



A Murvi in Wales
(See Page 5)

Contents:

Editorial	John Laidler	Page 1
Exploring SW Scotland	Carolyn Ash	Page 1
A Trip to Southern France	Brian and Anne Biffin	Page 4
A Brief Tour of Britain	John Laidler	Page 5
Hints and Tips	Various	Page 17
Newsletter Summer Edition		Page 20

Editorial

This is the first edition of the Newsletter for 2022 and is the first of what I hope will be four editions this year. I wasn't sure if I would have enough to fill it but the membership has responded generously and I hope you will find something of interest amongst the collection of hints and trip reports.

Exploring SW Scotland

Carolyn Ash

Difficulties this year (2021) in taking our Murvi abroad led us to plan a trip to Scotland, which sadly we hadn't visited for decades. This was prompted too by some old friends relocating to Kirkcudbright in Dumfries and Galloway, and by Rob's distant family connection. We decided that this was the area we would visit. Initial investigations showed that there is a SW 300 route which hasn't yet attained the popularity of the 500, and D&G promised scenery, hills, coastline, walking and birdwatching plus possibly fewer tourists. We were initially relaxed about booking sites for our trip but we soon changed our minds as we hunted for a pitch en route in the Lake District. Scotland proved no easier and so, 6-7 weeks before our departure, we had scrambled together enough places to cover a month.

Setting off on May 23rd seemed quite an adventure as we hadn't been as far from home in over a year. We broke our journey north in the pleasant and convenient Caravan Club site at Solihull just south of Birmingham. This gave us an easy day (via the M6 toll road) up to Penrith, where we left the motorway to stay for 3 nights in the Lake District at a CC&C hide-away at Linkelsfield Farm, Isel, near Cockermouth with great views tucked away north of Keswick.

Our onward route took us back to the motorway, on to Carlisle and then into Scotland at Gretna Green, and no great distance to Dumfries. We had been lucky in booking at a CL in an interesting spot on the coast at Kirkbean where there is a tiny museum celebrating a famous son, John Paul Jones, who emigrated to the US in 1773, to become the founder of the American Navy. This small 5 van site sits alongside the cottage birthplace and under the Stars and Stripes.



We used this as a base for 5 nights to carry us over the English bank holiday which brought lots of visitors into the area. The coast has some beautiful bays, notably Rockcliffe, Sandyhills (left) with a big grassy car park (and camp site) by the beach, but parking was difficult in our vehicle in many busy places.

There is coast path walking and a bird reserve at Mersehead with views over

the Solway Firth to the Lake District. We went inland as well and traced the house of Rob's aunt near Beeswing. The astonished owners welcomed us in and showed us a pile of title deeds to prove our credentials.

Still in warm sunny weather we moved to the Silvercraigs Community Site right in Kirkcudbright (pronounced Kirkcoo-bree) to join up with our newly resident friends. This is a charming and attractive little town of colour-washed houses, galleries, museums, cafes, shops plus tiny harbour. The camp site overlooking the town is deservedly popular. We made an excursion with our friends to the beautiful Threave



Garden (Scot Nat Trust). A few miles north is Loch Ken with walking, cycling trails and bird reserves. Instead we continued on to Newton Stewart to Brockloch Farm CL, a very good choice as from here we explored Wigtown and the Whithorn Peninsula. (Couldn't get in to the very popular Caravan Club site at Garlieston). There was lots of walking potential plus Whithorn priory and historical and nature interest. To the north there is the lovely River Bladnoch with ancient woodlands, bird reserves and otters.

Below is shown the Silvercraigs site in Kirkcudbright and the tidal River Cree below Newton Stewart.



We had booked 4 nights on the Stranraer peninsula at New England Bay, Port Logan. We loved this area, from the Mull of Galloway to Stranraer and beyond up the Ayrshire Coast. The site is big but very spread out with privacy amongst gorse, small trees and dunes, and right on the sandy beach ; a good central spot though devoid of shops, pubs etc., This area is popular for sea canoeing, paddle boards and dinghies. From the spectacular Mull of Galloway with cliffs full of nesting sea birds one sees the Isle of Man, Ireland, and Kintyre. The road to the car parking at the end is easy and the bird reserve and lighthouse (below) are usually open.



