



THE BUMPER LOCKDOWN EDITION

Vans at the southern Christmas meet at Alresford



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EDITORIAL

By Adrian Sumption

Well, what a difference a few weeks and a global pandemic makes. Far from having to resort to my usual pleading for articles I have instead been inundated with interesting articles for this newsletter.

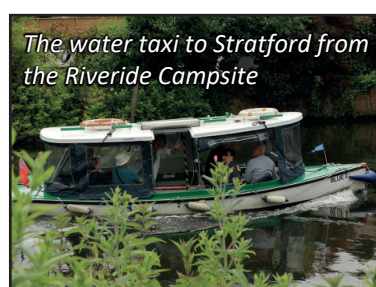
I guess it was predictable that many of you would combat the frustration of lockdown by putting pen to paper, or rather finger to keyboard, to write something about your travels (now a distant memory) or how you've made changes to your van. So, thank you to all of you who have contributed – it's made for a bumper edition and hopefully it will provide some light relief and a reminder of better times, both in the past and, hopefully, in the future too.

So, what have you all been doing instead of being out on your travels? For a while Karin and I found various jobs that had been hanging round for a while that we could fill our time with, but after a couple of weeks we found we'd done most of what we were able to, so we had to find other things to do. One of our problems is that we store our van at a C. & C.C. site and haven't been able to access it to do any work on it since we got home from France in March (just in time, phew!). One upside however is that our allotment is looking better than it has for years. But

the other side of the coin is that I've been spending lots of time woodturning bowls and the house is now full of them. Like many of you I guess, we have rapidly become experts on Zoom. I've had committee meetings, choir practices, family get-togethers, online dinner parties, sing-arounds with friends – you name it, if you can do it on Zoom, we've done it.

One of the biggest casualties of the lockdown as far as the club is concerned has been the cancellation of the Spring meet and AGM. We were all set to have the best attended meet ever when the committee were forced to make the difficult decision to cancel. As you will know this was to be a grand celebration of our 10th anniversary as a club, so we'll have to look forward to an 11th anniversary celebration next year instead.

We're already planning the 2021 Spring meet and AGM and it will be a rerun of



what was planned for this year at the Riverside Caravan and Camping Park near Stratford-on-Avon. As planned there will also be the ceilidh and hopefully the backstage tours at the Royal Shakespeare Company, although the RSC is in a perilous financial situation at the moment.

The only other plans the club has at the moment are for the November meet at the Hendre Mynach campsite near Barmouth from 5th – 9th November, lockdown permitting.



Brian Biffin who is organising the meet is currently marooned in SE France but has confirmed details with the site, so we very much hope this will be an opportunity for many of us to finally meet up again.

Until that time comes, stay safe and keep well.

The island of Corsica only became part of France in 1769 which in historical terms isn't long ago. For the previous fourteen years they had enjoyed a brief period of independence after defeating the forces of Genoa who had ruled over Corsica for several centuries. This history explains why Corsica does not feel like mainland France. Corsica has a distinct character of its own, different to the rest of the country.

From a motorhome perspective, Corsica also differs markedly from mainland France in having few aires. Wild camping is generally discouraged and most carparks by the coast have height barriers.

A great many ferries serve Corsica. The main French port is Nice and from here to Bastia take about twelve hours. The alternative is to leave from Italy, either Genoa or for the shortest crossing of about four hours, Livorno. The Livorno crossing was the one we used in May 2019 as it was the easiest to do with a dog.

Almost all ferries to Corsica, whether from France or Italy land at Bastia, which has the unexpected distinction of being France's second busiest port after Calais.

What you won't meet on Corsica are British motorhomes. We spent a month there and we saw only one or two. Much more common on the ferry were British caravans, but we didn't spot many of these on the road either. I suspect most head for one campsite then stay there, exploring from the site by car. This is sensible because the roads on the island are challenging in places. Corsican roads are not for those who suffer from vertigo. Steep drops of several hundred metres and questionable barriers are commonplace. It might be sensible to tour Corsica going clockwise around the island as this will keep you as far away from the cliffs as possible. Not being sensible folk, we went around it anti-clockwise on our trip. The choice is yours!

Cap Corse is the finger of land which stretches north from Bastia. There are a few campsites on the eastern side, but we found the beaches here heavily covered in mounds of eel grass. On the tip of Cap Corse is one of the best aires on Corsica.

It has no services but is free and in a spectacular location.



The coastal footpath running around the top of Cap Corse makes for pleasant and mostly level walking. Called the *Sentier des Douaniers* it was used by customs officers to deter smugglers. Further back in time pirates were the threat and the Genoese built towers all around the coast to watch for them. Sixty seven remain and the one near the top of Cap Corse is built from green serpentine rock.

The point on the top is a sentry post dating back to WW2. Note the eel grass on the rocks.



The port of Centuri on the west side of Cap Corse is attractive and filled with restaurants. You could probably spend a week here and eat out every day in a different one.

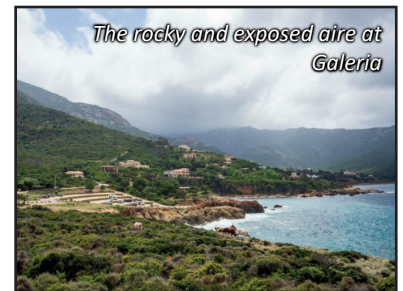


My preferred app for finding places to stay is CamperContact which listed nothing for Centuri but we found Camping Isulottu using Google Maps. Later I discovered the campsite is on the Park4Night app and website. A useful lesson not to rely on just one source of information!

Calvi is a major town on the north coast of Corsica and worth visiting. Like Ajaccio

and Bonifacio in the south, it has a huge fortified citadel overlooking the harbour. It is a solidly built place. The British Navy hurled thirty thousand cannonballs at it in 1794 with little effect. There are lots of campsites on the edge of the town.

Continuing down the west coast at the village of Galéria you can stop at another well positioned aire. It is just a car park without facilities and will cost you twenty euros but the location justifies the price. Facing west, you have the chance of spectacular sunsets.



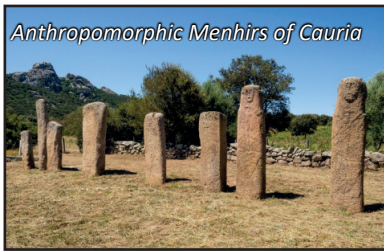
The roads south from Galéria going over the Col de la Croix are spectacular.



