

# AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB



Newsletter 19

April 1990

Greetings!

April is a very important month for the Club because not only did it come into existence officially on 1st April 1989 but we are bound by the Club Constitution to hold our Annual General Meeting in April each year. Since I was involved in drawing up the Constitution I obviously think it was quite a good idea. Spring in the air, air the van, get into the touring mood, etc. So, I will give Clive, National Rally Co-ordinator, pride of place:

"NATIONAL RALLY and ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

By the time you all read this item the detailed arrangements for the "National" will have been finalized and, with only two weeks to go, panic will begin to set in as we wonder what we have forgotten. Negotiations regarding the weather will of course continue right up until the last van leaves the site. Perhaps we will then relax although I suspect we should pay the bill before relaxing too much. You saw last month in the note from Charles that the Company, the Dealers and accessory people are putting on a tremendous show for us on the Saturday and on the Sunday morning. The Club Office and Shop will of course be open from noon on Friday, giving plenty of time for you to get your bearings before the Welcome Party at 7.30 pm. A large Site Plan will be on display near the Club Office to indicate who is parked on which pitch to help you find your friends. Our Wine & Cheese evening will be a good opportunity to "Meet & Greet", as the Yanks say, to background music provided by Chris Siddens, Roving Accordionist.

On Saturday all the stands will be open for most of the day. The Annual Lunch will start at 12.30 in the main marquee, and will be followed at 2.30 by the Annual General Meeting. The Saturday evening "Social" with music by the trio "Comet", who play '60's and Country and Western music, will start at about 8.30pm., following the Annual Dinner which, if all goes to plan, should begin at 6.30pm.

On Sunday morning the stands will again be fully staffed and at 10.00am there will be a short inter-denominational service lead by the Salvation Army Band. Our usual Coffee and Biscuits farewell gathering will follow at about 10.45 for as long as it takes to serve everyone and to bid you all "Bon Voyage". Although the Rally finishes officially at 12.00 noon, there will be no need to rush away. If you wish to stay for extra nights the Site Management will be delighted to hear from you - with the extra money of course. (Special rate £5 per night).

Although the official period for booking is now over, those arrangements applied mainly to the catering facilities. If you find at the last minute that you are able to come, please let Ken Scotney know. We will probably be able to accommodate extra vans but extra meals may not be possible. You will certainly get a welcome.

We look forward to seeing you all.

Clive Jenkins,  
Rally Co-ordinator."

I hear the Company are putting on a Show that will rival the one they put on at Earl's Court AND you can spend most of Saturday and all Sunday morning browsing, free of charge. (Well, almost!). All the new models plus the two Directors and the Sales Manager. What more could you want? In case you DO want more, there will be a small team of specialists there to advise you on the care and maintenance of your Auto-Sleeper and its equipment. The spares shop will be even better stocked than it was last year.

The bar in the main marquee will be open on Friday evening so that those who want to drink something other than free wine with their free food will be able to purchase whatever it is - or whatever the bar stocks! The bar will also be open at lunchtime on Saturday and during that evening. The planned opening times for all things will appear in the programme to be included in your "Welcome Pack".

Did you know that the Peugeot Talbot Motor Company, V A G (UK) Ltd, Lloyds Bank Plc, Auto Sleepers Limited and others, are all sponsoring the event? Full and grateful acknowledgement of the support given will appear elsewhere but this would seem to be the right place to say "Thank You" to some of our supporters because I can assure you the prices of meals would have been considerably higher without their generous help and there would not, of course, be the free Cheese and Wine "Welcome Party" on Friday evening.

Whatever you do, please remember that admission to the Annual General Meeting, on Saturday afternoon, will be by membership card only. If the organisers get the numbers right there will be seats for all.

Since Clive wrote his note, I have heard that we have already beaten last year's figures and the (delighted) sub-committee is putting Plan B into operation. This plan will allow for late booking of pitches but arrangements for meals are a little more difficult. As Clive says, our Caterer needs a bit of notice to arrange meals. Get your booking forms in just as soon as possible please, and contact Ken or Sybil Scotney (0480 451270) regarding last minute changes of

plan. If you have to cancel, let them know as soon as possible. It could make a meal available for someone else.

#### "CHAIRMAN'S CHAT."

I hope that the recent Spring weather will have persuaded you all to send off your booking forms to Ken Scotney for this year's Annual Rally at Billing. The programme looks terrific and I feel sure we are all going to have a good weekend. I know it's a bit early to forecast but I have a feeling that we are going to have another good summer weatherwise and so I look forward to seeing many of you not only at Billing but also at the other rallies which have been organised for 1990.

