



Another fine aire in Spain

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EDITORIAL

BY ADRIAN SUMPTION

Once again, a big thank you to all of those of you who have sent me contributions to this edition of the newsletter. I never fail to be impressed by the number and variety of the articles which you send in without me having to resort to arm-twisting.

It's been a busy Autumn for the Murvi Club. Meets at Hebden Bridge, Appletreewick and Hawes in September, followed in October by another of Steve Little's fascinating tours of Manchester exploring the city's rich industrial history & its architectural gems. And we've just returned from the annual November meet which this year was at South Molton in Devon (see the article on page 6).



Murvi Club members settling down to lunch in the exclusive surroundings of the Portico Library during Steve Little's October tour of Manchester.

And there's more to come. No less than three pre-Christmas meets are planned. Go to the [Club website](#) for full details of these meets.

Whilst mentioning meets, it seems an appropriate time to try to encourage more members to organise a few additional meets. As it happens there's one ready and waiting for someone to pick up

as none of the committee are able to attend. [ACCEO](#) organise an annual rally (see below) and it just needs one of you to take the plunge and round up a few fellow members to attend. All the hard work is already done so it's just a case of coordinating our members who want to go. If you are thinking of going please contact our secretary, Roger Pepper.

ACCEO National Rally and AGM 2020 30th September to 5th October 2020 At Ludlow Racecourse

- Weds:** Arrival, meet up with friends old and new
- Thurs:** Social Evening in the main hall with a quiz and some background music
- Fri:** Live Entertainment from female vocalist Emily Abbiss
- Sat:** AGM in the afternoon. Evening Live Entertainment from the brilliant 'The Soundations Band'
- Sun:** Coffee Morning with announcements and prize draw. Evening get together.

And Now, a Personal Tale of Woe

I have [AirRide](#) rear suspension on my Morello - maybe not the best decision I ever made for reasons we won't go into here. A couple of years back one side was losing air, so I took it back to the garage where I'd had it fitted and they duly repaired the break in the air line which they found.

To my considerable annoyance I recently found the air suspension was once again leaking on one side prompting another visit to the garage. A short while later the

garage phoned to say there was a section of the plastic tube missing. So, how on earth could that happen without damaging anything else under the chassis? The garage has limited storage space, so they asked me to take the van home whilst they ordered some replacement tubing.

A couple of days later they phoned to say they had the necessary tubing, so I returned to the garage. Imagine my shock when they phoned me again a couple of hours later to say there was now a section of tube missing on the other side! Fortunately they had ordered enough tubing to replace both sides.

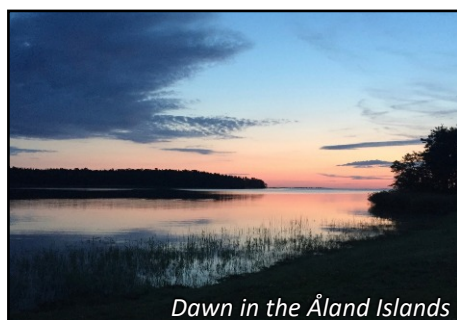
I told Karin what had happened, then after a few moments head scratching came the eureka moment - SQUIRRELS!!! Sure enough, when the mechanic showed me the damaged tubing there were the tell-tale teeth marks. Squirrels and other rodents seem to have developed a taste for some plastics and will sometimes have a go at electrical cables and plastic water pipes.

So, what's the solution? So far all I've managed to do is to smear the tubes with grease and tie-wrapped an old bicycle inner tube around both the air lines. Incidentally, a test with chilli spray, sold to deter squirrels from bird feeders, proved that London squirrels have developed a taste for curry, so no luck there.

And finally A rucksack quiz

Quite a few Club members who we have accompanied on club walks have Osprey rucksacks. Who knows where the built in whistle is on an Osprey rucksack? (Answer: page 9)

We took delivery of our Morello from Murvi in August. Having never been on a campervan holiday before, it felt ambitious planning a voyage to Finland. I got the sense that Rex also thought that this was somewhat rash. Usually our holidays involve lots of advance plans and bookings and it was with a real sense of liberation that we set off on our four week tour with no set plans other than the ferry from Travemünde in Germany to Helsinki.



Dawn in the Åland Islands

Our first night in the van, in a campsite outside Porvoo, a pretty town east of the capital was a great relief. It was comfortable and we immediately felt at home. We had been attracted to Scandinavia by the possibility of wild camping, but it turned out that by August all the Finns had either gone back to work or school and so we were able to enjoy all the luxuries of a site with few of the inconveniences.

