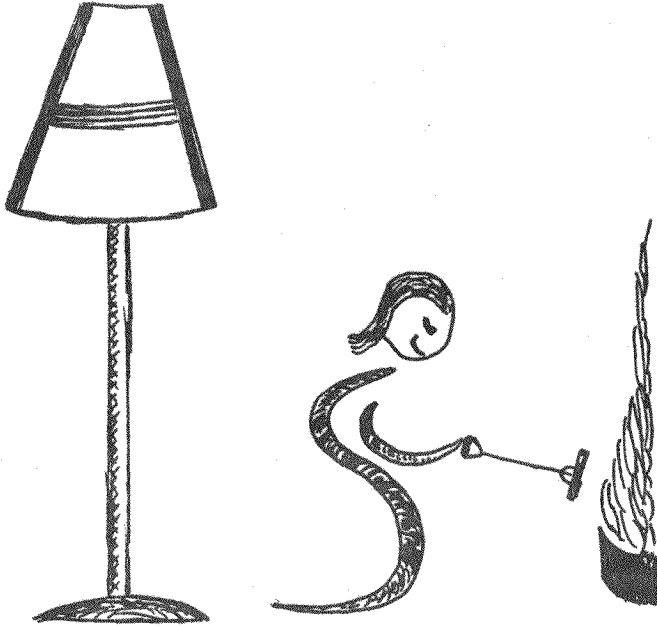


auto-sleeper owners' club



Newsletter No. 17

February 1990

Greetings!

Before I get involved in all sorts of other topics I am going to say something that has been on my mind for months. Many people were good enough to add to the "questionnaire" and to write to us with information on topics of interest to them and us, such as possible rally sites, annual events of interest to motor-caravanners, suggestions regarding "special interest groups" and, in particular, offers to help in various ways to run the club. Few if any of these offers were acknowledged and few have been taken up so you must think us a rude lot. May I ask you to be patient a little longer and let me try to explain why you have heard nothing further.

At first we didn't know what help we would need as, if and when the Club grew; then suddenly, it grew so fast we didn't have time to do anything much but attend to the essentials! We have kept all your correspondence on file in one form or another and now, with Sheila taking so much of the load off Rita's shoulders by dealing with all membership and enrolment matters, we are finding time to look through those records and, having a better idea of what is needed, we are sorting out likely sources of help. To take a couple of instances at random: Neville Blackshaw wrote last May (I think!) offering his services as co-ordinator or contact point for a West Group if one was ever formed. Now that it begins to look as if the Groups will go ahead, I need to ask if his offer still stands. We now have "volunteer" contact points for South East, South West, South Central and Central groups - so we are covered for about 50% of members already - many more if Pamela and Michael Stanton would consider extending their zone of influence to the whole of South Group? We are looking for ones for NW, NE, and East, if Neville is still willing and able to take on West. I was thinking of asking Mary C if she would act for East, but that was before I wrote some more in this edition about tyre pressures; perhaps she'll forgive me, anyway, for the sake of the Club!

Joan Tubbs, who knows about such things, has offered to guide small groups on Nature Walks, essentially botanical in nature, in conjunction with a rally in a suitable part of the country and at a suitable time of the year. This needs time and thought to organise, if sufficient interest exists. I am sure there does. I am convinced we need to know more about plants, which are essential to our life on this planet and that means any chlorophyll-bearing, oxygen producing system there is, pretty to look at or not. So the more we know about them, their functions, needs, habitats, uses and so on the better. Also, she very kindly offered to bring one of her microscopes and a supply of slides along to a rally, perhaps the same one, by prior arrangement. Have you ever seen what goes on inside a leaf? We would like to know if the idea appeals so, if it does, please signify, preferably by letter. Once done I am sure this type of event will almost set itself up in following rally programmes but initially there

are problems because Joan does this sort of thing all over the continent and has few free dates. Because we messed about with the date of the National Rally she won't be able to be there, much to her disappointment. (No, she had not promised a conducted walk round Billing Aquadrome!).

Mention of Billing reminds me that I need to include information about the "Big One" so here it is:-

National Rally and Annual General Meeting.

Thanks to all those who have booked already. We need a good idea of the numbers likely to attend, as soon as possible, so that we can ensure that the facilities on site and the catering will match the demand. I enclose another application form in case the other has disappeared. Obviously the larger the attendance, the more enjoyable and satisfying the whole thing becomes, so fill in the form and look forward to meeting old friends, making new ones and enjoying yourselves.

Now to detail, to give some information and solve some problems.

1. *The Rally will start* at 12.00 noon on Friday, 20th April and finish at 12.00 noon on the Sunday. There will be no need to hurry away. Those coming for extra days should use the normal site entrance and pay for extra nights direct to the site on entry. A special reduced overnight rate of £5 per van will be charged for those extra nights.

2. *Rally Fee.* The usual Club rally fee has already been included (for this rally only) in the overnight charge.

3. *Electricity Fee.* Since the connection points are limited the allocation will not be made yet. Please DO NOT send payment for electricity now but pay the Marshal on entry to the Rally, if you have been allocated a pitch with electricity. Due to the scarcity of electric hook-ups we do not intend allocating any to those who will come for one night only. Very special circumstances excepted.

4. *Children's Meal.* A suitable meal for children has been arranged for Saturday evening at about £2 per child. Payment will be made on the evening but please let Ken Scotney know if your child/children require/s those meals instead of Saturday evening dinner, so that the caterer will know.

5. *Social Evening.* The cost of the Social Evening is included in the Rally Fee (not in the dinner cost). ALL members will be welcome to attend the social whether or not they book for Dinner.

