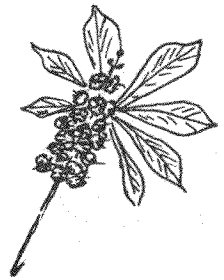
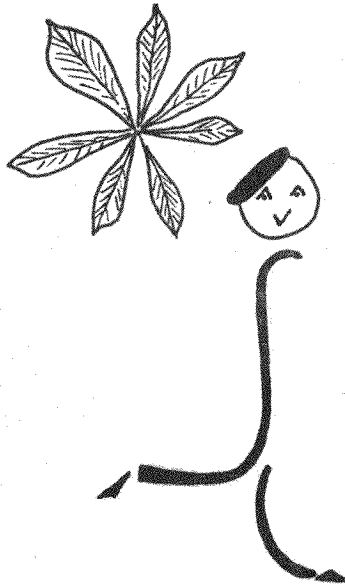
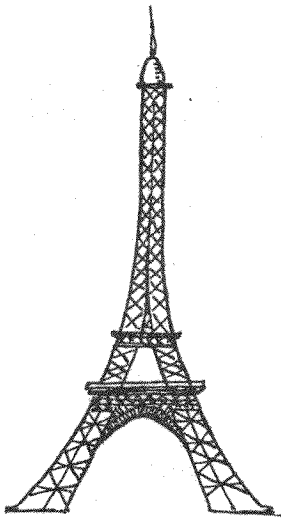


AUTO - SLEEPER
OWNERS' CLUB



NEWSLETTER 31

APRIL 1991

Hello.

First, a tribute to:

FRANK STINCHCOMBE

"I don't want to dwell on the death of Frank on 20th February but I would like everyone to know the part he played in forming this Club. He and Dilys met John Cox at Willersey in July 1988 and they discussed the start of the Club with Charles Trevelyan and Neville Jelfs. At that meeting Frank volunteered to design a logo. We now have this on our van badges, letter heading and regalia items. It was Frank who told me to look in "Exchange and Mart" for addresses of regalia suppliers and when I wrote to twenty of them - expecting a few leaflets - I received about 3" of brochures which I promptly gave to Dilys to sort out. She made a list, then she and Frank visited many of the firms to check quality and haggle prices. ("How much are you going to knock off if I collect them?") They tackled someone wearing a good quality Club Woolly and extracted the name of the supplier, visited the firm, and Frank had a slip-over with "Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club" and "Founder Member" made there and then to show the Committee. The name badges were developed in the same way.

Frank and Dilys went to almost all of the rallies that first year, taking the van loaded with the Club Shop - Frank's notepads for instance. Very heavy to tote. (20p each or a special price of 5 for £1.) Incidentally, his source of supply ended when the owner of the stationery business retired, so Frank found someone in a similar line, showed him a pad, told him the price and asked if he would supply them. Most of us didn't notice the join, although the quality was not quite as high they still served their purpose as jotters.

Frank's rallies were fun because he enjoyed organising things for people's pleasure, whether for a long lasting benefit or a burst of laughter. (At the Kingswood Green Field Rally Frank booked the Village hall and had the Chairman of the Parish Council properly announced with suitable solemnity - it was Frank again!) We now know that there were other organisations and individuals who have good reason to be grateful for his interest and help and we shall miss Frank and hope that Dilys will buy that "smaller vehicle" which has been suggested and join us again at rallies.

Rita Daley (3)"

Not very long now to the National Rally and AGM. I hope that you are all looking forward to it and as many as possible will be there. Some of our members obviously will not be present due to work (sorry about the 4-letter word!) and distance but I shall look forward to seeing many of you there. In a further part of Rita's letter to me was the following:

"John Tidbury has now taken over as Acting Treasurer and Wendy Fisher as Acting Regalia Officer. [Both posts are subject to ratification by the full committee. Ed] Wendy will be one new committee member (if elected) and I believe we have two other volunteers but in total we shall need six new members now. So please submit your names to Peter Fisher, (Secretary), at 27, Sunnyside, Walsall Wood, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 9LD or jump to your feet when we start crying out at the AGM. And those area co-ordinators. The job shouldn't be too time-consuming once it has been organised but we must have volunteers or the idea will have to be shelved for now. We would also like to discuss the organisation with co-ordinators rather than provide them with a set of rules, so offers, please. Although it will be discussed at the National Rally only some members will be there and we want the whole membership to consider this. How about it?

Rita Daley."

May I echo that plea and ask you to think about joining the committee, please? The job isn't too hard, the company is friendly at the meetings and the perks are good too. (We usually have a cup of coffee AND a biscuit!)

A letter came in from a member who has had to resign from the Club. He found his Flair rather small for his needs and, having visited the N.E.C. show, has bought a van of another make - a rather Swift decision. But he has sent in a tip for an adjustment to the locking mechanism for the rear doors of the Fords:

"Remove the rear door inner panel by carefully levering the plastic studs from their holes. Inside you will find a lower lock mechanism (where the key fits) connected to an upper lock by a stiff wire. When the door is locked (from the outside) this wire is pushed upwards by a turn of the key.