The idea was to drive along the south coast of Finland and from there take the ferry to the 6500 islands that form the Åland archipelago straddling the bottom of the Gulf of Bothnia. We stopped en route for three nights in the delightful clapboard town of Ekenäs pitching up on a sward of grass overlooking the sea. Then, after a day in Turku [the city centre

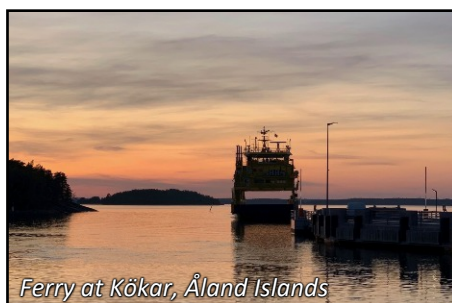


Campsite at Ekenäs

open air museum showing what life was like in 19th century Finland is to be visited if possible- try and catch the resident musical instrument maker from Norfolk!], we took a ferry to the Islands.

Like all the ferry journeys we took, it was magical. Island after island passed us by,

some very tiny indeed, not more than a boulder rounded by glaciers, a couple of pine trees and maybe a red holiday cabin or light house. Arriving at our destination, we found a peaceful and gentle landscape of pasture and woodland. The land was obviously fertile and the shops well stocked with good local produce. [This was our experience throughout Finland.] The locals, Swedish speaking, were extremely welcoming, proudly telling us of their successful efforts to keep this network of tiny island communities alive. In this they were assisted by an amazingly frequent and efficient ferry service. We visited communities of a few hundred people served by ships that would arrive three times a day!



Ferry at Kökar, Åland Islands

Two highlights were the outlying islands of Kumlinge and Kökar (pronounced shaw-kar). Taking a taxi trip on the first, when my bike had a major collapse, the driver proudly told us of Kumlinge's efforts to attract new settlers, including a family of Syrian refugees, who had been welcomed by the community and now much preferred the island to the bustling main town of the archipelago, Mariehamn (pop.11,000). Kökar's 312 inhabitants supported a museum, shop, choir, amateur dramatic group and a wonderful campsite [the Sandvik Gästhamn & Camping] from which we were able to borrow bikes to explore the island.

Other highlights of our visit to the Ålands included the floating woodfired sauna at the Sandöunds campsite on Vårdö. All the campsites we stayed at had saunas, but being able to jump into the Baltic



Floating Sauna

straight afterwards made this one especially invigorating. Also lots of fun were the kayaks we rented from this site with which we were able to explore the sheltered waters around the island.

We would also recommend visiting the Pommern in Mariehamn. This three-masted clipper has been conserved as an exemplary museum with very evocative interiors and a lot of fascinating information about its journeys, in which trips to Britain played a major part. Also the attached museum has a superb display of ships' models and tells the story of the foundering of one of these beautiful ships on our south coast on one of the last commercial voyages taken in the 1930's.

We had thought that we would carry on across the Gulf to Sweden, but were enjoying Finland so much that we instead turned east again for the mainland. The joy of campervanning! For our last week in Finland we headed up north of Tampere. The landscape was a mirror



Lake north of Tampere

image of the islands, with lakes and forests replacing sea and woods. As the days went on we became ever more idle, the peace of the countryside taking its hold, though we did find time for the superb Serlachius art gallery in Mänttä and another great open air museum in Tampere, preserving a worker's housing block from the end of the 19th century. But in the end our abiding memories will be the stones and trees of Finland reflected in its lakes and seas.



Sunset in the Åland Islands

In the last edition we outlined the first part of our trip. Our aim was Italy for 7-8 weeks. We travelled on 26th April via Harwich-Hook then a few days in Holland visiting the fantastic flower display at Koeukenhof. The next stage saw us cross Germany, including a pleasant meander along the 200 mile Romantic Road, then a quick dash through Austria and into Northern Italy and down past Lake Garda to the northern edge of Tuscany, which was our target.

By the middle of May the weather was an ever changing mix of sunny days followed by soggy days with no settled pattern and the forecasts were the same just about anywhere we looked. Southern Greece looked very warm and inviting though, so we tried to book the ferry from Venice to Patras, but no luck! But continuing south through Tuscany the scenery was spectacular and the weather at last became settled and warm.

We spent a lovely slow week along the small roads across sweeping valleys and hills. The famous town of San Gimignano was overrun with tourists, not surprisingly as it is special. Fortunately just a bit further south is Volterra a smaller less visited town but just as fascinating, especially with history back to the Etruscan period, that's 8th Century BC.



Three views around Castiglione in Tuscany



We eventually came to rest for a long stay on the Tuscan coast at Castiglione an ancient port with a walled old town. A great camp site 'buried' in a pine forest right on a beach of lovely sand. Just as good was the cycle path into town in an easy 15 minute ride. We experienced one of life's odd coincidences whilst here – back in May at least 4 weeks previously in a German supermarket car park we chatted with an English couple who were then heading to Croatia – guess what they found the same poor weather and 'diverted' a few hundred miles back to Italy and pitched up not only at the same camp but right next to us, cue some bemused "haven't we seen you before somewhere" looks from all four of us.

Having duly rested up after the long journey from home we eventually logged on to the internet and booked a ferry home, this time from Le Havre to Portsmouth, not the most obvious channel crossing from Italy to our home in Essex but bear with us.

