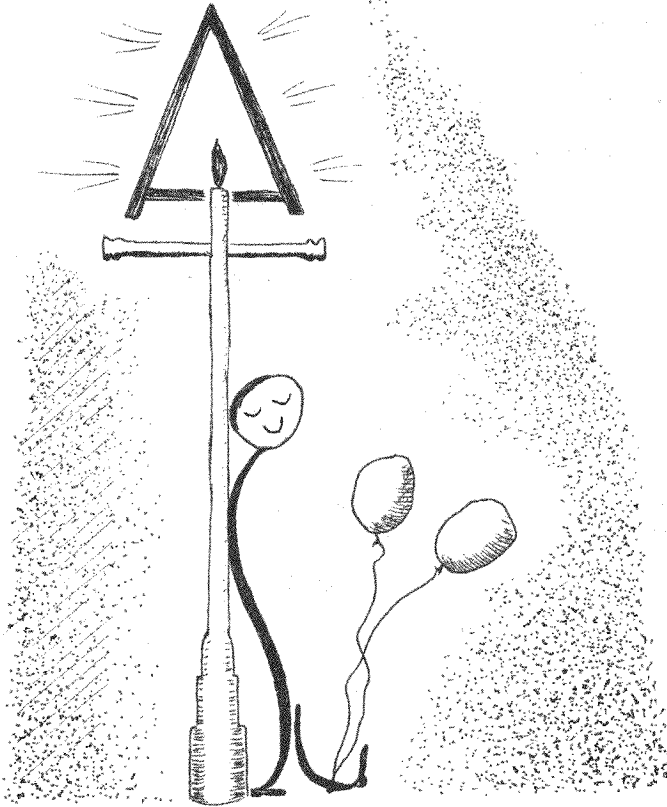


**AUTO-SLEEPER
OWNERS' CLUB**



NEWSLETTER 39

DECEMBER 1991

Hello.

It is getting near to Christmas time again and during the close season for caravanning our Members seem to have time to reflect on things. Try this when you have a moment or three to spare:

"Whilst travelling as a passenger along the M.6 I noticed a Talbot Auto-Sleeper and tried to guess which conversion it was. This started me thinking about suitable names for future Auto-Sleepers. It would be easier for the Company if the names were part of a series. Rivers, for example, Severn and Tamar seem suitable. The Mawddach and Dovey in Wales - we could have a 'Lovey-Dovey'! The Avon is being used for something but what about the Windrush and the Piddle? A grey/green conversion could become the Limpopo!

What about counties? Not 'Herefords and Worcs' but perhaps Lincs, Oxon or Berks. Or revive Rutland. Some of our garden birds might be racist or sexist but maybe the stars or planets? Mars and Jupiter are fattening, but Castor and Pollox? Ursa Major and Minor could be basic vehicles giving the bear essentials! We already have a Trooper but what about a Lance-Corporal? I began to sympathize with the Company when it named our first vehicle CX 1000 GTL.

Perhaps other members could suggest names, Harry might be persuaded to print the best - or most respectable!

Rita Daley.

This could easily get out of hand! If we go to Lance-Corporal there is another rank called Corporal-of-Horse. Our President would no doubt rejoice if he could have an "Auto-Sleeper Regimental Quartermaster Serjeant GL". Or a Drill-Serjeant based on the Staccato chassis! Welsh rivers could be unpronounceable - try the Mawddach (say it as mawthacsh) as suggested, the Cleddau (clethee) or Afon Ystwyth. Ought the company go a different route? We have the Talisman - maybe the Taliswoman or Talisperson? Or even, perish the thought, the Talis to avoid any personalisation. The Trident; how about the Duo-dent, Quadri-dent, Multi-dent? And the Legend; the Arm-end, the Nose-end, the Ear-end? If the Company decides to make very much smaller vehicles we could have Yorkies, Shetlands, and other small breeds.

Maybe the Skye is the limit!!! Over to you for suggestions, please.

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"Dear Members,

With this copy of the Newsletter you will receive the Membership Renewal Form. May I ask you ALL to complete it and return it to me, please? It helps me in keeping the Club records up to date with details of any change of address, vehicle etc., and I can check that I have sent new Membership cards out as necessary.

