



THE LOCKDOWN2 EDITION



The Stratford Avon where the 2020 AGM should have been

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EDITORIAL

So that's it then! 2020 is nearly over and the only genuine Murvi meet we've had this year was back in February at Devizes. With the AGM cancelled and no annual November meet it's been a pretty barren year, and very difficult for many of us. Let's hope we manage to meet up again in 2021. Maybe we'll even manage an AGM as we were unable to celebrate the club's 10th anniversary this year.

One of the few high points of the year for Karin and me was finally picking up our new Morello. We had originally hoped to pick it up in late May or early June, but lockdown put paid to that idea and we finally collected it from Murvi in late August. In a typical twist of fate, our old Morello, which we were about to trade in, came up with the dreaded engine management warning light in The Tesco car park at Ivybridge literally minutes before we arrived at Murvi. Rex wasn't impressed.

We're delighted with our new van now that we have got our heads round the totally different heating system. I understand the Webasto Dual Top isn't currently available as some of you may be aware, so Murvi have fitted a completely different Webasto system. Our van is among the very first Murvi vans to have the new system which comprises of two heaters, a Thermo Top water heater and an Air Top which provides

blown hot air heating. It took us a while to get our heads round the new system as we found the instructions sketchy, but now we have worked it out we think it works well. If anybody is interested I have written an idiots guide for myself which I am happy to share – email adrian@sumption.me.uk.

Like many of you I suspect, we have managed a few short forays in our van this year, but only in the UK. Back in October we spent a couple of weeks away, visiting one of our favourite sites at Little Stretton in Shropshire, then moving on to Ross-on-Wye and finally Bath. Our original plan had been to visit some Welsh sites, but the Welsh Parliament foiled that plan. If only Owain Glyndwr had had the benefit of coronavirus back in the early 15th century he might have succeeded in getting rid of the English.

In one final indignity, we got home from our trip and our shiny new van was parked outside the house overnight before taking it back to the campsite at Chertsey where we store it. Then at 3 o'clock in the morning we were woken by a loud bang to see shattered pieces of our wing mirror all over the road. So that's why we don't keep the van at our house!

Here's wishing you all well – stay safe and keep well and let's all look forward to a better year next year.

2021 SUBSCRIPTIONS

No doubt you will all have been disappointed by the restrictions we have faced during this year on our ability to meet up and travel. While the arrival of July brought about a welcome re-opening of camp sites and relaxation of restrictions on meeting people, the summer ended with people being increasingly subject to greater and greater restrictions until finally the autumn saw many of us been locked down again.

Sadly the club's AGM rally had to be cancelled at the start of the season and now at the end of the season the November rally has also had to be cancelled. In between it has been very difficult to run rallies and only occasionally have members been able to meet up at a distance in very restricted numbers. Let us all hope that 2021 will bring us back to something closer to what was previously considered normal.

In view of all that has happen this year the Committee has decided to extend the 2020 subscription year to 31 December 2021 and therefore **no subscriptions are payable for the 2021 year**. Any subscriptions paid in advance for 2021 will be carried over to 2022. If any member has paid a subscription in advance and would like to seek a refund please email your bank details to Alan Major at alandmajor@gmail.com

With best wishes for happier times in 2021.

We're not intrepid explorers in our van. We rarely go "off grid" and never wild camp unless you count French aires. We find beautiful places and return to them again and again. So for us to venture beyond the familiarity of EU countries to the "wild west" beyond felt a bit adventurous. We'd travelled down to Dubrovnik two years ago and discovered one of our "beautiful places" in Kuciste on the Peljesac Peninsula. So we were keen to return but this time wanted to visit Bosnia (resonant with memories of wars) and Montenegro (cos everyone says it's beautiful). In order to do so, getting vehicle insurance became rather complex. We were with NFU Mutual but they didn't provide comprehensive cover for the Balkans. So we changed to the Caravan Club/Devitts, one of whose underwriters (AXA) would cover Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro. This was comprehensive cover and provided a green card which was actually checked together with our passports being stamped as we went in and out of the different countries.

Our journey from home in Keswick covered about 3,500 miles, crossing over-night from Hull to Rotterdam and back. We stopped close to the ports at the Humber Bridge Country Park and on the Brielse Meer for our dog to get her exercise before crossing her legs for the long haul across the North Sea. We used several Camper Contact sites en route (thanks to John Laidler for recommending this many years ago - I can provide a list of where we stopped). Our longest stop-over was at one of our best ever campsites in the Dolomites at Seiser Alm near Bolzano: superb scenery and walking, integrated free public transport and an immaculate, stylish campsite. They even kept us our favourite pitch. (NB It's also our most expensive site!)