You will have seen from last month's Newsletter that Reg Rogers and I are planning a meeting for all those interested in a Continental Wagon Train at 9am on Sunday 22nd April. One of the things which has to be decided is whether we just go to one French camp site - as I believe the Caravan Club do with their "First Time Tasters" trip - or visit two or three. I would have thought the latter would be the better idea as one of the things that people new to continental caravanning want to get experience of is booking into a camp site. Anyway this is obviously a matter we can discuss at the meeting on the 22nd.

I have been pleased by the number of people who have written to me asking for details of Europ Assistance. There is no doubt that Europ Assistance, which is a Continental based organisation, give an excellent service and, with the 15% discount available to Club members, their rates are very competitive. It is difficult to compare the relative merits of Europ Assistance with, say, the Caravan Club's Red Pennant service. A lot will depend on how long you are going abroad for and what cover you feel to be necessary. Two points I would make:- Firstly, for those going abroad several times in a year the Europ Assistance annual cover is certainly a good buy. Secondly, the Premier Service, covering Motoring Emergency Service and also Medical and Personal Travel Insurance, only covers Europe - and not North Africa or Turkey. For those travelling further afield, with or without their Auto-Sleeper, Europ Assistance offer world wide Medical and Personal Travel Insurance at increased cost but not Motoring Emergency Service outside Europe.

You may remember that I mentioned a few months ago the rather attractive caravan site that I noticed at Milfontes during my visit to Portugal last Autumn. Daphne & I flew down to the Algarve again just recently and took the opportunity of exploring old haunts which

we hadn't seen for some time. To be honest we weren't as disappointed by all the new developments as we had expected to be. Although the outskirts of Albufeira and Portimao have been very heavily built up we thought the towns themselves retained their character pretty well. We looked at several caravan sites and were particularly impressed with the Club Camping Albufeira which was beautifully laid out and with really excellent toilet blocks and other facilities. Their charges work out at about £8 per night for a motor caravan, two people and electricity, but only £4 per night between October and April. There are two quite respectable sites at Armacao de Pera, quite a lot cheaper than Albufeira, and also a rather disappointing site, Valverde, at Praia da Luz. We saw this one being started some years ago and it seems to have gone downhill pretty rapidly. I would be very interested to hear of members experiences at any of these, or other sites in the Algarve, as we hope to go down there with "Capuccino" before too long.

John Normandale.

April 1990"

Comments on sites in the Algarve could be sent direct to John or to this address for forwarding. We are compiling a list of members' preferred sites throughout Europe (and that does include the British Isles!), so comments on sites anywhere will be welcome. This will be a small list of special sites, small enough to be kept up to date but big enough to span a trip from home to wherever. We don't intend to duplicate the massive lists prepared at great expense by the Caravan Club, Michelin, ADAC., etc.

The guidelines I follow in deciding whether to print a letter or not are of course very simple; does it contain matter of interest to some members (not necessarily the majority) and/or will some useful purpose be served by printing it? I must admit that recently some things have been a bit borderline but I have recognised the enthusiasm behind them and forgiven the length and some over-emphasis.

A letter from Ted and Nora Crust (246) of Calcot raises some relevant points so here it is:

"Dear Phil,

With another A.G.M. on the horizon (Hurrah!) Nora and I feel it is high time we told you how much we value the Club, and how splendid the magazine is, with its interesting and knowledgeable pages, and to offer our thanks to the Committee and other stalwarts for making it all happen. We really glow when we talk to others about the Club. But

- are there other Auto-Sleepers besides Legends, Talismans and V.W.s, we are asked, but of course, we reply, there is the FLAIR. It is dependable, always starts, has pull-you-out-of-the-mud rear wheel drive; that is the non-rust Flair! Life in a Flair, with Auto-Sleeper know-how and 100% back-up, is indeed comfortable and comforting; easy to drive, smooth automatic, layout just right for us; never mind no shower (there are always sites providing showers and loos!) So with 23 to the gallon - tested in France a year ago (on unleaded with no difference in performance) and with spares readily available and relatively cheap, we have only one grievance - the Ford Customer Service department is only as good (or as bad) as other manufacturers.

We have, incidentally, with the aid of Gardners' shower equipment, set up a "permanent emergency" shower at the rear of the van, between the sink unit and the grill unit, complete with roll-down curtains and collapsible shower tray - so we can go clean into the wilderness - but - no anti-social wild camping for us!

Although fitted with mains hook-up and second battery, we do not have a 12 volt charging through the mains system, so if we do not move from a site for a few days, there is danger of the second battery flattening - have I missed something in thinking a trickle charger plugged into the mains would solve the problem?

