



Rear view mirror

GENTLEMAN JACK SHOTS FROM THE LIP...

Contact Jack: Fen Leisure Services, 16 Cartmel Way, Eye, Peterborough, PE6 7XA E: fen.leisure@ntlworld.com



MK exhibit at all the major indoor and outdoor shows. This was their busy stand at the recent NEC show

'Sat-nag' for duffers

It's funny how things go in phases, nothing on this subject for ages and then recently I've received quite a few e-mails from members asking about a sat-nav suitable for use in their coachbuilt motorcaravan, but significantly one that is easy to use for those best described as being not at the forefront of the white-hot technological revolution. When I first tried sat-navs in motorhomes around 18 years ago, the enthusiastic techno-warriors were fascinated and immediately 'genned-up' on everything there was to know about them. This article is not aimed at such folk who

already know how useful sat-navs can be, but at those members who don't know their app from their elbow...and are just a teensy bit scared.

Firstly don't be scared or apprehensive, you don't need to be computer-literate in order to be

and electronic motorcaravan goodies at indoor and outdoor motorcaravan shows. They first appeared on my radar via their Falcon Security products which they supply to both their own retail customers and several other 'big-name' alarm installers. We approached Chris Williams the genial and knowledgeable proprietor of MK Electronics to help us chose a suitable navigator that would be sophisticated enough to disseminate vital information for motorcaravanners on tour and yet be easy-peasy to use. This is actually harder to achieve than one might think. In the past I've tested OEM equipment in European motorcaravans and found that surprisingly frequently they were either so impenetrable that I gave up - or if they were easy to use, they didn't have the features usually



Falcon sat-nav kit as supplied by MK Electronics

able to 'find your way'. MK Electronics is a regular exhibitor of all types of electrical

associated with high-end products. Chris suggested a Falcon 5 inch navigator might fit the bill and we've been testing it for the last four months.

Here are some beginners' FAQ's regarding 'sat-navs'.

Q Why do you call it 'sat-nag'?

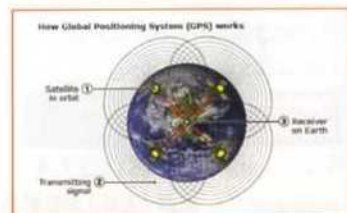
A This is an affectionate term and a play on words. One of a sat-nav's many uses is that it will tell you if you are exceeding the speed limit for your vehicle, or if there are weight restrictions on a road you are about to turn into. This is both a visual warning on the screen and an audible warning in the form of the spoken word via its inbuilt loudspeaker. It's more of a gentle reminder than nagging, but why spoil a good joke?

Q What's the correct name then?

A The official name is a GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) Navigator or 'sat-nav' for short.

Q How do they work?

A There are lots of communication satellites orbiting the earth. Each has a very accurate (atomic) clock on board. This means that they know exactly where they are when the signal was sent out. (Remember satellites are constantly moving over the same circular-ish path which is called its 'orbit').



How GPS navigators work. The 'receiver on earth' will be our sat-nav

This information is continually sent down to earth at the speed of light, and sat-navs receive this information. They use their internal brain to find out exactly how long each signal took to arrive. By using at least three signals from different satellites and simple trigonometry,

the sat-nav can calculate exactly where it is. To be absolutely sure that the calculation is correct, the clock in our sat-nav would have to be as accurate as the ones in the satellites. This would make them prohibitively expensive, so they use a cheaper time-piece and a fourth satellite signal to achieve a very accurate result.



N.B. It is a myth that sat-navs transmit to satellites, they only receive information.

The sat-nav itself will have been pre-loaded with some mapping information so that it can plan your route or tell you where things are that you want to find. These might include the nearest fuel station, campsite or Doctor's surgery, as well as places to see and things to do in the vicinity. The rest of information will be stored on a memory card which is just posted into a slot on the edge of the sat-nav.

A sat-nav's brain consists of two main parts. Stored information and an operating system which governs how the information is used and how it is communicated to you.

Q Does the sat-nav come complete with everything I'm likely to need?

A Many do, some don't. Falcon GPS Navigator kits all come with everything you are likely to need.

Q How does it know I'm in a motorhome and that I want to (for example) avoid low bridges?

A It won't know until you tell it what sort of vehicle you are driving, its size and weight. You will 'speak'

to it by tapping the screen. This might be to select something from a menu or by typing information in using the standard QWERTY keyboard as displayed on its screen.