I shall send the cards out on receipt of your cheque, or, if you pay by Standing Order, as soon as I see a copy of the bank statement which shows that you have paid. Your Membership form will show me how to expect the payment.

If you haven't received your cards after, say, a fortnight from either sending me the cheque or seeing that the standing order has been processed by your bank please get in contact with me. We have known cases where the bank has forgotten to make the payment or where letters have been lost either when coming to me or the one I send back to you.

With best wishes to you all for Christmas and for 1992.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Hammell,
(Membership Secretary)

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Bob Meason has been in contact with a request for further details of petrol and diesel consumption figures for his survey. He did have quite a good response but it appears to have dropped off a bit. So will you please send him the details. I'm experimenting at the moment with a catalytic gadget I bought at the Detling rally. This consists of pieces of tin contained in a metal sleeve and the whole thing is inserted in the fuel (either type) tank. It is said to improve consumption figures and make it possible for unleaded petrol to be used instead of the leaded variety. I've got to have the engine tuned up again soon before I can really assess

whether the claims are accurate. I have already tentatively negotiated a discount for Club members if I find it works. More of this later!

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The first two advertisements this month I find rather sad. Both offers have been caused by members needing to give up caravanning for different reasons. From time to time, as we know, people move over to different makes of van and so have to leave the Club but at least they can carry on in their hobby. So I sincerely hope that their vehicles find good homes and that things work out well for them all.

FOR SALE

Talisman GL Turbo-diesel, August 1989, 16,000 miles. Fully equipped for "long-haul" travel at 27 mpg average. Many extras to basic petrol model include 16" wheels, remote control security system, Yale & Chubb door locks, stereo radio/cassette 4-speaker system with electronic aerial, microwave oven, Omnistor 4000 awning, wire fly screens to main windows, aquaroll, etc., etc. Full equipment list available. Never driven on salted roads; not entered by smokers nor animals!

Reluctant sale due to illness and offered at £18,500 - a considerable saving on the £26,000 plus of an equivalent new vehicle.

Bruce Cunningham, Wychwood, Mill Corner, Northiam, Near Rye, East Sussex, TN31 6HU or telephone 0797 253146.

[*Bruce* sent me the full equipment list which is far too long to include here. But it most certainly is a very full list - Ed]

Talisman GL 'F' reg., Petrol, Manual, usual double glazing, fly screens etc. Mileage 8,800. Price £15,000 ono.

Dr. Wilfrid Attlee of The Granary, Whitton, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 3DB or telephone 0584 890333. [Another who sent a contribution for the Newsletter which is appreciated but still not necessary. Ed.]

Ford Legend, 'F' reg., 5 speed, petrol, 17,000 miles, cassette toilet, double glazed, blown air heating. Immaculate condition. £15,950. Telephone *Mike Matthews* on 0243 262990 (Sussex).

Ladder/Safety Rail, Work Surface. Made for 1991 Legend. Unused. Cost new £58 & £42. Open to offers. *Mrs.A.J.Cross*, 4 Sunset Drive, Dodwell Park, Evesham Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 9SR or telephone 0789 268478.

Silver Screen to fit Ford Transit (Legend etc.). Bought at A.G.M.in April 1991; used twice only. Bargain at £50.00. Please ring *Jean or Ron Rawlings* on 0403 782756 or write to Meadow View, Parbrook, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9ET.

Silver Screen suitable for use on a Ford/Autosleeper Legend GL. Purchased new only 18 months ago for £93. Would like to sell for £30. Contact *Brian Jeffery* on 0923 778098 (Rickmansworth, Herts)

[Yet another who sent a donation, much appreciated but NOT a necessity! - Ed]

Free-standing mobile Calor Gas room heater complete with gas bottle. £20.00. *Sheila Hammell* wants to sell this and you can contact her at 144, Devonshire Hill Lane, London, N17 7NH or telephone 081 808 9112 after 6 p.m. most days. [If you can't contact her you can always try to contact me - Ed!]

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Back in March *Allen Gray* asked about the possible use of some form of junction so that he could carry butane gas for normal use and propane for the colder times. This led to quite a bit of correspondence and the overall result appeared to be that the two gases should never be mixed into the same piping system. It seemed to be all right to use one gas or the other but not both together, if you see what I mean.