There is another matter which concerns us. I am referring to the "highly professional press release" of the Caravan Club (Newsletter No 18) which I believe takes us into an area outside the interests of the A-S O C. Surely it is not appropriate for the member of one Club to use another Club's media to promote the other Club's merits in such an overwhelming manner. What about the Camping and Caravanning Club, the Motor Caravanners' Club, the Auto Camping Club? Are these organisations to be given a two page free handout as well? No doubt, they provide an excellent service for their members, and it is arrogant to assume that one is of more value than another. Nora and I have been members of the Camping and Caravanning Club for over twenty years; we have toured abroad many times - with frame tent, trailer tent, caravan and more recently with our Flair, all with the friendly help of our chosen Club, and we hope to do so for many more years, but we would not dream of using the A-S O C as a platform to gain an advantage for the C.C.

Ted and Nora Crust (246)"

Point by point, if I can; after reading all the letter I began to wonder if the Hurrah for the up and coming A.G.M. was because Ted and

Nora hope to be able to elect a new committee, or at least someone to replace the present Editor! If Flairs and Friskies don't get mentioned very often it is because I get very few letters in which they are mentioned; what I don't get I cannot print, if you see what I mean. Regarding the use of a trickle charger on the second battery, I think it should be emphasized that the (second) battery must be dis-connected from the circuit before charging - has any Member any further advice?

The "Press Release" was a letter from a Member and contained the answers to many questions we are asked about foreign touring, especially by those who are hesitating on the brink. I thought it was helpful and likely to be of interest to many members so I printed it. The A-S O C cannot hope (and doesn't want) to compete with the big, established Clubs who play a rather different role in the scheme of things. Gordon pointed out what the C.C. could do for anyone interested. Perhaps it was a little on the long side but it had a lot to say and said it very well. No comparison was made or even suggested with other organisations; to praise one club is not to denigrate others. As for "two-page handouts" for other Clubs, just try me! (I did give the Snowbirds a bit of a mention a little while ago). Incidentally, I notice that the Caravan Club, who will provide routes marked on maps for members, suggest to their members that they should apply to the A A if they want greater detail with their routes. See what I mean? Your comments are welcome.

And what about wild camping being anti-social? Or is it the people who do it who are anti-social? We like to camp away from organized sites sometimes, in appropriate circumstances, especially in northern Scandinavia where it is accepted, within the well-known rules. Perhaps it would be a good idea to define "Wild Camping". It seems to me everyone knows what they mean by the term but we don't all use the same definition. It may be easier to approach the question from the other way and decide what is NOT wild camping; parking up overnight on Licensed Sites and Certificated Locations is obviously OK but since in this country and many others it is quite legal to use private land, with the permission of the owner, for a few nights that isn't wild, is it? Do we tend to let our emotions get involved, letting the term "Wild Camping" conjure up a picture of disreputable people in rundown vans making a mess and a nuisance of themselves and thus become a bit too sweeping in our condemnation of the use of anything other than "official" sites? Is the term "Casual Camping" a better one to use? This is a subject that will get a lot of airing in the near future so let's have some thoughts on the

matter. Briefly, of course!

Another base vehicle which gets little mention is the Renault and that's partly my fault. Months ago I had a letter from Pam and Geoff Franks of Cobham and I only mentioned part of it at the time because I was going to be clever and find the answers to some of the questions they asked. But I didn't manage it, did I? Sorry, Pam and Geoff, let me try to make amends by printing it all now:-

"Dear Phil,

Thank you for Newsletter No 13 - best yet.

1. I agree with Gordon Rollinson and would offer my services as co-ordinator for improvements for the Renault RCX model.

2. Thank you for the information on unleaded petrol for the Renault - this will save us money.

3. We also enjoyed the separate area set aside for us at Shepton Mallet - our thanks to the organisers.

4. Is a separate area planned for the 1990 Brands Hatch Jamboree for Auto-Sleeper Club members?

5. We will give you our contribution for your folder covering France and Spain.

6. Help please:

a) Has any member fitted a waste tank to the RCX? Details would be welcome.

b) Can a sliding window be fitted to the roof to replace the fixed one? - this is available for 1987 models.

c) How can the driver's seat swivel if the handbrake is on?!

Yours sincerely,

Pam and Geoff Franks. (303)"

There will be a Club area at Brands Hatch - please let John & Daphne Normandale know when you book & mark your booking form "Auto-Sleeper Owners Club", too. There will also be one at Shepton Mallet, Rally no. 16). Renault RCX owners can contact Pam & Geoff at: "Two Hoots", 4 Birch Vale, Cobham, Surrey. KT11 2PX.

A letter that touches on a variety of topics came to us from Ashford in Kent recently. It was written in January but due to lack of space has been held over. Anyway, by this time Eric and Pat are probably back from New Zealand and can have the thrill (!) of seeing their names in print:-

"Dear Phil,

Congratulations on the continued supply of interesting and useful information in your excellent Newsletters. How do you manage to keep it up?

First I must say how much we enjoyed the rallies at South Cerney and Honeybourne last year. I wish that we could have attended more but we always spend the months of June and September on the other side of the Channel and in between we are kept busy looking after our grandchildren's pets, a pony, three cats, a rabbit, and two guinea fowls, while they spend their school holidays in Hong Kong - quite apart from harvesting soft fruit in our gardens. Its a busy life being retired.