Our return route left Scotland via Moffat where we had a short look at the Annan Valley. Then we crossed the Pennines to Co. Durham, and afterwards down A1

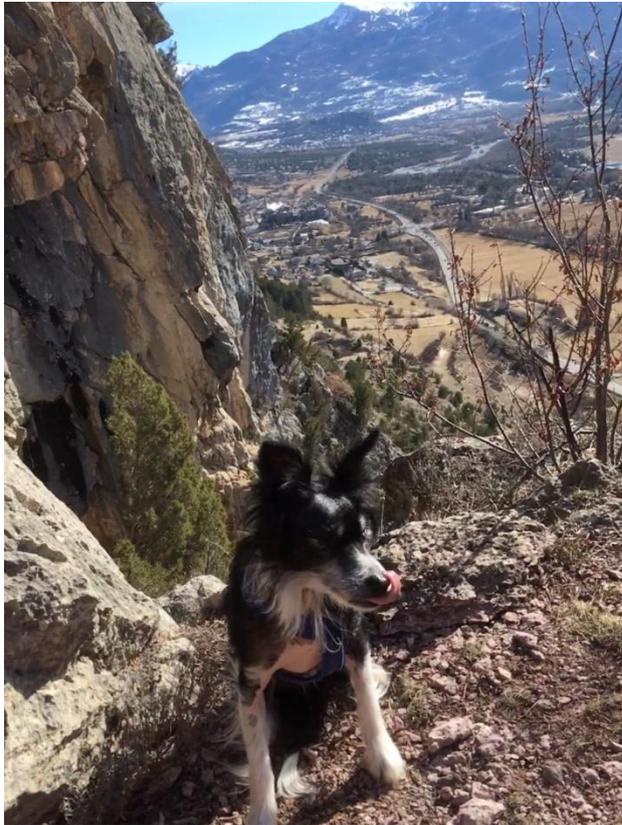
We seemed to have visited a tiny part of Scotland that doesn't include the Highlands, but can be a jumping off point for Arran and the Islands. Midges were only a minor problem, we were early

and mostly on the coast. A very useful guide was the Bradt Slow Travel Guide to D&G., also the OS app and a selection of OS maps. Possibilities for camping off-site do exist and in easier times we might have done this occasionally and felt less concerned about booking so far ahead. This year tourist incomes were very uncertain and local facilities very much needed our support.

A Trip to Southern France

Brian and Anne Biffin

Calvin, our Border Collie is now eleven and sadly no longer enjoys the cold or longer mountain treks.



We have therefore explored shorter walks in the foothills of the Southern French Alps and part of Provence.

Using the Glénat guide, we climbed the hillside covered in ancient Juniper bushes overlooking the Durance River, just above St Crépin (left) which boasts an excellent riverside campsite.

On to our first France Passion stop this year, on the southern slopes of the Luberon Mountain range. First year for the owners who were still developing their residential plot outside La Motte D' Aigues. Nothing to sell but they were thrilled to see us and even offered free ehu!

On to Bonnieux next. Great in March - no tourists and plenty of parking. Stopped in Isle sur la Sorgue station car park for lunch and a mooch around this charming town where the

crystal clear river splits and twists between the bars and hotels. Overnight at an old favourite at Domaine de la Gasqui - a classic FP vineyard (below). I admit I fell in love with the label. Pity the contents was so disappointing!



FP Confiserie de Mont Ventoux was our next stop, with an easy walk into Carpentras. We found La Boule aux Rats above a door in St Siffrein Cathedral. One story goes that if you touch the ball, you won't get the plague. Snag is, it's over 30 feet up!

We had a short drive to Vaison les Romaines Municipal Aire. A chance to replenish and empty - and free in March. We woke up to a great view of snowcapped Mt Ventoux before taking a short walk into town, with its spectacular Roman remains, with whole streets on view.



We then headed east on the D40, with Mt Ventoux towering above us to the south to M. Chabrand's FP farm in Montbrun les Bains, with its medieval village and chateau clinging to the hillside.

We are now back at "base" in Embrun and preparing to weave our way north to dive under "the ditch". Hopefully, we will manage to download our PLFs with less drama this time!

A Brief Tour of Britain

John Laidler

Like many 2020 and 2021 were years when our Murvi Morocco did not get a lot of use but towards the end of 2021 the planets began to align themselves into a pattern which would enable us to get away on a longer trip. We bought our Murvi in 2013 and almost every year up to 2020 we have gone on two longish breaks almost all of them to mainland Europe. We had been to Scotland on a Murvi rally and a few shorter trips in England but we always promised ourselves a longer journey around parts of Britain and particularly to the English East coast which was an area I knew little about.

