



<b>Contents:</b>	Editorial	<a href="#">Page 1</a>
	The Murvi Club Northern Christmas Meet	<a href="#">Page 2</a>
	Ferry, 'cross to Murvi	<a href="#">Page 3</a>
	I've Never Seen Big Ben	<a href="#">Page 4</a>
	Fest Noz	<a href="#">Page 4</a>
	A Murvi in New Zealand	<a href="#">Page 5</a>
	November 2018 Club Meet at Port Eynon	<a href="#">Page 6</a>
	In the Foothills of the Mercantour National Park	<a href="#">Page 6</a>
	Keith & Lyn's 2019 Road Trip	<a href="#">Page 7</a>
	Aires & Grace(s) in Spain	<a href="#">Page 8</a>
	Scuttle Problems	<a href="#">Page 9</a>
	Mobile WiFi	<a href="#">Page 9</a>
	Water Matters	<a href="#">Page 10</a>
	Shower not Draining?	<a href="#">Page 10</a>



*A murmuration of Murvis at Small Batch, Little Stretton*

## EDITORIAL

by Adrian Sumption

At the time of writing I am frustratingly confined to barracks as Karin had a hip replacement just a week ago, so trips in the Murvi are off the menu for a while. At least that means that thankfully I've had a bit of time between cooking duties and other unaccustomed menial tasks to put this newsletter together.

It seems like a lot more than 6 weeks ago that we had a record 48 vans camped at the West Midlands Showground just outside Shrewsbury for our annual Grand Spring Gathering and AGM. The Showground proved to be an ideal venue – plenty of space for all those vans, a sizeable meeting space where we could get together each evening and within easy walking distance of the town.

For those of you who don't know Shrewsbury it is a delightful town with a rich and interesting history which, thanks to our own resident expert, Steve Little, many of us now are better acquainted with.

The only slight frustration for me was the relative lack of interesting walking within easy reach of the campsite. Of course if you are prepared to drive a few miles there are many delightful walks in the Shropshire hills, as those who went to the pre-meet at Little Stretton can testify, but with such a large group at Shrewsbury this didn't seem practical. The one good walk (which turned out to be about 14 miles) that a few of us managed meant walking into town, crossing the river and

then walking back past the campsite on the other side of the river about 40 minutes later! Still, at least there was a pub that we reached at the halfway point spot on 1 o'clock, so it wasn't all bad.

Next year will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Murvi Club (ok, the name has changed from the Murvilovers Club in order to protect the innocent!) and we are already planning our celebrations at next year's annual Grand Spring Murvi Club Gathering which will take place from 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The venue is going to be the Riverside Caravan Park in Tiddington just a mile from the centre of Stratford on Avon. As the name implies the campsite is right beside the river Avon, and there's even a water taxi from the campsite which will whisk you direct to the heart of Stratford.



*Steve 'educating' us .....*



*...& his favourite Shrewsbury pub*

But before next year's celebrations there are other delights in store. Many of you will, I'm sure, be venturing far and wide across Europe (and maybe even further afield?) in your vans, but if you are around there are a whole host of festivals over the summer which some of our members will be attending. You can find details of these on the [events](#) page of the Murvi Club website. There are also a few meets planned for the Autumn – Hebden Bridge in early September moving on to Apple-treewick and Hawes, another Manchester historical and architectural tour with Steve Little in October and then the annual November meet which this year is in Devon near South Molton with a pre-meet at Dulverton on the edge of Exmoor.

And then of course there are the Christmas meets. We hope to repeat the success of last year's Southern Christmas meet at Alresford and I have no doubt there will be a southwest Christmas get-together. I even gather that there may be a repeat of the Northern 'Christmas' meet at Seahouses on the Northumberland coast (see the article on page 2). Having been to last year's meet there I can thoroughly recommend both the campsite and the wonderful coastal walks in the area – oh, and the fish and chips. Details of all of these will no doubt be on the website in due course.

So, lots to look forward to! Enjoy your summer wherever your Murvi takes you.

For some years now there have been Christmas Meets on or near the South Coast. Of course we Northerners, as we might call ourselves, are in no way averse to travelling any distance to meet up with our Murvi friends, especially at a time of seasonal good cheer. So our suggestion to hold a 'Northern Meet' was maybe more about a touch of guilt over an apparent gap in our Club's annual itinerary.

The site at Seahouses on the Northumberland Coast appeared to have much to offer as a November option.

It has an immaculately maintained leisure centre which includes a swimming pool, freely available to campers from early morning to the evening, and usually almost deserted in low season. Add to that the on-site licensed cafe, open early until late, and the fact that the site is virtually in the centre of Seahouses with its plethora of welcoming hotels, pubs, restaurants and cafes as well as a well-stocked supermarket, and it seemed like an appropriate venue. The bonus at low season was a 'three night for the price of two' offer.



