

“Don’t mind the mud, come right in”
A History of The Motor Caravanners' Club.
1959 - 1963
“by Harry Cuthbert. Member No. 1426”
In Memory of Derek Platt

Preface

This is an introduction to the initial years of The Motor Caravanners' Club, based on information:-

- gleaned from various editions of the Motor Caravanner Magazine
- unpublished documents, (and information) held by the late Derek Platt
- and personal experience.

It is not claimed to be fully comprehensive, and no doubt, Council of Management would welcome any corrections and/or further information. Motor-Caravanning was a new and exciting concept for us in the 1960's, various motor caravans had existed previously but not on a large-scale. For instance General Montgomery had a form of motor caravan as his headquarters during the war. These new fangled “caravettes” and “dormobiles” weren't caravans but neither were they tents. Therefore some Caravan Sites were licenced for 'vans and in other places it was the Camping Site which had the licence – confusing! What were the rules for running a Motor Caravan Rally – what was a rally – was it a meet – insurance policies excluded rallying – was this “Motor Sport” or Motor-Caravanning, am I insured at a rally? How do I describe the members, some who came to rallies in suits and waistcoats – Commanders, Majors, Self Employed Businessmen, G.P.O. and Nuclear Technicians, scruffy Geordie motor mechanics (me) and others from all walks of life. The first year or two were, I suppose in modern parlance “A steep learning curve”. I attended my first rally at Easter 1962 where at an “open” meeting I “volunteered” to show Derek Platt to a Caravan Site on the coast on the way home, a simple thing perhaps, but it changed my life – Committee Member and Council of Management, and to meet my future wife – is this a history of The Motor Caravanners' Club or is it of me? (Items indented and in italics are extracted from the various documents).

Formation

Legend has it that this happened on the 15th October 1959 in the kitchen of William “Bill” Kelly's home in Richmond, Middlesex, when Bill and a number of friends decided to form their own club.

“When Motor-Caravanning first started becoming popular in 1959, many of its followers had attempted to join the two established clubs, the Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland and the Caravan Club, and had been refused admittance”.

The author recalls, that Motor Caravans were allowed into The Camping Club, but could only be used as a car. The author's wife, Jane Cuthbert (Nee Marrows), had her membership of The Caravan Club rescinded when she changed her unit from a trailer caravan to a VW Caravette and was referred by them, to The Motor Caravanners' Club.

“During the earlier days of its existence, Motor Caravanning was considered by some to be a passing novelty and by others as a form of camping followed by questionable people. This latter view was changed by the Club's propaganda efforts and more importantly, by the high standards which members set for themselves.....”

This was to set in motion a train of events which started with a letter from Mr. W. J. Kelly (recognised as our Founder President) to the Autocar, Motor, Caravan and Modern Caravan magazines asking for interested parties to contact him. He then convened a meeting to take place at the Lido, Ruislip, Middlesex on 15th November 1959, and:-

“advised everyone who had replied to his letters that the meeting was to take place. In addition a number of magazines had carried advance notice of this meeting”.

Initial Meeting

“At this meeting a proposal was made and carried unanimously that a club for motor caravanners' be formed. A committee was then elected to draft a constitution and bye-laws for the club, This committee was to report back to a meeting on the 17th of January 1960. People present then donated £1 as advance entry fees, to provide a fund for the committee to draw upon as needed”.

Inaugural General Meeting

This took place on the 17th January 1960 when:-

The committee presented a draft constitution and bye laws, to those who had instructed and financed it. This meeting then accepted the draft constitution, and the committee retired, its task completed.

A new committee was elected to carry out the administration of the club. The committee elected were :-

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| • Founder President | Mr William J. Kelly |
| • Vice President & Chairman | Mr S.R. Howard |
| • Hon. Secretary | Mrs Kelly |
| • Hon. Treasurer | Mr W. Hodgson |
| • Committee Members | |
| • | Mr John Hunt |
| • | Mr R.O. Darling |
| • | Mr W. Derek Uphill |
| • | Mrs L.E. Amis |
| • | Major J. Longstaff |

It was agreed that:-

The entry fee was to be £1 (One Pound) to include a badge. An annual subscription of £1/10s/0d (One Pound Ten Shillings), due on the 1st January, any member joining after the 30th June to pay one half of the annual subscription, for that year... ..As the family of a member enjoyed the main privileges of The Club, Family membership was not necessary."

