


The MURVI Club Newsletter

Autumn 2022

| | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|
|  <p>Balloons in Bristol (See Page 2)</p> | Contents: | | Page |
| | Editorial | John Laidler | 1 |
| | AGM 2023 | Karin Sumption | 1 |
| | Bristol Balloon Festival | Nigel & Shiela Norkett | 2 |
| | Travels in Suffolk & Norfolk | Carolyn & Robert Ash | 3 |
| | Thoughts on 2022 | Keith & Lyn Ross | 6 |
| | SOGgy Bottoms | John Laidler & Lindsay Paterson | 6 |
| | Aires & Graces | John Laidler | 10 |
| | Oil Take A Second Look | Adrian Hitchman | 13 |
| | Newsletter Winter 2022 | | 13 |

Editorial

Very many thanks to all the contributors to this edition. I left it very late to ask for submissions but I have been overwhelmed by the response. I hope members of the Club find something of interest in these pages and of course, you don't have to wait for me to ask for articles. If you've just come back from an enjoyable trip or spotted an interesting gadget then let me know about it before it fades from your memory!

Murvi Club AGM 2023

23 – 27 March 2023

Karin Sumption

Next year's AGM rally will be held from Thursday 23rd March to Monday 27th at Norfolk Coast Caravans & Camping, The Racecourse, Fakenham Norfolk, NR21 7NY. The AGM will be held at 6pm on the Saturday followed by supper. We have the use of a room at the racecourse every evening so that we can get together.

The cost will £23 per van, per night. All the pitches have electricity. There are 26 hardstanding pitches and 28 grass. Please fill in the booking form below if you want to attend.

Click Here for Booking Form: <https://tinyurl.com/39y4ymrk>

Here is the website of the campsite. This is just for information, please do not try to book using this website:

<https://norfolkcoast-caravancampingholidays.co.uk/>

Bristol Balloon Festival

Nigel and Shiela Norkett

We attended this event via a Caravan and Motorhome Club (Avon section) rally in August. It was a hot weekend but very enjoyable.

We recommend booking early, we booked in January. This was our third Balloon Festival since 2005, this year was the biggest and hottest.

The Rally normally runs from Thursday to Sunday afternoon, there is water and toilet emptying facilities but no electric hook-up. You can allow someone to visit you on site and they charge £5 all day for car parking, (arranged in advance). The rally site is right next to Ashton Park, the venue for this free event. Programmes for the festival are available. During the festival there are two daily mass launches 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. This year due to the heat it was not possible for the evening flights to take place. The prevailing low humidity created cloudless skies and the thermal activity invisible to the pilots. There was a risk they could ascend to 7000 ft in an uncontrolled manner. It was reported that hang gliders were thermalling at 7000 ft south of Bristol.

There were huge crowds this year probably as it's the first one held for 3 years. There were numerous stalls and people selling various items and also there were dozens of food outlets from Thai street food to fish and chips.

On the Thursday and Saturday nights there is what they call a night glow where several balloons are tethered in the main arena at 9 p.m. and then they light the balloons up using the gas burners. They are illuminated to music and this year the music was choreographed by BBC Radio Bristol.



The crowd was singing along to many of the songs. It was quite an amazing atmosphere.

There would normally be an awesome firework display after each night glow however this year that was cancelled due to the fire risk!

During the days there are some events in the arena as a model radio model aircraft flight demonstrations tethered balloons being displayed small radio controlled balloons. The army parachute team also did a display.

BBC Bristol commentated on the events and it was possible to get updates by listening to the radio station. The arena area has many different food stalls drinks etc. There's a large fun fair bouncy castles slides etc and very good entertainment for children and there's also children orientated stools various marketing events such as Costa coffee launching new products to hand them out for free. Numerous toilets were provided around the site, there is also free drinking water top-ups available. You take your picnic rug and then you can just sit on the grass and watch the events.

The rally site is also convenient walk for the nearby park and ride car park and also you can walk into the Bristol dock area.

The rally was full at 250 vans, we were the only Murvi.

The rally field itself was large and there was plenty of space for children to run around if they wanted to. There was a very good relaxing atmosphere all round.

