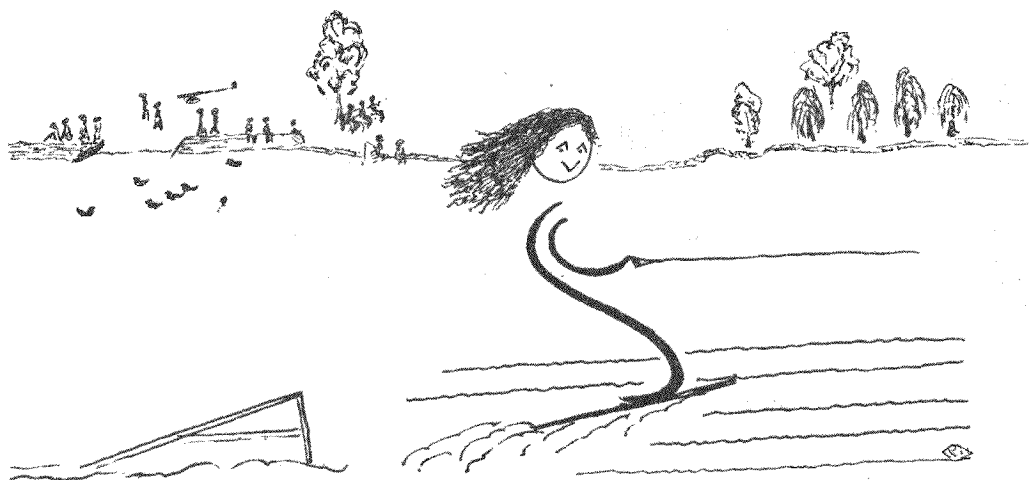


**AUTO-SLEEPER
OWNERS' CLUB**



**NEWSLETTER 59
AUGUST 1993**

Hello.

Back in harness again after a refreshing break, even though it was a bit hairy trying to get the Newsletter completed before we set off. But you should have got your copy on time.

There was one mistake (only one?) which has been brought to my attention. I accidentally gave the wrong telephone number with the article about Flud Maps (that was my way of writing Mud Flaps last month). The number given was that of the suppliers T.H.T., instead of *Terry Ball's* number. I hope that nobody was inconvenienced.

Now for another little puzzle and I hope that somebody can help with the answer. Your Editor has a friend (don't look so surprised - he has got some!) who suffers from M.S. and this has affected her memory to some degree. She has a photograph of herself as a younger lady taken alongside what appears to be a large concrete globe of the world. The continents are marked on it and the words "Atlantic Oc---" can just be made out as far as the curve of the globe allows. Judging by her height the globe must be about 18 feet tall and it is surrounded by a small fence. In the background is what appears to be a drystone wall. Does anyone know, or remember, what this is or was and, particularly, where it is/was? It seems possible that it may have been in Yorkshire but... I look forward to learning from anyone who knows.

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Unleaded Petrol in Older Engines

Do you remember the item from *David Perry* on the products which claim to allow the use of unleaded petrol in engines not otherwise converted? *David* has now written again to tell us that Walsall Trading Standards took one of the companies (Carbonflo) to court while another company (Powerplus) went into liquidation. The charges in the court were that the company was applying false trade descriptions and were supplying goods with a false trade description. Tests had been carried out which proved the claims incorrect in that carbon monoxide emissions were 3.8% higher and the car used 1.1% more fuel with the unit fitted than without it. Over 100,000 of the devices had been sold. The director and company both pleaded guilty to the charges and were fined a total of £4,000.

It now seems, from the July edition of the MG Owners Club magazine "Enjoying MG" that Carbonflo are unrepentant and that Powerplus has reappeared. It seems that the promoters of these products are determined to continue selling and that all owners of the older A-S models will need to watch out and not to be taken in by claims which may have no foundation in fact.

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2 Cab Seats with head rests. Good condition (from 'H' Reg van). Colour Anthony Rose (pink). Offers invited.

Free-standing awning suitable for side door van. OBI AutoLuxe. Cost £450.00. Offers invited for this too.

Telephone Dorothy and David Ellis on 0633 862 558 or write to them at 25 Thornhill Road, Upper Cwmbran, Gwent, NP44 5TF

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'F' Reg Renault Rapport High-top 4 berth. Blown air central heating, Hot & Cold water, Mains electric. JVC Radio/cassette with 4 speakers. Many other extras. 1721cc petrol engine, 5-speed box. One owner, only 18,938 miles. £13,000 (sensible offers may be considered). Bereavement forces sale.