So in early September we left out home near Plymouth and drove up the M5 before crossing the Severn into Wales taking the M48 instead of the M4 because it gave us the chance to stop at Aust Services on the English side just before the old Severn Crossing Bridge to park for an hour or so to give our dog Charlie a walk and to eat some lunch in the 'van.

Our destination was the Caravan and Motorhome Club (CMC) site at Brecon which is close to the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal and of course the Brecon Beacons. We were to stay almost exclusively on CMC sits on this tour; all booked ahead which proved a wise move as several sites had

signs saying they were full when we arrived. I am not going to describe each site as anyone who has used CMC sites will know they are all pretty much alike.

We headed to the Brecon Beacons on the day after we arrived to climb the 734m high Fan Fawr which is close to the much more well-known and popular Pen y Fan.

The reason for climbing this mountain was not just for the exercise but to follow a hobby I've recently taken up called Summits On The Air (SOTA). The background starts from a curious benefit of the first lockdown in 2020 when the exams to become a UK amateur radio operator or ham were switched from being club and classroom based to fully online. I took advantage of this and spent many an hour reading technical books and over the space of about 9 months from first picking up a book progressed through the three licence stages of Foundation, Intermediate and finally gaining the Full licence in the Spring of 2021 and the call sign MOWIV. You don't need a Full license for SOTA, the Foundation licence limits you to just 10W of power but this is more than enough because 10W from the top of a hill carries a long way. My reason for going through the complete exam system is you cannot operate a radio outside the UK without the Full licence and when we *do* get away into France or Spain I would like to take a radio with me. I also taught myself Morse Code which despite being a very old way of communicating by radio is still widely used. This is because a Morse Code transmission consists of nothing more than a pure radio frequency sine wave which can carry considerably further than a transmission containing speech. Many years ago it was necessary to learn Morse Code in order to be granted an amateur licence but the requirement has now been dropped. Fortunately, there are a wide range of apps, programs and websites to make learning easier. They do say learning a second language is good for the brain and mine did get a serious workout.

SOTA, whether using voice or Morse Code, is practiced by transmitting from the top of a specific type of hill known as a Marilyn. This is a hill with a prominence of at least 150m above the surrounding ground. The name was coined in 1992 in a book called the Relative Hills of Britain and it is a sly nod towards the Scottish Munros. SOTA itself started almost exactly 20 years ago in the UK and is now established in many countries around the World. The person operating from the top of the mountain is known as the Activator and those responding, called Chasers, are usually working from home, operating from what is universally known in radio ham circles as "the shack" even if it is a spare bedroom.



So from the top of Fan Fawr under blue skies I set up my portable mast and started transmitting, finishing the session with sixteen contacts or QSOs as they are known. Mostly these were with operators in the UK but a couple were from Spain and Belgium. The image above shows the summit cairn of fan Fawr with Pen y Fan in the background.

The next day we walked along the canal towpath into Brecon, which takes about an hour but the weather remained excellent and there was quite a lot to see along the way and in Brecon itself.



The following day we left Wales and drove north for the best part of 250 miles to the southern Lake District and another CMC site at Meathrop Fell. On reflection this was probably a bit far to drive in one day but within a given space of time the choice is between making lots of short hops and only

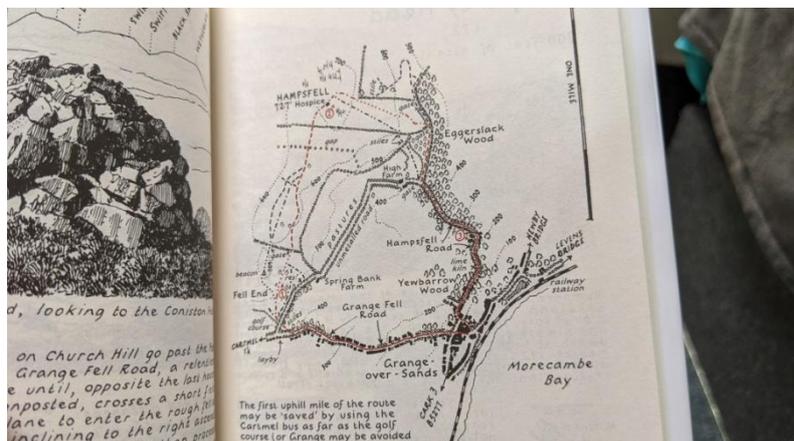
staying a night or so at each place or staying longer in fewer locations and accept a longer drive on the days you do move.