We are off to New Zealand next week for a Motor Caravanning holiday and will be back in time for the National Rally. In case some members are interested I am enclosing a brochure on Motor caravan hire in New Zealand. We booked through New Zealand House by phone and they were most helpful and gave us immediate confirmation for the dates we requested. During last summer we talked to the New Zealanders we met up with on sites and gathered a wealth of information and addresses with requests to call on Mum, etc. We are also grateful for the advice we received from Jean and Ivor Thomas who we met at Honeybourne. Because we are staying in Hong Kong both ways to break the journey, we are travelling by "Cathay Pacific" but the cheapest way to New Zealand is by Britannia Airways from Luton at £699 return with stopovers in Singapore. I have been told by people who have used this service that the food and service is excellent with better than average legroom. The hire of a van (at 2.69 NZ dollars to the £1) is £45 per day compared with around £60 for a car and Motel vouchers, but as we know, there is greater freedom with a van, without the problem of finding somewhere to stay at the end of a tiring day.

Now for a few comments which may prove useful for the Newsletter.

For those contemplating buying a diesel van, our present van is a VW High Top, Turbo Diesel. It is our third V.W., the first being a 1700cc air cooled petrol van (Purchased in 1972 for £1500 and sold for the same amount 10 years later and still going strong with no signs of body rust). We had a steady 25 mpg with this van but when I retired we opted for the 1600cc Diesel V.W. because we intended to use it mainly on the Continent where there can be a saving of as much as 80p per gallon over petrol (eg France, Belgium, Denmark). The diesel gave us 35 mpg but we had one drawback with a top speed of 68mph which, although fine for touring, left nothing in reserve when overtaking lines of lorries on the Autobahn with the prospect of 100

mph+ Mercedes bearing down in the overtaking lane. The Turbo is a different kettle of fish. Its top speed is 80 mph and is very stable in normal conditions. It has excellent acceleration from 60 mph for overtaking on the Motorway, and is very flexible at lower speeds. In fact once it is rolling I find little difference from my 1600cc Golf (petrol) in average speed and journey times. Its consumption varies from 32 mpg for fast Motorway driving to around 35-37 mpg when pottering in lanes and towns.

We have been touring the Continent for over 30 years and in the early days, because of limitations in time and cash, we frequently made long drives to Southern Italy or Yugoslavia with few stops en route. Now we are older (and more sensible?) we are exploring many of the places we passed by in the night on journeys to our favourite places in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. On every trip now we find interesting places, many untouched by tourism, without travelling hundreds of miles. There have also been some unusual surprises, such as at Clairvaux in Luxembourg where nearby in a wood we saw a British Hudson aircraft lying where it had crashed in 1945! Alongside are the graves of the R A F crew and the agents who were to have been dropped behind enemy lines. Local people care for the graves. It was a very moving experience.

In 1988 we won a 60 hour ticket in a P&O competition and we decided to explore the area between Calais and St Valery-sur-Somme, looking out for a site on the coast. Unfortunately it was during the French school holidays and we discovered that not all the French go South! So we gave up the idea of staying by the sea and drove across some very pleasant country on empty minor roads, to Guines, about 9 miles from Calais. Here we found Camping La Bien Assise, a four star site in the grounds of a 19th Century Mansion, surrounded by a moat. It has excellent facilities, swimming pool, tennis courts, electric points, take-away meals and a good-class restaurant. It was not crowded and the helpful proprietor found us a pleasant level pitch. It is close to the coast and nearby exhibitions of the V2 and V3 wartime sites and the Channel Tunnel workings at Sandgat. A "mammoth" supermarket is also at Sandgat. Guines itself is a typical old French village - a complete contrast to Calais. It has occurred to me that this might provide a suitable venue for members crossing the Channel for the first time or maybe for a future club rally.

I expect some members already have P&O 5.5% Preference Concessionary Shares. We have had them for years and it was by far the best investment I have made (apart from our house). For those who have not heard of them you need 600 £1 shares which will give you

unlimited travel with 50% discount on services from Dover or Felixstowe and 25% to 40% on the other routes. At the current price 600 shares cost £534 and this year we will save £154 for our two trips and receive a 5.5% dividend of £33, a total return of £187 for the year. The share scheme is intended to run at least until 1999 when the shares are redeemable at £1.20 each.

