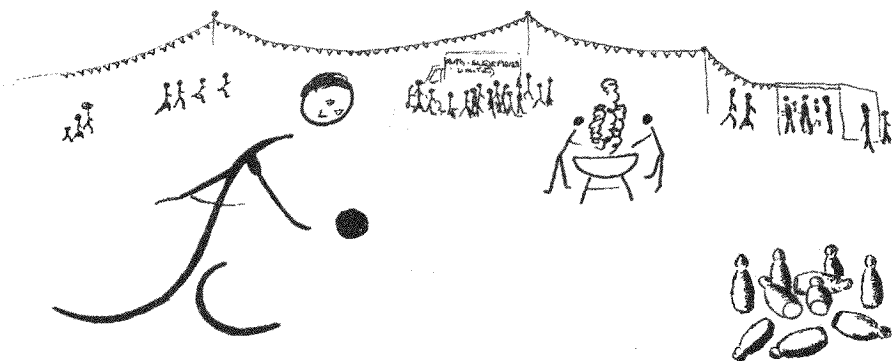


**AUTO-SLEEPER
OWNERS' CLUB**



NEWSLETTER 47

AUGUST 1992

Hello.

Here I am back in harness once again. My thanks to *Phil Daley* for holding the fort while *Sheila and I* enjoyed our honeymoon especially as *Phil* has not been at all well. He picked up some sort of bug while abroad on holiday and forgot to leave it at the quarantine station when he got home. But I'm pleased to say that he is on the mend now.

It was quite a change to get back and open a copy of the Newsletter which was virtually new to me. I've come back to find that "The Spike" is fairly full just waiting for me to include the items in this, and future, issues.

Just out of idle curiosity, who was it who stopped at the Farm Shop between Stratford-on-Avon and Broadway and pulled into their car park to inspect our Clubman GL (from the safety of their own Talisman) and didn't wait for us to pop out and say hello? You should have waited; we don't bite (well - not very hard!).

Right. Back to work and off we go.

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The Good Old Days

Alf Campbell of Redruth in Cornwall has been having a bit of a turnout and discovered a brochure for the A/S Bedford conversion of 1974. The Autocar is quoted on the front as saying "...in use it leaves one with little or nothing to criticise; instead one has admiration for its design and construction." The total price for the vehicle tested, including refrigerator, luxury cab seats, gas cylinder and regulator, chemical toilet, gas fire and underseal (amongst other items) was - wait for it - £1,778.79! If we have an archivist in our midst *Alf* thought it might be of interest, or perhaps The Orchard would like it for their records. Please let me know.

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Rally News

An extra rally has been arranged for 28th-31st August inclusive up in North Wales. It promises to be very good value and details are in the rally supplement. *John Greenwood* has been working hard on this so please support him.

Marshals have been found for the Kings Down Tail rally (11th-18th September). Revised details are in the supplement.

The rally at Detling has been **CANCELLED** because I have received no word from the organisers in spite of a number of letters to them. Sorry, but perhaps we can do that one again another year.

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RALLY REPORTS

"We attended the Lytham rally run by *Kath & Norman (Benyon)* and got V.I.P. treatment. On the booking slip, in the "Any special needs" bit *George* had written "Breakfast in Bed, please". No sooner said than done! A knock on our van door around 8.30 am and there was *Kath* in her frilly pinny. On a beautifully laid tray was a pot of tea, a glass of orange juice, milk, sugar, buttered toast and a single red rose in a vase. You've started something now, *Kath*! We all thoroughly enjoyed the Ice Show in Blackpool and the coffee morning with raffle in the Club room. *George* says its one of the best rallies he has been to - well he would, wouldn't he?

Daisy (Wane)."

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"We should like to record our appreciation and sincere thanks for the splendid arrangements made for the AGM.

In particular it was a pleasure for many of us "oldies" once again to hear and enjoy the good dance music provided for both evenings. We know that many members felt the same and all hope that for next year at Edithmead similar evenings can be held with no danger of "deafening discos".

Dorothy & Dave Foulkes."

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"*Vic* and I would like to say a big 'thank you' to those who organised the AGM. They did a really first class job. We've been to all the previous AGM's but somehow we seemed to enjoy this one so much more. I suppose we know more people now and its lovely to be so warmly greeted by such pleasant companions.

Thanks for the Privileged Parking area. It made all the difference for me. I could get to the Pavilion easily. If we had been at the top of the field I could never have made it without being driven to and fro - a decided nuisance.