Obtain a small angle plate and fold it nearly flat (with a hammer!). You may have to re-drill the holes in the plate to ensure that they line up. Drill a further $\frac{3}{32}$ " hole in one top corner. Slip this plate round the

stiff wire and clamp it tight with a small bolt. You will find that the wire can be un-hooked from the lock to do this. (Hook the wire back afterwards!)

Get a bicycle spoke and thread this through the hole you drilled in the bracket with the threaded end up towards the window (which it should just about reach). Refit the door panel lightly clamping the spoke between it and the door. Finally put the nipple on the end of the spoke.

The result is almost un-noticeable. A quick pull upwards on the spoke will lock the door and, even better from the security side, it will NOT unlock by pushing down because the spoke is too springy. The door can still be unlocked with the key, of course.

I hope some members may find this useful.

Brian Smart."

Sounds like quite a good idea. My only comment, if you want to try this out, is to be careful when you go to buy a bicycle spoke as they do come in different lengths and thicknesses.

We have all heard of the new VW van which will soon be available for conversion. One of our members has gone even further:

"I thought it might be of interest for me to relay my observations having just had a short test drive in the new front wheel drive VW Transporter. The model I drove was the 2.4 litre, 5 cylinder diesel, short wheel base which comes with power steering as standard.

The controls were well placed with the exception of the hand brake which appeared to be too low down. The instruments were clear and easy to read with a rev. counter and digital clock included. The position of the pedals and gear lever seemed just right. The general look of the dashboard and trim seemed closer to that of a good quality car than a commercial vehicle. On the move it seemed refined and easy to drive, it only reminded one that a diesel was under the bonnet when idling. The engine compartment seemed cramped and inaccessible until it was explained that the radiator grill (and actual radiator) hinge forward for better access.

I was impressed by the attention I received from the VW Van and Truck centre I visited (S&B Commercials of Welham Green) especially as I explained the nature of my

interest in the new Transporter as a motor caravan base vehicle and therefore would not in fact be purchasing a vehicle from them.

I now look forward with anticipation to the introduction of the new Transporter Auto-Sleeper in the not too distant future.

Roy Raeburn."

Thank you, Roy, for a very useful piece of information. We shall all look forward to what may come from the Orchard. In a similar vein - a letter about the acquisition of a new van:

"THE NEW EXPRESS

In November (1990) we took delivery of a new Rambler, parting after three years with our well loved CXL. The new van is, of course, on the up-dated Talbot Express and I thought some members might be interested in some early impressions.

The re-styled cab does, I think, improve the looks a bit and the lower window line gives room for two huge rear view mirrors which are a delight. They're sprung, too, which means that if need be they can be pulled out of the way in our narrow Cornish lanes. BUT (and to me it is a BIG BUT) we've lost the opening quarter lights of the previous vehicle which were such a boon for ventilation in sunny weather as I'm sure many will agree.

The new gear box and gear change mechanism are certainly a considerable improvement. Third, fourth and fifth gears are now sweet and slick - "just like a car" as the saying goes. But first and second are still as notchy as ever and occasionally awkward. Try changing down to first, for example. Isn't it odd that a vehicle manufacturer the size of Peugeot doesn't seem to be able to produce a gear change which is good over ALL gears? Or if they can do it for half of the box, why not for the whole? (And before anybody says anything, it has been in for adjustment!) My particular vehicle has a loud whine in fifth gear between 55 and 60 mph. I've only done 1400 miles, though, and the agents won't even look at this before 6000 miles, which is fair enough.

The sound proofing round the bulkhead has been increased and has much reduced engine noise on the road. Listening to the third programme while cruising becomes possible! Wind noise is lower as well, but whether this is to do with smoother lines, or fixed quarter lights,

or even a quirk of the individual vehicle I can't really say. Perhaps a combination of all three. Incidentally, less engine noise gives an impression of more power. An illusion, I know, but a pleasant one!

The new heater is miles and miles better - in a completely different league - with plenty of heat to spare and better controls backed up by an excellent, quiet, variable speed fan with a simple circular progressive switch. I like the re-styled steering wheel and new stalk controls for lights, indicators and wipers. No big deal, perhaps, but comfortable and practical in use.

The vehicle is on the 1000 chassis, as I believe the Rambler has been since it's introduction. Compared with the CXL the suspension is a little softer, with a little more roll on bends. Conversely there is less jarring on rough surfaces. One drives accordingly, of course, and I must say the vehicle is still astonishingly solid in strong winds.

Needless to say, inside Auto-Sleepers have done their usual immaculate job, so the whole ensemble is very promising.

Dan Flunder."

Thanks, Dan, for sharing your views. I hope that you have many happy holidays in your van. Perhaps you would like to join in with the survey mentioned a couple of months back and which prompted the following:

"Dear Harry & Club Members,

It seems that my letter in the magazine No.29 about fuel consumption has initiated some response. To date I have received 8 letters and to those who have taken the trouble to write may I say thank you. Obviously I will need many many more before assessing the various types and their consumption figures. Initially I was only interested in the Talisman Diesel but as I said in my last letter I am willing to compile other figures. Please keep the letters coming as the exercise will only be worth it if the information covers at least 20 vehicles of each type.

