

AUTO-SLEEPER OWNERS' CLUB

www.asoc.fsnet.co.uk



Ready for the signing of "Subscribers"
So that the Club can become a
Company Limited by Guarantee

NEWSLETTER 172 JANUARY 2003

Hello.

PANIC! That's what happened to me during the course of preparing this edition of your Newsletter. In the morning I was working on the computer as usual. I stopped for lunch and, when I tried to start up again in the afternoon, the monitor had stopped working. So it was off to the local PC World for a new monitor the following morning and now all is well. Panic over!!

You will know that the Club is in course of becoming a Company. Our two Founder Vice-Presidents signed the forms as the official "Subscribers". This term is used in its original and still legal sense of "Those whose names are written below". It did not mean that they had to provide any money! The papers are now with Companies House and we await the official registration. As I am one of the lucky ones with a digital camera, I was able to record the occasion which took place at a committee meeting. And purely as an experiment I decided to transfer the resulting picture to the cover. It is obviously not as good as a "proper" printed photograph would be but I thought you might like to see the result.

====oooOOOooo====

COMPANY CLOTHING

An exciting new outdoor leisure clothing range was launched by A-S at Earls Court. The range, designed with comfort and warmth in mind, was extremely popular at the exhibition. After seeing the attention it received we have decided to offer it to Club members at a 5% discount. Please call 013 8685 3338 for a brochure and order form.

Dan Meredith

Marketing Department

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A Gift - the loan of a Motorhome

One of the highlights of the Club & Company rally is the ever popular raffle, stuffed with worthwhile prizes and generating good profits for the chosen charity. An innovation in 2002 was a prize from A-S which allowed the winner the use of a demonstration vehicle for a 3 night trial.

Nica, having been an enthusiastic seller of tickets, was almost caught by surprise at being a relatively early winner, avoiding the later cuddly toys and getting a choice of the main prizes remaining. Requiring a quick decision the offer by the Company of the loan of a van was grabbed, knowing that we have a sister and brother-in-law who are on the verge of deciding whether to change from a trailer to a motor home. With *Charles*

Trevelyan an enthusiastic contact point taking a personal interest, we quickly agreed the use of a spanking new Palermo for a four day trip starting from Willersey. With a full tank of fuel and everything except food and bedding supplied, not much preparation was needed. We were happy to share the prize and accompany our relatives in our well used and faithful Clubman. We got 5 star treatment from *Charles* when we picked up the vehicle and he gave us a personal tour around the vehicle. He included subtle tests to ensure that we had grasped the safety features of the gas system and, after an extended tour through the electronics, we were ready for the off.

Our Clubman perhaps felt slightly outgunned by its bigger brother and we were beginning to wonder whether we had been too generous in sharing such a splendid prize. We set off to the West Country to make the most of our weekend. As birdwatchers we were interested to see whether the larger vehicle would cramp our style in searching out remote locations.

A question we had asked ourselves in preparation was what are the differences between using a trailer caravan and a motorhome? One distinctive feature seems to be that the motorhome is more ready to move on and not just be used as a base. With this in mind we had decided to use Caravan Club sites staying overnight at Chard, going on to Exeter and Devon. Pitching and moving on worked smoothly and comfortably and we began to use all of the motorhome facilities (maybe there'd be a full Sunday lunch from a grateful sister!) and, as testing the performance of the van on the minor roads of Devon was all part of our plan, we began to enjoy ourselves.

The Palermo is a big vehicle so that as we approached the old port of Topsham to explore its Dutch style houses, antique shops and small restaurants in the narrow streets, we began to wonder whether we had been a bit over-ambitious. As so often happens, finding a parking space for the vans was easier than anticipated and both were comfortable tucked away in a corner of the car park. Having already called at Aylesbeare Common for the Dartford Warbler and now finding Spoonbills and Egrets at Bowling Green Marsh, with the birds of prey watch point at Haldon near to the Exeter racecourse to look forward to, the bird watching was going quite well. After leaving Topsham we headed for the racecourse allowing for the use of a service point on the way in and out. Moving on next day to Slapton Ley the real test on Devon roads began. The Palermo took everything in its stride, cruising comfortably on all the major roads and causing no hold ups on the minor ... Perhaps it was just no hold ups for us! The weekend was going so well we began to feel a bit disappointed that it was due to come to an end on

the Monday, maybe *Charles* would listen to a suggestion for a trial run on the Continent if we asked nicely! *Elsie* and *Alan*, who were using the *Palermo*, had already voted the double bed "the best sleep we have had whilst camping". I caught *Nica* looking slightly enviously at the made up bed as final drinks were enjoyed before making up the bed in the *Clubman*. Perhaps it was time to head back.

Back to *Willersey* with the *Palermo* bursting with plenty of power and hardly warmed up with the 400 miles we had put on her, she ate up the *Devon hills* comfortably. On arrival, *Charles* looked surprising at ease with one of his prize vehicles out on loan. The *Palermo* had come up to all expectations, but it was also nice to reflect on the features of the *Clubman* which still remains a favourite for the birdwatchers. We were given every chance to go over the features of the vehicles with *Rob Axton* and *Dan Meredith* of the Marketing team who joined *Charles* in our debriefing which was followed by a splendid lunch at the *Bell* in *Willersey*, a local hostelry well tested by A-S.