6. *Booking Acknowledgements.* Because of the large numbers involved and to keep costs down, we will not be sending out acknowledgements. Tickets

and windscreen passes will be sent out from early March onwards.

I hope this advanced information helps. Please keep the bookings flowing. It is so much easier to deal with steadily rather than as a flood. I even write like a water engineer). We look forward to seeing you all at Billing in April.

Clive Jenkins,

Rally Co-ordinator

“Dear Phil,

CXL (& other) Matters.

1. *Access door for gas tap.* John Dyer’s modification (Jan Newsletter) of a hand-sized access door for the main gas-tap strikes a sympathetic chord.

Perhaps, like me, (it is no family secret) his first job in the morning, home or away, is to waken She Who Must Be Obeyed with a cup of tea. And perhaps, as with us, she sleeps on the port side, above the gas bottle box, preventing access to the main gas-tap. We have a Catch 22 situation. Therefore, for some time I have been meaning to cut just such an access door but have hesitated since I recalled having read somewhere that the sides of the gas-box should be kept totally gas-tight. On checking with the Orchard today, I was told that the new Code of Practice does indeed specify gas-tight sides (and top) but that, nevertheless, there is merit in providing a small access door since it encourages owners to turn off the main gas-tap when gas is not needed, including at night. The most important safety point is to ensure that the floor vent is never covered. I shall now go ahead and copy John’s modification, fitting a seal round the door to assist in meeting the new requirements.

2. *Step to the side door.* Does anyone have the perfect solution to providing a step to the side door? The retractable All Weather Foldaway Step mentioned by Bill Clarke (Jan Newsletter) seems an excellent solution but I can only think it is easier to fit it to a Talisman, like Bill’s, than to panel vans like the CXL/Rambler/Rhapsody where there is nothing substantial underneath to bolt it on to. We use a separate step. Originally this was an Addis, the plastic sort you can buy in any DIY store, but two years ago in the Dordogne, She W.M.B.O. stepped out of the van, the Addis collapsed and Perigueux Hospital had to fix her up with a wrist-to-shoulder plaster for a broken arm. No, you’re wrong, she’s only a size 14, (her precise avoirdupois is a family secret) and she hadn’t touched a drop. We now use a much more substantial Guardian Handi-step which has the additional advantage of not getting too slippery when wet.

3. *Levelling blocks.* What do you do about levelling blocks for the van? As a substitute for grubby lumps of wood, we bought a Dixon-Bate Leveller. You drive the wheel very carefully on to it and then screw it up to the desired height. It was not a success. To start with, it was necessary to take the wheel disc off to operate the screw. Then it seemed to take ages to wind it up and at

the finish the distorted tyre displayed more unhappiness than you-know-who without an early morning cuppa. To their credit, Don Amott gave me my money back. We then looked at one or two types of plastic wedge. They did not appear to be beefy enough, or wide enough, to give us confidence. We're now back to grubby lumps of wood, or at least to two short lengths of plank plus short thick blocks to provide ramps of various heights. The planks have sawn cross-grooves to prevent skidding and are tapered at one end to prevent them flipping-up as you drive on to them. They are just long enough (short enough?) to fit into the compartment next to the gas bottle box, together with the electric cable. Any better ideas?

4. *Wheel Discs.* Mentioning wheel discs brings up a dilemma. Undoubtedly they make the van look prettier, but mine made it awkward to check tyre pressures, even with the flexible extension on the valve, so I had to lever them off each time. The securing clips then scratched the paint on the wheels. Touch a kerb while parking and your wheel disc carries permanent proof that you're a moron. And we all know that punctures only happen to offside wheels on wet nights on major roads in the rush hour when the essential screwdriver to prise off the discs has gone missing and you'd kick the dog if you'd brought him. Sensing it was unloved, one of my discs left home somewhere between Penzance and Bodmin and I never shed a tear. Instead, I took off the others and, on an improvised turntable, painted the wheels to match (well, I think they do) the stripes on the CXL. Anybody wanting a free spare disc, CXL, 1987, I'll bring them to the National Rally. Except the one that proves I'm a moron.

Happy Wanderings, Gordon"

Gordon Rollinson co-ordinates the collection of mods and ends for CXL/Rhapsody/Rambler (even Harmony?) conversions and can be contacted at:- Long Lichen, Woodbine Lane, Burghclere, Newbury, Berks. RG15 9EB.-0635 27368.

"From The Factory.

Motor Caravan Code of Construction.

At the Earl's Court Caravan Show in November the Motor Caravan Section of the Motor Manufacturers and Traders announced the introduction of the Motor Caravan Construction Code.

Behind the glossy sticker which appears in the windscreen of each new Auto-Sleeper there is six months of development and change. Many items in the thirty page document we already complied with, thanks to the experience of exporting to France in the early '80s. One of the biggest changes we had to make concerned the storage of LPG cylinders in our van conversion models. We now have to store gas bottles in sealed and externally vented compartments which, in certain models, makes turning the gas on and off rather more difficult than before.

Many other changes, like the gas pipe sizes and electrical wiring practices you, the customer, will never see. However, you cannot help but notice the improvement in our latest vehicle instruction books which took Charles the best part of six months to compile, during which time they were updated at least three times and even now have a couple of minor discrepancies which have been brought to our attention by a couple of eagle-eyed customers. Other alterations such as windows which open in different ways and even more warning labels stuck here and there, are evidence of the Code of Construction which in many ways is designed for your safety.

Neville Jelfs, January 1990."

One or two people may not know that Nev, apart from being a Founder Member of the Club, is also the arch-organiser who handles the Company side of the National Rally. There will be quite a bit from him in the next Newsletter about what they will be providing, when and where and how you can obtain assistance if you need it.

