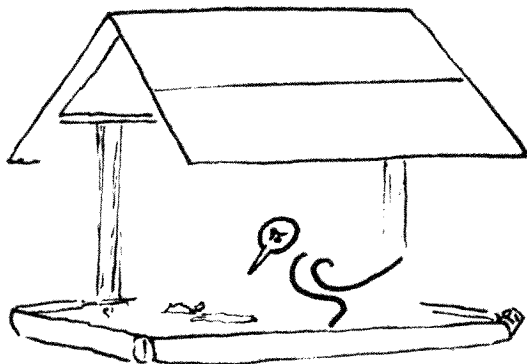


**A U T O - S L E E P E R  
O W N E R S ' C L U B**



**NEWSLETTER 38**

**NOVEMBER 1991**

Hello.

First of all an apology. (Seems we've been this route before!) In the last issue mention was made of articles for the M.M.M. It appears that I was misinformed. The letter received by our Secretary actually asked for him to send in articles about the doings of the Club, rather than articles from our members. For such there would obviously be no payment made because the item would come under the heading of "publicity". So my personal apologies to *John Hunt* for putting something into print without detailed checking!

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Another milestone in the Club's history has been reached. We have just recruited Member No. 1,000. See Chairman's Chat!

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The latest index is now available for issues 30 - 36. The usual routine, please, a S.A.E., of a size sufficient to hold a normal Newsletter, if sent to me will bring one through Her Majesty's Mails direct to you.

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A letter concerning the content of the Newsletter: "I always look forward to receiving the Newsletter.. Or do I? Lately each issue has been mainly filled up with accounts of members foreign touring. Indeed the October issue contained no less than eight pages of this stuff. It's a bit like holiday snaps - and just as thrilling. I have no moans about such an article now and then, providing that the content is a bit more than "we stopped here; we stopped there; a dog nearly bit me; etc. etc." Some of the stories are quite good, e.g. *John Tidbury's* account included his solutions to problems experienced with the van and the trip. However, many of us, particularly those with animals, only tour in the UK and, having spent a lot of time in numerous foreign places, I am persuaded that the UK has just as much to offer.

SO, how about more comment about UK sites and where to venture? Also more stories about the vans, their problems and solutions. After all, one can presume that each member is the proud owner of an Auto-Sleeper and there should be plenty of comment, good or bad, about them.

For starters - my Talisman's rear springs turned rusty and looked quite horrible so, rightly or wrongly, I spray them with WD40 and they now look black and not noticeable. This has also helped reduce some of the creaks and groans that come from them when loaded. I've noticed that if I fill the water tank right up the springs creak at every bump, so now I only part fill it and top up on site. Speaking of water, I find the tank never drains completely so the contents can sometimes be quite horrible. I always pour in a bit of Milton fluid but we carry a one gallon plastic bottle of water for drinking which fits nicely into the cupboard under the cooker. How many members find that whenever they open the tap to the waste tank there always seems to be a bit of waste water left there? Some nasty things can grow in this tank so I pour disinfectant down the sink now and then. I would like the option of a direct drain into a separate waste container and intend putting in a tap for this purpose in the near future.

In previous articles, prior to the foreign touring extravaganza, much was said about slow sink draining. One suggestion was grease in the waste pipe but, as a vegetarian, I didn't think this was the cause. Another was a collapsed pipe but having examined every inch of pipework I could find no such evidence. Then I found the answer - an airlock! A bit of suction in the sink using the palm of the hand and away goes the water like a rat down a hole. Better still, I now use a small sucker disc, whose original use was to hold a useless compass onto the windscreen, and the slurp and gurgle is a joy to hear.

We tour with three dogs on board so we don't go foreign but always pick sites where facilities for dog exercise are good. Some sites claim to have a dog walk which turns out to be quite pathetic. We also pick routes that include a country park or open area where they can stretch their legs now and then. Lots of other members no doubt do the same and I would be interest to hear of their experiences.

You may decide that publishing this will result in screams for my removal from the Club with my AS insignia stripped from my person with relish.

Pat Johnson".

Thanks very much, Pat, for a most entertaining letter. You will understand that I have to rely on contributions from members to enable a Newsletter to be put together. I agree that recently there has been a spate of foreign articles, with more to come. A number of these cause me problems because, like you, we travel in the UK with the two cats. As a result I'm often at a bit of a loss for the correct spelling of a place name when the handwritten version is capable of being misread. But articles on all topics are always welcome. Naturally, if there is a very serious criticism of some facet of a particular vehicle, it is passed to the Company first for their attention. You can rest assured that, if any screams for your removal are to be heard, I for one will leap to your defence - EVERY member has a right to his/her opinion even if I can't guarantee to include only what each wishes in the Newsletter. Incidentally I'm holding in reserve an item about water for inclusion when (and if) I get a bit short of things for the N/L.