Basic information required is:- Model; Engine size and type; Mileage covered by survey; Litres or Gallons used; Overall average. There are obviously many variables with different driving methods, terrain, loading etc., etc., but we should eventually arrive at a useful guide for each model. I shall be at the A.G.M. so if any member wants to pass the info to me there just

look for "Jemima II" Talisman D697 NTT and, barring any unforeseen delay, we shall be there on Thursday.

Bob Measom"

[See also FOR SALE section below - Ed.]

I'm quite surprised at the low level of replies. It doesn't take very much effort to record your fuel intake each time you pull in - you only need to 'fill to the brim' at fairly long intervals as a control. I shall have to put a small pad handy in the van and see what I can do to help.

-----oooOOOooo-----

FOR SALE

1988 'E' Talbot CXL High top, 2 litre, petrol, complete with water-heater, shower/toilet, Porta-Potti, Fiamma Awning, radio/cassette player, twin batteries (Zig), blown air heating, mains hook-up, 3-way fridge, fly screens, tow bar & electrics, crockery. 4 berth. Taxed, new MOT, 13,000 miles only. Full service history. Immaculate condition. Please write to Mr. R. Jeffries at 221, Burnham Road, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 3EJ or telephone him on 0278 784469. Unfortunately ill-health forces this sale which is done with reluctance.

-----oooOOOooo-----

"I have two Folding Cycles with Sturmey-Archer 3 speed gears, Universal make. Both in excellent condition and I would sell them for £80 the pair. I will bring them to the A.G.M. only if I have a firm offer. I've also got some seat bases for the CF Bedford vans having changed them for swivels in the past." So says *Bob Measom* and you can contact him on 0752 365416 or write to him at 110, Churchway, Weston Mill, Plymouth, Devon, PL5 1AH.

-----oooOOOooo-----

"We are about to change our Hi-Top for a coachbuilt and find the following are now 'surplus to requirements':

Isabella Free-standing awning for a rear entrance Hi-Top, £140.

Omnistor compact automatic roll-away awning, 3 metres, gutter fixing, suit any Hi-Top van, £150.

Porta-Potti 165, £25."

All items are described as 'hardly used' and near offers will be considered. Please ring David or Tina Wybron on 0656 766476 if you are interested. They live in Brackla which is up the hill from Bridgend in Mid Glamorgan (between Cardiff and Swansea) (rhwng Caerdydd ac Abertawe - if you are Welsh!)

-----ooo000ooo-----

WANTED

An Automatic Petrol or Diesel Legend. Please contact John Cox, 73, Westmead Road, Barton-under-Needwood, Staffs., DG13 8JR - Tel: 0283 712394 - his friend is interested in buying one.

-----ooo000ooo-----

Bed-ladder for the upper berth in a Talisman, or details on how to make one to keep a small child safely in bed. Please telephone Bas Young on 0609 774600 if you have any ideas or write to him at 101, Crosby Road, Northallerton, North Yorks., DL6 1AS.

-----ooo000ooo-----

I am reminded that if you have any spares or other oddments you do not want to keep there will be a "NOTICE BOARD" at the National Rally on which you can pin your own advertisement. This worked quite well last year.

-----ooo000ooo-----

CHAIRMAN'S CHEERIO!

It was a terrible blow to hear of the sudden death of our Treasurer, Frank Stinchcombe. I thought that the slip enclosed with last month's Newsletter said precisely what we all felt. Frank was such a cheerful, friendly person, always willing and happy to help anyone - he epitomised the spirit of the Club. All our thoughts are with Dilys.

This will be my swan song as your Chairman. I am retiring at the AGM in April and I must admit that it is with mixed feelings that I do so. I considered it a great privilege to be the first elected Chairman of the Club and I have much enjoyed my two years in office. I hope that I have been able to steer the Club in the direction which most Members wish and if I have succeeded in this ambition I shall be satisfied. I have always received wonderful support from the other officers and members of the committee and I must

especially thank Clive Jenkins, my Vice-Chairman. I shall miss the committee meetings and the lively discussions we had at them but now that Daphne and I are both retired we are looking forward to using 'Capuccino' much more extensively than we have been able to in the past. Our first major expedition will be a six week trip to Spain and Portugal setting off in the last week in April.

Congratulations are due to George and Daisy Wane for organising a splendid 'Early Birds' Rally at Fell End in Cumbria. This turned out to be a really superb site with beautifully landscaped areas and all 'mod. cons.' - including an excellent hall where we were able to have our coffee gatherings. Twenty-four vans attended and the weather was very kind. On the Saturday evening we all set off for an excellent meal at a pub about 3 miles away. The procession of vehicles travelling in convoy (6 Talisman, 2 cars) made quite an impressive sight. George and Daisy had also organised an excellent 'In the Van Quiz' which kept us all very busy over the weekend. It was good to meet many new members including eight who had not been to a Club rally before - we hope they enjoyed their weekend as much as we did.