Telephone Hazel Cooper on 0423 563 059 or 0423 531 066 or write to her at 22 Yew Tree Gardens, Harrogate, Yorks., HG2 9JU.

[Hazel and her late husband were early members of the Club.]

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Talisman, 'G' Reg, February 1990. 20,000 miles. 2 litre petrol. Extras - awning, security system, antenna and booster, 2 gas bottles and regulator, electric cable. £17,000. Please telephone Fauziah Coffey

on 0939 250 614 or write to her at 5 Beech Grove, Shawbury, Shropshire, SY4 4LB. (Irish Ferry bookings thrown in too, if interested!)

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Talisman GL, 'J' Reg, April 1992. 2 litre petrol, 5,171 miles only. As new. Fitted burglar alarm. Genuine reason for sale. £19,500. Please contact Norma or Allan Bentley on 0260 275 016 or write to them at 16 Minton Close, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 3TD

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Talisman GL, July 91, 2 litre petrol, Talbot. 4,000 miles only. Stored under cover. In immaculate unmarked condition with many extras. £19,500. Reluctant sale due to ill health. Contact John Allen on 072 589 346 or write to him at College Cottage, Martin, Nr. Fordingbridge, Hants, SP6 3LD. [John tells me that he has been caravanning for 65 years - can any member beat that record? - Ed.]

#####

Rambler GL, 'K' Reg. Only 2,100 miles. Cassette Toilet, Shower, H & C Water, Waste Tank, Second Battery, Gas Bottle. Electrolux Fridge. Fly Screens. All as brand new - still under warranty. £17,000 or exchange towards Talisman GL or Executive. Telephone Norman Burnitt on 0405 763 107 (daytime) or 0405 768 263 (evenings) or write to 30 Lansdown Road, Goole, North Humberside, DN14 6UR

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Set of "Bewley Wells" tweed upholstery for a Talisman including 2 full front seats, 4 cushions, 2 back rests, luton bed and cover only for slide out base. Very good condition. £250.00 ono. Contact Enid or Geoff Mackey on 0626 56 918 or write to them at 20 Burnley Close, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 1YB.

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WANTED

2.5 litre Harmony, diesel or turbo-diesel; new shaped cab and with power steering. H, J or K reg preferred. If you have one for sale please contact Mr & Mrs W. Gregson on 0706 625 420 or write to them at 9 Clemshaw Close, Lower Broadfield, Heywood, Lancashire, OL10 3HG. They want to become members of the Club but can't until they find their Harmony - and they haven't been lucky yet!

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A prospective new member wrote to ask for details about the Club and said in his letter that he has bought a CXL second-hand. There was no manual for the conversion with the van and as this is his first experience of camping he wondered if any member had a copy which he could borrow for photo-copying. The van is on the Fiat Ducato chassis and is a 'D' reg. If anyone can help, please let me know. Harry Henthorne, Editor.

More donations have been received for some of these advertisements for which many thanks indeed. As I continue to point out, adverts are free to members.

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RALLY REPORTS

Leverton Place

Please convey our thanks to *Noelle and Alan Johns* for the welcome extended to us when we joined the rally at Truro in Cornwall. A most pleasant site with a very friendly atmosphere as I'm sure all will agree. We took good weather with us to ensure that we would be allowed to join the rally without prior booking! Thanks again.

Dorothy and David Ellis

Seaford Holiday Rally

Sheila and I ended our holiday trip along the South Coast by attending this rally from Thursday until Sunday. *Margaret and Gerald Coggins*, the worrying rally marshals, could not do enough to ensure that everything was arranged as the attending members required. They had arranged a meal in a (reasonably) local pub on Thursday evening together with a skittles competition. Five teams, each of six members competed amid a lot of hilarity and, of course, the best team won. This was team 'E', led by *Gerald* and including *Sheila and me!* I actually managed to knock down 9 skittles with three vaguely round objects - how I did it I still don't know.

For Saturday evening they offered to get "takeaways" and we

gathered round their van in the evening to eat up. Naturally, the weather man had organised things so that the wind had sprung up a bit sharply and cooled the evening down rather more than had been the case in the past couple of evenings. By general consensus, the whole week had been a rousing success and our marshals and hosts were "invited" (arms firmly up their backs in hammer locks) to repeat the rally next year. They were allowed a reasonable time to think it over and see whether it could be fitted in with their own arrangements - 30 seconds, I believe it was!