Perhaps it will be of interest to Pat (and all of you) to learn of an offer received by Peter Fisher our Secretary. BCM Mirador Books, of London WC1N 3XX has sent him a copy of "Caravan and Camp in Britain 1991". This gives details of sites, repair centres for caravans, recommended restaurants etc. There are also some potted area histories, an index of key towns, site enquiry forms and site report forms. Normally selling for £6.50 which Peter tells me represents good value for the 300 or so pages, it is available only from the publishers at an end of season price of £4.50 post free!

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### "CHAIRMAN'S CHAT"

Last month I said I sometimes didn't mention things because I thought they were universally known; this month I have to mention some points that most of us "old-timers" take for granted but which some newer members haven't yet discovered. (If we don't tell you, how can you be expected to know?) They concern rallies so non-ralliers can skip the next bit.

Only Club members can attend Club rallies. There are several good reasons for this and two of them are:

- 1) The Club has taken out third-party insurance to cover us against claims which might

arise from something happening at a rally. This protection does not extend to non-members.

2) We are often able to negotiate special terms for members attending a rally, partly because we undertake to be responsible for the behaviour of our members (you agreed to abide by Club rules) but we don't have the same authority to control non-members.

A bit more on rallies: space is sometimes restricted, especially at popular sites and in the high season. We ask you to give the Marshal as much notice as possible if you intend to come along (or later, to cancel) but realise sometimes you can only decide at the last minute. For this reason we hope to include the Marshal's telephone number on future booking forms but remember, Mr. & Mrs. Marshal will undoubtedly have left for the site sometime on Thursday to get things ready for you so don't leave it too late! If you decide to take a chance and just turn up be prepared to be disappointed. At Curry Pools last weekend *Brenda & John [Slater]* ran into problems because the site had overlooked the booking (made at the rally last year) and booked another club onto the rally field. This resulted in us having only half the expected area and when four vans turned up unexpectedly only three could be squeezed in, the fourth just had to be turned away. *John* was most unhappy about this but had no alternative. Just one more thing about rallies then I'll move on to other things: Marshals often contact the site or the local pub some days before the rally to arrange for the use of a room. Sometimes they bring food for a supper or barbecue on the Saturday; if numbers change markedly at the last moment these plans can be seriously upset. Please, don't upset Marshals - no marshals, no rallies!

Duty done so on to what I really wanted to tell you. The 1992 National rally (24th-26th April) looks better and better as arrangements proceed. The Grand Pavilion at Wicksteed Park had a nice feel to it when *Rita & I* first saw it at the end of June even though it was full of electricians, carpenters, joiners, glaziers and painters doing a major refurbishment. The work has now been completed and when *Marjorie & Ron Wilson* and I were there on October 8th it looked superb. The catering is first class so the Annual Dinner is going to be something to remember! We realise most members wish to be able to talk to friends old and new throughout

the weekend so appropriate entertainment has been arranged. More news to follow.

The "Club & Company Rally" is being held on Stratford-on-Avon Racecourse over the weekend of 31st July-2nd August with the main event, the Company participation, scheduled for Saturday, 1st August. The Stores Shop will be there and that's good news but what I really want to see is a big contingent from Willersey, not only those who build our conversions but their wives and families, and girlfriends, too. This is intended to be a social event and while, inevitably, some technical matters will be discussed, all spanners, screwdrivers and continuity testers are to be left at the Orchard. Enjoyment is the keyword. *Barbara & John Cox* are going to marshal the event (itself a guarantee of excellence), *Neville Jelfs* and I are getting together from time to time to work out how all of you will be kept entertained, there's no limit to the number of vans we can accommodate, so watch this space!

*Jeff Worley* tells me he now has 32 (or was it 33?) rallies lined up for next year, some at favourite sites, some at new ones and at least two in National Parks for the first time. Well done, that man! We expect to have the full list out with the January Newsletter, just date and places at that stage with full details to follow in the usual way.

With so much planning for 1992 going on it's easy to overlook what's happening here and now; a few days before I found time to write this *Sheila [Hammell]* told me she had had a rush of new members to the Club (she's feeling better now!) and was issuing four figure membership numbers. I can't tell you who Member No. 1,000 is because a little bit of publicity-generating activity is planned. Watch all sorts of spaces for that! To keep the record straight I must point out that, although Member No. 1,000 is a reality, the actual number of paid-up members is a little over 700 (win some, lose some). That refers to van memberships, for want of a better term, and with usually two people per van we are now 1,400 strong. When I look back to the first meeting at the Orchard in August 1988.... But there isn't time to look back now!