The Calanques de Piana is a well-known and popular stretch of road. If you can avoid weekends and busy times of the year, it will be a pleasant drive but be prepared to meet people walking in the middle of the road to take photographs and parked on every available space.

There are a huge number of ancient sites on Corsica, mostly in the south of the island. Filitosa is probably the most famous prehistoric site on Corsica and was occupied for over five thousand years. The main draw here are the anthropomorphic menhirs which have human faces. Not far away are the Megaliths of Cauria, a collection of different sites, including more anthropomorphic menhirs.

Continued overleaf...



Anthropomorphic Menhirs of Cauria

A good base for exploring this region is Camping Campèole L'Avena, found just behind a pleasant beach. This is a good site, level, a motorhome service point and not too crowded.

On the southern tip of the island is the port of Bonifacio. Finding somewhere reasonable to stay near here is a challenge. The campsite we finally chose charged ten euros per night for our dog!



The Bastion at Bonifacio



The Eagle's Nest sits atop of Corte

The limestone cliffs on the seaward side of the port are striking. But go later in the day than we did if you want to avoid trying to photograph them while looking directly into the sun.

The interior of the island is as interesting as the coast. Zonza and the nearby Col de Bavella, where you can stay overnight, are worth exploring. The cultural heart of Corsica is Corte which was the capital of the independent Corsica. If you have strong legs, you can climb to the top of the fortress to the aptly named Eagles' Nest. The town has excellent restaurants.

The east coast of Corsica is mostly fairly low-lying and with plenty of beaches but if you want beaches Sardinia is probably where to head.

With only a few aires and the campsites often charging high prices by mainland standards, Corsica isn't a cheap place to visit, but it has a unique character, great food and exceptional scenery and coast. We spent a full month there, from the middle of May to the middle of June 2019 and found plenty to see and do. You could certainly do it quicker and perhaps include Sardinia as well in your trip. The ferry for Sardinia leaves from Bonifacio, conveniently the other end of the island from Bastia allowing you to explore the full length of the island before hopping over to the next one. For the really adventurous, you could even get a ferry from Sardinia on to Sicily.

- John Laidler is the author of two books on travels by motorhome. *Two Go to Spain* and *Two Go to Italy*. Both are available as paperbacks and eBooks on Amazon.

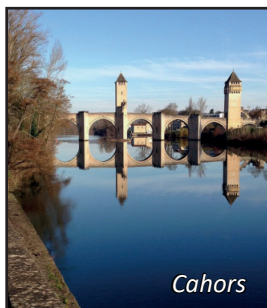
OUR SHORTEST EVER TRIP TO SPAIN - 6 NIGHTS

By Penny McCallig

Feb 21st: Arrived in France. South Korea starts lockdown. Follow our usual route south, stopping 1st night at Bonneval where the small town car park has motorhome spaces and all services.

Feb 22nd: Cross country on 'Route du Ble' where wheat is already sprouting, then motorway towards Cahors and space by the river. Walked over the bridge to get tourist info just as office was closing.

Amazing meal in small cosy restaurant: chestnut and mushroom soup, scallop pastries, delicious fish stew, tarte tatin oozing buttery caramel and fruity apple as the chef brought it straight from the oven. Concerns in UK are about flooding.



Cahors

Feb 23rd: Strolled around river along road closed to traffic on Sunday mornings, over quaint old bridge to visit cathedral and other sights. Continued south over rolling hills; vines and fruit trees in the fields. Andrew had a great time flying his planes

in a designated field. Spent the night at Foix alongside motley collection of hippies' vans. People arrive in UK from cruise ship with infected passengers.

Feb 24th: Climbed towards Pyrenees and Puymorens where a new Camperpark had all services up and running. Enjoyed snowy mountain

views and walks. Outbreaks of virus in Italy. Drove on, through Cadi tunnel to small town, Prats de Lluçanes, camper stop with hookup etc.

Feb 25th: All went pear shaped! Completed local walk then Andrew became very unwell. Anxious it was related to his prostate cancer, decided to go straight back home. Corona virus cases reported in Catalonia and other parts of Spain.

Feb 26th: A very windy drive. People arriving back in UK from northern Italy



Mmm.....

'advised' to self quarantine if showing flu like symptoms.

Feb 27th: Relieved to get home safely after heavy security checks by the army on leaving Calais. Andrew spends next 3 nights in hospital before they turf him out, probably to free up beds for impending pandemic patients. He was soon back to his usual cheery self.

So that was our trip, 6 weeks plus reduced to 6 days! Just as well we returned although at the time we had little idea of what was to happen and how life was to change. We'll try again once it's safe to do so.



Enjoying life..... in lockdown



Having enjoyed a 5 week break in Spain in December when Covid 19 was an occurrence in China and we were bemused to see panic buying in supermarkets on the tv screen, we returned to a wet England.

Our early return to these shores was to pick up a new dog, Phin, a beautiful eleven week old border collie. Then just a little pup of a few kilos, he is now a long legged giant of many kilos, although we don't know the exact weight as he is too heavy to lift and stand on scales and the vet is shut.

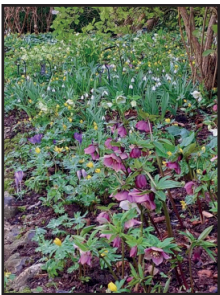
However, as he is to be a well travelled boy, we decided to get him used to the van ASAP.

So off we went to the Caravan and Motorhome site at Alderstead Heath , not too far from our home in Hampshire and a good base to visit 2 neighbouring National Trust properties.

Firstly, Chartwell, Winston's country pad, a beautiful setting with great views which we were fortunate to enjoy on a beautiful sunny day.

The second property was Polesden Lacey near Dorking, popular as a beautiful house and estate of an Edwardian socialite and marginally our favourite of the two.

Again we were blessed with another sunny day to enjoy the lovely walks there and allow the dogs off the lead , so good for the ugly sisters (sorry , Lola and Gracie) and bouncy, gangly Phin. A further stroll around the lovely seasonal winter garden was rounded off by a welcome visit to the all important dog friendly cafe .



Both places are so well worth visiting and which, even the unfortunate brush with a Volvo near Box Hill, (requiring a new toilet cassette access door - see 'An Enforced Lockdown Task' right) couldn't spoil.