Joining ASOC has been the best thing we've done in years. Since I had to stop teaching through ill health I just got more and more depressed. Now, thanks to the Club, we gallivant all over and have met so many lovely people (plus a few odd bods!).

Barbara Kaye ."

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"Would you kindly convey our appreciation and thanks to *Rosemary & Tony Beavis* and all the other ralliers at Salisbury who made our first rally very pleasurable.

Joyce & Gordon Matthews ."

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Four letters, each in its own way saying just what this Club is all about. I'm sure that I speak for all our members when I say "Its great to be a part of it". And long may it continue, thanks to you all out there, whether ralliers or not.

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Silver Screen for Talbot with truck mirrors.
4 blue/white flowered cushion covers for Talisman.
1 7kg Butane gas bottle (needs filling).

No reasonable offer will be refused so please ring *Pat & Dave Warcup* on 0507 578 616 or write to them at "Southwold", Main Road, Hemingby, Nr. Horncastle, Lincs., LN9 5QF.

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Talisman Turbo-Diesel, Dec. 1987. 27,000 miles. Excellent condition, full service record (latest service July 92). Cassette Porta-Potti; toilet compartment improved similar to latest models; microwave oven; front spoiler (white) fitted at Willersey; 2 roof ventilators with electric fans; new silencer; arm rests fitted to passenger seat; overcab converted to 3 large cupboards; wheel trims bolted on; secondary deadlocks on all three doors; mud flaps; aerial on roof; 4 speakers; 3 mains electric points; mains electric light. Overall mpg shows as 31+. £16,500. *Full details, name & address etc. will be given next month as the seller is away on holiday.*

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"We returned from a month in France (seeing only one other Auto-Sleeper!) to find the June issue of the N/L waiting for us. One or two comments seem appropriate.

I also have had problems with the Thetford cassette toilet in our Harmony (new in April 1990) The stiff twist knob (replaced with a redesigned version - parts cost £6), leaking lip seal (replaced) and leaking vent seal (replaced three times and leaking once again).

Arthur Irving mentions the Sealink Auto Club. I have used this for several years but unfortunately it has now been discontinued to be replaced by Compass Points, a somewhat similar scheme but with a membership fee of £5 per year. Details from Sealink Stena Line Compass Points, PO Box 232, Melksham, Wilts., SN12 7SB.

Finally, Calor propane cylinders. Yes, I too have had great difficulty in sliding some cylinders into the gas locker of the Harmony. I think it is unlikely that Calor will reduce their tolerances for our convenience so perhaps A/S could provide that little bit of extra height in the gas lockers to cope with the tallest cylinders in the range.

Jack Dawson ."

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Vice-Chairman's Chart

"First, a welcome to *Sheila and Harry (Henthorne)* back from their honeymoon.

By the time you read this the "Club and Company" rally will be over. No doubt it will have been a great success. At the time of writing (mid-July because of publishing deadlines) the bookings are still pouring in.

Our ex-Chairman (now P.R.O.) *Phil Daley* has been on the sick list, a chest infection required him to have a spell in hospital. When I met him recently he was still far from well. But, as those who know him would have expected, he was still working on details of the Stratford weekend. Nor must we forget *Rita Daley* who has, of course, had to shoulder a larger share of Newsletter production and distribution. *Ron Wilson* has also been unwell. I am sure that you all join me in wishing them, and anyone else who may be less than fit, a very speedy recovery.

Since my argument with gravity *Barbara* has been working hard at her driving and could now get us home if the need should arise. I suggest that everyone should try to arrange for two drivers for the motor caravan.

On another subject, I notice at some rallies members who plug their electricity coupling cable end into the site bollard and then walk on wet grass with the now live plug in their hands. No doubt somebody will tell me that I am fussing over nothing but can we really be sure that all sites have been wired to the correct standard?

Varlerie & Peter Fullick have volunteered to marshal the rally at Kings Down Tail,, Sidmouth, (11th-18th September) so that rally is definitely on again.

I wish you all happy caravanning for the rest of this season. How quickly it passes.

Jeff Wortley."

I agree with *Jeff* about the mains lead. As a matter of principle I always connect the van end first and then wander across to the bollard to connect and, if necessary, switch on. The reverse order, of course, when about to leave a pitch. We've got one of those metal spools to wind the cable on and I find that the bollard end plug just fits neatly into the centre holder - better than the other end does. And although I agree about the idea of two drivers for each van it must be extremely difficult in some circumstances. Perhaps one member of the 'crew' is disabled and cannot drive. It has been noticeable that, when a need has arisen, a "spare" driver has always been found from other members attending a rally.

