



The crock of gold at the end of the rainbow



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EDITORIAL

It seems to me that lots of you have had a busy summer this year if the response to my request for articles is anything to go by. I am most grateful to all our contributors for sending me considerably more material than I would have had room for. I say 'would have' because it has recently been agreed that we can now make the newsletter longer.

The size of the newsletter was previously limited because of the postal system we used to mail out the newsletter to those

members who we are not on email. As we now have only 3 such members out of a total of more than 300, the committee agreed that it was silly to continue to restrict the length of the newsletter.

Apologies to those contributors who took considerable trouble to keep their articles within the previous 800-word limit. We only made the decision a while after I had received most of your contributions. If it's any consolation there will be no restriction next time – within reason of course.

Nick has asked me to let members know that the tips section of the website is no longer password protected. This means you no longer need to be logged in to see the tips in full rather than just a brief summary of the tips.

Nick has also asked that when members wish to send a personal email to someone who has posted on the Murvi Club Chat that they do so using that person's personal email address rather than posting a reply on the chat page.

WHAT IS ACCEO?

By Roger Pepper

A member recently chanced on the ACCEO stand at the NEC show, which prompted the question, what is ACCEO?

ACCEO (The Association of Caravan and Camping Exempted Organisations), <http://www.acceo.org/>, represents over 200 Caravan & Camping Clubs who hold a Certificate of Exemption to hold rallies not exceeding five days in length on land unlicensed for caravanning or camping. The Certificate is issued by Natural England which is a Department of DEFRA (The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Activities), or The Welsh Assembly Government (Planning Division), or The Scottish Government (Housing Markets Supply Division)

When the Murvi Club was founded in 2010, the members charged the officers elected at the inaugural meeting to ensure that it became a properly constituted organisation. During early research the committee contacted ACCEO who gave them invaluable advice on preparing a suitable constitution

and obtaining Certificates of Exemption. When the Club's Certificates from all three agencies were in place, we joined ACCEO. Our current annual subscription, which is based on our number of members, is £85.00. Benefits of the Club's membership are:

- ACCEO arranges a public liability insurance policy for its member clubs to protect officers and members alike against an accident resulting from perceived negligence whilst engaged in Club activities. The Murvi Club has taken this out and the premium for the current year is £233.60.
- The Association Newsletter "ACCEO Matters" which is published up to four times a year keeps clubs informed on matters of interest and importance. Copies of the newsletter are in the INFO/ACCEO section of the Murvi Club website. In future, I will circulate our members when an edition is published.

- ACCEO organises an annual national rally. To date the Murvi Club has not been represented but we send our apologies for the A.G.M. which takes place during the weekend. The 2018 rally will be on Wednesday 3rd – Monday 8th October at the Ukrainian Youth Centre, Weston on Trent, Derby DE72 2BU. If any of our members wish to organise a party to attend the rally, please get in touch with me and I will send them booking details when they are published.
- ACCEO has a stand and coffee lounge at the NEC shows in February and October. If Murvi Club members introduce themselves at the stand they will be directed to the lounge where they can rest their feet, have a free drink and biscuit and chat to members of other clubs.

If anyone require further information regarding our association with ACCEO please contact me and I will endeavour to provide it. You can contact me at roger.pepper@btinternet.com



St Ninian's Tombolo where we camped

Ever since our bridesmaid moved to Orkney 10 years ago, I'd been threatening to visit her in our motorhome but never made it. However, this year we did. We've travelled extensively in Europe but not in the UK. Rather than write a day by day account, here are some impressions and memories.

Which to do first – Orkney or Shetland? Having decided on Shetland, we took our time getting to Aberdeen for the 12-hour overnight ferry to Lerwick, a busy bustling port, visited regularly by cruise ships, but not yet suffering from their effect as much as Orkney.

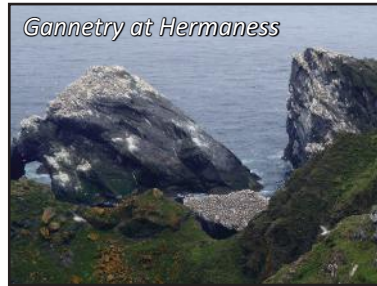
Shetland and Orkney are made up of many islands, some large, some small, some uninhabited, others likely to become so. We could only visit a few in the 12 days we had on each island. The joy of a motorhome is that we're free to roam, with no fixed times apart from that of arrival and departure times from the islands. We wild camped in some amazing places – alongside a replica Viking longhouse and ship, by an incredibly beautiful tombolo, by remote beaches. Small villages with marinas and village halls offered facilities to motorhomes. Beach car parks were good places to stay – no height barriers, often with public toilets, some even had hot water! A word of warning: there is no LPG on Shetland and Orkney – make sure you fill up before you leave Scotland.



Nest building puffin

We became, not very good but, fascinated bird watchers – we were at the height of the nesting season. We had listened to "A Bad Bird Watchers' Companion" by Simon Barnes and soon became familiar with great skuas (known locally as bones), gannets, arctic terns,

fulmars, kittiwakes and oyster catchers. Our introduction came at the Hermanes National Nature Reserve on Unst with 100,000 sea birds – what a noise and



Gannetry at Hermaness

smell. We had to wait until the end of our time in Shetland before finding almost tame puffins in the far south of the Shetland mainland at Sunburgh Head. Often, we would just sit and watch, enthralled by the activity on land, sea and in the air. We took an exhilarating trip on a small, 7-person inflatable craft, sitting astride as on a motorbike, holding on tightly, wearing lifejackets. We bounced over the waves to the bird colonies on the islands of Bressay and Noss. At one point, gannets dived all around us for fish thrown into the sea. I learnt that there are no such birds as seagulls – those you hear on Desert Island Discs are herring gulls.

