

AUTO-SLEEPER
OWNERS' CLUB



Suggested by
Arthur Irvine + Roy Davies

NEWSLETTER 29

FEBRUARY 1991

Hello.

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP? I hope that you have because if not this will be your last Newsletter. Anybody who has not renewed by the end of February each year is automatically considered to have resigned. Do make sure that you don't miss out.

Last month we had the first part of a contribution from *Margaret Fairburn*, the lady who 'Couldn't write a thing'. Now here is the second part to complete the picture.

"Turkey on the Orient Express - Part Two

Our destination was Pamukkale where we soon found a camp-site with trees, which was a good thing as it was 91° F in the van at bed-time. This place was one of the most impressive sights we have seen. Imagine a cliff 5 kilometres long and encrusted in what looked like white fondant icing with water cascading down. 2,000 years ago the Romans built a city here to take advantage of the calcium-rich hot springs which are still running today and depositing the calcium on the ever growing cliff. We spent a whole afternoon splashing around on the cliff in the warm water. Magic!!

One afternoon we went to visit the remains of the Roman city and amphitheatre. We were immediately engulfed by a class of about 30 charming schoolgirls, aged around 12 years, who were very eager to improve their English. They had been learning it for only 6 months and we thought it was excellent - certainly better than our 4 words of Turkish. (Rarely did we have a language problem as there was usually someone who spoke English.) The girls asked questions about our holiday, our family at home and what we thought of Turkey, Mr. Bush and President Gorbachev. They asked for our address and up to now we have had letters from two of them, beautifully written.

The next day was an easy drive of 150 miles to Kusadasi. Shortly before arriving in the town we turned off the main road through a little village of Canlik and found more than a dozen steam locomotives parked in a siding. This made Arthur's and Kenneth's day as they are both steam enthusiasts. Some looked as though they might still run. Perhaps a steam preservation society in the making?

The Orient Express calls at Kusadasi each Wednesday at 10.00 a.m. which gave us another couple of days to explore the area. One of the days we spent at Ephesos

and found it a little eerie to think that we were walking down the same marbled street indented by the wheels of Anthony & Cleopatra's chariot.

Apparently the settlement at Ephesos was begun in the 11th century B.C. by the Greeks; taken over by the Romans in the 1st century A.D.; destroyed by the Goths in 263 A.D. then buried by the river. In 1866 an English engineer, J.T.Wood, started to excavate the site. An Austrian team took over at the end of the century and are still digging today. There is a huge amphitheatre which holds 24,000 people and on occasions they hold concerts there - Joan Byers has been among the singers.

Upon our return to Camping Yar, next door to Camping Onder, we discovered that a German "Wagon Train" of 25 cars and caravans had moved in to join us and, like us, were preparing to rejoin the ship. We chatted as best as we could and they were very amused by our plaque on the back of our van "RETIRED - NO PHONE - NO WORK - NO MONEY - NO WORRIES".. One of them was video-ing it and told us of a similar thing in Germany. It is called "Der Dis Year Club" - in other words - do it now because next year - you never know!

We were up early on Wednesday morning, everything stowed, down to the docks and parked by 10.00 a.m. We decided to have a final stroll round the town to spend the last of our Turkish lire.

The ship sails at 3.00 p.m. thus allowing passengers not leaving the ship time to visit Ephesos. Then it is only a lovely scenic 2½ hour cruise through the islands to Patmos. We didn't take the excursion on the island but chose to have a gentle stroll ashore to sample the ouzo - hic! Back on board by 8.00 p.m. for dinner and by the time we had eaten we found the harbour-side lights slipping slowly astern as we headed out to sea with Katakolon to be our last port of call.

The evenings on board need never be dull. There is a cabaret and dancing each night and a flutter in the casino if you wish, or if you prefer, like us, to sit and mull over the day's events with a coffee or something stronger there are plenty of quiet places to be found.

6.30 a.m. on Saturday morning and Venice was on the horizon. St Mark's Square was strangely quiet as we sailed slowly towards our berth. The four of us were on the quayside and parked up by 9.30 a.m. Joan & Kenneth didn't manage a trip round Venice before sailing on 19th

May so we set off for a mini-tour of the sights. Afterwards we bade them farewell and all agreed that it had been a wonderful trip. They headed North to Austria and we went East to Trieste and then South into Yugoslavia to see some friends who were on a package tour near Split.

