


The MURVI Club Newsletter Summer2024

 <p style="text-align: center;">Toilet Surgery – Page 5</p>	Contents:	
	Editorial	Page 1
	Insurance	Dick Constable Page 2
	New Carpets	Mark Elson Page 3
	Broken Cassette Flap	Sandy Edmond Page 5
	Comfortmatic Care	John Laidler Page 10
	Next Edition	Page 11

Editorial

This is a slightly shorter edition than normal but that suits me as I am putting it together on an aire in Brittany courtesy of Microsoft’s Cloud which allows me to access the content I uploaded before we left at the beginning of the week. What I hadn’t expected was I needed to install Microsoft 365 on my tablet first. We have WiFi in our Morocco coming from a Teltonika router and roof mounted antenna. It has an EE sim card and it is very rare for us not to be able to get a signal. However, the download speed, being 4G isn’t too fast although it is usually fast enough for us to stream TV if we want – BBC’s Saturday Morning Kitchen is currently running in the background as I am typing this.

I expected installing the MS Office apps would be a big, slow download but I noticed my mobile (on Vodafone) had a 5G signal and a quick speed test revealed the connection would run at over 200 mbps. We are in a fairly remote part of rural France and it has excellent broadband coverage. At home in Devon we sometimes have to walk to our front gate to get a signal!

Setting up the ‘phone as a hotspot took care of the download but the tablet still whirred away for the best part of an hour installing stuff. Finally it finished and I could start putting together this Newsletter.

The first entry is from Dick Constable and describes his experiences of getting a competitive insurance quote. Of course the Club does not endorse any specific company and quotes will vary very much between members based on many factors such as where the vehicle is kept and its value. I think the main lesson from Dick’s article is that to reduce your insurance cost takes quite a bit of effort.

With Mark Elson’s permission I’ve also included an item on carpets he originally published in The Hub as I thought it would make a good item for the Newsletter.

Sandy Edmond explains a tricky toilet repair in his item. Which is probably as good an excuse as any for me to add something about cassette maintenance – the need to lubricate the slide. I find the mechanism becomes stiff after a while but a bit of silicon grease soon sorts it out. The curious thing

is where is the best place I've found to apply the grease. It's not on the actual slide itself, although this is worth doing once a year or so. Underneath the pull out handle are two metal rods and a small amount of silicon grease on these make a huge and immediate difference. We have a Dometic cassette other makes will be different of course.

The final article is about caring for the Comfortmatic transmission, which several members will have.

Insurance

Dick Constable

My 2013 Fiat Morello, 2.3L manual with 50,000 on the clock is parked at home on a private driveway. I'm just in the process of going through the annual circus of getting quotes.

I've used the usual comparison site, then some "specialists" etc. All obscenely exorbitant.. Even my renewal offer has gone up 30%. I've been with the same broker (Advance) for 6 years and to be fair they have moved me when they could get a better quote. Two years ago they moved me to ERS (Eagle Red Star). But this year they want £416 (up from £299), so enough is enough.

This year I've set out early to get quotes and it seems to work. I read that the closer you leave it to your renewal date, the less competitive you will find the quotes.

My own company doesn't send renewal offers until 21 days before renewal and I've yet to find a company who will quote more than 30 days ahead.

From Google I clicked on a company I'd never heard of (despite being founded in 1998) called RIPE Insurance. I did the online quote and it was refreshingly pleasing to read. "I'm in" I thought, reaching for the credit card. Then failure snapped at the jaws of victory and the emailed link wouldn't let me "buy now".

The "contact us" turned out to be a chatbot with no phone numbers. More frustration. But back on Google I found the company had a landline number in Manchester listed, so I tried early the next morning. Success. The receptionist was really freaked out that somebody had actually called her and quickly put me through to an agent without the usual protracted menu options and Asda music.

The agent was the most helpful agent I have ever dealt with. Not only did we pursue the quote and tidy up some missing data, but he ran the system forward and back re-quoting me for things I didn't have this year but might want to consider. For example, "Does your driveway have gates or a post"? In my case no. But if I had it would have brought it down by 6%

"Have you taken any advanced driving tests, i.e. Camping and Motorhome, Institute of Advanced driving etc?" In my case, no. But if I had another 10%

"Does it have a tracker?" In my case No. But if I had it would have brought it down by 10%. (Class 5 is better than Class 7 I was informed).