The next Committee meeting on November 2nd, just before you receive this, will be the subject of a report in the December Newsletter; hope you

like the new Company Magazine; all for now; see you!

Phil Daley".

-----oooOOOooo-----

### LEV<sup>ELL</sup>ING

Before I begin let me apologise for being so excruciatingly obvious! I am encouraged to write by the fact that I have never seen anybody else using my method of levelling a motor caravan and it took me years to wake up to the possibility myself.

For many years, first towing and later motor caravanning, I have been fairly fussy about levelling. It isn't only the refrigerator but also the sheer comfort of being reasonably level which makes a little effort worth-while.

Anybody reading this knows the difficulty with a motorvan. Before starting to place wedges it is necessary to be level in one direction - either transverse or lengthwise - and that can involve an awful lot of backing and filling. Wedges are not very high (for obvious reasons) so anything more than a slight ground slope is just not on.

At least Talbot Express owners have a good remedy. Early last year, while changing a wheel, it struck me how secure the Talbot jack is, with the spigot on the top plate actually engaging in the hole in the bottom of the jacking point under the vehicle. The van can't slide or bounce off the jack - they are effectively locked together.

So I bought a second Talbot jack (others won't do without modification - they don't have the spigot) and levelling on site at once became quick and sure. I use a pair of polyurethane wedges for a quick level in one direction and then the two jacks under one side, or one end, of the van and within five minutes were are nicely level. Fine adjustments become possible - even to one corner - and the whole operation is controlled by one of those two-way spirit levels, available in every accessory shop, placed on a level surface inside the van. A couple of short planks are desirable to give each jack a good, firm base.

All this sounds a lot to do, but in practice it is quick and certain - much quicker than all

that messing about with the fan roaring, tempers fraying and the cook chafing to get the dinner on.

I said it was obvious. I apologise once again to all those who have been doing it for donkeys' years!

*Dan Flunder"*

Thanks, Dan, sometimes the ideas which seem obvious, once you've thought of them, are the most useful and things which others can copy. In a similar vein came this:

"May I please submit a simple idea for a portable picnic table for use outside the van, if you have two tables. Assemble the tops on to each end of the leg using the smaller as the base. To avoid scratching use a piece of carpet, blanket or rubber mat on the ground.

*Marie & Tony Evans"*

Most of us who have been to rallies have seen this idea in use but it is well worth repeating for those who don't realise that it can be done.  
-----ooOoo-----

John Coleman has sent the following article to M.M.M. and thought that it might be of interest to our members:

#### "VARIABLE INTERVAL WIPE CHIP

Looking through a copy of the VW magazine a couple of years ago I came across an advert for this chip. Having neither variable nor ordinary interval wipe on my vehicle I ordered this little gadget.

Meanwhile I investigated the electrics of my 1987 A/S VHT (predecessor to the Trident which has interval wipe but not normally variable). I found that the wiper switch has the switching and wiring but is physically locked out of 'interval wipe' by a small white plastic wedge set within the mechanism.

I disconnected the battery; removed the shroud from the steering column to expose the switch contact mechanism; operated the wiper switch stalk and located the associated contacts with

the white wedge in the lower stalk position. This is easily removed with long-nosed pliers.

The 'interval chip' should be fitted in post '79 and pre '88 VW Transporter conversions in place of the shorting strip situated almost centrally on the relay panel, which is next to the fuse panel. In post '88 conversions the chip can replace the standard interval wipe relay. The instructions with the chip were good and easily followed.

My experience during the last two years with this system is that the wipe can be varied between 2 and 45 seconds, as advertised, and can be very useful in varying weather conditions with very good 'on the move' adjustment. The cost was £15.82 including VAT, post and packing from Interval Chips, Autometrix Publications, Market Chambers, High Street, Toddington, Dunstable, Beds., LU5 6BY. I must add that they have chips for several other vehicles, well worth a call to 052 554019."

Another useful bit of information for you. [I'm still trying to make a booklet of the tips, discounts etc., but haven't yet got a round tuit.]

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## RALLY REPORTS

"We found our way to Tanners Farm with no difficulty after an amazingly easy run; we even managed the dreaded Dartford Tunnel with no delay. On arrival we found our hosts, *Daphne & John [Normandale]* plus one or two other vans well settled in (i.e. the bottles opened!).

What a pleasant site - very large pitching area recently planted with trees, plenty of space between pitches and all surrounded by farmland. A super place for dogs (and their owners), a squeaky clean toilet block, hot water in abundance, hand dryers etc., not forgetting vases of flowers and pot plants. In the Gents too, I heard from a reliable source. The site owners breed and work Shire horses - an added bonus. Cameras were out!

