

AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB



**NEWSLETTER 71
AUGUST 1994**

Hello.

This is being written well before the Club and Company Rally so there won't be much news from that until next month. I have been amused, and rather amazed, to receive the odd telephone call from people who, for one reason or another, have not booked for the rally and want to know if they can still come along. As if I was the booking officer! In every case I have had to refer them either to *Jackie Claxton* or *Heather Tidbury* for further advice. Perhaps you will understand why there had to be a closing date for this rally when you consider the problems of insurance and security arrangements which have to be made for something of this size. I would like to take this chance of thanking our Booking Officers, *Jackie and Heather*, for all the hard work they have put into this otherwise thankless task. Not forgetting their spouses (should that be spice?) and families all of whom are involved in one way or another. I am sure that our Chairman will do his usual good job of thanking them too.

I wonder just how many members realise that our Booking Officers, as well as many of the Committee and Sub-Committee members are still in full-time employment and do all the voluntary work for the Club in their "spare" time! And I include in this those who were "roped in" to help with the marshalling arrangements, stalls etc. Occasionally I have learned that when a member telephones for information and doesn't get a reply he/she may feel quite put out that nobody was available! Similarly, if a reply is obtained but the answer given to the enquiry is not that which the enquirer hoped for then again the member feels put out. But please bear with your Committee members - and the other workers too.

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My "Spike" is continuing to grow for which I thank all correspondents. Please don't think too hard of me if your work of art doesn't immediately appear in print. So far as I can I shall use all items in the fullness of time but not all in the next issue - otherwise you would have a Newsletter consisting of a lot more than 20 pages!



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APOLOGIES FROM THE PRINT ROOM

Because of the euphoria caused by a successful holiday and a new van, we overlooked providing you with order forms for the new Regalia Booklet. These are enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter. Please put it with your booklet if you are not intending to order yet and keep both safe as we are only planning to up-date the prices from time to

time, keeping the same range of goods. Now for the good news. If we had posted the order form with the last Newsletter it would have cost another 7p each for the 1100 envelopes. Our apologies to *Pru and Richard Osborne* who have received the flak.

Rita Daley

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ROOF VENT STRUTS

I am grateful for the article on the Sonabat Chantal roof vents on the Talisman GL. Mine too have caused problems with the struts breaking just below the head and whilst I had repaired these with aluminium I felt that it was time to replace them. Being in the vicinity of St. Nazaire I decided to visit the factory which is situated in the adjacent industrial estate of Montoir de Bretagne. Actually finding the factory was difficult but periodic questioning for Aire Spatiale finally got me there. Sonabat Chantal is directly across the road from Aire Spatiale. Reception was most helpful, enlisting the services of an English speaking member who promptly got into her car and fetched the struts from the warehouse. I purchased 24 in all, 12 for myself and 12 for another member whom I had met at Hamble and who was experiencing the same problem. Each strut cost 2.50 FF, or about 33p in our money.

Fitting them is relatively straightforward. From above the roof vents take out the four screws and lift off the roof light. Remove the wire mesh fly screen. Slide the struts until you can see their retaining screws through the gap in the side housing and undo these. Drill or file the tops off the two blind rivets which hold the housing and then punch out the rivets with a small punch or nail. Lift off the two side housings.

Using the new struts assembly is a reversal of the dismantling operations. I didn't pop rivet my side housings as the originals were aluminium. I only had steel rivets and thought that this material would be too strong for the plastic housings so I used stainless steel self-tapping screws. This has the advantage that I can now take the whole assembly apart with just two screwdrivers.

The factory particulars are: Sonabat Chantal, 73 Rue Henri Cautier BP 13, 44550, Montoir de Bretagne. Tel:40.90.01.90. Telex: 700 984. Telecopie (Fax): 40.90.25.74. Teletex 933.40.90.25.74.

Although I didn't ask them I'm sure that they would post some struts to anyone with these problems. It's much cheaper than buying a new roof light!

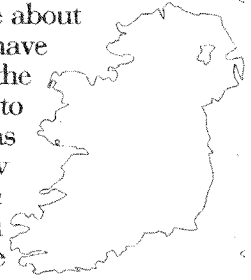
Cyril Coombs

Many thanks, *Cyril*, for some valuable information. One or two other members have asked whether or not I had the address for these struts and I'm very pleased that it is now in the Newsletter.

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IRISH RALLY

As new members we were a little apprehensive about our first holiday rally in Ireland. We need not have worried as from the time we left Fishguard in the company of *Joan and Trevor Hocking* we seemed to meet friends. However, on the third day *Len* was taken ill and had to be admitted to hospital. How lucky we were to be with the "FAB ONES", *Barbara & John Cox* and *Ellen & Dennis Oxley*. Thank you for your care and time, not forgetting of course the lovely "retired" nurses, *Phil and Mary*, who gave their very professional help until the Doctor and Paramedics arrived. We could not have been in better hands. Happily, we were able to carry on with the holiday and what a great time we had. We made many good friends, sorry we cannot name you all but we will see you again and carry on where we left off, with more chat, tea, wine and lots of laughs!



Sheila and Len Taylor

I am very happy to publish this letter because it does show the spirit and help of this Club of ours. In their accompanying letter, the *Taylor's* mentioned that there were quite a few mishaps among the eighty-odd assorted members present but perhaps we shall hear more of that from elsewhere. They also hope that the *Cox's* can be persuaded to organise another holiday rally next year. (See next item too!)