Was the trip successful? It was an excellent chance to consider the move from trailer to motor home. Will they do it? I think the answer is "Yes, next spring, and it will be an Auto-sleeper". For A-S it was a chance to hear objective view on their vehicle and to tune in to the thinking processes of potential customers. For the Club the raffle prize was a definite winner - well worth accepting if a similar offer is made next year by the Company.

Thanks to the team at *Willersey* for their enthusiasm, courtesy, good humour and willingness to put themselves out to help our trip to be the success it was.

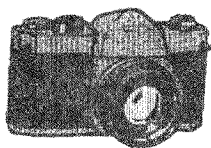
Anyone like to buy a raffle ticket.....?

Nica & Eddie Jones

I don't mind buying a raffle ticket, provided that it is not one of the used ones!

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Photo Competition



Yes, I know! We've only just finished the 2002 competition, but time flies when you're having fun. So with the lights all on, a good fire going and the rain hammering at your windows, now would be a good time to sort through those snaps you took back in the summer.

The rules are the same:

1. Each picture must show an A-S Motorhome.

2. No 'digitally modified' pictures.
3. Two classes, standard and humorous.
4. Caption, name, address and membership number on reverse.
5. Closing date - 15th June 2003.

Send entries to: *Brian Smith*, 9 St Mary's Road, Bluntisham, Huntingdon, PE28 3XA.

Talking of photographs, you may know that the Club has some archive pictures. Perhaps you have seen the albums at the Club and Company Rally. Well, we have quite a few from an early date and some recent ones. But there seems to be a 'hole' in the middle. So if anyone has photos taken in the mid-nineties that they would care to donate, please send them to me at the above address. Many thanks.

Brian Smith

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A Harmony Story

I thought that members might be interested in an experience I have had with my Harmony. The vehicle lacked power when climbing hills, so much so that it was embarrassing. I had to pull into the 'crawler' lane to allow lorries to pass!

My local Peugeot garage had the vehicle for three days in which time numerous tests were carried out. The fault was finally found. The carpet below the accelerator pedal was too thick, thus preventing full use of the throttle. The garage cut the carpet and now the Harmony is excellent. Climbing hills is now effortless - what a difference! (A-S have been advised of this problem.)

Donald Stott

====oooOOOooo====

WANDERING AROUND

We've just bought a nearly new Executive to replace our much loved Harmony (nicknamed the Tardis because of all the nooks and crannies for storage). Why did we change? Well my company (I won't say which but it is Never Knowingly Undersold) awards a six month break on full pay plus full holiday entitlement after 25 years service! Having completed 37 years I decided it was my turn next year, April to October, and the Executive is a key part of these plans.

There are 4 stages to the master plan; (1) will take us to New Zealand, hiring a motorhome in Christchurch and returning it to Auckland; (2) to Scandinavia - Norwegian fjords, Arctic Circle and the Santa Claus

village for part of a 2,500 mile round trip. Stage (3) is a visit to the Tour de France up Le Alpe d'Huez, returning via the Gran Paradisio National Park in Italy, then Lausanne, before heading for the ferry. Stage (4) is a leisurely strip to Loch Ness doing as little as possible. My job involves Seasonal Merchandising and I'm writing this (August 5th) surrounded by 2003's Easter Eggs! So long distance planning is like a busman's holiday and we now have day to day itineraries for 3 legs out of the 3 (Scotland is straightforward).

Our search for the Harmony replacement started early last year visiting shows and the A-S factory open day last September. This turned out to be the critical moment of the search which ended as soon as we stepped inside the Executive. The new 2.8Hdi was well outside our budget so feelers were put out to local dealers for a late pre-owned model. In March we heard of a 'W' reg model, 6,500 miles on the clock and in showroom condition - and at a very attractive price. Although many of the appliances were unused, the 1.9TD put me off as I was looking for a 2.5TD. After a thrilling test drive up the Marlow by-pass drag (in top gear!) and a trip to the local Sainsbury's for a parking test (its our only vehicle and size matters...) we returned to the yard to look under the bonnet for what seemed like a larger engine. It was subsequently discovered that the later 1.9TD's had been upgraded to 92bhp and what a difference! The deal was done before the engine had cooled. There was, of course, more science to it than that as we had arrived with a 4 page check list of 'must haves' before the test drive.

A few weeks later the vehicle was comprehensively handed over in superb condition. The only two faults to develop was a leaky water pipe connection which may have been caused by over pressure in the system. (We have since been advised that once the pump has been turned off, to turn the tap on again for a few seconds to release the pressure.) Essanjay replaced the 5th gear synchro covered by warranty; why it was needed so early I've no idea.

I've had the two front tyres replaced as they were apparently leaking through UV induced cracks through under use, although expert opinion is divided on that issue but mentioned yet again in the last month or so. On the insurance front SAGA wouldn't cover me as the vehicle would be used to 'commute' the 8 miles to work. In their view 'most people over 50 are retired'. I wish! MCIA have offered excellent cover instead. Domestic and General have never heard of a Fanmaster 5500 and despite desperate efforts by phone and fax on my part since 8th March to get cover

not one piece of paper has come from this company by way of apology, acknowledgement or kiss.....! I'll be looking for an alternative provider in the New Year, any suggestions gratefully received. 30th September - still no reply!