The 2023 Festival is being held over the dates 10-13 August. Details on the website: <https://www.bristolballoonfiesta.co.uk/>

Travels in Suffolk and Norfolk

Carolyn and Robert Ash

Several decades ago, we used to drive our Morris 1000 plus a little tent from London to the coast of Suffolk or Norfolk for a few days' holiday. It seemed over-time for us to revisit this lovely area. A three week visit in September offered the extra attraction of the arrival of many birds that overwinter here as they escape the harshness of the far north.

We headed initially via the Dartford Tunnel and M11 to see some old friends who live south of Cambridge. We always try to fit in such visits and, with our own accommodation, we feel able to drop in without being a burden. In this instance, as



is so often the case, we parked on their drive for the night, before travelling eastwards into Suffolk.

Our first stop on the Suffolk coast was Aldeburgh, home most notably to the composer Benjamin Britten, a very attractive small seaside town which sits alongside its long, steep, pebble beach. (above) Small fishing boats are still hauled up the beach and huts selling shellfish and fresh fish complement the various cafes and restaurants. It is a very good place to stay and luckily it has a site for tourers at Church Farm Caravan Park (mobile homes), an easy walk to the beginning of the town along the beach footpath/ cycleway. The site is very well laid out and we spent 5 nights there which allowed time to visit the area.

Five miles away on the River Alde, in an ANOB is Snape Maltings with its world famous concert hall which has a year round programme of varied events. This attractive cluster of buildings contains shops, cafes and other music venues with extensive free parking. There are river trips in summer. We left our van for a lovely walk along the Alde to the isolated church at Iken. After this we continued to Orford (right) nearer the sea on the same river, which winds through marshes and shingle banks. This pretty



village has a medieval castle keep built by Henry II, shrouded in scaffolding at the moment but normally a fine sight from the water. We took a boat from the quay for a very pleasant hour's trip round Havergate Island with its hundreds of avocets, plus the odd marsh harrier and spoonbill. It is possible to book a visit to part of Orford Ness, also interesting but with a more important role as a Ministry of Defence Atomic Weapons Research Centre.

High on our list was a visit the vast RSPB Reserve at Minsmere (plenty of parking), lovely for walking as there are footpaths everywhere including down to the beach at Dunwich, early capital of East Anglia but lost to the sea. There is a large car park allowing access to the coast path in both directions. Swimming off some of the shingle beaches around Aldeburgh may be tricky as the sea can be rough, but we were recommended to go to the sandy beach at Sizewell where the sea is warmed by the water from the atomic power station!

Our next stop was the charming small seaside town of Southwold, also with a very attractive sea front and pier. To the south lies the Blyth River and a harbour (with car park and sandy beach) plus many little fishing boats and many picturesque fishing huts selling fresh fish or fish and chips. Across the river to the south, accessed by a rowing boat ferry (right) or by a long drive round the extensive estuary, is the tiny but now rather smart village of Walberswick. This delightful spot is popular



because of its large beach car park, sandy beach, two pubs, shop and a cafe. Our site in for 4 days was a CCC Certified Site at Reydon conveniently placed for the bus and near enough to walk to Southwold.

We could have spent much longer in Suffolk, with its picturesque towns and villages and magnificent churches, but also wanted to explore the coast of North Norfolk so headed to Weybourne near Sheringham to a CL at Foxhills. This was such a lovely, small site that we stayed 6 nights. It is well situated on the coastal bus route, with access to footpaths, and next door to a military museum. For plane enthusiasts, the area is overflowed by impressive beasts from the US Bases nearby.

We were close to Cley Next to the Sea and the large Norfolk Trust Reserve, which covers extensive salt marshes, and lagoons.

A mecca for nature enthusiasts, it also offers many footpaths and access to the 84 mile coast path from Gt Yarmouth to Hunstanton. We had a happy day walking round the area and watching the arrival of hundreds of geese, including the pink footed variety, together with hosts of ducks and wading birds. This is still a magnificent place for the non- birder and a walk to Cley and beyond to Blakeney, or to the beach, gives extensive views of the marshes and beautiful skylscapes.

We chose to park on the glorious Quay at Blakeney (free to NT) as this was near the shops and several small cafes selling crabs amongst other fishy things. One of the joys for us of this whole area was the crab shacks in every village, the fresh fish and local vegetables plus the locally reared meat. From Blakeney paths connect to Morston Quay (good parking) with numerous boats offering seal watching at Blakeney point. The muddy creeks are often full of moored boats.