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It's odd how things happen.

It's odd how things happen isn't it? We pulled in at a camp site hoping to find an English owner who could give us the gen on the local vineyards. There was nobody about so we parked on a nice large flat grassy area, close to a water tap, put the waste container out and generally settled in. Within moments a very friendly voice was enquiring whether we intended to stay the night or had just pulled in for a meal. I outlined our programme and we found ourselves in the house having a demonstration of the merits of the local Co-operative "cave". Having done justice to this we returned to the van and prepared a tasty omelette and salad lunch. This over, we were just contemplating the merits of a Cappuccino to follow when the owner turned up again. "Who's for land yachting on the beach?" This being something neither

of us had ever done we naturally said "Yes" simultaneously. Did our lack of hesitation or forethought have anything to do with the wine tasting session?

And so to the yacht park, about half a mile from the beach, where the land yacht was tied to the back of the car with a bit of string and towed to the sand! Once there we took it in turns to be crew, and then had a go by ourselves. It really was a most enjoyable afternoon. The owner is actually a prominent member of the Sand Yacht Club and would be happy to arrange for visitors to hire yachts, but I have no information on costs. He also has leaflets about the local "Cave", Cave St. Roch at Queyrac which sells really excellent wine. Their Vin Rouge A.O.C. Médoc 1993 is quite unusually smooth for a cheap wine, it cost us 12F a litre. We also had to buy the 10 litre "Cubitainer" to carry it in. This is a wine box so you can take off what you want, when you want it. In addition, we brought back a dozen bottles of "Elite St. Roch 1989". This is a really beautiful wine, full coloured, deep flavoured and altogether something to be treasured and savoured on rare occasions. It will keep for years and continue to mature. At 37 Fr. it is not cheap, but worth every bit of it.

The site, Aire La Chesnays, Mayan, Vendays-Montalivet, LESPARRE-MÉDOC. is open all year, 42 Fr. 30% reduction out of season. It could make a good rally site for a wine exploration of the Médoc. I would be happy to give more information to a prospective organiser.

Nial Reynolds.

Possibly (Probably?) a good place for someone to run a continental rally next year - any offers?

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The Visitor

You may be amused at the following incident which we experienced in France last year. We had camped for a few days in the Rambler at Carteret on the west coast of the Cherbourg peninsular and decided to move on to central Brittany. Having found a reasonably well-equipped site, albeit almost deserted, about 25 miles west of Rennes we settled down to a cup of Tetleys (made, of course, with imported British water!). During the first sip I glanced up and, to my surprise, discovered that we had an uninvited but quite delightful guest! Sitting on the shelf below the upper sliding window was a tiny, beady-eyed, field mouse gazing around investigating the layout of the vehicle. A movement from us and he vanished into the depths of the upper bunk

area which we call our inside roof rack. This was now a serious problem because up there was all our bedding and if we didn't find him I don't believe we would have slept that night! What occurred in the next few moments, quite fortuitously, showed that A-S have inadvertently built a humane mouse trap into any of their vehicles using the hollow tube table support.

While wondering what to do, short of sending for Les Pompiers, our little friend obligingly re-appeared and sat on the edge of the trough which holds the table support when not in use...and then even more obligingly, vanished into the tube itself! The rest was easy; carefully blocking the ends of the tube with card, I was able to lift it out with its passenger, carry it outside and slide the creature out into the grass and away he scampered. Hopefully he/she found a new set of friends.

How did it get there in the first place? There is only one explanation since it could not possibly have climbed or jumped into the vehicle. The night before we left Carteret we stored our folding chairs under the Rambler and we have to assume that the mouse crawled into the folds of the material. Then, the following morning before we departed, we placed the chairs on the upper bunk alongside the bedding. From then on our visitor had the whole of the 'first floor' at his disposal but fortunately was spotted before he became a long-term stowaway!

Alan Riddington

A charming interlude and it is nice to know that not everybody screams the place down at the sight of a little field mouse. I cherish a lovely memory of standing on the edge of a cornfield (back in my cycling days) and watching a little mouse sitting at the top of one of the stalks enjoying the corn.

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FIRE!

It may be of interest to others to be aware of an unfortunate incident I had with my 1986 VW Transporter A-S (1915cc water-cooled). The vehicle is in excellent condition, a good starter whether hot or cold but when I had reversed alongside our "mobile home" where it is normally kept the engine caught fire when I switched off. Luckily I had bought an extinguisher in case of any "cooking" fires and was able to extinguish it before the fire brigade arrived. The damage was restricted to all the ignition cables and the distributor cap, the plastic ducting from the air filter and all petrol and water pipes. After putting out the engine fire through the number plate flap I drenched the carpet side of the engine cover which I did not intend removing before the arrival of the fire

brigade. These "blow-back" type engine fires are not new, apparently, but I had not seen any reports of them otherwise I would have reverted to a habit of the old days when I used to give a little blip on the throttle when switching off. I assume that had I done so, with the fuel cut off valve on some carbs now, this fire would not have happened. We had already enjoyed a barbecue at tea time, but that fire did not start quite so easily!