We generally avoided motorways and used the smaller slower roads which took us through a great variety of towns and countryside at a speed that enabled plenty of time to stop for coffee etc. and generally unplanned overnight stop locations, usually dependent on how far we decided to travel.

We did make an exception for the journey from the southern Tuscan coast northward to the French Riviera. We used the Italian A12 (E80) motorway, toll free with little traffic (early June) and through the most enormous number and variety of tunnels or across high viaducts – we seemed to be always up in the sky, never down on the ground. The road was close to the beautiful Mediterranean coast. By sticking to the coast route we avoided the mountain passes, tolls etc. of

Switzerland. We passed through Genoa and had a mad hour or so whilst satnav had a meltdown, as did the two of us! In 2018 There was terrible tragedy when the motorway high above the town partially collapsed

killing 43 people. This then led to difficult to fathom diversions through the port area. After much mental mayhem we eventually found our way out and onwards again.

Having crossed the border near to Nice we then headed across France on a more or less straight (wiggly) line to Le Havre. On this return journey from Tuscany we stopped overnight at either very small campsites or Aires, all in small towns. This often produced some surprising gems of places to visit including the Italian town of Dolceacqua (close to the border with France) In France we discovered a camp at the end of a narrow country lane of many miles, eventually arriving at a remote oasis of a camp by a lake in brilliant sunshine.



Relaxing in Dolceacqua

We duly crossed back to England on 18th June, then instead of driving home we headed up to Stoneleigh Park near Warwick for a Rock and Roll weekend, cunningly disguised as a Motorhome show – a wonderful fun way to round off an 8 week trip.



Remote oasis camp by a lake

Now for 2020 – perhaps we'll get to Greece.

Having had our Murvi Morocco for some 5 years now we have made a number of trips down to the nearby countries of South Western Europe such as France, Spain and Portugal. We now felt ready to try something a bit more adventurous, and Greece seemed to fit the bill. A bit of investigation revealed that the Peloponnese in southern Greece seemed ideal for a few weeks touring in the van, relatively unspoilt by tourism yet offering beaches, mountains and a fair share of historic ruins. We also felt this offered a fairly straightforward option rather than island hopping which we weren't sure how it would work with the van or indeed the cost.

It soon became obvious just how far it was to drive the whole way overland, so we decided to drive to Ancona, south of Venice, and pick up the regular Greek Ferry crossings of Ancona - Igoumenitsa - Patras. The plan was to arrive in Patras and spend 3 weeks touring the Peloponnese before heading back up across the Corinth canal, west through mainland Greece, a stop off on the island of Lefkada (you can drive here via a causeway), and then up to Igoumenitsa to catch the ferry back.

We left the UK on August Bank Holiday, with our return booked for 3 October. By the time we arrived in Ancona 4 days later we'd driven some 1100 miles so it already seemed a long way from home. The Greek ferry embarking experience is somewhat more daunting than your average channel crossing, accentuated by the inevitable hot temperatures, chaotic ticket terminals (nothing as easy as being given your tickets in the comfort of your cab here) and finally fraught tempers of the Greek naval officers directing you on the dockside by whistling and other gestures guiding you through trucks, coaches, hoards of pedestrians and other obstacles before getting onto what seems to be an enormous ship. The ferry was pleasant



Our cruise ship awaits...



Corinth Canal



Greek amphitheatre



Room with a view



Greek taverna at sunset

enough although probably not to the standards of French crossings, and we found food not particularly good and quite expensive even with discount offered with the booking. However the scenery was spectacular and all the travel seemed worth it when we finally arrived in Greece.

The weather in September was pretty well perfect with blue skies and temperatures typically 30 degrees during the day and warm at night. An added bonus is that at this time of the year the sea is a very pleasant temperature. We were originally planning to go in May but a skiing injury earlier in the year put paid to that. However friends who did go said

that the weather wasn't quite warm enough, places were yet to get going and the sea decidedly cold - although the wild flowers were spectacular. We reckon June would probably be about right as an alternative to September.

We were surprised how mountainous it was, every view seemed to have these in the background. For the most part we followed the coastline around the 'three fingers and a thumb' of the Peloponnese, although we did divert into the middle to see Olympia, Mystras and Kalavryta (where there was an extremely moving memorial relating to a German massacre of 700 men and boys in the second world war). The roads were absolutely fine and very little traffic, albeit we were one of the few to be staying to the speed limit - it seemed to be expected that slower vehicles drive half in the hard shoulder so 'normal' vehicles could overtake. A number of the mountain routes were spectacular and the roads more than adequate for our vehicle - we've experienced far worse in the Alps or Dolomites.

