

may have been four of us on board, but it was midsummer and we only really used the motorhome as sleeping quarters. We were out and about enjoying ourselves during the day, and ate at a restaurant at night, so the only thing drawing power from the battery was the water pump and maybe ten minutes of lighting each evening. Consequently, I would have expected a leisure battery to last at least a week with this amount of use, not two days.

In my article I perhaps didn't make it clear that the battery level was still low by the time we reached Düsseldorf, despite the long journey. I had no proof that the charger wasn't working properly, so couldn't make such an accusation, but it seemed clear that there was a problem with either the charger or the battery itself.

We do not normally use an electric hook-up at the Düsseldorf show. And despite usually being static on the rally fields for anything up to a week, we have never run out of battery power during this time. We would not expect to if everything were working properly.

I am lucky enough to regularly travel all over Europe, rarely using campsites with hook-ups, and am more than aware what to expect from a battery and charger. The Kimu didn't come up to standard in this respect, and I tried to make comments that reflected this.



*Gilbert Park is pretty certain that gas attacks are an unlikely scenario, but says sensible precautions are never a waste of time*

## **GAS ATTACKS**

I read with interest the letter from Brian Kirby (February, p13) in which Professor Hatch is quoted. I too am a consultant anaesthetist and a member of the Royal College of Anaesthetists. I also have owned several motorhomes and frequently

spend time in France often in aires or isolated areas. I agree entirely with all that my colleague has said. I do not believe it is possible to induce anaesthesia using ether by spraying it into motorhomes. So will I be fitting a gas attack alarm? Probably.

You may be asking why if ether can't induce anaesthesia am I even considering fitting an alarm? There are two reasons. The first is that ether is highly inflammable. Some lockers have vents that a criminal may use to spray the vapour. Alternatively, they may spray it into a low-lying area that is unventilated. Since ether vapour is heavier than air it will lay in these areas and although it is pungent only a faint smell may be present in the rest of the motorhome. Those unfamiliar with the smell may not recognise what it is and inadvertently light a cooker or a cigarette starting an ether fire. The second reason is that the alarm may be triggered during an attack by a criminal who doesn't realise they cannot anaesthetise the occupants. The alarm should sound before any harm can be done to the occupants. The loud alarm may frighten the criminal off, preventing damage to the vehicle as they try to break in assuming the occupants are unconscious.

Why only probably? Again there are two reasons. The first technical; the manufacturers haven't stated anywhere I have seen the sensitivity of the alarms and the question is will they actually work? The second is do these attacks actually occur? Although there are web sites claiming to show they do, few of the reports mention the smell: with ether this can't be missed and makes me wonder if the reports are accurate about ether.

So what have I done to protect the occupants of my 'van in isolated areas at night? Usually there are just two of us (both anaesthetists) and I often return after dark, on foot, having been taking photographs at sunset: Maire is understandably anxious about being alone. I have improved the physical security of the 'van by fitting inside locks on the drivers and passengers cab doors. The main door also has an extra lock that can be opened and closed from the inside. At night the blinds are shut around the windscreen and side windows, not just the cab/living area curtain to stop any would be thief from seeing what's in the cab.

If I am coming back at night

## **SUPPLEMENT SUGGESTION**

Whilst browsing through some earlier copies of MMM for Mel Eastburn's articles on weights and payloads etc, I found myself reading the letters and Interchange pages as if for the first time.

Then, as you know, you have read the following month's mag to study the replies. Once you start on this trail you're hooked! At the time of writing I have eight months of MMM on my desk, all opened at various sections.

I don't know how to get off this sequence because when I looked at the first of the eight I found some answers to questions I couldn't remember so I had to find and read the previous mag. Then the same thing happened again. Help!

Suggestion: would it be possible to collate all the letters pages and Interchange pages into one volume and produce this at twelve-month intervals?

Imagine all that highly technical and detailed expertise plus hundreds of readers' problems and suggestions brought together in one super annual mag. Sure to be a best seller!

Please could you put me down for the first copy? And if

after dark we use an inexpensive, walkie-talkie two way radio to say I am returning. These are much cheaper than mobile phones abroad and they have many other uses. Looking through the side window before unlocking the door identifies unexpected visitors at night.

The final part of the security precautions about dealing with attacks is to talk about it and develop an action plan if it were to happen. A charged mobile phone and the number of the emergency services somewhere near the bed are essential. The horn can also be used to summon help and frighten the attacker off. If all else fails there are a variety of ways of disabling the persistent attacker: but I'll leave that to others to advise on.

Safe sleep is what anaesthetists offer patients. With a few simple, relatively inexpensive precautions, we now sleep soundly and safely as well as our patients.

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