Already feeling a bit deprived after our shortened winter break, our weekend "aways" made it worthwhile by helping Phin get used to the van and camping and our other two precious pets Lola and Gracie, get used to him....well, maybe!

Phin's own tent proved a good idea as he was just too awkward and puppyish to contain for any length of time in the van and too young to undertake walks of anything more than 30 minutes. He did



come in at night though as it was March! So buoyed by this success off we went again to another Caravan and Motorhome site, Blackheath Farm , even though by this time the virus and the impending lockdown were looming.

This site is close to Dover ferry terminal and tunnel so great for overnight before and after travelling to France. We decided having looked at the white cliffs from the boat many times we would have a closer look and check it out for those over-nighters.

A short ride from the campsite soon found us upon those famous white cliffs



and enjoying a bright if windy walk from the N.T car park to the lighthouse with its amazing views , one of which being the most unusual site of a virtually empty Port, bar some lorries.



At this point lockdown was just a few days away.

The next day we went to Sandwich and what a delight. A Us naval gun boat with

an interesting history, parked near Sandwich town centre.



Somewhere else we had discovered which is well worth a visit and where we enjoyed another sunny walk across the links golf course to the sea. However, arriving back at site we were all told we had to leave in the morning. Then there was a mass evacuation of all camper vans and caravans including us.

Lockdown was now upon us and home we went.

Thank goodness we are so very fortunate to have a lovely long garden where Phin can gallop up and down and which he does at every opportunity!

Many jobs, long forgotten or postponed have been done and still the list goes on.

Enjoying the house and garden in such a leisurely way at a time we are most often found still in Spain, has been fun but now we are so looking forward to being able to get out and about and the old normal! Murvi normal, that is.

But we feel we must say a big , big thank you to the N.H.S and care home staff who have risked their lives for us, being in lockdown seems a very small sacrifice to make.

AN ENFORCED LOCKDOWN TASK

Having travelled tens of thousands of miles, nay hundreds of thousands even, throughout Europe, without mishap apart from the odd breakdown, we clipped our wings to Redhill, Surrey, this March, a mere hour and a half from home.

Having spent a glorious day at two National Trust places, Chartwell and Polesden Lacey we foolishly let Tina Satnav guide us back to the campsite via beautiful Box Hill, taking us down a single track lane with passing places.

Continued overleaf...

Ah ...I hear you say. Well that's not what our canine friends in the back heard us say.

More like "What's that stupid twit doing ?" (for publication purposes only, it was a slightly more embellished twit word used here. So for Twit please feel free to insert your own 'twit')

"No, surely he will stop, he can't get past"

"Well he must see us; we're big enough"

"Blimey, he's keeping coming. Pull in as close as you can".

We did and stopped.

First big mistake; Should have stayed in the lane.

4 x 4 Volvo closing his mirrors in , decides to keep coming and squeeze by.

Crunch Traffic piles up, we edge out up the lane to where we can safely stop.

Twit comes sauntering up grinning, posh twit like.

"It's okay, you've only brushed me, it will polish out. Not to worry!"

Off he goes looking very pleased with himself for being so nice to someone he clearly considered to be, an anxious old lady. Ha!

Second mistake; Should have taken photo of van there and then and the dummy driving the Volvo (remember that advert?)

Third mistake; should have let the 6 inch tall ginger thug called

Gracie rip his throat out which she was raring to do.

Actually we didn't really realise the extent of the damage as we were more concerned with possible damage to the rear light and body of the van which were unmarked. The damage to the toilet cassette access door looked minimal and glueable. Nothing that a bit of gaffer tape wouldn't hold together until we got home.



The damage repaired



THIS ONE'LL SEE ME OUT

By Geoff Wilkinson

Investment decisions: you know the thing - I guess we all have our inbuilt, default algorithm for deciding whether or not to buy something. Some obvious questions flick almost subconsciously through the brain. Do I like it? Do I want it? Do I need it? Can I afford it? And so on. But, then - at some point - you reach a 'certain age' and then suddenly the first and over-riding question mutates of it's own volition to: will this one see me out?

We eventually reached this point with our first beloved Murvi sometime in the autumn of 2017 at which point our van was approaching 9 years old. So (with half a mind on the anticipated lead time for a new Murvi) the 'new default' logic tripped in. How much longer before I fall off the perch? Will this Murvi last me until then?

The answer to question 2, we persuaded ourselves, was "no". So... call Rex, have a chat, assess some options, do a deal and pay a deposit. The last step we completed on 7 December 2017. Then we breathed a sigh of relief. A tough decision: evaluated confronted and resolved. Now we just had to sit tight and wait a bit. Our replacement van should arrive just about in time to retire the old van on or about its 10th birthday in late 2018. But then something happened.

Well, actually, a few things seemed to happen in short order and they all conspired to obstruct and delay the ability of Fiat to meet the demand for Ducatos. The main thrust of the problem was the bundle of changes Fiat were implementing

to ensure compliance with the new 'Euro 6' regulations (which set the maximum limits for harmful gases and particulate matter a vehicle is allowed to emit). This seemed to involve Fiat having to re-engineer their engine production capacity to incorporate additional technology (including AdBlue) into their engines.

So, it seemed, throughout the whole of 2018, there were no Ducatos to be had (even for 'ready' money). What to do? Yes, we toyed with some other options: a Ford or a Merc? Rex also came to the rescue somewhat in committing to honour the trade-in deal we had previously agreed - whatever the delay. And so, having specced a Ducato and given that we still had the 'old' Murvi in our possession, we decided to just hang on... surely it would all be sorted during 2019. Wouldn't it?

No it wouldn't. During 2019 the delivery problems persisted - now, further compounded by Fiat's decision to withdraw its range of metallic paint options (apparently, they sell more Ducatos as delivery vans, police vans and ambulances, so its speeds up their logistics dramatically to focus on white!).

Progressively, throughout 2019, it dawned on us that some compromise would have to be made to unblock the process. Alright then... why not just get a white van and have it resprayed. OK, it'll cost a bit more, but just think: you can have any colour you want. Hmm... but, what colour DO I want? Is there anything more daunting than having an infinite choice?

I feel it's time to cut this long story short. Suffice to say that (as far as we know) we now own the only Murvi Murello in BMW Melting Silver. We collected it from Ivybridge on Friday 20 March (three days before the initial Covid-19 lockdown) since when it has been SORNed and now stands forlornly on our drive awaiting, well... who knows what?