I was born in Cumbria and spent the first 25 years of my life in this region so it was nice to return although the traffic in the Lake District was much worse than I remember. Even decades ago we would joke about the Lake District putting signs up to say it was full but today the traffic comes to a standstill in many of the popular villages and towns. There are campsites in the centre of the Lakes but none of these had vacancies when I was making my bookings which was why we were reduced to staying on the fringes of the National Park.

Apart from nostalgia it was SOTA again which brought us here because our arrival coincided, and not by accident, with the SOTA Lake District Activity Weekend when a few dozen SOTA activators converged on the Lakes to scale various peaks and beam into the ether and to each other in "Summit to Summits". The Saturday found me on the summit of Hutton Roof Crag, a fairly obscure hill in the extreme south east of the Lakes. In the evening we drove to the town of Windermere and the Brookside Inn for a socially distanced SOTA evening. I was unsure about parking in Windermere on a Saturday evening, but amazingly there was room in the pub car park for us.

Sunday was going to be a no driving day, so I chose another hill within walking distance of the site, Hampsfell, which is a Wainwright summit not a SOTA summit. There are many classification systems for hills; Munros, Corbetts, Grahams, Donalds etc., and in the Lakes there are found Wainwrights

which are all the hills mentioned in Alfred Wainwright's guidebooks. And yes, there are people who operate radios from these hills; it's called WOTA – Wainwrights On The Air! Hampsfell was my first Wainwright but with another 213 left to do I suspect I will never complete the full list.



Wainrights description of the path to Hampsfell can be seen above.

On the Monday following the SOTA weekend we moved to another Lake District CMC site, Dockray Meadow on the outermost western fringes. This small site has no toilet block but is within walking distance of a few Lake District hills. We enjoyed our stay here. Of course I had to do a quick SOTA activation and chose the nearby Blake Fell, shown right looking over the small Cogra Moss reservoir. It was a steep walk in places to reach it, following Wainright's route again, but the views



from the summit in the clear air were exceptional. The central peak in the image below is Grasmoor.



On Thursday 16 September we drove to Fort William to spend a few days with my brother, who has lived in Scotland for over thirty years. We did some local walking in the Nevis area and of course I took the opportunity to activate a small SOTA summit. Druimarbin is close enough to be reached on foot from Fort William but my brother drove me there to save time. It was late afternoon when we arrived with glimpses of the sun and no wind. The photo of me tapping out Morse Code has Ben Nevis in the background, which isn't always so clearly visible. The other image is looking down Loch Linnhe towards the Corran Narrows.





After Fort William our plan was to explore a bit more of the west coast with our first stop at Morvich and another CMC site of course. After a few fine days the weather turned damp but this did have the advantage of bringing out the mushrooms and I collected several just outside the camp entrance which we ate for breakfast.

We were now not far from Skye so despite the unattractive weather we decided to visit it for a day, crossing over on the Kyle of Lochalsh bridge. I have been on Skye before in weather where the clouds were barely above head height but it wasn't quite as bad as that during our visit. A few showers blew through during the day but it stayed reasonable dry by Isle of Skye standards!

The map showed the remains of a broch near the road. There are better preserved examples than the Dun Beag broch in Scotland but sufficient of it is left to see the unique double walled structure. It was destroyed, probably by burning some time before 150AD.



Up to this point in Scotland we had enjoyed good roads but after Morvich, as we pushed up further north, the roads became much narrower and progress slower. The North Coast Five Hundred or NC500 is a route around the top of Scotland which has earned something of a reputation for the sheer number of motorhomes using it and the consequent traffic jams and impact on local communities. Nevertheless, our route would take us near part of it and as this was one of the more notorious sections I

couldn't resist the challenge.

The section from Applecross to Torridon also has some of the most spectacular scenery in Scotland but make sure you pull over to look at it as you will need both eyes on the road when driving especially on the Bealach na Ba section north of Loch Carron. It is doable in a Murvi but I wouldn't like to do it in anything bigger or when there was more traffic. We were lucky and encountered few vehicles coming the other way. We were also blessed with excellent weather. I put short video of our crossing on YouTube which might put you off but the section is worth the effort just for the views from the road. <https://youtu.be/9yV3ZYcB9K8> The date shown on the video is misleading – my old dashcam never remembers the time or date!