"The Value of the vehicle?". I guessed at 2 amounts about £5000 apart. The lower one was 15% less than the higher figure. Wow. So the message there is to know your vehicle's value as the insurance companies will only ever pay "Market Value"

I'm stuck with what I've got for this year, but I will certainly be looking into a post for the drive and a tracker given that both aren't that expensive.

And the end result is £263.67 for me and one named driver, Fully Comprehensive, protected NCB, £0 voluntary excess and £200 compulsory. This is based on 6000 miles per year.

I hope this helps other Murvi Owners get a competitive quote.

New Carpets

Mark Elson

At the point of ordering our Ford single beds Pimento XL we decided that a vinyl floor would be most practical, unfortunately, we found it cold under foot and decided to purchase a rug. Of course rugs are of odd sizes when trying to fit to a van so we needed something I could trim without the edges fraying. The solution? A company called 'Hug at Home' who make rugs which are rubber backed, can be trimmed without destroying the fibres and are machine washable too.

We went for the 'Sense' range which is more luxurious than a standard door mat. I managed to carpet all of our van with 3 mats and their various off cuts. The main rug stores under the RHS bed when they are set up for the night. If you cut them right the other mats stay in situ when the LHS bed is rolled out.

They are a company based in Yorkshire and a human actually answers the phone! They have lots of colours to choose from and will send samples on request, (you can also get a further discount if you sign up to their newsletter). For us they were the perfect solution. I hope this may be a of help to others considering a rug/carpet.

Their website:

<https://hugathome.co.uk/collections/hug-rug-sense>

Images on next page.



Broken Closing Flap on Dometic Cassette Housing

Sandy Edmond

(Pimento XL 2019)

When replacing the Dometic toilet cassette, after emptying, into its housing I was aware that it didn't go right home as usual and required a bit more force than normal to get the locking tab to click. BIG MISTAKE to push it too hard. I heard something crack but thought nothing of it and went back to the van but a few moments later herself went to use the toilet and said that the orange flap was still down, blocking off the slide opener. Took the tank out and found a small orange lug lying inside the housing – obviously broken off the end of the hinged flap, and the black operating lever was dangling down and disconnected. (Photo1)

No problem, I thought, I will just remove the broken flap because it doesn't really do anything except serve as a warning that "the tank is out so don't use the toilet!!" And with just the two of us we always know when one of us is emptying the tank. With the tank in situ the orange flap is up and out of sight and does nothing anyway. But on examining the flap and the two white plastic lugs that act as hinges I immediately realised that care was going to be needed because if undue force was used to pull the orange flap out and I broke one of the hinges, it would be game over and either do without the orange flap for all time, or a whole new cassette housing would be needed which is a very serious and expensive job. I did try to ease one hinge lug or the other one sideways to get the orange flap hinge pins to disengage but to no avail and not knowing how much force it would take to break the hinge I gave up temporarily.

We completed our trip no problem albeit that it was a 2-person job to replace the cassette – I gently pushed it into place whilst herself indoors held the flap up to allow the cassette slider to come through into its operational position – be warned that this can be a finger nipping experience for whoever is holding the orange flap up!!

I resorted to the internet and found that many folks have had the same issue, the lug broken off, and many folks have broken off a hinge bracket, or just decided to do without the orange flap altogether, but nowhere could I find a successful method of renewing the flap. So I proceeded as follows;

I am fortunate that I am a bit of a spare time modelmaker so I have a very fine toothed saw blade with a very sharp pointed end. I decided to saw off one of the orange flap hinge lugs. Being a Pimento XL makes thing difficult because I have to kneel on the ground and reach right through the rear cupboard into the cassette casing where there is barely room for 2 arms and hands but I managed to hold the flap up with one finger and saw with the other hand. There is very little gap around the hinge lug so I could only get about 3mm of sawing back and forth but the orange plastic is actually quite soft and cuts easily so it took about 5 minutes of extreme discomfort and the hinge pin fell off, followed by the orange flap, with no damage to the hinge lugs.- WHEW!! So far so good. (If I hadn't had a model saw I would have used a junior hacksaw blade with its end nipped off) (Photo 2)