Over the 4 week period we stayed roughly half of the nights at campsites (most through ACSI) and half off grid - mainly camperstops where we found some amazing places to stop including quaint fishing harbours, quaysides, typical greek tavernas, and numerous glorious beaches. This balance seemed about right in terms of being able to use the sites' washing facilities, showers, filling up / getting rid of waste. Another important consideration was that often the camperstops had very little shade during the day and the van would get very hot by the evening (having to have all of our stuff packed in the van didn't help here, even though we'd been as minimal as possible), whereas all of the sites offered very welcome shade.

We took two bikes and an inflatable paddle board which were all well used. Whenever we go to Europe we are tempted with electric bikes as everyone seems to have them, although mindful of the extra weight it would add at the very back of the vehicle - some of the beach site access roads were incredibly steep and I did think what impact this would have on the front wheel drive traction.

Continued overleaf....

The overall trip was 3,700 miles, at a cost of £611 miles in fuel (average 34 mpg). Tolls were roughly £150 each way, using a mixture of roads in France and staying on the Autostrade all the way through Italy. The cost was kindly supplemented by a speeding fine of £40 while travelling back through France - cameras are often concealed with no warning signs, so be careful! The Greek ferry crossing was



Paddle board before breakfast

€490 return. Generally everyday prices in Greece were a bit more than Spain, with coffees typically €2 - 3 although the really lovely pastries served in the numerous bakeries helped. Nowhere did we ever pay for parking.

We will definitely go back again as there is much more to explore, both to northern Greece and the islands.

THE SHETLANDS IN MAY: SNOW, SUN & STUNNING SCENERY

By Brian & Annie Marshall

It's not necessarily the easiest place to get to in the UK, but the Shetlands are wonderful - and a great place to explore in a Murvi.

We'd long been enticed by the thought of visiting those far-flung islands, way north of the Scottish mainland, and closer to Norway than Aberdeen. And it seemed an ideal place to see from the shelter and independence of our Morello.

We went in early May, breaking the journey with a couple of nights near Wakefield (staying at the peaceful Highfield House camp site at Flockton) and a day at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (highly recommended). It was then a long drive to Aberdeen and the over-night ferry. Fortunately, the crossing was fairly calm, although that should never be assumed!

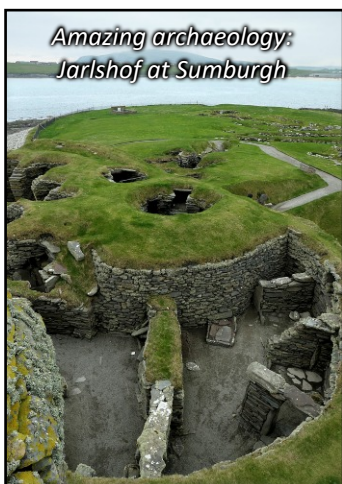
We were welcomed at Lerwick – the rather drab capital – by snow showers, an icy wind and a temp of 2°C. We wondered what we had let ourselves in for... But it quickly cleared, and we were then fortunate to enjoy two weeks of mainly clear, if chilly, weather.

We worked our way clockwise round the larger islands, starting at a campsite on the marina at Cunningsburgh. Camping on a marina was a theme repeated on our trip, as several were run by small boating or harbour clubs. It makes sense – plenty of parking, often with fabulous views; toilets and showers in the clubhouse, plus electric hook-up. There was usually an honesty box for the fee, with the whole thing run on the basis of trust

and mutual respect. Wonderful, and an indication of the Shetlanders' pragmatic attitudes.

We savoured quiet, if narrow and often single-track, roads with sparse traffic. The only town of any size is Lerwick. Away from there, the population thins and shops can be few and far between. It suited us fine, as we prefer peace and quiet and are not at all bothered by the lack, for instance, of pubs or eating places. Instead we enjoyed the wild natural surroundings, and did some fabulous walks and bike rides.

At dusk one evening, while parked side-on at the harbour at Delting Boat Club, Brae, we watched a family of 5 otters clambering over the breakwater and slipping into the sea. Magical. And the islands are laced with fascinating archaeology, including many well-preserved Iron Age brochs, and the world-class Jarlshof site at Sumburgh. (We camped overnight in the nearby Sumburgh Head Hotel car park for £5, including EHU.)



Amazing archaeology: Jarlshof at Sumburgh



Harbourside at Brae

After immersing ourselves day after day in unspoilt views, it was a bit of a shock to come across the huge North Sea oil

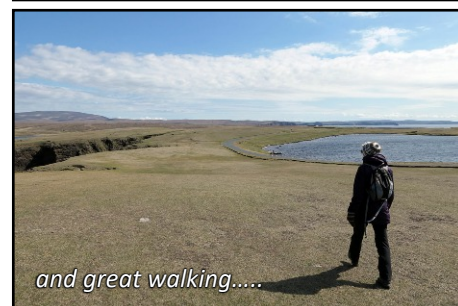
terminal at Sullom Voe – one of the largest in Europe. Such an enormous industrial plant seemed incongruous in such a beautiful setting. But it has brought jobs and money, with much invested back into the community in the form of new schools, community halls and sports centres.