On Friday we visited the Whitbread Hop Farm and the gardens at Sissinghurst Castle. These I thoroughly recommend, I could have spent far longer there. We returned in plenty of time for

the coffee evening but it had turned chilly so no one stayed chatting too long. Saturday morning papers delivered to our door. Unfortunately one of my gang felt frail (*Meg* this time) so we stayed "at home" for the day. Not that it was any hardship as there were plenty of people to talk to and exchange ideas with. I was very impressed with a "home-made" sun awning which cost only about £50 - and some furry "lambs tails" to keep the flies out. *Angela [Green]* and I went for a walk to the river in the afternoon but were not lucky enough to see the fox.

Out to dinner in the evening! *Daphne*, with help from her sister-in-law who lives nearby, had been slaving for the greater part of the day preparing a marvellous supper for us. Turkey, ham, sausage, salad, coleslaw, baked potatoes, sauces, pickles and stuffing. Followed by fruit pies and ice cream - quite delicious. We brought chairs to the *Normandales* van together with our bottles and wine boxes, queued up to be served then sat down to eat, drink and chat. It was good to see the site owner, Mr. Mannington, and two of his helpers who joined us for a time. I sat with my back to our van so that I couldn't see *Meg's* sad little face peeping out - but we did run a "meals in the van" service for her. The only complaint I heard was that it was getting dark almost before the bottles were empty.

Sunday morning started out wet but another annexe was man-handled next to *John's* awning so the coffee morning and raffle went ahead undampened! Then came a very warm vote of thanks to our excellent hosts. Not only a splendid meal but a "tourist board tent" as well with information and leaflets on the many places to visit. We stayed on for an extra night and it was strange returning on Sunday evening after visiting Leeds Castle to find just three other A/S to keep us company - all V.W.'s. A tiny outpost of ASOC. We returned home on Monday, visiting Ightham Mote on the way. I would thoroughly recommend this site to anyone who wants to visit this part of Kent.

*Mary [Colling]*".

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"We have just attended our second rally, this one at Lytham marshalled by *Kath & Norman Benyon*. It was fantastic and we really enjoyed it,

AUTO-SLEEPER

OWNERS' CLUB

REGALIA

AVAILABLE

1st November 1991

Our impressive list of Regalia available includes:

* Address Book		£ .40
* Badges, Club	Embroidered, Sew on	2.00
* ditto	Metal Brooch type	1.00
* ditto	'Peely Plastic', Van Sticker	.50
Badges, Identity.	Your name on top line over "Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club" Blue print on white plastic, brooch type	2.70
Ball Point Pens	"Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club"	.30
* Binders	for Newsletters, Blue	4.00
Booklets, Club	"First Timers Abroad"	.50
	"Inside Insulation & Multi-Muff"	.50
	"Travellers Tales"	.50
* Book Markers		.40
"Brabantia"	Safe Boxes with outer	13.00
ditto	Extra outer (for use at home or in another vehicle)	4.50
* Coasters	Square, Black & Blue only	.50
* Coffee Mugs	Pottery	1.80
Fluorescent Cards	"Visitors Welcome"(Green)/ "Sorry, We're Resting"(Red)	.25
Head Scarves	"Rita's Little Man" & seascape - Coffee, Air Force Blue, White	3.00
* Key Fobs	"Rita's Little Man"	.50
Note Pads	Frank's Famous Supply (Few left) - 5 for	1.00
Pencils	with Eraser	.25
Plugs, Floor	Fit neatly into the table leg socket on floor of the van, Brown or Black	1.50
Sink Plugs	(when available)	1.75
* Tea Towels	Pictures of A/S vans and with Club Badge	2.20
* Telephone Index	* Reduced Price to clear	1.50
* Ties, Club	Navy or Maroon	6.50
Van Names	Variety of styles similar to material used by Auto-Sleepers, up to 10 letters & spaces	6.00

Everything shown with a '\*' against it will have the Club Badge either embossed or printed on it.

Don't forget the "Woollies" which now bear a motif of 'Rita's Little Man' with "Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club" in a semi-circle above it. These are usually sent by post but check with Wendy to see if you can collect at a rally (and save postage and packing!)

Sweaters	'V' neck	£14.50
Sweat Shirts	Crew neck	12.50
Sports Shirts	Collar, button front, short sleeve	10.50
T-Shirts	Crew neck	7.00

All prices are inclusive of VAT.

Colours available are: Black,, Yellow, Grey, Navy Blue, Light Blue, Jade Green, Red, White.

Sizes are Small (34"-36"); Medium (38"-40"); Large (42"-44") or Extra Large (44"-46")

It may still be possible to obtain the earlier style of "Woollies" with just the name of the club embroidered on them. For colours and prices please contact Wendy.