Mari & Lew Gilmore

Having suffered a similar fate with a Transit and the V-6 engine where the carb is in the centre of the V and the petrol pipe (plastic!) is taken over the hot cylinders with melting results I can sympathise. In my case I too had an extinguisher or three to hand and lifted the bonnet just as far as the catch would allow before spraying everything with the big extinguisher. When I opened the cab door to put it away again I discovered a little flame busily creeping around the carpet edge - which quickly succumbed to the second extinguisher. An RAC man who came to my rescue was a little concerned that he had just run out of water so couldn't make sure that everything was out (I only had 24 gallons on board!) Then it was a Relay home (from Gloucester to London) and a similar renewal of cables, pipes etc.

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AND IN A SIMILAR VEIN - PIPES AND THEIR PROBLEMS

We have just thumped, jumped and bumped our way home from Nice, some 500 miles. The initial cause was a load of bad petrol but, somewhere along the line, the plastic breather pipe for the carburettor must have become dislodged. It settled onto the exhaust manifold and sealed itself down. At one stage we could barely crawl forward. Eventually, safely home, inspection revealed the culprit. A quick snip effected a cure. The pipe has now been re-routed. Careful checks have tried to make sure that no other pipes are loose enough either to melt or chafe!

On the subject of kamikaze flies, paint chipping stones, etc. Years ago, when in the great United States, and before we owned a camper, we noticed vans fitted with wire mesh screening protecting bumper and bonnet. Not sure how much use this was. It could well be more work washing the mesh than cleaning the nice shiny paint work!

Sue & Sefton Sandford

No, I didn't make a mistake when typing "500 miles home" - *Sue and Sefton* live in France! It does make you wonder how the "designers" of all sorts of motor vehicles actually earn their money when they allow

such things as plastic pipes to run where they can become a hazard. As for the mesh screen, I seem to remember cars in this country fitted with some sort of deflector at the front of the bonnet (in the days when cars had long bonnets) which seemed to keep flies etc. off the screen.

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TYRE PRESSURES - YET AGAIN!

In 1989 I purchased a Trident (high-top on the VW chassis) and have used the pressures given in the handbook and on the chassis label. Recently a friend of mine bought a second-hand VW of similar age and found that his recommended pressures exceeded mine by 5lb at both front and rear as shown in the handbook and on the label. I contacted the Orchard for clarification and found that they recommended pressures seven pounds lower than mine and more than ten pounds lower than the pressures used by my friend.

The figures are:-

	Front (psi)	Rear (psi)
My Trident	39	48
Friend's Trooper	43	53
A-S recommend	32	35

It would seem that the differences are quite sufficient possibly to cause excess tyre wear, uncomfortable riding and even safety problems. You might think that VAG would have the answer. Alas, a call to their Customer Care at Milton Keynes brought a negative response - "We have no technical information to give". Perhaps members can do better than this. What pressures to they use on their T2 chassis?

David Thornton

I passed a copy of this letter to Auto-Sleepers and received the following reply:

Perhaps we at the factory might clarify the reason as to why specific tyre pressures are no longer recommended either in our handbooks or in reply to specific queries.

Upon addressing this problem to our chassis manufacturers, it was rightly stated that the only recommendations that we could give should be those as stated in the base vehicle instruction handbook. The reason that we ourselves no longer recommend specific pressures is due solely

to the laws of Product Liability. Understandably different tyres fitted to different models all need different tyre pressures. If therefore we recommend certain tyre pressures to a customer and then the said customer changes his tyres yet still inflates the new tyres to the pressures previously advised, if this customer is involved in an accident for which the contributory reason can be incorrectly inflated tyres, to pressures recommended by ourselves, then we Auto-Sleepers would be liable for a not insubstantial claim. Therefore, as from last month, we no longer are able to provide specific inflation figures.

I know that tyre pressures are a subject close to many owners hearts and I would never wish any Club member to feel that we Auto-Sleepers were being less than helpful; on the contrary, we will always do everything possible to assist, but in respect of tyre pressures - our hands are well and truly tied!

Charles Trevelyan

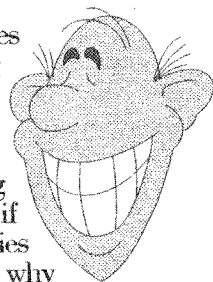
I can fully understand why the Company cannot give definitive answers - all tyres would seem to be different. Perhaps we should "pressurise" the rubber people to give more definite information or make solid (but comfortable!) tyres for us. (Sorry about the pun!)

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Vice-Chairman's Chit-Chat

When the Club's Treasurer went abroad, he left the Chairman a few notes. When the Chairman went to Germany, he left me a mark (I can't recognise it as a signature) at the bottom of a letter asking me to write this item.

At the moment, *Monica & I* are enjoying ourselves at the Pickering Rally. I am reminded of the beginning of a song popular in the 1930's. It started "Where my caravan has rested, from my window I can see....". I can see 40 or so members enjoying the fresh air and comradeship, able to do whatever they wish, knowing there are friendly and efficient marshals to help if necessary. When I consider the number of rallies organised by Club members each year it is easy to see why our Club is so successful.



Unfortunately, such success can cause problems. Each Committee meeting *Sheila Henthorne* reports on membership numbers and these continue to grow. We are now at a stage where the success of the Club is beginning to rebound on us. The task of finding a venue for the 1995 AGM, able to take the anticipated numbers, is proving difficult. Either

we can get the number of pitches, but not the accommodation or vice versa. *Ron Wilson, Ian Ross, and I*, have visited or contacted MOD sites, Universities, public and private sites, race courses, stately homes etc., from Lyme Regis to the North of England. Either we get a straightforward "sorry" or "come and see us". When we do, the facilities we asked for aren't there.