Further west is the interesting village of Stiffkey and the small town of Wells Next to the Sea (now 2 miles inland but still with navigable channel and fishing boats. Wells is a tourist hot-spot with amusement arcades on the front and a vast parking (with bus transport) at the east end of the very impressive Holkham Beach. It is a great place to start a walk as the beach, backed by pines, runs for miles, or a path leads through to Holkham Hall and deer park.

Our final camp site was at Burnham Deepdale, on the excellent bus route, and with nearby supermarket. The site is spacious and offers lovely views of sunsets and overflying skeins of hundreds of geese as they honk their way to their roosting sites. We were well placed here to visit Titchwell RSPB, another great reserve spread over marshes and lagoons with a public path to a glorious stretch of beach. (right) There are other picturesque villages and scenic walks to the west best reached by bus, as almost all car parks have height barriers. We found a small parking at Heacham for a great view of The Wash. The swirling masses of birds in autumn are a renowned spectacle.



We really recommend this itinerary, or parts of it, to anyone who likes wide open

spaces, magnificent skies and attractive small towns or villages. It is not necessary to be keen on birds to appreciate how glorious some of these places are!

Thoughts on 2022

Keith and Lyn Ross

The weather in the summer months was much better than our damp month of May in Scotland and we made the most of it. We have continued to be away every month of this year and are on track to do so for all 12 months with trips booked for both November and December. In all we'll have had around 110 nights away, despite not having a long trip abroad. We have our fingers crossed that we'll be able to venture to Europe in 2023.

Earlier we had a gap in the schedule with nothing on for October so, I took the plunge and volunteered to lead a Murvi meet for the first time. I enjoyed the experience. We had a pleasant stay in Harrogate at the excellent Harrogate Caravan Park where the weather was kind allowing us to be out every day and included very sociable times at the local pub most evenings. Harrogate is a good base to visit many of the wonderful locations in Yorkshire and we recommend it. Julia and I liaised to provide two meets back to back and we followed on from Harrogate to Laneside camp at Hope Valley in The Peak District.

I've kept a log of nights away, the cost etc. and the same for fuel. I was curious to see the difference in price over the past years and my log shows the average cost per litre of diesel as

2018 £1.27

2019 £1.26

2020 £1.14 (The year of lockdown = much lower demand)

2021 £1.35

2022 £1.74 (29% increase on 2021)

It would be nice not to have increases but, very unrealistic. I hope any further increase is less severe than this year. We get a great deal of enjoyment from our Murvi Morocco and are looking forward to more trips.

SOGgy Bottoms

John Laidler

This is an article in two parts and because of its subject matter is probably best read on an empty stomach. The first part covers a few points on SOG toilets which I've picked up from experience plus a couple of observations about how to get the most "enjoyment" from your cassette toilet whether

it is SOGged or not. The second part of this article by Lindsay Paterson describes the retrofitting of a SOG toilet to a Murvi.

A SOG toilet seems to be a popular extra on Murvis. The name just means Sucks Out Gas and with a SOG toilet it is not necessary to use powerful chemicals in the cassette to prevent unpleasant smells. When the blade on the cassette is opened a small fan draws air down into the cassette and expels it to the outside. The original SOG had a filter built into the cassette door with a flexible tube through which the fan draws the air and any smells from the cassette.



I have seen recommendations the filter should be changed annually but I've never heard of anyone doing that. At about £20 the genuine replacement filter isn't cheap but after eight years of use I thought I ought to look at replacing ours. You can buy sheets of activated charcoal filters online, they are sold for air purifiers and are cheaper than a SOG filter. I bought a pack of four and it needed three sheets, cut to size with scissors to fill the space in the filter housing. On reflection I am not sure it was necessary and the old filter could have been left in place but it was useful to discover how straightforward it was to fit the new filters. We've parked on some very crowded French aires without any complaints from our neighbours on the "windward" side.

The reason why I don't think the filter is really necessary in our case is because we always add a small splash of biological laundry liquid to the cassette after emptying it. This prevents any really unpleasant smells being generated which the fan can deal with anyway but it does make emptying the cassette decidedly more pleasant.

Buying biological laundry liquid is easy enough in the UK as it will say if it is biological but this is not the same in mainland Europe. A search for "Bio" in France for example will take you to the organic vegetable counter. You might see the word "Aktiv" or something resembling that but usually there is nothing to say if it is biological. Fortunately, this is not a problem because virtually all laundry liquids you will find are biological.

