



An interesting bird spotted on a Scottish campsite

Well, that's it then for 2013 - another good year for the Murvi Club, at least most of the time. The weather wasn't always as kind to us as it might have been but that didn't dampen our spirits too much. We had surprisingly warm sunshine in February for our meet in the New Forest but then bitter wind and snow in March for our AGM near Worcester. Then we had a rather windy time at the Exeter Motorhome Show in June which was attended by a small band of stalwarts, followed by the 'Staggering round Scotland' tour in September with members coming and going at various points along the way. Then to wrap up the year we had the Norfolk meet which saw twenty-eight Murvis getting together at the delightful Kelling Heath site - see Roger's article on page 6.

Let's hope for better weather for our 2014 AGM which will be at the [C & CC Teversal site](#) in Nottinghamshire, close to the M1. The site is within easy reach of [Chesterfield](#), well worth a visit as Karin and I discovered on a recent trip to check out the area. Apart from the famous twisted spire (the tour of the tower is fascinating) the town boasts a variety of interesting buildings and parks as well as a daily market which is one of the largest open air markets in the country.

Literally across the road from the campsite is the entrance to [Silverhill Woods](#), parkland created from old coalmining spoil heaps. Within this park is the highest point in Nottinghamshire which affords spectacular views in all directions on a clear day. The whole area is criss-crossed by walking and cycling trails so hopefully we'll be able to make the most of the opportunities! [Hardwick Hall](#) (NT) is only a couple of miles from the campsite and [Chatsworth House](#) is only about 20 miles by road.



Changing the subject, don't forget, it's always worth paying a visit to the [Murvi Chat forum](#). There are all sorts of interesting discussions and useful tips that come up from time to time, and of course as a member you are welcome to post comments or queries on the forum. Recent topics have ranged from winterisation tips to motorhome storage in Spain and from fitting a USB charging socket to Murvis for sale.

So, do have a happy Christmas and some great trips in 2014.....and now, read on.

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2014!

There are already a couple of meets organised for next year, so get them in your diary if you want to join us.

AGM - March 2014 - As mentioned above the AGM meet will be at the C & CC site at Teversal from Thursday 20th until Monday 24th March 2014 with the AGM on Saturday evening (22nd March). We have provisionally booked for 35 vans

Buckler's Hard - September 2014 - Julia has organised for a Murvi meet at [Buckler's Hard](#) in the New Forest in September 2014 from Wednesday 3rd Sept until Wednesday 10th. For those of you who don't know it, Buckler's Hard is a delightful village on the banks of the Beaulieu River with a rich history of shipbuilding. The maritime museum in the village gives an insight into the history of this 18th century shipbuilding village focusing on its vessels including those built for Nelson's Navy. There are tentative plans to go to the [Great Dorset Steam Fair](#) the week before (from Tuesday 26th Aug to Friday 29th Aug) however this means having a few days to fill between the two events.

There will doubtless be other meets organised through the year, including at least one at one of the motorhome shows. Do you have a favourite show that you would like us to go to? If so, then please let us know by emailing karin@sumption.me.uk. Unfortunately Karin & I won't be able to organise a New Forest meet in February as we shall be away, but if anybody else wants to do it then please feel free.

Are you thinking of organising a get together with other Murvis? - If you are, don't forget that we have an exemption certificate which enables us to meet on land without a site licence (a farmer's field for example). If you want to know more about this please contact [Roger Pepper](#).

So, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

BEANS IN BELCASTEL

Anyone who enjoys exploring the hidden gems of France will love Belcastel. It is a beautiful village nestled on a hillside on the bank of the River Aveyron near Rignac, and surmounted by a fabulous chateau. The chateau, over 1000 years old, was in ruins until beautifully restored in the 1970s and 1980s. Before then the village was virtually deserted, but the work was so attractively done that it was soon re-populated and its cottages rebuilt, medieval style with stone roofs. The whole effect with lanes and paths winding up through the village is wonderful.

A cleaner at the closed site at Rignac suggested we should try Belcastel. He told us to drive down into the Aveyron valley and follow the river east - about 10km. This we did, but when we arrived we found our way to the tiny campsite thwarted by the narrow medieval bridge. The tourist office told us to retrace our steps to another bridge downstream, then follow a dirt track along the southern bank. And boy, were we glad we did! As the village came into view we were stunned by the sight.