Still, Auto-Sleeper Owners never give up and by the time you read this (if the Editor deems it worthwhile to print!) you may have the dates and venue of the 1995 AGM if you were at Malvern. Furthermore, I am hoping to announce a site for the 1996 AGM so other Rally Marshals will find it easier to plan ahead. Happy days to all of you.

Bob Williams

When *Bob* sent this to me he added a note suggesting that if I didn't like it all I need do was to print the headline, then his signature and put in between "Unfit for Publication!" He has a very poor opinion of his own literary skills, hasn't he?

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GROWTH INDUSTRIES

Well, I am sorry to say that the old saying is true; all good things DO come to an end and in our case this is the selling of our most trustworthy CB22. We only had the vehicle for just over 4 years but she was a classic. She only let us down once in all that time and that was just after we had picked her up from a recognised motor caravan dealer after a service ready to go to France. They had left a locking nut off the clutch and also failed to secure the bottom hose, resulting in an unexpected stay in the South of France for four days. Apart from that, she had the acceleration of a family car, could turn on a sixpence, and could be parked with little trouble. The next person who has the good fortune to purchase her as their first motor caravan will not be disappointed in the least.

The reason for the sale was that as fast as aspirations grow, so do families and it was becoming quite cramped to say the least. Although Auto-Sleepers produce, may I say, some of the most visually attractive and mechanically reliable vehicles on the present market, they do not at present produce one to sleep a herd like mine. It is therefore with regret that I have had to look further afield for a larger vehicle to meet my requirements but I doubt that I shall find one with all the aforementioned qualities. We have enjoyed the Newsletter and the company of the people we have had the pleasure to meet and hope to see many of them at the National meets. All the very best for the future.

George Saint

AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB
RALLY SUPPLEMENT

Mid-August to mid-October 1994

11th/14th August; Naburn Locks Caravan Park, Naburn, York.

Site fees: £3.00 per van per night. No electricity. Rally Fee: £1.50

Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs J Henwood, 1 Fairfield Avenue, Linthorpe,
Middlesborough, Cleveland TS5 5HB Telephone: 0642 821 983

Cheque payable to: J. Henwood

Directions: Take outer ring road south of York (A64). Turn onto A19
northbound (to City Centre), in 100 yards turn left onto B1222. Site on
bank of River Ouse next to Naburn Locks, half a mile from Naburn, 4
miles south of York. A meal may be arranged for Saturday evening.

The centre of York can be reached by river bus, road bus or on foot.

No vans before 4 pm Thursday, please.

**13th/14th August; Scottish Motor Home & Tourer Show,
Ingliston, Edinburgh.**

See details in press. Site fee Friday night, £2; Saturday night, £4.50 to
include Craft Fair and Ceilidh; Sunday night, £2

**19th/21st August; Worksop Rugby Club, Stubbing Lane,
Worksop, Notts.**

Site fee: £1.50 per van per night. No electricity. Rally fee: £1.50

Green field site. Toilets and wash basins available.

Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs M G Robinson, 16 Maid Marian Avenue,
Bilthorpe, Nr. Newark, Notts. NG22 8SR

Telephone: 0623 870635.

Cheque payable to: M G Robinson

Buffet on site Saturday night, £3 per person. Rally slips to reach Mick
& Pam not later than 12th August. Please include price of buffet with
slip, because of ordering.

Directions: From M1 Southbound, Junction 31, SP A57; 4th
roundabout SP Worksop Town Centre; 1st Left Stubbing Lane. From
M1 Northbound, Junction 30, SP A619; 4th roundabout SP Worksop
Town Centre 1st Left Stubbing Lane. From A1 North & South,

Roundabout at junction of A57 & A614. Take A57 SP Worksop Town Centre, 1st Left Stubbing Lane.

Robin Hood hats to be worn on entry.

26th/29th August; Argoed High School, Bryn-y-Baal, Mold, Clwyd

Site fee: £3.50 per night. No electricity. Rally fee: £1.50

Toilets & water on site. Milk & papers available

Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs J Greenwood, 55 Park Avenue, Mynydd Isa, Mold, Clwyd. CH7 6XR Telephone/fax: 0244 548 882

Cheque payable to: J Greenwood

Directions: Turn off A494 (Mold/Queensferry) into Bryn Road next to Rose & Crown pub (S P Mynydd Isa). Proceed over by-pass bridge, turn left at top of hill along Bryn Lane until end of houses then turn right into Argoed High School.

A meal will be arranged on Sunday evening. A social room available. Licenced club adjacent

26th/28th August; Hatton Country World, Hatton, near Warwick.

Site fee: £5.00 per night. No electricity. Rally fee: £1.50

Farm field site with chemical toilet disposal and limited wash basins & toilets.

Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs R Price, 4 Green Lane, Woodstock, Oxford. OX20 1JY Telephone: 0993 811 707

Cheque payable to: R Price.

Attractions: The Country World exhibits, Warwick Castle, Kenilworth Castle, Stratford upon Avon, etc.

Directions: Hatton is north of Warwick on the A4177 (formerly A41).

Turn onto B4439 and follow brown signs to Hatton Craft Centre.

Closing date for booking 12th August.