One winter problem that was highlighted over the weekend was the very substantial draught that can come into a Talisman, and maybe other vans too, if parked with the fridge ventilator towards the wind. Obviously a large opening is necessary when the fridge is working hard in warm conditions but in the winter, when it may not even be turned on, the volume of cold air is quite a problem, even with an electric fan heater working. Any suggestions?

You may remember that in January I mentioned an American made cycle carrier 'Enflite' which we had recently bought. Although I have fixed this to the back of 'Capuccino' and mounted our two full size bikes onto it I must admit I have not yet undertaken a journey with it. The main difference from other carriers is that this one does not require any boring into the body. The bicycles, when attached, stick out at right angles to the rear of the vehicle instead of being carried parallel to it. This has the advantage of not obscuring the back window or number plate but does, obviously, add to the overall length of the van. It might be necessary to remove the bikes and stow them inside for a Cross Channel ferry. Quite a number of members have contacted me about it and I shall be pleased to show the carrier to anyone interested at the National Rally. I have been able to get some literature about it and have made copies which will be available. The importers and

suppliers are a firm called 'Cycleland' who have several branches in South-East England and the price is £69.95.

In closing may I say how much Daphne and I have enjoyed meeting so many members over the last couple of years and making so many good friends. We both look forward to seeing you all at many rallies in the future - and in particular at the one we are organising in Kent in September. Do come if you possibly can!

John Normandale.

-----ooo000ooo-----

"Phil's Rabbit"

You may know, and if you don't it's probably my fault for not having told you, that *Joyce and Tom Conway* have shipped their Turbo-Diesel, Four-Wheel-Drive Talisman to North America where they intend to stay for between six and twelve months. When last heard from they were in the State of Miami, [I thought Miami was a town in the state of Florida - Ed] having travelled down from Canada in easy stages. Their card, with a picture of "Sloppy Joe's Bar" on the front and dated 27th December, reached us on 3rd January, too late for the last Newsletter but here it is now:-

"Dear Rita and Phil,

This is not the place where we spend our time, though it is quite noted in Key West. It is the most southern point in the U.S.A. and we are on a site on an island 30 miles North. We are here until 2nd January when we travel West to California and the Pacific. The temperature is 75/80 daytime and about 10 degrees lower at night. The beaches are lovely with a clear blue sea and with the scuba equipment you can see so many different plants and fish. The trip to date has been great and we have seen so many lovely places, which at times you just do not wish to leave. Please remember us to everyone at the Club. Cheerio.

Joyce and Tom."

They had many reasons for setting out on this mammoth adventure, a minor one being the tax concessions on new vehicles exported from the U.K. for a minimum of six months. With no Car Tax or VAT to pay the initial cost of their somewhat special vehicle came down to a manageable figure. So if you are thinking of undertaking such a "Journey of a Lifetime", perhaps you

should try, hard, to make it coincide with the delivery of a new Auto-Sleeper!

Several of us, including Bill Clarke, are toying with the idea of touring the U S of A, and I have just heard from Bill that he has been offered such a good trade-in deal on his Talisman that he is taking delivery of a new one in March. Are you going to take the plunge, Bill? Perhaps not, because he has drawn my attention to an article in the Motor Caravan Magazine, October and November 1990, by Peter Brunwin who found another way to tour America; Peter and Frances flew to Florida, bought a second-hand motor caravan, toured for four months then sold the van before returning home. I found myself looking for all sorts of information that just wasn't there, such as total miles covered and difference between purchase price and sale price, but for all that it is something to think about. I had heard of people buying a car on one coast, crossing the country and selling it on the other side, the difference in prices being considerably less than the cost of hiring, but I hadn't really transferred the idea to a motor caravan.

In his letter Bill goes on to say, "I had over forty items to take off my van, and in March I have the daunting task of re-fitting to the new one. I often wonder if being a "DIY-er" is a good thing!" I am not qualified to comment on that, being only a dabbler in such energetic matters, but I have been driven to try to improve the insulation of our vehicle so that it is less uncomfortable in winter. I decided to fit treated felt insulating pads inside the cab doors. I have obtained these from Acousitikit Limited, Nile Mill, Fields New Road, Chadderton, Oldham, OL9 8NH, Telephone 061 652 2773. I ordered 2 x 1 square yards of self-adhesive felt at a price of £6.96 per sq.yd. plus carriage (£2.74) plus VAT, total invoice £19.16. If it works it will be well worth the cost and trouble. I will report later.

Phil Daley".

-----oooOOOooo-----

Talking of reporting, do you recall the letter from Jean and Ron Rawling last month? They are looking for a method by which they can waterproof the bit between the awning and the van. I'm not sure about this answer but Sheila & I have discovered some "Fill & Fix Foam" made by Mangers. According to the blurb on the can it "fills gaps of all sizes; bonds to wood, brick, concrete, masonry, metal and most plastics; can be easily trimmed, sanded, plastered or painted". The only thing that it

doesn't really mention is whether it is waterproof or not. But because it can be used around window frames, external pipes etc. and also because it can be sanded to shape I rather guess that it must be reasonably waterproof. I've bought some because I've got a water leak problem between the side of the house and the conservatory. The heavens open, the rains come tumbling down, and one end looks a bit like the Ingleton Falls in spate. When the weather gets a bit better I'll try the stuff out and let you know whether the water stays where I want it. In the meantime, Jean & Ron, have a look out for the can in your local D I Y supermarket and see what you think.