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I've received a delightful note from our one and only honorary member, *Dilys Stinchcombe*. She also sent the following for your interest:-

New Zealand

"After *Frank* died I thought "What do I do?" I took up my music again, and then rang our friends in New Zealand to ask if I could come and visit. They were delighted. So off to the travel office - they did the organizing and I paid the BILL - enough!

I left Heathrow on 5th October 1991 and arrived in Auckland on 7th to be taken to the Auckland Travel Lodge. From my window I

could see the Auckland Harbour Bridge to the left, the Ferry Building to the right and, right in front of me, the catamaran which had won the Americas Cup a year or so earlier. Next morning I started on the Northern Highlights Trip to visit Warkworth Satellite Station, N.Z.'s link to the world-wide Intelstat system; Parry Kauri Park (Maori war canoes are built from Kauri trees) and the Kauri Pioneer Museum. Then to the Clapham Clock Museum at Whangarei with over 1000 different clocks and to Kawaka where the trains run through the main street with the rest of the traffic! Next came the Treaty House at Waitangi where the Maoris and Pakeha (Europeans to you) signed a peace treaty after a lot of warring times. A trip by catamaran took us through the Bay of Islands to the famous "Hole in the Rock" before returning to Auckland.

The next venture was to the Waitomo Caves and a peaceful, subterranean boat ride through them under a canopy of glow worms looking like stars. Eastwards to Rotorua - which is on a volcanic fault line and where I could smell natural Hydrogen Sulphide gas - and a Maori Feast and Concert. There followed a guided tour of Geysers, Mud Pool and Maori arts and crafts before a trip on Lake Rotorua on a paddle steamer. We were able to help ourselves to Tea/Coffee, fresh scones, sponge cakes and all with jam and/or cream. Lovely! We also visited the Agrodrome to see 19 different breeds of sheep, sheep shearing and a sheep dog demonstration. Then we were asked if we would like to milk a Jersey cow and if we were able to get any milk we were issued with a certificate of "Udderance". In Rainbow Springs we took a walk through the woods to see the birds and the pools with rainbow trout and eels and an unusual Blue Trout. We also called at the Nocturnal House to see the one and only Kiwi bird. To the Wairaki Geothermal project where they pipe natural hot water to the generating station to produce electricity, the Huka Falls (very noisy) and so to Lake Taupo, the largest lake in N.Z. We were hoping to see three mountains but they were hiding in the clouds. This area is the principal skiing area in N.Z. We then went along the Desert Road, sometimes closed in winter because of the snow, to my destination Waikanae where my friends were waiting for me. After our evening meal I was invited to watch television with them - "Coronation Street" followed by "Emmerdale Farm". The programmes were about 2 or 3 months behind our and these are about the only things they watch except for the news.

I stayed with them for a week and visited the "Mission Vineyard", which is one of the oldest in the country, and is run by monks. I sampled the wine and bought some for later - very good too! My friends have planted trees and shrubs on the local Golf Course (keen golfers and help to run the club) and have planted

flowers from their garden around the club house. Their own garden is open to the public most weekends - they have over 70 different types of rose besides many other plants. While I was there they had a visit from a coachload of students from a horticultural college in Wellington.

I left them on 19th October to go on the "Westcoaster" for about 9 days - but will report on that later!

Dilys Stinchcombe."

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Trolleys

I've just read the July MMM and found that their "discovery" at Brand's Hatch was a small trolley designed for the specific purpose of transporting the Thetford Cassette Waste Tank. Whilst not doubting the entrepreneurial skills of the inventor nor the effectiveness of the trolley, I would suggest that members don't rush to buy too quickly. Have a look at Texas who are selling a fold up trolley at £6.99 (the one in MMM has a mail order price of £19.95) which serves the purpose admirably. Extended, the handle height is 34" and is rigid and it has an axle width of 12". It folds flat to 21" x 12". Apart from carrying the cassette it can also carry shopping, luggage, golf clubs, computer hardware etc. though not all at the same time! You also get an expanding strap to secure the load. These Taiwanese think of everything. I've just snapped one up at this bargain price - unfortunately a week too soon - Texas currently have 20% off everything bring the price down to £5.60. As a Yorkshire man I feel that I've been done.

David Carrigan."

And don't forget that "Wrinklies" can join the Texas 'Over 60 Club' and get 10% off everything on Wednesdays (or about 30% off a cup of tea and a bun if you want one!). Texas also stock the same pattern of crockery and other kitchen ware as that supplied as originals in the Auto-Sleeper range.