26th August/ 4th September; German Rally, Wunningen, Mosel Valley.

Marshals: Don & Anna Johnson, 44 Lanehouse Rocks Road, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 9DQ. Telephone: 0305 776414

**2nd/9th September; 7-Day Holiday Rally, Moreton Glade,
Crossways, Dorchester, Dorset.**

Site fee: £4.00 per night. Electricity: £1.50 per night. Rally fee: £1.50
Well equipped site. Our fourth year here. Extra days at same rates.
Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs J Worley, 26 Houndstone Park, Gunners
Lane, Brympton, Yeovil, Somerset. BA22 8SQ Telephone: 0935
24049

Cheque payable to: B Worley

Directions: On B3390 next to Frampton Arms pub by Moreton Station.
Trains to Poole and to Weymouth (via Dorchester). Lulworth Cove,
Poole Harbour, Studland and other attractions nearby.

16th/18th September; Motor Caravan Show, Shepton Mallet

**19th/26th September; 7-day Holiday Rally, Hidden Valley Touring
& Camping Park, West Down, Ilfracombe, Devon**

Site fee: £3.25 per night. Electricity: £1.50 per night Rally fee: £1.50
Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs J Worley, 26 Houndstone Park, Gunners
Lane, Brympton, Yeovil, Somerset. BA22 8SQ Telephone: 0935
24049 Cheque payable to: B Worley

Please try to book before Jeff and Barbara leave for their rally at
Moreton Glade.

30th Sept/ 2nd October; Merley Court, Wimbourne, Dorset.

Site fee: £7.50 per night, electricity included. Rally fee: £1.50
Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs P Murry, 21 Barrie Road, Moordown,
Bournemouth, Dorset. BH9 2EX Telephone: 0202 514 555
Cheque payable to: P Murry

Directions: Site off roundabout at junction of A31 & A349 south of
Wimbourne.

Attractions: Wimbourne Minster, Church of Saint Cutherberga.

Rally limited to 40 vans.

30th September/ 2nd October; Chester Southerly, Chester.

Site fee: £5.00 per night. Some electric points (35) at £1.40 per night.
Rally fee: £1.50.

Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs D Ellis, "The Alamo", 6 Tudor Close,
Shotton, Deeside, Clwyd. CH5 1NY Telephone: 0244 812 761

Cheque payable to: D Ellis

Directions: From M56 take M53 (sp North Wales) then A55. Turn left onto A483 (Wrexham), follow International caravan site signs to site. From South on A41 turn onto A55, left onto A483 then as above. A meal will be arranged for Saturday evening.

**7th October/9th October; Audrey & Margaret's Rally,
Whitchurch Cricket Club, Whitchurch, Shrops.**

Site fee: £7.50 for the weekend including a meal on Saturday evening.

No electricity. Rally fee: £1.50.

Club House open for the

duration of the rally, all facilities. Bar will be open Saturday evening.

Booking slip to: Mrs A M Crouch, "Sydney", Sylvan Close, Higher Heath, Whitchurch, Shrops SY13 2TB Telephone 0948 840 894.

Cheque payable to: A M Crouch.

Directions: From North on A49 follow Town Centre signs. At roundabout stay on main road bearing left, over traffic lights past Mobil station then 2nd right (Edgeley Road). From South on A41 take road signposted Town Centre - B5395 (offside lane). Over next roundabout then 1st right (Edgeley Road). As for last year but turn right for the Cricket Club, not the Rugby Club.

**28th/30th October; Penybont Touring Park, Bala, Gwynedd,
North Wales.**

Site fee: £4.50 per night. Electricity restricted. Rally fee: £1.50

Booking slip to: Mr & Mrs J Greenwood, 55 Park Avenue, Mynydd Isa, Mold, Clwyd CH7 6XR Tel/fax: 0244 548882

Cheque payable to: J Greenwood

Directions: Approach Bala via A494/A5 from Corwen. On entering Bala turn left onto B4391 at large coach & car park on left, follow road past end of Bala Lake, site is on right just after sharp lefthand bend. Hardstanding, toilet block, small shop on site. 10 minutes walk to town.

Note: Book as many days as you wish for the holiday rallies, you don't have to book for the lot!

George makes it sound rather as though he needs something like a double-decker bus converted by the A-S factory and possible pulling a similar sized trailer! We are, of course, sorry to see him depart from the ranks but I would remind all members that, having once been a member of the Club and having owned an Auto-Sleeper to become a member, you can continue to receive the Newsletter only even though you go over to another make or retire from motor-caravanning. You cannot attend rallies or obtain other items through the Club but you may wish to continue to read about what we are all doing. In any case, from all the members, the best of luck for the future. And when the family grows and flees the nest, perhaps we can welcome you back with your new, smaller, van! In a similar vein, but for a different reason, we have been advised that *Stella and Norman Cutler* have gone over to another make of van. Their reason was that they had a careful look at the Symphony but that still required the beds to be pushed forwards and they would have lost the neatness and storage under the settee on the nearside which they had with the Rapport. So their new van has one large, easily prepared, double bed and a practical luton. We wish them well with the new van and look forward to seeing them around on some site or other in the future. Of course, if A-S come up with a new van which will suit their requirements - who knows???

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HELP!

