



KNAUS KONTAKT

November 2006

A VISIT TO THE KNAUS FACTORY

A visit to the Knaus factory had always been on the cards for us and on a recent trip to Germany we made it to Jandelsbrunn in Bavaria right near to the Czech/Austrian border. The weather for October was unbelievably good and we finally met up with 25 or so others, having earlier found the Works Tour dates listed on the knaus.de website. Our guide was a laid back young man who firstly made us welcome with coffee and pretzels and introductory videos about the firm and its products – (everything in German so special

slow moving flat track. At the end of this line the whole panel was lifted by numerous suction pads & turned over to the other side of the building where the out skin was laid on, bonded and rolled before being stacked for transport to the production lines.

Pretty well all the wooden components are made on site – the raw wood is brought in, cut, treated, kiln dried before being sorted and directed to the various sections for a variety of uses. Flooring, internal supports, furniture, etc., etc., nothing is wasted and off-cuts and sawdust are used for heating.

Throughout the factory there are extractor units, therefore the whole place is amazingly dust free and the some worker can be seen constantly tidying away litter. Needless to say it's noisy in parts, but there are ear plug dispensers all around for the workers to use too.

Our next visit was to the assembly section for all the internal units – all the cabinets, kitchen and fridge units, beds, etc. are manufactured from basic components to finished unit on a progressive assembly line. Each

unit is completed to be 'plug & play', with piping or wiring ready just to be connected once in its predestined position.

On the caravan assembly line for the 'Sudwind' it was interesting to see the Alko chassis go in one end and gradually watch the floor, wiring, mudguards, etc all go on – side wall panels, windows, locker doors, internal fittings, external lights and motifs being stuck on before, finally, upholstery, etc. were installed and the completed caravan rolled off the end to have a quantity of water run through the system and drained before being towed away to storage. And what storage that was! Acres of covered areas where the

arrangements would have to be made for solely English speakers, although the tour is to a degree self explanatory). This all took place in a building a little away from the main factory site and our actual tour began after a leisurely stroll to the factory.

There are several different sections on the site and we were to see 3 or 4 – starting with the largest and most modern production line in Europe for the making of the side wall panels for all their makes – Tabbert, Knaus, Weinsberg and Wilk. It was impressive – insulation and interior panelling all laser cut and computer controlled and bonded together on a



The 'V' Liner

the latest model in the 2007 range on a Renault Master Chassis. Fixed bed for 2, but 3 belted seats for travelling

20-25 caravans per day and 10-15 motorhomes all stand protected from the elements, which in Bavaria can mean heavy snow in winter. Interestingly each van in store is ordered, bought and paid for.

The motorhome assembly line is on a similar format to the caravans but it is either a Renault or Fiat cab and chassis which goes on to the line. In parts specially high work platforms are installed for the workers to reach the higher levels for the larger motorhomes – it was interesting to watch the preassembled roof on an 8 meter plus 'Sun Traveller' being lifted on, complete with internal soft lining and see it competently attached to the body below. Further along the line was a huge lifting gear which raises each vehicle for the under-sealing to be done. Every part in the production is bar coded and the whole assembly line is computer controlled. Alongside the 'general' assembly line is another which allows 'one off' vehicles to be worked on and in the case of right hand drive they have to deal with a minimum of ten units for the UK market. All in all it was an illuminating few hours finished off by inspecting some of the latest models before departing with the usual load of leaflets and the daydream of returning, having won the lottery, to order our own 'special one off'.



GERMANY, AUSTRIA & CZ - A SUMMER TRIP BY DAVID & BRIDGET HILTON

I include a brief account of our summer trip which perhaps some members might be interested in hearing about.

In the last few years we have come to rely on Norfolk Line (cheap!) and so crossed to Dunkerque before going on to the Mosel valley for our first night abroad.

Bernkastel is well worth a visit with a good campsite (Kueser Werth) on the banks of the river though there are plenty of Stellplatz for those who prefer.

We have long wanted to revisit Schwetzingen Castle near Heidelberg. Our first visit was over 40 years ago with a school party in tow and there is an exquisite rococo theatre where Mozart is said to have played. We made the detour. The heatwave had now arrived and temperatures were in the

upper 30's as we negotiated the narrow streets in the centre of town looking for parking, only to learn on arrival at the admission



desk, that the theatre was closed for restoration work! Not to worry - the gardens and the cafe are first rate.

