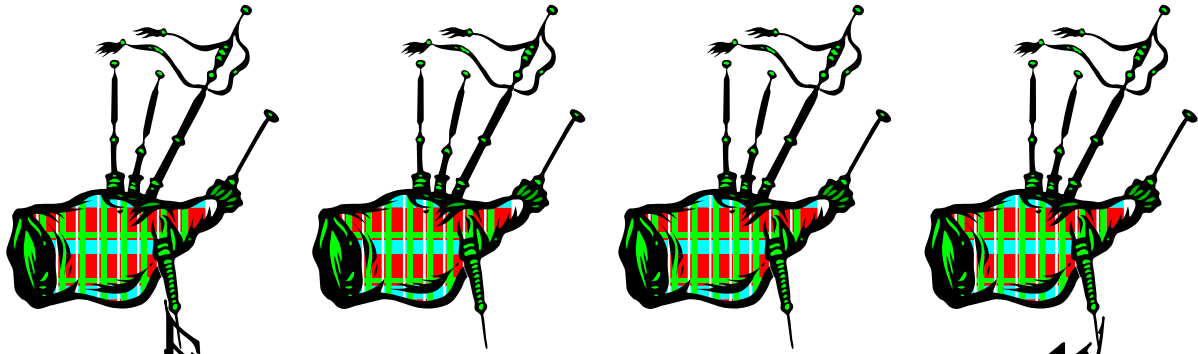


The Autocruisers

Newsletter No.15
January 2001



Edinburgh Tattoo Rally a report by Brian & Grace Hall

How impressed we were on our arrival on a beautiful sunny Friday afternoon, at our very first Autocruiser rally, to see about 16 vehicles parked around the Drum Mohr campsite for the Edinburgh Tattoo Rally. It was the start of a really marvellous weekend of making new friends, good food, plenty of 'make you legless stuff' and great entertainment, both planned and unplanned. This started with Joyce, on her return from shopping. "Had a bit of a problem" she said, clutching her waistband of her knickers, "The elastic snapped!"

Shortly afterwards Freddie Starr arrived, somewhat dishevelled, muttering something about a red 26 bus, and having walked a mile from the roundabout. Seems as though the Scottish country miles are just as long as those south of the border.

On a not so funny note, poor Bernie also had a problem that afternoon in the shape of a golf ball. This arrived unannounced through his windscreen, compliments of the local golf club. However when advised of the mishap they were very quick to accept full responsibility after some friendly persuasion from our Hon Sec, and Bernie's windscreen was promptly replaced.

The evening was spent around the punchbowl, meeting the remainder of our fellow ralliers, and hearing tales of derring-do on the French Rally, complete with photographic evidence.

Saturday started wet and threatened to stay like that all day, but this didn't stop folks getting out and about, sorting out means of getting into Edinburgh for the Tattoo. That evening we all made our way there by public transport and Shank's Pony, and our sincere thanks to all the helpers with the wheelchairs for Maggie, Bernie and myself.

There was a lovely atmosphere in Edinburgh on a dry, warm evening as we walked in groups towards the Castle. Lots of people, plenty of chatter, laughter, excitement and a little music from one or two buskers from the Festival.

At about 9-45pm we took our places or seats in the arena, the three wheelies plus their helpers right on the Esplanade beneath the scaffolding, with the rest of the 'Cruisers upstairs on the HARD SEATS!! The Tattoo was a really wonderful spectacle, enjoyed by everyone, and we wouldn't have missed it for anything. In addition to the show however there were little diversions which all added to the evening's enjoyment. For instance, we may have missed some of the marching band patterns, but we did see three young cadets from the Arena Party, behind the mesh screen under the opposite seats, pulling Moonies at a Maori warrior every time he put his tongue out during the Haka.

Or a very old lady a couple of places along from us who was thoroughly enjoying herself conducting every band that went past. Who would have thought anyone would have noticed her, but a very large Highland Pipe Major did. As his band made their final pass before leaving the Arena, he gave the old lady a big smile, a wink and the thumbs - up. It was brilliant to hear her giggle and see her face light up.

Then there was the West Indian drummer who, on seeing us applauding his steel band, gave a beaming smile and a "thank you".

Best of all was the gentleman next to us. A distinguished, bearded, Scottish Gentle Man, dressed in immaculate light green highland jacket, kilt, socks and dirk. A quiet-spoken man. A man who gets things organised without all the fuss. Then, into the Arena came a Highland band, the pipes skirling and the drums beating out the tempo - louder and faster - the bass drummers knocking seven bells out of the drums. But what had happened to our quiet neighbour?