Richard Crossman is the proud owner of a SV 100 (or should that be an SV 100?) but when he bought the pre-owned vehicle (to use the modern term) there was no handbook with it. A-S themselves have no copies since the famous fire so *Richard* would like to get in touch with someone with a view to borrowing their copy for photocopying - or some similar arrangement. If you have such a handbook, please telephone him on 081 (0181 soon) 997 6101 or write to him at 16 Kingfield Road, London, W4 1LB and make whatever arrangements fit the bill, please.



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TRIDENT/TROOPER AND THE PORTA-POTTI

The fact that the Thetford Porta-Potti 235 will not fit the cupboard was quite irritating to me, particularly as I believe it to be significantly better than that which is supplied with the van. But the situation is not irretrievable since it is only the front to back dimension that is the problem.

The rear panel in the toilet cupboard can be removed by unscrewing the right-hand fixings (as you peer into the cupboard) and prising off the left-hand side fixing next to the fridge. This is only glued and stapled on that side. Once removed you will see that this is only a covered piece of plywood and there is enough room to replace it further back in the cupboard, positioning it much closer to the water pump and so allowing enough room (just) for the 235. It will also help if you chamfer the cupboard door by the hinge as it will then not need to be opened quite so far.

Geoff Watson

Now that seems a good idea and I am sure that if you copy it you won't push the board too far back and up against the pump. That would cause all sorts of noises when the pump was working! I've got some other items from *Geoff* which are on the spike for future use!

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TALBOT GEARS

Having read *George Hall's* letter "Talbots First Gear" in the July Newsletter I found myself pondering, not at his undoubted mechanical expertise, but at why he, or anyone else, should have to go to such lengths on a new vehicle in the first place. Just over a year ago my wife and I traded in our beloved 11 year old VW (A-S conversion) for a new Talbot based Harmony. It was an expensive mistake. The gears were best described as rubbish although there is a shorter word I could think of. Gear selection was a lottery, actually getting into first was worth declaring a national holiday and gears three, four and five were too low. Just for good - or bad - measure the entire rear suspension had to be dropped, dismantled, greased and re-assembled. The only good thing about that vehicle was the Auto-Sleeper conversion.

Needless to say we traded that one in for - you've probably guessed - another VW, this time the Clubman GL. Five gears which do as they are told, power assisted steering and (of course) an Auto-Sleeper conversion. Bliss!

Norman Rendle

I can subscribe to the remarks about the Clubman as that is what we have. I do find it surprising that so many people complain about the Talbot gears and nothing seems to be done about it by the manufacturers. You would think that some comments would have reached their ears by now. So far as the choice of gears being a lottery is concerned, who else remembers the old Bedford CA, 4-speed version, with the steering column lever? In a fairly short time the linkage, which had many moving (and wearing!) parts, became very

slack and after that heaven help the unwary. Nevertheless I managed to take one all around this country and Ireland without too much trouble. She was a little under powered (to put it mildly) but a very willing worker if encouraged. *Norman* finished his letter by apologising that he couldn't lay hands on his Membership Number. Have no fears, people, we can always check on who (and what number) you are!

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Some time ago there was correspondence regarding how to mark the back of a photograph without spoiling it. I have found that a LABELLING PEN from W.H.Smith does the trick. The ink is permanent and quick-drying and there is no need to press hard.

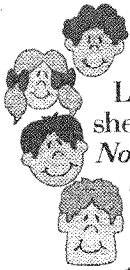
Dick Dickeson

Always a useful tip - particularly when you get home, get the pix developed and printed and then sit there wondering where on earth that particular shot is and why you took it!

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I had begun to think that we had no more children in the Club but this suddenly appeared on the doormat so it is included to revive this item.

CHILDRENS' CORNER



During this year we have only been to a few rallies, most recently to Lytham and Beverley. When we went to Lytham we took my Grandma with us for a short break and she stayed in a nearby guest house. Thank you to *Kath and Norman [Benyon]* for finding such a place for us. On the Saturday we went into Lytham and then for short walks along the sea front. We had the meal in the evening and found it was just as delicious as last year. On Sunday morning, at the coffee gathering, we found that Grandma had won a pot plant in the raffle.

The following weekend we went to Beverley. We had a leisurely time walking into town and hunting out bargains at the wonderful car-boot sale. We had two lovely meals prepared by a catering firm and altogether it was a good weekend. This weekend we booked into a camp site at Bala, Gwynedd. It was a lovely site, only ten minutes walk from Bala and right by the lake and the little railway. In fact it was so perfect we thought it would be wonderful for an ASOC rally. The site owner was keen and so we decided to run a rally there on the last weekend in October. So shall we see you there?

Ruth Greenwood

The site at Bala sounds as though it might be very nice - I hope that the *Greenwoods* checked with our Rally Co-ordinators before making arrangements with the site owner. It is so very easy to get carried away when you find a suitable place so that you make all the bookings only to find that the Club already has one or more rallies booked for the same weekend.

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ELECTRICS

I have just been reading the article by *Alan Wheeler* in answer to the problem *Doreen and David Palmer* have with their Legend. Unfortunately I did not pick up the original article. I will use the same phrase **DON'T DO IT!** What *Alan* is suggesting is positively suicidal. The way he describes his connections would leave the leads in the shoe at full positive battery volts, these being fed from the main battery. As most commercial vehicle batteries are capable of supplying around 500 amps, if these leads were to short circuit to chassis a fire, or worse an explosion, would be very much on the cards.