General History

By February 1960 the Club had grown to over 100 members, and the first duplicated Newsletter had been produced which stated that:-

"The Club badge of a snail within a steering wheel has been approved and car badges in the club colours of blue and white should now be arriving from the makers" (Renamel?).

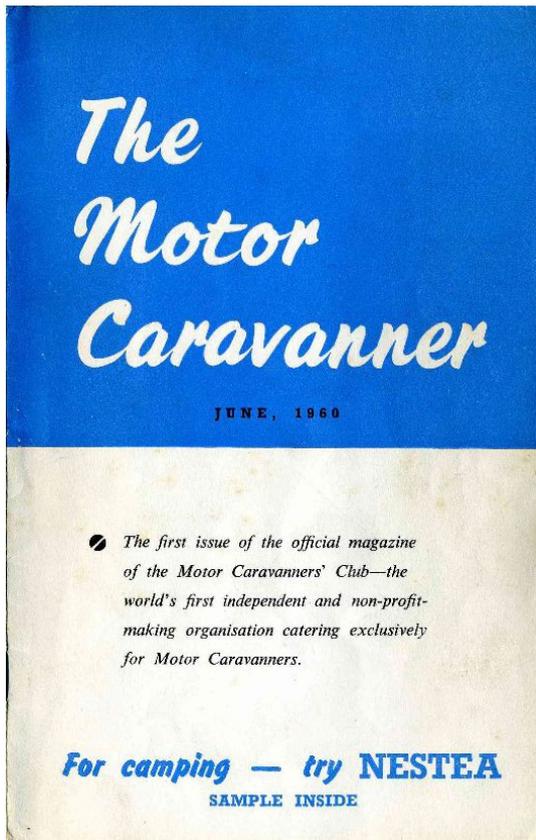
"These badges are adhesive, but a plated disc to hold the badge will be available as an extra. These discs make the badge even more attractive. A badge will be sent free to all members. Those wanting the plated backing are asked to send 7s 6d, (37 1/2 p) to the Hon. Sec. and they will then receive the mounted badge".

During April two 'informal' Club 'meets' took place – one in the New Forest, and the other at Redlands. Lighthorne. What was a 'rally' and what was an 'informal meet' – were these in fact the Club's first rallies – was Heytesbury in August actually the third rally? Redlands was reported upon as below:-

"Easter at Warwick (Anon)

Blessed with warm weather during the days, and hard frost at night, the informal gatheringproved that motor caravanners are at the least adaptable. Seventeen motor caravans called in at various times and lost themselves in a field which could have taken ten times that number. No arrangements had been made as to what entertainments we could visit, which was as well, for once started, the difficulty was to stop talking about our varied vehicles. These ranged from the Land Cruiser down to the more usual Martin Walter Bedfords with a fair sprinkling of V.W's. We also were visited by two Car Campers, and these ingenious conversions attracted much interest... ..There can be little doubt in the minds of those who attended this meeting that it must not be too long before another get-together, and arrangements were made then for a number of us to meet again at Woburn, sufficient proof (if needed) that the meet was a success. Our thanks go to the womenfolk, who so patiently waited with meals getting cold, whilst the men chatted on, and to the men for coming along and—chatting".

During May a sub-committee was set up, to organise rallies and Centres.



June 1960 saw the publication of the first issue of The Motor Caravanner Magazine

"The first issue of the official magazine of the Motor Caravanners' Club – the worlds first independent and non-profit making organisation catering exclusively for Motor Caravanners".

Prior to this there had been one spirit duplicated Newsletter

The content included:-

"The route roller (or navigator) is useful for those who like to make things easy on the road. A couple of hours was spent in preparing a route for a 200 mile trip, which was transferred to the navigator, the ensuing tour being notable for its freedom from navigation worries".