Fingers clicking, and hopping from foot to foot, the kilt swinging from side to side in double quick time to the beat of the drums. Then the music stopped and our

neighbour became the Scottish Gentle Man again - yes, it was our host Andy Baxter, a very talented ex bass drummer himself.

All too soon it was over and we all wandered to the bus, following a little girl who did a wonderful job carrying the flag whilst perched on someone's shoulders. We all collapsed into nice soft seats in a comfortable bus and did some people watching while Andy went to look for the "two ladies locked in the lavatory". Nobody minded, and soon we were on our way back to the campsite.

After a late night on Saturday there weren't many about early Sunday morning, so most missed the Haggis hunting for the evening's Burns' Supper. For those who did miss the hunt, the attached picture (the light was very poor so early in the morning) shows you "the before". You all ate "the after".

The afternoon was spent getting three big vans into a U shape, with the tables arranged under the awnings. More of that later. We all filled our glasses and soon afterwards, Andrew, son of Andy piped in the haggis, carried by our Hon Sec the Haggis Bearer.

Andy gave a most impressive "address" to the haggis, and then Pat and her helpers started serving the meals in a very speedy and well-organised manner. In the middle of serving the meal however there was a heavy downpour. The rain started to gather in the awnings, and before long they had such a bulge that "little John" thought it safest to dump the water by lifting the awning, just enough for it to pour all down Ron's back. He really did look like a half drowned ginger tom in his wet ginger wig and caterpillar eyebrows. Although soaked to the skin he took it all in good part.

The meal was really delicious and a special thank you to all concerned. With the dishes cleared, the entertainment soon got underway. At this point, events may not be reported in the actual running order. From time to time, a bloke who looked like a mixture of Norman Wisdom and Columbo did a walk-on announcing each act, but the notes seem to have got lost -blame the drams for that.

Andrew gave us a couple more tunes on the pipes before having to make a hasty departure back to Police College in Aberdeen, but was given a great round of well-deserved applause before leaving. Then came Mike with a very clever and amusing Millennium poem, assisted by Chris as a Millennium Angel (or was it Madam Butterfly?) - its those dam drams again. Stacey joined in the panto spirit with an ad-libbed "He's behind you!!" - nice one Stacey. This was followed by Kirsty's highland sword dancing - a very good performance, its amazing where they get the energy from! The same could be said for the Beverley Sisters - Plus

One- Sheila, Carol, Joyce and Chris, who entertained us by singing/lurching/miming a variety of numbers.

Suffering slightly from the after-effects of the drams, we all gathered the following morning for coffee before starting on our way home. On behalf of everyone we would like to thank our hosts, the Baxter Family, all The Entertainers, and others who we may have forgotten, for all their hard work in making it a really wonderful weekend. May there be many more to come!!

Grace and Brian Hall
Northumberland.

The Wild Hairy Haggis

Roamin' on the Scottish Braes
In a' kinds o' weather
Biding here a' ma days
Munching springs o' heather
But keep yer eye oot in the Spring
That's when we're feeling frisky
At breeding time we have a fling
And like a dram o' whisky.

I am pleased to add that a cheque duly arrived for £301.26 from the Golf Club to pay for the replaced windscreen. We all breathed a sigh of relief when it arrived. There was some thought that they may try to renege on the their agreement. So be careful about breaking a windscreen they are not cheap to replace! Ed.

Sponsor Money for Richard & Gordon

Nicky from Autocruise CH Limited has informed me that a grand total of £830 was raised at the Autocruise Weekend for Richard & Gordon's abseil down Nottingham University for Imperial Cancer Research.

***Does this sound familiar?
From Peter Darnell***

The highway across the park is only thirty miles long, but it is so steep that it took me all morning to cross it. By 10a.m. there was a steady stream of cars in both directions, and free spaces at the lookouts were hard to find. This was my first serious brush with real tourists – retired people with trailer homes heading for Florida and motorhomes from thousands of miles away, and at every look-out point people were clustered around their vehicles with the doors and trunks open, feeding from ice coolers and portable fridges. Every few yards there was a contained dwelling on wheels that took up three parking spaces and jutted out so far that cars coming in could barely scrape past.