I should explain at this point that my work has seen me professionally connected with electrical and electronic circuitry for 30 years. You tend to pick up a few things on the way after this amount of time.

There are a number of far safer options:-

1. The cheapest option is to fit a standard car battery charger with its 12 volt output permanently connected across the vehicle battery. If this was wired directly into the output from the RCD (fused, of course) the van battery would be charging every time the mains was connected. Due to components in the charger there would be no discharge back through it when the mains was not connected.

2. If the split charging relay is anything like the one fitted to our Flair it is simply wired to the ignition so that as soon as the ignition is switched on the two batteries are connected in parallel and charged from the vehicle's alternator. The same applies when the engine is running. Here the Ford Transit has a very useful feature. The radio position on the key supplies 12 volts when set to this position. By using a multimeter I also found that when the engine is cranked this voltage disappears. If the relay is fed from this point it allows you to parallel both batteries without turning on the ignition, thereby trickle charging both batteries. Also when starting the engine the second battery drops from circuit thus limiting heavy current discharge to the vehicle battery.



When wired normally if the second battery is flat the main battery would discharge back through it causing the starter to struggle with what current is left. Using the modified position, the relay has no chance to bring the second battery into circuit. When the key is released the engine is already running so any discharge will not matter. It should be noted though that with any relay connecting batteries the fuse between the two could blow. I always carry spares. The second battery is then only charging and discharging at a low rate which should increase its life markedly.

3. If the Zig charger is not capable of providing enough current for both batteries (an expert would be able to confirm this by measurement) certainly the Logic unit we have is. My measurements show both batteries being charged at 1.5 amps. It also charges both batteries, even when the split charge relay is out of circuit. This is probably the most expensive option but as far as my experience is concerned it is highly effective. We only need to switch the charger on in the depths of the winter to counteract the drain from the lights. The charge from the trip to the site is usually enough to keep the batteries up.

4. If *Doreen and David* use the CD and CB as much as they suggest it would be worth powering them from the second battery thus leaving the main one for vehicle functions only.

In conclusion I would echo our Editor's words and suggest that they seek professional advice. Try Peter at Cotswold Motor Caravans in Gloucester.

John Randall

I think that comprehensively states the case. Just to re-iterate, if in doubt **DON'T!**

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Ron Wallis kindly sent in a copy of an article from "Globe", the magazine of the Globetrotters Club. The writer is a retired headmaster with many years experience of world travel. It is a bit too long for all of it to be included so here are just a few oddments from it. The writer had spent a month delivering books to teachers in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Theoretically, with the collapse of the Communist regimes, it should be easier to travel overland to the east. But there are many problems. The closure of Yugoslavia as a route to Turkey seems to have put power into the hands of the Romanians and it was his experience that they were either unable to cope, corrupt or just abusing the situation. There are no fuel points in Austria which take credit cards and the banks charge a lot for currency changing. Oil in Austria costs up to £10 per litre! The motorway from Germany to Vienna either has

lots of roadworks or a very bad surface where the thin tarmac has been worn to grooves by heavy trucks. Slovakia suffers from some border guards having rigid communist thinking but the people are friendly and costs low. Hungary has progressed perhaps more than any other country. It is expensive, has no supply problems and Budapest is like any other lively western city. Romania gave the impression of a squalid den of thieves. The borders are crowded with con-men trying to charge ecology tax, road tax, bridge tax...you name it. At the Giurgiu/Russe bridge over the Danube he found a town run by Mafia types who treat visitors as mobile banks.

So if you are thinking of driving to the East - beware of Romania; use the Giurgiu/Russe as the main crossing point into Bulgaria and DON'T give money to anyone who has no official badge or office. Beware also of money changers at this border. There is no point which the writer can see in going into Bucharest without a compelling reason. It is a sordid mess of ill-signed roads with potholes which can swallow an ordinary car. The ring road is made from concrete with no expansion gaps so there are 12 inch high slabs sticking out of the road with no warning.

Ron is willing to provide photo copies of the full article to anyone who may be interested.

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And from the same pen - a couple of tips:

A good place to carry spare windscreen wiper blades. If you leave them in their original packaging they can be lodged in the tubular table legs. there they will not get damaged and are out of the way. [So much so that I bet you forget where you put them - Ed!]

I always carry "Araldite Rapid" glue in the van (is there a better one?). On holiday the window winder in my Talbot came adrift with the boss split in half. I mended it with that glue and it is still in place. Once, in a remote place in Spain, a large hole in the radiator of my old Bedford caused by flying gravel was mended with that adhesive. We had to sweat it out in extreme heat for some three hours to give the glue time to harden before we could refill the system and get on our way. The alternative to that D.I.Y. job could have been costly both in getting help to us and in hanging around for some days. The repair was still good when we sold the van three years later. I wouldn't have enough room to detail all the other uses to which that particular adhesive has been put.

From *Ron* again - Spain, Portugal and Documents!