(Sat Navs, a thing of the future, not even foreseen by Dan Dare in the Eagle Comic!).

The 10th-12th June 1960 saw over 150 Motor Caravans attend a rally at Woburn Abbey, organised by Leslie Wilson of Wilson's Motor Caravan Centre (of Acre Lane, Brixton, London).

"The M.C.C was there to advise and assist. The Woburn Rally was the first of its kind and there were some mistakes and omissions. The committee members were aware of these and intended to profit by them when organising the M.C.C's first rally at Heytesbury in August".

In the same month:-

"...the first 2000 brochures were produced and distributed", and "a lot of work and organisation went on...."

August 6th saw *"about fifty members"* attend The Motor Caravanners' Club first official rally at Heytesbury Manor, Wilts which was *"marred by very bad weather"*. This was followed on the 27th by the first Scottish Group Rally at Lewisburn Border Forest Park, Kielder. Six vans attended, with only two being Scottish. An announcement was made in September that a Handbook was to be published, and *"Feminine Fare first appears. September's Magazine raises the issue of Toilets:-"*

"The Club must very soon make up its mind about its attitude to lavatory accommodation. Some members at Heytesbury were surprised to find no such accommodation at the site (although excellent flush closets were available across the road these were not signposted and the Rally Marshal neglected to tell everyone about them). The brochure about the Rally said, "Wherever possible you are requested to bring your own chemical closets and toilet tents, the reason for this being the necessity for us as a club to demonstrate our own ability to look after our own affairs in the matter of hygiene." An excellent sentiment and statement of policy, but it was hidden away in the middle of the brochure and probably not everyone saw it... .. The Writer is inclined to the view that all motor caravanners should carry their own " bucket and spade"... ..Most of us do not like crowded caravan sites and there are very few farmers' fields with sanitary accommodation laid on. In addition, provision of suitable accommodation at rallies and meets would involve the Club in expenditure which is, for half our members, superfluous.

It appears to be almost impossible to hire chemical closets and screens. This means that the Club would have to buy them. They would have to be stored somewhere and special transport would be needed to and from the site. Then there is the unpleasant job for some Committee member of supervising the things and emptying them. How much simpler if each family looks after its own affairs. It is simple enough to find volunteers to dig a hole and fill it in later. but the provision of adequate chemical closet accommodation for a hundred or more people is not a job for part-time voluntary labour”.

(Club Officers – Chairman, Secretary, Toilet Emptier!). During October 1960 the New Caravan Sites Act “quietly crept in” (The Club had been involved in the discussions) and The Motor Caravanners' Club is granted a 'Certificate of Exemption'. John Hunt (Editor of The Motor Caravanner) carries out the first road test of the Paralanian based on the Austin 152 / Morris J2, (John later went on to become the first editor of Motor Caravan and Motorhome Magazine).

The problems of Motor Caravanners continued, as reported in the November Editorial :-

“Rumours have been flying fast and furious, and lately some of them have been proved to be fact. One club has now agreed to accept motor caravans, and there is also an unconfirmed report that another body of hitch caravanners is considering offering some sort of bait to motor caravanners.

These are tempting prospects for the members of a club such as ours – a small club whose unpaid officers are still struggling to offer members something more than a badge in return for their subscriptions. The members of the Executive Committee must be thinking along the following lines: “We have tried to join a caravan club when we first bought a motor caravan but they would not have us, saying our outfits were substandard. The MCC has proved that there is a demand for a club catering for likes of us. If we can persuade these large organisations (with all the facilities they are able to offer) to accept us, our job is done and we can now sit back and reap the benefit of our labours.”

We hope they are not thinking any such thoughts. Whatever our omissions, we are the first and only club to cater exclusively for motor caravanners, and that is something that can never be taken away from us.