Prices are subject to change without prior notice.

POSTAGE AND PACKING is, of course, EXTRA unless you can arrange to collect your purchases at a rally. At present these charges are as shown below:-

Identity Badges	- - - -	£0.30	each
Newsletter Binders	- - -	0.80	each
Safe Boxes with outer	-	3.00	complete
Extra outers	- - - - -	2.30	each
Ties	- - - - -	0.25	each
Woollies	- - - - -	2.00	per item

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For the Safe Boxes you will need to know the measurements which are:- Outer Case: 5 7/8" wide by 2 1/4" deep. The length is only 8 5/32" with a protruding lock BUT you MUST have sufficient space in front of the outer case to be able to get the Safety Box out! The depth includes the bumps provided for recessing the fixing screws. Boxes can hold passports, money, small items of jewellery and similar items but cannot take bulkier objects.

The three Club booklets which have been published are:

"FIRST TIMERS ABROAD". Advice for anyone hesitating about taking the plunge and going abroad with their van. All tips and suggestions collected from your fellow members.

"INSIDE INSULATION & MULTI-MUFF". A new booklet giving ideas for D.I.Y. insulation.

"TRAVELLERS' TALES". A collection of stories submitted by members and including an article by JOHN HUNT.

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Our Regalia Officer is Mrs. Wendy Fisher who can be found at 27 Sunnyside, Walsall Wood, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 9LD or telephone: 0543 377777

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Your cheques for any of these items should be made payable to "Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club", please.

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It would help the Club if, having received your "Woollies" through the post, you would return the bag in which it came to our Regalia Officer. Those Jiffy Bags cost rather a lot and if they can be used more than once so much the better.

arriving to a warm welcome on Friday and being told where everything was. Around tea-time a van and trailer arrived and a hot air balloon was inflated before our very eyes! Volunteers were then sought to ride in the basket. Some went up but not me; I'm a coward and get dizzy on a thick carpet. Friday night and the bus took us round the lights stopping on the way back for fish and chips. We got into bed about 1 a.m. Saturday was left for sightseeing and shopping and we found the beach was only 5 minutes away from the site. On Saturday evening we went into the club house to hear Fred on the organ and to enjoy Lancashire hot pot and apple pie. Great company, great food, the party breaking up about 11 p.m. Morning coffee on Sunday in the club house and the raffle was drawn to complete, as I said, a fantastic weekend. Kath & Norman were talking about another rally next June on the same site; we shall certainly go (that is if they will put up with us again!).

*Pam & Mick Robinson."*

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"Unfortunately we could only stay at Moreton Glade for the weekend which was very enjoyable and made a good start for our two weeks holiday. The American supper on Saturday was excellent. Well done, the rally marshals!

*Noelle & Alan Johns".*

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"A good time was had by all attending our second rally at Curry Pool Mills, near Bridgwater. The weather could have been kinder but it didn't deter members from taking the circular walk on Saturday (with a stop at 'The Lamb' for refreshment). The evening found 22 members at the 'Malt & Shovel' where we had exclusive use of the dining room for a well presented meal. All too soon it was Sunday, time for farewells but not before we saw the answers to Brenda's [Slater] competition which had exercised our grey cells all weekend. A return to this venue is planned for next year.

*John Slater".*

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"At the Bridgnorth Rally the Curator of the Museum introduced the man from Radio Shropshire to us on Saturday morning. He was doing an "Out

& About" programme and asked if we would like to take part. I gave a brief outline of the formation of the Club and the help we received from Auto-Sleepers. Barbara [Cox] and a few other members spoke about our rallying through the year and round the country and then the reporter asked to see Jim Vinton's van and described it to the listeners. None of our radio stars is (yet) contemplating selling autographs!

Some 20 units arrived including several new members and we hired a small clubhouse for the Saturday evening meal. As our ex-member Gerry Woolley was staying on the main site we invited him and his wife to join us.

John Cox".

John also suggested that it might be an idea for marshals to contact the local radio stations who might be interested to visit our rally.

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### FOR SALE

1988 'E' reg Rambler, 33,000 miles. Extras include: Insect Screens to all sliding windows; Battery-charging unit; new 90 amp Leisure battery; new fiamma awning; Moss Security alarm; A/S conversion of top bunk to storage space; waste water tank; Porta-Potti; stereo radio/cassette; front seat headrests.  
Price - £11,500.

Raleigh Motor-villa deluxe free standing side door awning. Used twice. Price £130 o.n.o.

Lewis McQuillin has these available at Sancreed Cottage, 72 Main Street, Bretforton, Nr. Evesham, Worcs., WR11 5JJ and the telephone number is 0386 830329.