*Bamburgh Castle*

The area has some fantastic coastal walks, spectacular at any time of year: Bamburgh castle within easy walking distance Northwards and the iconic ruins of Dunstanburgh to the South. Access to coastal villages is enhanced by two bus services which can also take you along the scenic journeys as far as Alnwick or Berwick.

For 2018 we took advantage of all the options mentioned above and, for those who enjoyed the walking, the beach walk to Bamburgh and the coastal walk back from Craster were memorable in spite of fairly inclement November weather. Indeed, in my view, any type of weather, come wind, rain or shine, with its constantly changing patterns and variations in light, seems only to enhance the splendour of this little visited part of our coast.



*Setting out ready for the weather*



*The coastal walk from Craster*

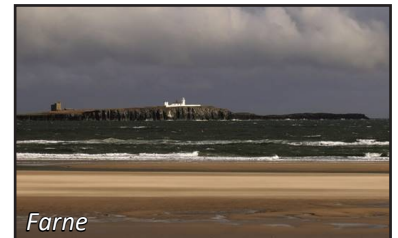
Our Christmas meal, if at the end of November it can be thus described, was booked at the Bamburgh Castle Inn, just across the road from our camp site. From here the dining tables enjoy a lovely view over the picturesque harbour, still well used by fishing boats but also as a base for the popular tourist trips across to the Farne Islands.

Seahouses is almost as far North as you can travel without venturing over the border. Surprisingly this appeared to be no deterrent to members well South of what we might describe as 'up North'. Also when I mentioned the distant location to Karin she simply observed that it would provide a welcome opportunity for our friends North of the Border. (But where were you?)

But a word of warning. Danger lurks in the Ship Inn, albeit a destination much frequented by our group. The mere mention of the word 'massage', and before you can say Bob Northwood, you will feel a grip of iron on both shoulders. Such was the fate of one of our number, who shall remain nameless, except to say that he was an officer and is still a gentleman. On the other hand she thought she would be flying high when she discovered the RAF connection. But our good friend was so terrified about what might be imminent that on the fateful evening the relationship was to be sealed, he actually abandoned his evening drinking! So all ended happily: the said barmaid was not one to tolerate non-attenders, least of all at her bar.

So be warned, (or even lured?!) the young unattached barmaid-come-masseur remains an unattached barmaid-come masseur!

If this seems as much like promotional material for a repeat meeting you are not far wrong. Christine and Vince rarely miss their annual visit to Northumberland and we are going to be at Seahouses in the last week in November 2019 (25th-29th) when, once again, you are invited to join us.



*Farne*



*Beach walk by Dunstanburgh*

**SKIPTON WATERWAYS FESTIVAL**

This group of images of the Skipton Waterways Festival was sent by Geoff Wilkinson. The festival happens each May Day bank holiday weekend. The Coach Street car park offers overnight access to campervans with marked out slots.



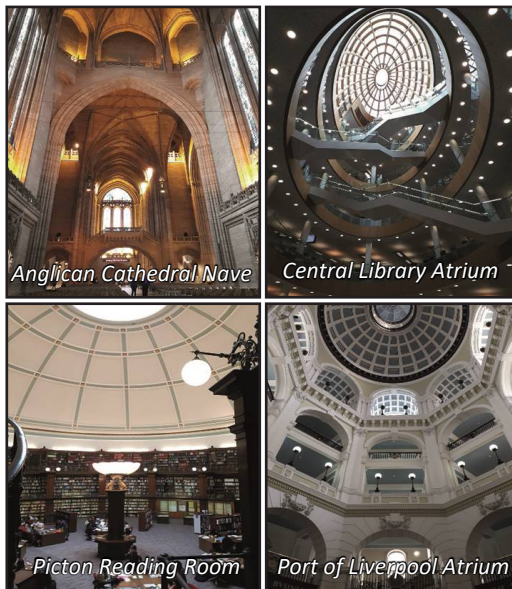
Sorry about the pun! Following a lovely week or so with other Murvis, firstly at Small Batch campsite on the Long Mynd, then our four nights at Shrewsbury for the annual Murvi Club AGM, we decided to continue on to Liverpool, making the most of the diesel miles from Hampshire! We had been for the first time ever to Liverpool with the Murvis, at Nick Mawby's instigation, last July. We were so impressed by the city, and could only scratch the surface, we really wanted to continue our exploration.

We camped again at the Liverpool Marina, this time taking our bicycles for the reasonably long, flat walk along the Mersey, past the Albert Docks and on to the Three Graces and the new Liverpool Museum. Bikes made such a difference at the end of a long day on one's feet – just sailing back in 5 minutes – bliss!

Our first port of call (sorry, pun...) was the Walker Gallery, where last year we all saw the Terracotta Warriors exhibition. This time, Charles Rennie Macintosh was the subject – a very interesting collection indeed and very worthwhile. Then,



needing a map of the city, we called into the new Central Library building where the Tourist Information was housed. Wow! and wow! again. The new atrium literally took our breath away! See pics. Quite fabulous, with oval shaped galleries rising ever upwards to a glazed ovoid dome and with criss-crossing glass walled staircases floating between floors, we puffed our way up each one to the roof. On the way, we passed dozens of computer stations, all occupied by students, avidly working towards their final exams in a few weeks' time. The place was a low buzz of activity – very stimulating. In complete contrast was the Picton Reading Room, the original traditional circular building, again, well occupied with students, but this time in a hushed atmosphere of concentrated study!