However much the efforts of the Committee may be decried, a great deal of work has been put in by them for scant thanks and no financial reward. There is, recompense, the satisfaction of doing to the best of their ability the job they were instructed to do. So, although the big boys are reported to be wooing us, or threatening a take over bid whichever way you look at it it would be a pity to succumb. The alternative is to tighten up our standards and make ourselves an exclusive club for enthusiasts only. Let the apathetic members who joined for what they could get out of us leave and reap the benefits of belonging to one of the large caravan organisations; let our membership drop to a couple of hundred; let the sites list contain only a few excellent sites; let this magazine revert to a duplicated newsletter; none of these things matter so long as we retain our identity. We should refuse all offers of amalgamation and “go it alone” as we were compelled to do when the MCC was founded”.

This attitude persisted, and we still remain totally independent of any other Club. The Constitution and Bye-laws were published in the same edition of the Magazine.:-

“APPENDIX TO CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

ARTICLE 3. MEMBERSHIP

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP- SUITABLE VEHICLES

1. A vehicle approved as a Motorised Caravan by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

2. Converted Vehicles

(a) Windows on each side of vehicle at rear of driving seat.

(b) A vehicle with self-contained accommodation within the vehicle, including:

- **At least one full sized bed.**
- **A suitable means of cooking.**
- **A dining table.**
- **Washing and washing up facilities.**
- **Suitable water storage.**

Adequate storage accommodation”.

These requirements were laid down by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise as a standard, and adopted by the Club, (we did not want a van with a mattress thrown into the back). New 'vans meeting these standards were classed as 'living accommodation' and were not subject to Purchase Tax (at a rate of 45%), whereas new cars were.

Home converters were advised to complete the conversion before cutting the apertures for the windows, then getting H.M.C. & E. permission, else Purchase Tax was due immediately. Home Converters had to submit photographs and/or an inspection before becoming a member of the Club (the author had inspected one or two 'vans for this purpose, and indeed his first 'van was a home conversion). The December's Editorial reported on the accomplishments of the first year:-

"The Motor Caravanners' Club has been in existence for nearly a year and now is the time to look back and see what has been accomplished?On the face of it, very little; a rally and a few informal "meets." The first get together of motor caravans was organised by a garage proprietor as a commercial venture. The M.C.C. was invited to take part and agreed to do so without hesitation. We said in an earlier editorial that Wilson's of Brixton deserved a pat on the back for their courage in sponsoring such a large-scale effort whilst motor caravans and their owners were still an unknown quantity. We were wondering what sorts of people were buying these vehicles. When we all met at Woburn an agreeable surprise was in store. There was a cross-section of income and social groups. But the same streak of common humanity seemed to run through all of them. One's job did not matter. Everyone was tickled pink with this new way of life. Social, political and economic barriers were down. We all loved the open road and the green countryside. Then there was the Club's own rally at Heytesbury.There were minor shortcomings in the organisation (for we were, and still are, learning). We realised that motor caravanners were indeed a cross-section of the population, including among their number litter louts, milk bottle thieves, congenital moaners and, worst of all, one or two of those nuisances who think everyone wants to listen to the radio. The Executive has always been aware that many motor caravanners would drive a hundred miles to avoid a social gathering. It was to cater for them that the list of sites was begun and the News-letter initiated. "The Motor Caravanner" is still heavily subsidised out of subscriptions. We, of course, think its publication is justified and we hope our readers agree with us on this count. We have received many words of encouragement and praise. Modesty forbids that we repeat them. What then has The Executive with its sub-committees accomplished? Much of the work has been exploratory and its nature cannot, at this stage, be publicised. However, we can remind members that centres and sections are beginning to appear, a motor caravanners' guide or year-book is in course of preparation, and so is a comprehensive pamphlet on private conversions, a code of behaviour has been drawn up, the sites list is growing, we have a mass of information on foreign touring, "The Motor Caravanner" has been launched, many more road tests have been arranged. the Club is now an exempted organisation under the terms of the new Caravan Sites Act, hundreds of enquiries about every conceivable aspect of motor caravanning have been dealt with, liaison has been established with manufacturers and all the various organisations dealing with caravanning and camping. There is room for improvement and expansion in all these spheres, but the 'foundations have been "well and truly laid".....