So, when we were camping in France with a friend who is happy to go anywhere, we thought of Belcastel. Neil lives on the continent so it is easy for him to drive and rendezvous at a good site at Dole. From there we meandered south until we reached Belcastel. Camping with Neil works well - we pay the site fees and he drives us around on days out. An added bonus is that he speaks better French than us! Oh, and he carries a small 'bar' as well as his tent which he erects on the same pitch as our Morello .



Our Morello by the river

Neil is wonderful company, and quite exuberant. On arrival at Belcastel he approached the 70-ish rather severe looking gardienne with his arms spread wide, a large genial grin and an expansive "Ah, bonjour Madame". Well, a coy smile and slight blush showed her appreciation, and I think Neil might have been a little unnerved.

Anyway, his charm worked well. We were told we could pitch where we liked before doing the paperwork. We found the perfect spot right beside the river opposite the village and beside a stone trough full of flowers. Madame seemed in no hurry to 'process' us - I am sure she wanted to enjoy a little more of Neil's company!

It was our wedding anniversary, but we told Neil he could join us for dinner in the village restaurant - if he behaved himself! It was an excellent meal and Neil managed to order something without greens. As a Scot, he proudly tells us, he avoids eating anything green! It was a slightly merry trio who lurched back across the in the evening gloom.

It was a wonderfully quiet and warm evening as dusk approached, and we settled down for an al fresco nightcap. But the mood was soon broken when Madame sidled up and said we would have to move. She had been 'phoned from Rodez, and told that they had had a flash flood which was coming down the Aveyron - right beside which we were pitched. Well, it was easy for us to move but Neil had to strike camp and throw everything into our van before we drove to a higher part of the site.

Now this is where Neil's charm paid off. Madame would not let him struggle to re-erect his tent in the dark, and took him into the site building from where he emerged a few minutes later with a sheepish but triumphant grin. He was given a little room courtesy of Madame complete with bed, washbasin and toilet. We retired to our camper knowing Neil was safe for the night.

Next morning, after a rather disappointingly small rise in the river, we decided to have a coffee at the tiny site café before re-erecting Neil's tent. Madame appeared and sat at the table next to us with large sack of French beans which she began to top and tail. Neil expansively admired the freshness and colour of her beans. Preening, she said that she grew them herself.

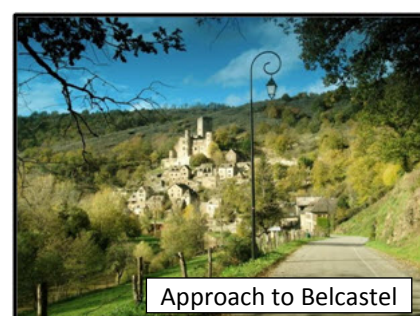
She disappeared returning after a few minutes with another sack of beans which she proudly gifted to Neil. "No more than two minutes in boiling water," she said wagging a stern finger, "then toss in butter and black pepper". Neil managed to hide his horror of green things, but had no choice but to gracefully accept them. So, once we were out of sight of Madame, Neil donated the beans to us. Actually, they were wonderfully fresh and succulent. We dined on them nightly for next few days, while Neil looked on with evident distaste. But after three or four days their appeal began to wane and we became increasingly flatulent!

Eventually Neil left us to return home, and that was when we were able to jettison the remaining beans. Phew! They were beginning to get a bit floppy anyway. Even now we are not quite as fond of French beans as we always used to be.

From Bob Northwood



The medieval bridge



Approach to Belcastel

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FAMOUS

We didn't plan it this way, in fact we hardly planned it at all. A six week Grand Tour of Europe in our Morello, Audrey Postcode, visiting places we'd not seen. The rough outline was to start off in Holland, go into Germany and then play it by ear as to where next, with a visit to Weimar high on our list of "must sees". Leaving in late summer, we were to return in early October. Our default plan was that we would follow the sun. This we did, but somehow also managed to follow in the footsteps of the famous.