I then offered up the new flap and found that it seemed to need excessive force to get it to click in between the hinge lugs, so I still had the problem of potentially breaking a lug!! I got round this by

filing a bevel on one of the hinge pins with a fine file (or sandpaper would do also) (Photo3 & 3b.) so that the pin was slightly wedge shaped and eased the lugs apart as I pushed the new flap into position – and with relatively little force the flap clicked in – SUCCESS!! I had remembered to locate the black lever onto the orange flap lug before clipping the flap into place so all seemed good, job done.

Then I inserted the tank, pushed it into place and heard a crack – I DID NOT BELIEVE IT – lug broken again!!! Having calmed down I repeated the procedure to remove the flap again but this time I managed to use my Dremel mini drill with a 20mm diamond tipped cutting disc and with this I cut the corner off the orange flap near to one of the hinge pins, taking care not to cut too deep and damage the casing behind. (Photo4.) The flap dropped out and then I examined everything – the tank, the tank slider, the housing, and the black lever. Only then I realised that the lever was also broken but the break had sprung closed so wasn't readily visible. (Photo 5.) So another flap and a lever ordered (all parts from Caratech.co.uk , excellent stock and service, but not cheap). I wasn't sure how to remove the lever but after looking up into its hinge recess with a mirror I couldn't see any obvious fixing so I gave it a wiggle and a tug downwards and it popped out ok. So popped the new lever up into place (make certain to get it the right way up!!), filed the pin on the second new flap as before, popped it into place connected to the lever and then gently slid the tank into place – click and all good.

Still not sure why the flap spigot broke in the first place but popular cause theory is that maybe the tank slider was not fully slid home on the tank when I inserted it into the casing – if the slider has moved out at all the orange flap will catch on it as it tries to rise up out of the way and something will have to give if the tank is shoved in too hard. So I now double check the slide is fully closed when inserting the tank.

A very awkward job but at least I didn't break one of the hinges.