December's Magazine also sees the announcements:-

"that a dossier of information is being compiled to help those doing their own motor caravan conversion, and a "New Year Get Together Party" is organised in Stretford, Lancs".

It is also noted that:-

"We see welcomed signs of less exclusivity amongst other clubs. The Camping Club now admits Motor Caravans even though they do not have lift-up roofs, and the Caravan Club refuses to ban tents for use with caravans on the sites they control".

February 1961 sees the announcement of a handbook to be published in March, Mr Wood is appointed as Membership Secretary and an article by R.L.S tells of a four weeks holiday in France for £200:-

“Readers may be interested in an account of a four weeks’ tour of France and Switzerland which my wife and I made this summer with our two daughters—one in her twenties and the other a ‘teenager’ — in a 1960 Volkswagen “Devon” Caravette..... nine out of 28 nights were spent in hotels..... COST The whole four weeks’ holiday, including all extras, cost about £50 a head for the four of us. We spent on an average 23/- (£1.15) a head per day on food, drink and accommodation (including the nine nights in hotels). Petrol cost £14 for the 1,700 mile trip and we averaged 28 m.p.g.

Those were the days! Government restrictions at that time meant that only £50 per person could be taken from the country - perhaps that explains the poor service in cafés and shops abroad – the English had no money to spend. Booking in on continental sites could present a problem Motor Caravan ?? - Caravette, Dormobile – Oui Monsieur!

The March issue of The Motor Caravanner is published as a “Handbook” and includes an article on “The Development of the Motor Caravan and the formation of the Club, the first “Buyers Guide”, the first “Sites List” and the first “Summary of Continental Sites recommended by members.

The 1st Annual General Meeting took place at Ranksborough Hall Caravan Site, Langham, Rutland on the 1st April 1961. The membership had grown to 420. J.R.H. Writes about the Rally:-

....As I drove up to the field on Friday afternoon I thought again how gay these motor caravans look - even in wet weather—with their multi-coloured lift-up roofs. I noticed that the indefatigable Mrs. Turp and her daughter already had a bonfire and children’s games in full swing. It was pleasant to see so many faces remembered from last year - even if one could not always put a name to them. The evening was spent in nattering (interrupted by children demanding a variety of objects—including one’s wife—for their game). Then, for us, an early bed, for we had travelled all the previous night. Saturday morning was spent in further nattering and drinking other people’s coffee. The A.G.M. took the whole of the afternoon — and what a lively meeting that was! Ours is a virile club, even if we can’t always agree—or, perhaps, becausethe draught Bass in Oakham can be thoroughly recommended... ..here were to be found more motor caravanners with the same idea Our grateful thanks go to:-

*-Mr. Uphill and Mr. Haselhurst (and their wives) for so capably organising the site and the little details such as milk and bread distribution. Mrs. Turp and her daughter for their sterling efforts with the children. The owners of Ranksborough Hall for making us so welcome. All members and families for being so friendly and hospitable. How many, many times we heard “ **Don’t mind the mud, come right in.**”*

The following characters who made us laugh:-

-The Calthorpe owner, being shown a Romany roof with 9 ft. 6in headroom, saying, “All right for 9 ft. 6 in. tall people.”

The Irishman selling unwanted loaves. “You needn’t have it as long as you pay for it.”

The member who left the A.G.M. to shoo away those elusive cows and then returning and wanting us to go through all the business again.

The V.W. which came steaming past us on the way home, only to conk out in front of us on the first hill. The muttered curses coming from the water closets that would not function first or thirtieth time”.