Then, armed with our new map of the city, we made our way past the main railway station at Lime Street, to the Anglican Cathedral. We had tried to see it the year before, but with the graduation ceremonies being held there in July, it was closed to the general public until 5pm, by which time, our aching feet refused to return from our "campsite"\*. Built with local red sandstone, the cathedral is very impressive, but we felt it was rather soulless – worth the visit, though.

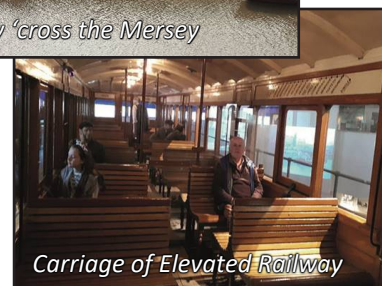
The weather the next day improved dramatically from the dull, damp, fine drizzle of yesterday, so again, bikes primed, we cruised to the new Liverpool Museum. We were greeted by a former school teacher who had done his 30 years and was now working part time at the museum and part time greeting the cruise ships as they disembarked their passengers. At his suggestion, we went up to the "Double Fantasy" exhibition about Yoko Ono and John Lennon, how they met, their life and work together – fascinating and with a number of screens showing various interviews with the likes of David Frost and "Parky".

As the weather was so glorious, we took a break from the museum and at our greeter's suggestion, walked over to the



Port of Liverpool building, one of the Three Graces buildings, to look at the atrium there – and again, gasp at the beauty of it – a complete contrast to the library. This is an Edwardian building with marble and decorative stonework, an almost church like interior.

Then, of course, as we missed out last time, it had to be a trip on "The Ferry 'cross The Mersey"! So we booked tickets for the 3pm sailing, having just missed the 2pm trip, and returned to the museum for another yomp up the 84 steps of the impressive central spiral staircase (pic) to look at the only surviving coach of the former elevated railway that used to run between the many docks lining the river.



Our ferry trip was uneventful and the promised loop playing of the famous song did not materialise, apart from a few bars each time we left a port of call, since it stopped to drop and collect passengers from the New Brighton side of the river.

Once back on "our" side of the river, we had a final trip into the museum, before mounting our faithful steeds, for the blissful 5 minute ride back to "camp". We will be back!

\*We must emphasise, the facility for "camping" at the marina is strictly on the understanding that no camping gear – tables, chairs etc – are to be deployed outside. Currently, £15/24hrs plus a £10 deposit for entry to showers, loo empty and fresh water, with a £5 refund when you leave. David, the manager, very helpful and friendly, but his rules are essential for his continued planning permission.

Hurlesdon Junction, where the Llangollen arm of the Shropshire Union Canal leaves the main line, is known to everyone on the canal because the first lock on this arm is generally acknowledged as the narrowest navigable lock on the English network. The village of Hurlesdon on the A51 north west of Nantwich is known to motorists for another reason – Snugbury’s Farmhouse Ice Cream.

There is another reason for road or canal travellers to be aware of Hurlesdon and this one is more dramatic seen from the canal . As you climb the flight of locks from the junction and snatch a glance to the left you may see a giant Dalek built from straw bales slowly emerging from the countryside as we did in 2013, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Dr. Who*.

In 2012 you might have seen Bradley Wiggins after winning the Tour de France and an Olympic gold medal. And last year



it was 150 years ago that Peter Rabbit was created



The farmer at Snugbury’s has been adorning one of his fields each year for the past decade with sculptures built from straw bales. These have included The Millennium Dome, the London Eye, an ice cream cone, a Jersey cow, a windmill and Jodrell Bank.

The first one of the annual sculptures we saw was in 2009 and was what I used to call St. Stephen’s Tower (a name adopted by Victorian journalists) but which was officially named the Clock Tower.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> in 2012, to celebrate the Queen’s diamond jubilee MPs voted to change the name to *Elizabeth Tower* which seems rather appropriate as the tower at the other end of the palace is *Victoria Tower*.

By now you will have grasped the reason for the title of this piece: the name Big

Ben does not apply to the tower but to the clock’s hour bell.

Residents of Loughborough, the home of the world’s largest bell foundry, – Taylor’s – will tell you proudly that Big Ben was cast there. This is not true. This 16 ton bell was actually cast in Stockton-on-Tees and initially hung in Palace Yard as the tower was not ready for it. Whilst there it cracked and was sent to Whitechapel Bell Foundry in east London for recasting. In the process it appears to have lost 2½ tons.

Whitechapel Bell Foundry sadly closed two years ago at which time it was the



oldest manufacturing company in the UK and the site is likely to become a bell-themed boutique hotel.