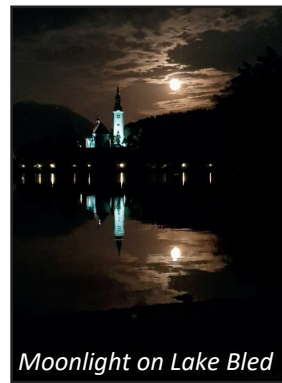
Resciesca funicular, Dolomites

It was on leaving the Soca Valley in Slovenia that our journey got interesting. We

plotted our course to Lake Bled up and over the Vrisic Pass (1611m, 25 hairpins up and 25 down). We'd done it before so no worries, until we came round bend 10 on the way down the other side: an incomprehensible notice (in Slovenian) attached to a totally comprehensible barrier across the whole road!

After a lengthy discussion involving Slovenian police, roadworkmen, and several different nationalities behind us, we did a five point turn and made our way back up the pass. Well before we reached Bled we knew we had some sort of problem denoted by the grinding noise emanating from our rear end. Nothing wrong that we could see. After a call to the Caravan Club we followed the advice of the very helpful staff in the campsite office and visited a local garage next day. This resulted in an improvised repair to the damaged part involving a bit of plastic and two cable ties. Total cost – 15 euros! And it's still in place today.

When we decided to visit Bosnia it was Mostar we wanted to see with its famous bridge, so close to Dubrovnik we could do it easily. However, a friend at home said we must go to Sarajevo too. One of the most unsettling things about being beyond EU borders turned out to be the lack of mobile data as we'd decided we could manage without it. Google Maps suddenly seemed like a necessity even with our satnav doing its best. After much research we'd decided to try for a Camper Contact site close to the centre of Sarajevo but we knew we had to avoid the direct route to it. Having travelled this road subsequently in a taxi we realized the 1 in 4 rough cobbles were not best suited to any sort of motorhome. Amazing that we found the site at all but so glad we did! It was a bit like someone's back yard but with the most magnificent view over the city below, spectacular at night. Our bedfellows that first night were three luridly painted vans from Bristol with a motley crew of punks who turned out to be the nicest group of lads you could ever hope to meet on a dark night in Bosnia!



Moonlight on Lake Bled

The site owner spoke some German and was really helpful. He booked us taxis to go into town next day and we went on "free" city tours with knowledgeable locals. Mike and I had to go separately as dogs weren't allowed in taxis! Sarajevo is a fascinating blend of East and West culture with a surprising amount of impressive architecture

surviving. It has three claims to fame – the assassination of Franz Ferdinand which sparked the First World War, the 1984 Olympics (remember Bolero?) and the terrible siege in the Bosnian War. My guide had been a child through the siege and had many tales to tell.



Sarajevo at night



Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque, Sarajevo

Our second stop in Bosnia had to be in Mostar, though we intended to just look at the bridge and get back to Croatia. Best laid plans...



The Old Bridge, Mostar

Whilst looking for a car park we ended up, as you so do, in the ever-narrowing lanes of the old town. Grateful to see a Parking sign ahead of us we turned into a courtyard and stumbled across another

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Camper Contact site. The owner greeted us with the offer, "come up and see my terrace!" How could I refuse! At a huge cost (35 euros) we spent a magical evening sharing a candle lit alfresco meal with the old bridge floodlit below us and the calls to prayer echoing from the six mosques surrounding us. It was worth every penny!

On to Montenegro. After several miles beyond the border on an unmade road (they'd ripped it up before completing the new one) we inevitably got a puncture. This was when data could have been useful. You can imagine the problems where no one spoke English and we had great difficulty establishing even where we were. Very luckily we *had* got a mobile signal so it was back on the phone to the Caravan Club. They had to

find a partner they could work with in Montenegro as they didn't have one. In very little time we were completing our journey to a deserted campsite on the back of a breakdown truck with the driver constantly on his phone and no seat belts in sight. He took our wheel away, leaving us balanced on a block of wood for the night, promising to return in the morning with a new tyre. Which he did. Looking back we were very impressed with the Caravan Club who were very reassuring at the time and even reimbursed most of the 60 pounds we spent on phone calls that day. We didn't linger in Montenegro! A drive round the Bay of Kotor on our way back to the familiarity of Croatia completed our shortened stay. We found it an attractive enough country but not a patch on the beauty of Croatia.

Our homeward trek included a brief stop in magical Dubrovnik (just time for a memorable meal in a waterfront restaurant with live music and song), and a week relaxing in our beloved Kuciste by the sea. From there we wended our way home via lovely ancient Trogir, crossing the Alps on the serpentine Pass Ploeken, and stopping off by the Moselle near Schengen for our usual visit with the dog to Ingrid the vet.