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Diesel Matters

" I read with interest the article on fuel, oil etc., in the July Newsletter and some of the points seem to read like a horror story. I have a Talbot 2.5 Turbo Diesel and note that the makers recommend either Esso Superlube Diesel or Shell Super Diesel 15/40

so why pay all the extra for synthetic oil? An agent once charged me over £22.00 for synthetic oil on a service and refunded the overcharge when I pointed out that he had used oil not recommended by the makers. The Talbot handbook also quotes the specification for Diesel Oil as CCMC PDI or PD2 (Comite des Constructeurs due Marche Commun) and that code, with others, is on a "can" of "own brand" Turbo-diesel oil bought in a French hypermarket last week for just under £5 and which will be used with every confidence. It would be very interesting to know what all the various codes stand for as they are virtually a statement of quality or suitability of use of the contents. I'll bet none of the big transport concerns use high priced synthetic oils - and they really work their Turbo-diesels very hard indeed.

It is appreciated that the reason for turbo failure can be due to switching off the engine too soon after a hard run. I have not seen an exploded diagram of a turbo but on mine the oil seems to be fed into a central bearing on the turbo and from there drains into the sump. Besides lubricating, it is equally important for cooling. Switching off when that bearing is unbelievably hot means that the oil no longer flows but absorbs the heat so that both oil and bearing give up the ghost. If, when arriving home late, I left my engine running for a few minutes as suggested, my neighbour would create hell next morning, so I must quote from the makers' handbook - "after a journey at high speed wait a few SECONDS before stopping the engine". Also it must help to take things easy for the last few hundred yards of a journey if at all possible. As a matter of interest the Talbot Turbo Diesel has not one but two big radiator cooling fans and also a warning light for high OIL temperature so there must be a risk of extremely high oil temperatures in these engines.

Regarding the Technical Tailpiece. The conversion to Turbo-charging is very interesting but is it just the engine that has been converted? As a Turbo-charged Diesel Talbot costs some £4,000 extra I guess that *Dennis Galloway* will have saved a great deal of his hard earned cash. Looking at the Turbo itself it would seem a lot of money for that alone and the only other obvious difference is the much bigger wheels and tyres. I suspect that those are backed up by bigger disc and rear brakes and also heavier duty drive shafts; possibly the engine too has been strengthened in vital places. Anyone who has driven a Turbo will know what a 'kick' is delivered when accelerating hard and that must put a much greater strain on many parts of 'the works'. Being unable to get workshop manuals these days it is difficult to get technical information on such matters.

Could I just add that my vehicle is a Rhapsody (can't get anything bigger into my parking space) and though I claim to be a gentle driver I find the turbo a great advantage; overtaking those huge lorries on French roads (although not just recently) is made easier and much less nerve wracking; general driving is more relaxing because there's a lot less gear changing; hill-climbing is easier and the extra power means keeping up with other traffic is no problem. In fact last year we motored from South London to our first (real) stop in Turkey recording 1998 miles in just five consecutive days. Although I was then 76 I can honestly say that I was not tired at the end of any day. MPG is consistently 33 but the mileage recording is about 3% out so that makes a true 32 mpg. Diesel fuel in Greece last year was 92p per gallon and I spent just £266.45 on fuel for the total mileage of 6662 or about 4p per mile!

On the subject of valve lubrication with unleaded petrol, I wonder if the use of a graphited upper cylinder lubricant always, or just now and again, would help? But then, most folk don't want to mess about with such things. I hope there is someone in the club more expert than I (not difficult) who could comment further on these important matters."

Passing through Calais this week (dodged the lorry drivers' road blocks by minutes) we found that diesel at the Mammoth Hypermarket was the equivalent of £1.53 per gallon and could be paid for by "Visa" which is also accepted in the store. I think that the filling station is open for 24 hours so don't go there with a full tank. Diesel is cheaper than the U.K. everywhere in France anyway. In Luxembourg it was £1.26 - £1.30 per gallon.

Hilda & Ron Wallis."

Perhaps because of where I have lived but I have always been in the habit of taking the last couple of miles or so fairly easy after any sort of run. At present we have four corners to turn within the last quarter mile or so, and there is no real chance of rushing the last bit. But this seems to be sensible advice and rather akin to the warning about the practice of revving the engine when starting from cold. Not a particularly good practice but you can still hear it every morning. And we thought we were doing well to buy diesel in South London for £1.86 - anybody got a pipeline to Greece?