And so, like the vast majority of the UK, and all tourists, I have never seen Big Ben

*\*\* Editor’s note: I have seen Big Ben. I once did a tour of the House of Commons and was up in the Elizabeth Tower when it struck midday. I don’t think my hearing has ever recovered properly!*

**FEST NOZ**

**By Penny McCallig**

If ever you get the chance, go to a Fest Noz. Wandering around Carhaix in Brittany, we saw a poster and decided to go out for Saturday night. Turned out it was a fund raiser for a local school so was full of families. It was a bit like a ceillidh but the dancing is much easier to join in. Music came from bagpipes, flute, guitar and drum, or sometimes unaccompanied

singers set the beat with chanting. People dance repetitive steps in ever increasing circles which snake around the room as more and more join in, linking arms and stamping feet. All ages got together and little kids raced around, in and out of the circle. Cider and a delicious spread of homemade Breton cakes added to our enjoyment, and the van was only 5 mins

away in a parking with services and hook-up.

The area is great for motorhoming with Aires in so many villages, lovely walking and cycling along tracks next to the Nantes-Brest canal. In May there are blue-bells and yellow irises all along the banks.

I’m sure we’ll be back!

Adrian's call for content came as we were on the return leg of a two week tour of the South Island of New Zealand. Mandy and I emigrated in 2016, complete with Morello, and live on the North Island, on the Kapiti Coast.

We're still working, so don't often get more than a long weekend away, and this was our biggest trip so far. We were heading over to Picton on the ferry and making our way to Queenstown to visit our eldest.

There are around 80,000 "local" vans, as well as the thousands of vans hired by overseas tourists. If any Murvi-club members venture over her, it's most likely you'll be hiring (except Andrew Bawn, who has the other NZ Murvi)!

NZ vans are either certified "self-contained" or not. Without self containment, you are restricted to campsites with facilities. There are plenty of good ones costing around \$25/pp/per night. In peak times, you are advised to book ahead, because they fill up.

With containment, freedom camping is allowed in certain areas and you can get up close to nature. It is currently possible to join the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) from the UK through the caravan club; they waive the joining fee and you pay the \$90 subscription. This gives you access to their own sites for \$3/pp/per night and also to POPs (park over property), usually run by members. The RSA, much like the British Legion, allow you to stay overnight in many of their carparks. It's all in the membership documents and on their app.

The Department of Conservation runs a number of sites, usually in remote parts of the National Parks. Requiring self containment, expect minimal or no facilities and usually plenty of sandflies! DOC membership is seasonal and can be obtained for \$100 for 4 months through NZMCA or \$50/week through the rental companies. They are good value if you want to explore the parks.

Most visitors try to do every signposted walk or attraction. We take notes of things we'd like to do or see "another time". For us, NZ isn't a holiday! Some areas of interest are on unmetalled (unsealed) roads so our Murvi is "lifted" 70mm for increased clearance.

We stopped in Blenheim, centre of the Marlborough wine region, then headed

south and spent our first night in a POP at the Pier Hotel at Kaikoura (\$20).



I hadn't been down that coast since the November 2016 quake, so it was interesting to see the road and rail re-engineering and also the large area of rock which emerged out of the sea, at Point Kean, displacing a local seal colony! After the quake, locals came out to rescue paua and other shellfish and relocate them in the sea. At the time, the roads north, south and inland were blocked with slips, so many campervans were abandoned and the tourists were evacuated by the Navy. NZMCA members were called on to recover the vans, once the road was opened.

We cut inland over the Leader track to Waiau and on to Hanmer Springs. Hanmer has an alpine air with winter ski fields fairly close. It was autumn but still mild and so we walked, mountain biked and relaxed in the hot springs! It has a network of MTB tracks, similar to Glentworth in Scotland. There's an NZMCA site just out of town and commercial sites but we stayed at a POP at a motel.



We then drove down to a club site right next to Lake Tekapo. Club sites are interesting because there is such a variety of campers. Usually several "full timers" in converted buses, as well as holidaymakers.



Views here are stunning and it's clear night skies made this an ideal site for an observatory which runs tours of the night sky.

Mount Cook, (Aoraki) was in cloud so we headed on through the Mackenzie country. It is one of the great drives. On route there are small airfields offering sightseeing tours of Mt Cook by plane or helicopter, if the budget goes that far.



We recommend the Queenstown Creeksyde holiday park, walking distance to the centre and the cable car. It is European styled with hedges, trees, great facilities and some sculptures too!

We headed back north, stopping at the Kinross winery in Gibbston valley for lunch. You can do a cycle tour of the wineries and a micro-brewery if you have time. We retraced our steps and this time Mt Cook was looking amazing. Avoiding Christchurch, we took the SH72 scenic route which skirts round the western edge of the Canterbury plains. There had been some snowfall on Mt Hutt and surrounding peaks.



We took the Lewis pass north, visiting Lake Rototoi, St Arnaud, which has the national canoeing centre. This lake and Rotoroa to the west, were part of Maori trading routes from the greenstone areas of Hokitika, to Nelson.