Moselle Chateau, Sierck, France

We'll never be able to replicate the magical time we spent away but as always the memories bring a smile to our faces. And as the owner of our Kuciste site said "You know, the door is always open". Sadly, I think not this year.....



Rescue, Montenegro!



Sunset Kuciste, Croatia

MARK & Jo's BLOG

By Mark Skerritt

We are Mark and Joanne Skerritt, from Portishead, North Somerset. We retired from work a couple of years ago intending to travel long term in our van.

We sold our first van in August 2019 shortly after our last trip in it, ordering a new Morocco XL. The period since then didn't exactly go to plan, with ill health and major surgery for Jo and a Corona-virus pandemic for everyone! This meant that our new van was stuck with Murvi, nearly finished, when 'Lockdown 1' was imposed on all of us here in the UK.



The stumbling block to our van being road ready was Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA), the problem being that the test centre suspended testing when lockdown was announced, just one week before our van's appointment there.

We finally received word from Rex that our van was going to be ready for collection at Ivybridge and we set the date of Wednesday 19 August 2020 for our handover, 51 weeks since we placed our order!!

We couldn't be happier with the finished van and had a Channel Tunnel crossing booked for 29 September 2020 intending



to spend two or three month in Europe returning for Christmas. Unfortunately the pandemic forced us to change plans again, we moved our crossing to Jan 2021 and decided to embark on a month long trip to Scotland instead.

Plan B was wonderful however, we had a great time and our new van which performed impeccably. We 'Blogged' our way around the North Coast 500 and the South West Coastal 300 so if you are interested in reading about us, our Murvi and our journey you can find out much more at: <https://wheretwo.co.uk/blog>



Having lost the chance of an autumn escape across the Channel, we decided to make an October visit to the West Country. This would involve moving on from our usual favourite Dorset sites, although advice from friends wasn't encouraging. Many people predicted great crowds, difficulty finding places to stay, unfriendly natives, and the final killer of half term. Advantages for us were the possibility of reasonable weather, good walking on the SW Coast Path, and a bit of bird watching at the end of the migration season.

We decided we would take a chance on campsite bookings after contacting several sites (small as well as larger) where we found no real shortage of spaces, warm welcomes and some available hard standings. To start us off, a reservation was made at the Slapton Camping Club Site which is a lovely site but not over equipped with hard standings - and busy, so we were unable to extend our stay because the grass pitches were very wet.

Slapton is well situated for walks and there is a bus between Kingsbridge and Exeter conveniently close. For bird watchers, butterfly and flower enthusiasts the Ley (freshwater lake) at Slapton Sands is of great interest, and coast path walks extend to dramatic Start Point with its small colony of gull buntings. Nearby Torcross has an very moving history as it was the site of a huge D Day rehearsal in April 1944 involving a practice-landing by thousands of American and other allied soldiers. Tragedy struck when German E boats attacked and hit 3 tank landing craft leading to the loss of hundreds of American combatants. Over all more than 1000 died. There are many illustrated panels telling this terrible story, plus a memorial and an original American Sherman tank that was raised from the sea bed.

*Salcombe**Ilton Castle Farm*

We moved on a short way to Salcombe and a lovely CL on a working farm - Ilton Castle Farm - run by Wendy, who is a very helpful and welcoming host, with 5 hardstandings and a great view. Access is down a narrow lane so we opted to go out on foot during our stay and there is a pleasant downhill walk to Salcombe (but a steep walk back). There is a bus route from Salcombe to Marlborough and Kingsbridge, and also taxis for the return. We had lovely walks via Salcombe and the East Portlemouth foot ferry to Gara Rock Hotel, and via Marlborough to the coast path and Bolt Head. Salcombe has a truly spectacular setting on its long, narrow estuary but the little town is now given over to tourism and shops for smart leisure clothes, boat tackle, craft shops and galleries. There is plenty to look at if the weather isn't fit for more active pursuits.

*Ferry*

Getting around in a Murvi Morello isn't that easy in South Devon, as most Murvi owners will know, and parking is a problem nearly everywhere as car parks are often down long narrow lanes or are too small. Our plan was to move on after 3 to 4 nights and explore each area on foot or public transport. We therefore went on to Looe to the friendly Caravan Club site for 2 nights, and in poor weather walked via the coast path to the little town of Looe which still has a small fishing fleet. Buying fish in these West Country ports is always difficult and a hunt for dressed crab in Salcombe had revealed only a cache of very active live specimens, while our Murvi kitchen lacked containers big enough to boil the poor things. Looe with

its boats and fishing kit along the quays, lacked fish shops too, but again the tourist industry is pre-eminent and local sea food is on the menu in countless eateries. Looe was well served with buses and taxis, but the direct walk from the site to the town was downhill and partly along a busy road.