All morning I had been troubled by a vague sense of something being missing, and then it occurred to me what it was. There were no hikers such as you would see in England – no people in stout walking boots and short pants, with knee high tasselled stocking. No little rucksacks full of Marmite sandwiches and flasks of tea. And no platoons of cyclists in skintight uniforms and bakers' caps labouring breathlessly up the mountainsides, slowing up the traffic. What slowed the traffic here were the massive motorhomes lumbering up and down the mountain passes. Some of the, amazingly, had cars tethered to their rear bumpers, like dinghies. I got stuck behind one on the long sinuous descent down the mountain into Tennessee. It was so wide that it could barely stay within its lane and kept threatening to nudge oncoming cars off into the picturesque void to our left. That, alas, is the way of vacationing nowadays for many people. The whole idea is not to expose yourself to a moment of discomfort or inconvenience – indeed, not to breathe fresh air if possible. When the urge to travel seizes you, you pile into your thirteen ton tin palace and drive 400 miles across the country, hermetically sealed against the elements, and stop at a campground where you dash to plug into their water supply and electricity so that you don't have to go a single moment without air conditioning or dishwasher and microwave facilities. These things, these 'recreational vehicles,' are like life-support systems on wheels. Astronauts go to the moon with less backup. RV people are another breed – and a largely demented one at that. They become obsessed with trying to equip their vehicles with gadgets to deal with every possible contingency. Their lives become ruled by the dread thought that one day they might find themselves in a situation in which they are not entirely self-sufficient. I once went camping for two days at Lake Darling in Iowa with a friend whose father – an RV enthusiast – kept trying to press labour saving devices on us. "I got a great little solar powered can open here" he would say. "You wanna take it?"

“No thanks” we would reply. “We’re only going for two days. “How about this combination flashlight/carving knife? You can run it off the car battery and it doubles as a flashing siren if you get lost in the wilderness.”

“No thanks.”

“Well at least take the battery powered microwave.”

“Really we don’t want it.”

“Then how the hell are you going to pop popcorn out there in the middle of nowhere? Have you thought about that?”

A whole industry has grow up to supply this market. You can see these people at campgrounds all over the country, standing around their vehicles comparing gadgets – methane-powered ice-cube makes, portable tennis-courts, insect flame-throwers, inflatable lawns. They are a strange and dangerous people and on no account should be approached.

From Bill Brysons’s ‘The Lost Continent. Travels in small town America’

TIRED?

Yes I’m Tired.

I’M TIRED BECAUSE I’M OVERWORKED!

The population of this country is 51 million.

21 million are retired.

That leaves 30 million to do the work

There are 19 million in school

That leaves 11 million to do the work

Of this total 2 million (?) are unemployed

And 4 million are employed by the Government

That leaves 5 million to do the work

1 million are in the armed forces

Which leaves 4 million to do the work

From the total 3 million are employed by County and Borough Councils

Leaving 1 million to do the work

There are 620,000 people in hospitals and 379,999 in prisons

That leaves 2 people to do the work

You and Me

And you are sitting on your arse reading this.

NO WONDER I’M TIRED.

The First Timers First Time
By
Adrian Sincock & Vanessa Cantello

“What we need is a Dormabus like my Auntie Vera had.” This was the out of the blue comment by Vanessa, which started a five-month search for a motorhome, it had to be comfortable for two, have a six foot plus bed, toilet and cooker.

After going around all the local dealers, and some not so local, new and used and taking all four specialist magazines, every month, we finally decided on our ideal layout. This was an Autocruise Stargazer on an S reg Peugeot. However, lurking in a corner of a well-known dealers yard was a new unregistered Autocruise Starfire, at about the same price. As it was a Sunday and near closing time I thought it would be safe to enquire further. Vanessa and the salesman had different ideas, so no fewer than twenty minutes later the deal was done. Due to our work patterns we had to wait a fortnight before we could take delivery.

In the meantime we joined both the Caravan Club and the *Autocruisers*. We also received lots of advice from work colleagues who ‘came out’ as campers and caravanners. I used to have a quiet time on the late shift at the ‘bus depot, time to catch up on all the manager’s paperwork he’d left me. Now all of a sudden drivers would come into the office and chat about Elsans, berths, Calor Gas and the like.

The big day came and in a very clean Fiesta XR2i, we set off up the M3 to collect our ‘van. With all the documentation complete. A full and thorough hand over effected, we set off homeward along the A30. I pointed out to Vanessa that her car was still outside the showroom, but she didn’t look. Instead she adopted a Cheshire cat grin all the way home

After a week tootling around, to and from work, delivering a double divan, showing all the relatives, an impromptu picnic with petrol station sandwiches and several visits to Argos, Woolworth and Millets, we were set for a weeks tour of..... At this point we were still unsure.

The next Saturday a raid of the house was undertaken, clothes, drink, bedding, wine food, Bacardi, tapes, Scotch and the bedroom TV. Everything was stowed and I noticed that all the cupboards along the sides were still empty! Anyway we set off at lunchtime heading south west to the Dorset coast.