Q How simple is it to use?

A Our family's opinion is that this Falcon was no more complicated to use than a self-service till at our local DIY superstore.

Every time you turn it on, the helpline phone number appears on the screen...just in case!

Q Tell me more

A Well you need to type in the start and end points on your journey and also where you would like to

stop en-route. These are called way points. From then on it does everything else for you including re-calculating your route if you go wrong, or are subject to a diversion caused by road works. It will display this information on the screen as a map in 3D and with a vanishing point. This means it looks as though you are driving along the map, plus there will be spoken instructions.

Q Can a motorcaravan-friendly sat-nav be used in another vehicle?

A Yes it can be used in any vehicle with a suitable power supply. In older vehicles this is the cigarette lighter, in newer ones it may be from a powered accessory socket. Falcon sat-navs also have their own internal battery so they can be used when walking about after reaching your destination. If you do this, save power when on foot by putting it into sleep-mode when not actually looking at it.

Q Any other uses?

A Yes, loads...it can be linked to other equipment, a mobile phone for example, or you can display your digital photographs on it. For now we'll concentrate on its primary function. In a future article we'll

REAR VIEW MIRROR



In our own motorcaravn, I found the best place to site the sat-nav was over the (redundant) interior mirror- It's never been any use because the Wentworth has a blind rear wall. If you have an 'A'-class motorcaravan where the windscreen is a long way away, it will be better to attach it the fascia or to a side window than to the windscreen. If it was going to be a permanent fixture, I'd have sited the power lead around the top edge of the windscreen

look at those other uses as well as reviewing Falcon's latest 7 inch sat-nav complete with an inbuilt camera that records everything happening that is visible through the windscreen.

Following is a quick run-through of just some of the information the 5 inch Falcon unit can provide.

- Mapping, in the UK and in 45 other countries.
- The route, estimated journey time, lane guidance and turn-by-turn instructions both before the junction and on it for those of us with a less than perfect memory.

You can even select the type of journey you want to make. 'Fast', 'easy' and 'avoiding toll roads' are just three of many different options. These can be customised for your type, size and weight of vehicle.

- Speed limits that currently apply and a warning if you are exceeding them.
- Known problems, congestion, road works etc, and a way of avoiding them before you get snarled up in the queues.
- Details of over 25,000 campsites.
- Details of points of interest (POI's)
- Speed camera warning (switchable for European travel)

The 5 inch GPS Navigator kit I've been testing is available at shows for a remarkable £299. Remember this includes the sat-nav itself, windscreen mounting bracket, 12V power lead, 230V power lead, USB lead, 4GB memory card containing all the latest software & maps and finally, the instruction manual.

My tired eyes found the print too small in the latter but on test, we all found that the sat-nav was so

easy to use, we just turned it on and followed the clear and easily read instructions that appear on the screen.

Just in case you are concerned that you might not 'get it', there is a technical support telephone number which comes up on the screen every time it is turned on, so you don't even have to worry about noting it down 'somewhere safe'.

In chatting to motorcaravanners generally and Club members in particular, I've teased out that one of the things that has prevented folk buying electronic equipment is an irrational fear that (a) they won't be able to use it and (b) all those who already have them are much more able and don't make mistakes. Let me reassure you that neither is true. Whilst testing this I couldn't see how to put postcodes in. A chat to MK soon sorted the problem. I'd made an elementary mistake but was soon 'whistling Dixie', thanks to their helpful staff.

MK Electronics are based in Cheshire.

Contacts: 0844 884 3245

www.mkelectronics.eu

They will be exhibiting all year.

Next show is the National Motorhome Show, East of England Showground, Peterborough PE2 6XE. 18th-21st April

Xmas Competition results

WINNER W Evans, Scarborough
2nd prize P Houghton, Auchnagatt

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Autocruise | AUGUSTA |
| 2 Dethleffs | ADVANTAGE |
| 3 Auto-Trail | MOHAWK |
| 4 Knaus | Sun Ti |
| 5 Adria | Coral S 660 SL
ALLEGRO 97 |
| 6 Chausson | Voyager
GOUL II |
| 7 Swift | Destiny |
| 8 Timberland | by Dan |
| 9 Hobby | ifit |
| 10 IH (Motor Campers) | ifit |

To get going, all you have to do is tap the screen to choose from a menu -simplest! (Already you are using apps without even knowing it!)