Heading further into Cornwall our next stop was the Caravan Club Site Merrose Farm, near Portscatho, a well situated and very attractive site linked to the coast path by a short lane and path, and to St Mawes, Portscatho and Truro by bus. This suited us so well that we stayed 5 nights and enjoyed lovely walks to Portscatho with its beaches, Pendower and Carne beaches and Nare Head, St. Just, St Anthony in Roseland and other beauty spots on the Roseland Peninsula.

*Pendower & Carne*

On quiet days we parked easily in St Mawes in a vast car park near the Quay (summer probably very difficult), and parked in Portscatho, and in St Just to visit the 13th century church by the tidal creek surrounded by a churchyard planted with sub-tropical species. There is a frequent passenger ferry from Falmouth to St Mawes. We found an all-year cliff top camp site just south of Gerrans - Treloan camp site - with a friendly owner, which we might try another time.



Our final Cornish stop was The Lizard Peninsula, to look for the illusive chough. This comical member of the corvid family is very acrobatic in flight, bigger than the jackdaws that it often associates with, and announces its presence with a very

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Lizard

loud electric buzzing call. Its bright red beak and legs are often hard to spot as it flies above, more obvious on the ground as it probes the short turf for worms and insects. We found a pair of choughs on the cliffs at Mullion Cove (a very picturesque tiny harbour with sea walls protecting the inlet from the pounding waves) and near The Lizard Lighthouse complex, plus another 4 around Bass



Mullion Cove

Point. Chough seekers can learn the call from recordings on the BTO web site which makes finding the birds much more likely.

The Lizard is the most southerly point in Britain, and a walk round the point and the Lighthouse, on the coast path, gives great sea views, especially in stormy weather, though care must be taken in windy or wet conditions. The Peninsula is the home of the Royal Naval Air Station at Culdrose (visitor viewing a point outside the east boundary) and also was the site of Marconi's first wireless transmission in 1901 across the Atlantic to Newfoundland. Marconi's station above Poldhu Cove near Mullion is commemorated by the Marconi Centre open to the public, and the ruins of the mast bases



Poldhu Cove

and buildings on the cliff top owned by the Nat.Trust. We found 2 convenient CLs near Mullion with hard standings, and also large parkings in Mullion, Mullion Cove and at Lizard village.



King Harry Ferry

Our route homewards crossed the very efficient King Harry Ferry, then Bodmin Moor (on the list for our next Cornish trip) and stopped for the night at a very good member-owned CL near Okehampton at Bridestowe with views over north Dartmoor. This would be a great base for moorland walks, the Lydford Gorge etc. In conclusion, in 3 weeks we happily explored only a tiny number of the spectacular places in this region - enough left to see us through many Murvi trips in the future!

STRANGE TIMES INDEED

By Brian Biffin

Back in January, as we boarded the ferry for Le Havre, "it" was on the other side of the planet and someone else's problem. Skiing was somewhat limited after Anne's tumble but we still had plenty to do with our friends, the last of whom returned to the UK the day before Monsieur Macron announced immediate "Confinement" The police were out in force. We had our "Attestation de Deplacement Derogatoire" checked no less than six times. We were allowed out once a day for an hour, no further than 1km from our home in the southern Alps. We were fortunate to have access to indoor accommodation, otherwise van fever would have been an issue.

Because the Foreign & Commonwealth office was "advising" against travel to France, our travel insurance became invalidated - unless we abandoned the van at Marseille airport and joined the queue awaiting repatriation. We decided to sit it out.

In April and May we made the most of a local easing of restrictions and took some wonderful walks in the Queras and Ecrins national parks and met up with some of the locals.



A local marmotte

Travel restrictions meant that we were not allowed to drive to Le Havre, but our crossing had been cancelled - twice - anyway. Come June, restrictions were eased, still no sailings, so we accepted the Brittany Ferries credit note and headed for the Shuttle. As "luck" would have it we arrived in Folkestone the day after Boris decided we would have to be in quarantine for a fortnight.

The day after quarantine ended we were off to Barmouth to spend a few days effectively wild camping (apart from the electric hook up) on the seaside campsite where we were planning to arrange the Murvi Club winter break later in the year. Yes - that's cancelled.