-----0000000000-----

RECIPE CORNER

I think that we must have the slimmest bunch of motor caravan people in the business. It doesn't appear that cooking is done in the vans because I haven't had very much response for this Recipe Corner. So I am delighted to be able to include the following:

"Some time ago you asked for recipes especially suitable for preparation in the van. I have hesitated to submit my idea on the subject of a quick and easy meal for one through a slight feeling of shame at having to let everyone know I'm thoroughly idle! But one cold, wet, Autumn night near Sandhead on the Rhins of Galloway, being alone in the van and wanting a substantial hot meal, I took the line of least resistance, thus:-

Take two saucepans, one tin opener and one potato peeler. Open one 450 gramme tin of Stewed Steak or Steak and Kidney (Tyne Brand or PEK come to mind), empty contents into saucepan (1), add contents of a 450 gramme tin of Baked Beans, stir and put on a low heat. Peel a spud or two (only you know how many you can eat), cut into chunks, put into slightly salted water in your second pan and set to boil on the other burner. By this time the first pan will need attention so stir and turn up the heat. Keep stirring from time to time. When the potatoes have boiled, turn down the gas and put a plate (dinner or soup) on top. You now have about ten minutes to get the meaty lot hot, the van is getting nice and warm, so set the table and pour yourself an aperitif!

Having served the spuds and helped yourself to as much of the meat and beans as you want, you come upon a slight snag - you have enough left over for at least another meal (I defy anyone to scoff more than half!),

but if you can find a safe stowage place you will only have to do the potatoes (could be rice or pasta, I guess) and re-heat the meat-&-beans tomorrow night. This lot takes about 15 minutes to prepare, warms the cockles and causes very little washing up. It doesn't do a lot for the waistline, either!

Phil Daley."

Thanks, as ever, Phil. I noticed the use of a potato peeler - using the old fashioned sort of vegetables which grow in the ground - definitely one of our conservationists. I don't know if anyone else is like me but I have, for many years now, kept a tin of 'New Potatoes' in the van for emergency use. (*) And every time I've opened the tin I've not been very keen on the taste of the spuds. Then, some time later, I spot another tin on the shelves of a shop and buy one - just in case. (Back to (*) and round the circuit again, many times!) Perhaps I should learn but...

One thing I do like is when one is deep in the heart of the country and finds a baker's shop with REEL BRED! The stuff that keeps for a long time, may go a bit stale but is still good for toast. The last loaf we bought like that was in the Blists Hill Open Air Museum at Ironbridge. Much, MUCH better than the steam cleaned, ready sliced white pap that passes for bread nowadays.

-----oooOooOoo-----

"A tip for First-Timers Abroad. Keep your receipts in Italy, particularly those from restaurants. The police may be checking on the restaurant's payment of VAT and, if you cannot produce proof of having paid VAT, you could be inconvenienced." Another useful oddment from *Rita Daley*.

More about gas. I have written to both the suppliers which I mentioned and await their replies with interest. And another letter arrived saying:

"On the question of gas, both butane and propane are heavier than air and as such are subject to the same safety procedure. Storage lockers should be at low level, used only for the storage of gas containers and be provided with permanent low level ventilation. I believe that Auto-Sleepers are aware of all these requirements and my Trident is certainly well provided for in this respect. [As are all A/S vans. Ed.] Burning of the gas should only be carried out in a well-ventilated space.

The main noticeable difference between the two gases is the storage/delivery pressure and thus any apparatus which is set up to burn one of the gases is not suitable for burning the other gas without extensive modification. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should any attempt be made to install "dual-feed" supply pipe systems. The best way to take advantage of the higher pressure and low temperature gassing properties of propane, if you are not fully committed to it, and suitably equipped, is to carry individual equipment dedicated to, and supplies of, each fuel.

For instance, we carry a propane single ring cooker, whilst leaving the heating and the fridge to run off the butane bottles as supplied with the Trident. This gives us the advantage of quicker boiling times for water, which we use for tea and coffee brewing, whilst leaving the two blue Calor bottles for the blown warm air heating, the fridge and for other, slower, cooking.

Speaking of which, we find that gas economy is another of the advantages which can be obtained by using one of the closed cooking pans, in which all the ingredients of a meal can be cooked together in the same pan. We saw one being demonstrated at last year's National and they really work. Food cooked by this method can be really flavoursome.

Thelma & John Austin."

The underlined capitals were not in the original letter but I felt that the comment should be emphasised. Thanks, T & J, for a very informative letter. There are other topics mentioned in their letter which I shall try to include in a later edition. I must investigate the use of propane a bit further because we have been caught with the problems of low outside temperature when we want a cuppa and, preferably, the inside heater working too. And which particular part of Mr. Murphy's Law says that gas bottles invariably run out at about 7 am on a cold and frosty morning?