You don't need a lot of liquid, which is helpful as it isn't cheap. I find just a splash, perhaps a desert spoonful is enough.

We have found our SOG reliable but the slide can get stiff and the trick to getting things running smoothly again is by lubricating it with silicon grease. One place where the grease can make a big difference isn't obvious; it is the two metal rods found underneath the blade handle.

You can see them in the image on the right going into the black plastic part of the cassette. A little dab of grease on these is strongly recommended.



At the top of the cassette is a large round rubber seal. This benefits from some silicon grease too but we had another problem with this seal a couple of years ago.

After a day of travelling with occasional use of the toilet we were finding the bottom of the cassette housing, when you removed the cassette for emptying, was damp, putting it delicately. Something was leaking. The culprit was the large doughnut seal over which the blade slides. It was not forming a proper seal anymore and the solution was to replace it, which we did and there were no more leaks.

To replace the seal I partially dismantled the cassette. This made it easier to remove the old seal although you could probably get away without doing this.

The top of the cassette can be removed if you rotate it anti-clockwise to the position shown in the photograph on the left below. It will be easier to turn if you pull the slide out and once in this position the slide mechanism can be lifted off. Of course this is best done with an empty and well rinsed out cassette!



This year I noticed another small leak coming from where the black emptying tube joins the cassette. This only showed itself when emptying with a slow drip. It wasn't a major problem on our recent trip to France as long as I remembered to keep my feet out of the way while emptying.

I did some investigating when we returned home and I discovered if you turn the outlet to the position shown in the photograph on the right above the whole tube will lift off. There is a large O ring around the tube which I will liberally coat with silicon grease. If this doesn't work I will look for a replacement O ring

There seem to be two schools of thought on how the cassette should actually be used when required for what I will delicately call "serious comfort sessions". The divide is between the blade open and the blade closed schools. The blade open faction claim they can deliver their contributions into the cassette with perfect accuracy. Lesser mortals like me keep the blade closed and also line the bowl with a few sheets of toilet paper. You can get purpose made toilet bowl liners but I find a collage of paper works just as well. We always buy two ply paper, anything thicker can get stuck during emptying.

Another lesson we've learned on SOG use is if you need to move the vehicle when the cassette is full unless it is only a short distance and without any slopes always disconnect the pipe and put the bung in. If you don't you risk unmentionable liquids finding their way into the pipe and even, perish the thought, being drawn into the fan.

Having gone this far into a murky subject I guess I had better go all the way and finish with what might prove a life-saver should you be so unlucky as to need this trick. It hasn't happened to us but I have heard of a case where a "user" didn't notice the cassette had been removed for emptying. The resulting challenge is how best to clean out the cassette housing afterwards? Throw in a large amount of cat litter and leave it to absorb the liquids and dry up any solids is the answer. I guess dry sand from a beach might work to some extent if you suddenly find cat litter a little tricky to obtain in your remote camping spot. Ideally, of course, always check the cassette is in place before use.

The next article, by Lindsay Paterson describes the fitting of a SOG II. This is a new model of the SOG which does not require a hole to be cut in the cassette access door. This is because the filter fits in-line on the hose which just needs to be run somewhere where it can exhaust to atmosphere. The installation instructions suggest this can be achieved by drilling a hole in the floor but Lindsay found a way to avoid this.

Fitting a SOG

Lindsay Paterson

I decided to fit a SOG unit to the van after much deliberation but I did not want to cut into the exterior door for the cassette removal. Looking at all possibilities, I decided, after measuring the space available I could fit one of the new SOG 2s into my van.

The SOG was connected up as per the installation instructions to the cassette. Now the different bit. I ran the extraction hose and cable to the rear of the van. The panel to which the curtain is attached was removed to allow access. The SOG2 filter fitted in here, quite snugly. It is the green drum seen near the top of the first image below.



The extraction hose was then routed to an opening in the van, just above the rear towing hook.

The installation has been successful and if I get another van, I could transfer the complete SOG, as no holes were made in the van, saving approximately £200 and the fitting charge.



A competent DIY'er can fit a SOG. The Harrisons fitted one.