And then there was the dramatic coastal scenery, largely wild and remote, plunging cliffs, sea stacks, rock arches and blow holes. We sat on the cliffs at the most northerly point of the UK on Unst – next stop the North Pole! We met more walkers on our way to the Old Man



The Old Man of Hoy

of Hoy. The wind is ever present and while, England was experiencing a heat-wave, the temperature rarely went above 12 degrees. There are very few trees on Shetland and it's much wilder, less agricultural than Orkney. We hope it's remoteness keeps the hordes of tourists away that threaten to overwhelm Orkney. The local saying is that Shetlanders are fishermen trying to be

farmers and Orcadians are farmers trying to be fishermen. The sea is ever present.



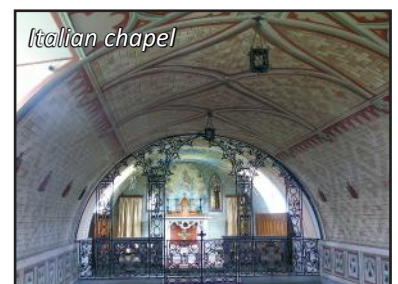
Spectacular cliffs I'd walked along

For those interested in history, there is plenty to see. Neolithic villages built by the sea, buried by sand and exposed by storm and burial mounds and tombs., Evidence of Viking settlements are found on both islands but not as impressive as the Neolithic ones. Our bridesmaid's house overlooks Scapa Flow and the Isle of Hoy, the scene of much naval activity in WW1 and WW2. Italian POW's built the five Churchill barriers to protect the ships at anchor from U boat attack and later created a beautiful chapel from two Nissen huts.



The Ring of Brodgar

Our only regret is that we didn't make the threatened visit earlier before Orkney became a cruise and tourist destination. But it was possible to get off the coach routes and experience the unique character of both islands – a truly memorable holiday. If you would like to know more, type "Mobile Geriatrics Roger and Wendy's travel blog" into your search engine. Why not follow in our footsteps?

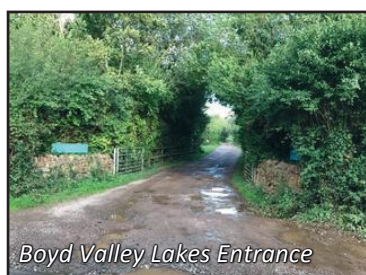


Italian chapel

We have four sons, two of whom belong – as we do – to the Camping & Caravaning Club. During the summer David, our oldest, made use of a 'Hideaway' site to stop overnight when one of his children was involved in a cricket tournament.

The site he found struck him as ideal for a family weekend away from all the usual pressures of Life. He accordingly arranged a weekend with the owner, and notified all who may be interested of his plan.

Thus it was that on a weekend in mid-September a gathering of three motorcaravans/homes, one 6 berth Dandy trailer tent, two large tents and an assortment of 'pup' tents arrived at Boyd Valley Lake C&CC site. We started arriving on the Thursday afternoon, and into Friday. Simon and Oona arriving after dusk on the Thursday, resulting in their Dandy being erected by the light of the car headlamps. (Sadly Oona was really poorly with what we thought was a cold, but which turned out to be a viral infection and they left on Saturday so she could be seen by a doctor closer to home, while our two great grandchildren had gone down with colds so their mum decided that they were not up to joining us at all).



Boyd Valley Lakes Entrance

The site is situated close to a small town called Bitton, between Bath and Bristol – just outside Keynsham. It is up a short, muddy lane and sheltered behind a tree'd hedge. There are the basics of water and CDP, plus toilets and washbasins. These last are in the process of being upgraded to include showers, but the owner is doing this himself, so when they will be finished is unclear. Grey waste went into the hedges. As a family we are all happy not to have hookups.

On the opposite side of the lane is the large area given over to the coarse fishing lakes, and the carpark there was fairly busy the whole weekend as fishers

came and went. They didn't bother us. One lake has been established for quite



Main Lake



New Lake

a long time, while a second has been dug out and stocked, but at that point had not been opened up for public use. The appalling weather that had preceded our weekend had left the ponds looking very muddy and I was surprised that anything could survive in them. However, although the sunshine was a bit watery, we had reasonable weather the whole weekend – apart from the Saturday evening, when we planned a Barbeque!

The site is as close to level as one will find, and we had it to ourselves so were able to pitch as we pleased, leaving a space at one end for the junior members to spend time throwing frisbees and balls without causing damage. They killed the Swing Ball which will have to be repaired for next summer.

For those who are keen on walking, Bitton was not really far away – ¾ mile or so – and Keynsham close enough for a car-load to fetch barbeque food. Papers and all the basics can be obtained in Bitton so no need to go further if we had been resistant to moving cars. Bitton appears to be on major bus routes and it looks as if a bus trip to Cribbs Causeway is possibility as well as into Bath or Bristol. There is a pleasant walk around the lakes, and we came across an interesting picnic table beside the larger lake.