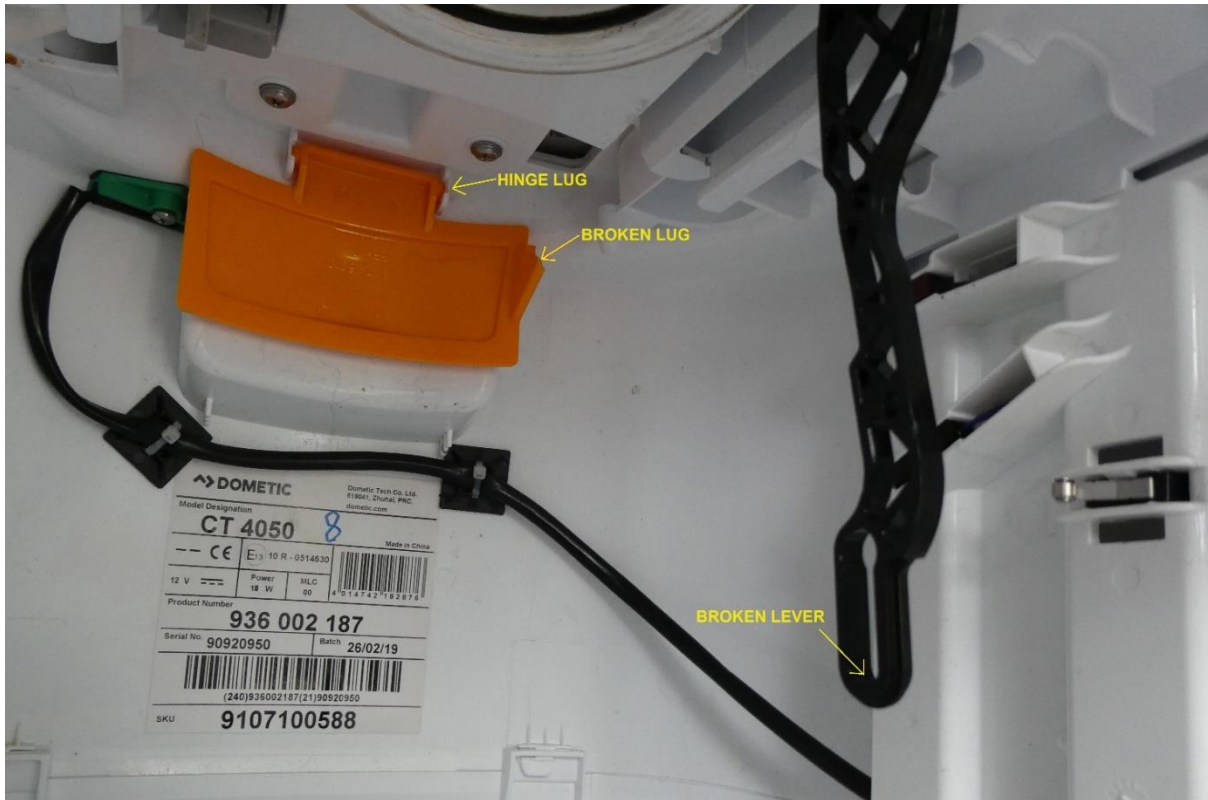


Photo 1. Broken flap lug and lever

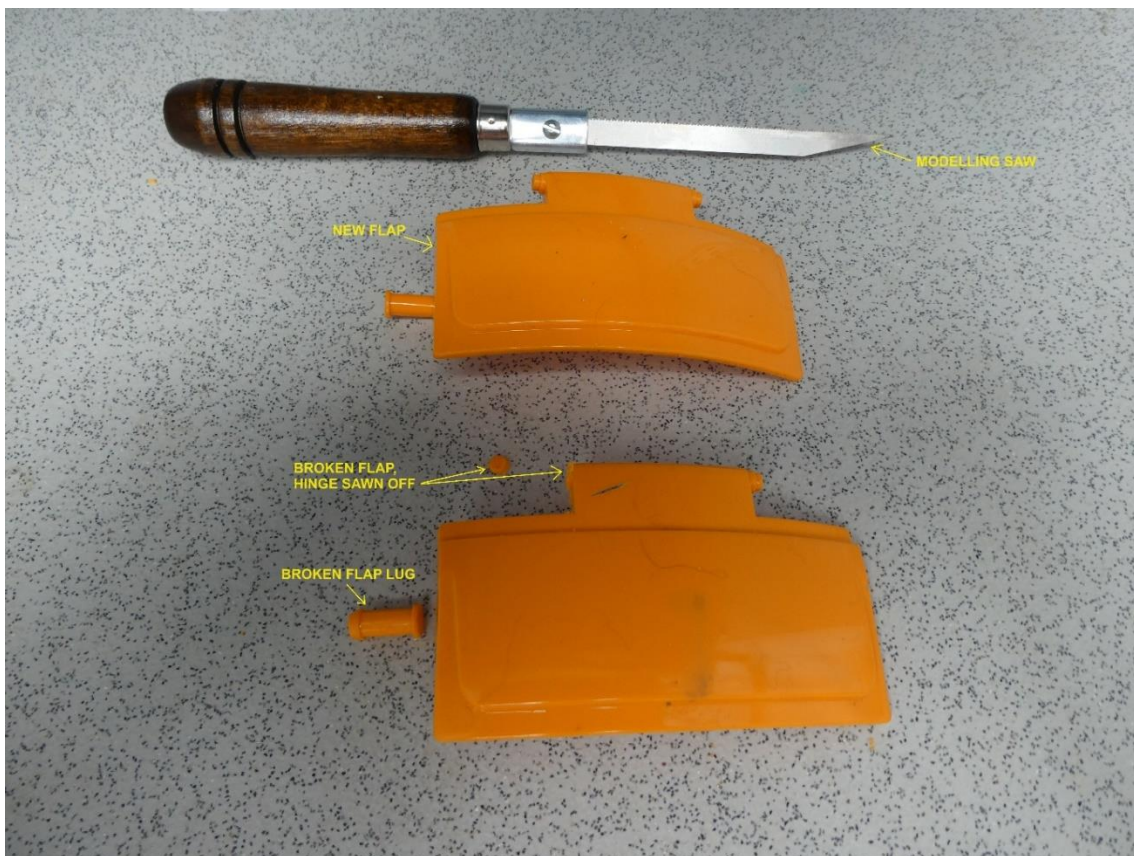


Photo 2. New flap and broken flap



Photo 3. Filing hinge pin bevel



Photo 3b Hinge pin bevelled



Photo 4. New flap cut off with Dremel



Photo 5. Broken lever

Comfortmatic Care

John Laidler

Quite a few Murvi models have been supplied with the Comfortmatic automatic transmission. It was eventually replaced by a 9 speed automatic but after only a few years this in turn has now been replaced by an 8 speed design. The Comfortmatic is not a “proper” automatic like the 8 and 9 speed transmissions. It is really just a conventional manual transmission with hydraulic actuators doing what you would do with your leg to operate the clutch and your arm to change gear.

The service schedule which came with our Comfortmatic is very thin with nothing required other than a check on hydraulic oil levels every few years. The transmission is normally very reliable but if it goes wrong it can be horrendously expensive. Ours ran faultlessly for over 50,000 miles but towards the end of a trip to France it started to stall when moving off. It was clear the clutch was engaging at the wrong point. We managed to return home with only two stalls at traffic lights in Plymouth after disembarking the ferry from Roscoff.

My local garage thought it was a sensor which took ages to arrive and then turned out to not cure the problem. They eventually sorted it although the gear changes were not as smooth as I had expected. Then on the next trip, which was to Spain, the vehicle battery expired suddenly and needed replacing. Afterwards I noticed the gear changes were smooth again!

Back home I started doing a bit of research. There is a component called the Transmission Control Unit (TCU) which talks to the Engine Control Unit (ECU) monitoring speed and throttle to decide what gear to choose. The TCU is permanently connected to the vehicle battery and if you disconnect and reconnect the battery it forces it to re-boot. This must have been what happened when the battery was changed in Spain and explains the better gear change afterwards.

Further research uncovered a growing realisation amongst Comfortmatic owners that more or less ignoring the transmission, which is what the service schedule does with its minimalist approach is not the best practice.