We then headed back North and had a couple of days at Lake Bled and a further two weeks were spent visiting Southern Austria. Over the Gross-Glockner Pass with its wonderful views (we melted our front wheel trims on the way down!) then a visit to the "Eagle's Nest" at Berchtesgaden, which was Hitler's hide-out, was well worth the detour.

We passed through Munich in a tropical type storm and spent the next 2 days beside the Rhine at St. Goar. Our route to Calais lay through Aachen, Liege and Mons and upon arriving we were relieved to find that the Sealink strike was over.

Finally I feel that I should have called this article "Hello, Turkey" as there were times when we felt like royalty when the people working in the fields, mainly women, ran to the roadside waving and shouting "Hello, Hello". But beware! The bull-dozers are working and we found the real Turkey away from the coast.

We never did buy one of those ruddy carpets!

Helpful Notes

It had taken us 7 weeks to complete the trip. We clocked up 4,000 motoring miles plus the ones on the ship and everything went according to plan. The Legend performed very well and purred along at 60 m.p.h. on the auto-bahns averaging over 30 m.p.g. Now it has loosened up it gives us 33 m.p.g. and we find it ideal for our own needs - small enough to go shopping and big enough for our trips.

We obtained our brochure of the cruise through our local travel agent. Prior to our trip Sealink were the owners of the ship but early in 1990 the Orient Express was taken over by Euro-Cruise Line. The Orient Express experience is not cheap - but think about "Der Dis Year Club". Fortunately we were able to reduce the cost by £340 including a reduction on the Sealink crossing because of the Apex ticket offered in the brochure. Booking is also available through the Caravan Club. Camp sites around £3 - £4 and we found the standard good. Diesel £1.24 per gallon - prior to the Gulf

crisis. Eating out very reasonable. We used our Access card to draw currency in all the countries we visited - no problem! We also put our account in credit before we left home to cover any bills that arrived while we were away.

Margaret & Arthur Fairburn."

I found this story most interesting - especially as it is a little unusual in that the "ferry" part of the trip is an essential part of the holiday. A bit different from the "Cross-Channel-Bash" that most of us are more used to. Now, I wonder if I could get the van onto a low-load truck on the back of the railway Orient Express from Victoria to Venice and then take this ship to Turkey.....I wonder more if I could afford it!

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Some of our members venture to the Arctic, some go to the Alps, others go to the Midlands. Why? To see snow, of course. You will probably remember that in December 1990 the Midlands had a fairly severe snowfall. Among many of the services affected the airport was closed for a time. When things began to improve the following couple of items were heard on the radio.

The electricity board had some helicopters about checking for faults on the power lines. After some routine exchanges the ground control was heard to advise that the choppers were getting a bit close to the Telecom or similar tower. A third voice, not previously heard, immediately came back to ground control with "Boi-n-n-n-n-g!"

The other happened just after the airport was reopened.

Pilot: "What is the runway like now, please?"

Ground Control: "Just ready for ironing, sir. Slightly damp!"

It just goes to show that whenever there is any sort of crisis the British sense of humour carries the day. My thanks to *Rita Daley* for passing on these pearls.

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In the middle of December I received a telephone call from *Bill Lauder* of Bury which was somewhat disquieting.

He bought a new Talisman GL in May 1989. He apparently went to start the engine just to ensure that all was well and found that the battery had discharged. Undaunted, he went to couple in the second battery and found that although it was correctly fitted with the negative to earth the battery casing had been manufactured with the '+' sign at the NEGATIVE terminal.

As he so rightly said, such an error could cause all sorts of problems. Luckily, he has some knowledge of electrics and electronics so was able to sort matters out. But he felt that a warning that there may have been a batch of rogue batteries ought to be put into the Newsletter as soon as possible.

Naturally I let *Charles Trevelyan* know immediately and have been advised that all batteries at the Orchard have been checked and found correct. It may therefore be just a single rogue battery has appeared but you may like to check your battery - when the weather is a bit warmer, perhaps.

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Dear Harry,

"I had a very interesting letter from Phil Daley recently and I enclose the relevant bits for inclusion in the Newsletter when you have space. I have added comments where necessary.