In this month's copy of the Caravan Club's magazine "En Route" there is an item which says that the Gaslow people provide a simple change-over connection to allow both gases to be used. This is a T-style tap, code IM68 and you can get

further details from Grade (UK) Ltd, 5, Factory Lane, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 4AA - telephone number 0602 257716.

Still on the subject of gas, propane particularly, I've received a letter which I am sure will interest a lot of people.

"Supergas are aware of the problems club members are experiencing with obtaining cylinder propane in 6kg size, a size which we supply. We are grateful that our name was mentioned in the March Newsletter but feel that you should know some important facts about Supergas.

Supergas, the third largest liquefied petroleum gas distributor in the country, was founded in 1946 and has twenty three filling plants/depots and around four hundred dealers/stockists in England, Wales and Southern Scotland.

For details of how to obtain 6kg propane cylinders, please write to: Sales and Marketing, Supergas Ltd., Burford Road, Witney, Oxford, OX8 5RD.

Yours sincerely,
G.T.B.Cooper,
Sales Director".

I know that quite a lot of interest has been shown in this size of propane bottle which Calor have, so far, seemed to show no interest in supplying although they do a similar size in butane. So if you want the benefits of the propane gas, please write to Supergas. I think it is a good idea to support a supplier who is willing to provide what the customer asks for!

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Chairman's Chat

We had a Committee meeting on 2nd November which was quite an event, in its way. Indeed, in several ways. We'd had a meeting at the Daley residence before but this time we set a new record by having twenty for lunch. Seating was one problem but everyone found somewhere to perch, some even came back for second helpings; some stayed for tea; some stayed overnight and had coffee with us on Sunday morning. The coffee session almost turned into a second committee meeting, all sorts of good ideas came up. But I'd better report on the proper meeting first. It's worth noting that the

full Committee attended (no reference to lunch implied!) with apologies from the President and one Vice-President. We had a very full agenda and I can only pick out items which are likely to be of general interest. *John Tidbury*, Treasurer, reported a large balance in the deposit account, earning interest. The Chairman suggested some of these funds could work harder for us if we used the money to buy a Scan Printer (a fairly hi-tech duplicator) in order to produce the Newsletter ourselves. Our present arrangements were somewhat precarious and, although not expensive, cost us more than it would to do it ourselves. We could save something like £80 per month on the Newsletter alone and more on the numerous other items we have "printed". Money invested in a scan printer would show a return of about 20% over the first year, compared with about 7% in the Bank. As you may imagine, there was considerable discussion. This Newsletter will be/has been produced on our own printer. How does it look to you?

Sheila Hammell, Membership Secretary, reported over 90 enquiries since the last meeting and more than 70 new members, including Member No. 1,000, *Mr & Mrs Goodread* of Fareham, of whom more anon. *Wendy Fisher*, Regalia Officer, showed us the new vehicle badge which we all thought looked very good. At the time of writing most of the first fifty badges have been sold and more have been ordered. *Pete Fisher*, Secretary, reported that everything was under control, now that the misunderstanding over *John Hunt's* letter had been sorted out. *Jeff Worley*, Rally Co-ordinator, produced his bigger-and-better rally list for 1992 drawing particular attention to new Marshals and new venues. On the subject of marshals he suggested that it would help if anyone thinking of running a rally for us but not quite sure how, could act as assistant marshal at a rally first. This would give them the experience and also let someone else have time off for lunch! This is an excellent idea so if it could apply to you please let *Jeff* know or contact the marshal at the rally of your choice. *Jeff* will be standing down from his arduous task as Rally Co-ordinator at the AGM and *Tony Jones* will take over. We are hoping that the formation of a rally sub-committee, with members widely scattered throughout the UK, will spread the load because we must stop wearing out our co-ordinators at the present rate. *Harry Henthorne*, Newsletter Editor, expressed his relief at the decision to print the Newsletter ourselves. This would not only gives us more

control over its production but give us the flexibility to alter the format or size and to add inserts at very short notice - real "Stop Press" stuff!

As Chairman of the National Rally sub-committee, I reported a failure to find a site north of Birmingham with accommodation for a meeting for 700/800 people and catering facilities to match. Several lines of enquiry had been pursued but Haydock Park, with accommodation for 500, theatre style, for a meeting came nearest to meeting our needs. After discussion it was agreed the sub-committee should try to make arrangements for our National Rally and AGM, April 1993 to be held at Home Farm, Edithmead, Burnham-on-Sea. Arrangements for the two National Rallies next year, Kettering in April and Stratford-upon-Avon in July, were progressing happily. Well, those were the points from the meeting most likely to be of general interest. If I have forgotten anything I'm sure someone will comment. The next Committee meeting will be on 11th January, at Willersey.