That evening we reached Eberbach, a small town on the Neckar and spent several peaceful days by the river. Again there is a good site (Campingpark Eberbach) overlooking the town from the opposite riverbank.

Despite the fact that it was high season we found booking necessary only once and that was in our next destination - Rothenburg ob der Tauber, (Camping Tauber-Idyll). Here we met up with friends who were with us for the rest of the trip and thus a prior booking had been made. The town is very popular - rightly so as it contains a fine collection of old buildings. It should be on everyone's list of places to see - even if in July you have to contend with the crowds - it's an easy quick flip off the autobahn for an overnight stop - and in our case the heat. A forty eight hour break set us up for the final outward lap to Vienna - 395 miles, best accomplished on a Sunday when there are few lorries on the autobahnen. We would not normally try to cover such a distance but it was no great problem. Bugs me though having to buy a 7 day vignette to use the motorways for half a day. Camping Vienna-Sud is easy to find, large (there is always space) quiet and convenient. The facilities are very good with the exception of the wash-

ing-up sinks which are of the most ridiculous design imaginable. The site is however open only for a surprisingly short summer season. Travel to the city centre takes about 30 minutes and there is a variety of tickets that can be bought either at reception or at the Tabac opposite the site. A bus takes you from the site entrance to Philadelphia Brucke where you change either to the underground or, as we did, a tram to the Wiener Oper from which excursions to most central sites can begin. Alternatively get on your bike! There are maps in reception and good, dedicated paths to all parts.

We spent a full week in Vienna but there is surely no need to list all the places we visited. Mention must be made however of the cafes - there are so many good ones but at least 2 are outstanding. First, the Cafe Landmann on the Inner Ring opposite the Old Rathaus (Town Hall) easily reached by the Ringstrasse tram 1 or 2. This was Sigmund Freud's coffee stop. An excellent 2 course lunch is available for 10 euros and the less said about the cakes the better - we



DEMELS Café - Vienna

became regulars! The other cafe is Demels almost opposite the Hofburg Palace. Here you can watch the chefs preparing the fantastic cakes and again the whole experience is very affordable. Sit outside and watch the world go by - or rather watch the world watching you and envying your plateful. Vienna is really a wonderful place - so easy to visit and not expensive.



e-mail camping.sued@verkehrsbuero.at

And so on to the Czech Republic. Again we travelled on Sunday and found little traffic. Crossing the border is an experience. Expect to queue. The officials are not interested in English visitors - they waved us through with a minimum of fuss when it was our turn - but they did look very long and carefully at almost everyone else! we travelled on Sunday and found little traffic.

Then you have to negotiate the tat, (!) the young and sometimes not so young "ladies" lining the route. Obviously plenty of trade! But soon the scenery improves and travel in the republic is easy apart from the fact that suddenly we understand nothing! Road signs might as well not exist! Ordering a coffee was a matter of luck!

We had decided not to head for Prague - been there, done that, so we selected Kutna Hora as a place to spend several days for R and R. It is a World Heritage site full of fine buildings but without the tourists of Rothenburg. Another highly recommended visit. We stayed at Camping Autocamp Transit, which, despite its name is one of the most beautiful small sites we have used.



It has the atmosphere and appearance of a CL. The only slight downside is a proximity to the railway station -not so much of a problem to a train enthusiast like me. We spent 2 days ambling round the small city (and its restaurants) and 2 days in the height of the heat wave leisurely cycling round the surrounding countryside visiting palaces and castles.

Food was very inexpensive and always very good although by this time we were tiring a little of goulash and dumplings! The beer was worth the journey on its own - 20p bought a half litre of my favourite, Staropramen. The wine was surprisingly good too. A visit to the local supermarket (Albert!) was fascinating and we often had little idea what we were buying. There was a Tesco in the next town but we managed to avoid that! You need have no fear of travelling in CZ. So you can't understand a word - few speak much English, some locals might manage a little German but we managed and enjoyed being somewhere different. The Czechs appear a little gruff at first but they are really very pleasant and helpful as we were about to find out.