1. Peter Fisher has fitted a pair of Fiamm "electronic" horns to his Talisman and they were such an improvement on the factory fitted horn that I have done the same. They are available from Halfords and the only bits and pieces needed are a few spade connectors, an in-line fuse holder and 10 amp fuse and connecting wire. The two leads that are attached to the original horn are connected to two terminals on the supplied relay and the rest is just as described in the instruction sheet.

Do ensure that you use wire capable of taking 10-15 amps, as the current load on the compressor is heavy.

2: A minor item which has improved things more than I expected is a good thick coat of underseal under and around the front wheel arches. This not only protects but reduces noise from thrown up chippings and general road noise. The rear wheel arches now need cleaning before they get the same treatment. I used Finnigan's Underbody Seal with Waxoyl but there are others. I like its property of remaining flexible.

3. This was shown to us by Barry Crawshaw at the Kirkbymoorside rally and was very important to Rita who has always thought the passenger/navigator in the van should have more handy storage space for maps and other items needed fairly frequently while under way. Barry had fitted a pocket to the nearside door, identical to the one fitted as standard by Peugeot Talbot to the driver's door. To follow suit one should obtain a pocket from the nearest PT dealer, part number 939115, costing £7.80 plus VAT, and a packet of four screws, ref. 6912, from the same source. Remove the grab handle (2 screws), window winder handle and door catch shield then carefully remove the trim-retaining pegs. Take the trim away and remove the plastic sheef stuck to the metal of the door - CAREFULLY - this will have to be refitted. The inside face of the trim is marked at four places where the fixing screws for the pocket go, so make small holes in the trim to assist the entry of the screws, hold the pocket against the trim in the right place, tighten the screws then put everything back again. Dead simple, very effective and not expensive.

I and my Navigator agree whole-heartedly on this modification. May I suggest that whilst you have the trim panel off why not carry out the modification shown in para. 4 (below)? Also, to combat the possible/probable RUST problems, give the inside of the door a thick coating of the underbody seal (see 2 above), especially the lower part where the outer and inner metal door panels join. Make sure, however, that you do NOT bung up the slots which allow water to run out. One tip: when removing the trim retaining pegs put a large screwdriver on each side of and close to the peg. Gradually and evenly lever outwards. They are extracted more easily that way. I've noticed that on the new Talbot chassis they have reverted to the old method of fitting a pocket to each door as standard. A lot of owners must have had a moan.

4. The other item on the list is the application of Accoustiseal (treated felt) panels to the inside of the front doors in an effort to improve both thermal and acoustic insulation. I have the felt - all I'm waiting for is a reasonably dry and warm spell of weather! Accoustickit Ltd. of Chadderton, Oldham, produce a kit tailored to the cab and under-bonnet area of the Talbot Express but it is not a lot of use to us since it would need to be applied before the carpet was laid.

That's all for this month.

Barbara & Bill Clarke."

Thanks, Bill, (*and Phil*) for some very useful tips. For your ease, dear reader, the bits in *italics* are from Phil, the rest is (are) Bill's comments. Confused yet? Never mind, I'll keep trying! And from the same pen two weeks later: "Dear Harry,

Just a few notes for the Newsletter following a phone call I had recently. Mr D. Petett rang me from B.F.Parkinson Ltd ref. the Britax Marker Lights. (These were described in Newsletter 20, Page 16.) The four lights, two red and two clear, fitted with festoon bulbs are now available for £10.85 which includes V.A.T. and Post and Packing. That's a reduction of £2.00 on the previous price.

They also have on sale a limited number of Phillips Stereo Radio Cassettes (DC 361) for fitting to vehicles. LW, MW and FM bands; Output 12 watts per channel; Manual tuning; Speakers NOT included. Special price £51.75 inclusive of V.A.T. Post and Packing £2.50 extra.

If anyone is interested, please order on a special order form for ASOC members.

Barbara & Bill Clarke."

Please ring Bill for further information and, possibly, for an order form. Telephone Number: 0462 672172.