Our first attempt to try things out in anger was just west of Abbotsbury, on the scenic Bridport Road, we had to use first gear before a viewpoint called us in for

coffee.. The guidebooks came out and a couple of likely sites picked out. As it was February the choice was a bit thin. West Bay was favourite, quite pretty, seaside and the setting of a TV series about someone in a boat. This site was closed (contrary to the guide). So off we went to our reserve. Bingham's Farm inland from Bridport was much more than we had expected, hard standing, bar, electric, bar, friendly people, oh! and a bar.

Vanessa in Cheshire cat mode again started cooking as soon as the gas was turned on and the hook up hooked up. All the things we had played with in the driveway was now for real. The hot water got hot, the Guinness got cold, the lighting lit and the toilet did what it was designed to do. The blow air heating was great, just as well, the weather forecast said minus five overnight. This was proven with a moonlit stroll from the bar under a shroud of stars.

Morning broke with what promised frost, and the caravanners carried their washing up about, we were nice and snug in our Starfire.

...The Beginning...

Due to the photocopier breaking down at the Autocruise Weekend some of you may find that the following article was not included in your Newsletter. It wasn't my fault but a technical hitch. I think they should buy a new copier. It would make my life a lot easier.

Safety - Siting of Vans

Concern has been expressed because the 20ft rule is not being adhered to. May I draw your attention to Constitution rule 4.1. In future the rally host will insist on the 20ft rule. It was pointed out that had an accident occurred at Roundhill rally, where a number of vehicles parked very close together it is possible that insurance covering the vans would be null and void. In future this rule will be rigidly enforced. Please park where directed, sensibly and safely.

Changes to Membership List

Would anyone changing address or registration numbers please contact me. Also anyone with mistakes in the membership list please let me know.

Rally Diary 2001

The rally held on July 5-8th at Thorntons Holt Camping will not have a buffet supper provided. There will be a fish and chip supper on Saturday night. The booking form is correct the list of rallies with charges is incorrect. Sorry about that folks.

A Letter of Thanks

Dear Sheila

My wife and I have just returned from a week's holiday following on to the Autocruise Open Weekend.

I would just like to say how much we enjoyed ourselves and er, uhm, gulp, ugh although we are not Autocruise owners what a lovely and friendly atmosphere your members made.

Having had a rather tedious journey northwards on the Saturday (usual delays on the M1 – actually we are just feeling old), we retired to our van slightly before the end of the evening's entertainment but your members were most considerate in returning quietly to their vans. So many thanks to them all. You have a club to be proud of!

Best wishes,

John Dinning of Worthing.

Families – who would have them!

I feel I have to write and let the membership know what kind of people you are mixing with. You think they are all nice and friendly – well I can tell you that you are wrong. John Eames, Ron Winter and Sheila Lennie – keep away from them they are really very uncaring people and they are on your committee!

I am writing on behalf of my two cousins Gladys and Maude (she is sometimes, no come to think of it, most of the time, called Crap) and myself. My name is Betty and honestly I feel like finding another family. It doesn't matter what I say I am ignored! My cousins say the same thing. We have another cousin Percy - he is lucky. He lives in Wales with his family and they love him! But the three of us are getting a bit fed up with our families. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that we are all ladies, not that John would agree to that!

I live with Lance and Sheila and it must be said that Sheila is taking a little more notice of me but Lance, well he decides to go where and when he wants and doesn't listen most of the time. We all hate know-it-alls and unfortunately we live with them all the time. John Eames, Maude's unfortunate relation hates her. Ron Winter, Gladys' relation, plays with her a lot but then ignores her when he feels like it. He once got lost in Banbury and when asked where Gladys was replied "In the cupboard." Now I ask you is that anyway to treat a lady?

We won't be treated like this it is just not acceptable! If you can't treat us as proper family members then we shall have to find another family to live with. We aren't asking for much just a little bit of kindness, a little respect and dare I say it, a little bit of affection? Talk to Graham & Sylvia they know how to treat Percy and he loves them dearly and never lets them down.

After all why buy a sophisticated Global Positioning Satellite System if you are going to completely ignore the instructions from our fantastic computer brains. We know the best route so follow it or otherwise one of these days we are going to be very rude to you all. You have been warned!

Friday Night Punchbowl

It is proposed to hold a Faith Supper on Friday nights with the Punch Bowl so the committee requests that anyone attending the Friday night punch bowl provide a plate of something for the faith supper.