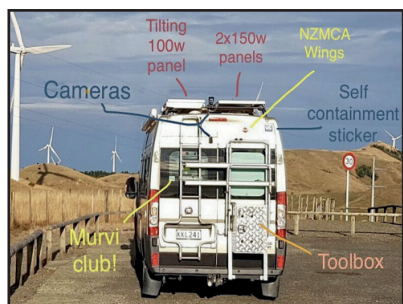
Postscript.

The long lead time we experienced at least provided the advantage of being able to pick more brains amongst Murvi Club members. So, I would particularly like to thank Roger Pepper, Alan Major and Robert Flitney for their help and advice in nailing down some choices.

Most “RV” owners, not just Murvi people, will at some point modify their vehicle to make it better fit their travelling needs. Ideas thought up or borrowed that make life a little more convenient. There’s no right or wrong, but these are the things we’ve done; they very likely won’t suit anybody else!

Stuff

The handle I refer to is a handle at the rear of the sliding door, to help pull it shut from inside, idea stolen from Ronnie Leadbitter. Mine was the grab-handle off a Passat. Another Leadbitter invention he helped me with, was the all-round shower curtain to minimise the water damage.



We fitted two rear view cameras. One on the roof rack gives permanent rear view on a monitor fitted over the rear view mirror. The other, on the rear door, pointing down, displays on the Kenwood head we fitted, when reverse is selected. It aids parking, even with the Fiamma bike rack and cover fitted. Both are hard-wired and sheathed, which involved removing much of the bathroom cabinetry and panelling.

We fitted an IKEA basket kit in the wardrobe because we don’t use hanging space and the baskets are handy for loading our clothes into the van. We have a small drying frame that hangs from the shower roof light, in transit, for drying wet gear. Duvalets add more comfort to the bed.

The table leg bracket was removed after clattering my ankle too many times! We use a Fiamma folding base and aluminium leg, which you can use outside too.



Solar

Over the six years since we bought our 2009 Morello, the solar system has developed and morphed through necessity. The main issue was getting enough power to run our all-electric fridge, continually, off grid. NZ is really geared up for “Freedom Camping”. Our Varta Silver stop-start 100Ah batteries lasted for 6 years and 6 months. But they needed a hefty 15.8V charge to keep them at peak. I’m on my third solar controller, a 30A EPEVER MPPT, which



delivered the voltage, but when in ‘Bulk’ mode, it would trip the over-voltage protection of the Webasto heater! I tried various voltage regulator setups but I could only get around it by turning on the heating later in the day or fiddling the controller!

Our current setup is two, American, Full-River 105A AGM batteries.

Two 150w panels feed the MPPT, reprogrammed to 14.8V, One on a fabricated aluminium tilting bracket stuck to the roof with Tiger Seal. The other is fixed on the roof rack.

A further 100w panel sits on a tilting bracket I made, also on the roof rack, feeding a second, smaller controller. A Trik-L-Start (Winnebago fitment) charges the starter battery at midday, from the controller.



Our van had a 12V microwave, which we only ever used to store bread! I sold it and in its place, above the hob, we store a Crock-pot slow cooker and used the heavy microwave cabling to run a 1500W sin-wave inverter.

It gives enough to power Mrs B’s electric hair brush to dry her hair.

Kiwis like their coffee and whilst we have a hand grinder, we can power the Nespresso in sunlight. The two controllers work in parallel when we need it,

giving us 400w, more than enough to run the slow cooker through the day.

I then had to make a door with a piano hinge to cover the space. Rather than match it to the existing doors, we covered it in a patterned stick-on fabric, which we echoed on the fridge door. The theme on the fabric is coffee, naturally!



Gas

LPG became a problem soon after we moved to NZ. I was able to get a US adaptor to fill the fixed tank from the pump. But the tank was getting rusty, and when I started to investigate refurbishment, I realised that my setup was illegal. The tank is not NZ compliant, which risks a \$10k fine! It is very difficult to get a fixed, non-propulsion tank certified here. Most RV gas is bottled and stored in a vented locker.

This took a leap of faith to overcome and some “left of field” thinking from Mandy! We only needed gas for the hob, and we didn’t need such a big tank. As you know, there is no unaccounted space in a Murvi to fit a locker! So I purged the tank and removed it with its subframe. [Health warning: LPG is dangerous, inflammable and can freeze your hand off; don’t try this at home]. This saved about 25Kg, not including the weight of LPG! I removed the hob and worktop and found a matching worktop. My neighbour used the old top as a template and routed out a new one without the hole for the grill. We purchased a Dometic Oregon 2 burner alcohol stove, primarily designed for boats. We carry 2 litres of meths and can easily restock at hardware stores. We gave up the grill, gained some storage and the stove works well.

So this gives us an uncluttered work top. We store the stove in the locker next to the sliding door and either use it inside, where the hob was, or mostly we use it outside when the weather is good. It keeps the cooking smells and excessive heat away from the van. More recently,

Continued overleaf...

I've added an aluminium tool box locker on the back which takes a portable Gasmate BBQ and small LPG bottle and our bike gear. It hinges down from the tow bar, to open the back door and doubles as a step to help load the bikes on the rack! As the BBQ is not a fixed appliance, we no longer require gas certification.



King springs, which are heavy duty replacements and stand nearly 70 mm taller. I needed to replace the tyres last year so went for slightly oversize Toyo Open Country all terrains (LT 225/75-16 116R).

The overall effect is much more secure roadholding, less rolling and pitching and fairly reasonable off-road ability. The van sits

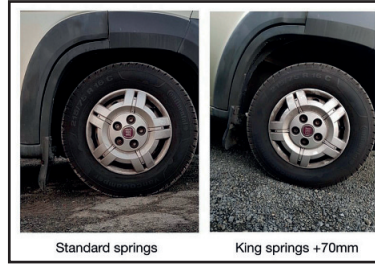
level too. Fiat have upgraded the springs on more recent vans.

We took a trip to the Motorhome show in Auckland in February, just before we were locked down. One of the stalls sold twin cartridge water filter units so we grabbed one because ours was the original fitment! We also got an in-line filter for our water hose. It never occurred to me previously to stop contamination getting into your tank in the first place, as you travel around.

So that's it. Purists might say it's no longer a Murvi! The result is a considerably modified RV which meets our needs. We like walking and MTB, so it can take us and our bikes well into the back country, completely off grid for days on end. I wonder if you could convert it to 4x4.....