"Dear Harry,

I have been meaning to put finger to keyboard about fuel consumption on the Talisman Diesel. I did write a letter which appeared in No. 18 Newsletter and quite honestly expected a deluge of replies from members saying that they got a lot more that I do. As I said in that letter people do tend to quote a general figure but cannot back it up with proof, i.e. accurate records. I suppose that it may be that members have started keeping records and are possibly surprised that the figures are not quite what they thought. Maybe that's why there were no replies? At the risk of being a bore I should like to outline the method for accurately checking fuel consumption for those who might just be a little baffled by it all. Today calculators are so cheap and ~~it~~ certainly helps to use one. It is best to use a ruled notebook kept, with pen, in the glove compartment at all times and once you get into the habit of recording the details it comes quite naturally. Columns should be headed as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Litres</u>	<u>Total Miles</u>	<u>M.P.G.</u>
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*You can, if you wish, add a column with the cost per litre but as this varies so much I never bother.

Start initially by recording the date and filling the tank to the lip. On this initial fill there is no need to record how much fuel you put in but it IS important to record the mileage. From then on you must record every litre of fuel put in until such time as you want to do a check. Then you again fill the tank to the lip and record the mileage. Take the first mileage recorded from this latter figure which will give you the total miles run between full tanks. Divide this number by the total number of litres you have put into the tank to give you miles per litre. To convert this to miles per gallon multiply by 4.54. It really isn't as complicated as it sounds.

Personally, I have got into the habit of filling the tank to the lip about every 300 miles and recording the M.P.G. every time. My latest six-month average has been 25.8 m.p.g. but when added to the previous records only gives me a true average of 25.45 over 4 years and 26,000 miles.

Well, I have had my say again so maybe we can get some comparisons, not only for the Talisman and diesel but for all the other makes. On reflection we do not want to give you any more work, Harry, so I would be willing to co-ordinate a record of all types of vehicles over a period to come up with some interesting figures. Providing, of course, that they are accurately recorded by members.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Measom.

Has anybody been keeping such accurate figures? I have done something similar but only on an ad hoc basis. But if you would like to help in such a survey please write to Bob at 110, Churchway, Weston Mill, Plymouth, PL5 1AH or telephone him on 0752 365416. Thanks, Bob, for taking charge of this - I don't think that I would have the time! When I was checking the consumption on a previous van I ran into a bit of difficulty with some pumps issuing gallons of petrol and some showing litres. But I faithfully recorded both measures and, as Bob says, filled to the brim before and after. My computer (a Spectrum then) was brought into play and a little program was written so that I could insert the relevant details in whichever format I had recorded them, the machine did all the work and produced the answers in kilometres per litre (which I didn't really need but it looked good) and miles per gallon.

The snow-clad Midlands certainly gave people time to get some letters written. And brought back memories of less than warm caravanning times. The following letter seems to echo some of the sentiments of one in last month's N/L.

"Dear Harry,

Waking this morning [10th December 1990 - Ed.] to find everywhere covered in a layer of snow revived memories of waking at Honeybourne in April last year to find many ralliers with taps, Calor Gas and the site stand pipes frozen. It was after this experience I thought about a cheap method of retaining heat in the Rambler. Having used the small bubble plastic in the greenhouse and finding that this did improve the temperature by 4 to 5 degrees even on the coldest nights I decided to give it a trial.

5 yards by 5 feet of small bubble plastic was bought from the local garden centre at 75p per yard. My intention was to use existing press studs wherever possible, so additional studs and the necessary punch was purchased from the local caravan shop together with a packet of eyelets.

Concentrating on the two door windows and windscreen a template was first made from brown paper as the slope of the windscreen means a pleat is needed to make it fit properly. From this a piece was cut lengthways from the plastic.

There is a piece of plastic on each side of the windscreen held by six screws. The screws were removed and fitted with the bottom part (i.e. male) of the press stud and then replaced. A small 'S' hook was fixed under each of the screws on the curtain rail end stops.

Fitting the plastic is a bit tricky but, by fixing it under the inside mirror and lowering the sun visors plus the use of several pieces of masking tape, it was eventually shaped to fit against the windscreen. Whilst thus fixed the positions of the additional press studs at the side of the screen and the two press studs holding the curtain straps either side of the doors were marked on the plastic.

Each of the marked positions was reinforced with masking tape and the top half (i.e. female) of the press stud was fixed to the plastic. An eyelet was pressed into the top corner at each side to fit onto the 'S' hooks. The bottom of the plastic was left a little

longer than the windscreen depth and was tucked onto the shelf.

Two pieces were then cut to fit the side windows. A lack of press studs on the off-side window presented a problem. This was overcome by using two pieces of sticky-backed Velcro fixed at either end of the top of the window and corresponding pieces fixed to the plastic. When the bottom of the plastic is tucked behind the bottom curtain spring I found this sufficient to hold it in position.

