Letters
Your chance to have your say

Wide of the mark?

WITH REGARD to the DfT consultation on allowing trailer widths up to 2.55 m to be towed behind cars in the UK, instead of the present 2.3 m, I sincerely hope that caravan manufacturers will not be foolish enough to exploit such a ruling as an opportunity to make ever increasingly wide caravans.

Considering that many caravan sites are accessed via rural roads and that current 2.3 m-wide caravans have difficulties when they meet each other, then two such monsters would require a further 500 mm (or 20 in old money) to get past each other.

Touring caravans, to my mind, are designed for their owners to get to remote, out-of-the-way places, which means that manoeuvring ability and not being unnecessarily oversized are essential. When we bought our 2006 two-berth caravan with end bathroom, the width compared with our previous model had grown by 3 in to 7 ft 4 in. I can honestly say that we do not really notice the extra width; in fact, had the model been available in these two widths we would have chosen the 7 ft 1 in model.

Most of us make an error on occasion which takes us along an unsuitable road, do we not? I am sure that there will be those who disagree, but for what reason? If they want caravans of that size, it would be better to revert to static units. Many of the non-caravanning fraternity already have a disdain towards us — why make things worse?

Albert Topliss, via email

Cope with that, cope with anything

HAVING BOUGHT our first caravan, a 2000 Avondale Dart, our inaugural trip took us from our Cheshire home to the Club’s gorgeous Chatsworth House site. This took us directly across the Peak District and, with gradients of up to 14%, our poor 1600cc Renault Scenic groaned and screamed its way up, down and round corners that would seem scary even without a caravan on the back.

Our return journey posed a greater test. A motorbike appeared in my door mirror and I noted how restrained the rider was being, holding back a couple of times, but then opening the bike up and gliding past and up the hill with glorious power and elegance.

Over the brow of the next hill and an emergency stop later we found the motorbike on its side, minus its rider. He was in a hedge, in a fairly poor way. We comforted him, then used our motorbike on its side, minus its rider.

Having watched the antics of some of my fellow caravanners and their blatant disregard for quite reasonable rules and requests, Play by the rules

WHAT IS it about people today? Why do so many believe that site instructions, rules and regulations do not apply to them? At Easter we stayed at Houghton Mill. I agree that confusion may arise because the website says not to arrive before noon while the Directory says 1pm, but we could not believe the number of people trying to gain entry to the site before midday.

One particular man, having been turned back once well before 11am, lurked in the National Trust car park adjoining and every time someone tried to gain entry to the site he followed them down the entrance road to try his luck again! Needless to say, at 12.50pm, all the early birds who had been turned away drove out of the NT car park where they had been gathering to queue for a 1pm entry.

I have great admiration for the patience of the site wardens. At one point, we considered gathering to queue for a 1pm entry.

Have you got something to say?

Send your letters to The Caravan Club Magazine, East Grinstead House, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 1UA. Alternatively, email us at magazine@caravanclub.co.uk. Apologies, but due to the quantity of post we receive we are no longer able to send acknowledgments on receipt of letters.
The right direction?

ON A journey back to our home from the south coast recently, I programmed our sat-nav to direct me without using motorways. It took me on a real hair-raising route along very narrow lanes and via some very tight turns – it was a good job I wasn't towing the caravan.

This was an exercise to see how it would be if I was looking for a Caravan Club site by just relying on the sat-nav. Whenever I visit a Club site, I carefully plan my route beforehand using a good map, as well as the directions in the Sites Directory & Handbook. The sat-nav is purely employed to confirm that we are heading in the right direction.

I will stick to mainly using a road map to go from A to B and not rely on the sat-nav to do all the work of finding a Club site – it could be a bad decision.