On our last day in Kutna Hora our backsides and the heat said no more cycling. Lunch in the old Town Square in Prague seemed a good idea. Frequent trains to the capital for about £3 for the hour-long trip. Fine! Easy! Except that our train calmly came to a halt about half way and in the very middle of nowhere!. The guard came by to tell everyone (except us!) what happened. - A young medical student told us that the wires were down and then promptly left the train, as did

several other travellers. Two hours later we followed the remaining passengers to the rear of the coaches. But nothing happened. (Remember the temperature was 38C and rising). Frustrated and clueless as to what was going on my wife stood up and loudly enquired if anyone spoke English. Back came a quiet reply from the lovely Lucy! 'Yes, I do!' Saved! Lucy was 25 and had recently returned to CZ having spent 2 years working in Brighton. I won't bore you with all the details except to say that she was amazing. Once help arrived in the shape of a diesel engine and a bendy bus, she guided us right to the centre of Prague. She was 3 hours late for work - we had lunch in the middle of the afternoon and made the return trip without incident.

Next day we headed for Dresden and stayed at Camping Bad Sonnenland near Moritzburg. This is another huge site with plenty of space and a good restaurant, although you can tell even now that this is the old 'East'. There are buses into Dresden which will soon be a very beautiful city again - the target is to complete the rebuilding by 2015 but at the moment it is a huge building site. However the Frauernkirche and the Old Masters Gallery are worth seeing and a boat trip on the 100 year old paddle-steamer to Meissen is a must.

Next came Leipzig where we all wanted to see the places associated with J.S. Bach. We used the first class Campingplatz Auensee - again bus and tram to the city centre. We all found Leipzig a fascinating place, worth a trip in its own right.



J S Bach's Statue in Leipzig

Our final destination was Wernigerode so that we could enjoy a few days travel on the wonderful steam Harz Mountain Railway. We stayed at Camping am Brocken in Elbingerode about 10k from Wernigerode and used our friend's car to travel in to the town.. But there are buses. The railway is another 'must'. You buy a 2 trip ticket for 28 euros which allows a return to the summit of the Brocken Mountain and any other journey of your choice on the extensive system. Whilst here we celebrated our 40th Wedding anniversary in Elbingerode with an excellent meal in the local restaurant Cafe Berghof - not the ubiquitous schnitzel and chips - and we've just drunk the bottle of white wine they gave us as an anniversary present!

The return trip was straightforward. We broke the journey at Aachen at the only site we used which is not listed in the Caravan



Club Sites Book Europe 2 (Aachen Camping on Branderhofer Weg - leave autobahn at j3, turn towards the city and follow signs -see MMM Nov05) All the others are in the Caravan Club Book2. At Dunkerque, needless to say we spent time stocking up in Auchan at Grande Synthe, then found Norfolkline had new boats - a final treat!. The Caravan Club site at Folkestone where we overnighted briefly before covering the 405 miles home in one stretch - was the most expensive site of our entire trip and it was noisy!

So, a very good trip, highly recommended, a total distance of 2868 miles in five weeks. Any club member is welcome to contact us if they would like further information email us at-

davidandbridget.hilton@pipex.com

IS ANYBODY WILLING?

As indicated in April Jill & I, due to lifestyle changes, are unable to continue as Treasurer & Secretary. After making such progress it would be sad to see the Knaus Owners Club cease to exist. We will be willing to help over any transition period, so please get in touch if you can spare some time to fill one of the posts. -

Mike Dixon

Read about member Simon Gee's long term trip on the Club website - he, his partner and the dog are taking a two year European tour in their Knaus.



JUST IN CASE YOU MISSED IT IN THE TRADE PRESS

A safety recall in case you did not read this in the various motorhome magazines.

From the Truma website:

Safety takes priority - Truma is recalling individual Trumatic C models. Truma Gerätetechnik GmbH & Co. KG has decided to maintain the operational safety of its Trumatic C heater model by modifying heaters that were manufactured at certain times. The Trumatic C heater model has been operating reliably in many motor homes for many years.