Through the Wairau valley to Blenheim, we were struck by the huge increase in vineyards since the 90's, mostly Sauvignon Blanc for the UK market!

We did a tour of the WW1 air museum, made largely from Peter Jackson's own collection. There's also a WW2 and a car museum, but we saved them for another day!



The wind blew and in true Welsh style, the rain rained, but forty nine of us hardy outdoor types were not deterred. The forecast for Friday promised a very wet afternoon, so a short circular walk was chosen, up on to Port Eynon Point, along the coastal path for a couple of km before climbing up the return route to Overton.

Saturday, the weather improved. Some of us headed off towards Rhossili, not realising that we would be meeting hundreds of runners competing in the annual



*Rhossili Bay*

Gower marathon, half marathon and elite marathon. The coast path is spectacular but also narrow, steep and slippery, and

surprise, surprise, muddy. Some folk turned back early taking the inshore route home. Some of us had a drink in the Worm's Head Hotel, while one ventured across the causeway on to the Worm. Thank you so much, Virginia and John, for the lift back!

Saturday evening we were accommodated, dogs and all, in the restaurant of the Ship Inn, a short walk from the site. That steak and ale pie took some beating!

Sunday most of us took the coast path to Oxwich Bay where we filled the Snug in



*On the walk to Oxwich Bay*

the Oxwich Bay Hotel, dogs, muddy boots et al, and enjoyed meals or snacks.

The Ship hosted our slide show in the evening. I am extremely glad Roger brought his laptop and projector. The on-site technology we had been promised was fixed to the ceiling and hardwired to Sky sports. At least the screen was jammed in the down position!

Rob, at the Skysea campsite, was helpful as ever, ferrying provisions for us and only one Murvi needed towing off the grass.



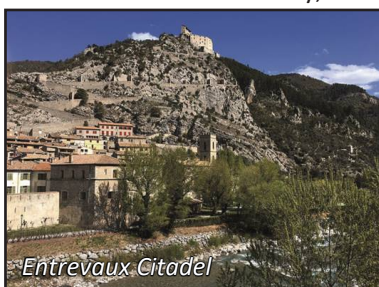
*The Beach at Port Eynon*

This was the first meet I had organised and I am pleased to say that the learning curve was not too steep. We quite enjoyed ourselves in fact. I have even learnt a bit more about the vagaries of Excel spreadsheets.

Next November's meet is already booked at a luxury site on the edge of Exmoor, November 7 - 12<sup>th</sup>, so no excuses, put that date in your diary now!

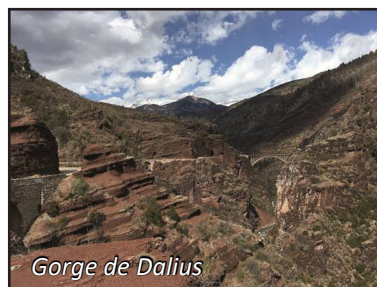
**IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE MERCANTOUR NATIONAL PARK**

Mid April was rather early in the season, so we did encounter some snow, but were blessed with superb weather. We turned east off the A51 towards Digne les Bains (famous for it's amazing ammonite slab, right beside the D900A - a short diversion but well worthwhile!) Following the Route Napoléon to Castellane we headed north east to Entrevaux (excellent aire at the far end of the station car park) where a visit to the imposing citadel was called for. Standing atop a rocky outcrop, it is a fascinating diversion. UK health and safety would shut it down immediately, but typi-



*Entrevaux Citadel*

cally, the French assume visitors have a slight degree of intelligence! Heading north to Guillames via the Gorges de Daluis, the fun began. Rather than widen the road, given the rock overhangs, narrow, one - way tunnels were bored through the rock. I would not want to have tackled this in anything larger than a Murvi! (Excellent riverside aire at Guillaumes behind the fire station, and offering a good walk up to the ruined fort).



*Gorge de Daluis*

Heading east, we had lunch in Varberg, a pleasant ski resort with a nice aire, but we pressed on to Isola - the town - another good aire beside a pleasant veloroute / footpath following the Tinée river. Rather than drive up to Isola ski resort, which was still in full swing, we headed up the Tinée valley towards the Col de la Bonette, apparently the highest metalled road in Europe. We got just beyond Vens before being turned back as the Col was still snowbound. We then drove south before picking up the N202 and heading back to [La Ferme de Castellane Campsite](#) as lights were flashing in the plumbing department!

This area was somewhat off our beaten track but it was well worth the detour, and plenty more to visit, with the [Valée des Merveilles](#) - prehistoric rock paintings and stunning walking country being definitely on our list, once the snow melts.

Last year we managed a 6 week tour around France so this year our aim was Italy for 7-8 weeks. First stop however was Holland to see the fantastic flower display at Koekenhof. We travelled on 26<sup>th</sup> April via Harwich-Hook then 35 miles to a great campsite at Rijnsburg named Koningshof, just 5 miles from the flowers. We visited on Kings Day national holiday where most of Holland and the people are in orange. We were amazed at the beautiful displays of various shapes, sizes colours etc. the result of planting over 7million bulbs annually, definitely worth the visit.