As far as modifications are concerned, a Beeny box and a second small table from the superb service centre at A-S, Air-ride refitted from the Tardis, an E-Mag fuel conditioner to improve fuel consumption from 23mpg to 26mpg fully loaded but yet to prove itself on short runs to work and back, a supertap and extension hose for the waste from CAK tanks and 2 litres of cheap orange squash flushed through the water system to improve the taste. I plan to take the Executive to Van Aarken here in Bracknell as they are the only company who can retune the diesel fuel pump to uprate the bhp to 110 from 92 with apparently 30% more torque and resultant fuel economy. £346.00 to members of the Caravan Club and considering most of our trips next year are uphill, money well spent.

All that remains is to hit the road with a sign that says 'We will follow you to the nearest police station' in Norwegian, French and Italian for those time when we're not sure if the policeman/car is genuine and a ratchet strap to thread through the cab door handles - much easier than chains and a padlock in emergency - to avoid unwanted night time visitors. If we get back in one piece I'll let you know this time next year.

Terry Hammond

Yes, please, do let us all know the results of your travels. They should make interesting reading.

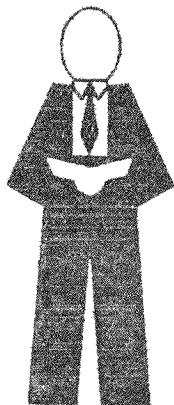
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Chairman's Chat

First of all, *Barbara and I* would like to wish all members a happy, prosperous, and trouble-free New Year.

During the Committee meeting on Saturday 16th November, the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Club were signed by our two Founder Vice-presidents, *John Cox* (Membership No. 1) and *Rita Daley* (Membership No. 3), and their signatures were formally witnessed by our President, *Charles Trevelyan* (who of course was also heavily involved in setting up the Club). The occasion was celebrated with a modest libation and a slice of fruit cake, for which we are very grateful to *Eileen Kellard*.

The documents have now been sent to our solicitor to be forwarded to Companies House in early December.



When they have been approved by Companies House, the new Company Limited by Guarantee will be registered and from that moment the Club takes on its new status. During the meeting, the Committee also passed a resolution confirming the decision made by members at this year's Annual General Meeting that all current members at the time of incorporation should be admitted to membership of the company.

The Memorandum sets out the aims of the Club, which are identical with those expressed in the Club's Constitution. Our solicitor added a number of conventional clauses permitting the Club to do virtually anything legal, both now and in the future, to further those aims.

The Articles are the rules of the Club and are also based on our Constitution. The draft Articles seen by members before the last AGM have been amended and extended by our solicitor to ensure that all clauses are expressed in the correct legal terms and comply with the requirements of the Companies Acts 1985 and 1989 - in particular, with table C of those Acts which sets out model articles for companies limited by guarantee. As authorised by the AGM, we have of course accepted the amendments and additions suggested by our solicitor. As early as possible following the incorporation of the company, the Articles will be printed and circulated to all members - probably with the February Newsletter, which will also contain the notice calling the 2003 AGM together with the final date for the Club Secretary, *Janet Sutterby*, to receive nominations for election to the Committee and resolutions for consideration at the meeting. The Articles will also be published as soon as possible on the Club's web site.

The Committee now needs to prepare by-laws, governing the more mundane details of the Club's activities, including rules for the conduct of rallies and the three codes we all agree to observe whilst camping - the Motorhome Code, the Countryside Code and the Seashore Code. In addition, Committee Standing Orders will be prepared to set out how the work of your Committee should be conducted.

Ray Whiley

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Our Ear Boxer

We have owned our A-S Executive for approaching 3 years and we are in general satisfied with it. There are a couple of problems that have become apparent during our ownership, namely a noise and thermal insulation.

Firstly, the ear shattering noise, which overwhelmed us whenever we travelled above 50 or 60 mph. If you imagine Concorde landing on the roof of our Camper you're close. I pondered what the noise could be and decided it was that d*mn Status aerial, which A-S had fitted on the highest point of the Camper, immediately above our head. Tapping the edge of the Status gave a feeble noise similar to our noise. The Status aerial gave us a television picture that was just marginally better than just the coaxial lead plugged-in, and when we were travelling it reached out to trim every tree it could along our route. It just had to go and when the £200.00 cost of fitting the Status aerial had dimmed in my memory a little, I resolved to tear it unceremoniously from the Camper's roof before a passing tree did the job for me. In a few minutes the job was done – peace at last.

No, I am afraid not. Oops! We headed out for our next trip only to find the noise returning at speed. Some time later whilst reading the MMM magazine I found a reference to our noise in one of the articles. It would appear that Kellogg's cereal packet cardboard was the answer to my problem as the other sufferer had poked cardboard between the grey trim above the windscreen and the Camper body. We tried it with a piece of plastic water pipe split down its length and pushed into the offending gap. Bingo. We can now run up to 80 or 90 mph (on the Continent of course) without the Bedlam Brass Band starting up. If you have this problem – now you know the secret.

My second problem of poor thermal insulation is more difficult to solve. We have to have heating on in all but the hottest days to keep my wife's angina at bay – not a problem we suffered with in our touring caravan. A-S install glass fibre insulation between the glass fibre shell and the interior wall. Unfortunately, at least in our case with road vibrations, this has settled leaving just air between the inner and outer walls in some areas of the Camper. How do I solve this one? Has anyone improved his or her A/S insulation?