The following devices have to be modified:

Model 1: equipment in model series C 3402/4002/6002 including EL versions Serial numbers from C xxxxx-x-16 255 001 to C xxxxx-x-17 159 000

Model 2: equipment in the C6002 EH model series Serial numbers from C xxxxx-x-15 329 001 to C xxxxx-x-17 159 000

You can find the serial number on the name plate that is attached to your heater.

For the devices concerned the following precautionary measures are urgently necessary -

1. The heater must not be used for heating or hot water preparation!

2. Please note you can find the serial number on the name plate of your heater

3. Please contact Truma UK Service Department on 01283 586020

We understand that the modifications are carried out free of charge at your home location.

Our membership is increasing all the time and stands at 82 as we go to "print".

We welcome the following new members to the Club :-

David Alcock

Bill & Jacquie Lowes

Alan & Maxine McPherson

Brian & Wendy Belcher

Alan Weeks

Mr & Mrs J W Hallam

Mr & Mrs J M Kent

Steve & Allyson Marlow

Derek & Brenda Booth

Richard & G Drummond

Cyril & Janice Alger

Geoff & Diane Spencer

Dave & Kay Thomson

A news sheet for the Knaus Owners Club in the UK

Hon. Secretary
Michael V Dixon
20a Colkett Drive
Old Catton
NORWICH
Norfolk
NR6 7ND

Phone: 01603 426243

Mobile: 077110 18139

Email: mvdixon@btinternet.com

Club Website:

www.knausowners.netfirms.com



TRAVELS IN SICILY & GREECE - PART 1 - CYNTHIA WEBB

Last winter, instead of our usual winter resting place of Spain, we set off for the Greek Peloponnese via Sicily. Sicily is easily reached with a short ferry trip across the Straits of Messina.



Mt Etna from the Campsite, nr Taormina



The Temple at Segesta

We camped near Taormina in the shadow of Mt Etna which, on a clear day, is seen smoking away in a bed of snow ... amazing. The cycling and walking is excellent on this part of the coast and the fish wonderful. We caught the local bus into the nearest large town (Catania – 2nd largest town after Palermo) mainly to experience the fish market which was truly amazing - absolutely frenetic – langoustine and eels still squirming and swordfish being beheaded - the guide-book description of “*not for the squeamish*” was apt. We gorged on fresh fish, cycled, walked, got up Etna (just) although snow chains would have helped our little hire car. Next stop the mosaics of Piazza Amorina. Well, having left the snow of Etna we caught up with the mud of the central plain. We now understand how so many treasures have lain buried in mud for so long ... following a mud plough is less fun than following a snow plough! Ugh! From there we moved to the south coast, 2° warmer and, at last, sunshine. We stayed on lovely harbours, struggled with narrow streets and overhanging balconies (our new toy, satellite navigation, does not seem to understand that we are 3 metres high and 2.3 metres wide), visited amazing temples and archaeological sites, and spent a few days in a Nature Reserve getting our breath back. Deserted beaches and isolated bays were compensation for the cold winter nights - no umbrellas or beach mats in sight! Then Sciacca (thermal baths unfortunately

closed) and Mazaro del Vallo, the largest fishing port in Italy, and on around the west coast. We saw flamingos, cormorants, kingfisher and heron on the salt flats and, of course, one last temple at Segesta.

Then the north coast – our first stop being Castellammare del Golfo in which, only 50 years ago, it is reputed that 80% of the male population had served a prison sentence and one third had committed murder! Well, it has changed. A pretty fishing port nestling into the hillside, we spent 2 happy days exploring (and felt quite safe).

A day in Palermo sufficed – taking heed to beware pickpockets who abound. After a spectacular drive across the mountains we left Sicily with regret and motored across the “foot” of Italy to pick up the ferry to Patras, Greece from Brindisi. We had “open deck” tickets which meant that the 15 hr overnight crossing was spent in the comfort of our own camper, complete with electric hook-up! No extra cost!

Part II of Cynthia Webb's journey into Greece will be next time, but in the meantime, she has kindly offered to answer any question if you email her @

cynthiaawebb@hotmail.co.uk

Thanks to those of you who have sent in postcards & news of your trips and journeys. Articles from members have been like those buses, suddenly three came along at once - it is much appreciated and makes the newsletter much more interesting. You will also find items posted on the website - knausowners.netfirms.com where Steve Brock would be happy if you could email your experiences to him too.