The site owner was welcoming, cheerful and accommodating, going out of his way to provide us with a homemade fire

pit to keep us warm when we had our barbeque.

With no one else on site the younger ones were free to race round unfettered whilst adults made endless pots of coffee and tea, drank copious quantities of wine and generally chilled out. Foraging was possible in the hedges, with blackberries and rose hips in abundance. We bought some flour and Fi made crumble to put on



Picnic Table

BBQ

stewed blackberry and apple which I prepared and we cooked in their motorhome (we have no oven in our Murvi).

We had huge family breakfasts cooked in said motorhome, with everyone pitching in with provisions. We listened to music, played with the children: Dave took nephew John across the lane to go fishing, and others joined them.

In the absence of the two great grandchildren Amelia was the youngest and the older children vied for the privilege of 'entertaining' her.

A good time was had by all and we are already planning another such break early next year.

We would have no hesitation in recommending this site for those who are happy to have just the minimum facilities and be left to their own devices.



Pops & Amelia



End of the Weekend

You may recall that the first part of this article was included in the Spring newsletter. Should you wish to reread part 1 then go to the club website - <http://murviclub.org.uk/w/spring-2017-newsletter/> and go to page 8 of the newsletter.

We left Poland on Monday along the road which follows the coast along a thin strip of land enclosing various arms of an inland sea, but (disappointingly) no water could be seen from it. We headed for Rugen island as it has a reputation for being very scenic, but it was nothing special compared to home. It was still very windy (from the west) so we chose a campsite in the woods, east near Binz which turned out to be a fairly up-market German resort, and very nice too. The bus into town was up to the usual standards of German efficiency. The town has developed along the beach from a row of massive large houses of distinguished and individual design, and sightseeing boats call at the pier. Finding a lunch spot the next day near the huge opening bridge at Wolgast reminded us that former East Germany also has its inheritance of crumbling abandoned former communist factories and poor infrastructure.

The small town of Wismar was next, with a reputation for being exquisite, but after our Polish cities it too was nothing special, although nice enough. En route to the Wohnmobilstadion at Westhafen, the satnav-chosen road was completely closed due to major works and we had to drive right round the city to find it: but it was a muddy, cramped and disappointing site (in the rain) so Plan B took us north west to Zierow and the Ostsee Camping. This was a full-on German touring holiday park above the beach

with mesmerising views over the Baltic which managed every hue between inky black and silver white while we were there. The campsite assumes that everyone has bikes, a dog and children: we had none of these, and were a curiosity - the Saltire flag confused people further. In fact people went by bike for even the shortest distances around the site and we found few other walkers. The site also boasted 3 llamas, 2 smart goats and several rabbits with moustaches! The driver of the bus into Wismar informed me (with a smile) that the charge for photographing her (very smart) bus would be 20 Euro, but we negotiated a normal fare.

After Wismar we were heading home, so travelling around 140 miles per day for 4 days, first to Sottrum (near Bremen), a nice peaceful family site in the country - very welcome after a horrendous day struggling with endless breakdowns, accidents and roadworks around Hamburg's autobahns. In nearby Wildeshausen we found a large Edeka to stock up for our remaining few days, and stopped for lunch at a layby in a secluded spot in the woods. We could not help noticing that an elderly campervan further along was rocking wildly on its springs: the occupants were giving it lalady. "Youngsters" we thought, but the man who stepped out after a while was not a youngster and he got into the car parked in front and drove away, alone. We caught a glimpse of the lady as we went on our way, and suspect that other cars would turn up from time to time in a similar manner: perhaps she publishes GPS coordinates for the next day ...

The area of Germany along its western border (around Dorpen) was very empty of people, and there was a substantial industry in strip-mining what appeared

to be peat for power stations. We found our way into Holland via a back-road at Heede/Vlagentwedde: these less-travelled boundary crossings have always had a fascination for me. We reached Emmen that night, a Dutch version of the family touring holiday park but with a beach only on a local lake, and were again an object of curiosity: here, the campsite bike traffic was at alarming levels to walkers. From there it was west to Alkmaar via Lelystad (lunch at the harbour, with sailing ships) and across the thin ribbon of causeway (around 30km long) which crosses the inland IJsselmeer, a strange place. Alkmaar boasts a large cheese market every Friday (unfortunately it was Monday) so we contented ourselves with a walk in from the campsite (which had established a decent sandy beach alongside a convenient canal): a lovely wee town in the traditional Dutch style built around a star-shaped defensive canal. Searching for a cheese shop (shouldn't be difficult, we thought) we however found ourselves in the one red light street which seemed to be open for business at 11am (but then it turned out that most shops don't open until noon on Mondays ...). We did find a shop (elsewhere!) and spent 30 Euros on fabulous old mature cheese which they vacuum sealed in manageable pieces for us: that'll keep us going for a month or 3.

The ferry sailed from IJmuiden at 17.30 and we were accompanied on a flat-calm crossing by an elegant insect which remained on the outside of our cabin window all night: a dodgy immigrant, obviously, all the way to North Shields. And so to home (via Morrisons at Berwick, a regular stop): quite a trip altogether, out of which we got so much, and the company of our fellow GBMH travellers was a bonus.

Following the very enjoyable task of organising a combined 8 day meet in our County in 2015 we thought it high time we offered a repeat invitation, this time moving the focus from the Yorkshire Dales to the North Yorks Moors and the City of York.