David Baldwin

I seem to recall that several years ago a company produced an insulation foam in a spray can of some sort which could, with great care, be squirted into such cavities. Unfortunately, the last I heard of them they were in process of closing down, but I am sure there must be something similar around today. Anyone any ideas?

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GAS CONVERSIONS

Further to *Ron Daniel's* letter relating to alternative fuel. We converted our petrol Executive, from new, in May of last year to run on

Liquid Petroleum Gas and are pleased to report that it makes a substantial difference to the cost of running the vehicle. We live on the south coast and have been to Scotland and south as far as southern France and Italy on gas. We have found that gas is readily available in Belgium, Holland, France and Italy at a cheaper cost than the UK. Germany does have gas but you have to plan refills. Here, we suggest you look at the LPG gas website on www.lpga.co.uk to find availability in your area.

We agree that there are cowboys about who profess to know about gas fitting. We, like *Ron*, were doubtful at first but after many enquiries from local and not so local converters we came across Alternative Fuel Systems Ltd of Spring Copse Business Park, Slinfold in West Sussex (Tel 01403 791116) who on initial contact, not only sounded enthusiastic but have proved to have fitted a system that has worked well. They have told us of horror fittings that they have corrected.

As every motorhome is different they needed to see the vehicle first to see if it is possible to convert and where the tank is to be fitted. Our tanks are fitted where the spare wheel is fitted and we have housed the wheel in an internal lower locker. We could go further in this reply. However, if anyone wants to talk further please do not hesitate to telephone us on 01202 762 572 or e-mail to Tonychrisben@aol.com.

Tony & Chris Bennett

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I was interested to read the letter from *Ron Daniel* asking about other people's experiences of converting an A-S to run on gas. Just over a year ago I wrote of my experience of having my 1991 Talbot-based Talisman converted and the letter was included in the November 2001 Newsletter. (Page 11 - Ed) Since the conversion in April 2001, I have done over 11,000 miles and calculate that I have more than paid for the £930.00 cost of conversion (including VAT and a tank of gas). It is getting much easier to obtain gas and this year I have not had to switch over to petrol at all. The price of gas varies considerably - the highest being 38.9pppl and the lowest 28.0pppl (near Cannock in Staffordshire). I have had various problems with "Taffy" this year, but only one connected with the conversion - that was a cough caused by an air leak, but that was quickly rectified by the man who had done the conversion.

After my previous letter several people contacted me and one couple came from Bristol and stayed with me overnight while their Talisman was converted. I have kept all the details of the costs and fuel



January 2003

Rally Supplement

A Happy New Year to all members.

Hidden Valley New Year Rally.

We will require marshals for this rally next year. If you are interested please contact the Rally Co-ordinator. If no volunteers are forthcoming we will lose this rally as there are many other clubs waiting to claim both dates and location.

8TH - 15th. June. (7 Nights Sun.-Sun). Delftse Hout Caravan Site, Delft, Holland.

Rally marshals: Tricia & Ted Pratt & Jan & Vic Hicklin.

Site Fees: £ 11.50 approx. per night. Rally Fee: £15.00. (Refundable if unsuccessful).

Bookings will only be accepted for the full 7 nights. Please send an SAE, rally slip and cheque for

£15.00 payable to P.M. Pratt, 3 Grafton Road, Stapenhill,

Burton-on-Trent, Staffs. DE15 9DN. Tel. No. 01283 538 818

Attractions: Delftse site is located 20 miles from Hook of Holland. Buses run from site entrance to town. (10 minutes walk away). And tram & train station. It is a lovely site adjoining beautiful countryside, lovely for cycling, swimming pool & full facilities.

Limit 25 vans. Spaces still available.

19th. June - 3rd. July (14 nights). Sarzeau, South Brittany, France.

Rally Marshals: Dorothy & Baz Wellard, assisted by May & Derek Armitage & Brian Thomas.

THIS RALLY IS NOW FULL

13th - 15th. February (3 nights). Grouse & Claret, Rowsley, Nr. Matlock,

As the Grouse & Claret is due to be refurbished during the early months of the year we have had to cancel this rally.

MARSHALS REQUIRED for the following shows. Contact the Rally Co-ordinator if interested.

9th - 11th. May Thames Valley & Motorhome Show, Newbury Showground.

18th - 20th. July. Midsummer Music & Leisure Show, Lincoln Racecourse.

13th - 16th. March 2003 (3 nights) Elm Cottage Caravan Park. Little Budworth Cheshire.

Site Tel. No. 01829 760544 emergencies only. Limit of 30 vans.

Web site www.elmcottage7.freemove.co.uk.uksite

Rally marshals Elizabeth and Bryn Morgan and Nora and Ven Venables

Site fee: £5 per night. Electricity :£2 per night. Rally fee: £1.18 each person. All inclusive of VAT. Dogs allowed but must be on a lead on the site.

Application by post please. Rally slips and cheques to: B. Morgan, 44 Mersey Road ,Heaton Mersey ,Stockport .SK4 3 DJ .Tel. 0161 432 4869. Mobile 07890876859

Please include a SAE for confirmation of booking, site directions and further details.