I'd like to enlarge on the subject of assistant marshals because we've just had first hand experience of how well it can work. *Daisy & George Wane* ran the excellent rally at Fell End earlier this month with two pairs of assistants, *Cynthia & Roy Davies* and *Barbara & Brian Harrison*. This appeared to result in someone being "on duty" all the time but the others had opportunities to relax. With 38 (or was it eventually 39?) vans on site a bit of rest was welcome! We've seen it work too at rallies where *Marion & Jim Henwood* have teamed up with *Vera & Brian McLean*, several times. An idea well worth developing.

You may be interested to know just how much co-operation goes into the production of the Newsletter. For instance, I composed this item on my computer (a P.C. if you know what that is) and "printed" it onto a 5 1/4" disk. I then posted the disc to *Sheila* who fed it into her PCW's extra 5 1/4" disk drive so that she could transfer it onto a 3" disk for *Harry* to put into the 3" disk drive on his PCW and thus get it on his screen without having to re-type it. He then incorporated it into the bulk of the Newsletter, printed it all out on his printer and posted it to us so that we could turn out the 900 or so copies on the scan printer! I will be the first to admit that the effort involved must appear to be rather like taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut but we have

other things in mind for the future. Watch this space.

In this, the last Newsletter of 1991, *Rita and I* would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. We look forward to meeting you in 1992.

Phil Daley.

I do agree that it looks like the sledgehammer/nut syndrome but it does save quite a lot of typing. And as *Phil* said we are looking to the future and have certain ideas in mind which could be quite useful.

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RALLY REPORTS

"22 vans attended the Chester rally in October and the weather was 'perfick!' Members enjoyed the sunshine and the opportunity to walk the Walls of Chester. Some folk did the local walk round Hawarden Castle grounds and woods - Prime Minister Gladstone's home. Some enjoyed shopping on the Chester Rows and looked very smart for the evening meal. We understand some very fancy satin underwear was purchased but our lady member didn't 'give us a twirl!' We think everyone enjoyed themselves and thank you all for joining us.

Jean & Duncan [Ellis]"

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"A letter for the Newsletter, if you have room.

If you cannot buy the perfect vehicle with the perfect conversion go to the next best combination. My VHT, purchased new in 1988, showed signs of rust around the windows and roof join in 1990. A letter to A/S brought an immediate extension of the warranty and a request to deliver the vehicle to the works for rectification. This year bubbling in the windscreen spread to my line of sight so I visited the local VW agents for an opinion. They checked a modification list against the chassis number and the screen was replaced free of charge. Companies like that deserve their success.

And a query. Has anyone used a VHT or Trident (old style) in snow? I gather Silver Screens are a virtual necessity and that we are fairly well insulated already but the Austrian Alps would be quite a challenge and any tips and hints will be

welcome. My water tank is already internal and the vehicle has a heater but is it safe to leave that on while unattended?

Now for the cheap and cheerful mods department. I have fitted pockets, not only to the doors, but to the front of each seat plinth. Very handy for small items like cassette tapes. And the black plastic one inch angle sold in DIY shops makes a useful retainer if velcroed along the narrow shelves on the line of the original roof. It can also be self-tap screwed along the lower edge of the dash with a cut out to turn it up the side by the passenger door. With a similar small turn-up half way along, it holds maps and guide books securely. Not cups, like the elaborate VW accessory dash fitment, but far cheaper.

Peter Taylor."

Of course there's room, *Peter*, there always is for the interesting snippets. And I'm sure that one (at least) of our adventurous members MUST have been to the top of the odd Alp when the snow was "deep and crisp and even". Personally, I'm not too keen on leaving a gas heater operating if one of us is not in the van (or just outside perhaps). I don't mind and electric fan heater because I feel that they are a bit more secure. But, as always, I'm open to correction from more experienced people.