On the matter of Auto-Sleepers' After sales service (George Hawke January Newsletter) I think it is second to none. I first experienced their friendly concern for owners' problems when I called in at Willersey to look at new vans. I mentioned to Neville Jelfs that the plastic window in the elevating roof of my VT20 was coming out of its rubber surround. By the time we had finished looking at the new vans, the side of the roof had been removed, taken into the factory and the window replaced. Needless to say I bought another Auto-Sleeper. Subsequently, because of faulty pre-delivery work by the dealer I had occasion to go to the factory again (by prior appointment) when faults in the second battery wiring were rectified. Because a small amount of rust had appeared from under a side window rubber, Charles Trevelyan asked me to return the vehicle to the factory so that this could be rectified and all the windows taken out and sealed. This was duly done. I cannot speak too highly of the help and courtesy extended to us by Charles Trevelyan, Neville Jelfs and the factory staff.

I hope that now dealers have sent staff on the factory courses there will be fewer complaints about work carried out after vehicles have left the factory. If I can keep going in my retirement my next van will be another Auto-Sleeper, but experience has taught me that it would be best to check with the factory whether any modifications or additions can be carried out during the conversion before placing an order with a dealer. Some salesmen are too ready to say that they can arrange for additional work to be done in their workshops, leaving the buyer to live with unsatisfactory results on an otherwise first class conversion. Of course when buying from stock you are in the dealer's hands and it is best to give precise instructions as to what you require.

In the Newsletter the question of security is discussed. My van is fitted with a V.W. Ultra Sonic and door operated alarm, but I have to keep at the lowest setting otherwise movement of the curtains can set it off. We have heard sad tales from other caravanners of their experience particularly in Italy, Spain and France where stealing from tourists' vehicles has become a way of life. It has got much worse in recent years and we now try to avoid leaving the van un-att-

ended in towns in popular tourist areas by leaving it on a nearby site and using public transport. In France stealing from vehicles in Supermarket car parks seems to be coming more prevalent. I have heard of this happening at Grenoble, Lomm near Lille, Dunkirk and Calais. According to the French police small groups of youths, often with mopeds, frequent Supermarkets watching for tourists' vehicles coming into the car park. Having selected a target one of them will follow the occupants into the Supermarket so that he can warn the others when they are about to return to their vehicle. Meanwhile the youths have plenty of time to take what they want and get away.

We try to avoid becoming a target by parking the vehicle so that it stands out on its own, if possible, without cover from other vehicles or, next to any G.B. coaches that may happen to be around - the drivers usually stay with the coaches. Otherwise we avoid going into the Supermarket together, but take it in turns to guard the van.

I hope some of this will be of use to you. I am not one for writing to magazines but I am so impressed with what you have done that I feel I should make some contribution.

Best wishes to you both -

Thank you for your hard work,

Yours sincerely

Eric & Pat Muxlow (46)"

What an interesting letter and so much to comment on. Let's get some facts about P&O Ferries concessionary fares into print. Don't dash out and buy a parcel of the Preference Shares and expect to get a discount off your ferry fares this year. Just let me quote from a note issued by P&O Concessionary Fare Department, January 1990:-

"P&O 5.5% (net) Redeemable Non Cumulative Preferred Stock (P&O Concessionary Stock)

Your attention is drawn to two important points:

1. To qualify for concessions you must be the registered holder of the required nominal amount of P&O Concessionary Stock on 31 December immediately before the sailing date, and at the sailing date.
2. Concessions are available only to the individual named (first named individual in the case of joint holdings) in the P&O register, concessions are not available to companies or to individuals holding stock through nominees.

An up-to-date guide to the Scheme, a sailing and fares brochure for the following year and two booking forms are sent to eligible stockholders in December every year.

A fixed non-cumulative preferential dividend of 5.5% (net) is paid on the P&O Concessionary Stock on 1 July in every year in respect of the year ended on 30 June.

Stockholders with at least £600 nominal of P&O Concessionary Stock on 31 December 1989 can claim the full concessionary discounted travel in 1990. Holders of between £300 - £599 nominal of P&O Concessionary Stock are entitled to half the value of the full fare discount.

The stockholder must travel personally - and take a car, motorcaravan or motorcycle - to qualify for reduced fares. You can take up to three additional adults, with two children counting as one adult.

The reductions apply only to standard rates for private vehicles and accompanying passengers. They do NOT apply to special rate fares, foot passengers, towed caravans and trailers, inclusive holidays or shipboard goods and services.

Concessionary bookings must be for return (two way) journeys - but a different route can be used in each direction.

There is no limit to how many concessionary trips that can be made during the year. Further application forms may be obtained from:

P&O European Ferries

Concessionary Fare Department

Channel House, Channel View Road, Dover, Kent CT17 9TJ.

What are the concessions?

Discounts on standard fares are:	Full	Half
Dover & Felixstowe routes	50%	25%
Portsmouth routes	40%	20%
Cairnryan-Larne	25%	12.5%

Applications by telephone or personal call cannot be accepted."