In this connection, have we any communications experts or even practitioners in the Club who can help with mobile communications at the Rally? We need something like walkie-talkie contacts between the Marshals at the gate and the Office tent and also would like to be able to set up some mobile contact between Company staff who will be out and about on the Rally fields. All very short-range stuff but it could save an awful lot of time and walking about. Help, anyone? Contact Clive or me, please.

Going back in my files I found this note, dated 3rd April 1989, from Aldo Lanteri (102), of Coventry:-

"Ingenious levelling antifrustration device.

I am sure that many motor caravanners have experienced the frustration of getting the van on to their levelling blocks when they tend to slide away from the wheels.

My idea is a very simple one. One would need a piece of plywood (4/5 ply) of the same size as the base of the existing block, a couple of strong garden gate hinges and a few screws. As the extension folds underneath the block there is no need for extra storage space. The idea of this "conversion" is that as you drive on to this added piece, the block is held in place, thereby enabling easy access to the levelling block. I am sure that many Auto-Sleeper owners will find it useful, resulting in less loss of temper all round!

Many thanks for a lovely Rally. Hope to see you in the not too distant future.

Aldo & Beryl Lanteri."

Yes, they had just returned from the Inaugural Meeting. What memories that evokes.

Of course, the real answer is something Hayes (Leisure) Limited of Darlaston, West Midlands would like to sell you. With this little item, called a

Power Leveller, which has four electrically operated jacks, one for each corner, one can sit in the driver's seat and do it all by pressing four toggle switches, one way for up and one way for down. All for a modest £2727.72, ex stock, fitting or delivery extra. One reason why we don't have one is the doubt I have about its suitability for use on a piece of soft green grass. I have a clear picture in my mind of four rectangular holes being pierced in the ground while the Talisman stays still. But then, if one took four grubby pieces of wood to place under the jacking points before operating the system... There is another reason, I'm sure.

Another note, an extract from a letter dated 12th December, 1989, from Aldo:-

"I have recently collected my new Turbo Diesel Rambler which I find delightful to drive. I thought you might want the registration number for your files - it is G 644 ADD (the Gadabout!). Yesterday I went to Willersey to have some "gremlins" flushed out, and I was telling Charles that the wardrobe must have been designed to store the fly screens when not required, as it is just the right size. He suggested that it would be a good idea if I let you know about it.

The fly screens will sit in the wardrobe on top of the box covering the wheel arch with probably a couple of millimetres gap on each side so they will stay on by themselves, but if you put a little Velcro strap similar to the one Auto-Sleepers use to secure the gas bottles, then they will be safe, out of the way, and will not interfere with the clothes in the wardrobe." Thanks, Aldo, passed to Gordon for his collection!

There is quite a change in the contents this month which is one reason why I find it almost impossible to follow the good advice given by Melvin Crapp, to decide on a layout and keep to it, month by month. The only way I could do that would be by holding your letters and other contributions on file until I had the quantity needed to fill the allocated space and I don't want to hold anything on file if I can get it into print. My original idea, and I still like it, was to take advantage of the small size, and the flexible printing arrangements we have managed to make, to keep the correspondence active and current. My target is to get items from you into one Newsletter and the replies in the next. To do this I really do need to impose a deadline, for nearly everyone, of the 20th of the month. When the Rally programme was not available in December as intended, I started on ferries, then found in January I had altogether too much copy so had to eliminate the ferry bit for that month! I had no idea how interesting the life of the Newsletter Editor was going to be when I hesitated just a little bit too long over saying "No" at one of those very early meetings at the Orchard. Thank you, fellow Foundered Members! Just look what you've done!

Need I say that, as ever with this dynamic Club of ours (have I used that expression before?), there may well be changes in the near future, this time in

the editorial set up. The object of the changes will be to give a different flavour to the editorial comments, from time to time but, don't worry, if what I have in mind comes to pass, the Newsletter won't be altered much because we get such a lot of nice friendly comments about it the way it is! Wasn't it nice to read what John Hunt had to say about it and us in the January issue of Motor Caravan & Motorhome Monthly and we got a pretty generous treatment in the Club Corner of the Motor Caravan Magazine for February, too. In fairness to Rita, who draws the "Little Men" (name copyrighted by Dilys Stinchcombe), the sketch incorporates ASOC, not just AS, making it much more difficult! Should we run a sweepstake on the date when Rita runs out of ideas, proceeds to a charity of her choice? No, I do but jest - I've seen her folder of preliminary ideas. You ain't seen nothing yet.

Since the Wagon Train to France, courtesy of Reg Rogers, will require careful organisation, taking time, we have been asked if any Members going to France during the early part of the year (before the end of July, say) would be prepared to act as guide, mentor and friend to one other Member for a few days, to see them over the water, into France and hopefully happy to continue independently. If the idea appeals, let me know; a) if you are offering help or requesting it and, b) the relevant dates. I will then put you in touch with the opposite number. Chairman John has said he has another idea - I'm not sure if he has thought it through yet - along the lines of joining a "First Timer" in his/their van on this side of the Channel, acting as an "in-cab" guide to the ferry port (anywhere as long as it's Dover), over the sea, through French Immigration and Customs (a harrowing experience!) and, I quote, "spend the first night with them in France and then make my own way home - if they paid me my fares!" Thinking...thinking...thinking...I wonder if Daphne knows about this...???