We crossed to the north isles of Yell, Unst and Fetlar. They are linked by easy and fairly regular ferries and you only pay one way, when heading north. These islands are even more sparsely populated...at least by humans. On Unst, we cycled to the magical and enormous nature reserve at Hermaness where it felt (quite rightly) that it was the birds who were in charge. Over a million seabirds visit Shetlands in the breeding season, and many return to this particular area.

The first challenge was to walk across a mile or so of duckboard, with warnings that to stray from the path was likely to invite an attack from nesting arctic skuas (known locally as bonxies).



Great cycling.....



and great walking.....

Continued overleaf....

We were awestruck at the sight and noise of tens of thousands of breeding gannets, and other birds, on the rock stacks offshore. There were also many puffins nesting in holes, some very close to the path. It was one of the most remarkable places we have visited from all our world travels, and we felt quite moved and humbled.

Unst was also the location of our favourite pitch. There's an independent hostel - Gardiesfauld at Uyeasound - with parking for a few vans right next to the beach, complete with EHU. The modest price includes access to the hostel facilities. And for an even more modest price, you can still use the facilities and park next to the harbour, a short distance away, for free.

From Unst we joined just one other vehicle on the ferry to Fetlar, where we temporarily increased the resident population count by two to 65. The only shop is run by an "incomer" from Sussex, who talked about both the attractions and disadvantages of living in such an



On our pitch on Inst



isolated place. She also recommended a couple of places for us to wild camp, as there are no official camp-sites. And so we had a peaceful night in a secluded spot right above the beach without feeling any sense that we were intruding or unwelcome.

And then the slow return, over a few days, to Lerwick and (thankfully) another calm crossing back to bustling Aberdeen.

We highly recommend the Shetlands. But it's not a particularly straightforward or cheap place to get to, especially from southern England. And we were lucky with the weather....

For more information, see www.shetland.org Also, the NorthLink Ferry website has a very useful section on campervan touring, with photos and links to recommended sites. We used this as the basis for our camping planning.

We are also happy to answer any queries – butleigh@gmail.com



It could (almost) be the Caribbean

SOUTH MOLTON MEANDERINGS

By Brian Biffin

We arrived at Riverside campsite on Thursday afternoon after a very pleasant couple of days at the pre-meet at Dulverton. There, we had walked along the river Barle to Tarr Steps and then back over the moor. Brian and I had paddled that section of the Barle, by canoe, a number of times and it was interesting getting a walker's perspective of it.

Given the time of year the weather was surprisingly good to us and the two days for planned walks were rain free, if a little cloudy. On Friday thirty of us walked into South Molton to catch the service bus to Landkey. From there we walked up to Codden Hill to the memorial to Jeremy Thorpe's wife, Caroline. Codden Hill is the most striking of the area's whale-backed hills the result of the collision of tectonic plates 300 million years ago. I'm not sure how many of us realised that whilst walking over the hill! From the memorial

we walked down to The Chichester Arms in Bishops Tawton to have some very welcome refreshments. The walk continued along the Tarka Trail passing some very rare Mazzard cherry trees and, thus, returning to Landkey stopping for more light refreshment at Willow's Tea Rooms.

That evening we had a hotly fought game of skittles before bedtime.

The weather forecast for Saturday was for rain and it did not disappoint. Many Murviites walked into South Molton and could be seen dodging the showers in the small, but interesting, covered market. Later, sixty-four of us sat down to a convivial three course meal.

On Sunday the local Community Transport bus arrived at 8.45 am to transport the first of two groups of sixteen walkers to Simonsbath for a walk along the upper reaches of the river Barle and a return trip over Exmoor. As the second group was walking along beside the river we could see the first group walking along the ridge



Saturday Dinner

of the moor above us. We caught up with them at The Exmoor Inn in Simonsbath. Another lovely refreshment stop to add to our list! Group 2 refreshed themselves whilst Group 1 returned to Riverside then the bus returned, fortunately, for the second group.

Another fine meal on our return to the campsite was followed by the traditional slideshow, rather in opposition to the Young Farmers playing darts, pool and skittles. An unfortunate double booking on the part of the campsite.

Monday saw Brian and I returning home, already thinking of where we could go for next year's November meet.



Codden Hill



Tarka Trail

We had first ventured to Southwest France back in 1985, when as a family, we were obsessed with windsurfing. We travelled down nearly every year for 20 years or so. Now in our 70's, we still love to sail, but now either dinghy sail or kayak rather than windsurf. So, in August of this year, we decided to re-visit our favourite lakeside site at Biscarrosse. The site has direct access to the lake via a gently shelving clean white sandy beach, & it also has its own harbour & boat launch slipway. The area is also superb for cycling, with dedicated cycle paths zig-zagging the area.