Now you are on your own. If you want more information write to the address given, they are very helpful. The recent price of the Stock was 88 pence per share. Don't forget brokers' fees and stamp on top of the purchase price - I think I paid about £33 on top for 600 shares so this year's dividend will pay for that.

Some more on ferries, West Coast ones this time and then we'll call a halt on general comments on services across the sea until the end of the year when your reports will be welcome. This contribution was to have appeared last month but once again there was pressure on space and, on top of that two of the Major Glossies covered the subject pretty well in their March issues. We can't always beat them!

Eryan Ellis who lives in Westonzoyland and describes himself as

being "One of those who usually travel in the opposite direction to the majority" has sent in the following notes which cover some of the ferries which receive fewer comments.

"Swansea-Cork. (Swansea-Cork Ferries). A comfortable boat with sufficient seats and accommodation for all the passengers, even on one occasion when we know that every available vehicle and passenger ticket had been sold. Prices on board reasonable. (Polish) crew helpful and polite. The problem is that the Irish Government was so late in agreeing to give them a subsidy for 1989 that it was too late for them to find a boat to charter; result, no service in 1989. This service will be operating again in 1990. It is scheduled to sail between 9th May and 30th September and from a quick glance at the fare structure it appears to cost only an extra £10 each way over the Sealink route. There is no surcharge for overheight vehicles! Full details are available from Swansea-Cork Ferries, Kings Dock, Swansea. Telephone 0273 606686.

Fishguard-Rosslare. (Sealink) Prices on board are reasonable but on sailings where the boat is full of private vehicles the accommodation is very crowded and there are insufficient seats for the number of passengers. They do make an effort to keep the Motorists' lounge for motorists but the seats are incredibly uncomfortable and definitely not recommended. If it is mainly commercial traffic then there is plenty of room. There are only about a dozen cabins with the result that they are not advertised and in fact the travel agent's video display will tell you that none are available; to get one you have to be in the know and insist that the agent contacts Sealink by phone.

Pembroke-Rosslare. (E&I Line). Haven't used this route for a while. In the days of their own boat I found it slightly better than Sealink but in 1989 they chartered a boat. The main drawback is that they impose a £30 surcharge (return) on "overheight" vehicles which Sealink does not."

I am going to include Bryan's comment, made in July last year, on another ferry, for interest:

"Newcastle-Bergen. (Norway Line). Just come back from using this service - what a smashing country Norway is, especially scenically! And I have never seen so many motor caravans (mainly German, of course) especially as one travelled further north. The ferry is comfortable with plenty of all types of accommodation. Pity that even these days they expect you to report at least 90 minutes before sailing. But the real gripe is the level of prices on board. They charge Norwegian prices which surely is quite unjustified. This

applies everywhere: cafeteria, restaurant, bars, etc (coffee 70 pence a cup in the cafeteria, £1.50 for a half-litre of beer or a single measure of spirits in the bars). And the Duty Free prices are geared to the Norwegian market (about £10 for a bottle of spirits or 200 cigarettes).

With best wishes, and keep up the good work. The latter is appreciated even if we are an "unsociable couple" who are unlikely to attend anything approaching a rally. That is why we go to the less popular areas and use CLs in the UK, never a campsite.

Yours,

Bryan Ellis. (330)"

Taking last things first - I don't think anyone has to make excuses for wanting to do their "own thing", that surely is what motor caravanning is all about. Some of us are gregarious and some of us are not - you pays your money and you takes your choice! On the subject of Norway Line and prices for food and drink, especially drink, I find this applies to all the Scandinavian ferries and was not happy about it, until I heard of a very unpleasant happening on one of the Eritanny Ferries from Plymouth to Santander involving a bunch of drunks. Does anyone ever recall seeing any drunks on the Scandinavian ferries? It would certainly cost a packet to get seriously the worse for drink and I wonder if that is one reason for the exorbitant prices? On the other hand your Boozy Brit isn't going to go to Scandinavia anyway, is he? Whisky at £34 per bottle, was it? And hard to come by, especially in Norway. Not that I tried, of course. We have decided that our preferred route, even to the Far North, is via one of the fairly short sea crossings (Felixstowe-Zeebrugge has a lot going for it from anywhere much north of Watford) and then driving through the more interesting parts of Holland and West Germany to Puttgarden whence the ferry to Rodby Havn in Denmark takes one hour and has duty free facilities, useful for topping up purposes. I sound just like another Boozy Brit, don't I but I'm not, really. We just like a drop of the hard stuff as a nightcap. Some drops may be larger than others but who's watching?

It will surely be interesting to see what happens to the former Sealink British Ferries now that they have been bought by Stena Line of Sweden. The latter say they intend spending several millions on bringing the ships (and crews?) up to Scandinavian standards. Might take a month or two...