On Sunday morning, during the coffee meeting, they announced that they would try to repeat the rally for 1994, probably around the end of May. There are seventeen vans around whose crews will recommend this rally to those who missed it. And it does give you a chance to see some of the marvellous countryside of the South Downs and South Coast generally.

Congratulations, *M & G*, on a very good effort, especially for "first time marshals"

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ROYAN

We would like to thank *Maureen and John Edden* for their help and kindness on our first venture abroad in our motorcaravan to Royan. Everyone had a great time there; thanks to *Carol and Steve Bowler* for all the organisation involved. Thanks also to everyone there who helped to make our trip so memorable.

Eleanor and Dennis Oxley

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Midland Railway Trust, Ripley

Our rally attracted 32 vans, almost in spite of the rain on Friday afternoon. The weather improved during the evening and we were able to enjoy coffee in the open air. On Saturday evening 59 people sat down to a good meal in the buffet and, from what was said to us, it looks as though we shall have to run this one again next year. We are hoping to arrange for it to be held during a gala weekend at the Trust.

Sheila and Harry Henthorne

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Christmas Rally



Sandra & Bernie Wisely

invite you to join them at a Christmas Rally in 1993. The details are:

The rally has been arranged at Hidden Valley, Ilfracombe, Devon, for 24th - 27th December 1993 at a very competitive price of £110.00 per van (2 Adults per van) for the package. (A single person in a van will cost £62.50)

A MINIMUM of 15 vans is needed to make the rally viable and the site owners can only accept a MAXIMUM of 25 vans. The site is normally closed during the winter so we shall use the Club's Exemption Certificate.

The package will include the following items:

Rally fee; Site fees; Electric Hook-up; Meals (shown below); Entertainment by an Organist on Christmas Eve and Boxing Night. The Club House will be available for most of the day with the bar open at lunch times and during the evenings.

The format of the weekend will be:

Arrival - **NOT BEFORE** 12.00 noon on 24th December.
Christmas Eve - hot buffet. Organist entertaining in the bar.
Christmas Day lunch - two course meal with all the trimmings.
Christmas Night buffet.
Boxing Day lunch.
Boxing night buffet. Organist entertaining in the bar.
Monday, 27th. Brunch 11.00 am - 2.00 pm.
Departure by 3.00 pm on 27th December.

The Wisely's will need a deposit of £25.00 together with the names of those people interested **as soon as possible** so that the organist can be booked and the details can be finalised with the site owners. The balance to be paid by 3rd December 1993.

If you are interested in this rally please contact *Sandra and Bernie Wisely* at 12 The Laurels, Roundswell Village, Barnstaple, North Devon, EX31 3QY. Their telephone number is 0271 46 400.

If you are sending a cheque for the deposit please make it payable to **Mrs S. Wisely**.

I suggest that you get in quickly for this rally. It is one that has been suggested on occasion in the past and which now has come about. I should imagine that it might be a very short time before all the places are booked so.....!

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GAS - AGAIN!



I was rather concerned because I have been reading letters in the Club magazine about turning off gas at night. I have a Flair complete with a fridge and water heater. If I turn off the gas neither of these will operate. The gas compartment is under the floor of the van and is ventilated. What do other owners do in this situation? Is it necessary to turn the gas off at the bottle? It's quite a lark anyway. However, because I travel with my mentally handicapped son and feel responsible I would appreciate some view on this.

Eileen Langman .

I think it is safe to say that at night you will want to keep the fridge running otherwise what is the point of it? We always keep our gas turned on at night while we are stationary on site but we do turn the water heater (Cascade) off to save some gas. It only takes a few minutes in the morning to warm up while we are having a cuppa. As has been said, you should make sure that the gas is turned off at the bottle while the vehicle is travelling on the highways and byways. But provided that the refrigerator has been properly serviced and the various gas pipes and taps are sound there should be no problem.