-----oooOOoooo-----

"Please find enclosed letter received from Brittany Ferries regarding their charges for 1991. Whilst my initial enquiry was about the Poole - Cherbourg route I have confirmed that this information applies to all their routes.

'Dear Mr. Kerchey,

Thank you for your recent letter in connection with our motor-caravan tariffs and in particular, the supplements that we introduced within our current brochures for higher vehicles.

As you are perhaps aware, each of our ships' garages contains separate folding decks which are deployed for the majority of the season and stored during the winter period when our main traffic is freight. The clearance space beneath these decks is approximately 2.45m and you may appreciate therefore that vehicles in excess of this height are likely to require either a double space allocation or to be positioned in the area adjacent to the bow or stern of the vessel.

In order to maximise our garage utilisation and thus maintain the highest level of value in our tariffs, supplements were introduced. However, we are concerned that the resultant increases, year on year, for many owners of the more popular motor-caravans will be excessive.

We have, therefore, reviewed the situation and have reduced the supplement to £10 (£15 in the case of 5/8/10 day returns) for those motor-caravans which are over 1.82m but do not exceed 2.9 metres in height, thus removing the 50% surcharges that many of our prospective customers would have had to consider and maintaining the high level of value that our fares have always and will continue to represent.

We do hope that with this new information to hand, we can look forward to being of service to you during the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Heskins

Customer Services Manager.'

I hope that this information will prove of use to other members for this coming holiday season.

David & Kathy Kerchey."

Thank you very much indeed, David, for following up this point which *Phil Daley* brought to our attention last month. I also noticed something to the same effect in the M.M.M. this month so it just goes to show that if you shout loud enough something gets done.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Another plea for help. I've had a letter from a reasonably new member who isn't yet used to us. He signs himself "M.G. Robinson" and addresses me as "Dear Sir or Madam!" (I know my hair is a bit long and unruly but....)

"I have a new Ford Transit Frisky Model 100. I would like to purchase a rear awning made in nylon. Is there a manufacturer that does this awning? I only require a small one. The reason I require a nylon one is for lightness. My wife is disabled and I have to put the awning up myself.

Yours sincerely."

I must confess that I have never really considered the weight of an awning, although some of the ones I have seen must get really heavy when wet. Can anyone help, please? I have replied to Michael advising him to contact the awning people who advertise in the various magazines but maybe you know the equivalent of the "little needle-woman round the corner" so beloved of the Victorian ladies.

Awnings seem to be yet another area where everybody has different ideas. The following shows one search which is still going on:

In Pursuit of the Perfect Awning

A long time ago, when we did not know what Grecian 2000 was, let alone need it, we took delivery of our first motor caravan and shortly afterwards we bought, in our innocence, what was advertised as a "motor-caravan awning", which was really a close-coupled tent. But try as we might, by hauling on elastic ropes, thumping on huge press studs and hammering in battalions of tent pegs, it always looked like a baggy concertina, except when standing on its own without the van. Then it resembled a hot-air balloon brought down by a Patriot missile. We spent two days and nights in a gale in Glen Nevis (together with a thick mist - we never got up the Ben) listening to the canvas flapping itself to near-destruction and I agreed with the chief navigator that summit had to be dun.

We applied a degree of lateral thinking to the problem. A close-coupled tent may be essential for those who perpetually holiday round the Pentland Firth or high up in the Lake District but we spend 90% of our motor-caravanning south of Southampton. When parked, why do we need something lashed to the side of the van

rubbing away its paintwork when most of the time what we are looking for is shade for a siesta?

So we got rid of the "awning" and bought a normal free-standing tent with its own awning attached. The advantages were instantly apparent. On most sites, positioning the van satisfactorily depends upon a number of factors such as the direction of the sun at midday, the prevailing wind, the view to be preserved or obscured, whether you want to cultivate (or ignore) the neighbours, the access to the plot and also its shape. The separate tent could be orientated at any angle around the van to provide the optimum solution. For the aesthetically-minded, the wider choice in tents makes it easier to colour-coordinate with the van. Best of all, our tent inspired confidence by its smart tautness and we could leave it on site knowing that, if the wind got up in our absence, we would not have to drag it back from three plots away. Having to take two steps to travel between van and tent was not exactly strenuous. When returning to site, the tricky, precise, driving-test manoeuvres to realign the van and awning were eliminated; with a free-standing tent it really doesn't matter to a foot or two where the van finishes up. We have had many years of enjoyable holidays with the tent.

However, tents, whether close-coupled or free standing, suffer from one major drawback on a touring holiday: they take an appreciable time to erect. Flat out we could not get below 15 minutes, detracting from one of the motor-caravan's major virtues, speed of establishing camp. Sweet it is to sip a second G & T while observing the unenlightened, sweating, trailer caravanner still winding away at his legs.

Generally, it was not worth putting up the tent unless we intended to stay for more than two nights. What we needed was a simple protecting canopy that could be put up in less than 2 minutes. The catalogue solution was the "shop-blind" manufactured by Omnistor, Fiamma and others which you wind down from its long box fitted above the side door. We winced at the prices of around £300 and call me old fashioned, but I worry about centres of gravity and prefer, at least in vehicles (not ladies), that any extra weight should be central and low down not hung permanently off one side of the roof.