The Centre of Expertise for Comfortmatics seems to be Adams Morey at Portsmouth. There are several Adams Morey branches around the Country but they are not all Fiat centres or know the Comfortmatic. The reason why the Portsmouth branch has specialist expertise is because the manager there has a motorhome with one and has learned how to look after it.

The recommended schedule is now to change the hydraulic oil every two years and reset the “kiss point” for the clutch, which was what had gone wrong when ours was stalling when drive was engaged. Apparently, the hydraulic oil over time can become thick and sludgy, there are also two different hydraulic oils used in the system and cross contamination can occur.

Living near Plymouth a return trip to Portsmouth in a day was a bit too much so I booked a non-electric grass pitch at the Camping and Caravan Club site at Plymouth for under £14 and drove to Portsmouth the following morning. This in itself was quite a drive and I might choose somewhere closer next time!

What I hadn't planned for was my appointment was the same day as the 80th D Day celebrations with HM the King just down the road leading the events on Portsmouth seafront. The waiting room at Adams Morey had a television and I was watching it while my vehicle was being serviced. The programme showed two DC3 Dakotas flying overhead then a couple of minutes later I saw through the waiting room window the same two aircraft flying overhead! How many garages arrange a fly-past when you take your vehicle in for a service?

About £150 lighter I drove away after a 90 minute wait. We are now on a trip in France and gears are being changed smoothly and moving off from rest is also very smooth. My fingers remain crossed but at least I've done what I can to avoid trouble.

Of course visiting Portsmouth will be a long drive for many owners but in theory a Fiat Professional garage should know what to do. Otherwise, if you are heading across the Channel if you can swerve by Portsmouth I don't think you will regret it.

Next Edition

The next edition will probably be published towards the end of October 2024 and a request for contributions will be posted before then – but you don't have to wait! Just email anything you have to the following address at any time. newsletter@hub.murviclub.org.uk

John Laidler

Newsletter Editor