There are four capped screws at the top and four at the bottom of the near-side window. The two middle screws, top and bottom, were removed and the male part of the press studs added. These positions were marked and the female part of the studs affixed to the plastic. All eight screws could be used but the the corner screws are awkward to get at and as the curtain has a top and bottom rail this held the plastic close to the window.

The male studs on the curtain straps for the top ventilator windows were again used after fixing the female parts of the studs into the plastic. No fixing was needed on the two back door windows because if the plastic is cut to fit against the glass the drawn curtains hold it in position.

Having used this many times in 1990, both to keep heat in AND out, I found it did the job fairly well. Apart from cheapness in installing (less than £8.00) it has two other advantages:

1. It is always dry when being stored.
2. When in position it allows light into the Rambler.

Yours Autosleeperly,

Doug. Wood."

I've said it before, and I shall have to say it many more times I expect, our Members are ingenious. Please watch out next month when I shall be able to give you details of another ASOC booklet about how to make a Multi-Muff - in course of production now.

Now let us see what you can do with this. Sheila Hamwell received an application for membership which put a couple of questions forward. Here they are:

"Related to my interests in the activities of the Club do you have any information on the following, all suitable for a Ford Legend GL:

1. A pump suitable for emptying the waste tank.
 2. Security systems.
 3. A slide out step to fit under the door step.
 4. A stainless steel cycle rack for the rear.
- (I am having one made by a local company and will advise details later.

P. Nutting".

I'm sure that somebody can probably help with items 2, 3 or 4, indeed our Chairman wrote about a cycle rack last month. And that one didn't need fastenings to be drilled into the bodywork. So far as the security systems are concerned I think it is very much a case of everybody to his or her own choice. Perhaps the local crime prevention officer at the police station could advise on suitable systems and fitters.

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RALLY NEWS

Early Birds Rally

Now is the time for all good men (and lady) motor caravanners to get to the Rally up at the Fell End C.P. in Cumbria. Full details will be found in the Rally List in the middle of the Newsletter. So shake out the carpets, clear out the moth-balls, fill up the water tanks and the food lockers, put in the (thicker) sleeping bags, take an extra duvet for additional comfort and GO, MAN (or WOMAN), GO! Cumbria is a bit too far to run from Surrey so I hope somebody will send a write up in due course.

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"Christmas Rally 30th Nov - 2nd Dec 1990

What an excellent way to start the run-up to the festive season!

We joined, at Abbey Wood, a group of pleasant, cheerful and sociable members in 12 Auto-Sleepers. Some of our companions had travelled longish ways to be with us but the 'distance' award must go to Clive & Rita Jenkins who made a 400+ miles round trip - and this despite the fact that professional commitments precluded their arrival before Friday night.

John & Daphne Normandale had laid on an interesting but relaxed week-end programme based on the 1989 experiment using the same site. We believe that they

will have great difficulty, in future years, to improve on their successful formula. Friday evening saw the group assembled at a drink-eat-chat session in the local community hall. Food came from local take-aways and very good it was. Wine from boxes organised by our worthy Chairman (or was it Daphne?) - lovely - wish that our 'local' would provide such an acceptable brew at 50p a glass. For those who preferred it there was beer or soft drinks. The chat flowed freely, the company being so good that it became difficult to get a word in edgeways; quite delightful! And so to bed on a quiet site.

Saturday was 'free & easy'. The excellent local transport services invoked a wide range of activities by the enterprising group including visits to relatives, Kew Gardens, the Thames Barrier, Docklands, London Bridge, West End shops and local soccer matches. Two pairs could not resist the temptation of relaxing, chatting and planning for the coming Spring, soon to be upon us, and to indulge in more of the Chinese nosh sampled last night. In-between-times we played Rummikub [or perhaps Rummibub - Ed.]. If you don't know the game let me warn you that it can be quite addictive.

As darkness fell our companions began to return and we were regaled by details of their interesting wanderings. Another well planned and organised evening was in prospect. Again all the group assembled, this time at a very pleasant local pub. Here the landlord had reserved for us an ideal room which he had decorated to add to the festive feeling. The buffet supper, both hot and cold, was excellently varied and more than generous. The landlord and his lady had also laid on an amusing quiz. And all this for £5 a head. Well done our leaders!