We have made the most of summer - cycling, paddleboarding, canoeing the Thames and the local canals and harvesting

the sloes. Anne has been busy making sloe and blackberry jam and syrup, not forgetting the sloe gin, which should be ready for Christmas - now there's something to look forward to! We managed a couple of dancing lessons before the centre got closed down. We have also been singing again, albeit on line - not quite the same despite my best attempts with reverb and a few other tricks with Audacity.

Definitely the end of the season now - tipped some tank cleaner into the water tank, drained it right down, not forgetting to drain the Webasto too. We are not expecting to get over the Channel till June next year. I wish this post was more positive and cheery, but as I said, it's strange times indeed.

Best wishes for 2021 and above all, take care!



Sloe & Blackberry jam

We were getting itchy feet as we hadn't been away for a little while in our motorhome. Where could we go, not too far but somewhere interesting. I consulted the forecast on Accuweather as they forecast further ahead than the BBC. It was looking good for the following week so we settled on Salisbury, a place we'd often driven past on the way to Portsmouth for the ferry to France.

Hurrah, there were spaces at the campsite, so off we went on ?? October. We arrived in sunshine and settled in and had lunch. The warden who welcomed us had given us instructions on how to get into the town, so we walked down through the playing field, through a couple of streets onto the cycle/walking path. We reached one of the rivers (Salisbury has five), crossed the bridge and walked by the river all the way to the town centre. Salisbury has quite a few old streets full of historic houses so we wandered round just admiring them.



Historic Building in Salisbury

We'd been told about the bus to get us back but we decided that the walk would do us good and we could pop into Waitrose for a couple of necessities for our meal.

Next morning dawned bright and we put our walking boots on to visit Old Sarum at

the top of the hill within view of the campsite. What a fascinating place it is, an old iron age fort, much larger than the ones on Woodbury Common, and occupied by William the Conqueror. A stone castle was built with extensive buildings, a palace really. Just below the castle on a large level area was built a Cathedral, whose ruins are easily visible. In 1220 there were so many people living in the castle that there wasn't enough water for them, the bishop decided to build a new Cathedral down in the valley. It just so happened that the bishop owned the land in the valley. So eventually everyone moved down to the valley and Salisbury was built. A really interesting visit.



The Cathedral Foundations

We booked a visit to the cathedral the following morning, so walked down again into the town. The volunteers were all very friendly and we talked to a clergyman who had been brought up in the Methodist Church in Torquay. As the Cathedral was built in 38 years it is very unusual in that it is all one style, Early English Gothic.



Salisbury Cathedral Close

The cloisters are very attractive as well. The cathedral environs are lovely so we walked all around the close, admiring all the beautiful buildings there. Then off to Wetherspoons for lovely fish and chips for lunch, a walk back to the campsite and a lazy afternoon catching up with our reading.

Next morning, we decided to drive out to visit Winchester, last visited when our son Tim was married in Southampton and had their wedding reception at Winchester, that's 25 years ago. We found the city much busier than Salisbury. There were a good number of old buildings and a lovely main street. We sat near the cathedral to eat our sandwiches, but thought another cathedral was too much in one week.

We walked back up the town to the 13th century Great Hall, which is all that is left of the castle. Inside is the round table on the wall, which is nothing to do with the knights of the round table, but is of the medieval times. Henry 8th had it restored and painted to impress important visitors. It is impressive!



The Round Table

The next day we travelled home, we'd had a lovely time.

REBUILDING A GINETTA DURING LOCKDOWN

By Paul Johnson

We have not used the Murvi since March when we went to Crufts at the NEC in Birmingham. Soon after we had the lockdown, I thought it would be a good time to work on Gay's new car, a 'J' registration Ginetta G32. The car had been a track day car built for racing but was road registered so we drove it back from Wales to North Lincolnshire. The car had been made in Scunthorpe 15 miles from where we live 19 years ago. It was one of the last G32s made. Ginetta, like Lotus, have made sports racing cars since the 1950s. They will race in Le Mans in 2021 and have a race series to

compete in. Lots of work has been done since we got the car. Gay chose the colour which is Ford Azure blue. The car is made from parts taken from the Ford XR3, with the engine in the middle of the car just like a Ferrari. It's like driving a powerful go kart. I still have carpets and a headlining to fit and am saving this for the present lockdown.



Like everyone we've been constrained on travelling anywhere this year but have managed three trips.