Day one saw us all arriving on a slightly soggy rally field, conveniently situated within a few minutes of the market town of Pickering and even more handy for the terminal station of the North Yorks Moors railway – the busiest heritage railway in the world!

That would be the key to one of our activities, for at the other end of the line, a very scenic 25 miles away, is the relatively unspoilt fishing town of Whitby. Fish and chips beckoned, of course, and they did not disappoint. En route one or two members hopped off at Goathland station (Harry Potter's Hogsmeade) also within a short walk of the Heartbeat village, where the elderly Ford Anglia police cars awaited us – but we behaved



Heartbeat Memorabilia - both I guess

impeccably! Here we could venture along the course of one of the world's first railways, horse drawn at that time, or even linger with the birds of prey.

Another day, a surprisingly large group, given the uncertainty of the weather, alighted from the train at Newtondale, a



beautifully isolated station halt right in the heart of the Moors. No turning back now the guard informed us – no more

trains due for a while! Well yes, it wasn't long before we survived a drowning, but, after a while, our reward, following a sudden sharp climb in the pouring rain, was sunshine and a pleasant walk across the moorland. Then a picnic spot with superb views across the moors and down into Newtondale itself where another heritage steam locomotive made a well-timed appearance.



The picnic spot looking down into Newtondale

Other visits were made to the Market town of Malton, Helmsley and of course Pickering itself, the latter having plenty to interest us.

Curry appears to be growing in popularity amongst the club members. The final evening saw us well catered for at the Cilantro, Pickering, which one member described as brilliant!

What was not quite so brilliant was our departure from our little grassy site the next morning which was now far more than just a little soggy. However this was



Our Secretary's Great Escape - not the one on the tractor

where the true spirit of our club emerged. With a combination of anti-slip aids, tow ropes and eventually the owner's tractor we all made sure each vehicle was on firm tarmac before anyone left. Must admit, being one of the last to be hauled out of the mud, I



The Great Escape!

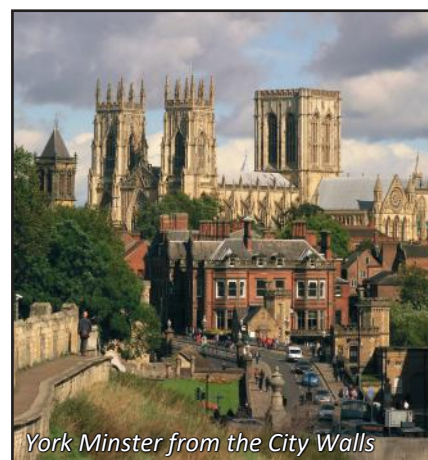
did feel very much like the captain on the sinking ship at this point! But all was well and we could now look forward to moving to our hardstandings (and electrics, site toilets and showers!) at our next venue near York.

For anyone needing a site near York, Millhouse Farm Site, is to be highly recommended. It has excellent new facilities and, being a farm site, the farm animals are an added attraction, especially when the hens wander around the vans – and into them!



Millhouse Farm - our friendly hosts

The site is conveniently located next to a cycle/walkway, actually the former East coast main line, and is also close to the River Ouse and Naburn Marina. Needless to say, riverside walks and visits into the historic city were a 'must'. We enjoyed a very informative guided tour of the city and visits to the National Railway Museum made an interesting sequel to the Heritage railway. Finally, the marina restaurant opened specially for us to provide another brilliant meal for our Yorkshire farewell on our last evening together.



York Minster from the City Walls

Our thanks to all who supported our meets.

Editor's Note: Robert has kindly written this article in response to a request from a member who is relatively new to motorhoming.

The tip I liked was "Best winterisation we found is to go to Spain for 3 months" - thanks Lin & Wendy for that, but maybe not quite what was meant.

There is of course plenty of advice to be found on the Internet on this subject, including on the club website.

When a question pops up on the Club chat, the reply is often, what model van and year? The same applies to winterising, as critical systems such as the water and heating are quite different depending on the year and model of van.

The next question is how do you use your van? Are you summer softies? Do you escape to the sun for the winter or are you hardy four season in the UK types? We use our van all year, not so often in the winter but a couple of times a month for either days out or visits to relatives, including the Christmas – New Year holiday period. So, keeping all that in mind, here is what we do, plus a few tips I have learnt along the way.

Our van is a 2007 Morello on a Mercedes Sprinter, with Eberspacher diesel heater for heating and hot water. Also the water system is the type with pump in the tank and micro-switch taps.

Here are a few ideas, and lessons from our experience.

• **Park the van in gear with the handbrake off.** This was something I learnt from before I was old enough to drive and is equally relevant to any other vehicle. Frozen cables or brake linings corroded onto the drum/disc are all bad news. Obviously if you have to park on a slope, be careful and use chocks.

• **Drain the hot water system,** assuming you have already drained the cold tank. OK, Webasto equipped vans do this automatically. Open the taps to help drain the pipes and cylinder, set half way between hot and cold. To drain the cylinder, on ours there are two valves, with red handles, under the rear seat section on the bottom of the wardrobe wall. This is essential to avoid damaging the hot water cylinder. Check that water is draining out underneath the

van, somewhere behind the offside rear wheel.