The Sunday morning coffee gathering and raffle was in the open air by our Chairman's Talisman. It was a most pleasant finale and we were so pleased that Rita & Clive won the Christmas Hamper; a just reward for their long trek from Somerset.

There was a somewhat sad note at the end when many of us learned for the first time that both our Chairman and Vice-Chairman feel that they must take a break from office at the A.G.M. We do understand that they deserve a break to enable them to relax at the pleasant meetings we enjoy so much.

And so homewards! All good things have to end. As we departed our leaders could not have been left in any doubt of how much we had enjoyed the week-end and how

grateful all of us were to them for the efforts they had made on our behalf. Thank you, John and Daphne, we look forward to next year.

Joanne & Ralph Dulson".

Thank you, Ralph, - this was the effort to which John Normandale referred in his Chairman's Chat last month - it didn't arrive in time. A good time seems to have been had by all concerned.

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Our hard-working Rally Co-ordinator, Jeff Worley, has a problem with the rally due to be held 16th - 22nd June. Originally this was to be at Shiel Bridge but this venue has been CANCELLED. It has now been arranged at the Forestry Commission site at Balmacara, in Ross-shire and full details will be found a little later on in the rally lists. BUT, and here is the problem, the member who had volunteered to marshal the event is now unable to do so. Therefore unless someone who is planning to attend that rally can volunteer to be the marshal, it will, regrettably, have to be cancelled. Can you help, please? If so, please get in touch with Jeff at 26, Houndstone Park, Gunners Lane, Brympton, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8SQ or telephone him at 0935 24049.

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From: Frank & Dilys Stinchcombe.

To: Everyone who sent us Christmas Cards.

Many thanks. We wish you all a Happy New Year and Pleasant Rallying in 1991.

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"Dear Harry,

I was pleased to receive the December issue of the Newsletter and found it most interesting. I was delighted to see so many answers to the various problems that I had raised in the November issue regarding our Talisman. All the suggestions were gems, and I rushed out armed with copper elbow and tubing to sort out the sink problem, but it was such a cold day that the plastic piping was more rigid than the copper and that solution will have to wait until the sun comes back again. My sincere thanks to all who went to so much trouble to give their advice and help. It just proves

that membership of the ASOC is well worth the subscription.

By the way, I have been wearing my Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club jumper (Bright Yellow, of course) around the town and have received numerous comments from the general public. Most of them relating to how do I manage to sleep in the auto condition or what do you have to own to become an auto-sleeper? I shall ignore them and keep my coat on in future, giving a quick flash only when safe to do so.

Pat & Beryl Johnson."

The jumpers always seem to attract attention even if the colour isn't quite as bright. They are certainly a useful addition to one's wardrobe as are the tee shirts etc. Even the tie gets noticed from time to time when people ask me what the AS stands for and, in one case at least, "haven't you lost the second S?" Further notes about the Club Apparel can be found later in this journal. So if you want to join the 'quick flash brigade' or just to wear the Club badges, please read on.

Have you sent your renewal form in to Sheila yet? If you haven't please try to get it to her soon. It is a very useful document from the Club's point of view because it helps to keep track of which vehicle you have and whether your or your van's details are correctly recorded. At least one member asked why the form was sent to those who have elected to pay by standing order. The answer is quite simple but is in two parts. First, it would be a laborious task to sort the Newsletters into Standing Order Payers and Others. Second, your bank can make a mistake. If the payment is not received and you have said that you are already (or have just started) paying by S.O. Sheila can tell you that something has gone wrong. At the start of 1990 a couple of banks paid the £10 sub for two months and one building society paid for at least three months. So may I repeat the second sentence above, please, because it can prove useful.

Continuing from that, here is a new item which will possibly (probably!) become a regular feature.

"Phil's Rabbit

Among the many interesting points raised when the Questionnaire was being filled in was one along these lines: "We have a Rambler. Are there any other Ramlers in the Club or does everyone own a Talisman?" The short

answer was: "Yes, there are lots of Ramblers" but I thought I would see just how good our records were and quote some real numbers. A few days ago there were 73 Ramblers, 19 Harmonys and 17 Rhapsodys compared with 123 Talismans. [Should that be Harmonies, Rhapsodies and Talismen? Ed.]