Our plan then was to cross Germany in a leisurely non motorway style, keeping away from the huge conurbations along the Rhine. We travelled north of this area via Utrecht, Munster, Paderborn, Kassel to Wurzburg (east of Frankfurt). The roads were quiet and across attractive rolling countryside of the Wald with lots of forest mixed with open country. We stayed in Stelplatz (like French Aires) and in a riverside camp at Kassel the home of the brothers Grimm of fairytale fame. The reason for aiming to Wurzburg was for the 200 miles along the Romantic Road to the border with Austria. This route was created after WWII as a means of attracting tourism and deliberately follows quiet country roads through many wonderful old towns many with ancient walls and buildings. In Rothenburg am Tauber we took the evening Night Watchman tour led by a very interesting guide who explained how the town was one of the lucky ones to avoid destruction during the closing weeks of WWII, all down to a German general being away and his deputy accepting the offer of the US forces for them to leave before a major bombardment.

As we approached the end of the Romantic Road we encountered snow in the fields beside the roads and up the mountains of the German Alps all around with a distinct chill in the air, but lovely to be out and about. We stayed for a few days in a lakeside camp near Fussen before the next stage. During this time we visited the amazing castles of King Ludwig II, known as mad King Ludwig. Linderhof was built as a castle for one person and Ludwig spent most of his



A selection of Keith's photos

time there. The other main castle is Neuschwanstein, new because it "replaced" the original nearby castle of his father. Neuschwanstein has global fame as the image used by Walt Disney and is just as fantastic in real life.

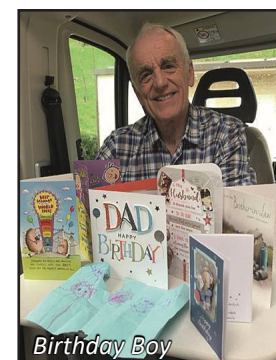
We used a route cribbed from an internet forum that avoided motorways, tolls, queues etc. through Austria to the Dolomite region of northern Italy. From Fussen via Reutte to Imst then Landeck to Merano. Thanks to a tip from Ingrid and Billy we stopped at the Hermitage camp at Merano a great place and a marked increase in the temperature from around 5C in Fussen through Austria to Italy in one day to 21C. The next section saw us to Lake Garda to camping La Rocca at Bardolino on the eastern shore, this time via a tip from a German couple we met at Merano camp (it's good to talk, even if Google translate is needed!). From here there is over 10 miles of cycling or walking along a lovely promenade beside the lake to other small towns and coffee shops, ice creams etc.

After 4 days at La Rocca we moved a whole 20 miles to the very bottom of the

lake near to Simeone and by pure luck it was the day the famous Mille Miglia road race came through (look at [www.1000miglia.it](http://www.1000miglia.it)) pure joy for all petrol heads, won in 1955 by Sterling Moss covering 1,000 miles in 10 hours! Nowadays a celebratory procession over 4 days with more than 400 cars from 1927-1957. For a while we were caught up in the procession with the roadside crowds similar to Tour de France waving flags and cheering us on in good humour.

At present we are in another mountain area, this time the Appenines at Sestola high up. Geared to skiing, but still a pleasant stopover. Today the 19<sup>th</sup> is my birthday, yes 21 again. The camp restaurant has a very good chef so we had a great lunch, now in recovery mode

before the next step down into Tuscany and who knows where in our remaining 4 weeks. To be continued.



Every year when we travel through France and Spain we repeatedly tell ourselves to make a note of the Aires we have particularly enjoyed and /or might be useful for others.

So in no particular order we have listed just a few. While France has an abundance of marvellous Aires, they are still not quite so plentiful in Spain . We have therefore concentrated on some of those we visited this past winter in Spain, finally including one we discovered on our way home through France. A full list can be found on our blog shortly to be sent to the website!

**JACA** - After a winter dash through France hurrying to avoid those Gilets Jaunes we were pleased to arrive just over the border in Spain at the town Aire of Jaca.

GPS . Lat 42.568298 long. -0.54519.  
Lat. N 42° 34' 6" long. W 0° 32' 43".

Easy to park, good enclosed dog walking area and a short walk uphill into town. It is on Park4night website marked with the campervan sign. The approach is through housing but do not be put off by this.



*Aire at Jaca*

**ALFAFARA** - In the Costa Blanca mountains there is a region called the Sierra de Mariola. We stayed at the Alfafara Camper Park, again on Park4night marked by a campervan sign.

GPS. lat. 38.78358 long. -0.552933.  
Lat. N 38° 47' 1" long. W 0° 33' 11"

Wonderful views. Directly in front of the door runs a Via Verde and lots of local good walking.



*Alfara camper park*

The hosts are Ricardo and Isabel a most delightful couple, who also run a clinic offering a variety of alternative therapies.