Someone, and it could have been Rita, suggested I should do my bit to allay the, to my mind needless, fears of hesitant Continental travellers. My comment above about the "harrowing" experience of passing through French Customs and Immigration was facetious in the extreme. The last time we landed in France, May 1989, we drove off the ship, followed the car ahead of us at a good lick across the open space of the ferry terminal and slowed down a little as we passed two slightly shop-soiled men in lounge suits who waved us on and, there we were, on a French road, driving towards Caen. Most disappointing, really. No, it's the dreaded British Customs and Excise Officers, awaiting your return, laden with all sorts of contraband (no, you, not them) that should give you pause for thought. To be serious for a moment, the only time any traveller is likely to try to import dutiable goods illegally is when going home (leaving aside professional traffickers), so a Frenchman entering France or an Italian entering Italy will get the same sort of examination as you

or I can expect at a British port. (On the other hand, our wheels didn't stop turning as we went through the customs shed the last time we returned from Norway via Newcastle and that has happened elsewhere too.) My comment here has to be "It isn't worth it", whatever it is. Stick to the allowances, while they last. The penalties fit the crime and can include confiscation of the vehicle, just for starters. And the time a suspicious officer can take over a good look round inside doesn't bear thinking about, even if you weren't in a hurry to start with!

Every year, bar one, since 1971 we have toured all over Europe and Scandinavia, this side of what was once called the Iron Curtain (except Greece), Bed-and-breakfasting by car until we saw the error of our ways and decided to buy an Auto-Sleeper, and we have never had so much as a scratch on the vehicle or us.

At most frontiers they seem to like you to slow down to a notional walking speed as you go through. Many times we have been unable to see anyone around to "give us the nod" and have gone on our way, rejoicing! There are one or two routes on which I am not at all sure where the frontier is, having used them several times and never seen any signs, never mind Officials. One is from Austria into Italy via the Reschenpass (Landeck - Bolzano, 315/S40) and the other is the Col de la Maddelena or Col de Larche (S21/D900), a beautiful journey between Italy and France where, on the Italian side, there is a pole across what used to be the road and a well worn track around it towards what I suppose is the Italian customs post. I have never seen anyone there and, many kilometres later, on the French side we once heard a voice out of the dusk urging us, gently, to carry on. Where it came from we'll never know. Or care!

The second time we went from France into Spain we used the coast road (N114 - C252) from Banyuls to Llanca, paused on the way to get passports out of the safe and were waved on by French and/or Spanish officials who appeared to be playing cards together in one of the offices. Incidentally, don't use this route if you don't like hairpin bends and gradients, otherwise it's a scenic drive, with very little traffic.

Once into Scandinavia - Sweden, Norway or Finland - there are no border formalities between the countries, unless you wish, for example, to stop on the way out of Norway into Sweden to reclaim (most of) the VAT, called MOMS by them, on goods bought in Norway. It's well worthwhile if you have bought some fairly expensive presents of knitwear, for instance, their VAT or MOMS rate being quite high. (19%?) Extended motor insurance (Green Card) has to include all three countries even if you are only visiting one.

An extract from a letter from Arthur Fairburn to Rita - I hope he doesn't

mind!:-

"In September 1988 Margaret and I did an extended tour of France and Northern Spain and made a video of the whole trip from the ferry leaving Portsmouth, back to boarding the ferry at Caen. Now! do you think any member who has not yet crossed the Channel and driven 'over there', would like to see the video to help them decide whether or not to take the plunge?

I'm afraid there are six hours in all and quite a bit is shot through the windscreen, so one gets the feeling of driving on the right. Campsites are shown in the Dordogne, Biarritz, Pyrenees, Costa Brava and St. Tropez, we did some walking in the Ordesa National Park in Spain, before setting up camp at Tossa de Mar on the Costa Brava, super site!

Our van then was 'Old Faithful', a 1971 Commer Wanderer that gave us 15 years of happy wanderings before we pensioned her off and bought our Legend.

If you think any member would be interested, you may put my offer in the next Newsletter. I would expect the postage to be paid, that is all.

See you at Billing!

Arthur S. Fairburn."

Looks like a pretty fair offer to me. It is on two VHS tapes. Please contact Arthur direct on Chesterfield (0246) 852799.

"Chairman's Chat.

What did you think of the new easier to read Newsletter last month? I thought it was excellent even if it does make the finished product a bit bulkier.

Apart from the attractive new format it seemed to me that the contents were even more interesting than usual.

I was somewhat surprised that George Hawke has seen no written evidence in praise of Auto-Sleepers' after sales service. Having noted the Editor's very pertinent remarks about the responsibility of Auto-Sleeper dealers I would only add that I have spoken to many members who have had experience of work done at the Orchard and I have heard nothing but praise for such work. Auto-Sleepers had good write ups in the Motor Caravan press for their maintenance courses arranged fairly recently for staff from their main dealers too.

Towards the end of last November Daphne and I were lucky enough to be invited to dinner by two members, Bob and Ruth Barlow, who live overlooking the river in Docklands, Isle of Dogs. Bob and Ruth had recently returned from an extended holiday covering two six-months periods driving their Talisman around the United States. Altogether they covered more than 30,000 miles in the U.S.A. and had a most interesting time. As you can imagine a right hand drive vehicle is most unusual over there and this aspect alone caused a great deal of interest and amusement. To us a Talisman is a fair sized vehicle but to the Americans, used to their mammoth R-Vs, it's a "cute little wagon".

I very much hope that Bob and Ruth will find time to write some items for

future Newsletters on their experiences on the other side of the pond. Ruth, by the way, is an avid goat fan, in fact quite an expert on this rather neglected animal, and also has a wonderful collection of goat photos, figures and wall plaques including a truly splendid one in metal.