Unfortunately our records are NOT complete, partly because not everyone has filled out a Questionnaire and partly because we have had comments such as "Changing to a new A/S in August" and no further details followed! How can we improve matters? I feel it would not be very helpful just to ask everyone who didn't complete a form to do so now because you probably can't remember if you did or not. We do need vehicle details so would it be a good idea if I sorted out the incomplete records and then gave a (short) list in the Newsletter each month? I suggest just Membership Number followed by "Model?" and/or "Reg. No?" Your help on this one would be very much appreciated. Of course, if you know you didn't fill in the form and would like to do so now please tell me and I'll send a blank. That would be marvellous.

Phil Daley."

So you see, completion of the renewal notice will help your Committee to supply answers to your questions. When Sheila has entered all the renewals onto her computer with the latest vehicle details she will be able to extract a list for inclusion on Phil's databank.

A special note from Dilys Stinchcombe, our Regalia Officer. Members who wish to order woollies, T-shirts etc., for collection at the National Rally and A.G.M. should get their orders to her not later than 4th March 1991. For prices, please see the insert in the September 1990 Newsletter.

Identity badges can also be ordered for collection at the rally and the latest date for these is 18th March 1991. The price of these badges is now £2.70 each as shown in the December 1990 Newsletter, page 11.

Please make your cheques payable to "Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club" and send to Dilys Stinchcombe, 40, Hillesley Road, Kingswood, Wotton-under-Edge, Glos., GL12 8RU. When ordering do please make absolutely certain that you quote the correct size, colour and style for the woollies and other garments and, for the identity badges, you PRINT CLEARLY the correct name. Don't forget that if you intend to collect these items at the rally you do not need to include postal charges.

FOR SALE

Well, to be perfectly accurate, not quite for sale. George Wane, of Arnside up in Cumbria is considering exchanging his 1989 Talisman GL petrol model with many extras in favour of a diesel version. So if you too are considering altering your mode of transport and are interested in his current bus, give him a ring on 0524 761657.

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1972 Bedford Auto-Sleeper, 5 berth (including cab bunk), elevating roof, free-standing rear annexe tent. Many extras fitted including rear seat belts and overdrive. Recently partially re-furbished by Auto-Sleepers Ltd. In excellent condition throughout. Full 12 month M.O.T. 82,000 genuine miles only, 1 owner from new, full service history available.

£2,500 or near offer will purchase this delight from Bob Udy who you can talk to on 09397 470 or write to him if you prefer at Towanroath, Sansaw Heath, Clive, Shrewsbury, Salop., SY4 3JT.

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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

You may remember that my copy of the November Newsletter was much delayed and, when it arrived, apparently travelled via Ashford. Much the same has happened again - I am assured that the January edition was posted last Friday and here we are on Wednesday afternoon and still no Newsletter! I know second class post means just that - but this is ridiculous!

The Committee is due to meet at Willersey on Saturday, 26th January so by the time you read this that meeting will be over. One of the main topics to be discussed will be arrangements for the 1991 National Rally & A.G.M. at Home Farm, Edithmead. I know some members have expressed disappointment that we haven't been able to find a more central spot but no-one has suggested any viable alternative. Burnham-on-Sea with its good motorway access isn't as far West as some people seem to imagine and I certainly hope that many of you will be able to make the journey for what should be a really good week-end.

May I please remind you all that we are looking for several new committee members this year, probably four. As I have mentioned previously, serving on the Committee

isn't all that demanding and we really are hoping that some of our members will put their names forward. If anyone is considering volunteering but has some reservations why don't they ring me and have a chat about it? My phone number is 081 467 0798.

Reading through the December Newsletter I was quite amazed by the item about The Snowbird Club's plan to open continental sites for caravans. It all sounds very complicated and I would have thought that there were plenty of sites available already. Perhaps I am missing a point but I can't really see any future for the idea.

Tony Harrison dropped me a line about the snow mats which I mentioned recently. I bought these red plastic mats - each about 2'6" long and 10" wide - some time ago, from Halfords I believe, and they are just fairly substantial mats with ridges on both sides to provide grip. I haven't had cause to use them yet but I am optimistic that they would work well if we were caught in a slippery patch. Has anyone had practical experience of using them, I wonder? [Yes - unsuccessfully. They may work if you can get on to them but I found that I was sliding too much to do that! Ed]

At the Christmas Rally at Abbey Wood someone, I can't remember who, suggested that it might be a good idea to have a "Do It Yourself" rally where members could exchange tips on modifications and extras and those more skilful at fitting such goodies could help those less capable, like myself, with any problems. I suppose the National Rally itself provides such an opportunity but what do you think of the idea of a special rally for that purpose?