**RICOTE** - Ricote is a small friendly town in north Murcia . The Aire is part of a large informal car park with water, grey waste and cassette emptying. It is predominantly used only by camper vans and a few local pigeon fanciers who paint their pigeons amazing colours!

GPS lat. 38.151299 long. -1.3667  
Lat. N 38° 9' 5" long. W 1° 22' 0"

It is surrounded by lemon groves and enjoys excellent walking opportunities. There are buses into Murcia city.

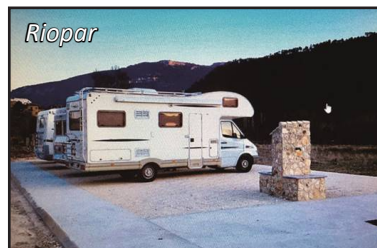


*Grace at Ricote by the lemon grove*

**RIOPAR** - Riopar is a small village in Castilla La Mancha, it is famous as being the source of the Mundo world river.

GPS. Lat. 38.496546 long. -2.421556  
Lat. N 38° 29' 48" long. W 2° 25' 18"

We found it in Park4night. Good scenery, lots of walks.



*Riopar*

**PUERTO LAPICE** - Usually on our return to the UK from Spain it's a quick dash. However on this occasion we ventured into Don Quixote country and stopped at Puerto Lapice. A must for all



*View from the van*

things Don Quixote including 3 windmills a short walk from the Aire.

GPS. lat. 39.3265 long. -3.48354  
lat.N 39° 19' 35" long. W 3° 29' 1"

**CASARES** - In the hills north of Marbella is a small town , Casares. We liked it enough to go twice, great views, great walking and more Griffon vultures than we could count.

GPS lat. 36.446098 long. -5.278290  
lat.N 36° 26' 46" long. W 5° 16' 42"



*Casares Aire overlooking the village*

**ERRETERIA** - Finally to avoid a really busy Aire at San Sebastián we went into the hills to Erreterria, just 30 minutes from San Sebastian.

GPS. N43° 16.076 W001° 54.071.

A woodland Aire , described in Vicarious Aires as having low trees and narrow roads, but no problem for Murvi owners!

Deciduous delight for dog owners avoiding pine trees and the processional caterpillars.



*Grace enjoying freedom of an aire 30 mins for San Sebastian*

Finally on our way home through France we found this delight in a small village. Aire La Madeleine Bouvet just off the D920 midway between Alencon & Chartres.



*Lake alongside the aire*

GPS . lat. 48.470901 long. 0.901995.  
Lat. N 48° 28' 15" long. E 0° 54' 7"

It is in the Vicarious Aires of France and Park4night. It is set on a small lake, very pretty and quiet.



Possibly, like me, sadly neglected, or maybe you are not sure where it is or even what it is!

We recently suffered a cracked windscreen, promptly and, I assumed, professionally replaced by a well known national windscreen replacement firm. That was when I came to fully appreciate the importance of this narrow and flimsy bit of plastic that Fiat hope will collect all the rain that might run to the bottom of the windscreen, and thus be drained below the engine.

But after the said professionals had been at my van I discovered that all the water that might run forward from roof and windscreen was actually flowing straight into the engine compartment.

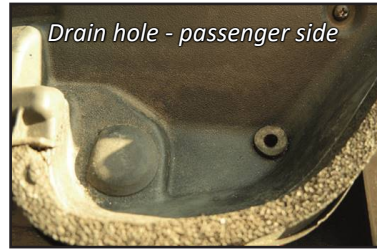
So here are my tips for making sure your scuttle is doing its job, referring just to the scuttle on my 2014 model, before the latest frontal facelift.

Firstly there are three drain holes. There are two very tiny ones. One is where the drivers side wiper spindle sits. The other is in a similar position on the opposite corner. Much of the water from the windscreen arrives at these two places and if these two tiny drain holes are blocked, that water will spill over straight into the engine compartment.

There is a large drain hole towards the drivers side of the main part of the scuttle tray. Conveniently a vacuum hose sucked an amazing amount of debris out of this hole, although it was still working, if somewhat inefficiently.



*Drain Hole - driver's side*



*Drain hole - passenger side*



*Main drain hole*

The scuttle is in two pieces with a centre joint. My glass replacement team had left this joint badly sealed so any other water



*Vulnerable centre joint*

finding its way into this part of the tray was falling straight onto the engine.

The other Fiat weakness, possible, I gather, even on a brand new vehicle, is that the rubber seal at the bottom of the windscreen can pull away allowing water to run behind it and avoid the scuttle tray altogether. This was another issue for me at both ends of this seal, resolved with a very careful and limited application of screen sealant.

To be fair I guess my neglect was already causing some problems even before windscreen replacement. Having cleared all the drain holes, then using a little sealing material, and also applying some sealing foam in other vulnerable points around the removable panels above the headlamps, I can now check that my engine compartment remains perfectly dry, even under the heaviest rainfall.