Attractions: Nantwich, Chester, Little Budworth Country Park, Salt Museum and the Anderton Boat Lift. The Shrewsbury Arms Pub, which serves food, is 400 yards away.

The level site is a well draining one. Pitches have hard standing for the vans but access to this is across the grass so wellingtons or suitable footwear is desirable. There are two small toilet blocks each with one shower. Also a shower for the disabled.

We will have the use of the sites "Noggins" barn for our evening get together with possibly an American Supper on Saturday evening. If there is sufficient interest we will organise a coach trip on the Saturday to Nantwich and Stapeley Water Gardens. The cost will be approximately £5.50 each person. Please indicate on the rally slip if you are interested in this trip but do not send any money.

**NEW 27th.-30th.March (3 nights) The Motorhome & US RV Show,
The Showground,Great Driffield,East Yorks.**

Emergency Tel.No. 0777 557 0182 Marshals' mobile.

Rally Marshals: Jan & Vic Hicklin & Tricia & Ted Pratt.

Site Fee: Special Club prices. Arrive Thursday £28.00 Friday onwards £23.00.

Rally Fee:£2.35(Incl.VAT).Send rally fees,£2.35 with rally slip & SAE for Show application form to Mrs. J. Hicklin,381 Manor Road, Brimington,Chesterfield, Derbyshire.S43 1PP.Tel.No. 01246 236 157.

We depend on volunteers within the Club to act as rally marshals.If you know of a suitable site why not think about running a rally.It is not difficult and help is available.

It is important that all potential rally dates and venues are checked with me first as,unless they are approved by the Club,there will be no Public Liability Insurance.

Neil C. Rogers

3 Appleby Close,

Aldbrough St. John,

Richmond,

North Yorks,

DL11 7TT.

Tel./Fax. No. 01325 374 540 E-Mail. ncr@nasuwt.net

Local assistant: Jerry Haxton (01483 223 476) Woking,Surrey.

E & O E

Rally: Date:

Your name and address(Please PRINT).....
.....

Post code:.....

Phone No.: Van Reg:

Membership No: Day/Time of arrival:

In the event of an emergency at the rally whom should we contact?

Name Phone No.

Please complete both sides of the form!

Rally: Date:

Your name and address(Please PRINT).....
.....

Post code:.....

Phone No.: Van Reg:

Membership No: Day/Time of arrival:

In the event of an emergency at the rally whom should we contact?

Name Phone No.

Please complete both sides of the form!

Rally: Date:

Your name and address(Please PRINT).....
.....

Post code:.....

Phone No.: Van Reg:

Membership No: Day/Time of arrival:

In the event of an emergency at the rally whom should we contact?

Name Phone No.

Please complete both sides of the form!

Is this your first ASOC rally? Please tick box Yes No
Number of people in your van: Adults..... Children.....

Names of Adults

Names of Children (including ages)

Extras: Please indicate which you would like, if available:

Electricity: Yes No Evening meal: Yes No

Have you any special needs? Yes No If Yes please specify:-

Full payment MUST accompany this slip-cheques payable to the marshal.

POST FORM TO REACH MARSHAL 14 DAYS BEFORE EVENT,IF POSSIBLE PLEASE!

Is this your first ASOC rally? Please tick box Yes No
Number of people in your van: Adults..... Children.....

Names of Adults

Names of Children (including ages)

Extras: Please indicate which you would like, if available:

Electricity: Yes No Evening meal: Yes No

Have you any special needs? Yes No If Yes please specify:-

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Number of people in your van: Adults..... Children.....

Names of Adults

Names of Children (including ages)

Extras: Please indicate which you would like, if available

Electricity: Yes No Evening meal if arranged: Yes No

Have you any special needs? Yes No If Yes please specify:-

Full payment MUST accompany this slip-cheques payable to the marshal.

POST FORM TO REACH MARSHAL 14 DAYS BEFORE EVENT,IF POSSIBLE PLEASE!

consumption and could send them to anyone who is interested (e-mail: patchwork.cave@ukonline.co.uk).

Mary Cave

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I read with interest the article headed "Alternative Fuel" in the December Newsletter which I think should read "Ultimate Fuel". Here is a short account of my experience of gas.

Years ago I had a 2 litre BMW converted and also a 3½ litre Rover. Both served very well but in those days gas cost almost as much as petrol but gave me a longer driving range. So when I got my Talisman 2 litre Talbot Express I naturally got it converted. Instead of the £450.00 I paid before it cost £1,800.00.

However, since it was installed with 2 x 52 litre tanks 18 months ago we have recouped £1,300.00 against the cost of petrol. It works out at about 50% saving on cost. As regards problems, we had one when we first had it installed. The initial trials returned 11 miles to the gallon which, of course, was very disappointing. The vehicle was fitted (at no extra cost) with a high tech ignition advance gadget when the vehicle was running on gas.

Whereas I did 20 - 22 mpg on petrol I now do 17 - 18 on gas. So at half price it is quite a saving. My driving range is about 300 miles on gas. I always use my trip meter as a guide as I have yet to see a reliable gas fuel gauge. I haven't used petrol for over 12 months.