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Talking of heaters, a letter from *Martin McGrath*:
"Talbot Heater

Having experienced cold feet while driving with the heater on and seen comments about the same problem in magazines, I decided to see if I could make any improvements. On looking at the air ducts, it is evident that they are designed for left-hand drive. The duct for the driver's side is shaped as shown by the dotted lines in the diagram. I cut out a piece of the curved plastic duct between points A and B; this has resulted in the air being directed down instead of across. I can now feel warm air on my ankles while driving."



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AUTO-SLEEPERS ACHIEVE THE IMPOSSIBLE

At the Earls Court Caravan Show, Auto-Sleepers achieved the seemingly impossible by not only selling more vehicles than ever before, but also by winning the Caravan Industry Award for Motor Caravans for the fourth successive year - thus making a total of five occasions on which this prestigious Award has been awarded to the Company.

The total value of the retail orders taken by the Dealers on the Auto-Sleepers' Stand during the course of the Show far exceeded their best ever year; this being a record £3,373,381.

Undoubtedly, a major contributory factor in Auto-Sleepers' success was the fact that 60% of the vehicles on their Stand were new models which had been introduced since last year's Show; the most recent additions being the Talbot Executive (which was the winner of the Caravan Industry Award), the Volkswagen Clubman and the Renault Recro, all of which were

.PRESS RELEASE...PRESS RELEASE...PRESS RELEASE...PRESS RELEASE...PRESS RELEASE

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The Auto-Sleepers Stand was not only the largest in the motor caravan section, but also beautifully designed. The walls and floor were finished in light grey with contrasting red bands and the ceiling supported by triangulated pillars around which there were large displays of flowers. To complete the picture, the paintwork and trim of all vehicles were colour co-ordinated.

Auto-Sleepers' Company motto is "A Company Committed to Excellence" - perhaps this says it all?

[My apologies for the drawing, *Martin*, but I'm not an artist. Hope that it is nearly the same as the one you sent. Ed]

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I had the same trouble with my B-reg Talbot as *Gerry Woolley* describes in the November N/L. It just crawled up hills in first which were normally taken in third. I resorted to a trick learnt years ago with an old £100 (when new) Ford; pull out the choke. It helped a little but was of course not a cure.

The local one-man garage found the solution - a blocked fuel filter. Replacement was a simple job and the cost was low - apart from the fact that my local man always changed the plugs whenever he had a look a look at the engine - to save me money on future occasions, he said, because they were so awkwardly placed that it was best to do it when the spare wheel, air filter and other obstructions had been removed. He showed me where the filter (a simple glass tube on that model) was located and advised me to keep an eye on it. The whole system was riddled with rust and muck but I was advised that a simple replacement of the filter, at about £5, when necessary was a lot cheaper than trying to clean out the tank, plus fuel lines, filler tubes etc.

Dare I mention it? The 'van was one of the first Camelots!

John Hunt."

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FRANCE, FLU AND SWITZERLAND

June, and time to take our new VW Trooper on to the Continent for this year's holiday. But first, to welcome ASOC members to Kilkerran as they arrived for their tour of Scotland. A sunny, warm evening with 12 motor caravans parked peacefully in the walled garden of the estate. Everyone sat around with Jenny making the tea and introducing members to Scottish home-made shortbread.

Next morning off early for a night stop near Cambridge, then through the Dartford Tunnel en route to Folkestone. What's this, no lunches in England on Sunday? We had to back-track to The Moat, at Wrotham, where we were well satisfied. Boulogne to Paris, then with Jenny driving (and with me navigating) anti-clockwise around the Peripherique we

found our exit and drove to the apartment. I had five days to work here while Jenny took herself around the Art Galleries and Museums.

Sunday morning, we left for our first camp site at Milly-la-Foret, not far from Fontainebleu. Quiet and deep in the forest, our night stop cost a reasonable FF60. I had planned a relatively short drive of 175 miles/day to our destination, Nice, so Beaune was on target. The Municipal park here, at FF40.50 for the night, was good value with only a short walk into the centre of this famous wine producing region.

Next day to Valence and a site alongside the wide River Rhone. Another comfortable night on our 2-inch top mattress purchased before leaving home. Our next night stop was to be in a 'Logis de France' to satisfy my demand for '3 nights camping - 1 night recuperating!'. We stopped off at Frejus for lunch and supplies before we (I) decided that a 'Logis' would be a good base for our four nights stay after arriving in Nice. Here Jenny experienced the stainless steel "Nouveau Loo" with an automatic sliding door giving entry to a palatial throne complete with piped music. I was placed "on guard" outside to ensure that no one else entered. This space-age cylinder is pressure cleaned and sanitised after each exit, ready for the next occupant. Quite an experience!