With our 15 year old Murvi, we towed a trailer carrying two electric bikes, two kayaks & all the necessary kit for a 4 week camping/kayaking/cycling holiday. We took an overnight Plymouth to Roscoff ferry, cleared Roscoff at 8.15am the following day & drove approximately 285 miles to overnight at Chalandray near Poitiers. The following day was a



Rest area whilst travelling to SW France

shorter journey of 200 miles via Bordeaux to Biscarrosse in the Aquitaine Landes area of France. The site was still quite busy, being the last week of the August French school holidays, but a number of shaded pitches were avail-



On site at Navarrosse, northern lake at Biscarrosse



Another photo showing our Murvi with awning-tent setup.

able, & we soon got ourselves set up. The weather was superb for the 3 weeks we spent at Biscarrosse, being in the high 20's or low 30's centigrade, which for late August/early September was very acceptable. By the last week-end of August, the site had quietened, families had departed, & the site became home to senior couples, predominantly in motorhomes.



Biscarrosse coast at 10am, the French do not go to the beach before 2pm!



Early morning paddle from campsite, before sun got high & the wind got up

We kayaked most days, cycled 15-25 miles every other day, cycled the 8 miles out to the coast a few times, shopped in the supermarkets & twice weekly market at Biscarrosse town (which is an easy 2 mile cycle or walk along the cycle path), & generally loafed about most after- noons in the sun or shade.

We had thought that this might have been our last trip to Southwest France (a combination of Brexit & our advancing age) but, our enthusiasm for the area was re-ignited & our aim is to tow my boat down next year & sail a bit more on the lovely lake at Biscarrosse.

Our Murvi covered the 1200 miles trip without missing a beat, with the 2.8 Fiat engine coping with motorway gradients towing 500kgs with ease (I did have ECU re-mapped to add a few horse power) & returned 33-35mpg.



The lakes in SW France are huge, with clean gently shelving beaches.

EXPLORING THE SATNAV ROAD MAP

By Alan Major

As I am sure you are aware there is a myriad of different options for obtaining route guidance for trips in our Murvis. I am sure that Adrian could fill a whole newsletter with articles related to the subject if he canvassed members for their views. For better or worse my choice is a radio head unit with a built in SatNav but over the course of my Murvi ownership I have become frustrated by the cost of map updates and the limited upgradability of the built in SatNavs. I felt there had to be a solution waiting to be found 'out there' somewhere but where?

If only there was a roadmap. I offer this article as a possible roadmap for anyone else who is similarly frustrated or perhaps just wants to ensure they have considered all the options.

Retaining a single head unit was a red line for me and with that as a constraint the challenge was to find a unit which would allow the SatNav software to be upgraded or even changed. Many of the mainstream brands (Kenwood, Pioneer etc) were addressing this requirement by incorporating Android Auto and/or Apple CarPlay functionality in their units. Both

of these options required a SatNav app to be run on a smartphone which is then displayed on and controlled from the head unit. As an approach it certainly would work but I felt it compromised my requirement for a single unit solution and closer investigation revealed a limited choice of SatNav apps able to work with Android Auto or Apple CarPlay which became extremely limited if an app with motorhome routing capability was required. Time to move on.

Continuing my journey the next waypoint was the RV7000M head unit sold by

Aguri and subject to recent reviews in MMM and C&CC magazines. Having studied the reviews and the product pages on the Aguri website this seemed to be the ideal solution. A SatNav app that could be upgraded, free map updates with motorhome relevant POIs all incorporated in a head unit which could provide our entertainment needs. I thought maybe I had reached my destination and decided to purchase one.

My initial experiences with the Aguri head unit were good and for many it will be a perfectly good unit. With longer experience I found it did not deliver all that I had been hoping for and in the end despite excellent support from Aguri in trying to finding solutions I sadly decided to return the unit. For me there were just too many compromises given the price of unit. So on my roadmap this was just a waypoint and not a destination.

Time to reconsider, should I relax my requirements or was there another solution waiting to be found. Analysing my

experience with the Aguri unit I found pointers to a possible solution to my needs. The approach used by Aguri was to combine a Chinese head unit with an Aguri specific software overlay containing a SatNav app and connectivity options to obtain map updates and software upgrades. My main concerns with taking this route were customs duties and difficulties with obtaining product/warranty support if a Chinese head unit needed to be returned at any stage but at least I would have a platform to which I could add my own choice of a SatNav app. Further research led me to some Chinese brands which were distributed from European warehouses via Amazon UK. Rightly or wrongly I felt reassured by the fact I could purchase via

Amazon UK and eventually made a decision to order an ATOTO A6Y2721PRB head unit which arrived within 2 days.

This time my initial experience has been much more positive. I feel much more comfortable with my own choice of SatNav app (Sygic Truck Navigation with a RV/Caravan licence and Live Traffic). So maybe I have found a suitable destination but time will tell. However this final leg of the journey will not be for everyone. It does require more than a passing familiarity with computer technology so for some embarking on a similar journey the Aguri unit maybe their destination.

There is a companion article on my Blog called [Exploring the bleeding edge of SatNav functionality](#) which explains in a little more detail on how I made my decision and a full [review](#) of the solution I finally decided on.