\*\*\*\*\*

'H' reg. Talbot Harmony. One owner. 2,400 miles. Fitted 2nd battery, radio/cassette, alarm. Lifetime rustproofing. Only used 3 weeks. As new. £16,500. Douglas Shearer of 8 Corpach Drive, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 7XG has this available and you can telephone him (evenings, please) on 0383 732842.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hitachi 6" colour television with FM/MW/LW radio and cassette recorder. Mains/12 volt. Only consumes 16 watts on D.C.! £60.

Please ring Arthur Fairburn on 0246 852799 for this bargain. Arthur lives in Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Hi!

Can anyone out there help me? I have had my Bedford CF CB22 for two years now and, touch wood, have had little or no trouble with it at all. However what I do need is a new air vent cover, as the last one came off on the M.11 at some time or other and neither for love nor money can I seem to get hold of a replacement. If any of our members can help me on this one, or in fact on anything to do with the CB 22 I would love to hear from them. Thank you all.

*Linda & George Saint".*

If you can help them at all, please write to 4(B) Meynell Road, Well Street Common, Hackney, London, E9 7AP or telephone on 081 986 9573.

Again these members sent a contribution towards the Newsletter which is NOT required but is much appreciated.

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Meg & Ted Goodread of 41, Stubbington Lane, Stubbington, Fareham, Hants., PO14 2PN need information regarding the fitting of a Fiamma Compact Carry Bike to a Talisman. If any member can help them, please write to the address show. Any information will be appreciated.

===oooOOOooo=====

"I found an item in 'En Route' about Green Cards. suggesting that they do NOT extend your comprehensive insurance cover FOR continental travel. It merely tells foreign policemen that you are covered by MINIMUM insurance. We have always obtained a green card - and paid for it - believing that we had comprehensive insurance cover. Whilst I am trying to get further information, if any member in the vehicle insurance business will write to the Editor we may get this sorted out. Meanwhile if you are going abroad this winter CHECK YOUR INSURANCE COVER and ignore the piece in the "First Timers Abroad" booklet about it.

If it does NOT extend cover, why do the insurers charge for the card?

*Rita Daley".*

Rita wrote to her insurers for clarification and has been advised that if your cover is comprehensive for driving in the UK the green card extends that comprehensive cover for travel abroad. But you would be well advised to check with you own insurers because the same thing may not necessarily apply.

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Following on with the comments about servicing, I received a letter from Ron Wallis which said that he had had problems with the charges for oil used by a dealer when servicing his Talbot Express. For obvious reasons I won't mention names but it seems that some £21.50 had been charged for oil used. But when Ron checked with Shell to price the correct quantities needed he found that the cost, inclusive of VAT, should only have been about £14.34. The servicing garage had claimed that they had used some superior type of Duckhams oil which is formatted for high performance sports cars and is wasted on our type of vehicles but Ron suggested to them that Duckhams oils were usually green and the contents of his sump was not green!

The offending garage finally repaid the amount claimed as overcharged but have now lost a customer. So it does pay to check what is being charged and to question anything which you doubt.

Ron also submitted this next item:

#### "LOOS

This subject was mentioned last month so may I enlarge on it, please? Recently a writer in one of the mags said that his wife awarded stars to sites based on the quality of their loos. In southern Yugoslavia, in 1967 or so, we stopped at Petrovac. We then had a frame tent and the site offered terraces, many fruit trees for shade and a magnificent view. We lazed there for several days but the loos! Virtually holes above a pit and the stench of ammonia was almost overpowering. One did not linger longer than absolutely necessary; indeed, one usually sought the greater comforts of the only hotel nearby. But the many glorious hours more than compensated for the MINUS 5 star loos! Sadly, the site has been replaced by one with all modern facilities which makes me ask again - are all the amenities

built into virtually every van simply for show and not for use?

A true story of the 'squat' type loos. In 1976 with very little choice we stopped at a site outside Izmir. Very basic but adequate for a night stop. The gents' loos were the usual footprint style but just above a pit and with no flush. Privacy was given by a wall across the front. One morning nature called and, clad only in my bathing trunks, I entered with modest grace and proceeded about my business. I was not the only living creature there. I slapped at something biting my shoulder and a wasp fell to the ground. Within seconds the small place was filled with the buzzers. A few more seconds and I discovered that those are NOT locating footprints but are Starting Blocks! Lynford Christie could not have got away faster and I doubt if any All Black could have jinked round that wall as quickly as I did. I suppose I had given those wasps the final insult but at least speed avoided some pretty embarrassing stings and possibly lasting damage to my pride."

I must confess that I roared with laughter when I read this item. It certainly brought a vivid picture to mind. All I ask is did Ron have time enough to replace the swim trunks?