Getting back to the January Newsletter, I found Barry and Sue Brown's letter about van security very interesting, particularly the idea of a loud, shrill internal alarm - I can imagine that its effect would be quite dramatic. I must have been a bit sleepy when I read the Editor's comments on the "panic button" fitted to Talbot steering wheels - it was several minutes before the penny dropped! There seem to be widely differing views on van security; my own feelings are that security is one of the main factors in favour of a properly run camp site as against wild camping.

Touch wood we haven't yet been affected by the dreaded "Flooded Shower Tray" problem. Maybe it's because we normally empty our waste water tank frequently and don't believe in carrying extra weight around - particularly at the rear of the vehicle. I wondered, though, whether the tray plug, if jammed in hard, wouldn't cope with the difficulty. Or maybe one of those pop-up plugs that Dilys is looking for to sell to members - or even a suitable sized cork. Any of these would save the trouble of inserting a tap in a rather inaccessible place, as suggested by Bill Clarke.

Jack Dawson's letter on Sealink's regulations concerning gas cylinders is an interesting one. I wonder whether they have changed their rules this year as I have just received their 1990 Ferry Guide and on page 45 it says:-

"Gas Cylinders.

- 1) All appliances using gas cylinders must be properly turned off and adequately secured against movement of the ship.
- 2) Leaking and inadequately secured or connected cylinders will not be accepted for shipment.
- 3) No more than three cylinders may be carried except for small expendable cartridges, hermetically sealed and packed in an outer container, when up to 12 may be carried."

It then goes on to say that cylinders must be declared to the vehicles Officer-in-Charge. Not a word about them only allowing FULL cylinders - which was Jack's main point. Nor, if you read the wording carefully, any requirement to turn off the cylinders' own valves or any isolating taps - something which I am sure all members would do anyway. Incidentally a bit further down the same page Sealink say that petrol cans - full or empty - are not allowed.

Finally on the subject of cross-Channel ferries, how many of you have used our favourite line, I wonder. I am referring to the Olau line from Sheerness to Vlissingen in Holland. This really is a super way of crossing especially if you are heading for Germany or Northern Europe. Their vessels are more like ocean liners than ferries and very luxurious - they are now in the process of replacing them with even bigger and better ones.

Please forgive me if I remind you once again to make sure you have re

newed your subscription, preferably by Bankers' Order, if you joined before 1st September 1989. Those of you who joined after that date are automatically covered up to the end of 1990. By the end of December we had well over 500 members, and we don't want to lose any of you! The National Rally at Billing Aquadrome, 20-22 April looks as though it is going to be a really splendid one so make sure your membership is renewed and send your yellow Booking Form to Ken Scotney as soon as possible.

John Normandale, February, 1990"

I am sure Leo and Dorothy Soble would be particularly interested in an article about Motor Caravanning in the U.S.A. since they are planning an extended trip there themselves in the very near future. They are leaving their Talisman at home and hiring an R-V out there. Or buying one and selling it at the end of their trip.

This month to the delight of Mary C and the disgust of almost everyone else, I return to the subject of Tyre Pressures. Having found that Peugeot Talbot and the other base vehicle manufacturers "play it safe" by sticking to the recommendations made in their various handbooks and realizing the majority of our vans come to us fitted with Michelin tyres, I have obtained a copy of the Michelin Technical Data Book, 1989-90 and it's a little mine of information. I am going to quote some of the relevant passages because they can answer most of your questions about "Correct" tyre pressures.

1) "Introduction

The information given in this publication is for guidance only. In the event of any doubt concerning tyre applications and loads, inflation pressures or handling arising from the use of Michelin tyres, please contact Technical Division, Michelin Tyre PLC (01-861 2121)"

2) "Tyre Pressures

Except where two sets of pressures are shown - for "standard" and "full load" conditions - the pressures given in the fitment tables are for vehicles loaded to their maximum gross weight. However, many vans and light trucks seldom if ever run in this state and hence the recommended pressures - especially at the rear - may well be too high. This applies in particular to such vehicles as motor caravans which are usually converted from standard vans.

In these cases it is usually possible and even desirable to reduce the rear tyre pressures though those on the front, whose tyre loadings will not vary much between the fully laden and unladen states, should normally be kept at the recommended figure. Ideally, the vehicle's normal rear axle loading should be determined by weighing or, if this is not possible, by calculation. The approximate pressure for this axle load can then be found by reference to the tyres in question in the section *Axle Loads and Pressures* elsewhere in this publication. Where the recommended pressures are higher at the rear than at the front the

rear tyre pressures should not normally be reduced to less than 3 psi (0.2 bar) above the front tyre pressures. This is to ensure that the vehicle's handling characteristics are not affected."

I have quoted from these paragraphs verbatim since they are important and also because they provide the key to the answers we have all been asking - except John Hunt who has told me of his "rule of thumb" (or hand) for determining the desirable pressure, but I won't go into that now!

The calculations are not nearly so complicated as you might think at first glance. Let me give a few relevant examples. We have more Talbots in the Club than any other base vehicle so I'll start there (I had to work out my own, anyway!).

Sportsman, Rhapsody, Rambler and Harmony, petrol engined or with the 1.9 litre Diesel Engine, from 1986-9, use 6JK rims (it's punched into the rim if you are in doubt and it's usually easier to see on the nice clean spare), and the Michelin fitment (tyre) is 185R14 XZX Reinforced 94R which is a reinforced car tyre. The "standard" pressures are given as 51 psi front and 46 psi rear. No "full load" figures are given so we could suggest other pressures, related to axle loading if these seem to high. Earlier models, from 1982-6, using the CX1000 base, had 165/75R14 XCA75 97/95N tyres (or earlier equivalent) on 5JK rims. If you have those rims and tyres the "standard" pressures are 57 psi front and 65 psi rear. Any variation on these pressures, related to axle loading, would have to take into account the proviso about rear pressures being higher than front so you could leave the front as they are and drop the rear to 60 psi. If that gives a hard ride let me have the axle weights in normal trim and I will make suggestions. I need to know the rim type and full tyre details and if yours are not Michelin, tough, I can't help, at present. (Where the heck do Kleber live, anyway?)