CAMPER HOME APPS FOR BEGINNERS TRAVELLING IN EUROPE

By Lin Powell



[park4night – camping car & van.](#) Easy to use & easy to find places to stay using both forms of GPS. or address with reviews and photos.

A French based site which has sites and places to park overnight in something like 22 different countries. A huge abundance in France but good in others too. Registration is free and the mobile apps are also free. Can be used on phones, tablets, computers. Places and stopovers include: Aires, Free car park for campers, Paying car park for campers, Private car park for campers, Picnic areas, Rest areas, Service areas without parking, Camping On the farm (farm, vineyard ...), Off road (4x4), Parking day and night, Parking Day Only, Wild camping. It also has an offline facility but you have to pay a small charge of approx. 9 euros. We found this really useful. This App. is probably the nearest thing you can get to an easy to use App. for Wild Camping. If somebody finds a place where they can park a motorhome, they can register that place with the site so that it can be enjoyed by others. Thus many of these would be classed as 'wild camping' so do read descriptions and

reviews carefully as this in itself can cause problems. This is because they can include almost anywhere where people have literally just parked up, and have not been moved on! So be warned and use your common sense! There are many photos and reviews to help with this.

Having said that we find it a really good app and our favourite used a great deal in our blog on the website 'Wintering in Spain'



[Camperstop-App](#), for smartphone and tablet. The Camperstop-App allows you to find motorhome stopovers

easily and contains up-to-date, detailed information, images and reviews from other motorhomers. With updated information about more than 10,750 inspected camperstops, throughout 27 European countries.

The Camperstop-App gives you access to the entire database and offers you the following features:

- Search for Camperstops around your current location or your desired destination.

- Use filter options to search for aires/stopovers according to your wishes and requirements, regarding type of stopover and/or offered service facilities.
- Navigate easily from the Camperstop-App using Google maps or any other installed navigation-app on your smartphone or tablet.
- Download offline maps, so you don't have to use any of your data bundle on the road.



[Campercontact](#) website and app lists motorhome parking spots throughout Europe (nearly 700 in the UK), and claims to be

Europe's biggest. Add details and reviews and search by best rated or free stopovers. There's a free trial version, but otherwise costs £4.50 a year. With the Campercontact-app (All Motorhome Parkings) you have the information about more than 24,000 motorhome parkings in 50+ countries always available at your fingertips. The app works perfectly offline so you don't have to incur roaming charges abroad. The app is compatible with smartphones and tablets that have an iOS or Android operating system. The

Continued overleaf....

database of Campercontact contains three categories of motorhome stops :

- **Motorhome parkings** : places especially for motorhomes. Overnight stay is allowed. There are several subcategories.
- **Service areas** : places where motorhomes can discharge their waste water and chemical toilet and have the possibility to tank fresh water. Overnight stay is not allowed here.

- **Motorhome friendly campsites** : places on campsites which comply with three conditions: motorhomes must have the possibility to discharge waste water and chemical toilet, and the possibility to tank fresh water.



[Alan Rogers camping Apps](#): The Alan Rogers Camping App for iPhone is packed full of reviews on the best campsites across

the UK and Europe, and best of all – it's FREE! . Over 3,000 campsites in 29 countries. Follow full driving directions to sites. Read full reviews of all sites. Alan Rogers first published a campsite guide in 1968. Over 40 years later and with inspectors visiting thousands of campsites each year, the Alan Rogers name is now known as the leading authority on campsites and camping holidays in Europe.

HOOK-UP CABLE JOINT PROTECTION

Like a number of other club members I have taken a 25metre hook-up cable and cut it in two to make two separate cables, a 10 metre and a 15 metre cable. One or other of these shorter cables is usually long enough to reach the power outlet on most campsites, however there are occasions when the full 25 meters is required. On these occasions the two cables can simply be plugged together to form a 25 meter cable.

Having said that, I am always wary of leaving the joint in the cable exposed or just covered with some makeshift arrangement to keep the rain off the joint, even though the connectors are IP44 rated (protected against splashing water) especially since an incident which happened a few years ago.

A van which was using a jointed cable caused the loss of power to the whole campsite during a rainstorm on the site where we store our van. Subsequently when the power had been restored the offending van once again joined their cables together, despite being asked not to, and caused permanent damage to the site electrics which had to be repaired at considerable expense.

As a result I have looked for a slightly more robust way of protecting a cable joint. I tried one sold by Outwell for the purpose but it wasn't big enough to hold two of the blue 16A connectors joined together, so a rather pointless bit of kit.

My solution has been to buy a suitable plastic food container (actually a 1 litre 'bacon box') and make a U shaped hole in each end of the bottom half of the box. I had to cut the end tabs on the lid slightly shorter to enable the lid to snap shut properly and, hey presto, a decent cover for the cable joint. Not 100% waterproof I'll admit, but a lot better than a plastic carrier bag or an upturned bucket!