The May Magazine contained a report on the A.G.M.Townsend Bros. Ferries stated that the number of motor caravans using their service has increased by 90% in three years. Mr G.E. Fowler invited,

“any bold spirits motor caravanning down this side of Africa to visit him in Khartoum”,

did anyone take up his offer? Reading the magazine, members visited many places that even today we would class as very daring and adventurous. *The D.I.Y. Dossier has been duplicated and sent out to all who had asked for it. Rallies took place in August at Heytesbury Manor, Wilts, on the 11th August, and another at West Bay Municipal Camping Ground, Bridport in September.*

The August magazine carries a report on:-“

Tough Plastic We have been testing some “Melaware” products for the past few weeks. They have been in constant use and have stood up to all the usual household hazards. Melaware is not cheap but it is far superior to the “plastic” cups, saucers and plates sold by the chain stores. It is virtually unbreakable, will not chip (a great advantage in a caravan) and is odourless and tasteless. It is, incidentally, produced to B.S.I. specification and is made from the same basic materials as “Formica”.

Also mentioned occasionally were demonstrations of the 'New' wonder containers – Tupperware!

The Motor Show was to take place and Motor Caravans, to be exhibited were reviewed in October, these included:-

AUTO SLEEPERS LTD.

B.M.C. 16/18 cwt., £889, Commer 15 cwt., £895. Berths for 2 adults and 1 child (roof bunk optional extra), 2 rings and grill, electric lighting, elevating roof.

CENTRAL GARAGE LTD.

Parry Lane, Bradford. “Paralanian”, £1,250. Coachbuilt with permanent headroom. 2/3-berth, 2 rings, grill and oven, electric lighting, point for gas fire, chemical closet, 15 gallons water and waste tank, cold box, waste bin, Venetian blinds, cab heater, spare wheel.

LISBURNE GARAGE

“Devon Caravette” on V.W. Microbus, standard, £970, de luxe, £1,185. Berths for 2 adults and 2 children, 2 rings and grill, fluorescent lighting, 11 gallons water, awning, elevating roof £65 extra.

“Devonette” on V.W. Kombi, £819, on V.W. Microbus, £870. 2-berth, 2 rings, electric lighting, elevating roof £65 extra.

MARTIN WALTER LTD.

(Two-berth models are approximately £15 cheaper than 4-berth).

Austin 10/ 12 cwt “Dormobile”, £825. 4-berth, 2 rings, fluorescent lighting, elevating roof.

Bedford “Dormobile” Romany de luxe, £875. 4-berth, 2 rings and grill, fluorescent lighting, elevating roof.

Thames “Dormobile”, £834. 4-berth, 2 rings, fluorescent lighting, elevating roof.

Volkswagen Kombi “Dormobile”, £915. 4-berth, 2 rings and grill, elevating roof.

ROOTES MOTORS LTD.

“Commer Cara-van”, 2-berth, £1,024, 4-berth, £1,039, 2 rings and grill, gas and electric lighting, elevating roof. (Rootes Group were the only Motor Manufacturer to produce a Motor Caravan)

Following on from this in December, is a review of accessories, some of which are:-

“CHEMICAL CLOSETS. There are four basic models to choose from, for most of the others are large for motor caravans. The RACASAN PARAGON (£6 12s. 6d. for the Tourer model) received the 1961 “Design of the Year” award. It is all plastic and a very good looker. ...

The ELSAN C.V. MINOR (13in. high, 14in. wide, 16in. long) is a well known model retailing at £7/10/0d. For vans with limited space there is a collapsible model (14in. diameter and 11in. high when closed) selling at £4/5/0d. It is necessary to empty this model before travelling.

the J.K. MINOR, designed specially for motor caravans. There is a separate inner container with a spill proof lid. Height 14in., width 14 in. Price £4/17s/6d

JACKSON & WARR LTD., supply most items of camping equipment. An innovation is the “do-it-yourself” sleeping bag kit, consisting of a sheet of Terylene “batt”, sufficient outer and inner covering material and a 108-inch open-ended zip fastener. Price complete £5 17s. 6d. Any part of the kit may be bought separately. They also supply a folding Barbeque grill for £1 19s. 6d. (charcoal 2/ 6d. a bag). The first member to cook his breakfast on it in the open air at a rally will certainly make all the others envious. Is there any more tantalising smell than someone else’s bacon and bangers?