The start of this section is shown below.



Our destination was Kinlochewe at the southern end of Loch Maree and the farthest north we were to go in Scotland. There is a lot more to see beyond here but to do it justice needs a lot more time than we had available. One of the disadvantages of living in Devon is the north of Scotland is a very long way away. Someday we must visit the Hebrides but it wasn't to be on this brief trip.

At Kinlochewe we met our first and last "CMC Grumpy Warden" but his wife was delightfully cheerful and more than compensated for the cloud of gloom of her husband.

After so much driving we only explored on foot from Kinlochewe but there was plenty to see and do locally. On one path through trees I encountered a few of the famous Highland Midges but otherwise our entire trip in Scotland proved to be midge-free.

Of course I couldn't resist a bit of SOTA although my only reservation was the hills around us were high and steep. The weather was also a bit unreliable but there seemed to be a short window of better weather on the Sunday morning if I got up early enough. Beinn a'Mhuinidh, pronounced "Beyn a Voonee" is a 692m high summit just south of Slioch and was within walking distance of the campsite. The only trouble was it was going to be a longish walk. My hiking GPS told me afterwards I had covered nineteen kilometres and as about two thirds of that was on pathless moorland it did turn out to be a challenging day.

Even more challenging was the wind when I got to the summit. I approached from the south east and as I neared the summit cairn looking towards the west I encountered one of the strongest winds I have ever experienced. I literally could not stand up so I crept to the edge on hands and knees to take a photograph of Beinn Eighe (below) which was looking striking in the clear air.



The views from the summit all around were also striking but I had the radio to operate so I retreated to a small depression below the summit sheltered from the gale. The photograph shows my mast bending in the wind with the jagged peaks of An Teallach in the far distance, right of centre



The activation, only the third ever done by anyone here I completed using Morse Code to add a bit more to the challenge. The mast blew down twice and after the second collapse I quickly packed up as I could see rain approaching. People were still calling

me on the air but I was beginning to feel a bit cold so with safety a paramount concern on this lonely mountain where there was also no mobile phone signal I took the prudent choice to leave. Fortunately, the rain didn't last too long and my descent was completed in the dry and was delayed only by my choice of a different route down to the one I had taken to ascend and an encounter with a very high new deer fence which caused me to take a long detour.

The area I had to cross was covered in scattered lochans, one of which is shown below.



From Kinlochewe we travelled east to the Caravan and Camping Club site on the Chanonry Point peninsula near Rosemarkie, Inverness. The site was very busy and we had to wait in a short queue until we could be booked in. As for the other sites on our trip we had a reservation which was just as well as they were full as had been the CMC site at Kinlochewe.

The site at Rosemarkie is just above the long beach with wide views of the Moray Firth. Chanonry Point is famous for dolphins which come to feed on migrating salmon and they can often be seen leaping into the air when the tide is flowing strongly. Unfortunately, when we walked to the Point to see them there were no dolphins. The tide timing was correct but the stars of the show did not put in an appearance.

I suspect there were no salmon moving through for them to hunt. We have seen them here on a previous occasion so this was not too great a disappointment. The photograph shows the Point from the hill above the village of



Rosemarkie. The site is just above the houses. Fort George is on the opposite side of the Firth on the left.

With no SOTA summits within easy reach I confined myself to operating from the Murvi and became a SOTA chaser instead of an activator. Contacts were made with operators on summits in Switzerland and more locally, the Cairngorms.

After Rosemarkie we started the part of this trip which was going to take us into new areas for us – the entire east side of England. Perhaps because I was brought up in Carlisle, in the north west, I have always favoured the west side of Britain over the east. I have had many journeys along the west coast of Scotland, into Wales and of course the south west where we live now but whole tracts of England in the east were blanks on the map for us.

The first part of the journey took us through the Cairngorms. I had previously never been particularly enthusiastic about the Cairngorms as they lack the dramatic appearance of the mountains you can find elsewhere Scotland but the views from the A9 changed my mind. There were some spectacular summits to be seen from the road and with very light traffic it was an enjoyable drive. The only thing to watch was our speed as I've never seen a road with more speed cameras!

As our intention was to explore the English east coast we started at the beginning of at Berwick upon Tweed, just a few miles over the border from Scotland. The CMC site here is close to the centre of the town, which is worth exploring, ideally in drier weather than we had.