Refilling with water after draining the hot water cylinder needs care to ensure the cylinder is filled. We generally need at least half a tank of fresh water and then run the hot taps until water flows freely. As long as there is water in the main water tank there should be no harm running the pump without water appearing, you are pumping from the cold to hot water tanks. Do not use the electric immersion until you are absolutely sure the cylinder is refilled.

There are two variations on the water theme:

If the van will be parked for a while, or it threatens to be a severe frost, with the taps open alternately in hot and cold positions I blow down them to remove as much water as possible from the lines. It is interesting how much comes out. If we want to use the van for just a day, we take some bottles of water with us for a brew, and flushing the loo.

Alternatively, if it is not too bad a frost, and we want to use the van, I run the heating and hot water, on diesel, for 20-30mins in the evening. This heats the van and more importantly the hot water, so it would have to be an arctic frost to freeze the cylinder. The idea of using the diesel is that, with the Eberspacher system, the coolant system will also add a bit of retained heat to the system.

Now, a word of warning. If there is an Achilles heel it is that the water supply goes across the back of the van at floor level just inside the back doors. This has only proved to be a problem for us once. We had a winter trip up to Scotland, in the snow, using the van en route. We then stayed for a couple of nights with our son in Stirling. We made sure to run the heating and hot water a reasonable time each morning and evening to keep the van reasonable. However, when we stopped for a cuppa, near Carlisle, on the way home, no water. The pipes across the back of the van had frozen. The really distressing part was shelling out Costa Coffee prices for hot dishwasher masquerading as tea. So, in such situations it would be worth running the taps on hot and cold for a few seconds a couple of times a day to circulate some water.

• **Keeping the van warm.** While parked at home in the winter procedure is as follows:

- Close all blinds, to improve insulation. Do not forget the roof vent blinds, the bathroom vent lets in a lot of air.
- Mild amount of heat. We use a 500W oil filled heater on a bit above the frost setting.
- Close the heater vents to cut down cold drafts.
- And, health warning on this one, make sure the gas is off at the tank/bottle. I then put something over the lounge floor gas drain grill. As we live on the top of a hill it is surprising how much draft blows in. Do not do this if for any reason you have the gas on.

• **If you are using the van in the frost,** leave the waste tank drain open, and use a bucket to collect the waste to prevent it freezing in the drain pipe.

• **If you do not use the van in the winter,** and leave it parked for an extended time, I believe it is best to avoid leaving the hook-up permanently on. I was told by Rex that he has experienced owners having very short leisure battery life by leaving them permanently on charge over the winter. For reference, our first AGM batteries lasted 8 years. So, it is best to turn off the mains every week or so and maybe leave the van with a few lights on or something to partly discharge the batteries. If you have a solar panel fitted this will provide some charging. We only use the mains if it is cold enough to warrant using the space heater.

If you have not used your van in the winter, and are wondering what to expect, do not be put off. With a few precautions such as those above you will be fine. A cab curtain helps in keeping the living area warmer. We do not have a fitted curtain, but a home-made job that makes use of the door pillar coat hooks, tie down rings and some Velcro.

The lowest temperature at which we have used our van was just after New Year 2009 when it was consistently -5 to -8°C at the Bath Marina site. We got good value from the hook-up charge. And my dear wife, a native of Bath, who had previously assured me that "it never freezes in Bath" gets reminded of these words occasionally.

A couple of cake recipes to whet your appetite **YUMMMMMMMMM**

Carrot Mug Cake

By Kate Foster

A quick 'Murvi' pudding for those with a microwave

Serves 1, Ready in 5 minutes, plus standing

Considering this only takes a few minutes, AND it's a Slimming World recipe, it's not bad. Don't forget to pack the grater! ... and some eggs.

Ingredients:-

- 2 level tbsp self-raising flour
- ½ tsp ground mixed spice
- 2 level tsp sweetener (or, I used a tsp honey)
- 1 small carrot, peeled, ½ grated and ½ peeled into ribbons with a vegetable peeler
- 1 medium egg, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp skimmed milk
- Fat-free natural Greek yoghurt, to serve
- ground cinnamon or nutmeg, to dust.

Method:-

- Put the flour, mixed spice and sweetener into a 250ml mug and stir to combine.
- Add the grated carrot, egg and milk and stir again to combine.
- Place the mug in the centre of the microwave and cook on high for 2 minutes or until risen (this is for 800W microwave, adjust the cooking time if yours is different).
- Leave to stand for 5 minutes – your mug cake may be a little moist in the centre but don't worry, it will continue to cook while it stands.
- Turn the cake out on to a plate (or eat it straight from the mug if you want to keep things informal!)
- Add a dollop of yoghurt, dust with cinnamon or nutmeg and decorate with the carrot ribbons.



Tuck in straight away, as microwaved sponge tends to dry out faster than oven-baked sponge.

Selkirk Bannock

By Karin Sumption

Those of you who were with us in Melrose after the Berwick meet last year may have tasted the delicious 'Selkirk Bannock' in the local tearooms.

Not one to make in the Murvi unless you have an oven (or maybe a skillet?)