Aires and Graces

John Laidler

This article is about places where you can stay overnight which are not traditional campsites. The most frequently used term for these places is probably aires which is just the French word for area. In other countries different terms are used, for example in Germany stellplatz and in Italy sosta. In Spain camperstop is frequently encountered. In France the word is used to describe different places. An aire de service is a motorway service area and aire de repos might also be seen from a motorway and is just a rest area with limited or no facilities. Aires de service are generally not recommended for staying overnight on, mainly because robberies have been reported and refrigeration trucks can be running their engines all night. The areas set aside for motorhomes in France are aires de camping-cars and these can be found all over the country. Some are completely free, some might need a couple of euros for water and others charge up to around fifteen euros a night, especially in the high season, depending on the popularity of the location and the services offered. Charges in other mainland European countries are similar.

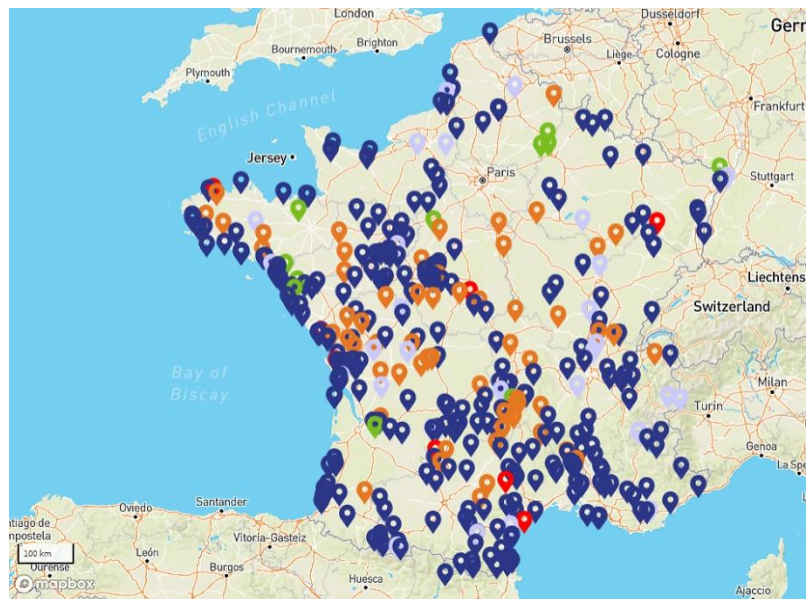
A glaring absence is an English equivalent of the word aire which must explain when a group was established to encourage the provision of places to stay overnight in a motorhome or campervan in the UK they called themselves the Campaign for Real Aires abbreviated CAMpRA.

CAMpRA have promoted themselves and their cause well and have achieved success but as a country we are long way behind our nearest Continental neighbours. You can find out more on their website <https://campra.org.uk/> and they also have a Facebook group which you can find by searching for CAMpRA. I am not aware CAMpRA produce a list of aires in the UK but using one of the apps, such as CamperContact, SearchforSites or Park4Night will find them. I find CamperContact the easiest to us but others will prefer a different one. I do use Park4Night occasionally if there is a specific place we want to stop at and CamperContact doesn't have anything to offer. Park4Night does seem to have more locations but the sheer number of them makes it more difficult for me to use.

Mary and I have had two tours of France this year and on both of them we made extensive use of the aires operated by the Camping-Car Parks (CCP) organization. If you've travelled in France you may well have encountered these and if you haven't yet you soon will as their network is growing rapidly.

CCP passed the two hundred sites threshold recently and are continuing to grow rapidly. They are almost all in France but now have one or two in Belgium and Spain. The typical CCP business model

is to take over the management of a struggling municipal aire or campsite and install a barrier and an automated machine for accepting payment. The income is shared between CCP and the owner of the site. The majority of their locations are aires, with parking for motorhomes only but in the last couple of years they have opened a number of *Camping de mon Village* which are shown in orange in the map above. These are campsites they are now running which for most of the year only admit motorhomes but in the high season, July to the end of



August or sometimes mid-September they open the toilet blocks and allow in tents and caravans. The model seems to work and over the last three years or so we have noticed an increasing number of motorhomes, particularly French owned ones using the CCP locations. It is now not unusual to find aires at popular locations full on weekends.

CCP sites require a card for entry and exit. You can order one from their website (<https://www.campingcarpark.com/>) where, even if you select the English language version of the

site it is referred to as the PASS'ÉTAPES. This is probably a sensible thing to do because otherwise you will have to obtain the card from the machine at the entrance when you arrive at your first aire. In fact, a small number of remote aires don't have a machine where you can obtain a card so this may be another reason for getting one before you leave the UK. You will need to put some money on the card but this could be as little as twenty euros.