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H E L P

Has anyone needed to remove the Vinyl Badge from an external wall of the van? Ours became a badly discoloured circular embarrassment - hence the reason for removal. Whoops! We now have a very pale circular patch. Despite using various fluids it remains. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Dave Ellis

On another van I was subjected to graffiti being inscribed by some "learned wit" (and I use both words with a tongue very firmly in my cheek). I found that the use of Ajax or Vim or similar cleanser was very effective but it did leave a rather cleaner patch on the bodywork. Fortunately, this got a bit grubby with the miles and disappeared completely. I am reluctant to suggest quite such a drastic method in this case so any suggestions, please?

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DAFT DEFINITIONS

in response to the list of "Rally Marshals" we would like to

submit the following:

THE LONG-STAY RALLY GOER

Arrives on site, plugs into electric, erects free-standing awning and/or toilet tent (these will act as sheds at night). Surrounds van with wind breakers, produces thickly padded sun loungers, patio tables and chairs along with sunshade. Cooks the evening meal on the gas-fired barbecue.

Bicycles and/or mopeds are propped against the van or the nearest tree. After a couple of days a portable washing machine appears, a line is connected between the van and a suitable tree and a variety of odd shaped and coloured flags is hung thereon!

Hazel, Martin & Kirsty McGrath

Perhaps we should add to that the type we have seen on a number of occasions. "The Short Stayer". Arrives, stealthily, late in the evening, perhaps about 9 pm or so. Parks then draws curtains in van. When we wake up in the morning at the very late hour of 7.30 am there is just a space left where the van had been. (Or it may have been a tent but seldom a trailer van!)

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Collective Nouns

How about a "CHOICE" of Auto-Sleepers? This would be an acronym for Cheerful, Helpful, Owners Interested in Camping Everywhere. Or perhaps a "PRIZE" of A/S - People Really Interested in the Zest for living Everywhere.

Incidentally I think that Club Members should be known as "CHARACTERS" - Club Members in Harmony with Auto-Sleepers: Rimini, Recro And Clubman, Talisman, Trooper, Trident, Executive, Rapport, Rambler and Symphony!

Anyway, I had fun thinking these up!

Tonie Smith

We have got some wonderful people in our Club, haven't we? And using big words too, like acro-thingummy. Looking at the names of the various models again I am reminded of the views we took some time ago to try to bring them into line with the modern (mis)use of English. Remember the Clubperson and the Talisperson? Perhaps we should also have the Troopim and the Ramblim! And what about a Rapstarboard too? (Well, it seemfunny to me!)

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GOOD NEWS & BAD NEWS

After two years of hoping to be employed *Nigel Coffey* struck lucky and will be off to Abu Dhabi next week [mid-June - Ed.]. Due to this posting we regretfully have to sell our Talisman. There goes the Irish Trip. Please insert the add in the next Newsletter.

Thank you to one and all at A.S.O.C. A lovely and friendly lot and I will miss you greatly as well as the magazine. Keep up the good work.

Warmest regards,
Fauziah Coffey.

The advert appears in the usual place. We are so pleased that *Nigel* will be back in the ranks of the employed again, even if it is so far away. And I was just getting used to spelling Faw..For... Fauziah's name correctly too! All the best to the family from all of us.

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PEN ULTIMATE

August being the silly season I must pen ultimate thoughts on the Cruise Control. If you want the real low down truth, and you want to scare yourself witless, read on.

Take a nice vehicle like the Rambler, fit it with Cruise Control and then find yourself a nice undulating twisting country road. On the first straight get up to a decent speed, say 50 mph, and set the control. Take your foot off the accelerator and watch the first gentle bend come up. Normally your eyes would assess the curve, transmit the information to your right foot and the vehicle would slow down slightly without you seeming to do a thing. Not so with cruise control; you go right through the bend at precisely 50 mph, which is probably 5 mph faster than you would have normally dared, and perhaps faster than you should. As the bends get tighter so your blood pressure rises until sheer panic takes over and you decide to resume control.

Ah, "resume"; that's the important word. You see, all you have to do is to watch the road (you should be doing that anyway) and as the curve approaches just touch the brake. You are then immediately in manual control (with your foot), so negotiate the bend in the normal way and then press "resume" and the auto-pilot will bring you back up to 50 and stay there until further orders.

Undulating roads make it feel distinctly odd because the control

opens the throttle to the full to get up the hill. At the top you expect to dive down at great speed but it closes the throttle to keep the speed constant and there is a distinct feeling of holding back which takes a bit of getting used to. All in all I think it is a jolly good thing.

All I want now is to be able to couple the Cruise Control with the AutoRoute Express and let the van find its own way to the next site!