DAVENSET (Partridge, Wilson & Co. Ltd.) can give you 100 watts of 240 volt alternating current from your 12 volt battery for £15. In the same line, VALRADIO can supply a wide range of "Transistorised Transvertors". Decide what wattage you want (bearing in mind that if you go up to the maximum of 400 you will need a battery of batteries to supply it) Prices range from £11 to £60.

The ELTRON CAR KETTLE and FRY PAN can be plugged in to the electrical circuit whilst you are driving so that the bacon is sizzling and the water boiling as soon as you stop - assuming you have a flat road and a steady driver. The kettle costs 35 / 11d. and the frying pan 49/-.

The 2nd Annual General Meeting

took place on the 20th April 1962 at Alton Towers, Stoke on Trent.

The Honorary Secretary's. Report states that:-

".....income exceeded expenditure by £399. This position was reached largely because of a healthy increase in membership during the year. Membership increased during the year from 492 to 1138. This is a creditable performance and yet it is not enough. For our voice to carry full authority, we must increase our members even more and we again ask each member to enrol another.

Under the Articles of Association we have taken power to introduce different classes of membership and it may be that the ladies attending the Alton Towers Rally might like to consider the prospect of starting a Ladies Section or Family Section, as the case may be....

...."The "Motor Caravanners' Club Insurance Policy" was introduced during the year and is proving to be very popular. It is also instrumental in attracting new members. Basically it is a motor car policy which is extended to cover the caravan fitments, and to include risks from gas etc. at no extra charge. Beyond this there is a discount of 10% to members.

At this time there was no national speed restrictions on cars, however commercial vehicles were restricted to 30 m.p.h. The Club claimed that motor caravans were dual purpose vehicles and were not subjected to the speed restrictions. However the police were not convinced of this and various prosecutions took place. (At one time Wilson's Motor Caravans converted a Ford Escort Mexico into a motor caravan and claimed it was 'the fastest double bed on wheels'!)

".....As reported in "The Motor Caravanner", we have been watching the position concerning speeding charges and a case in which we were interested came to a successful conclusion. The legal position of the Motor Caravan is not yet fully clarified but the Club will continue to help where possible and will exert political influence if eventually a High Court decision goes against us"....

.....A vehicle approval scheme is already in course of implementation and it is hoped that before many more weeks, all the best conversions will be carrying our approval motif. .A scheme is also being devised to cover hire vehicles where so often the users do not know how to use the vehicle properly and as a result bring motor-caravanning into disrepute"....

An approach had been made by The Camping Club of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Honorary Secretary reports:-

"Within the last few days, an approach has been made by the Camping Club of Great Britain & Ireland for us to affiliate with them. The invitation was not accepted on the basis offered - that we pay to them 25/-d. of each member's subscription and retain the balance of 5/-d. for our own use. We are interested in affiliation with any organisation with similar aims but it must be on realistic terms with affiliation fees, if any, being on a two-way basis. The Camping Club offer is rather more a take-over bid than an invitation to affiliate.

What we are most concerned about, is that motor caravanners' interest are properly safeguarded and this needs a virile organisation that understands the needs and difficulties of motor caravanning. The Camping Club have been informed that we are still interested in genuine affiliation".

Elsewhere in The Motor Caravanner a statement reads:-

"The relationship between the two Clubs was very cool and in 1963, Motor Caravanners (including some of our members) within the Camping Club formed their own Motor Caravan Section. The Caravan Club has continued to decline to accept Motor Caravanners and refers all such enquirers to this Club, but the indications are that they may soon re-consider this policy."

This was expanded upon with the publication of a letter in sent to the Chairman of the Camping Club, an extract of which appears below:-

"12th June, 1962.

Dear Sir,

I have read an item in the June issue of "The Caravan" in which it is stated that your Club is ready to consider forming a motor caravan section, or to admit this Club as a section of your Club, provided that the arrangement is consistent with your Club's constitution. May I say that in view of the fact that the only approach that has been made to my Club has been a telephone call from Mr. Cubitt, your Deputy Secretary, I consider this publicity to be rather ill-judged.