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"I hope that this time you open the aerogramme the correct way and do not finish with two halves!" writes Tom Conway from Gananoque which I am sure you all know is in Ontario, Canada. "I felt that I should file the final progress report on our American journey which was planned in the very simple schedule of 3 months north to south down the east coast; 3 months east to west along the south; 3 months south to north up the western side and the final quarter (west to east) which is our present leg. We are booked on a freighter in late October so should be home at the end of November. I have read in some of the Newsletters of members considering the pros and cons of bringing their own vehicle or buying one on arrival here. Obviously, during the time we have been here I have had the opportunity of examining the alternatives and of discussing buying over here with people who have done it, so if on our return any member wishes to contact me I will be only too willing to give the the details. I hope to write an article on the trip with full costs and the many little things which occur yet no one

seems to consider important but which can be troublesome when they happen.

The mileage covered to date is 27,000 so the overall door to door will add a further 2 to 2½ thousand to this which, when you consider the duration of our trip, indicates that we have not gone out to break any records of distance in the minimum time. I think that this is an important factor of which those considering such a trip should be aware. The differences in the climatic conditions are considerable, so much so that we have retraced our steps and made a long stop-over to wait for better weather as it is unlikely that we shall get the opportunity to see that area again. We have not left an area without having seen everything we wanted to see.

The drive up the Oregon coastline is very spectacular but it can be very cool. The sea is very cold and the area can be wet, but having the time to explore it is a must. The Columbia River Gorge, which divides the states of Oregon and Washington, has every type of water sport you could wish and very good state camp grounds close by. We journeyed from there across 4 states into the interior to the Yellowstone National Park to see "Old Faithful" gush boiling water though I believe there are other things equally impressive. Our initial exit from the park was via the north entrance and we travelled high into the hills along a road cut through snow 6 to 8 feet deep to the Chief Joseph Highway. This, for a great distance, is only a gravel track climbing and descending mountain sides where land and road slips are a part of the journey and the scenery makes it worth while. And so to Cody, the home of Buffalo Bill, here there is a marvellous museum which requires 2 days to do it justice. We went back east to west across Yellowstone and on this part of the journey the views are quite different. Thus to Glacier which is the U.S. part of the Rocky Mountains where lakes and mountains have to be explored.

Well, I have run out of space and I haven't even started to tell you about Vancouver Island, British Columbia and Canada so possibly a further report will have to be submitted."

Of course it will, Tom, you must have something to do to while away the time on the slow boat back to these shores.

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"We made two visits to Algeria, on the principle that it is always easier to leave and re-enter a Maghreb country than to extend a visa. In both cases we crossed at Bon Chelka having been turned back in the South. Algeria has a Socialist government and frontier posts appear largely autonomous, some are easier than others.

Having negotiated a flash flood we took three hours to fill in forms etc. There were no problems till it came to money. They had run out of Algerian currency and could not in fact supply us with enough to buy an insurance - compulsory, expensive and only third party. "What do we do?", we enquired. "Just drive slowly and not over 50 kph!" The roads were good and by 5 pm we were near Tisssed and looking for somewhere to pull in. Seeing a 'Poste de Secours' - a combined fire and ambulance station - we enquired and to our surprise we were very warmly welcomed, given coffee and made free of the garden, the TV and the bathroom. As it was a 4 man crew I only availed myself of the coffee but my husband was grateful for the shower. Tisssed is the best preserved of all the Roman towns we visited, so well that it appears that it could easily be re-occupied! It was a leave centre for troops from Tazeault Lambese and occupied by retired legionaries with their promised tract of land. We much enjoyed the area, doing necessary business in Batna and visiting the homes of some of the crew members. We drove north and stayed overnight on the quayside at the disappointing Roman town of Tipasa where we visited the tomb of Silene, the daughter of Cleopatra. We left the town fortunately before the earthquake which caused many deaths. We avoided Algiers but went to Dar el Beida (formerly Maison Blanche) to visit the Commonwealth Cemetery at El Alia which, together with a French one, is within the confines of a much larger Moslem cemetery. Since my last visit President Boumedienne has been buried here and there are now imposing gates and a dual carriageway approach.

Driving south through the Aures mountains past the gorges of the Jebel Abiod, a small gorge, 'The Mouth of the Sahara' makes the transition from North to South; from mountains and vegetation to the flat sands leading to the Oasis of Beskra. Here I used the thermal bath, an open air bath and occupied by four elderly ladies in yards of white cotton busy applying henna to their hair. The shock of my appearance (having

put a shoulder to the rock that held the door closed) caused a flutter but I was soon accepted, shown how to get into 4'9" of hot water floored by slippery boulders and that was that. After twenty minutes I felt wonderful although looking like a boiled lobster but they stayed in for 2 1/4 hours - every day!