Early last year the Danish firm Isabella introduced an awning called the Sun-2. It consists of a single piece of material which provides not only a roof but also two triangular sides, giving a degree of wind protection. It slides into the normal extruded aluminium channel provided on most trailer caravans and is supported by

two sprung horizontal, not vertical, poles angled and cantilevered out from the side of the van on detachable rubber feet. A single tent peg tensions each side and thereby the top as well. So it looked as if all I had to do was to fix a length of the special awning channel to the side of the van roof with self-tapping screws and buy the Isabella product. There was however (isn't there always!) a snag to adapting this awning to use on the hightop CXL/Rambler type of van. The smallest size of awning had a nominal roof length of 3 metres (actually 3.2). Even by curving the ends of the channel downwards I could not provide a length greater than about 2.85 metres. In the end, Isabella, who have a repairs workshop in Thame, Oxfordshire, agreed to shorten an awning to fit (not as easy as it sounds). With the alterations charge the awning was still less than half the price of a "shop-blind" and, yes, it can be put up in less than 2 minutes. It was sufficiently effective for us to leave the tent behind on our main holiday and it kept the sun off us while touring in Switzerland, Italy and Turkey last year.

But it isn't perfect. Perhaps because of the cut of the material it does not stretch uniformly taut and we use a guy rope from the middle of its front edge down to a peg. Now for tautness you should have inspected *Margaret and Arthur Fairburn's* heroic awning at the Billing Rally last year. There must have been a few master sailmakers among Arthur's ancestors for him to have designed and constructed such a tour de force for his Legend, but I gather that, in practice, it, too, proved a little disappointing.

The search, therefore, is still on. Is there an ASOC member out there who has located the perfect awning?

Gordon [Rollinson]"

-----ooOoo-----

Now,

"A NORFUL WARNING"

I received the following letter and I will offer it to you without further comment:

"Four days before we left for Europe on our last holiday, the Talisman brake warning light came on. It seemed most likely that the front pads needed renewing (a correct assumption) but I wasn't willing to take any chances, so when my Peugeot Main Dealer was unable to book the vehicle in before we left, they advised me to take it to a local 'Brake Centre' (you know the sort -

Any make, While you wait). This I did - they replaced the front pads and all has been fine until last week.

I should say that I have always, over the years, used small, reliable, garages where I have known the guv'nor and mechanic. New vehicles and/or a coachbuilt can oblige one to use the Main Dealer, a situation I am not entirely happy with (impersonal service, geared in the main to the fleet/business user, and a rip-off financially). Anyway, on with the tale.

Last week (and only 6,000 miles later) a faint 'graunching' sound on braking was the first indication that all was not well. I immediately booked into the Dealer, four days hence. The graunching became worse - but no brake warning light. One of the pads had completely worn out and the pad's steel backing plate had scored the disc, necessitating not only new pads but new discs as well, total nearly £200!

But why no warning light? Either the pattern-part pads had not been connected up originally by the el-cheapo 'garage' or, more likely, the wires were simply not long enough to sustain the pad/caliper movement and just pulled out.

So the moral is - if you cannot get a small, reliable garage to do your 'van servicing (still my first choice), pay up and choose the Motor-caravan or Vehicle Main Dealer and NOT a Brake, Exhaust, Service, Oil-change, Tyre and Whatever Centre.

Yours, in penury,

Barry & Sue Brown."

-----oooOOooo-----

Changing the subject completely and utterly, I can now advise you that the Index for issues 25-30 of the Newsletter is available. Usual routine: an A5 size envelope addressed to yourself and already stamped will bring a copy to your very door (or wherever the postman/woman leaves your mail!). (Provided that the envelope is sent to me, of course. If you send it anywhere else they might wonder what you want!) A certain number of copies will be available at the National Rally together with the earlier issues but the supplies are rather limited at the moment.

And changing the subject yet again you will find an entry form for the National Motorhome & Tourer Show at Peterborough in the middle of this Newsletter. THIS IS

SEPARATE FROM THE NORMAL RALLY LIST AND BOOKING FORM.
Please use the special form if you want to go to
Peterborough.

DO NOT SEND THIS FORM TO THE CLUB. IT MUST BE SENT
TO WARNERS GROUP SALES. (It says all this on the form,
but I thought I would remind you.)

-----oooOOOooo-----

A Special Request. The Club had a number of Rally
Signs made some time ago - discs with a moveable arrow
on. These have been passed around to various people who
were organising rallies and we have lost track of some
of them. If you have any in your possession, would you
bring them to the National Rally at Edithmead and hand
them to Jeff Worley? Then we may be able to find them
all and pass them around again - keeping better records
of who has got what!

-----oooOOOooo-----

And once again I must say 'That is that' for this
month. I rather imagine that the next issue will be
taken up with reporting the National Rally and AGM (if I
have time for it all!) and I may even have to go to more
than 20 pages. Has anybody got any spare fingers,
please? In the meantime - Have a Happy Easter - see you
at Edithmead

Your Editor

Harry Henthorne

69, Bingham Road, Addiscombe, Surrey, CRO 7EG.