Holy Island is a little further down the coast and an easy drive from the site. There is a website which gives the safe crossing times for the causeway onto the island after which the road takes you to an extremely large car park. Holy Island is a very popular destination even on a damp day at the end of September. A path goes all around the island and we walked most of it after viewing the ruined Abbey. You have to book ahead if you want to go into the Abbey but we felt we could see enough of it from the outside.



Our next stop going south was at Whitely Bay and of course another CMC site beside the sea.



Our journey took us past the signs for Holy Island again and by sticking to the coast road we came to Bamburgh Castle, which we had glimpsed in the distance from Holy Island. You can visit the Castle if you book ahead. The site has a long history having been the seat of the Northumbrian Kings of the sixth century and the Keep was built by the son of William the Conqueror. However, it was turned into a private home by Lord Armstrong at the end of the nineteenth century and the “modernised” interior is not exactly authentic. If you have the time it is probably worth a visit but we restricted ourselves to walking around it and letting our dog run on the beach from where we could see the Farne Islands.

The site at Whitely Bay is a little away from the bright lights of Whitely Bay itself, it would be a longish walk there and back so we restricted ourselves during our stay, as the weather was still changeable, to short walks up and down the coastal footpath. The coast here showed evidence of erosion, something we were to see several times as we travelled further south. I intended to do a bit of geocaching, the finding of hidden caches using GPS, but the nearest cache to the site was on top of a very unstable cliff and to reach it you had to go past signs saying it was dangerous to proceed further. So I didn't and the cache remained undisturbed – until it no doubt falls into the sea, eventually.

The CMC site near Whitby was our next destination, although the site is some distance inland on the edge of the North York Moors. There is some nice walking directly from the site and with the weather improving, we made the best of our time here, visiting Robin Hood's Bay and Whitby.

Whitby Abbey is worth visiting, we enjoyed the walk around and within it but we didn't go into Whitby itself, mainly because the Abbey and its car park is perched high above the town and the walk back after descending to the town looked very strenuous!

The Abbey is shown below.



But we couldn't escape hills when we visited Robin Hood's Bay the following day. This is all steep, narrow streets and hordes of people. Very touristy and not really for us but we had to see it and tick it off.

A long drive followed to Cromer in Norfolk. We wanted to see this part of the Country of course but the reason for choosing Cromer is I have a cousin who owns a holiday cottage in the area. We hadn't seen each other for eighteen years but the distance in time just melted away when we started chatting and it was as if we had only parted a few days earlier. We met at the Cley Marsh Reserve where I managed to squeeze the Murvi into a vacant parking space. We had accidentally timed our meeting to coincide not only with an event going on in the Visitors' Centre but also the arrival on the coast of a Bonaparte's gull, which is a rare vagrant from North America and it had brought the twitchers out in droves – or should that be flocks?

To my surprise Norfolk isn't totally flat and around the Inceborough Fields CMC site are several low hills which I think are ancient sand dunes. From the top of Inceborough Hill, the highest of them, I played with my radio and made my first trans-Atlantic contact - with Eric VA2EO who was on a summit in Québec, Canada. All done in Morse Code again of course.

A forty five minute walk from the site along paths, pavements and the beach brought us to Cromer where there isn't a lot to see other than the pier. At the end of the pier is the lifeboat station and we watched them carrying out various drills before returning to the site.

The Inceborough site has only a few hard standing pitches and we had ended up on a grass pitch. After all the rain we had had recently the ground was very damp and driving off our pitch was a struggle, with our wheels spinning. I carry a pair of Tracmat sand ladders buried under the bed, bought after nearly getting stuck in soft sand in Spain but I also have a pair of thin Fiamma mats which were easier to get to and worked well enough to allow me to drive off the pitch and onto the road.

Another long drive took us from Norfolk to Kent and the Black Horse CMC site just outside Folkstone. This journey entailed driving over the Dart Crossing which you have to pay for online within twenty four hours of crossing or face a hefty fine.

From this site we made forays to Dungeness, Whitstable and Canterbury. For the latter we used the Park and Ride where motorhomes can stay overnight. A bus took us into the centre of the city but the main section of the Cathedral, which we had wanted to visit, was closed for a funeral so we had to content ourselves with a walk around the grounds. Derek Jarman's cottage at Dungeness is shown below followed by a close-up of our Whitstable lunch.