Barrie Fletcher, via email

COMMENT: We do advise members to follow the directions published in the Sites Directory & Handbook and on our website for caravan-friendly routes. Sat-navs may well take you down roads unsuitable for vehicles towing caravans – Editor

Robbery warning

WHILE ON a recent caravanning trip to southern Spain, one of the tyres on our caravan was slashed in a motorway service area just south of Madrid.

The intended robbery of our car was foiled, we think, because only my husband got out of the car. I stayed in the car as a young man showed my husband that one of the caravan tyres had a ‘puncture’. As soon as he realised that my husband was going to change the tyre and that I was staying in the car, this man vanished.

Apparently these robbers target tourists and work on the non-toll motorways. Please be aware when travelling in this area.

Maureen Winiskill, via email

Get the full picture

MUCH HAS been printed recently about the use of satellite television while touring. As someone who has toured extensively in Europe for some years, I would like to offer some practical tips.

The majority of sites in warmer climes are set among trees and bushes to provide much-needed shade. Consequently, the siting of a dish aerial can be very challenging from within the confines of the allocated pitch. If you have invested in a very expensive roof-mounted dish, it could well be impossible to get a clear view to the satellite. It is unlikely to be possible to shuffle the caravan around to find that elusive gap in the foliage – there are usually other considerations as to exactly where you pitch and many sites are too full to offer an alternative location.

Lining up the dish with the satellite through a small gap in the trees can try your patience, but is often only achievable using a dish with a long lead on a tripod. I have had over 95% success rate this way.

I recommend taking the receiver and television and placing them on a small table next to the dish so that the signal level can be watched as the dish is moved. Once optimised, peg down the dish and move the TV etc. back to where you need it, using other leads if appropriate.

Broadcasters are required to focus their transmissions on their home territory, so you will get a weak signal in southern Europe. A large-ish dish is needed if you go a long way south, but it still can’t see through trees! It is also more directionally critical than a small one.

A decent compass is essential but remember some dishes are magnetic. The cheaper satellite finder devices which are only signal-strength meters are not very effective and can easily lead you on a wild-goose chase, tuning to the wrong satellite.

Unless you have a non-Sky receiver which has the other satellites programmed into it, you won’t see any channels even though you may be detecting a signal.

Also, remember that your European neighbours on the site will be using a different satellite from you. There are several websites giving compass bearing and elevation for different locations in Europe. Best print one out and take it with you or write the information on the back of your dish.

Happy tuning.

Brian Coombes, Southampton

Welcome to the fold

I WAS surprised that the comments in the April issue in response to Richard Coles’s letter regarding a hinged double bed in a caravan only mentioned models from the past, as there are some new ones that boast this facility too.

The Bürstner Averso Plus models with hinged beds have recently been launched here on the Continent. Production has started with three models: 410 TS, 440 TK and 510 TK. See buerstner.com for further details.

Unfortunately, I don’t know when or if these models will be available in the UK.

Jan Joosse, Kudelstaart, The Netherlands

A wonderful gesture

AT FEBRUARY’S Birmingham NEC show, I spoke to Lee Sivins, Finance Manager of Glossop Caravans, and told him about a letter my branch of the Royal Engineers Association, Chesterfield, had received from the Welfare Office at Camp Bastion Hospital, Afghanistan, requesting towels for our wounded troops as it was desperately short.

Mr Sivins spoke to the Directors of Glossop Caravans, who immediately contacted their towel suppliers and ordered me 100 pairs of towels for my Association to be sent to Camp Bastion Hospital. This fantastic gesture will go a long way towards making the life of the wounded soldiers a bit more comfortable.

Roger Price, via email

Packing issues

THERE IS often comment that there are not enough dedicated parking spaces for caravans at motorway service areas. On our way back from the Club’s wonderful Abbey Wood site, my wife and I stopped off at South Mimms services to find that all but one of the dedicated caravanning parking slots had been occupied by just one rig. It was still there when we left just over half-an-hour later. I think you will agree that parking in this way does not improve the availability of parking spaces for caravans!

John Morley, via email

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