Ingredients:-

- 7g sachet fast-action yeast
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- 500g strong white flour
- 140g unsalted butter, or half butter, half lard, melted and cooled
- 450g sultanas
- 50g light brown sugar
- Milk for glazing

Method:-

- Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4.
- In a large bowl, mix the yeast and caster sugar with 250ml warm water. Let it stand for 10 mins until the mixture becomes frothy.
- Tip in the flour and 125g of butter and mix to form a smooth, soft dough. Knead for 5 mins, then put the mixture back in the bowl.
- Cover with oiled cling film and allow the mix to rise, in a warm place, until doubled in size.
- Knock back the dough by kneading it lightly for 1 min, then add the sultanas and brown sugar, kneading them in well.
- Grease a deep 23cm round cake tin with the rest of the butter. Shape the dough into a round and place in the



tin. Allow the dough to rise for 30 mins or until it has doubled in size.

- Brush the Bannock with a little milk to glaze, then bake for 45-50 mins until risen and browned. The bread should sound hollow when removed from the tin and the base is tapped.
- If the bread colours too quickly, but is not quite cooked, you can cover it with foil and check after 5 mins more. Cool in the tin for 10 mins, then remove from the tin and finish cooling on a wire rack.

Our trip to France was to test our 6 month old Murvi Pimento and ourselves after a very leaky trip to Oxford last November.

First stop was 'Le Point du Jour' just off Ouistreham, Caen's port, then on to 'Mont St Michel', 'Les Saules' at Cheverny in the Loire Valley and back via Chartres, a total of 16 days.

Le Point du Jour had pleasant pitches, separated by hedges and a somewhat goose-pimply but welcome, heated, covered swimming pool. On one side of the site was sea and a long sandy beach.

In Bayeux and found easy parking in a designated area for motor homes. The Bayeux Tapestry was fascinating, 1000 years old and still not finished! It was beautifully presented and the audio pointed out quaint features such as the soldiers' bare legs as they waded out to their ships and Duke William having a celebratory feast (BBQ) on a beach when he arrived in England. There were also the Museum of Art from prehistory to modern time, the Museum of the Battle of Normandy and War Memorial Graves in the vicinity.

We returned to the campsite just before a tremendous thunderstorm with thunder, lightning and hail. Some pitches became flooded, nor did I require any of my thermals that night because of heat and humidity.

A key part of the liberation of Normandy was the retaking of Pegasus Bridge by the Allies. The Pegasus Bridge Memorial Museum told the story which like many wartime victories was due to heroic effort and luck. We searched for the Landing Beaches and found 'Sword' and 'Juno'. There are plenty of memorials but the coast is long and it was also difficult to park.



Pegasus Bridge

Today we ate 'poulet fume et cuit' (cooked, smoked chicken) and tried 'Calvados', strong apple brandy, guaranteed to knock you out and/or grow hair on your chest. They grow a lot of apples in Normandy so we opted for demi-sec cider instead.

Next day we walked along the beach outside the campsite to Point de Merville. This beach area is called 'Cote des Nacres' because of all the sea shells. We came back via a Nature Reserve and startled some nudists who rushed around trying to put their clothes back on.

Anne Montmorency (male) rose to become Governor of France and is now the name of our Sat.-Nav. (female). She went on strike and took a lot of cajoling to accept our next destination at Mont. St. Michel. The journey was uneventful and we stopped at two 'aires' on the way. Some are excellent though we never stayed overnight. However, the toilets do not provide toilet paper, so go prepared!

Our pitch is peaceful; lots of sparrows, lots of birdsong including cuckoos, just right to relax with a nice cup of tea and some 'tarte Normande'. We have a swim in the open- air pool once we realise that the gate is also the shower. The pool is cold and refreshing.

Our Mont. St. Michel day was hot, 25C. The motorhome car park costs £17.20, payable on exit by credit/debit card. We shuttle-bused into Mont. St. Michel as it was too hot to walk far. Someone offered me a seat so I guess age has its compensations. The Mont now has a causeway so is never cut off by the tide and keeps the revenue pouring in as it's **very** busy. St. Michel is enormous and is either steep up or steep down with lots of steps – excellent exercise for Rod's knees! At the foot is a small village and shopping street. The Mont is surrounded by granite outer walls while some of the inner walls are of limestone from Caen. From the ramparts are amazing sea- and- countryside views with very flat, white-sandy fields. There is still a Brotherhood who live up there but tourists are the mainstay.

Everything is large: the warming room has two huge fireplaces with people staring up the chimneys. Goods were originally brought up to the higher levels by a pulley system. Why make life so difficult? Which is probably both question and answer!

Six soldiers appeared late in the afternoon, carrying camp beds. Were they expecting a terrorist attack? Another point of interest was a gull with a nest and young one behind a bush close to a busy pathway.

I had a visitor back at site, a chap who thought the van was open but unoccupied. He quickly brought out a £10.00 note and some small change and asked me how much that would be in euros. I told him to go to a bank but wondered where he had got the money.

In Avranches there was a pretty Jardin des Plantes near the free car park and the Church of St. Gervais which holds the skull of St. Aubert which has a hole in it 'where an angel touched him' and told him to build a church on St. Michel's Mount. Perhaps the hole was caused by a benign tumour but the legend persisted and St. Michel did get built. The skull is now encased in gold and silver and it has around it medieval statues for company.

I fell over in the local Carrefours, smack on my replaced hip and was shaken but alright, thank goodness. Then it rained all night.

By now it is Thursday 18th May and the temperature has dipped to 10-12C, but we are prepared with woolly hats, gloves, warm pullovers and rain wear.

At Fougères we found a free car park near the 'Jardin Public', round the corner from Eglise St. Leonard. We could not visit the church because of a funeral for two firemen with two hearses, fire engine and bagpiper with kilt. We would love to learn the story of these two local heroes.