Suspension

Our van had air assisters fitted on the rear but in common with many Ducatos it sat very low at the front. We got it stuck off-road a couple of times; the low ground clearance didn't suit NZ loose-surface roads either. After much research I bought a pair of Australian



LOCKDOWN CAPERS: SHOWER ROOM PRIVACY WINDOW FILM REPLACEMENT

By Angela Emuss

Over the years, the Murvi fitted privacy film has, on our 2010 Morello, shrunk and cracked and eventually become very unsightly. Thanks to Kate Foster, who gave us the balance of some film she used



at her home and with the incentive of having copious amounts of time in lockdown, we finally tackled the job!

The first task was to remove the old white film. This was achieved with the aid of a hair dryer on low, and a wallpaper scraper, though it came off in bits. We were then left with a window covered in what looked like contact adhesive and we needed a perfectly clean surface for the new film to self-adhere by static.



Well, we started by using "Goo Gone", "Sticky Stuff Remover", cellulose thinners, white spirit, WD40 – none of which made any real inroads, and Angela gave up after ten minutes! However, Robert persevered and from a secret stash of Boots Nail Varnish Remover in the garage (don't ask!) and elbow grease, he eventually removed the gunge.

The next stage was to make a template from brown paper, and Angela used a pudding bowl to get the curved corners accurately cut. Then, once we were satisfied the template was a good fit, we cut the film, using a scalpel on a self-heal

cutting board, and applied it to the window. The instructions to spray the glass with water and then use a plastic spreader thingy to ease out the bubbles etc., was relatively easy, once the top corners were lined up.



Les Bunce's Blog

Les has had a variety of camper vans from his first VW in 1977 to his present Morello. Les and his wife Heather are adventurous travellers and Les says "We're not fine-detail planners for our travels and rarely do more than get a return air ticket somewhere or have a vague idea of where we're going in the van unless we've set out to

walk a long distance path". Les regularly writes a blog of their travels and you can see his latest blog [HERE](#).

If you want to read more about the trip click on the arrow to the left of The Traveling Buncebury's at the top of the page and then on the next page's top left click on the three bar icon. That will take you to the Archive where all the Italy/Sicily blogs are

listed under May 2019. If anyone has questions please feel free to email me on lesandheatherbunce@gmail.com There is an option on the blog to post a question but Les gets no notification if someone has, so best not to use it.

We loved Sicily and perhaps reading this blog of our trip will encourage some of you to visit the area at some time too.

Well, that is an interesting question!

The answer is - 'When it is the one living next door to us'!

This is a review of the MURVI badged Camper that lives beside us.

The current owner saw it before buying it, choosing it for being 'attractively unassuming and functional' (I quote), has read my review, editing where necessary, and given permission for the photos. Both review and images are aimed squarely at the MURVI Club.

Looking at it from outside, it looks pretty standard, if not in the first flush of youth. The badges are in the usual place, although there is the addition of a Disabled sign on the back, asking for space to be left for a ramp to be lowered..... Really? via the kitchen? in a MURVI?



.....Maybe look inside then?

Opening the sliding door we find to our left, the standard 'Captain' seats, upholstered in blue leather. Tight to the left is the little unit that all MURVIs of this vintage have, for books, or odds and ends, and capped with the useful lidded storage box for keys and things. But the lifting flap for the night time coffee table is missing. As we use ours to keep everything on the shelves, that would be a loss.



Scanning to the right is a long sofa-bed. Not entirely in MURVI colour ways, and not quite to their design either, being completely straight without the corner

piece. Above are the standard carpeted wall cupboards offering a true MURVI feel, but turning further to the right the wardrobe, whilst adorned with a tv in the 'right' place, and (a defunct) Zig unit, also has a rocker switch for the purpose of monitoring the battery status. The layout of the cupboard doors is unusual, particularly for this model of Morello.



Looking into the galley there is a very non-Murvi cupboard door facing into the living area beneath the kitchen worktop.

Stepping up into the 'Van and looking into the kitchen there is a decent sized 3-way fridge with a solid work top above, while to the right, beneath the kitchen window is a glazed two burner hob. There is no sign of a kitchen sink. Strangely, the fridge has only been wired for battery or mains use - the gas pipe hangs forlornly awaiting connection.

Looking to the left, behind the wardrobe, there is no door to the ablution room - only a shower curtain. In there is the usual Thetford WC, with a substantial looking corner unit supporting a circular wash bowl and tap. The original MURVI high wall units remain intact.

This is indeed an interesting but strange beast! and so perhaps it's story should be told...

Bought some years ago as a Murvi Morello, a subsequent owner had a need to accommodate a disabled daughter. Rashly (in my opinion) instead of purchasing something more appropriate, they ripped out the entire kitchen area of the MURVI in order to fit a rear facing ramp (hence the disabled sign on the outside of the rear door).

A decision was taken to retain the toilet facility, but all other floor mounted units at the rear of the vehicle were - apparently - removed at this time, including the sink, cooker, fridge and the water storage tank as well as removing the wardrobe. They also took out the hot water system, leaving the Eberspächer dangling beneath, but not plumbed into anything. The Murvi bed was replaced with a futon style sofa-bed. Possibly the sink in the WC was replaced at this time although it seems more likely to have been installed later.

The 'Van was apparently run for some time like this, as what would appear to have been an almost empty van.

A subsequent owner reputedly paid a boat chandler to fit some new units, in order to return the vehicle to it's status as a camping vehicle.

Continued overleaf...

This included a new wardrobe and floor mounted kitchen units. Probably the new sink was put into the toilet room at this stage with a small cold water storage tank beneath, and a new water filler point inserted into the outer wall. There was no replacement washing up facility put into the kitchen region.

At no point has anyone refixed the Eberspächer. Neither has a door been put between the galley and the WC, this being left as the curtain mentioned in the 'review'.

The leisure battery facility only appears to power the reading lights over the bed, so this 'Van is best used with a hookup, unless for perhaps a single night. A small heater would be needed for cold weather, and although the current owner has managed washing up with a bowl and the

small sink in the WC, given the lack of dedicated dishwashing space, a campsite with washing up facilities would be preferred. Personally, having to boil a kettle for warm water in which to wash would indicate a good quality toilet block as well. The tap over the sink is not a combined tap and shower head - and in any case, only the cold water is available.