This is the first winter when we have used "Capuccino" quite frequently during the cold weather. Apart from the trip to Willersey at the end of January I can tell you that we are much looking forward to a "5 Day Wagon Train-ers" reunion which Geoff and Helen Gray have kindly arranged for mid-February - it should be fun. And then there is the Early Birds Meet which George and Daisy Wane are organising for the first week-end in March. It seems that there is no closed season for Auto-Sleeping.

It is now Thursday and the January Newsletter arrived in this morning's post - no indication this time of the route it took to reach here.

The Daleys trip to the North Cape didn't make me want to follow their example. It seems that a trip of 6,000 miles is a long way to go to make up for a missed photo.

I was interested, though, to read Gerry Woolley's remarks about his Symonspeed rear suspension assisters - in fact he had shown these to me at Abbey Wood and very professional they looked too. Like our Editor I was rather surprised about the problem Gerry seems to have had with both his Talismans, or is it Talismen? I know the rear leaf springs on the Talbot chassis are much flattened by the weight of the body and its contents but I have never found the handling adversely affected. Admittedly one has to slow down a bit for right hand bents (ever heard of "Adverse Camber", Mr. Editor?) but I have never experienced much actual roll and put this requirement down to the fairly high bodywork of the Talisman. Normally this problem is infrequent but I must admit I try to avoid places like Bracknell, Milton Keynes, Swindon or Telford which seem to be made up of a series of roundabouts. These really do need fairly slow circumnavigation. Perhaps sets of springs do vary and Gerry has been unlucky in picking up some soft ones whilst mine are a bit firmer.

Finally a few words about Le Monde du Camping Car, which seems to have caught the Editor's imagination. I picked up the August/September issue when in Normandy with the Wagon Train and it contained a voucher which enabled me to order a year's subscription (10 issues) for 175 francs - postage paid to the U.K. I will resist Harry's invitation to translate any particular items but just give you a few random observations. Among the news items in the issue I bought over there was a report that Pilote, the major French manufacturer, had bought up the German firm Frankia and that joint production for 1992 is planned at 5,000 units. In that same issue was an interesting article about wild camping on harbour quays and seaside promenades, a popular habit in France, and the reaction to this from mayors of all the major resorts from Concarneau to St. Jean de Luz on the Atlantic coast - these varied quite drastically!

It would seem that Swift is the only British manufacturer with a regular marketing set-up in France - a Kon Tiki 640 will set you back 283,500 francs. A regular feature of L.M. du C.C. is road tests of base vehicles and also prices of these if you want to build your own. They have a monthly "Glass's" type guide to secondhand prices of all major outfits year by year from 1983. Each issue carries at least four full road tests which are magnificently illustrated and end with "Feu Vert, Feu Orange & Feu Rouge", rather like M.M.M.'s "I liked, I would have liked, I disliked". Strangely, readers letters only occupy one page and are obviously not a major feature. Club news appears, though, and good reports on continental shows: there is a hilarious

photo from the Essen show of a Karmann Autovilla on a VW LT with a collapsible balcony on the back complete with patio furniture and parasol! I will try to remember to bring my copies along to Edithmead if anyone wants to look at them - as I have said the layout and standard of photography are outstanding. I also have three more of the subscription special offer vouchers if anyone wants them - give me a phone call if you do.

P.S. I am not paid any commission by L.M. du C.C.!

John Normandale"

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STOP PRESS

Things are beginning to move for the National Rally. As at 20th January there are already some 40 firm bookings and the Dealers are showing interest too. The Salvation Army has kindly agreed to attend on the Sunday, similar to 1990 at Billing. Receipts and directions will be sent almost by return but tickets and other items will be handed out on arrival. ONE SPECIAL POINT. If you want to stay for extra nights Please do not send additional money with your booking form. Make your own arrangements with the site direct, please. Any moneys received in this respect so far will be refunded.

Sorry, folks, that's it for this time, I've run out of space!

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