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Mary [Colling] has sent in details of a range of waterproof boots, shoes, overshoes/galoshes and what are referred to as "Supa-Klogs". All of these appear to be very suitable for use in the type of mucky fields we sometimes find ourselves in. Unfortunately, nowhere in the leaflet which was sent could I trace the name and

address of the manufacturers. So if you are looking for some waterproof footwear - hard luck! Or look for the "Supa-" prefix in some advertisement!

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☺ " PHIL'S RABBIT ☺

Some long time ago, probably at Billing, *Dave Clarke* of raffle fame told me he had bought one of the little compressors which works off the vehicle electrics via the cigarette lighter socket. He had been pleased at its efficiency and found it much more acceptable to hang on to the compressor for a few minutes (to stop it wandering around) than labouring with a foot pump trying to get 65psi into a rear tyre. I thought it sounded a good idea, especially since most filling stations seem to have changed over to a "pay as it blows" system - which I found inconvenient and expensive on the one occasion I tried it - the 10p lasted only long enough for two tyres and I never did get round to the spare. But for ages I wondered if such a little gadget could really do the job and would the supplied cable reach to all four tyres... Not that I doubted *Dave's* word but were the ones I saw the right ones? Anyway, I eventually found the courage and £14 and bought one. I am delighted with it. It takes a few minutes to top up the tyres on the Talisman - it reaches all of them - but only seconds to re-set the 30 psi required on *Rita's* UNO. And the gauge supplied is pretty accurate too which is a bonus. Thank you, *Dave*. I wonder if I will ever reduce the pressure in those rear tyres when the van is not fully loaded, knowing I can put the pressure up again so easily when required? I somehow doubt it! (Supplier, B&Q).

We all know what sort of thing we can expect to find in a bundle which appears unexpectedly on our doorsteps, from something very young and innocent to something even younger and very deadly. On returning from the Rally at Kingsbury Water Park *Barbara Worley* found quite a large package left outside their door. Apparently it didn't rattle or squeak and they were not expecting to be blown up by terrorists so they opened it. What a surprise they got! There, after being lost for over a year, was our old original Club Banner. Who had left it there, where it had come from and what had happened to it since we last had it at the 1991 National Rally at Edithmead, I just don't know. If *Barbara* manages to find out anything at all we'll let you know. In the meantime, just in case someone who knows more than he/she is prepared to say should happen to read this, let me say the Club is very grateful for the return of its property.

If you have met *John Greenwood* in the last few weeks I think there's a better than even chance you'll know he's running a rally at the end of August. In case you haven't, and don't, these are the details he has asked me to pass on: Date, August Bank Holiday weekend. Duration, from Friday noon to Monday noon. Place, Argoed High School, Bryn-y-Baal, Nr MOLD. This has been squeezed into the calendar for the sake of those of us who don't fancy a long trip down to the other rally at Crocknorth Cottage, East Horsley in Surrey over the Bank holiday. *John* tells me there is plenty to do, temporary membership of the Social & Sports Club next door can be arranged. Ring *John*, soon, on 0244 548 882 for further details.

Phil Daley.

Details of the Argoed rally are in the supplement, as previously stated. It is nice to know that our original banner has returned to the fold. But now it is rather like they say on the police help programmes on television - "have you seen it between Edithmead and now? Or have you seen anything suspicious in a back-street garage?" If only the inanimate objects could talk! "There I was, all rolled up an comfy in front of the dais when I was picked up and bundled into a van. I got shoved into a corner when the van got home and nobody took any notice until suddenly I was rushed back out to the van, taken along to the *Worleys'* pad and dumped unceremoniously on their step!" On the subject of compressors I thoroughly agree with *Phil & Dave* (or is that the name of a pair of comedy entertainers?). We've had a compressor for some time and very valuable it is too. But surprise, surprise, while in Wales this summer we found a garage with a FREE air supply. We took advantage of that - just to check because nothing was really needed. So there are still one or two about.

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Hints & Tips

You may remember that some time ago I invited any member to assist *Rita Daley* and myself in the task of preparing an index of hints and tips from the Newsletters. *Louise Story* offered her help with the result that we now have available a version of the usual index specifically aimed in that direction. At a later stage, if time permits, a Club Booklet *may* get written but don't hold your breath waiting for it! The current H&T index covers issues 1 - 24 only (so far).

Don't forget that all your hints and tips will be welcome for inclusion in the Newsletter. You may think that your idea is hardly worth writing about but you may have hit upon the answer to a problem that is vexing another club member. So don't be shy, send your ideas in. Obviously all items tried out will be solely at the risk

of the owner of the van and without the Club, Company or Editor having any liability or any responsibility. See the next but one item - but remember the caution!