New Members

129	- Joe Beech	Beccles
130	- Doug Gibbs/Marion Ward	Suffolk
131	- Eric & Daphne Cason	Suffolk
132	- Alan & Dot Warne	Reading
133	- Bill & Wyn Tinsley	Bootle
134	- Peter & Vivien Booker	Norfolk
135	- Don & Pat Woodhouse	Bury St Edmonds
136	- Alan & Joan Godfrey	Newark
137	- Richard & Alison Stokes	Southampton
138	- John & Pearl Miller	Lowestoft
139	- Jack Morris/Janet Sutcliffe	Henfield
140	- David & Sylvia Barron	Rochdale
141	- Dave & Betty Smith	Cheltenham
142	- Cliff & Eileen Rutter	Skipton
143	- Keith & Carol Bateman	Montgomery
144	- Colin & Margaret Guest	Barnsley
145	- Richard & Pauline Allen	Tiverton
146	- Brian & Sheila Edlin	Redbourn

Members No.129 to 146 joined at the Autocruise Weekend.

147	- Barry Skillington	Sheffield
148	- Ted & Margaret Marsh	Filey
149	- Ray & Pat Tolley	Upton-upon-Severn
150	- Roy & Maureen Marchant	Romford

Motorhome Ticket Club

It has been suggested that anyone booking a ferry crossing or buying motorhome insurance from Motorhome Ticket Club should inform them at the time of purchase that you are an Autocruiser. Motorhome Ticket Club pay an advertising fee for the advert in our Newsletter and this would let them know that the advert is working for them.

How About This Then?

THE DRINKER'S PRAYER

*The horse and mare live thirty years
And do not know of wines and beers
The goats and sheep at twenty die
And never taste Scotch or Rye
The cow drinks water by the ton
At fifteen life is almost done
The dog at fourteen packs it in
Without the aid of Rum or Gin
The modest, sober, bone dry hen
Lays eggs for years and dies at ten
But sinful, gin full, rum soaked men
Survive till three score years and ten
And some of us – the mighty few
Stay pickled till we're ninety-two.*

A reminder to everyone.

**Please make all cheques payable to
The Autocruisers**

Christmas Rally 2001

A rally has been booked to take place at Woodland Waters Caravan Park, Willoughby Road, Ancaster, Grantham Lincs, NG32 3RT. You will find a label to stick into your rally diary with this newsletter. A Christmas dinner has been booked. Site fees will be published in the next newsletter. Booking slips should be sent to Bernie King. I will remind you nearer the date.

More Rally News

The rally booked for June 14-17 at Seton Sands, Longniddry has been cancelled. We are hoping to move the August rally at Riverside Park Stratford-upon-Avon to this date. A rally will not be booked for August 2-5th but we are endeavouring to book a rally on the coast around Filey, Whitby or somewhere similar to run for five nights preceding the AGM in August. Further details will be published in the next Newsletter.

Following the poll taken we will be holding a holiday rally in September but will **not** be holding a rally in France this year. The holiday rally will run for two weeks but if you wish to attend for one week or a weekend that is fine.

We will also be requesting club sites for Peterborough, Shepton Mallet, York and Three Counties shows. These will not be official rallies but a club site will be booked so anyone attending these rallies can be together. Booking forms will be posted to you for the above shows in due course. That means when I have received them from the organisers.

A meal has been booked in the restaurant at Woodhall Spa, our February rally, would anyone requiring a vegetarian meal please state on the booking form.

Talking of booking forms, to help the rally host, could you please indicate whether or not you will be requiring electric hook up and also the number of adults that will be attending.

More New Members

151 – Marina Smethurst	Cardiganshire
152 – Michael McKenzie	Malvern
153 – Robert & Stella Goodwin	Reading
154 – Ron & Joy Jeffrey	Sleaford
155 – Geoff & Pat Small	Stockton on Tees
156 – Duncan & Rosalyn Pickering	East Grinstead

Welcome back to

009 – Bill & Sue Dimmick Reading

FOR THOSE WITH MOBILES WHO DON'T KNOW THIS ALREADY

Mobile phone users, prevent thieves using stolen mobile phones!
To find your Mobile phone's serial number, key in the following digits on your phone.

0 6 # (Star Hash 06 Hash)

A 15-digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset, write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

Should your phone get stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset, so even if the thief changes the Sim card your phone will be totally useless.

You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it, can't use/sell it either. If everybody did this, thieves would soon stop stealing mobile phones.

Thanks to Peter Hughes for this information.

**I hope you all have a good Christmas and a very
Happy New Year.**