In France about 80% of garages sell "GPL", the price being only slightly less than at home. In France the garages and supermarkets close on Sundays and Bank Holidays so if you happen to land on one of their bank holidays, as we did, it is very useful having both fuels with a range of nearly 600 miles. Another peculiar fact we have noticed, as we keep a record of all fuel used, is that we always do about 2 miles to the gallon more on French fuel, both gas and petrol. Perhaps it is a better quality than the British fuel. Last summer I did a trip to the South of France with three extra passengers and returned exactly the same MPG.

By hesitating, *Ron*, you will only delay recouping your outlay!

Wally King

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I bought a petrol fuelled Mercedes Vito that had been converted to a panel motor caravan. I had it converted to use LPG in 2000 by Auto Gas Developments of Brimfield near Ludlow. It was most successful. MPG on Auto Gas was about 95% of that with petrol. I could travel 150

miles on one filling of gas and within the UK never found that one gas supplier was further away from the next than that distance. One sometimes had to divert a mile or so from one's route to get to a supplier. But the situation is much better now. Talking to the local Calor Gas supplier, who had already converted his delivery van to Auto Gas, it was quite evident that one needed to be very careful to whom you entrusted the conversion. I was given to understand that there were several converters quoting much less than the Brimfield firm. Shoddy conversions could lead to a significant fire risk apart from such minor problems as poor performance.

The only problem that I had was that after some time I experienced a back firing when switching over to gas once the engine had warmed up. On presenting the problem to the converters they immediately connected the vehicle to their diagnostic computer and quickly established that the "in vehicle" computer was at fault. The reason for this was that moisture has intruded, probably from the hinge area of the bonnet. A new computer was installed at once in a safe, dry area and there was never any further problem.

Unless you are doing a very high annual mileage it is difficult to justify the conversion on cost grounds. Especially if you are converting a second-hand vehicle and therefore cannot qualify for a 50% grant. Even if you are converting a new or nearly new vehicle, you may not qualify for a grant unless the base vehicle manufacturer has lodged that particular engine with the appropriate Ministry. I know, because later on I enquired about converting a petrol driving Harmony. The conversion cost from petrol to dual fuel is not far off the difference between a petrol driven vehicle and a diesel vehicle. But of course the savings in fuel cost are much higher. The conversion can be justified on these grounds.

Norman Goodwin

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We bought our Talisman 2.0 litre petrol new in September 2000. We asked for it to be fitted for gas before we took delivery. The vehicle has run very well, we have done over 10,000 miles and have had not problems. It has no real difference in performance from petrol. We have toured all round Scotland and have found it quite easy to obtain. It is normally less than half the price of petrol. Where we live we can buy it for 29p per litre, so you can see that it is very economical. We have a capacity of 100 litres. I usually keep just a couple of gallons of petrol in the tank "just in case!"

John Morden

#####

We have a 1989 Talisman on a Fiat Ducato base (2 litre) which we have had converted to LPG following the letter from *Mary Cave* saying how pleased she was with the conversion on her Talisman. We got in touch with her and then spoke to the converter, agreed a price and decided to go ahead. A 70 litre tank plus all the necessary vaporizers, mixers and electrics were fitted and the job completed in two days.

We have had no problem in obtaining gas in various parts of the country and the price varies between 36 - 39ppl. We do about 220 miles on a full tank of gas and if it does run out it's only a flick of a switch to revert to petrol but as yet we have not had to use petrol at all.

Performance is unaffected and savings on fuel costs over the first 4,500 miles have worked out at 5.5p per mile. Incidentally we have never had to start on petrol. It starts much better on gas.

For those interested in helping to preserve our environment, dangerous emissions from gas engines are over 90% less than those from equivalent power diesel engines, as well as being 50% quieter.

Note, if your vehicle is over 5 years old you will have to pay the full cost of the conversion including VAT and you will NOT get any reduction in Vehicle Excise Licence for driving a low emission vehicle. Our mechanic who services our van informs us that our conversion has been very neatly and professionally done. So if anyone would like more information we'd be pleased to help. Telephone 011 7965 9000 or write to I Frenchay Close, Downend, Bristol, BS16 2QX.

Christ & Clive Barrington

-----oooOOOooo-----

Computer Viruses

You recently drew attention to the dangers of virus infection of software in computers. You quite properly urged members to ensure that they are protected, even though "virus checkers cost money". My PC is currently protected by the AVG Anti-virus programme. Not only is this as good a programme as you can get, according to my computer literate friends, but it is available as a FREE download. www.grisoft.com is the address!! Members may wish to take advantage of this facility.

John Francis

#####

I read the virus article in the December Newsletter. Articles in previous Newsletters have made me extremely worried about using my computer and this latest news nearly gave me a heart attack. I never

realised that computers could steal your credit card details and all that other stuff.

I have to agree that something strange is happening because I came downstairs one morning and found my computer switched on and whirring away doing whatever computers do when your not watching them. I am sure I switched it off before going to bed. My wife is convinced that it was going through my jacket pockets while we were asleep.

I have now decided to be rid of the thing for ever and intend throwing it in the dust bin; it's not worth the worry and my time would be much better spent polishing the van ready for next year's rallies. Many thanks for your information.

Ben Bruce

I have a very strong suspicion that this last letter was written with the tongue very firmly in the cheek! If you do get rid of your machinery, *Ben*, how will you be able to e-mail any further gems to your hungry Editor? And incidentally, the item did NOT say that the computer was stealing anything from anybody, just some extremely clever programmers who wanted to do something not only different but illegal! The computer is, so far, a mindless machine. The best description that I have yet heard of computers is that they are high-speed, logical idiots!