Tel: 081 654 4216

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 any
responsibility for the consequences if you try them out.

AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB
RALLY SUPPLEMENT
=====

April & May 1991

PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHEQUE PAYABLE TO THE RALLY MARSHAL NAMED AND SEND IT WITH THE COMPLETED BOOKING SLIP AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, and preferably at least 10 days before the rally. YOUR NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER printed on the back of the slip will help the marshal. Last minute arrivals are still accepted but it does help the Marshal to advise the site of about how many will be coming and to have everything prepared. So the motto is EARLY BOOKING PLEASE, IF POSSIBLE!

22nd-24th March. Ranch Caravan Park, HONEYBOURNE. Fees: £3.50 per night. Electricity £1.50 per night. Rally fee £1.50.

Marshals: Barbara & Tony Jones, 49, Wessex Way, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7NT.

Directions: Site is on the Bidford-on-Avon to Broadway road.

5th-7th April. NATIONAL RALLY AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Home Farm, EDITHMEAD, Somerset. Please use separate booking form for this rally. Full directions are shown thereon.

8th-14th April. 7 day Holiday Rally: Leverton Place, Green Bottom, CHANCE WATER, near TRURO, Cornwall. This will follow on from the National Rally. Fees: £3.50 per night. Electricity £1.00 per night. Rally Fee £1.50.

Marshals: Noelle & Alan Johns, 3 Jays, Lanreath, Nr. Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2NX.

Directions: 3.5 miles west of Truro on A.390 Truro - Redruth road.

Good centre for touring the area. Room available for social activities. Bar and snacks available.

19th-21st April. Camping International Site, OXFORD. Fees: £4.50 per night INCLUDING Electrics. Rally Fee £1.50.

Marshals: Heather & John Tidbury, 26, Ferny Close, Radley, Abingdon, OX14 3AN.

Directions: From Ring Road on SOUTH side of Oxford take A4144 towards City Centre. In about 0.25 mile turn left at VW dealers. Site on right behind Texaco garage.

26th-28th April. Motor-Caravan Jamboree, BRANDS HATCH, Kent.

BOOKING FORMS and fees for this rally will be found in M.M.M. Please write A.S.O.C. clearly on the form. It is important to advise our marshals to ensure that sufficient area is allocated to the Club:

Barbara & Dave Clarke, 2, Fleece Road, Long Ditton, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 5JN.

Brands Hatch is, of course, on the A.20 - do NOT try to use the M.20.

26th-28th April. LADIES RALLY. Ebury Hill Camping & Caravanning Club Site, SHREWSBURY, Shropshire. GREEN FIELD site. Fees £2.70 per night. Rally fee £1.50.

Marshal: Audrey Crouch & Margaret Harrison. Bookings to Audrey, please, at "Sydney", Sylvan Close, Higher Heath, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 2TB.

Directions: On A.53 Shrewsbury to Market Drayton road. Turn right about 1.25 miles from A.49 junction s.p. Haughton - Upton Magna. Site on right.

28th April-3rd May. Follow-on Midweek Rally at the same site at EBURY HILL. Fees for extra days Normal Site Fee. Please tell Audrey when you book whether you wish to stay extra nights but DO NOT INCLUDE EXTRA CASH. Pay on Site, please.

Marshals: Barbara & Jeff Worley.

There is much to see in the local area, including Ironbridge Gorge.

10th-12th May. National Motorhome & Tourer Show, East of England Showground, PETERBOROUGH. Fees - normally £10.00 but special reduction for Club Members to £8.00.

PLEASE NOTE that there is a special booking form enclosed with this Newsletter. Send the form DIRECT to the organisers, please.

Marshals: Not yet finalised.

17th-19th May. Holme Pierre Point Camping & Caravan Park, National Water Sports Centre, HOLME PIERRE POINT, Notts. Fees: £3.50 per night. Rally fee £1.50.

Marshals: Barbara & John Cox, 73, Westmead Road, Barton-under-Needwood, Staffs., DE13 8JR.

Directions: Turn left off A.52 Nottingham to Grantham road on outskirts of Nottingham. Follow signs to National Water Sports Centre.

AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB

Send one of these slips to the Marshal named at least 10 days before the event. You can arrive at the site without booking and you will be welcomed but if the rally is limited you may be disappointed.

ALL CHEQUES PAYABLE TO THE MARSHAL BY NAME, PLEASE

R A L L Y S L I P

Site..... Date.....

Name.....Membership No.....Van No.....

Day/Time of arrival..... 1st Rally? Y/N Electricity? Y/N

Saturday night meal, if available? Y/N. Any Special Needs?.....

.....
Please send this slip to the Marshal with the fee. Please complete
BACK of slip IN FULL!

R A L L Y S L I P

Site..... Date.....

Name.....Membership No.....Van No.....

Day/Time of arrival..... 1st Rally? Y/N Electricity? Y/N

Saturday night meal, if available? Y/N. Any Special Needs?.....

.....
Please send this slip to the Marshal with the fee. Please complete
BACK of slip IN FULL!