**MOBILE WIFI (MIFI) ... OH, AND ANOTHER THOUGHT**

**By Keith Ross**

Having wifi away from home is helpful and there are a number of solutions available. We use the following method to give us wifi almost anywhere including overseas.

Mobile wifi is referred to as **mifi**.

Our mifi unit is also fully mobile in that it is NOT fixed to our Murvi and can be taken and used anywhere. Ours has been used on a cruise ship , coach, train, car, whilst walking and of course in our Murvi. The only requirement is for a mobile phone signal. Our mifi is also small, about the size of a credit card and thickness of a mobile phone, therefore easily fits in a pocket.

We bought our mifi from Currys/PC World for a one-off cost of £30 and we pay £15 a month. (Current prices/models may be different now). This provides a reasonable amount of data download and is usable both in the UK and overseas. The unit is made by Huawei (yes that Chinese company) and has its own rechargeable internal battery like a phone, plus a SIM card. In our case the SIM is from THREE and effectively provides a mobile phone number but used for data not calls.



A number of devices can be paired to the one mifi unit. We have 3 mobiles, 2 ipads, 2 laptops. All paired without problem.

As an example of having internet literally on the move I've used live Google maps to provide street navigation whilst we (not me) were driving in a large city.

**And on a different subject.....**

We have a Morocco so the bed can be either a double or 2 singles which then provides a central aisle down the length of the van.

Recently just one off us was away in the van so only one bed needed and being lazy I just slept on the 'sofa' thereby not having the full bed width, as part is under the upright back section.

I then had a 'bright' idea (which Rex was delighted to hear about!) - I persuaded him to fit an additional locking position so that the sofa base can be slide out about 6 inches then locked, which provides a full width single bed whilst leaving maximum floor space.

Everyone seems to have their own way of getting fresh water into the tank of their Murvi. Probably the simplest and most universal approach in the sense it will work almost everywhere is a watering can and ideally a collapsible one to save on storage space. Perversely, I don't use one and rely on a range of methods which I will describe.

*Picture 1* is a funnel with a short length of hose taped to it. I use this frequently, topping up from a ten litre water container.

Where I can I much prefer a hose attached to a tap of course and in a few places you might come across a tap which needs a connection like the one shown in *Picture 2*.



*Picture 1*



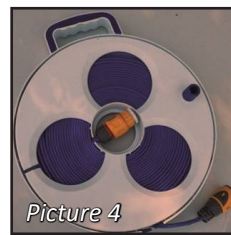
*Picture 2*

Other taps need a screw connector, most commonly 3/4", occasionally 1/2" and rarely 1" as shown in *Picture 3*. You may never need a 1" one but they are only a pound or so and take up little room.

My lay-flat hosepipe (*Picture 4*) has been in use for six years and is still sound. I



*Picture 3*



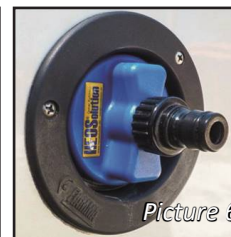
*Picture 4*

think it pays to buy a good one, mine was around £30, cheaper ones don't seem to last. I don't think it is technically food grade but I always run the water through it before filling to remove any water chemicals might have leached into.

You will see my hose has female Hoze-lock connectors at both ends. The tap connector goes on one end and the other into a HEOS cap shown in *Picture 5* and when fitted in *Picture 6*. This is a useful device which makes filling on your own much easier. I bought the wrong one and the bayonet "tangs" were too long but they were easily cut down with a hacksaw.



*Picture 5*



*Picture 6*

The only problem with this cap when used with a lay-flat hose is the weight of

the hose can create a right angled bend, especially when the water pressure is low, preventing rapid filling. The solution is a short length of garden hose with a female Hoze-lock fitting at each end and a male to male adaptor to allow the hose to be connected. *Picture 7* shows this on its own and in use in *Picture 8*.



*Picture 7*



*Picture 8*

A very few aires in France and possibly elsewhere although I've only ever seen them in France require a male to male connector.

These are the only instances where a watering can doesn't work! Some of these water points have no control over the water flow, as soon as you introduce the adaptor the water starts and sometimes at a very high pressure. To avoid getting too wet a male to male adaptor with a tap is the answer - *Picture 9*.



*Picture 9*

**SHOWER NOT DRAINING?**

**By Wendy Palmer & Lin Powell**

Since we have had our present van the process of taking a shower was hampered by the slow flow of water down the waste pipe.

Finally enough was enough and having read John Laidler's tome of the action he took we leapt into action.



*Wiggling under the van*

Firstly a wriggle manoeuvre under the van to be confronted by a white right an-

gle pipe connected to plug hole and a pipe leading to waste tank.

The white pipe came away swiftly, and proved not to be the culprit.

However lurking in the pipe leading to waste tank was a black rubber bit, I think the technical term is a non return valve. This was swiftly removed.



*The non-return valve*

So the test....and a kettle full of water disappeared swiftly.

So fingers crossed.....