1. In August we had 10 days in North Yorkshire at Slenningford WaterMill camp site alongside the River Ure, very pretty and a good base for exploring the Dales.
2. In September we had almost 3 weeks (we kept extending the stay) in glorious weather on the North Norfolk coast at Burnham Deepdale staying at Burnham Deepdale Backpackers camp and don't be put off by the name it is a well appointed site just across the road from the North Norfolk Coastal path. Martin and Penny surprised us by also spending some time at the camp.
3. In October we joined Roger and Wendy Pepper with a few other brave souls at the ACCEO meet at Ludlow. We were fortunate to have had 2 days prior at the Small Batch site at Little Stretton which rates as a real favourite place.

Whilst whiling away the time at home we have completed a few projects to further improve our Fiat Ducato based Morocco which we think is a great unit. Some of these might be relevant to other van models so in case they're of interest here they are.

1. Above the driver's door, replaced the grab handle with a case for sun glasses. This was an easy one, just requiring a Torx screwdriver and a glasses case from the internet for under £10. There are two retaining screws/bolts with a Torx head located each end of the grab handle underneath a small flap that is prised upwards with a thin blade.

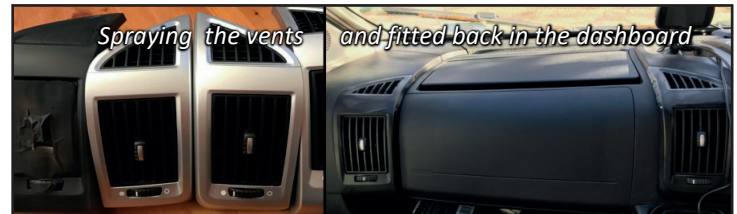


2. Installed a Fiamma XL Pocket on the inside of the rear van door that opens into the bathroom. This to hold in place our fold flat bucket and lid and stop them clattering about when on the move. As the white door panel installed by Murvi is quite thin I used Rawplugs designed for hollow walls to give a decent foundation for the 4 screws.



3. Finally got fed up with the silver reflection on the windscreen from the four dashboard airvents. So, I found a very helpful YouTube video on how to remove them then I sprayed them Black. Whilst I'll never get a job as a paint

sprayer the finished result makes a good difference. I used Halfords Black Bumper paint plus a can of Halfords Bumper Cleaner to ensure the plastic was properly cleaned of grease, dust etc. Both cans were under £10 each. Only tools required were a T20 Torx driver and a plastic trim remover tool, like a "crow bar" in shape but obviously much smaller and easily obtained from the internet.



4. My solution to leaves and debris clogging the windscreen scuttle drains has been to fit a wire mesh cover to the drain tops, fixed in place with a tiny self-tapping stainless steel screw.



5. Another item that made me fed up (I'm not really miserable) was the dashboard display so phase 1 has been to replace the black dial faces with white. I chickened out of doing this myself and our Fiat garage charged 30 minutes which I was happy with. The replacement dial faces were obtained from Lockwood International in Leeds.



6. Whilst it's not a project as such, we've followed the example of others and opened an account at FloGas to provide a source of pumped LPG. A £10 deposit provides a key to access the pump and a comprehensive set of instructions was provided. It is noticeable that Shell is withdrawing fast from the pumped Autogas market but Morrisons is providing an alternative.

Happy to provide more details on any of these. Email rossk2759@gmail.com

Our Morocco was originally fitted with a 90W solar panel but during a cloudy holiday in Brittany I became convinced we needed extra capacity. Returning home I fitted a second panel of 100W together with an improved solar controller to replace the very basic one fitted by Murvi. This combination of nearly two hundred watts provided ample power during several spring and summer trips but in 2018 we visited Germany in October for a gentle tour down the Mosel. We had good weather but the sun was very low in the sky and once again our batteries began to run down. The problem was compounded by the short distances we were driving each day. The German equivalent of a French aire de camping-cars is a stellplatz and the Mosel has a lot of these. Over about ten days or so we stayed at several, often driving less than twenty kilometres between them. And this of course was the problem, twenty kilometres is nowhere near long enough to recharge batteries.

It was time for another modification, the fitting of a battery to battery charger. Usually abbreviated to B2B these give very rapid charging, achieving in thirty minutes what would otherwise take four or five hours. A B2B is not a standard option on Murvis so they are probably not well known by Club members so I will first describe how they work.

The standard charging system on a Murvi is a split charge system. These are widely used on motorhomes and their principle of operation is simple. When the engine is started the alternator generates a voltage which is used to close the contacts of a relay, allowing current from the alternator to charge the leisure batteries. When the engine is turned off the relay opens and the leisure batteries are disconnected from the vehicle electrical system.