I think the lesson from this is that if one is buying a pre-loved MURVI - and let's face it, many of us can't run to a new vehicle - then it is *essential* that you go and look at it - even if it is at the other end of the country! Not only is this clearly not a MURVI in the true sense of the word, but it is not in my humble opinion even a 'proper' camper - more a Day Bus. However, the current owner has enjoyed holidays in it and been perfectly happy

with what it offers, although is planning to sell it on this summer.

For MURVI aficionados it has seriously limited camping facilities, especially if you want to do wild camping, unless the fridge was connected to the gas supply for use off grid. But even then, washing up and personal ablutions would be less than convenient.

The retention of the name badges may - possibly - have been done so that there was no tampering with the external body-work with the subsequent risk of water damage, but they leave a very misleading expectation of what could - or should - be inside the vehicle. Anyone not familiar with MURVI could look at this one and be put off the brand for life!

As ever, Buyer Beware!!

NEW YEAR AT ROBIN HOOD'S BAY

By Maggie & Steve Butler

It is hard to believe that the last time we stayed in our van was at New Year. Ever since we first owned a campervan we have gone away for New Year (not just to avoid embarrassing parties and hugging people you don't really know - when you could hug ...). This year, as for the previous six years, we were at Robin Hood's Bay on the spectacular North Yorkshire coast - a favourite place of ours. At least, not quite in Robin Hood's Bay as there is nowhere to stay actually in the bay but we can stay within walking distance.



For the first couple of years we found a lovely CL just above Fylingthorpe with glorious views across the bay, but they closed so we had to find somewhere else. We did find another CL further up

the hill, but it was a particularly stormy winter and we nearly got blown away! So since then we have booked in at Middlewood Farm Holiday Park, which is a bigger campsite down the hill. It has only limited views but is an easy walk to the bay and to the bus stop in Fylingthorpe.

Tradition has it that we always visit Whitby by bus on New Years Eve - except sometimes New Years Eve is on a Sunday so no bus. It is possible to walk or cycle Amazingly, the weather is always glorious, although having said that it never will be again of course. We walk around the town and out onto the piers and have fish and chips for lunch at our special restaurant (not the Magpie, for those who know Whitby). And to date we are still able to climb the 199 steps to



the interesting Church of St Mary with its wonderful Christmas Tree festival and to the iconic Abbey.

New Year's Day, when the weather is also surprisingly good, we walk down to the Bay where, for a charity donation, you can have bacon sandwiches and coffee cooked outside beside the sea. Providing the tide is out, the walk along the beach is great and very busy with families enjoying the sea air. And so back to the van where the slow-cooker produces our meal and we give thanks for our cosy Murvi. It can be very cold on the east coast!

Well, the van sits in our drive now, waiting to be used - hopefully before Robin Hood's Bay for New Year 2020, which is already booked.



A Rewritten Morello Manual

Alex Good was forced to self-isolate in late March and spent 23 days in his Morello. Rather than succumbing to boredom he spent some of the time reading the Morello manual and the manuals of other fitted

equipment and then combined them into one comprehensive manual. This is of course specific to Alex's van although many elements will be common to other Murvi vans, although he would hasten to add that he cannot guarantee its complete accuracy.

You can find a PDF copy of the rewritten manual [HERE](#) on the Murvi Club website. Alex would also be happy to forward an amendable word version of the manual to anyone who is interested. Please contact Alex at alexandergood@me.com.

MY LOCKDOWN PROJECT

By Phil Greenwood

My lock-down project was to build a garage for our Murvi. We keep the van at home on a patch of land to the rear of our back garden. When we first got it I built a wooden stockade (basically a high fence) round the plot for security reasons. That worked well but it did not keep out the snow, rain or falling leaves, so we bought a custom made cover from Protec. Again this did the job required but it was very difficult to put on and take off, even though I am tall and fit. Indeed uncov-

ering the van was such a pain that we didn't go out in it as often as we could.

Building a proper garage was an ideal task for lockdown as it took me three weeks of hard work. I did not buy any materials at all, but used pieces of wood I had hanging about in my shed. Also, just before lockdown, our next door neighbour moved away and bequeathed me the storage for his boat. This consisted of a large tarpaulin supported by a framework of plastic water pipes. I dismantled and re-erected the framework inside the

stockade- raising the height by attaching the structure to the stockade three feet off the ground, and I supported it with wooden planks. I extended the height of the doors and the tarpaulin made a roof.

The resulting garage resembles a Nissen Hut and the support structure looks rather Heath Robinson but now I can drive the Murvi straight in and out of the garage without any palaver. A job well done.



THE PROSPECT OF THE ALL-ELECTRIC CAMPER VAN

By Steve Lax

What is the prospect of building an all-electric campervan? We know that diesel-fueled vehicles are on their way out – and a good thing too, of course. But what can replace them? The main contender currently is battery-only electric vehicles, with e-vans announced recently from Vauxhall, Mercedes and Fiat.

Much of the discussion about electric vehicles focuses on range and availability of charging points. I don't wish to dwell on that here, but instead I want to think about the other aspects of camping in a van: cooking, heating and so on. Once our van's motive power is provided solely by batteries, it surely makes no sense to continue to carry gas tanks around or use diesel heaters. Just as, from 2026, new homes will no longer be connected to the gas grid (for heating, at least) we really do want to abandon fossil fuels entirely. So, instead, is it feasible to rely on electric battery power alone for all our needs? (Yes, I know electric vehicles rely on 'fossil fuels' too, but decreasingly so.)

In considering this I will, necessarily, make some big assumptions, but I will explain my reasoning – and maths: you must decide how reasonable my reasoning is! But, first,

a couple of starting points. The most useful measure of energy, whether consumed or stored, is the watt-hour (or kilowatt hour, kWh). While we're used to our leisure batteries being rated according to the number of amp-hours (Ah) this is only useful since leisure batteries are universally a nominal 12 volts. Where battery voltages differ, the energy is actually measured by multiplying amp-hours by volts to give the watt-hour figure. So, a typical 100 Ah leisure battery stores approximately 1200 watt-hours (or 1.2 kWh) of total energy (of which little more than half may be reasonably available if we're not to over-discharge the battery). That 1.2 kWh will, in principle, power an electric kettle or small fan heater for half an hour or so, but it will run LED lights for hours on end. So our leisure batteries are fine for lights, pumps and so on but not for cooking or heating.