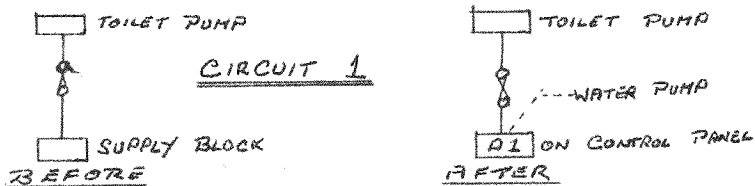
An example of an extremely simple idea (it has to be simple, it's one of mine!). When we had the Bedford Clubman we added a couple of sample squares of carpet in the kitchen area. Cheap, cheerful and very comforting to bare feet on chilly mornings rather than treading on the cold floor covering which is down there. Also we've seen another simple idea of using the hooks which Mothercare (and no doubt others) supply to hold bags on pram handles being used to hold plastic carrier bags for the rubbish. Any more ideas?

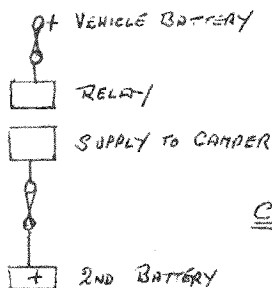
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Before you read this next item let me remind you that **ANY** adjustment to any electrical wiring **MUST, REPEAT MUST** be properly wired and preferably checked by a competent electrician. I'm not suggesting that you won't do the job safely and properly but there are too many areas where even the slightest fault could cause havoc. It might be just a simple blowing of a fuse which, although a nuisance need not be too serious, right up to the blowing up of the van because the gas was leaking too. So please, BEFORE you start anything like this make sure that you are capable of the task. If in doubt, **DONT!**

Electrical Mods.

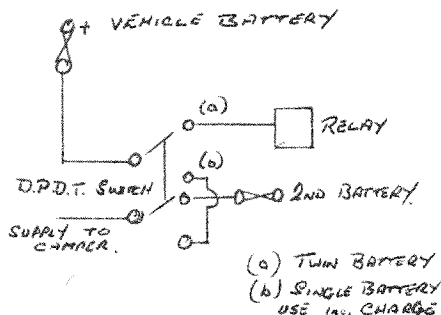
"Thought you might like to include this in the N/L. We have made some mods to our Fiat Talisman GL. Circuit 1 changes the supply for the cassette toilet pump so that it can be isolated via the water pump switch. Circuit 2 adds a double-pole double-throw switch which enables one to (a) charge the vehicle battery via the built in charger and (b) use the vehicle battery in lieu of the second battery in an emergency. Any new wiring should be of the same standard as the existing wiring and the switch should be one of the heavy duty type. Mine was government surplus mounted on a bracket over the existing relay. At the same time I have changed the pump and fridge switches to an illuminated type (obtained from Halfords).





BEFORE

CIRCUIT 2



AFTER.

In the June N/L mention was made of problems with the Cassette Porta-Potti. Theyford have produced a modification kit making the job easier. Priced at about £6.00 - another job I haven't got round to yet!

During the winter we suffered from a leaking heater control valve - situated up behind the dash panel. With some difficulty I removed the valve and, before trying to buy a replacement and with nothing to lose, I had a go at repairing it. The leak was coming from around the spindle. I removed the operating arm and inserted a thin fibre washer on top of the sealing ring and then replaced the arm. So far it has been a complete success.

We have also made other modifications - three external stowage areas and lift up lids to the seat storage area - but that, as they say, is another story.

Jean & John Ansell.

Please let me have that "other story" in due course, *Jean & John*. I have often wondered whether any outside storage could be added to the vans, apart from a roof mounted box. Having seen some other makes with large underfloor external lockers I've thought how useful they must be for the camping chairs, free-standing awning etc. And I've also noticed some vans with tubular additions - to the roof and under front or rear bumpers - but I still don't know (a) what they are, (b) how they are mounted or (c) where to get them.

There have been other comments about the Electronic Cassette Porta-Potti which have been sent to *Rita Daley* all of which follow much the same lines - seals leaking and operating knob sticking. Comment has been made that this seems only to affect the cassette versions, the earlier ones apparently being free from the sealing problems. In my experience with the older types the only problem

I've suffered is the bellows disintegrating through lack of proper care in the winter. But even then the seals kept on working. Maybe the latest cassettes have been "improved" as the advertising people say!

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Changing a Filter - Cleanly!

I have managed to change the oil filter in my diesel Talbot without spilling one drop of oil. Other members may be interested in the method which can doubtless be used on other makes of vehicle.