A steep pathway from the 'Jardin Public' led to a medieval village of half-timber framed buildings, narrow streets and rambling roses in bloom. The Eglise St. Sulpice has a Joan of Arc stained glass window and a 'Mary of the Marshes'

Continued overleaf....

enthroned on one of the two granite altars while the main altar is elaborate with gilding.

After driving 231m along straight, fairly empty roads in intermittent rain, we reach 'Les Saules' (Willows) in Cheverny in the Loire Valley just before the deluge. Again, pitches were flooded and ducks colonised the larger puddles.

Next day was sunny, if wet underfoot, so we walked cross-country to Chateau Cheverny. This is also cycling country and cyclists popped up everywhere.

Cheverny Castle has been owned and lived in by the same family for 6 centuries. It has many Gobelin and Flemish tapestries and much sumptuous décor. Plenty of deer skulls and antlers attest to the family's love of hunting deer, although the largest belonged to a 6,000 yr old elk from Siberia which, in life, had stood about 15 ft high.

Deer hounds are kept in a kennel in the grounds and can be heard baying before one sees them. At 11.00 a.m. is 'Soupe des Chiens'. Really, 'Dog Soup'? However, that is the time the mutts get fed. Luckily, we were not nearby at the time as it was probably suitably gory.



A picture in the Chateau showed an Aide de Camp, named 'Hyacinth.' Camp or what? No wonder the English thought the French aristocracy were effete.

Anne Montmorency Sat.-Nav. Is refusing to help us drive to Chateau de Chenonceau, so we asked a group of middle-aged 1930s-style sports car enthusiasts how to get there which led to animated discussion and wildly gesturing arms.

Chateau de Chenonceau spans the River Cher. It's very spectacular as boats can sail through its arches and it also has extensive grounds. Diane de Poitiers modified the Chateau to cross the river but had to sell it to Catherine of Medici

who desired it. Here we saw swallows darting in and out of their mud nests, feeding their young, high in the Old Tower.

Blois has an enormous Chateau but we did not have the energy to look around inside, especially after walking up 121 steps in 26C heat. We have our picnic sitting in the children's playground of the Jardin de l'Eveque (Bishop's Garden), on the terrace above the beautiful and fragrant Rose Garden. Lunchtime is sacred in France and none of the really shady benches would be vacated any time soon.

Back on site we find some new neighbours: a young French couple playing boules with lots of squeals and laughter and an English couple whose van partly blocked our woodland view because his satellite dish would not work under trees. As compensation they gave us their Times newspaper, actually quite useful for food insulation and drying wet boots.

Enjoying ourselves is darned hard work so we have a 'day off' and a picnic by the River Loire back at Blois whose old town makes a lovely skyline. It is exceedingly hot again so we walked along the river on the cycle track to the remains of an old bridge, then returned to seek nourishment. 'Apple cushions' and some small balls of choux pastry from a local snack shop together with our own cheese and tomato sandwiches went down very well and, notably, our view from the open sliding door of the van was not of a car park or other vehicle but of river, bridge and old town!



We are at Chartres ACSI site by 1145 next day and can pitch anywhere. A stroll along the River Eure (very sluggish both it and us because of the heat) brings us into Chartres, famed for its Cathedral's beautiful stained-glass windows. The oldest have the deepest blue made from

cobalt oxide. There are amazing stone carvings of the life of Christ and 'the veil of the Virgin Mary' relic, apparently 5th century Turkish cloth.

Lest we feel deprived there are plenty of steps called 'tertres', leading from one level of the town to another. While having a 'little something' at a small café, we noticed lots of soldiers walking past, guns at the ready and later heard about the bomb massacre in Manchester.

No-one had mentioned next day was Ascension Day holiday, so almost all shops were shut and we needed to stock up. By luck, we found a 'Franc Prix' open and doing a roaring trade with no competition.

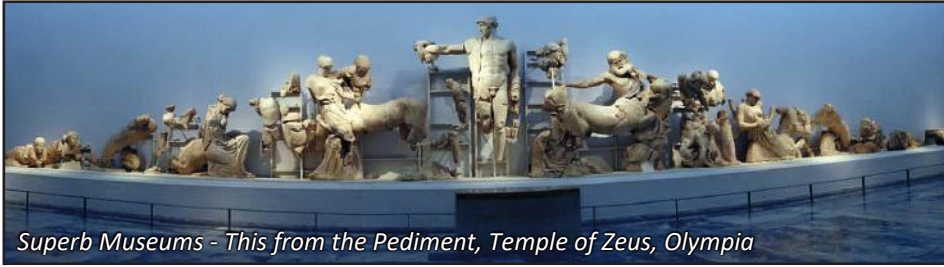
The 'Picassietta House' was worth a visit. It took the owner 15 years to decorate it with a mosaic of broken china and glass. Shortly after finishing it, he died. Moral: Never finish anything!

Back at 'Point du Jour' it was heaving due to the Ascension Day holiday and good weather. I tripped over a guy rope of our wind break and once again landed on my new-hip side. I made quite a clatter as I had all the pans, plates, cutlery on my way to wash up.

Merville Battery Museum told the story, with simulations, of its 'neutralising' just before D-Day. There was the sound of guns, noise of battle and the smell and smoke of cordite. Only 20 German soldiers and Steiner, their Kommandant survived. Its capture happened, as is often the case, through luck and bravery.