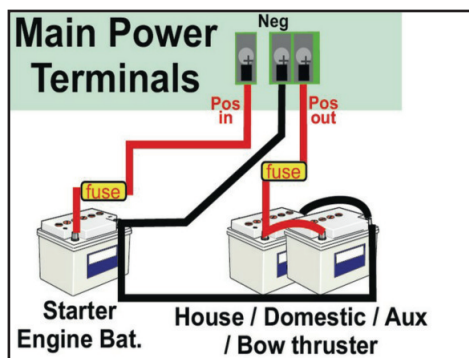
The weakness of this system is there is no effective control of the voltage used to charge the leisure batteries. After a night say of running the heating the batteries might be discharged down to about 70%. To fully charge them requires 14.4 volts, assuming they are the normal lead acid batteries. Other types of battery require a slightly different

voltage. If you are able to watch the voltage your leisure batteries are experiencing you may see 14.4 volts when you first start the engine but very rapidly, sometimes just a few minutes later, the voltage will have dropped to typical something around 13.6 volts. This is why it takes hours of driving to recharge the batteries because 13.6 volts is a “float” voltage and is what a fully charged battery needs to maintain its condition. It is well below the optimal voltage required to recharge a battery.

It gets worse with the latest vehicles which are fitted with what are called “Smart” alternators. To reduce fuel consumption and emissions these can actually turn themselves off during driving which is of course hopeless for battery charging.

To achieve rapid and full charging of leisure batteries requires them to be charged at a higher voltage than the vehicle battery, which typically will be fully charged soon after the engine has been started. This is what a B2B does.

It took me a while to understand how they work. I had read somewhere a B2B “tricks” the alternator into producing more current but I couldn’t work out how it did this. It wasn’t until I bought one and read the instructions did it become clear how a B2B works. This is the wiring diagram for the Sterling B2B I have fitted.



The power terminals at the top of the diagram are the three connections on the bottom of the B2B. To install the B2B it is necessary to run one cable from the vehicle battery positive terminal to the B2B, another from the leisure battery positive terminals and a third cable, shown in black in the diagram, which joins all the negative terminals together.

When the engine is started the B2B senses the rise in voltage across the cab battery and this turns the B2B on automatically. The B2B now puts a heavy load on the cab battery, forcing the vehicle alternator to increase its output. The B2B takes this current which will probably be at a little over 12 volts and increases it to around 14.4 volts and applies this voltage to the leisure batteries. The important point is the leisure batteries are now being charged at the optimum voltage for fast charging. The B2B will maintain the 14.4 volts until it senses the leisure batteries are fully charged when it will automatically drop the voltage down to the float voltage for the specific type of battery fitted.

The instructions which came with the B2B had no advice on how to install them in a motorhome. Sterling say they have no expertise on motorhomes and there are too many different systems. So you are left on your own to work out how to wire it in. One of the first things I noticed as I examined the Murvi wiring is the positive terminals on the leisure batteries are not joined together. Each has a separate cable which runs to the main fuse box. For the B2B to work the positive terminals need to be joined together with a suitably sized cable.

For the B2B to work correctly the existing split charge system needs to be disconnected. I did this by removing the 100 amp fuse found behind the access panel at the back of the wardrobe. It wasn’t quite as simple as that because when I removed the fuse the Battery Master system, which keeps the cab battery charged on solar and EHU, stopped working. This was because it was wired up through this fuse but I was able to reconnect the cable to another point in the wiring instead.

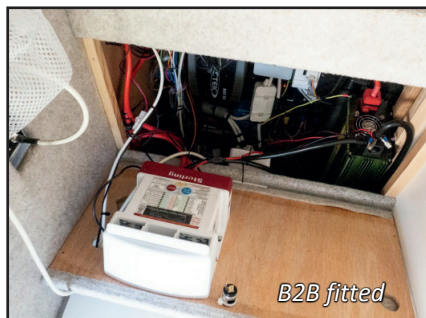
Our Murvi has a battery monitor which shows the state of the batteries and it was something I overlooked when I fitted the B2B. The result is the monitor does not now show the correct charging current from the B2B. This is because, following the instructions, I connected the common negative cable to the leisure battery negative terminals. This works as far as the B2B is concerned but

Continued overleaf...

it bypasses the shunt the battery monitor uses to calculate the current flowing into the leisure batteries. The shunt is wired between the leisure battery negative terminals and all the negative cables coming back from the various loads in the Murvi. All load and non-B2B charging currents pass through the shunt which is why the monitor can show you what is happening. To get the monitor to show the B2B output it would be necessary to connect the B2B not to the leisure battery negative terminals but to the side of the shunt where all the loads are connect. I haven't changed how I first installed the B2B because the monitor very quickly works out the batteries have been fully charged soon after we arrive at a location, showing they are charged to 100%. I assume it does this by sensing the voltage, which is a direct indication of the state of charge. I might get round to modifying the wiring one day but it means having to buy new cables as the

ones fitted are just the right length to reach the batteries not the shunt.