The image on the left is a CCP machine which dispenses cards and allows you to add funds to an existing card. In the top left is an LCD screen which should show a number of flags. Unless you really want to improve your French it would be wise to select the Union flag after which the machine will communicate in English. The screen will take you through the process of registering an account for which you will need to enter details of a credit or debit card. A final hurdle, after it spits out your new card, is you need to “validate” it. Things might have improved and the current instructions may be better but it wasn't clear at the time I got mine what this meant. What is required is to hold your card against the pad you can see in the lower right. I think the newly issued

card is not linked to your account when it is issued and the validation is the process of achieving this. If you encounter problems just ring the number on the machine, they speak good English and have helped us out a few times, usually when barriers fail to open for some reason which happens occasionally. On a UK mobile the number to ring is 0033 183 646 921 and just hold on as it goes through a bit of pre-recorded stuff until an operator answers.

It is free to join CCP but there is a premium level of membership which allows you to book ahead. I wouldn't recommend taking this option unless you find you need it after trying the standard level of membership first.

CCP have an app which is what I use all the time. You can use this to check how much is on your card and add more money if needed. Payment is taken as you exit the aire, you can enter with nothing on your card and then at the end of your stay work out how much is needed and add that but be aware the app does not seem to show any local tourist tax so the final bill might be a euro or two more than you expect. You can also browse their sites on the app and on an Android device if you tap the Route button it will use Google Maps to

direct you there. There is an iOS version but I have no experience of this. I am sure it works fine although the app is a bit quirky and the interactive map is slightly buried within it but once you have found the map this is what I use all the time to plan the next stop.

CCP aires are not perfect, some are untidy and others in unattractive locations but most have electricity and the service points are usually easy to use. Like finding any aire look on the map to see what is around and read any reviews then make your choice.

Oil Take a Second Look

Adrian Hitchman

As many of you will know we broke down on the way to the Wareham meet. We suffered a loss of oil pressure at Honiton, we luckily came to a garage but they couldn't help until later in the day, so suggested we top up the oil and see what happened, the pressure stayed okay for several miles and then dropped again, we limped into another Garage with a lot of oil dripping from the bottom of the Van, yet again they couldn't do anything immediately and suggested we call the RAC.

We pulled into a layby by the garage and waited for the RAC, the chap arrived and when he looked saw a lot of oil on the end of the Engine and said it's an oil seal on the engine. After a couple of hours we were picked up by a rescue truck and brought back to Falmouth, we dropped the Van at our local garage and waited for the big bill.

When the Mechanic started stripping down to do the seal he said it didn't look right, no oil where it should be, so he started the engine and saw a fine spray coming from the oil filter spraying on to the engine. Obviously when we were driving something had hit the oil filter and made a small hole, I don't know how exposed the filter is on a Fiat, the oil sprayed on to the engine, making look as if the oil came from a seal. So for the sake of a £15 oil filter we missed our holiday.

Moral of the story, don't assume that what you first see is the problem, take a second look, it might not be as bad as first thought or on the other hand it might be worse than you first thought. We were lucky in that we were able to pull in before it did any damage.

Murvi Club Newsletter – Winter 2022 Edition

The Winter edition of the Newsletter will be published around Christmas/New Year or even later depending on how much I eat and drink. Input from members is of course essential and the Editor would be very grateful for items to be submitted by 20th December, 2022. As usual Word format is preferred and because of the way I am putting the editions together now the images can be left embedded in the document. They do not need to be sent as separate files.

Recipes, trip reports, hints and tips or anything else you would like to share which is linked, even vaguely, to Murvis and their enjoyment will be very welcome. I would also like to put together an article about any storage tricks members may have devised. For example, in our Morocco I've found

an excellent place for books and maps and I am sure there must be other ideas around. They may well be specific to a particular model but that doesn't matter. All ideas are welcome. Just a photograph and a few words of explanation will be enough.

I would also welcome feedback on articles previously published. For example, in this edition I've written a bit about aires and I would be interested to hear any thoughts on this subject, whether aires in the UK or the ones on the other side of the Channel. "Wild Camping" is a closely related subject and we have done it but always only for one night at a time as we find we need to find a service area daily. Less incontinent Murvis may have achieved longer durations. If so please let us hear about it!

Previous editions of the Newsletter can be found on the Club website:

<https://www.murviclub.org.uk/newsletters/>