It seems that the last British visitors to Beskra Camping came in 1966 and, apart from water taps, everything else has crumbled, rusted or seized up since. The town provided us with jointed chicken, normally sold alive, and we visited the local equivalent of the Dorchester Hotel for a reviving Coca Cola and watched Tom & Jerry on T.V! We pressed on to Tonggourt (did not find the fountain said to provide constant hot water) and Ovangla and found the garden of a pleasant small hotel for parking. There was no race meeting (camels) but there was an excellent track so we spent a day at Hassi Mersaond, the oil capital of Algeria. This is an entirely functional and fairly bleak town, the 'burning off' oil flares scattered across the desert among a maze of pipes. Natural gas is piped from here to Italy via La Skhirra in Tunisia.

Our next stop was in the oases of the M'Zab, 121 miles on, at Ghardaia, one of five towns which are Mazabite, a strict religious sect. They are all colour washed in shades of pink, brown, blue and green and their small hills are crowned with watch towers glowing green at night. In Beni Isquen the gates are locked at night: no inhabitant may marry outside the town and no stranger may remain overnight. Each evening those with goods to sell carry them round and round the tiny square inside the gates waiting for offers in a form of auction. There is strict conformity and the women are veiled to reveal only one eye. I was asked to help with a 'knitting pattern' by a French speaking husband; I sat on the floor (my husband in the van with coffee) and found it was a German 'flower maker'. Sadly, it would have taken too long to make enough to sew together but the daughter, sitting at her rug loom, showed interest in my knitting so I gave her a photocopy. Ghardaian rugs may yet appear in the Bishop of Leicester's pattern!

We did stay in the camp site there and witnessed a foolish contravention of strict Algerian law. No Algerian currency may be taken in or out of the country. We merely hide our

reserve sterling and francs and forget about them; quite acceptable since we use Postcheques. But three young Dutchmen, going to Mali to sell Peugeot cars, gaily admitted to the Customs Police that they had currency got through a Dutch bank. Having extricated 7,000 dinars from their respective socks they were fined 21,000 dinars, passports confiscated, with 7 days to pay or prison. Through friends we knew that there was a (little used) telex machine in one bank in Ghardaia so hope that they were successful within the time. It is necessary to change 1500 dinars, for official receipts, on each entry to Algeria. This is no problem as it represents a few days in a hotel. But there are strict regulations on using undeclared foreign currency. Postcheques are efficiently dealt with throughout North Africa and one receives the currency in which they are written although in Algeria it is wise also to obtain a receipt from the Post Office to cover the official amount.

Leaving Ghardaia we went south to El Goba; 178 miles of totally featureless desert. This is the burial place of Charles de Foucauld, murdered in Tananrasset. Just south of here the road divides, south to Tananrasset or west to Timimain. The southern road is constantly under repair and the bulk of the journey is on the piste; friends in a similar van did make the trip but we are too old to cope with corrugations and sand ladders. It cost them 4 new tyres, 4 shock absorbers, some moments of terror and a neurotic dog who would not get back in the van to return the same way. Timimain, a real African town, was reached some 230 miles later; there is literally nothing in all this distance except the ever changing desert colours and an occasional well somewhere in the hinterland marked on the map as 'eau potable', 'eau bonne' or 'eau sale'. Timimain is bleak and windswept (a sandstorm in progress) but has an interesting building in the shape of the first hotel in the Sahara and the Gate of Timbuctoo, small and now divorced from the walls. Sadly, the storm persisted so we had no chance to explore the oases or see the area where the Sahara sand roses are found.

Food was not easy; we had to queue for bread and actually bought only a few carrots. "The Conquest of the Sahara" by Douglas Porch vividly paints the difficulties of the region. In 1902 its trade was said to equal 'that of a grocery store in a large town' and where, of 9,090 camels

requisitioned for an expedition, 3,538 died even before they left El Goba. Even the Foreign Legion declined to garrison Fort MacMahon, just to the north, describing it as a mixture of penal colony and military disaster where the tribesmen looted the supply columns and the garrison could only leave on foot. On our road west we got stuck but were extricated by a Police 4WD vehicle. Beni Abbes provided huge dunes beneath which to sleep and a wonderful Museum of Desert Life (74 varieties of date palm!) with some fascinating plants and animals. We travelled via Taghit, a delightful wadi with rock formations, prehistoric engravings and 500' dunes. The local children ran up and down but we only managed 350'. We left Algeria with regret, and rather weary, although learning yet again that the frontier was closed and we were not allowed in! It is a wonderful country and we hope that things will get easier.

*Clare Sommerville."*

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That's that, yet again. Hope I haven't upset too many people with the contents! See you next month.

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