In Hamelin we couldn't help but be immersed in the story of the Pied Piper. From the campsite by the River Weser it was an easy walk into the town, and once there we appropriately followed the sound of music, as did the children in the famous story. There was a festival in full swing. Live bands ranged from jazz to noisy europop. We'd missed the weekly enactment of the Pied Piper story but we spotted several "Pipers" decked out in full costume. We didn't see any rats...

Travelling east through the Harz Mountains we reached Weimar, famous for the founding of the Weimar Republic between the two World Wars, and a hot bed for German creativity. The Bauhaus Arts and Crafts Movement was founded there, writer and politician Goethe lived there, as did poet and playwright Schiller. Composer Liszt lived for some time in Weimar and as we walked through the very pleasant tree-lined streets, we thought we also spotted Angela Merkel on a hausfrau shopping expedition.



Goethe & Schiller

In Weimar we stayed on a stellplatz for the first time. Located in a quiet area near one of the town's impressive parks it had water and electric hook up. We visited the homes of both Goethe and Schiller, now interesting museums with rooms intact as when lived in by these two cultural giants. Weimar itself has a pleasant cosmopolitan atmosphere, wide leafy boulevards and extensive parkland. The central square is dominated by a statue of its two great men, who were close friends.

In the original rough plan, it was on the cards that we would continue to head east towards Dresden and then to Saxon Switzerland with its weird rock formations. But the weather app was reporting highs of 13 degrees there, with rain, so we implemented the default plan and followed the sun south. Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance appealed and the well-appointed lake shore campsite was a pleasant 10 minute walk from the town.

Views across the lake to the Austrian and Swiss Alps were a daily delight, as were the nearby nature trail, cycle path and lakeside bars where we enjoyed our early evening weissbier. Once again we were travelling in the footsteps of the famous.



Diderot

Friedrichshafen is home to the Zeppelin Museum, and is the city where these airships were born. The Museum is well worth a visit, with a mock up of part of an airship. We learned that they were built with large viewing windows on the underside, giving passengers a wide angled panorama of the earth below. After the Hindenburg disaster in 1937, this method of air travel ceased, but it's still possible to take a trip in a Zeppelin over Lake Constance. It's a fascinating and impressive sight to see one pass overhead.



Zeppelin over Lake Constance

We moved on, travelling through Switzerland, Italy and into France where we stayed in St. Rémy de Provence. We knew it was famous for Van Gogh's painting "Starry Night" but there were only a couple of tatty information boards about this. St. Rémy is also the birthplace of Nostradamus, famous for his prophecies, but we saw no other reference to him at all apart from a side alleyway named rue Nostradamus, and a Banksy-type graffiti image of him on a wall. Did they miss a trick here in St. Rémy by not featuring him more, or are they a bit ashamed of him and his prophecies?



Old town St Remy

Heading north we stayed at the municipal site in Langres, set on the ramparts of this picturesque hilltop town, once again chancing upon another famous figure. Philosopher and writer Diderot was born here, and Langres proudly celebrates the man who wrote the *Encyclopédie*, a dictionary of arts and sciences. Famed for its architectural grandeur, Nancy beckoned. The École de Nancy led the Art Nouveau movement in France and the city offers a visual feast to be savoured. Whilst there we sampled one of the region's famous dishes. I have to question the saying, "Real men don't eat quiche". The portions of Quiche Lorraine we had for lunch were so large and rich we didn't need to eat for the rest of the day!



Quiche Lorraine

Joyce Hopewell

OUR MURVI MOROCCO - THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

When we decided to buy our Murvi we wanted if at all possible to be able to park it at our house so to check this Rex kindly loaned me a vehicle which I reversed up our steep drive. Ignoring the slight smell of burning clutch this exercise established two things, it was *just* possible to get a Murvi up our drive and in a collision between bumper and wall the bumper comes off worse. Rex took this demonstration of the relative strengths of stone and plastic quite well I thought. We also realised having a large garden wasn't going to give us much time to get away unless we covered the garden in concrete. Which was why, when we collected our new 'van in June 2013 we were living in a smaller house with no discernable garden but level parking for one Murvi and three cars.