Aubrey Wagstaffe, in January 1989, wrote at length on the subject of tyre pressures for his Talbot GTL Hightop. I faithfully recorded, in the Newsletter, his experiences with computers and other diabolical pieces of machinery at the end of which he was advised to inflate the Michelin 185R14 XCA tyres to 51 psi all round. These tyres were fitted (still are) to the 2500 cc Diesel version (CX1300). Those pressures are the ones Michelin quote for "standard" load for these tyres now on Expresses, front and rear. The Diesel Talbots have less variables than the others. Talisman (I, II or GL, Diesel only) 1400 series chasis cab with 2500cc Diesel engine, should have 185R14 XCA75 102/100N Michelins on a 6JK rim. Standard pressures are 51 psi front and rear on these versions, too. I find these about right and disregard the pressures given by Peugeot Talbot which, understandably, are the "full load" pressures viz: 57 psi front and 70 psi rear.

Aldo Lanteri wrote to me on this matter and got his Turbo D Rambler weighed first - well done, that man! Let me quote from his letter:-

“Our van is fitted with 195-75 R16C XCA Michelin X tubeless tyres. The Talbot book says fully loaded, front 58 psi and rear 66 psi. I believe that these pressures, particularly the rear, seem to be very very high. I have taken the van to the public weighbridge, and with full touring complement, half a tank of fuel and half a tank of water I get the following figures:

Gross	2,580 kg
Front axle	1,380 kg
Rear axle	1,200 kg

I should be grateful if you could obtain for me the correct pressures they would advise me to use.”

Michelin quote “standard” pressures for these tyres as 65 psi both front and rear for the Talbot Express 1800 kg version, no full load figures. However, reference to another table relates these pressures to an axle load of 1959 kg for highway service (and I’m NOT going to go into the other service tyres now!), which is a lot more than Aldo is carrying. The calculated figure for the front axle load is 45 psi and Michelin suggest an extra 5 psi because of the front wheel drive so we come up with 50 psi. The lowest pressure suggested by Michelin for these tyres is 44 psi (3.0 bar) relating to a load of 1350 kg so the actual weight on the rear axle (1200 kg) is off the scale. I think I am prepared to suggest 50 psi all round, the recommendation for “standard load” being the same front and rear. What do you think, Aldo? Are you prepared to try it out, cautiously, and let us know what you feel (good word that) about these pressures? The same tyres are fitted to all Talbot Express Turbo Diesels so it begins to look as though 50 psi all round could be a popular choice for recent Talbots - subject to special conditions, of course.

It’s only fair and always a pleasure to come back to Mary C and her problems. Well, one of them, anyway. Mary, if your VW is basically a Transporter, made between 1980 and 1989, has 5 1/2J rims and 185R14 XZX Reinforced 94R Michelin tyres, the suggested pressures are 33 psi front and 42 psi rear. What more can I say? I know that if I have the wrong base vehicle, wrong rim size and wrong tyre, you will tell me. You will, won’t you? Before you do, though, how about loading the van as for a rally, including Meg and Angela and going to your local Public Weighbridge and persuading them to give you an update on front and rear weights? No, the van, silly.

Having come to a working arrangement with Michelin I thought I had it made but, Oh! no, along comes Don Madge with a request for pressures for his Rambler, fitted with Kleber tyres! I understand Peugeot Talbot may be switching between makes so I will try to find a reliable source of information

on pressures for Kleber tyres. Promises, promises...

Ferries. We have ferries almost everywhere and the last one I mentioned in December was the Hoverspeed service from Dover to either Calais or Boulogne. Quick, efficient, expensive - not so expensive in January, February and March, when it doesn't cost much more than the slower transports. At the moment, on the lowest price schedule, the single fare for van (up to 5.5m) and two adults is £65 on Hoverspeed, £50.50 on P&O, both Dover to Calais or Boulogne, and £74 on Brittany ferries, Portsmouth to Caen. This is where I want to make the point, already well known to most, that if you can choose when and where to go, you can save a fortune in ferry fares. For instance, on the Notice Board towards page 19, there is mention of the Snowbird Club trip to France in July. They say they are departing Portsmouth for Cherbourg by P&O, 08.30, Sunday 15th July (my schedule gives 09.00). This is a "B" Tariff, top whack, and the single fare for a van & two is £119. But I am almost sure they are going on the 08.30 ship on Sunday from Portsmouth to *Le Havre*, on the lower, "D" tariff, for £75, saving £49. This is not meant to knock the Snow Birds, who do a very good job for a lot of people but to show that time spent on study of the schedules can be both interesting and profitable.

Further intense study of the brochures confirmed the adage about the early bird catching the worm or, travel on Thursday rather than over the weekend; on 12th July we could cross from Portsmouth to Caen by Brittany Ferries for £72.00, if we took the 15.00 sailing, AND we could have a free campsite for our first night in France, booked and paid for by Brittany Ferries.

If we should prefer P&O - who this year are charging a flat rate for Motor Caravans and Campers up to 6.5 metres long on all their routes - and expect to cross the Channel more than once in the next twelve months then we should enrol in their Motorpoints Bonus Club, which would enable us to save 20% on the second crossing. But then Sealink do something similar, don't they! I haven't yet obtained their 1990 brochure, sorry about that. Most inefficient of me.