We spent our days on the 'prom' and in sightseeing and on Sunday drove the tortuous road to join the "Millionaires" in Monaco and Monte Carlo. Our route to Switzerland was north to Gap where we stayed on the Alpes-Dauphine site. We were not the only A/S as we met Joe Paine and his wife on their way home. Next morning we found a 'deviation' at Ugine which took us and a poor soul with a large towed caravan up a narrow hairpin route to Flumet. We had planned to stop at a site near Chamonix but I was becoming ill and we found a B&B in the town, alongside a fast flowing, glacial river.

We shall not forget the next day which started well with a lunch stop at Sion. We had already experienced smoking disc pads and boiling brake fluid on the long descent into Albertville the previous day. This warned us to put the automatic gearbox into 1st which gave us a comfortable 25 mph descent on the engine alone. Climbing up to the Furkpass (2,431m/8,011 ft) we passed the railway siding and

carriages which can take you and the van through the mountain. Jenny was driving and I was in charge of the map and camera. The hairpin bends became more vicious at every turn with many built out from the mountainside on stilts! At 6,500 ft we went into cloud and found ourselves surrounded by snow banks as we climbed past the Rhone Glacier to the summit. Having reached the top we began the long descent in first, making way for oncoming Swiss Army vehicles at regular intervals.

Approaching Andermatt there was another "deviation". Selected to host the Winter Olympics, this small town and its roads were being rebuilt and we found ourselves on the N.2 motorway to the Gotthardpass and Italy. Not too far from the border we managed a U-turn and retraced our miles back to the town. It had not finished with us yet. Turning a corner we met a line of Swiss policemen who demanded Jenny take an immediate breathalyser test. From there on it was a very picturesque drive to my cousin's home in Zug where a warm bed and days of recuperation were waiting.

We returned home with stops at Metz, Rheims and St. Omer before joining the ferry at Boulogne. The round trip of 3,188 miles consumed 623 litres of unleaded fuel, 23.27 mpg.

Jenny & Peter Berry'.

I've cut out some of the mileages between stops in this item because I found that they irritated me when reading it. I hope that it doesn't upset *J & P* and that the content proves interesting to one and all.

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O.K! Hands up all those who spotted the deliberate mistake in the Autosleeper Magazine. The Membership Secretary's name on the slip on page 43 has been changed - and we don't get married until June next year. Never mind, *Sheila (still HAMMELL at present)* has received an apology from the perpetrator. Following on from that, I'm sorry, I've forgotten who sent this in to me but I think that it is high time I put it into the Newsletter - especially in my present predicament!

HOW TO PRESERVE A HUSBAND

Be careful in your selection.

Do not choose too young and take only such as have been raised in a good moral atmosphere.

Some insist on keeping them in a pickle, while others keep them in hot water, or worse yet, over their heads in debt; this only makes them sour, hard and sometimes bitter.

Even poor varieties may be made sweet, tender and good, by garnishing them with patience, well sweetened smiles and flavoured with kisses to taste.

Then wrap them in a mantle of charity, keep them warm with a steady fire of domestic devotion and serve with three good meals a day.

When thus prepared, they will keep for years.

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Page 43 in the A/S Magazine also contains pictures sent in by members for the photo competition, and very good they all are too. There could only be one winner and *Tony Jones* took the prize with the "End of the Rainbow" theme. All the other pictures have earned the runners up prizes. Congratulations to *Tony* and indeed to all who sent in pictures. I understand that it was a hard job to choose the best to submit to the Company and it must have been just as difficult to select the winner.

I've just learned of something which should have been reported some time ago. Way back in August there was a rally at Chestnut Farm, Norton, in Gloucestershire. As one of the raffle prizes our friends from Cotswold Motor Caravans presented a rather nice barbecue which was very much appreciated and not only by the lucky winners. Sorry that it wasn't mentioned before but there has been a failure of communications somewhere along the line!