In comparison, the batteries that power electric vehicles are much bigger and, being lithium based, can discharge to greater depths so that more of that nominal storage is available. The Vauxhall Vivaro e-van is to be supplied with a 75 kWh battery, so the 1.2 kWh in the leisure batteries becomes rather insignificant if

we can use the vehicle batteries as the power source for living in the van as well as moving it. (There may still be value in retaining a leisure battery as an independent source of power but I'm not sure why, really.)

So, assumption number one is that van converters will be able to tap into the vehicle batteries and all the management software that goes with it. There really is no other way. Then we have to consider what equipment we'll use for cooking, heating and cooling, the biggest consumers of energy when we're camping.

Cooking

An electric induction hob is more efficient than a gas hob since it only heats the cooking pan and not the space around it. Many domestic four-ring hobs will run off a standard 13A connection and have a maximum power consumption of 3 kW. The gas burners on our Pimento's hob are rated at a nominal 1 kW and 1.8 kW (small and large, respectively) but these waste heat to the surrounding air. *So an induction hob rated at 3 kW maximum would be more than enough for a camper's needs.*

Continued overleaf....

Heating

Most of our vans' heaters already include an electric option for when we're on hook-up. This is usually 2 kW maximum and will be in the form of direct heating via a resistive electric element, like a fan heater for space heating and an immersion heater for water. An electric camper's heating *could* be supplied in this way from the vehicle batteries – and some electric cars heat their cabins in this manner. Other electric vehicles, such as the relatively familiar Nissan Leaf, are heated with air source heat pumps. Domestic versions of these are now in regular use and are expected become widely installed in homes built after the 2026 gas cut-off. They operate like a refrigerator in reverse, extracting heat by compressing the cold outside air and supplying its heat energy to the cabin or to water heating. In principle, the same equipment can also offer cooling (like air conditioning) by reversing their operating mode. A typical domestic air source heat pump has a 'coefficient of performance' (CoP) of 2 to 3, meaning that for every unit of electrical energy used to power the pump, two to three times as much heat energy is produced. The small heat pumps fitted to vehicles are probably not that good yet, but progress will surely be made. *So, I assume here that a 1 kW heat pump will provide the necessary heat energy of around 2 to 3 kW.*

Cooling

Compression fridges are already more efficient than three-way appliances, so this is an easy adaptation to all-electric camping. Dometic reckon that the absorption fridge in our Pimento needs anything between 2.5 kWh (electric) to 4 kWh (gas) every 24 hours to keep cool, while the equivalent compression fridge needs, it says, just 0.4 kWh to do the same. *So the efficient compression fridge we need is already in widespread use.*

As for the other consumers of energy, lighting, pump, entertainment and so on, these are adequately supplied by our leisure batteries in our present set-ups and, as we've seen, in comparison with the vehicle batteries in our e-vans, leisure batteries are minuscule, so we can comfortably ignore the demands of these remaining bits of equipment for our purposes here.

		Hours use per day	Energy per day (kWh)
Summer			
Cooking	Induction hob, 1.5kW average in use	1	1.5
Heat: space	Heat pump, 1kW	2 (=1h running)	1
Heat: water	Heat pump, 1kW	1	1
Fridge	Dometic 24h data		0.4
		Total/24h	3.9 kWh
Winter			
Cooking	Induction hob, 1.5kW	1	1.5
Heat: space	Heat pump, 1kW	16 (=8h running)	8
Heat: water	Heat pump, 1kW	2	2
Fridge	Dometic 24h data		0.4
		Total/24h	11.9 kWh

The calculations

Here, then, are some back-of-an envelope calculations to see what energy might be used by all this equipment.

(I'm assuming cooking averages out at 'medium' over the cooking period; heating is thermostatically controlled so two hours' use of the heater means it's running for one hour, say.)

So, a summer day's camping makes a relatively small dent in the e-van's 75 kWh battery, while a cold winter's day is more challenging, but still manageable. Put it another way: assume you arrive at your campsite with the vehicle battery 50 per cent full, and you don't want to leave the site with it much less than 25 per cent full (enough for around 30 to 40 miles) so you can be sure of reaching a charging point, that allows you almost 20 kWh from the battery for camping. You could therefore manage five days without hook-up in the summer, but maybe just a couple in winter.

How does this compare with our current off-grid options? With gas, diesel and a decent solar panel, we don't really need hook-up at all in the summer (a 100W panel might contribute 0.5 kWh on the best summer day). Nevertheless, we probably move the van at least once every five days for trips out so in an e-van that could be combined with a battery charge (rapid chargers fill an empty battery to 80 per cent in half an hour). In winter, at present, even with a solar panel (less than 0.1 kWh generated per day) we can be hook-up-free for

maybe three or four days, depending very much on the weather, so perhaps twice as long as in the e-van scenario above. (Of course, on hook-up the e-van's battery is easily replenished so there is no concern. Even a 6A supply would add over 30 kWh per day.)

However, we can be confident that over the next years, by the time converters might realistically be contemplating electric-only vans, a few things will make the situation more favorable still:

- The rapid charging network will be more extensive, so it'll be easier to arrive on site with a *full* battery – and maybe possible to depart with one less than a quarter full;
- Vehicle batteries will have even greater capacity;
- More campsites will have on-site fast-charging facilities.

I'd suggest that long before the 2035 ban on sales of diesel-fueled vans it should be perfectly possible to re-create our camping experiences in an all-electric campervan. I'm not aware of any manufacturer heading down this route yet, but some at least must be thinking hard about the possibilities for the future.

Finally, a note on range: Vauxhall claim a 180 mile range from its 75 kWh battery. Let's assume it's more like 150 miles. Some detractors compare that with a 500 mile diesel tank and thus dismiss e-vans – but how many of us, honestly, drive 150 miles in one go, without a toilet stop or coffee break? With the development of an extensive network of rapid charging points, concerns about range are all but banished.

So here I am in sunny West Coast Scotland with my almost brand new Murvi and unable to go anywhere. SO FRUSTRATING when my wife and I had set aside April and May for campervanning and it has been the driest and sunniest on record I believe. Ah well, we just dream on I suppose. So we collected our new Pimento XL from Rex and his team last August and had a couple of weeks in October and a few weekends before winter and other commitments had us lay-up for the winter. However, the van proved to be everything we dreamed of and is absolutely perfect for the two of us and two dogs. We really cannot fault it and everything works beautifully.

