thinking about:-

"Dear Mr Daley,

Your notes on ferries in A-S O C Newsletter No 15 prompt me to mention a problem with Sealink British Ferries. Their conditions for the carriage of hydrocarbon gasses restrict conveyance to FULL bottles/cylinders only (which must be declared to the ship's officer in charge when boarding). Telephone calls to Sealink have confirmed this restriction; calls to other ferry companies established that no such restrictions applied. In the event of any accident affecting a motor caravan while on board no doubt Sealink could disclaim all responsibility if their conditions had not been observed and part-full or empty cylinders were being carried.

I have written to the Editor of MMM about this difficulty so you may feel it unnecessary to mention it in the Newsletter. However, you might like to have the information "on file".

While on the subject of cross-channel ferries I would find it very useful to have information on ports where it is possible to park over-night to simplify catching an early morning ferry. This can be done at Folkestone (the car park has a height barrier - OK for an RV50 - but alternative space is available) and at Quistreham (Caen) after the night ferry has departed. Other members probably have other details which might perhaps be listed in the Newsletter.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Dawson."

I gave this letter some priority, not to try to steal any of John Hunt's thunder but because this is the time many people are looking at ferry timetables and information of this sort can help in decision-making. Parking spot? Off the top of my head, Ramsgate, Sally Line no height barriers but can

be a bit noisy (HGVs). Dunkirk, lots of room, they'll probably give you a call in time for the early ferry! Roscoff, no problem. The Hoverport at Calais has a large, slightly sloping car park which has been used, out of season.

On the subject of gas in vans, the P & O brochure I have says, "Cars powered by LPG should have tanks switched off when on vehicle decks. Make sure gas cylinders, cookers and fridges in caravans are properly turned off." I can't find any reference to gas in brochures from Hoverspeed, Brittany Ferries, Fred Olsen Lines - nor Sealink for that matter! Is there possibly some confusion between commercial gas cylinders and the small bottles carried on/in caravans? We certainly have never experienced any problems but I do urge everyone to take special care over the safety of their gas system - no leaks at all - and to turn off at the bottle before boarding. When did you last replace the rubber hose you fit onto the regulator? No leaks - no explosive mixture - no problem. I think...

Bulletin Board.

Membership renewals, or applications, to the Membership Secretary, Miss Sheila Hammell, 144 Devonshire Hill Lane, London N17 7NH.

Rita Daley is asking for information on Spain for members seeking the sun. Camp sites, there or en route, interesting routes, anything like that.

Dilys is sorry to have to tell you the Postage on Club (embroidered) Woolies has to go up to £1.50 per garment. Increased cost of packing & post.

Any items for the two booklets in course of production "Firsttimers Continent" and "Van Touring" are wanted by Rita, as soon as possible, please.

Mr J R Jones, 9 Park Avenue, Ruislip, HA4 7DU (0895 672500) is looking for a Legend about 2-3 years old, petrol or diesel, manual gearbox.

Your Editor,

Phil Daley.

January, 1990. 46, Ulverley Green Road, Solihull, West Midlands. B92 8BQ  
(021-706 1816)

DISCLAIMER.

All contributions from Members which appear in the Newsletter are published in good faith in the hope that they will prove useful or interesting. All reasonable care has been taken to ensure accuracy but none of the modifications has been tested by us therefore neither the Editor, the Club nor the Company will accept responsibility for the consequences if you try them out.

NATIONAL RALLY 1990

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PROGRAMME

Arrangements are now well in hand for the 1990 National Rally at Billing Aquadrome, Northampton (20th - 22nd April 1990), and a busy week-end is planned. The functions will include a Wine and Cheese Party on the Friday Evening, a buffet Lunch to precede the Annual General Meeting on Saturday followed by the Annual Dinner and Social, while on Sunday the usual gathering for coffee will be preceded by a short service led by the Salvation Army.

Throughout the week-end the highly valued "Help and Advice" facility and spares shop will again be provided by Auto-Sleepers Limited, while a number of dealers, an accessory supplier, and several specialist manufacturers will be represented. The Rally is again supported by generous offers of sponsorship.

Clive Jenkins, (Rally Co-ordinator)

Below is a copy of details on the Booking Form for you to fill in and keep as your record.

Names of those booked .....  
 .....  
 .....

Offer to Marshal Yes/No

Site Fee.....£5.00 per night.....Booked.....nights.

Day Only.....£1.00 per day.....Booked.....Day

Electric Hook-up £1.00 w.e..... (Pay the Marshal on arrival).

(There are a limited number of Hook-Ups and these will be allocated in the order received.)

Wine & Cheese (2 Adults per Van f.o.c.) Number booked....Adults...Children.  
 Children under 16 f.o.c) Extra Adults at £1.00 each.....

Saturday Buffet Lunch...£2.00 per head Booked.....people

Saturday Dinner.....£5.00 per head Booked.....people

(The Social Evening is included in the price of the Dinner).

Total Paid..£.....:.....Milk ordered.....pts per day.