====oooOOOooo====

Eye Watering

I have recently changed to a 1999 A-S Legend. On our first shake down trip to the CC site at York we came across a problem and I wonder if any other members have encountered it and if they have a comment to make about my solution. Using the Carver heater, and with only the blown air on, we noticed that our eyes started itching and we suffered general irritation by coughing and sneezing. This stopped after turning off the heater blower. We came to the conclusion that the previous owner had kept a dog in the vehicle and that the hairs were being distributed by the blown air system. On returning home I took the front off the heater and, sure enough, found dog hairs which were vacuum cleaned out.

I also noticed that I could see through the front of the heater into the void behind the Carver, below the wardrobe base. Having removed the wardrobe base I found this void to be filled with domestic roof glass fibre and also that one branch of a "T" piece from the blown air heating system to the bathroom was left open ended. My conclusion to our problem changed from the dog hairs to one that the fan was blowing hot air into this

void via the open "T" piece and then drawing these disturbed glass fibre particles back into the system and distributing the around the motorhome.

I have since removed all of the glass fibre (a black bin liner completely full) and closed off the "T" piece resulting in no more runny eyes or sneezing. I have ensured that one blower vent cannot be closed as per the Carver instructions. I wonder if any other members have come across this problem and what is the effect of removing all of this glass fibre. It does seem to be a bad design by A-S, or don't they use their products?

Alan Robbins

My first thought on receiving this by e-mail was that it was a second-hand van and the previous owner might have "adjusted" various things, as we nearly all do. So I sent a copy of the letter to *Charles Trevelyan* and now print his reply:

On reading the copy e-mail, it would appear that *Alan Robbins* recently purchased this model and I would question whether this "T" piece blanking plate had not been removed or become misplaced during the vehicle's previous ownership. I can assure you that at the time the Legends were built, and indeed when we fitted the Carver heater/fan master, we ensured that no "T" pieces were left open, blanking plates always being fitted.

I rather question why, in the preceding three years, this problem had not been noted by a previous owner. It certainly seems to have been a very significant problem as reported by *Alan*, and I would have thought that this would have come to the notice of the occupants earlier in the vehicle's ownership. *Alan* also mentions that what he reports is a bad design. I can assure you we have never designed a vehicle with the ducting to be open ended blowing excess heat into the area behind the heater, and indeed our demonstrators are regularly used, not least by our Design Department staff and other members of the Company.

Interestingly, on the Truma Ultra Heater that we now fit, there is a directional vent that enables us to direct approximately 2/3rd of the heat to the accommodation of the vehicle and the remaining 1/3rd to the shower. From experience we have found this balance is right.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our notice.

Charles Trevelyan

-----oooOOOooo-----

Tyres

Having experience of 40 years in public service vehicles with buses operating in cities, housing estates, villages etc., and coaches on motorways and autobahns working with large tyre producers I offer the following which is, unfortunately, rather long.

1. Check with chassis manufacturers their requirements for your vehicle chassis.
2. Check with good tyre suppliers what they recommend for quality.
3. Michelin and Pirelli are expensive, but good. (Goodyear Cargo G26; Michelin XC Camping)
4. Good fitting of tyre, wheel balance, clean face of rim to mating surface on disc or brake drum, wheel nuts/bolts clean and oil thread, clean tapered surfaces, tighten to correct torque, drive for approx. 50 miles and re-tighten nuts/bolts to correct tightness.
5. If tyre wear is uneven, have front wheel geometry checked by reputable firm.
6. Regularly walk around vehicle to see if tyres look correct; wall damage, correct pressure, items ticking in tyre (stones, glass, nails etc.) and remove with sharp instrument. If item looks long, then change the wheel and take to specialist to get repaired/replaced. (When looking at the tyre tread you see a definite pattern, take objects out of the spaces. You will also see slits of various lengths, these have been made since the tyre was fitted to the vehicle by sharp objects in the road. Take a small screwdriver and poke into the slit and lever out any debris. You will find sharp flints and glass - if these are left in they work through into the cover and cause an air leak and eventually a blow-out - and ACCIDENT!)
7. Every month check tyre pressure as recommended by vehicle manufacturer. Check in the morning when atmosphere is cold and before vehicle moves. Use a good quality tyre gauge, do not rely on garage/petrol station. Check more often if tyres do not give a steady reading.
8. If tyres not holding pressure, check valves. If OK have wheel checked by good tyre specialist.
9. When vehicle is parked check:
 - A. Not touching the kerb.
 - B. Not on top of kerb - tyre half on and half off.
 - C. Not parked on object such as a stone etc.
 - D. If in sun, cover with material to shield from heat.
10. Approx. 10,000 miles, change wheels around to get a good wear pattern. Before fitting a wheel check outside of tyre for wear and damage

and objects as in 6. Now you can budget your pocket money for when and how to buy your next tyres. Get the best, it is another insurance, your life depends upon them.

Tyre size and designation - 145 SR 13.

145 is tyre width - 145mm. S is rating for speed of 112 mph. R is radial ply. 13 is rim diameter in inches. Some sizes quote 145/70 - this is a ratio figure of width/height.