The B2B itself I fitted to the back of the access panel. You can see it in the photograph as a white box.



The B2B has a lot of settings although the defaults are fine for normal lead acid batteries. If you have Gel or AGM batteries it will run at slightly different voltages. Where a B2B really scores is if you have lithium batteries. Although some suppliers claim their lithium battery can be a direct replacement for

lead acid batteries this is a very questionable claim. To get the full lifespan out of a lithium battery they have to be properly charged at the correct voltages. The B2B also has a temperature sensor which alters the charging voltage depending on the temperature of the batteries. Higher voltages when it is cold, lower when warm.

If anyone is interested in fitting a B2B please contact me directly and I can provide a bit more detail. Alternatively, a company like VanBitz at Taunton could install one. I fitted a 60 amp B2B but this is probably a little too powerful for the 180Ah of batteries we have. A 30 amp B2B might be a better choice but we have done two long journeys, to Corsica and around France without issues, so it all seems to work and charging is very quick. Half an hour of driving is enough to fully recharge the batteries after a night without EHU.

FORD SERVICING - CHECK WHAT YOU ARE GETTING

By Robert Flitney

I have found that Ford's idea of vehicle servicing is slightly different to my usual experience and expectations. When getting a service, I would expect that changing the engine oil would be top of the list, but not on a Ford Transit. Some 18 months ago now we collected our shiny new Transit Morello from Murvi. During the handover Rex advised that it was worth the effort of keeping the service schedule up to date with Ford and if it had an annual check it would make resolving any potential warranty issues much easier. This is something that I have always done with new vehicles anyway.

Our first anniversary of ownership coincided with the start of Lockdown 1. I took the precaution of booking the service, and a recall that had by then come through, safe in the knowledge that it

would be a while before they got around to us. At the end of June we had what in Fordspeak is an 18k Service. Fine, this means we could set off when sites re-opened and had several trips out combining use of the van with meeting up with far flung family. Imagine my surprise in mid September, enjoying a beautiful socially distanced trip in the Yorkshire Dales when one morning the dashboard came up with 'Change engine oil soon'. So, on the way home at the end of the week we called in at the dealers, I imagined that they had omitted to reset the service indicator. But no, the reply was that the 18k Service did not include an oil change. So we then had to book an oil change, less than 3 months after a service! I imagine that the indicator came up because it was just two years since either

the vehicle build, or PDI on arrival at the dealers in Plymouth.

I know that modern engine oils are good for much longer change intervals, but it seems strange to me that a service does not include an oil change. So, I suggest that if you are getting your Ford serviced, it would be a good idea to ask that it includes an oil change as well. After all, most of us are interested in making our vans last a good few years.



Editor's Note: Apologies to Wendy & Lin who submitted this article in the spring, but due to space limitations I kept it back for the Autumn edition of the newsletter. It feels very nostalgic now the weather is so autumnal!

Part One. Sunny Days.

Well, mostly we are in the garden.

Here it is,



Anytime between 7.00am 'til 9.00 we breakfast here.

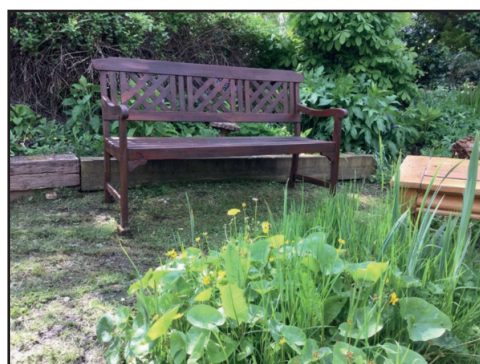


Then between 10 30 'til 11.30 it's coffee time here.

Next comes lunch on the middle patio anytime from noon onwards 'til 2.30 here.



From 3.00 it's afternoon tea here



Then a wee restful glass of wine from 5.00 onwards here

Anytimethere's always the hideaway at the bottom beyond the fruit cage when one needs a rest ...here.



Part Two. Rainy days.

Anytime between 7 00am 'til 9.00 we breakfast here.

Then between 10 30 'til 11.30 it's coffee time here.

Next comes lunch anytime from noon onwards 'til 2.30 here

From 3.00 it's afternoon tea here.

Then a wee restful glass of wine from 5.00 onwards here

Wendy re-writing our list of 'To do's' here

Phin wishes he could run out into the garden even if it is pouring with rain and get out of...here.