We really like the layout, this being the main reason we choose a Murvi and the only reason we went for the XL was to get the storage at the back - this is truly life changing compared to our previous 5.5m Autosleeper, and all the outside gear, dirty stuff, and dog gear goes in there leaving the inside of the van clean and clear of all that 'stuff'.

I have done a few small modifications which might be of interest to others, and of course these are to suit us, and may not be for everyone. Wherever possible I avoid drilling holes or using fixings which would leave traces when removed, but sometimes this is unavoidable.

So one essential is the two way spirit level which I mounted on a little bent aluminium bracket which is stuck to the dashboard in full view of the driver. No more wondering if we are level, heads up or heads down, and going up onto the wedges is a doddle.



Then we had Rex fit a two camera reversing/rear view system with dedicated screen in the front offside corner of the windscreen, which flips from rear view to reversing view when reverse gear is engaged. This is a new gadget to me but

I soon realised we had goofed with this; when reversing I need to be able to manually select either rear view (for reversing along single track roads into passing places etc. where you need long rear view) or parking view when actually parking. Solution was to fix a little rocker switch to the side of the screen and wiring this in was simple after Rex advised where to find the cable that comes from the gearbox selector switch..



Now a really serious problem we had on our previous van was when sitting in the passenger seat facing rear, having a cup of coffee or indeed the glass of Merlot, there is not a single horizontal surface within reach to sit the glass/mug on. This drove me nuts so I made a little lift out shelf on a bracket which is in exactly the right place, on the side door post, to make life so easy and indeed luxurious. And a similar problem exists on the settee, so another shelf was made with an old fashioned very large paper clip as a clamp, which can be placed anywhere along the 'rail' behind the settee. Now no more spilt vino!



Then we discovered that the side door runs so smoothly and friction free that, if parked on the slightest slope, the door shuts or opens itself, which was a real pain when you want it half or any intermediate closed position. I wracked the brain cells on this one and could see no easy way to modify the track and locking clip at the bottom of the door. (which I did very easily on our previous Peugeot) So a very simple solution came to mind and

consists of a length of 8mm bungee cord fix to either end of the top of the sliding door (drilled and self-tapper fixing) and the cord tied under slight tension (so it lies straight along the door-top and unnoticed when not in use) Then a simple hook fitting (actually a yacht lacing hook) screwed to the panel just above the door. And that's it - just open the door to the required position and pull the bungee into the hook, and the door stays put. Just 3 screws and infinitely adjustable and no damage if someone grabs the door from outside and opens it - the bungee just stretches.



Then interior lighting we found to be great if you want bright lights but we wanted a bit of mood lighting, so a run of spherical fairy lights run off one of the usb sockets, the cable being tucked into lining joints or stitched with a needle and thread to the linings.



And I found that when I stayed up late reading, in the passenger seat, the spotlight was too strong and disturbed she who must not be disturbed in bed so I fitted a little flexible led reading light which I wired off the spotlight cables, with the wiring inside the plastic lining. This is just perfect and leaves the rest of the van in darkness.



Cupboard storage use is always an issue and years of boating and camping teaches how to maximise space utilisation and

Continued overleaf...

with the plethora of plastic boxes of every shape and size now readily available I firmly believe in lining lockers with non-slip matting then getting boxes which are as near a perfect fit as possible. Everything then stows securely, you get to know which box to grab to get what, and nothing gets too mixed up.



The kitchen in our Pimento is a joy to cook in but the kettle and a chopping board are always in use so again non slip matting takes care of them, the kettle just sits on the hob glass even when driving - it has never slid off, and the chopping board likewise. Why have the bother of putting them away, taking them out, put them away!! And there is nowhere to dump a hot pan or kettle without damaging the worktop so two steel trivets live on the worktop, their nearside legs are trapped behind a strip of black plastic glued to the worktop, so they can be used where they are, or just lift out to somewhere else. Again, they stay put when driving.



One real bugbear in our last van was where to stow all the small kitchen food requirements like sauces, condiments, spices, stock cubes etc (I do a lot of cooking!) so two wire baskets were bolted to two bits of aluminium angle and these were screwed into the rear edge of the worktop, these screws only visible when the back door is opened so no visible damage to the worktop. And all the kitchen junk goes in there, immediately



available to grab when cooking and never lost in the depths of a cupboard.

Moving outside, with dogs we tend to live in the awning so have used tether pegs in the ground up til now, but with an electric step now (luxury or what!) I screwed a plastic bullseye fitting onto the edge of the step and the dogs tether ropes just clip in there - no more banging stakes into rock hard ground.



And just about the only thing that Murvi did that I have changed is to shift the water tank drain valve from having to reach blindly under the back, to now visible and accessible at the side. I know that some say it might get wiped out if reversing into a kerb, but it is still higher than, and forward of, the rear suspension link which will get hit first when reversing, plus I just take care when approaching kerbs in reverse. And it is so much easier to work!



The fresh water filler is very high due to the internal tank height so it is awkward to fill with a jerrycan. (And I have no time for electric pumps - they take far too long and is just something else to go wrong). So it was a 2 person job until I rigged a simple filler which is a 5ltr plastic container with the bottom cut off and a

couple of plastic plumbing fittings. This is held in place with a loop of string (high tech indeed, but infallible) on a simple hook screwed into the window frame lip. 5 seconds to fit and then a one person job to fill the tank.



Finally I cannot overstate the usefulness of the rear locker - again filled with shelves and boxes all made and bought to measure and holding all the cables, hoses, tools, deckchairs, awning, levelling wedges, groundsheet, walking boots, welly boots, wet weather gear, barbeque, picnic blanket, shopping bags, water carriers, all the dog food/towels/toys and so much more. But tight fitting boxes that just lift straight out and in are the solution to keeping it all under control. (Photo 14). Not sure how to control the dog though!



Well that's it and I hope we get a chance to experience it again this year but sadly it is looking more unlikely. And we normally avoid July/August/September due to Scotland being too busy then. But maybe October will be good to us, Covid 19 permitting. If anyone is anywhere near Achnacarry, on Loch Lochy, miles from anywhere (but nearest is Spean Bridge, near Fort William), give us a shout and you could park up here for a night. We have an outside toilet and shower and a decent view. Maybe see you sometime.