Brittany Ferries have no height restrictions on any of their vessels now and on their services to France charge a set fare for vans up to 5.5m in length. Over that it's £10 per metre or part thereof but unless you've built an extension on the tail end, that won't bother you. P&O don't make any extra charge but ask for prior notification (when booking) if the van is over 1.86m (6ft in old English) high, so tick the box!

Folkestone - Dieppe. No information. Does anyone use this route?
Portsmouth - St. Malo. Brittany Ferries. Tony Jones said, in November, he had just used this route with his Flair. Outward on the "Duchess Anne" which

was in need of some refurbishment, loading and unloading was excellent whilst service on board was satisfactory."

Portsmouth - Caen. B F. Bill Clarke was not happy. "We used the 15.00 sailing. On arrival at Caen at dusk the priority was to get all the many lorry trailers off first, then the lower cars, then by lowering the different sections of the deck, the upper cars, and finally, by raising the decks we drove off one and a half hours after docking". We used this route last May, also the 15.00 sailing, and agree with Bill, "the food has been below average, poorly presented and not what one expects of French cuisine," but we didn't have such a long delay unloading. We agree with Tony's comments, "The Caen and St. Malo routes are ideal for travel into Central and Western France, although the St. Malo route is a ten-and-a-half-hour crossing on the night sailing, therefore a cabin or berth is recommended. All in all I consider the Caen route as one of the easiest ways into France." Dare I put his comments on sites here? Tony wants me to put everything in its place and Sites do not belong in the middle of Ferries, but see just how easy it is for me to be untidy! (All comments and reports on Sites and Supermarkets near to Ferry Terminals are being sorted into a separate document, by Rita, who needs more information from members on this subject, as quickly as possible, please.) There are two all-year caravan sites adjacent to Ouistreham (the port for Caen) suitable for overnight stops. One is at the first roundabout on the outskirts going towards Caen, with a Supermarket nearby. The other is at Benouville about 1km further along towards Caen." The second one was where Brittany Ferries booked us in, FREE!

Poole - Cherbourg. B F. (Truckline). Bill Clarke found this, in the reverse direction, to be "considerably better."

Portsmouth - Le Havre P&O. Awaiting reports.

Portsmouth - Cherbourg. P&O No reports.

Weymouth - Cherbourg. Sealink. Summer service. One sailing per day each way. We have used this route from France several times and have no complaints. Both ports are relatively quiet and loading and unloading don't take too long. Customs at Weymouth once did a spot check or minor blitz on the three or four motor caravans coming from France but, apart from the delay, there was no problem.

Plymouth - Roscoff. B F. No recent reports and they have changed their ships.

Last year from Roscoff to Plymouth the poor old ship had slipped an hour behind schedule some weeks before we used it and didn't seem able or willing to make up time. So we sat about at Roscoff for about an hour and a half, no warning until we were in the queue, had a six hour journey, arriving late of course and then took ages to get to Customs and Immigration, where I think they were as tired as we were and passed us through quickly.

Plymouth - Santander. B F. 24 hour crossing to Northern Spain. The new ferry, the "Bretagne" is said by them to be luxurious. My thought is, with pos

sibly 600 cars to load & unload, how long does it take to get on at one port and off and away at the other? No reports on this ship but Bill (Clarke) used its predecessor, the "Quiberon" and said, in part, "There were many complaints from passengers who had cabins below the car decks, who found sleep impossible due to heat and engine vibration. This was also the case on the return trip, so we slept on settees in one of the upper lounges and were joined in the early hours by disgruntled people from the lower cabins." He and Barbara enjoyed their trip round Spain and Portugal though, but that's another story. Also another time, the West Coast ferries, by Bryan Ellis.

Almost as this goes to press, I have News of Member no. 500, who actually are Michael and Shirley Cross. They joined in December, were invited to the Orchard by the Company and the President - Charles swiftly changing hats -and, what with Christmas and one thing and another, the date was fixed for 26th January. You'll have to wait until next month for a report on the occasion, though.

NOTICE BOARD.

This is a new feature and one which I think will run on from month to month.

There will be a real Notice Board at the National Rally on which Members can advertise items for sale. Notices, postcard size, giving details of the item(s), price(s) asked and the pitch location of your Auto-Sleeper can be stuck on the Notice Board, free of charge. Perhaps it would be a good idea to say when you will be available to deal with enquiries.

Marshals running Club rallies claim the Site fee and rally fee for that rally as an expense to be paid by the Club. This ruling applies for 1990 and is likely to be continued.

The National Rally is treated as a special event and NO RALLY FEE is charged.

Rally Date Changed: Please note Rally No. 4 at Kirkbymoorside, North Yorkshire will be from 4th to 7th May inclusive, over the May Day Bank Holiday, NOT 11th - 13th May as announced last month.

Rally Extended. Please note Rally No.3 at Exeter, Devon will also run from 4th to 7th May inclusive, over the May Day Bank Holiday, NOT 4th-6th as stated last month.

Rally Date Changed: The Rally at the Bath & West Showground is to take place from 21st-23rd September to coincide with the FICC rally there, of course.

Rally Date Changed: As a direct result of the amendment above, Rally No. 16 at Lower Lacon Caravan Park, Wem, Shropshire will run from 28th-30th September. The dates got twisted in transmission, somewhere. Our apologies. **Membership Cards.** Please try to get into the habit of carrying your membership card with you when attending club functions, especially rallies. Although not very important now it will become essential when we have been granted a Certificate of Exemption and start running rallies on unlicensed sites; the Department of the Environment insist on proof of membership being available for inspection at such rallies, so it will mean "No Card - No Admission."