By: Adrian Sumption

WHAT THREE WORDS: SMARTPHONE APP

Here's an app that's worth looking at and installing on your phone.

What Three Words is a free app for smart phones and it could save your life. It works by providing a location code wherever you are in the entire world, which is displayed on your phone, even if you don't have a phone signal at that place.

The what three words code is just that, it's 3 words, that in themselves are meaningless but they provide a unique code based on the globe being 'divided' into 3 metre squares, that's 57 trillion in all.

This is much more precise than say postcodes, which are also not much use if you are stranded in the countryside.

Many of the UK Emergency services including Police, Fire, Ambulance are now using this app to locate those in need of rescue. Car manufacturers including Mercedes are now including the app in new models. By providing the W3W code to a call centre the response team can more easily find those in distress.

Sometimes a great idea is so simple in concept that it's difficult to explain. Do a Google search on "What Three Words App" and read some of the articles to get a wider idea of the potential benefit from this app.

By: Keith Ross

The answer to the Rucksack Quiz on Page 1:

The whistle is in the chest strap buckle.

Thanks to Hilary, one of our local Shropshire walking friends who spotted this facility.



Wheel Changing

I have never trusted scissor jacks, including the one Fiat supply for lifting a 3.5 ton, fully loaded Ducato. The 2.5 ton RAC jack which I had held on to from my VW T4 days was neither high enough or strong enough.

After some online research, I purchased a Chinese (Beley, labeled Autool) Electric hydraulic jack for around £90. The spec looked good: 5 ton capacity and a maximum height of 43cm. Maximum height turned out to be only 33cm. Even with a massive 16cm block on the saddle, the pump gave up. After much correspondence I got my money back.

Next I phoned SGS tools, an all British firm, who recommended their manual 3 ton trolley jack with an extended height of 46cm. It does the job and cost £60! Sadly, it also weighs in at around 20Kg but I think that's a price worth paying. Call me old fashioned, but I prefer to know I can sort myself out rather than wait for the AA.

By: Brian Biffin

COMPRESSOR FRIDGE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

After six months of use we really like the compressor fridge on our Morello. Just switch it on and forget it, and as long as there is a smidge of sunshine it costs nothing to run, especially as Rex managed to squeeze a pair of solar panels on the top of our Transit.

The very boxy shape of the fridge means there is plenty of space above it, for a drawer or oven, but this also creates a bit of a problem. It is very 'deep' from front to back so it is easy to lose provisions in the back of the fridge.

One solution may be a set of knee pads, but we like to restrict those to DIY and gardening activities. Some suitable plastic containers seemed to be a better solution, and after combing several outlets armed with a tape measure our local super-market offered the best solution, with smart white storage trays. A potential drawback of such trays could be that air circulation would be restricted. To avoid this, a series of approx 25mm diameter holes were drilled in the sides of the trays, and some 8mm holes in the base of those that would sit on the shelves. Any tendency for the tray in the bottom to slide around can be curtailed by sticking some pads of foam draught excluder to the base.

If anyone wants to use this idea, the trays are manufactured by Wham.



By: Robert Flitney

An Uncomfortable Truth....

I hope it's not considered too heretical to ponder here about the future of the motorised camping pastime that we all share and love.

Returning home this autumn from a European trip, with news reports of environmental groups trying to raise awareness of the urgency of tackling climate change and pollution, I got thinking. And wondered how things might develop, particularly for us diesel campervan owners and users, over the coming decades.

In common with all petrol and diesel vehicles, there's no getting away from the fact that we are contributing to the world's emissions problems. It's an uncomfortable truth for me, and one that I would prefer not to consider as it conflicts with my love of using our Murvi.

Electric and hybrid delivery vans are being produced and marketed. But the current (sorry!) electric range, given the weight of a large van, is around 100 miles at best. But who knows where developments will take us?

Meanwhile I continue to plan and enjoy trips. But with an occasional unwelcome prod from my conscience.

Am I alone?

By: Brian Marshall

LPG ADAPTER FOR SPAIN

On a recent trip to Northern Spain we ran out of Autogas and were unable to refill as we did not have the correct Eurogas adapter in the selection supplied when we bought our Murvi. If you buy one, make sure you get the M22 (21.8mm) UK thread.



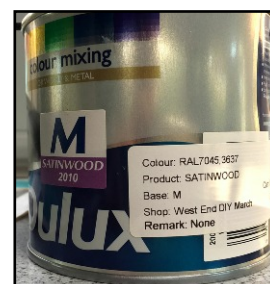
Be prepared; it's better than drinking warm beer!

By: Nick Mawby

CUPBOARD DOOR PAINT CHIPS

There have been several posts over the years concerning paint chips and the various ways members have tried to deal with them. I finally bit the bullet, unscrewed a door and took it to a DIY shop for scanning.

Due to its depth the chip will require several coats and sandings, however, the colour match is pretty accurate.



By Tony Phillips