We chose the Morocco because it offered the choice of double or single beds, the latter a nod in the direction of my advancing years but single beds are also a little cooler in the hot climates we hoped to visit. Ours has automatic transmission and the three litre engine which is not essential but it does carry the vehicle up steep hills with impressive ease and so far we have managed an average of 28 mpg over the first 4000 miles.

On the internal fittings we specified an oven, no microwave and the smaller 'fridge. The oven has been used a lot, both for homemade pizzas and when in the UK for cooking supermarket "meal deals". For our first trips we used sleeping bags but now we use duvets where we found it is worth paying a bit more as they compress down much smaller than the cheaper ones.

Mary relaxing on the Île d'Oléron, France.



Locals descended down to the sea in large numbers at low tide to catch shellfish, shrimps, crabs and anything else edible. The Plage Saint Jacques, Quiberon, Brittany

A couple of extras did not live up to expectations. Roof bars seemed like a good idea but the roof of the Murvi is so high it gives me a nose bleed just looking at it so the bars came off as did the Fiamma bike rack. If you have lightweight bikes it might suit but my tourer is heavy and as we had already specified a tow bar it was easy enough to get rack to fit it.

A re-chargeable vacuum cleaner and a small George Foreman grill which we use for toasting paninis and grilling steaks have proved worthwhile. However, the Cobb BBQ is more of a charcoal-powered hot plate and a small gas BBQ might be a better solution for BBQ flavoured food.

After trial trips within the UK we took off for two weeks in France. The 'van performed faultlessly throughout and this trip gave us the opportunity to try the Windblocker awning. Compared to conventional awnings this is very easy to put up and packs down to a small size. Our first trip in colder weather was

to Truro in November. Despite single figure temperatures and a Force 8 all went well and we stayed warm.

Next year we are planning a 6 week trip to Spain and Portugal starting in late May and then another trip later when we might drive down to Italy or Greece - but things are still undecided. I also need a couple of weeks to cycle from Barcelona to Santander with my brother. Oh, the perils of retirement, fitting everything in!

John & Mary Laidler



The Windblocker awning provided useful shade but the simplest answer might have been to park amongst the trees like the vehicle behind!



Our normal evening setup. Take no notice of the wine glasses – no idea how they got in the shot!

A SIMPLE TRICK FOR FILLING THE FRESH WATER TANK



All you need is an old long necked water bottle, a pair of scissors and a steady hand. Cut an oblong opening in the bottle, then it fits in the filler opening. What could be simpleror cheaper!

Wendy Pepper (sent by Nick Mawby)



B & B ON TOUR 2013

In June we took the plunge & went on a seven week 5,000 mile tour of Scandinavia with the C. & C.C. We met up with other members of the tour in Northern Germany. The tour took us up through Denmark, Sweden & Finland where we crossed over into Norway & up to Nordcap at the top of Europe.

We were very lucky with the weather at Nordcap, clear blue skies & sunshine so we decided to camp there for the night, it was very strange having 24 hour daylight, especially when trying to sleep at night.

The tour then continued back through the Arctic circle & down through Norway, the scenery was fantastic, we drove the Atlantic road & on through the fjords. The highlight of the tour for me was driving the Trollstigen, a mountain road with eleven hairpin bends (not for the faint hearted!). Betty's highlights were meeting father Christmas in Lapland & spending the night at Nordcap.

We packed as much food as possible into the van before we set off & we were glad we did as the price of food in Norway is unbelievable.



1) Arctic Circle going south; 2) Lost in Narvik; 3) Atlantic Road Bridge; 4) Looking down Geiranger Fjord; 5) Nordcap at midnight; 6) Meeting Father Christmas; 7) Lots of Reindeer; 8) Dried fish; 9) Storfossen Falls; 10) Looking down Trollstegen

We came home for a month & then set off again for a month touring round France mostly in the Loire valley region.

The Yorkshire section of the Motorcaravanner's club had their 50th anniversary in October & we had a fantastic four days with them & we are finishing of the year with the same group at their New years eve celebrations. All in all a very busy but enjoyable year.

Barry & Betty Tomlinson

THE UNFORTUNATE TALE OF FISH AND CHIPS WITH VINEGAR.

Just a quick story with a moral. On a return journey from Wales we stopped for a night or two at a nice canal side site somewhere in the Midlands. Lovely sunny evening and the fish and chip van was coming. What could be better?