Incidentally I'm glad our excellent editor is a good map reader, it is a valuable accomplishment. Perhaps he has the advantage over me there, I didn't start till I was about 8, (1924 or thereabouts). All the same AutoRoute needs to be used with care. To come down the M6 for Harborough they tell me to come down to the junction of the M6 and M1, turn north to J20 and proceed to Harborough. There is no access from M6 at the M1 to turn north, although there may be when the M1-A1 link work is completed at Catthorpe. That job was much delayed by the second battle of Naseby, a wonderful example of how a NIMBY pressure group can hold things up for years on a completely nonsensical pretext.

Well that's 481 words to help *Harry* fill his pages, all done with the best of intentions.

Nial Reynolds

And of course, in the best of all possible tastes too! Yes, I reckon that I have got the edge on *Nial* when it comes to map reading. I started, under my father's guidance, cycling around the country at the age of 6. A bit later than 1924, I hasten to add; our maps were printed on the new-fangled stuff called "paper" which made them much easier to handle than the chunks of granite *Nial* had to use! I wonder how long it will be before the Auto-Route people can get in with a satellite or something so that we could have a computer in the vehicle which would give us really up-to-the-minute details about road works, accidents, blockages and so on? I have heard about the system which is being tried out in London but I do wonder sometimes as to whether it is a good thing or not. And I thought that we were not allowed to have any sort of TV type screen within the driver's view. So if the driver is alone, how can it help?

I am also amused by a phrase we all tend to use - "as the curve approaches" - we approach the curve or roundabout. If I see one approaching me I shall wonder just what is happening!

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Vehicle Security

Last month I mentioned the old idea of a ring-bolt set into the

ground to which caravans, trailers etc. could be chained. Would you believe it? A firm called A.T.C. from Grantham have sent in details of a "Deter-a-Thief Ground Anchor" made from heat treated 12.5mm spring steel coil with a heavy gauge top plate. I quote "Just screw it into the ground and secure anything - such a Light Aircraft, Gliders, Caravans and Boats - with tie downs, lock and chain or mooring ropes through the loop to give peace of mind whilst the equipment is stationary." It can apparently be used either in concrete or "just screwed into the ground" and costs £25.00 plus £2.50 P&P from A.T.C., Little Humby, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG33 4HW.

I'm not sure that I would want to "just screw it into the ground" because I think that would be quite hard work unless the ground was very soft. If that was the case, it might be just as easy for someone else to take out again! And I'm not sure about having a heavy enough chain to wrap around an axle or something - it might be a bit much to handle on a cold wet return home.

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000 SPARE WHEELS 000

An item which came through our front door addressed to *Sheila* was a letter and description about the Anderton "Spareline". This seemed to me to be a very good idea. What a problem it is to ensure that our underslung spare wheels are always kept up to pressure. Go on, admit it! When did you last check your spare wheel? I only checked mine when it looked as though one of the other wheels was a bit lacking in pressure. It wasn't, luckily, it was just the angle I had viewed the tyre!

The "Spareline" consists of a flexible tube of which one end is screwed onto the spare wheel valve and the other, which has an inlet valve, is screwed to a suitably accessible place on the vehicle. Then, when you pump up or check your tyres, you can easily do all five (or seven if you have twin wheels at the rear!).

I understand that this is in use with Ambulance Service vehicles. The £5.00 that it costs (plus 30p for P&P) is money well spent, in my opinion. We now have one fitted to the Clubman and it is very simple to check and inflate the spare. I've taken the extension to the back of the van where it is protected by the bodywork but has the substantial cross beam on which to screw it. It could have been fixed by the sticky pad on the mount but I'm a bit chary of stuck-on bits. The hardest part of fixing it is to decide just where you want the end to be! There is an alternative end, apparently used by the ambulances, which is a plastic mounting fitted to a suitable spot with screws and washers. I felt that this was not such a good fixing

as the simpler sort. Ken Anderton, Anderton Spareline, 44 Penny Lane, Haydock, Merseyside, WAll 0QS is the chap to write to and I wish him every success with such a good and very simple idea.

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A "UNIQUE" REFURBISHMENT

Last year we exchanged our Rambler for a Talisman II which was in excellent condition. We hope to keep it for some time and had no thought of making any alterations until we met a couple at a rally who had just returned from Unique Furnishings where they had had their van refurbished. We were very impressed and on meeting up with them again this year, and talking to an A-S representative on the merits of Unique, we decided to change our upholstery. We arranged to visit Unique Furnishings at the beginning of June.