With his permission I am going to quote extracts from Eric White's recent letter, in appropriate places. They prefer crossing to France from Portsmouth, "a much easier journey from the Midlands

than to Dover. A little study of the P&O brochure shows that if one can choose days and times mid-week (Monday to Thursday) it makes the journey considerably cheaper and the boats are never more than half-full. I have kept a record of the cost of fares from 1982 to 1989 and the price each year has hovered between £90 - £99 (taking the 40% Concession). This year it has gone down to £84.

We prefer the trip to Cherbourg because it is shorter and the afternoon boat gets in just before 7 pm and we can reach Villedieu-les-Poêles by 9 pm down a splendid, at that hour, empty road along the west coast of the Manche peninsular."

#### ODDS and MODS.

"The gale force winds which we have all recently endured must have reminded any motor caravan driver they are not the most aerodynamic of vehicles. Although I have never fitted any spoilers to the Admiral, people who have do claim an improvement in stability. However one thing I did do after experiencing some sidewind drift was to have the tracking of the front wheels checked. Although set within the recommended specification I was advised to set them to run parallel (which is also within the VW spec.) and there was a noticeable improvement, certainly far less effort was required to maintain a straight line in a crosswind. An interesting point here is Michelin recommend the tracking to be parallel on VW vans if fitted with Michelin "X" tyres anyway.

The Admiral is about to be given his pre-season check, ready for another (hopefully) problem free year of camping. As well as all mechanical items to undergo a scrutiny there are the less obvious but far more important things such as gas pipes and wiring (particularly the mains part). With constant flexing and vibration of the vehicle all the pipes and wires are subject to movement, so must not be overlooked.

Rust is a very sad fact of our motoring life in this country and it was this which caused us to sell our previous VW (1973 vintage). Determined not to be caught out again by buying a van with rust already present we searched for a new or preferably nearly new VHT. Our dream materialised with the Admiral and even though coming up to 5 years old shows no rust on any of VW's workmanship. However it is dismaying to note rust is appearing around the windows of the conversion, where the panel van has been cut for the apertures. Removal of one window last year showed serious decay which had to be treated. Whether I've stopped it only time will tell, but my experience has proven it is an uphill struggle. It is a great shame Auto-Sleepers do

not use the windowed van from VW to eliminate this problem at the same time giving us the option of double glazing which is available for these vans.

This brings me to a final point. Does the Auto-Sleepers team examine older models that have had some wear and tear to look for ideas on improvements? The motor caravanner has always had to bear the brunt of a convertor's ideas, whether good or bad, so it would be nice to know at least Auto-Sleepers learn from mistakes in early conversions of current models. (Yes, I've filled in the factory questionnaire, but it's not the same, is it?). And change does not necessarily mean improvement. All food for thought.

Happy travels,

Roger & Carol Slim (17)"

Another item that comes under this heading is "Cruise Control", so:-

"Dear Phil,

Well, a lot has happened since I last wrote to you. I have been in contact with Zemco Ltd. (who make cruise controls and other automotive products), and they have kindly offered a generous 20% discount on their products to A-S O C members. In addition, they offer a nationwide fitting service and are prepared to offer a 10% discount on their charges, which appears quite reasonable compared to those of a garage.. Good news, I think you'll agree, and one more reason to be a member of the Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club!

I am now in possession of some brochures and price lists, some additional advice sheets, and, most important, a special order form which affords members the 20% A-S O C discount. Any member interested in cruise controls may send me a large stamped, self-addressed envelope, when I will forward these details to them. Please include Membership Number though.

I would particularly welcome members' experience with other makes of cruise control, particularly Econocruise, whether they are worth the extra money, compared with Zemco. Incidentally, the two controls offered by Zemco are about £100 and £156 (including discount and depending on model).

Regards,

Barry and Sue Brown (370)"

The address is:- 8, Heathdene, Brighton Road, BURGHEATH, Surrey. KT20 6AW, but I am not sure about the amount of postage required; 60 grams isn't a lot where brochures are concerned. You could ring Barry on 0737 359985 if in doubt. Let me be the first to say Thank You to

Barry for his efforts on our behalf - Well done that man!

At the risk of incurring the severe displeasure of our Chairman I am going to mention tyre pressures again, but only briefly. Eric White, who I am sure will not mind my mentioning his recent advancement to the rather select band of octogenarians in the Club (our Honorary Auditor, John Duarte, is probably the senior member at 84), makes what I think is a good point. He says they find a pressure of 58 psi front and rear on their Turbo-Diesel Talisman gives lighter steering, better fuel consumption and a reasonable compromise on comfort. He quotes axle weights, which are available to those interested, but I think the point is, find a pressure between the soft ride which reduces thumps and the hard ride which induces headaches. Eric and Mary prefer a ride on the harder side, with easier handling and better fuel consumption. Let me quote again from Eric's letter: "Regarding the vehicle itself, it has now completed 13,000 miles and the consumption of its turbo-diesel engine has steadily improved and our overall consumption now stands at 30.93 mpg." I am going to try the effect of increasing the pressure in my front tyres to 55 psi because I think 50 psi gives poor mpg and anything higher than 55 psi results in loss of grip.