1. Loosen the oil filter until oil just begins to ooze past the gasket.
2. Take an empty 1 litre carton (milk, fruit juice or wine according to taste and country) and slip it over the filter. Gripping the carton, fully unscrew the filter until it drops into the carton.
3. On the Talbot, prop the carton on the cross-member so that the oil from the filter housing can drain into it.
4. Leave for ten minutes, then remove the carton and wipe the housing with a rag to remove the last traces of oil.

I am still working on the problem of removing the sump plug without getting covered in oil!

Alan Wheeler."

That last sentence brought back memories of lying underneath the vehicle and carefully unscrewing the filter. The result was oily hair which took several washes to get (reasonably) clean again. But now I have found a way to avoid getting covered in oil - I take the vehicle to a garage for servicing! Thanks, *Alan*, for a very useful tip. *Alan* has also produced a very informative article on "Wintering in Spain" and copies can be obtained from *Rita Daley*. He has also offered to help anyone with specific queries about Spain (before he migrates for the winter, that is) if you telephone him on 0892 525 807.

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Make your own mind up

"One of the great joys of attending a rally is meeting old friends, making new friends and generally chatting about holidays and experiences in the van. *Barbara and I* certainly provided a good topic of conversation at the Fell End Rally in March this year when we arrived in our Talisman on the end of a tow-rope attached to a R.A.C. recovery vehicle.

The reason for our ignominious entry was the complete failure of the clutch some 20 miles from the site. Had we been superstitious we would have been wary of travelling on Friday 13th March but we knew from previous experience that a rally organised by *Daisy & George Wane* would be too good to miss. As expected, the rally was first class and on Sunday our vehicle was dragged onto the back of a low-loader for the homeward journey - to the clicking of many camera shutters.

When the clutch failed the van was only 2 years old and had covered 11,992 miles. It happened with very little warning and naturally was on a bend, on a hill, with double white lines and a soft verge! The R.A.C. Rescue Service was splendid, they not only took us to the rally then home again on Sunday but also provided a recovery vehicle to get us to the garage for repairs on Monday.

When the clutch assembly was removed we found that the friction material on one face of the clutch plate was badly damaged and was completely missing from the other face leaving only the bare metal.

Providing and fitting a new clutch assembly was very expensive. I wrote to Peugeot-Talbot explaining what had happened, pointing out that the vehicle was only two years old and had covered less than 12,000 miles and invited them to contribute towards the cost of the repairs. They declined my invitation as they said there was no evidence of faulty materials nor of incorrect assembly of the clutch when the vehicle was built. The only other factor which could have caused the failure (although P-T did not say this) was the manner in which it had been driven. This may well have been the cause although, as I pointed out to them, I have been driving vehicles of various sorts for over 50 years, including 6 years in R.E.M.E. and the Talisman is my third motorcaravan and I have not previously had clutch trouble.

I feel that purchasers of new motorcaravans tend to get a poor deal under the manufacturers' warranty. Such vehicles, which are used mainly for leisure purposes, usually cover relatively small

annual mileages. In many cases the warranty period has expired before the engine is properly run in and any incipient defects have had time to show up. P-T informed me that it would not be possible for them to offer a different warranty on vehicles which are converted into motorcaravans from those for the commercial market. Why not, I wonder? After all, it is possible to purchase an extra 12 or 24 months extension to the warranty period when the vehicle is new. Many people, I suspect, do not bother because they cannot imagine a brand new, very expensive, vehicle breaking down in the first two or three years. They do not realise how few miles they will cover in that time. This is a matter in which the individual can do little but protest. Perhaps Auto-Sleepers Ltd., and all the very many other converters who must buy hundreds of vehicles and chassis each year, could be in a position to influence the manufacturers and get a more realistic warranty arrangement. This would be a good selling point and, because most vans are looked after with loving care, I doubt if it would cost the manufacturers very much in the long run.

George Greenwood."

It seems a good idea that the warranty should be extended as suggested. Perhaps this is an area which the Motor Caravan Section of the S.M.M.T. could investigate. It does seem rather unfair that a van which will be driven by a variety of commercial drivers and worked extremely hard in the first twelve months should appear to have greater protection from the manufacturers of the chassis than do vans which, as *George* suggests, are carefully driven and lovingly maintained. Perhaps a mileage based warranty would be fairer than a time and mileage basis.

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Another couple of items from the typewriter of *Ron Wallis*.