Our 'last supper' was at the site café: mussels/fish, chips, beer and crepes, sitting in the sun. The Market Trader was back selling wine, calvados, dried, local sausages and local cider. The most popular items for the French were the dried sausages and local wine.

There was time before taking the afternoon ferry to have a visit to the Maison de la Nature et Orne Estuary where we saw an otter swimming and to have a coffee at Pegasus Bridge at £7.60 for two. We returned home late and went straight to bed but in our dreams we were still travelling around France, enjoying the good food, amazing sights, friendly people, usually excellent roads and a Murvi which did what it said on the box.



Superb Museums - This from the Pediment, Temple of Zeus, Olympia

I am prompted to make a contribution to the current newsletter following our recent visit to Greece and in particular to the Peloponnesian Peninsular.

I know that several club members have toured the area fairly recently but that others, who may actually know Greece far better than we do, have been discouraged from making further visits over concerns about issues of immigrants and the country's severe financial problems. Significantly there appears to have been a sharp decline in the number of GB touring vans and caravans. So are such anxieties justified?



Porto Kajo - a world apart

Let me reassure at the outset. Greece and the Peninsular are still a wonderful places to tour. We spent several weeks following the coast using a 50/50 mix of reasonably priced camp sites and 'wild' camping. Sites we found were well run and several included a small restaurant where it was not unusual to meet the morning receptionist serving our evening meal.

We found it very easy to overnight outside the bounds of camp sites, provided we parked up in a way so as not to affect local communities. Several restaurants had also taken the trouble

to provide free overnight parking, often without any obvious obligation.



Kakala - with overnight quayside parking

Wherever we ventured we found a friendly welcome, be it at the filling station where a much appreciated wind-screen clean was all part of the service, the cheerful and helpful service in a local shop, or at the café, bar or the supermarket. Camp site staff were particularly attentive, helpful and friendly. Prices were also always very comparable with what we would find elsewhere in Europe. This side of our experience was very much as expected and very much in accordance with our experiences of 6 years previously.



Spot King Nestor's

So has anything changed? Well, as before, we met immigrants only once, at the Patras ferry terminal. But this time they were showing no interest in we campers, only the HGV's. In fact we were entertained, sadly in some

respects, by the game of cat and mouse with the terminal security personnel!

But the other noticeable change was the decline in tourism. The saddest incident we came across was a row of restaurants, by the water's edge, in what would formerly have been a popular tourist spot. All were without diners as waiters were almost pleading for our business. Later we ate at the Dolphin restaurant at Plaka, on a balcony overlooking the prettiest harbour scene, where Thomas welcomed us just he had done six years previously. Sadly, during our last night there, he confessed that he wasn't sure if he would be able to continue with his business.



Plaka

So the purpose of this article? I guess just a bit of a plea for the struggling Greek tourist industry. If you are contemplating a first visit, or a return, in our opinion, there is no reason to hesitate. This trip to Greece, we thought, might have been our last, but when we left we were quite determined to be back! Oh – and do visit Thomas at the Dolphin restaurant!



Typical Greek fayre

P.S. We are not Greek Travel experts, but if anyone wants to benefit from what we do know, particularly in getting to Greece toll free and any of our information about the Peninsular you would be welcome to contact us – vince@plusnet3354.plus.com

ANOTHER USE FOR A MURVI SEAT!

By Phil and Hilary Greenwood

When we have lots of guests at our house and need extra chairs we always bring in the seat from our van. We have only just found out that not everyone else does this.

Boys on the seat...



Wind & Rain Screen



I had this made up by a sail/awning maker and simply bought an expanding pole to support it. It works well for when it's a bit cold, rainy or windy and you don't want the door closed.

It's made from canvas and plastic awning material. The top and bottom have open ended borders to slip poles in. The borders need to be wide enough to give

a reasonably strong frame. Mine are 3 " at top and bottom and 2 " at sides, (but probably would go for 3 ins at sides too now.) I simply weight the bottom with my broom handle or poles, so it is easy to flap open. If very windy I put another expanding pole across the middle to prevent it blowing in.

It's also useful as a half screen for keeping the dogs in or out.

It also works well turned on its side as a wind break.

All poles and screen are stored rolled up in a rotary clothes line bag and stands neatly in behind the shower curtain in the bathroom. Approx. total price £60-£70.

Magnetic Opening Fly Screen



I made up this fly screen from two separate door fly screens bought from E-bay/ Aldi for £3.99 each.

Simply measure the door width size.

Cut one of the screens lengthways according to measurement.

Sew it to the complete one, leaving the magnets on the non- cut side. Measurements can be quite crucial for attachment e.g. not too narrow as magnets will not meet for middle opening! If cut too wide, it hangs in folds (although this can be adjusted at sides if not too much).

Remove the magnets from the discarded cut length and clip them down the outside of the newly sewn screen. They unclip easily and can be used as a template to make the small holes needed for attaching magnets.

Sew a border along the top to allow an expanding pole to slip through for fixing.

The magnets stick beautifully to the metal door frame either side (but remove easily as opposed to the stick- on Velcro) and the middle ones gives easy access in and out.

My preference, now having made it up, would be Black to be honest.

If you do mess up it up, use to cover your plants or cabbages.

And finally - to all our members, have a very