We arrived at their factory on a Wednesday morning and were shown around the complete operation. After coffee, we narrowed our choice of material down to three, but when we took them into the van one stood out from the rest making our choice easy. We arranged to return early the next morning and booked into a Caravan Club CL site just five minutes drive away, on a quiet farm on the edge of a wood with lovely views. Early next morning we delivered the van to Unique and they handed us the keys of a car for our use. We visited Mansfield and the surrounding countryside and returned to the factory in mid afternoon. Barry and his team had replaced the two front seats and fitted arm and head rests. The luton bed was being installed and the fillers, cushions and back rests were receiving their finishing touches of 'buttoning'.

We are delighted with the results and can certainly recommend the excellent workmanship of Barry, Roy, Simon and their skilled staff at Kirkby-in-Ashfield. If you did not see our van - "Gemkey" - at the Club & Company Rally we shall be at the Bath and West. You are welcome to 'peek'!

Enid Mackey.

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Childrens' Corner

I would just like to say thank you to *Carol and Steve (Bowler)* for a super rally in Royan and to all the men who taught me how to dive and swim a width and a bit under water. No one could have predicted our evening meal out on Royan's front when a big electrical storm hit and tornado-like winds came to blow the chairs, tables and items of peoples clothing about. Just like True Brits we ate our meal as though nothing was happening. The best part was

when the electricity went off.

On our last night we went out for a crepe [pancake] and coffee and ended up in "Cafe Freddy" (does this mean that it was really Fred's caff?). At the end of it all my mum still insisted on calling "E. Leclerc" the "electric shop" and also kept holding up three fingers when asking for two things! A special thanks you to *Valerie and Raymond Massey* for letting us follow them through France.

Kirsty Jane McGrath (age 12)

It sounds as though this young lady has thoroughly enjoyed her trip to foreign parts and is carrying on with what *Ruth Greenwood* was saying, that rallies are fun! So come on the rest of you young vanners, let me have your experiences too.

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Chairman's Chat

Winifred and I have just returned from a holiday in Scotland which we enjoyed despite the rain. While we were away we saw many Auto-Sleepers and did manage, on most occasions, to return the wave of the driver and/or passenger of the other van. In some cases we didn't because of the traffic conditions or because I was wrestling with a gear changing problem - I couldn't always get into either first or second gear. This was eventually sorted out by the Service Manager of Bruce Motors Ltd, in Hawick, who are Peugeot Talbot main dealers. He very kindly worked into his lunch break to find that the linkage rod was cracking and distorting. After removing the rod and finding that the Stores did not have any in stock he spot welded the crack and, after straightening the rod, welded a strengthening bar onto the rod. Some 2 1/2 hours later, after finding the fault, we were on our way having paid a very small bill.

It is gratifying to be able to have a repair effected quickly and efficiently, especially when on holiday, and to be on your way to enjoy the rest of your holiday thanks to kind and thoughtful people.

When you read this Chat you may have been to the Club and Company Rally at the Three Counties Showground at Malvern along with more than 407 other vans of members of the Auto-Sleeper Owners' Club (that was the figure I was given for booking up to 10th July 1993!). All the bookings will have been handled by *Heather Tidbury* who deserves the thanks of all in the Club for her sterling

work. She has been ably assisted by *John, Nicola and Robert* and our thanks are due to them too.

Whilst another member has volunteered to take over the Bookings from *Heather* in the future - more on this in another Chat - may I also remind members that volunteers are still urgently needed to run rallies in England, Wales and now Scotland. "Tiny Tones" and "John Eden" (if the Editor's spell checking routine is to be believed - see page 8 of last month's Newsletter!!) will be delighted to hear from you. In case you can't find that issue, I mean *Tony Jones* or *John Edden* who are our Rally Co-ordinators.

Next month there will be reports on the Club and Company Rally which, at this time early in July, looks like being a great success.

Farther Carving.

(or as a non-computer-buff would put it *Arthur Irving*)

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Arthur tells me that of the 407 vans attending the C & C Rally some 85 will be rallying with us for the very first time. I hope that everyone there will do the usual trick of talking to their neighbours as well as their friends and will have made the newcomers welcome. We had a couple of first timers at our Ripley rally and both of them said how friendly our Club is. I very sincerely hope that it always stays that way because that is what it is all about, isn't it?