Briefly about the Portsmouth to Bilbao ferry. As our trip to the Algarve started on February 1st this crossing was chosen because at that time of the year the risk of snow or really bad weather on the roads through France would be high. The boat timings are good, 20.30 departure, 2 nights and a full day on board and disembark at 08.00 almost straight onto a motorway. Because of heavy rain we continued on the motorway to Burgos - some 110 miles - toll charge £11.00! Then there is a dual carriageway for the next 100 miles. In spite of a brief blizzard and snow over a pass, the good roads and lack of traffic enabled us to cover about 381 miles easily before stopping for the night. A sightseeing route to Albufeira with a night at Beja camp added 307 miles. Much work is being done on the Portugese roads, mostly being paid for by the Common Market, but we found road signs lacking and at times misleading so one has to be very alert to the problem. After 4 1/2 weeks with some beautiful daytime weather, though frosty nights at first, we reluctantly headed homewards via Cape St. Vincent, then northwards up the coast camping one night at Milfontes which had been justly recommended in the magazine some time ago.

In the 50's we had travelled that way through unspoilt Portugal on a motorcycle and have wonderful memories of that trip. All the places we then visited have grown out of all recognition and the roads are no longer virtually traffic free as they were then. This time we stupidly got involved in the rush hour traffic in Lisbon; absolute chaos is the only description, but a good campsite there. One night in Porto but we would not recommend the camp site. A visit to the Port wine lodges is worth while but it required a two hour sleep before we could drive away!

We crossed into Spain near Vigo for a rainy day's drive north to the Atlantic coast. In spite of the weather the scenery made for a very enjoyable drive with the hills ablaze in yellow broom contrasting with the browns of the bracken. Most of the way the traffic was very light. The campsite that night advertised "70 metres to the beach". It was on top of a 70 metre cliff! There are only a few sites open at that time of the year so the next night we "free camped" at a holiday resort but at Bilbao next day we found that most vans had spent the night on the quayside with no problems; it seemed they were also able to use the toilets there. We shall probably repeat the holiday next year and maybe include a couple of weeks with the one in Spain mentioned in the April Newsletter.

Four days after departing from the Algarve we found that we had forgotten to collect our passports from the camp. It was then too far to go back for them so we took a chance that, having taken the precaution

of photocopying them, we could be OK. At the frontier into Spain there was no sign of officialdom. Next day at Bilbao we embarked on the boat after a little hassle. At Portsmouth the Immigration Officer studied both the rather rough copies and us very intently, remarked that it was fortunate that we had the copies, and wished us a good journey home. So always carry separately photocopies of all important documents. Our passports arrived by post three days later!

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FOR SALE

Double bicycle carrier purpose made for Talbot, easily removed for rear opening doors. Price negotiable. Also pair of levelling wedges £7.00. Telephone Clare Somerville on 0935 813 310 or write to her at Tabard Cottage, South Street, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 3LX.

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Silver Screen (White/Silver) to suit Talbot Express with truck type mirrors. Hardly used - £20.00 for quick sale.

Fed up with the beds in your Talisman? I have available two full length seat cushions, 52" x 28" x 5" foam, piped all round, quilted and buttoned, in Astoria Blue/Grey. These replace the existing four seat cushions and give a much better bed. As new and cost a lot but going for £50.00 the pair.

Both the above available due to change of van.

Telephone Pat Johnson on 0992 464 898 or write to 3 Baas Hill Close, Broxbourne, Herts., EN10 7EU.

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Omnistor "Carry-All" Bike Rack for T4 (e.g. Trident/Trooper). 3 bike capacity. No drilling to attach and tailgate can still be opened. £60.00.

Wheel Trim - one white/cream A-S type with 13 x 30mm holes around extremity. 390mm diameter overall for 14" wheels - fits T4 among others. £10.00. Telephone Geoff Watson on 0455 291 801 or write to him at 1 Ferrers Croft, Barlestone, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV13 0JL.

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Ford Legend. 2 litre petrol, 5 speed, 'H' Reg (November 1990), 19,000 miles, one owner. Full spec., extras include Airide suspension, over-cab locker/extra bed option, Fiamma 2-bike cycle rack, high level stop/tail/brake lights, cab seat arm rests, swivel arm table, silver screen, CB radio. Immaculate. £17,000 ono. Available mid September. Telephone David Carrigan on 0742 469 473 or write to him at 38 Grenfolds Road, Grenoside, Sheffield, S30 3NU.

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(David sent a donation with this - many thanks)

VW Trident 1991, 2.0 litre petrol. Rear engine; twin headlamps; rear wash/wipe; Propex heating; towbar and electrics; alarm; rear seat belts; swivel seats; Zig unit; twin batteries. FSH. 24,000 miles. £12,500.00. Telephone Lesley or Joe Rood on 081 989 5277 or write to them at 67 Dover Road, Wanstead, London, E12 5DZ.

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Front spoiler for 1991 Harmony - reasonably priced, please. Telephone Maurice Wright on 0984 40 857 or write to 46 Cleeve Park, Blue Anchor, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 6JF.

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Camping Car Stations

I have received news, from the Federation Neuchateloise du Tourisme, of 9 stations already in operation and another four to start in 1995. These stations are apparently equipped with emptying facilities "installed for the use of camping cars staying in the region of Neuchatel". If anyone is thinking of going to the Neuchatel area, on the western edge of Switzerland I shall be pleased to send them a copy of the "map" received showing the stations, just send your Editor a stamped, self-addressed envelope! From the other accompanying blurb it looks as though it could be a very interesting region.

Phew! Dunit!! All that remains now is to load the van, get ourselves (and the puss cat) ready and then it's heigh-ho, off to Malvern we go. By the time you read this we'll have been and come back too! Let's hope that everyone enjoyed the weekend and the work was worth it!

Your Editor
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