A note from your Secretary:-

"Two Committee Departures.

As I intimated just after the IGM, I intend to retire as Secretary this April. It was obvious, even then, that the Club was growing fast and that the jobs of Secretary and Editor would grow to match. I thought it was not very good for the Club to have both of these posts held by one couple, since illness and holidays could cause quite a disruption. Both Phil and I get a fair amount of correspondence from people who want advice or help, so it seems better for me to act as back-up and assistant to Phil in future, and cook him nice, tasty meals. One other member of the Committee will not be standing for re-election; Ralph Dulson has illness in the family and does not have time to spare at present. He says he might offer to help again when things are back to normal.

Rita."

This reminds us that, since we are acting under a "temporary" constitution until the new one is agreed at the AGM, all the Committee will be standing down at the meeting and most will be hoping for re-election, some for one year and some for two. For myself I think my stint as Editor could well come to a close after a

further 12 months - this is Newsletter 19, after all. Harry Henthorne will be taking my place for three months later this year to give us a break and I think an Editorial Team should be developed to share the load. It isn't a difficult job, it's very rewarding but it is a tie, demanding about two weeks out of every month, month after month.

It has occurred to me that I should state that the views and opinions expressed by contributors are their own and not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor. Need I print that statement every month?

#### NOTICE BOARD.

There will be a notice board at National, in the main marquee, on which members can place postcard-sized notices - Wanted, For Sale, etc. We suggest your pitch number should be included and times when someone will be there to deal with the response.

There will be a Suggestions Box there, too. Suggestions regarding Club affairs in general and the organisation of the National Rally in particular will be placed before the next Committee meeting.

#### "WAGON TRAIN.

The advantages of a "Wagon Train Party Tour Abroad" are companionship, security and mutual aid. A reassuring and comforting thought for some travellers away from home.

If you have never taken your motor caravan abroad this could be your chance to do so. If you have and would enjoy going on holiday abroad with fellow club members, your support would be most welcome.

John Normandale and I look forward to meeting all interested members at 9am on Sunday 22nd April in the main marquee at the National Rally.

Reg Rogers.

(Tel: 0249 659742)"

KIRKBYMOORSIDE. Joan Tubbs will be there and hopes the weather will be good enough for her to organise a nature walk on one day or another. We've got it in our diary - see you there, Jim and Marion.

#### CALOR PROPANE.

Ron Lear suggests the Club should use its influence to persuade Calor to supply propane in 7kg cylinders. He says "The advantage lies not only in the avoidance of "frozen" supplies in wintry conditions but also, since propane is a hotter gas, an ability to have a longer lasting supply for use when overseas touring where Calor supplies for refills are not available (e.g.Scandinavia)." Will those interested in this idea please write or tell us at the Club Office at Billing.

WANTED.

Renault Rapport or earlier Renault hightop. Mr B. Minett-Smith is prepared to go to £9,000 for a suitable vehicle. Contact him at 248 Brooklyn Road, Cheltenham (0242 522973).

FOR SALE.

Peter Harrison, who lives in Kings Lynn, telephoned to say he has a Talisman for sale or exchange. It is a 1986 model, converted to Talisman II specification at the Factory. 12,000 miles, regularly serviced, 4-berth, a host of extras, would sell for £14,250 or would consider an exchange with cash adjustment, for a VW Trooper with 2.1 litre engine. Any VW with that engine would be of interest, elevating roof preferred. He intends to tow a small caravan to accommodate his growing family on holidays abroad. Contact Peter on 0553 674158.

CABANON ANNEX. Rear or side fixing. Suitable for Hi Top. Can be left free standing. Used once only. £165. Contact Marjorie Savage (292 on (Malvern) 0684 564487.

PAULCHEN RACK with mountings and fittings for two cycles. Other fittings available to make the rack a load or ski carrier instead. It will hold up to four cycles and does not necessarily have to have any holes drilled in the vehicle. Peter & Wendy Fisher are asking £130.00 and can be reached on 0543 377777.

STOP PRESS. Have just heard from the Orchard that they will be bringing a supply of the latest type of spoiler for Talbots to the National and a fitting service will be available. The price for the spoiler and fitting will be £90.00 plus VAT. This is a very special price for this rally only. Available in white or grey while stocks last. Have you ever rammed your toes into the table socket base - very cold in winter! A supply of plugs, black or brown, to fit the hole will be available at Billing. (A-S Spares Shop)

Out of space, again. See you at Honeybourne?

Your Editor,

Phil Daley.

46, Ulverley Green Road SOLIHULL West Midlands B92 8BQ  
(021 706 1816)

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