My little piece of nonsense when I used the spell checking routine of Committee Members names appears to have been well received. Perhaps I shall have to do the same sort of thing again - on the rally locations maybe?

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A FRUITLESS SEARCH?

Our worthy Chairman, *Arthur Irving*, has recently spent a pleasant couple of hours searching for his name in the Queen's Birthday Honours List but, as usual, he didn't find it. He didn't find my name, either! But he did spot the fact that Briercliffe Bleackley Smylie who is the Vice-Chairman of the A.C.C.E.O. had been awarded the M.B.E. In the magazine "ACCEO Matters" this gentleman is listed as Bob B. Smylie! We presume that it is one and the same gentleman and offer our hearty congratulations.

NOISE

A tip from one who has been bitten - or rather deafened. The current Talbot Express is a much improved vehicle, the gear change and all the other little niggles have been ironed out. The mpg from the normally aspirated diesel version is most impressive.

There is only one small problem left and that is the noise level when driving the diesel version at even modest speeds. A complaint to my dealer reveals that Peugeot-Talbot do not fit noise insulation padding under the bonnet - but Fiat do this as standard! So specify the Fiat chassis when ordering your next motorcaravan and save this comparatively modest but annoying extra expense.

Jeff Worley

I must confess that I am rather surprised at this complaint. I would have thought that in this day and age ALL motor vehicles, whether for commercial or private use, would have had such insulation already fitted. The noise pollution caper and all that. But I suppose it is the old story of making to a price.

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Photo Competition



Photo Competition

We have been having such glorious weather recently (except for certain areas like where you have been, no doubt!) that you have all been busy with your cameras and video recorders. If you have got any pictures showing your van somewhere a bit different from usual (no, I don't mean upside-down on the motorway!) or a snap which has some bearing on our great pastime, don't forget to send a copy to *Rita Daley* for entry into the competition. You must remember her address! You don't? Oh, well, it's 46 Ulverley Green Road, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 8BQ. There is a prize for the winner and something for the runner(s) up so it could be worthwhile if you are lucky - or clever. Don't be shy, we want you to send your pictures in. Unfortunately we cannot accept your video films because we have no way of translating them to a still picture.

Please make sure that your name and address is on the back of any print you send **BUT** - and this is a very big **BUT** - please do **NOT** write on the back in ink or ball point. Use a **SOFT** pencil (2B, 3B or something like that) and press lightly. The reason for this is because ink, in whatever form, can get messy and ruin the next picture against which it is resting. If you have to use ink, please

make sure that you place a piece of plain paper between each photo. Slides can be accepted and must show your name and address somehow.

The closing date for the receipt of entries is SEPTEMBER 15TH. It is now the beginning of August so you don't have very much time. Get snapping, get 'em printed and get 'em posted (I nearly said "get 'em off" but I thought better of it!)

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John Cox telephoned about this item which has appeared in a couple of issues. He referred to the Highway Code (which all too many people seem to forget after they have passed their test) which seems to show clearly that motor caravans are classified as private cars rather than as commercial vehicles. Now I have received a letter from *David Perry* (haven't I seen that name before this month?) which says:

"Perhaps I could add my experiences to the debate on speed limits which appeared in the April and May issues. As regular users of the A.74 to and from Scotland are aware, there are many reminder signs about the commercial speed limits. The Police also mount regular, some would say almost permanent, speed traps on this road. Several times I have been through these traps at speeds in excess of the commercial limits but below the normal limits and whilst I have not been stopped the commercial vans travelling at the same speed have! This shows that these Police forces at least do NOT regard us as subject to the commercial speed limits.

I think that it is important that we do not let through 'on the nod' any attempt to label us as commercial vehicles since this could have knock on effects on issues like bridge and tunnel tolls, parking regulations, restrictive covenants on houses, etc. Asking for an official view on speed limits could be detrimental, so what we need is a member with a friend "in the right place" to ask them unofficially. Any offers?"