We settled down outside with our meals, salted, peppered, vinegared and ketchuppued. Now, we had the step out and the kitchen flap extended to use for serving. After a couple of minutes savouring our fish, Stewart wanted a bit more vinegar, still in the van. Unfortunately, as he went up the step he hit his head on the under edge of the extended flap which resulted in a nasty gash to his head. To the rescue, I suggested he sit down and I would get acres of kitchen roll to help stop the bleeding. So, I leapt up the step and....hit my head on the underside of the corner of the extended flap. This resulted in a corner shaped gash on my hairline. We needed a lot of kitchen roll.

Rather stunned and clutching kitchen roll to my head I had rather gone off my fish and chips. Stewart finished mine as I had kicked his on to the ground in the excitement of the occasion. Later we retreated to bed, following much sympathy from fellow campers, wearing matching wads of gauze and feeling a little delicate. Sorry, no photos.

The moral.....make sure you take the vinegar out with you if you eat outside.

Anne Cormie

MURVI CLUB RALLY TO NORFOLK 14 – 18 NOVEMBER 2013

28 vans and 52 people congregated at Kelling Heath Holiday Park for the Club's November rally. The site is beautifully situated near to the village of Weybourne in 25 acres of natural woods and heathland in an elevated position giving outstanding views of the nearby North Norfolk Coast. The large area allocated for touring vans meant that we were all relatively close to one another on flat well drained pitches.

The weather was mainly dry although damp and misty at times but this did not stop a wide range of activities including coastal and country walking, cycling, riding the Poppy Line railway, checking out the shops in Holt and other local towns, bird watching, eating fish and chips, watching England lose to New Zealand in the rugby, visiting friends and relations who lived locally and of course sampling the local brew.



Walkers at Cley windmill

There is a regular bus service linking the North Norfolk coastal towns and villages. On Friday in bright sunshine a group of us walked through the woods down to Kelling village and caught the bus to the tiny port of Blakeney with its narrow cobbled streets. From there we followed the coastal path back, first out along the defensive bank and then across the marshes by the River Glaven to Cley next the Sea with its distinctive windmill. Another elevated path took us to the beach where we joined many bird watchers and found an excellent shelter in the sun and out of the wind to eat our sandwiches. Awkward walking along an ancient shingle bank followed with grand views of the Weybourne cliffs in the distance on the seaward side and inland across the marshes to Salthouse and the hills beyond. A green lane took us back to Kelling and its café where some of us were refreshed with tea and cakes. We stayed there too long and it was quite gloomy going back up to the site but we were rewarded with a beautiful sunset when we arrived.

Saturday morning saw feverish activity at the back of some of the vans as bikes were unloaded for us to tackle the 20 mile Holt Explorer Loop. This was an excellent cycle route along quiet and scenic country lanes, through several attractive villages with interesting churches and best of all past several pubs where we could stop for lunch. We chose The Pigs and feasted on the largest bacon sandwiches I have ever seen.



Team Murvi cyclists



Waiting for a train at Kelling Heath Halt

The next day about 18 of us congregated on the campsite's own railway halt and waved down the Poppy Line diesel for a trip to Sheringham. It took the guard a bit by surprise as his train was nearly empty and amid a fair amount of chaos and with help from us he just about managed to collect all our fares before we reached our destination. We spent a couple of hours in Sheringham and Wendy and I wandered along the beach admiring the huge sea defences covered in local art work before we climbed the cliffs up to the local hill, Beeston Bump, which gave us excellent views over the town. In the afternoon Adrian led us back to the site along the cliff top path and promised us excellent views but unfortunately the mist came down and we could only see about 50 yards!



Which appears out of the mist

Kelling Heath has excellent facilities with several bars and a large restaurant. Most of us congregated there every evening to enjoy each other's company. On Friday we were provided with an excellent meal and on Sunday we enjoyed looking at 15 sets of slides showing what the Murvi owners had been getting up to during 2013.



Sheringham street art

From my point of view as the organiser the members who attended made it a most enjoyable and sociable weekend in a beautiful part of the country. Of course the fine weather and good food and drink helped!