As I understand the circumstances surrounding this matter, Mr. A. R. Harding, who is concurrently a member of both Clubs, asked a question at your Annual General Meeting and the reply was that you were prepared to negotiate. As a result I received a telephone call from Mr. Cubitt asking if my Club would be interested in affiliation on the basis that we should be governed by your constitution (presumably Memorandum and Articles) and that of our 30/- annual subscription, 25/- would be payable to the Camping Club and the balance of 5/- could be retained to enable this Club to publish its own magazine. I informed Mr. Cubitt that that was not my idea of affiliation, but sounded rather like a take-over bid. I informed him that speaking in my personal capacity, I was interested in any genuine offer of affiliation provided that benefits flowed in both directions. However, I gathered that the true attitude of the Camping Club was that it did not really wish for affiliation.....

Yours faithfully,

R. A. Johnstone,

Honorary Secretary.

"It was at the Alton Towers Rally, that Derek Platt was approached by his next door neighbour,

a member of Council and asked to start a Northern Group! (More information on the formation of the Regional Groups will (hopefully) follow next year),

The Council decided to invest in attending the Camping and Outdoor Life Exhibition in London. This was manned by members who put their own units on the stand and lived in them.

Coronation Street



Bill Kelly
(Founder President)

with

Lynne Carol

&

Betty Alberge

better known as

Martha Longhurst

&

Florrie Lindley

Visitors to the stand included the then Minister of Transport, Ernest Marples and members of the cast of Coronation Street, Lynne Carol and Betty Alberge who played Martha Longhurst and Florrie Lindley more well known for being in the Snug of the Rovers Return with Ena Sharples!

Colex 1962

Camping and Outdoor Life Show (Calex) February 1962

Olympia
London



**Bill Kelly talking
to Ernest Marples
Minister of Transport.**

Ernest Marples
Minister of Transport
3rd Left (sitting)

Bill (William) Kelly
Founder President
3rd rt.

The magazine reports that:-

"we enrolled about 50 new members but a large number of application forms was distributed and it will not be possible to tell what the full effects will be. The stand was visited by many thousand people - has helped to make us known to many who had not before heard of the Club"



**John Hunt first editor of the Motor Caravanner
demonstrating DIY skills at Calex**

John went on to become first editor of Motor Caravan and Motor Home Magazine

The Club continued to grow through 1962 and saw six National Rallies being planned, however, one at Porthkerry had to be cancelled due to an outbreak of smallpox in the area, (the only one known - this was followed many years later by the outbreak of 'foot and mouth'), the others include Heytesbury Manor, Beaulieu Abbey, Stanley Park, Blackpool, (and possibly Chigwell in Essex) the last rally of the season took place at Bridport with 70+ vans attending.

A Members Meeting took place on the 2nd June at Overstone Park Solarium, Overstone. Northants, to accept the Final Report and Accounts of the Unincorporated Club.

A Certificate of Incorporation was issued by Company's House on the 18th June. This is the period where the formation of many local Groups start to take place.

1963 sees the first AGM of the incorporated Motor Caravanners Club Ltd on 13th October at Overstone Park Solarium, when the expenditure exceeds income by £375/19/5d.

(This is reversed in in the next year with a surplus of £312) COLEX costing the Club £152/3/0d.

By October the membership had risen to 1874. The problems of motor caravanners and the other clubs rumbles on, The Report of The Council of Management for 1964 states that:-

In the last few months it has become apparent to the Clubs that they had much to gain from closer association, and talks have been taking place between the two Senior Clubs for some months. We in our turn have had informal discussions with each of the other Clubs and there is little doubt that all three Clubs desire, in varying degree, some form of closer association.

However nothing appears to have come of this.

The Club continued from then up to the present day – there have been hiccups, disagreements and fallouts, (one of which led to the formation of the Auto Camping Club by Derek Uphill) but the Club continues today based on the foundations set by those early members.

To the authors knowledge no-one has yet disproved that the :-

The Motor Caravanners' Club is "The worlds first independent and non-profit making organisation catering exclusively for Motor Caravanners"