Frank Stinchcombe is asking for volunteers please, to sell raffle tickets at the National Rally. Junior Members helped very successfully last year...Also Dilys needs two or three hard-working adults to help for an hour or so, at busy times, selling regalia and memorabilia from her stall in the marquee. Meet new people and enjoy yourself at the same time! You won't be left on your own, Frank and/or Dilys will be there if needed, to help or advise. Contact them direct at the address given on the list of Useful Addresses enclosed with this Newsletter.

Dignified Personal Identification. Engraved, laminated plastic in satin finish. Clear and permanent, complete with safety fastener. Each badge individually engraved. Blue letters on a white ground with blue edge. For example:-

PHIL DALEY
AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB

Size of badge 2.375" x 0.75" Cost £2.50 each, including postage. Orders with cheque please, made payable to the Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club, to Dilys. Please PRINT your name or the name you want on the badge, clearly.

Do your copies of the Newsletter get mislaid? Why not buy a binder from Dilys for only £4.50, including postage and a case. Each holds 24 copies. See December 1989 Newsletter for fuller details.

Don Madge (515) requests information/advice on suitable awnings for his first Auto-Sleeper, a Rambler. Contact him direct on 0430 423028 preferably early in the evening (before 22.00).

Mountain walkers, actual or potential, can contact Don on the same number or write via the Editor for information on the French or Swiss Alps. He is also willing to organise rallies for walkers, in the UK. Let me know if you would like to join in. So many Members gave walking as one of their interests that producing a list would not be helpful in this case. Let the keenest ones have

first crack of the whip!

The "Wagon Train to France" idea has been well received and a meeting of those interested will be convened at the National Rally, in the marquee at 09.00 on Sunday. In the meantime Reg Rogers can be contacted on 0249 659742.

The Snowbird Club of Great Britain is running an escorted trip to Brittany in July this year for the first time, in addition to their well known winter safari to Spain to miss the snow. Sailing time will be 8.30am on Sunday 15th July via P&O Ferries Portsmouth/Cherbourg and the escorted holiday will last for two weeks, of which 10 nights will be spent at Beg Meil, 4 km from Fouesnant, south west Brittany. You can contact them at P O Box 31, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 4UU. Or telephone Joan Spriggs, Secretary and Tour Organiser, on 0386 871024. (She's probably in Spain at the moment).

Rita Daley wants more articles or reminiscences, long or short, about travelling or living in the van. This is urgent because the little booklet is to be available at the National Rally, if possible.

Rallies. Roger and Carol Slim, like many others I guess, ask if they can attend Club rallies without booking - work schedules can make planning ahead difficult. Yes, of course you can, normally, and your welcome will be none the less warm when you pay your dues to the Marshal. BUT on some sites the numbers they will put on the rally field are quite restricted (eg. Chester Southerly - Max 30 vans) so there may not be room for latecomers. Again, normally the site requires notice of numbers but this is essentially a minimum figure (if we say 30 and only 25 turn up we may have to pay 30 pitch fees anyway). Apart from July and August, I think "casual" ralliers have a good chance of getting a pitch.

For Sale:

ELSAN Visa Potty 238, with pump flush, brand new, never been used, as supplied standard with the Rhapsody, £45.00

PAIR matching sleeping bags, Poly-cotton, 6ft x 2ft 3ins, will make one double, almost new, £10.00. For above three items, contact David or Pauline Lepper, Brookwood, Surrey on 04867 80413, after 6pm or evenings.

WANTED. Renault Traffic Diesel Hightop five speed or might consider petrol. Target date April 1990. H L Cottee, 12 Parc-yr-Onen, Carmarthen, Dyfed SA31 1EP

The 1990 Northern Motorcaravan Camping and Holiday Show will run from 10th-12th August at Ribby Hall Caravan and Leisure Park, Kirkham, Nr. Blackpool. Situated on the main A583 between Preston and Blackpool, only 4 or 5 minutes from Junction 3 of the M55 Motorway, it is an exceptionally good custom built show

site entirely on grass. It is a licensed camping and caravan park with all the usual facilities including a village pub, 2 restaurants, sports centre, sauna, solarium, toilets and shower blocks, launderette, village shop, amusement arcade and children's park. 10.00 to 18.00 each day" - Extracted from a press release - more details when I have them.

Europ Assistance. Don't forget to ask John Normandale for details of their continental personal and vehicle insurance schemes. The Club act as agents and at present pass on the 15% discount to members. Makes the rates even more attractive. A large (A4, 9" x 4.5" or larger) stamped, addressed envelope is requested.

Cruise Control. Bill Clarke would like to hear from any owner of a petrol-engined Talisman who has fitted, or had fitted a Cruise Control. Who better than Barry and Sue Brown, who started the correspondence on this subject. They live at Burgh Heath, Surrey and their phone number is 0737 359985. (Is it possible to fit one to a Diesel?)

Once again I have run out of space, and time, before exhausting the supply of information. I must try to cut the cackle in future, to set my successor a good example!

*Your Editor,
Phil Daley.*

February 1990.

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STOP PRESS * URGENT INFORMATION** for Talbot owners who had petrol tank/fuel starvation problems last year. Doug Wood telephoned from West Kingsdown just after this had been prepared for the printer to say the problem had arisen again and his P T Dealer had found the inside of the fuel tank was flaking. A new tank had been fitted under warranty but, and this is the point, his warranty expires in February and he thinks the other sufferers had taken delivery about eleven months ago, too. Urgent action may be needed. Many Thanks, Doug.

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.