Sunset over the camp

In 2014 I hope to run a rally to the North Devon Coast on the weekend of 13 to 17 November. If anyone knows of a campsite in this area which will be open then could they please let me know at roger.pepper@btinternet.com. It needs to have at least 30 serviced hardstanding or well drained grass pitches and a heated service block. There should be a restaurant on the site or within easy walking distance that can provide a meal for about 60 people.

Roger Pepper

STAGGERING ROUND SCOTLAND

The only trouble with Scotland is that it's just got so many beautiful places to visit. The problem I have with that is the temptation to cram too much in. Thankfully the constraints of touring around with friends helps to control that urge, and so it proved with the Murvi Club "Staggering Round Scotland" tour.

The plan was that we should have a rough itinerary so that fellow club members could join us or leave us at whatever point suited them. The fluid nature of the company added to the variety and enjoyment of the trip, and so we got to see plenty of wonderful places whilst enjoying good company.



Scone Palace

First stop was Scone where we met up with two more Murvis. Of course you can't go to Scone without visiting the palace and you can't visit the palace without tasting the Scone scones – very good and very big they were too. The Palace is built on the site of an Augustinian abbey, the home of the Stone of Destiny (aka the Stone of Scone or the Coronation Stone) which witnessed the crowning of many of the early Scottish kings including Robert the Bruce. The Stone has travelled around a bit over the centuries, ending up in Edinburgh via Westminster and an audacious kidnapping by four Scottish students in 1950.

Then it was on to Speyside and the Moray coast; first stop Craigellachie and walks along the Spey and into the pretty little town of Aberlour. Not being whisky drinkers the lure of the distilleries was a temptation that didn't need great willpower to avoid, although I suspect we may have missed a treat.

Next stop was the delightful small campsite next to the harbour at Findochty (pronounced 'Finechty' as we were assured). A visit to nearby Cullen gave one or two of us the opportunity to try Cullen Skink which despite its rather unappetising name is a delicious and warming soup of smoked haddock. From Findochty we moved on to Rosemarkie on the Black Isle where we watched the dolphins, regular visitors to the Moray Firth, and where we visited the pretty village of Cromarty, the birthplace of Hugh Miller, a pioneering 19th C Scottish geologist, author and evangelist.



Findochty campsite

We then headed to the wild northwest coast to some of the most remote communities in mainland Britain and some of the most majestic scenery. This isn't the place to head if you want wall-to-wall sunshine but it is the wild landscape, the ever changing weather and the soft light which makes it such a fascinating and photogenic area. We made overnight stops at Altandhu, Achmelvich and Scourie and on our way we paid a visit to the Old man of Stoer. He wasn't in the best of moods and welcomed us with a mix of wind, rain and sun and the spectacular arc of a rainbow out to sea.



Summer Isles from Altandhu



Sandwood Bay

One of my ambitions was to walk to the remote Sandwood Bay. It's a four mile trek over open moorland to get there but the reward is one of the most beautiful and remote beaches in Britain - then you have to walk back! The beach is nearly 2 miles long, flanked by sea stacks, and is now owned by the [John Muir Trust](#) who purchase and protect wild landscapes in the UK. The four of us who walked there probably made up half of the people on the beach that day, so we didn't have to fight for a space on the beach.

The final few days of our trip took us all the way along the northern coast of Scotland with the aim of visiting the most northerly extremities of the coast. The only way to get to Cape Wrath, the most north-westerly point on the UK mainland, is to take a ferry - ours was nearly cancelled due to rough seas - then an 11 mile minibus ride along a rough track to the Cape. The cafe there is run by a man who lives alone there all year round - no wonder his wife left him!

Dunnet Head, the most northerly point on the mainland, was shrouded in mist so we carried on to John O'Groats (what a dump!). Having taken the obligatory photos we carried on to nearby Duncansby Head, the most north-easterly point, and infinitely more attractive than John O'Groats.



Findochty sunset



Altnaharra

Our final few days saw us stopping at the delightful Caravan Club site at Altnaharra in the Strathnaver valley, site of some of the worst of the Highland clearances, then a final overnight stop at Braemar before heading back south. Our thanks to all those who joined us and kept us company along the way.

Adrian Sumption