FERRIES

"One point not mentioned in the note on P & O shares is that they must be held by December 31st to be eligible for discounts in the following year. also it is useful to know that if one has tickets from Dover on P & O it is possible to change route to either Calais, Boulogne or Ostend (Belgium boat) when you arrive at the port and you can also return from any of those ports, not necessarily on the date booked, giving a lot of latitude but you must be in the same fare structure or pay any excess. We seldom seem to use the return boat (or port) we are booked on and through and have never yet failed to get on the first sailing home. But then, we don't travel in the high season."

Insurance

"Being so 'devilish old' (*Howard Duart's* term) we have in the past had problems obtaining Travel Insurance and have waded through the small print of dozens of proposals without luck. Now we have found that the National Westminster Bank 'Travel Protector Insurance' does not impose any age limit or require a doctor's certificate for those over a certain age and their premiums are quite competitive. It is also possible to take out a year's World Wide cover, with a limit of 90 days for any one trip, for £68 per person. We needed an extra month last year and the only company who would extend our cover (we already had 90 days with another company) was Trailfinders who, because of our ages, doubled the premium; it was really high! But beware if you do go abroad with an existing medical problem and do not declare it. Be prepared for the company to refute liability if medical treatment is needed for that problem and the insurers find out about the pre-existing condition. If it is declared beforehand it would probably be excluded from the cover."

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Cheques for Rallies

Just a word of warning arising from a problem I am having with my bank. *Sheila & I* have not, as yet, opened a joint bank account. In fact we have discussed the matter and can't see any real need for one, especially as we have learned of a difficulty one lady had when her husband died and the bank refused to honour her cheque drawn on the joint account.

For our rally we have received a few cheques made out to us jointly and the bank has returned them to me saying that they cannot credit them to my account. Theret is apparently some new legislation and in future cheques will be crossed "Account Payee" which will "make it more difficult for unauthorised encashment". So now I shall have to approach each member concerned and ask them to alter (and sign) their cheques. I presume that if a joint account holder receives a cheque made payable to one party only the bank would accept it. So perhaps future payments for rallies should be made payable to MR. BLANK or MRS. BLANK but not to Mr & Mrs Blank! This is all the more confusing to me because we received some wedding present cheques drawn to Mr & Mrs which the bank accepted without question. Have we any banking members who can throw light on this? I suppose it depends on the awareness/

intelligence/ alertness of the clerk who handles the transaction -
unless automation has crept in there too and "THE COMPUTER" -
(turns towards the machine and bows very low at least three times)
- has been programmed to reject anything which does not coincide
exactly with the name of the account.

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An Apology

Sheila and I would like to apologise to anyone who has been trying to contact us on the telephone since July 20th. You may remember that there was a storm that evening/night (depending on what time it caught up with you!). We had a beauty around here - lots of flashes and bangs in all directions. Truly, it was a wonderful sight and lots of rain (over 2" in places) fell down from the sky - we have again discovered that our conservatory roof is not completely watertight!

However, somewhere during the evening, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed and all the world was shaken - including something to do with British Telecom. To such a degree that we have been unable to use the phone since then. It has been reported as a fault but so far (22nd July) it is still out of action. So now you know why you have been getting the 'number unobtainable' sound. It wasn't because we haven't paid the bill.

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Rally Co-Ordinator's Ramblings

"The morning after the AGM I awoke early to the sound of wind and rain on the van (memories of the last AGM). On peering out of the window I espied a familiar figure trudging along, water bottles in hand, heading for the tap. Almost immediately, someone else was heading for the disposal point; then dogs were being taken for a walk.

Two weeks earlier, at Honeybourne, the Saturday morning had started with glorious sunshine and the dawn chorus. Did anyone stir? It seemed ages before I spotted any activity on the rally field, then it was only dogs dragging their unfortunate owners to the doggy walk field.

The conclusion to all of this is that our vans are very comfortable but are not well insulated against the sound of rain and whining winds. (I was going to say the sounds of nature, but then thought otherwise!)

Getting on to rallies, please do try to get the booking slips to the marshals in good time and check that you send the correct money.

And on the subject of marshals I am still looking for volunteers for next year (1993) and for venues. I have quite a list of venues suggested by members but I would like marshals for them, so if anyone can help, just give me a call. Also an apology that a marshal for the Peterborough rally could not be found until after the AGM. Thank you, *Bob*, for volunteering!

Finally, thank you *Jeff [Worley]*, for all your hard work over the last two years, not forgetting *Barbara* who kept you on the right track. I've certainly got a challenge.

Tony Jones."

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That's all for this time - rather hard work for the first month back. Keep the items rolling in, please, the "Spike" is looking a bit forlorn now and I could use some more ~~money~~ articles!

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