Also I must record thanks to the wives of the Committee members who valiantly folded the November issue of the Newsletter. Whilst we were chattering away spending a

couple of hours or so on something which is being reduced to Minutes they worked hard in 'the back room' doing their bit to help the Club along. Thanks very much indeed, ladies.

There has been a lot of talk recently about the quality of water issuing from our domestic taps. It appears that in some areas it may have fallen below standards set by the E.C. It has long been a source of discussion in the caravanning and camping fraternity (and sorority of course) as to the quality of water which comes from whatever sort of container we are using. Each has his/her own opinion as to whether filling should be done by a hose or a jug if the tank is built into the vehicle. And no doubt their own ideas as to why the quality should be as it is.

In the end it really comes down to a question of hygiene. Have you cleaned your system through properly? Have you sterilised the tank/pipe/taps/waste tank/sink etc.? When you think about it there are quite a lot of places between the tap in the house or on the site and the tap at the exit from the waste tank where nasty things can happen.

We can't do very much about the water we get from our domestic taps, except complain if it isn't as we would like it, but we can do something about that which we carry. So, back onto the old theme, DRAIN YOUR TANK(S) PROPERLY AND FULLY before Jack Frost can cause havoc and when you refill for next year, make sure that you cleanse everything thoroughly.

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I've just learned that *Dilys Stinchcombe* is in hospital. I'm sure that I speak for everyone when I say that we hope that she will be home again very soon, fully restored to her normal, happy and bubbling self.

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One thing I find disappointing about many guide books is that they concentrate on towns and what's in them and fail to mention the countryside stretching for miles between these man-made excrescences. A series which I like more than most is the Michelin Green Guides which are written for the touring motorist and give all sorts of suggestions for tours of varying length from selected centres. We found the one on

Spain particularly good for us last year on our first real look at the interior of the country and we intend returning to see more this year. We managed to fit in some of their suggested routes here and there and found them good, but more of that later - Editor permitting!

Another irritating comment which is fairly frequently seen in travel guides is along the lines of "don't travel through France if you can avoid it, the motorway tolls are very high." Why the [censored expletive] does anyone want to travel through France on Motorways? Even if you have only two weeks holiday and want to spend as much of it as possible on the south coast, I still feel that belting along the Autoroutes is rather like bolting a delicious four-course meal in order to enjoy the coffee and liqueur at the end. It's a crying shame to miss the real beauty of the country as you travel through.

French roads are not like English ones; they were designed for easy travel from place to place and French drivers use them to get from here to there quickly so spending less time on the road, thus keeping traffic density down. On most Departmental roads, those with a 'D' in front of their number, you will meet the occasional car or lorry, no queues and you can set your own speed in order to see the countryside. Villages present no problem but on the contrary, offer the opportunity to buy fresh bread and the makings of a picnic but towns, particularly big ones, are different so we avoid them where we can.

There must be as many possible routes through France as there are roads, but some are better than others. We have travelled through the country almost every year since 1971 and can still find a different route, if we try hard! Why try? Well, lots of reasons. In the first place, I love map reading and can spend many happy evenings plotting and revising a way from here to there with deviations and detours. Or even a direct route if our plans call for one. For instance, last year we decided to have a better look at Spain than our original recce in 1986 had provided because that had just taken us all round the coast of Spain and Portugalk.

A fairly quick transit of France seemed to be called for since we had allowed about a month for the journey. We prefer the P & O Portsmouth/Cherbourg Ferry for financial and logistic reasons and quite like crossing the Pyrenees by

the Col du Pourtalet, so I wondered how straight a furrow we could plough between the two. Even if we avoided crossing the Loire at Nantes, (too big and busy), it looked pretty straightforward. About 600 miles (586 our way, actually).

The first night in France was at the small Municipal site in the village of Lessay, partly because it was an easy drive (35 miles) from Cherbourg after arriving there at about 7 pm French time and partly because it's quiet and there is a boulangerie and charcuterie within a very short walk. The next night at St. Laurent-sur-Sevre, 197 miles on, was very peaceful. This site by the football pitch and the river is well hidden; even the Michelin Motoring Atlas of France doesn't list the village in the index but, on page 80, due south of Cholet on the D.752 just after the crossroads on the N.149, there it is. Having found the village, look out for the sign near the bottom of the hill, a sharp right turn then a narrow lane, up and down to the site, not (officially) open all year.