Thanks, *David*, for a timely reminder of the need for caution in asking questions. Far too often has a question prompted the wrong answer - so much depends on the original phrasing. I strongly believe that we should be classified with the private cars rather than the commercials - after all we don't usually dash about delivering goods here and there. And we do wear seat belts, which I notice

many of the van drivers don't. I've never really understood why commercial vehicle drivers are exempt from such a regulation. If they come to a sudden stop in the event of an accident, don't they get thrown about too? I have heard the guff about the continual mounting to and dismounting from the vehicle makes it difficult but I don't really believe that either! Perhaps for the milkman - or other absolutely door-to-door delivery person - but not for most van, lorry and bus drivers.

What about the insurance angle, too? I believe that commercial vehicles are charged at higher rates than the private ones are (unless you happen to have a super-duper-GL-road-racer) and we don't want to be classed at such a high rate as might be incurred.

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Credit Cards, Battery Isolators & Door Locks

(All in nearly the same breath!)

Recent issues of the Newsletter - and various other publications - have referred to problems in using credit cards in France. My wife and I have just returned from spending a month in that country and our experience may be of interest and re-assurance to other Club members. We used both Visa and MasterCard in shops, hyper- and super-markets, restaurants, filling stations and banks (automated cash dispensers) with virtually no difficulties whatsoever. The only hitch arose in one supermarket where the cashier was not aware that UK cards had to be "swiped" through the channel in the machine and not inserted into the front slot as are French cards. Once this was explained, things went smoothly with smiles and "Merci's" all round. The bills are now starting to come in and, as I have noticed in previous years, the exchange rate used by MasterCard is consistently more favourable than that used by Visa. However, as they are both so much better than the rate given for Travellers Cheques, this difference may not be worth bothering about.

On a completely different subject, a word of warning to anyone who, like me, has fitted a "Dis-Car-Nect" battery isolation switch as an additional security measure. (We have a diesel Clubman.) While in France I forgot that this was in use and attempted to start the engine, immediately blowing the fuse in the bypass circuit. No problem, of course, once the screw connector was inserted; the fuse was replaced and I assumed all was back to normal again. A few days later we noticed that the auxiliary battery voltage was low (pump reluctant to start, lights dim etc.) and also that the refrigerator was not cooling down when we were running with it switched to 12 volts. A check showed that the 30 amp fuse between the auxiliary battery and the split-charge relay had also

blown so that the battery was receiving no charge from the alternator. Again, no problems once the fuse was replaced.

A study of the circuit diagram (for the Clubman, at least) suggests that, with the vehicle battery isolated from earth (which is what the "Dis-Car-Nect" does), any heavy current demand - for example, for glow plugs or starter motor - will be drawn from the auxiliary battery once the "Dis-Car-Nect" fuse (15 amp) has blown and the split-charge relay is activated, until one of the 30 amp fuses in battery/relay leads blows. If the relay is ignition controlled, as seems to be Auto-Sleepers normal practice, this condition exists as soon as the ignition is turned on - hence the blowing of the 30 amp fuse. The obvious answer is not to forget that the "Dis-Car-Nect" is in use but to be on the safe side I have now rewired my relay to be alternator-controlled - a simple job even though I was told that this was not possible with the VW!

While on the general subject of security, can any member offer advice on the fitting of deadlocks to the doors of a motor caravan, particularly a coachbuilt?

Jack Dawson.

No doubt many members will be pleased to have their fears about the use of cards in France allayed. Are there any problems to be faced when using them elsewhere? On our Clubman we have an isolator switch which is connected to the alarm system so that they are both activated and - more importantly I now see - deactivated together. Perhaps an addition to your personal check list of things to do before you set off would be in order. We all have our set routines, or reminders, such as "Steadies up"; "Gas off"; "Roof lights shut"; "Fridge to 12v" and whatever else you do or need to do before moving. Now remember that when you shout to your friends "See you later!" it rhymes with "ISOLATOR" and you will/should check that it is in the engine-starting state!

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A Silly Story - but a True one!

Originally we had a set of levellers which we made from some fairly long planks cut down so that we had steps each about 1 foot long. Good, but a bit difficult to carry in the van. In an accessory shop we saw what we thought was the answer - a couple of plastic wedges which could be filled with water for support. We bought 'em! The first time we tried them, which was a long time later, we filled them up, put the stoppers in and put them under the wheels. When the weight went on them the stoppers left at a rate of knots, the water gushed out and we were left low and wet! So they went

into the bin!

(The writer of this story is anonymous, but edits your Newsletter in his spare time!)

Once again that's all for this month. Remember that you are getting old if your back goes out more than you do!

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