Letter ratings are as follow: L is 75 mph; M is 80 mph; N is 85 mph; P is 95 mph; Q is 100 mph; R is 105 mph; S is 112 mph and T is 120 mph.

11. Do NOT let tyres overheat.
 - A. Wheel trims restricting air flow - check at every "tea stop".
 - B. Binding or over-used brakes.
 - C. Badly fitted wheel bearings - wheel centre overheats.
 - D. Mud flaps, if fitted, too close to tyres.
 - E. Vehicle overloaded or driven too fast on a hot road surface.
12. Never be too shy to get on hands and knees and look for trouble.
13. In the November Newsletter the point of tyre valve damage was mentioned. This would mostly be on nearside wheel. I have a VW Topaz - on two occasions the black plastic extensions have been damaged when I have driven too close to a kerb or stones in country lanes. I have removed them and fitted the old type dustcaps. The extensions will be temporarily replaced for pressure testing and inflating.

When speaking to a large tyre supply and fitting company they said that the biggest problem with blow outs or damage is incorrect pressure - low due to negligence.

I don't profess to know it all, but this may be of use.

Rod Logney

It certainly is useful and there is a lot of what ought to be common sense contained in this item. Fortunately I believe that most of our members do exercise the sort of discipline mentioned.

====oooOOOOoo====

DIAMOND WEDDING

It all started at the Club & Company Rally when we were so privileged to be invited to the Golden Wedding Anniversary celebrations of *Barbara & John Cox, Evelyn & Ben Mansfield and Winifred & Arthur Irving*. That was indeed a lovely evening. After that we began to look forward to our own Diamond Wedding celebration.

Eventually August 22nd arrived. I was up in good time, about 7.00 am. The kitchen floor was flooded and had to be mopped up with towels. At around 7.20 the postman brought us a special delivery, very special; it was from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. The front was the usual sort of mail which had to be signed for. The back informed the chief of the local sorting office that it was a special delivery item of Her Majesty and had to be delivered by the First Post on the due date. He also had to ring the Palace before 09.30 to say the matter was in hand. If he failed the Palace would Institute Enquiries. I was quite touched that she remembered our wedding and that she took it so seriously. After all, she was only about 12 at the time we got married! The card itself was very nice too.

At 9 o'clock I phoned the insurance company. I was told that all the flood damage was covered by not the actual plumbing cost. They would get the flood people on the move immediately. Around half past nine I cleared some rubbish out of the boot of the car, took a step backwards, tripped on a kerb, sat in the border and landed heavily with the small of my back against the edge of a concrete block. It was very painful. A few seconds later I realised that I could move, so I got up. A lovely neighbour from across the road came to ask if I was alright and if the party that night would still be on. 'Yes' to both questions.

The clean up team arrived, a smart young couple who knew all about everything while we were doddering old idiots. The vinyl floor was ripped out to expose the parquet floor below. A dryer was installed which would remove all the damp in a week. During the day, as the wooden blocks dried, they curled and lifted - a real death trap. The second post arrived with cards. Flowers started coming and had to be dealt with. Next the plumbing team, two little swarthy men in scruffy overalls and faded Lineas Canarieas baseball caps. They got down to work. Within the hour all the plastic plumbing to sink, washing machine and dishwasher was stripped, cleaned and re-assembled. They were really good and their bill was reasonable too.

The rest of the day was fairly normal apart from the gradual lifting of more and more of the parquet flooring while we were getting ready for the party that evening. That was a great success. Truly a memorable day. There is really no need to fly miles abroad to get excitement; there is plenty at home!

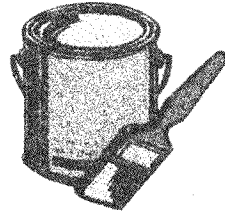
Nial Reynolds

This is the normal sort of thing for our younger (at heart) members who make a joke out of what might have been a complete disaster!

====oooOOOooo====

PAINT

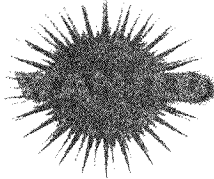
Jean and I have a 1993 Clubman and wanted to touch up the grey skirt. We were unable to purchase the paint in material shops and were told to try Halfords who have a paint ordering service. The paint comes in 400ml cans and is Rover Slate Grey, colour code 34.8. It costs about £12.50. Hope this is of use to *Gill and Alan Martin*.



Jean & Peter Burraway

====oooOOOooo====

Wanted



Fiamma Safari room, 3.5 metres, to fit Excelsior. Tel: Stuart Wood on 014 8460 4133 (Huddersfield).
Thanks for the donation.

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For Sale

Duetto 2.5 Turbo Diesel. 1997. 35,000 miles. One owner, immaculate condition, full service history and handbooks. Taxed, MOT. Thatcham Cat 1 alarm with central locking, electric windows, PAS, Status aerial, gas bottles/regulator, silver Screens, A-S crockery. Full A-S specification. Many extras. Non-smokers, no pets. Genuine reason for sale. £19,995.00 ono. Phone Dave Bull on 011 8961 1853 (Lower Early, Reading) or e-mail: DavidBull@NTLWorld.com.



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Cover Systems model No. TRN 2H, will fit Talbot Express van, i.e. A-S Harmony or similar. £65.00 plus delivery/postage. Phone Richard McAllister on 012 7878 1976 (Burnham on Sea, Somerset)

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