From there it was 189 miles to Creon for the next night. This is right in the middle of Claret Country (Entre Deux Mers) and ever since we had found the new by-pass at Cognac we had been driving through vineyards where grapes were either being gathered - mostly by machine - or were hanging, ripe and luscious, on the vines, so we weren't surprised to find some Travelling Folk on this site. Next day was not one of the best; I had under-estimated the amount of traffic to be found in Libourne on a Saturday lunchtime. It was thick, but we weren't in a planned stop at one of the many pleasant sites near Laruns quite early in the afternoon with another 145 miles on the clock.

Next day, Sunday, it was over the Col du Pourtalet (1,794 m or 5,886 ft) and into Spain. If you would like a description of the route in greater detail let me know.

Phil Daley."

This item has been on the spike for some long time now and I felt that I just had to use it. It seems to me to express the views of many of us in that one doesn't have to drive on motorways to get anywhere. I too can enjoy browsing over a map - it isn't just a collection of squiggly lines to me but more in the way of a picture of areas where we have been or a dream of where we might go. Let me have some more

more of your experiences, please, not so much the travelogue type but rather the odd things which have happened to you.

I remember a day in Eire when we came to a road junction without any indication of the place which we were trying to find. So I turned right into a nice country lane which got gradually narrower until we arrived in the front garden of an isolated house. If I remember correctly I needed about a 33 point turn to get round with the lady of the house watching with laughter from her kitchen window. She was kind enough to tell us that it was not an unusual occurrence and they had been thinking of putting a sign up at the junction to warn people but hadn't got round to doing it yet. On the same holiday we discovered a true Irish road sign warning us of a steep hill with hairpin bends. The problem was that it was situated at the bottom of the hill after we had got down it!

So come along there, people. Whilst reminiscing to each other after the surfeit of turkey and plum pud take a pen/pencil/typewriter or other scribing device, mechanical or electronic, in hand and jot down your memories. I'm beginning to look for items for 1992 now and every little helps. What about anecdotes concerning your pets and the van? There must be a fund of stories out there and I'm just waiting to put them into print. I don't mind how bad you think your writing is I'll usually manage to make some sense of it. I can even accept output on computer 5 1/4" or 3" discs (see Chairman's Chat) provided that your program can translate it into ASCII format under MS/DOS. (For the uninitiated or uninterested - don't worry, ordinary paper with marks on is quite good enough!)

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We visited the Earls Court Caravan Show this year and found that the attendance was about 40% down on last year. I don't know whether it picked up towards the end of the week but I understand that the 40% was the final total. We didn't bother to view the trailer vans and so-called "Mobile" Homes but spent our time up on the balcony looking at the motor vans and the other odds and ends, from accessories to the Gifts and Gadgets. Naturally we spent some money on some of the bargain offers only to find later that in once case at least we could have bought the same thing cheaper in our

local D.I.Y. shop. And I thought that I wasn't too gullible. Put it down to the heat of the moment.

STOP PRESS

"We have only joined the Club this year and would like to say how much we have enjoyed the rallies. We have met some lovely friends and would like to say a BIG "Thank You" for all the help we have received. A special "Thank You" to *Daisy & George /Wane/* and their helpers for an enjoyable weekend at Fell End - it was a lovely birthday!

A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to you all.
Best Wishes

Sally, Guy and Colin Gaskin

I think that this letter is one of the nicest I've ever received and says, in a very simple way, just what this Club of ours is all about. In the very early days it was agreed that we wanted to meet in friendship and not be regimented or bullied into things. And, like *Sally, Guy and Colin*, I've made friends with people from all over the country. Thank you, everybody, for making the Club what it is.

I hope that (a) you've noticed and (b) you like the slightly revised style of your Newsletter. To quote an old advertising slogan "Our policy is one of continued improvement (we hope)" and we are experimenting with the new machine. In addition *Sheila and I* have access now to what is called a "Desk Top Publishing" programme for our computers which should give us a wider range of abilities in the production of this Newsletter. As you will appreciate, we have to learn all the tricks necessary to get the most benefit from it and it may take some time. But please let me know whether you like this style or if you prefer the earlier version.

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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.

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Our Committee would like to wish you all
A Very happy Christmas
and many, many miles of safe travelling in 1992.