The final stop on our Round Britain tour was Hurstpierpoint in Sussex to stay with Mary's sister and her husband for a few days. After that it was a drive along the south coast and home near Plymouth. At six weeks this was our longest UK trip but it was still something of a whistle stop tour and we drove past many places we

could have explored - but it would have easily turned into a twelve week tour if we had!

Hints and Tips

Checking the State of Charge and a Troublesome Loo Hatch – Dick Constable

Dick offers a couple of quick tips. The first is how to check the state of charge of the batteries when parked up for a period and not connected to an electrical supply. Dick's suggestion is to position a small hand mirror, propped up with a cushion, in a position where the meter can be read through the small window on the driver's side. He says you will need to learn how to read the numbers "mirror image", but when it's not 100%, it's soon easy to spot.

Last summer the lock on the toilet cassette door stopped working during a trip. It wouldn't lock and stay pressed in. Worried the hatch might open whilst driving, then catch and snap off Dick needed a get you home fix. A friendly site owner lent him a hand drill so he could drill through the handle and put a self-tapping screw in.

Once he found out a new mechanism was £40 he's left the screw until he can find one at a car boot sale or similar. Unless anyone out there has a spare?



Mischievous Mirrors and Problematic Pumps – John Laidler

Our Murvi has mirrors which will fold flat at the press of a button. This can be very useful when you encounter oncoming vehicles in a narrow road but I found they don't always fold fully flat. The one on the passenger's side had a tendency to stick halfway in. With some difficulty, and ultimately without success, I stripped the mirror down as far as I could to see if it was possible to lubricate it. Fiat should put a sign on the outside of the mirror saying "There are no user serviceable parts inside"

because this is what I found. The internal mechanism includes a very strong spring and a large star washer. If you *could* compress the spring it might be possible to remove the star washer and then strip it all down but you would probably need to replace the star washer and obtaining one of the required size could be a challenge.

So my strategy now is making sure the mirrors get some use and I always park them whenever we stop. This is because it is lack of use which seems to be the problem.

However, lack of use wasn't the reason for our recent water pump problems. I had long had misgivings about our water pump and feared it was on the way out. The symptoms were it would suddenly run for a few seconds at random times including the middle of the night. The pump of course maintains a permanent high pressure in the water pipes and when you open a tap the pressure falls and the pump starts automatically. Starting on its own is typically a sign of a water leak somewhere but I could find no trace of one. My suspicion was the pump was losing pressure by allowing water to leak back into the tank. This suggested a valve was faulty so before our last long trip, which was to Corsica, I bought a spare pump and stowed it under the bed. And there it stayed for over three years. The pump still seemed to work and its involuntary spasms were not so frequent as to be troublesome. Until on a campsite in the Lake District last year it suddenly started running continuously one afternoon. Fortunately, we were in the vehicle and it didn't take me long to discover water was pouring out of the pump.

The pump has an upper section containing the motor and a lower section housing the diaphragm and valves. The leak was coming from the joint between these two and suggested the diaphragm had split. With a spare pump to hand it didn't take long to swap them over as access to the pump is so easy in a Murvi. The pipe connections are all press fit and easily released with a bit of wiggling. The pump is mounted on three rubber feet which can be left in place and the pump eased away from them. The new pump had three wires whereas the old one only used two, a red and a black. This slightly threw me but an internet search revealed the white wire is for a panel light to show the pump is running, useful perhaps on a boat but not in a Murvi as it isn't hard to tell when the pump is running. Using a terminal block I had available I connected the plug from the old pump and had everything quickly up and running. You can see the terminal block just to the right of the surge damper in one of the photographs below.

Back home I investigated the old pump and discovered the diaphragm had indeed split. It is possible to dismantle the pump assembly; the key screw can be found at the bottom of where the motor shaft fits. In the photo below you will see hexagonal shaft of my screwdriver engaged with this screw. Once this screw is undone the diaphragm can be accessed. In theory you could replace the diaphragm – if you could buy one. I could only find a complete replacement pump assembly for sale. At £45 they are about half the price of a replacement pump so this is what I chose and the refurbished pump is now back under the bed waiting for any future failures!



The C1 Licence Category and Reaching 70 – Bob Musk and John Laidler

Most standard Murvi vehicles have a maximum Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) of 3,500Kg which means they can be driven by anyone with a normal car licence. To drive a vehicle above 3,500Kg (up to 7,500Kg) requires the C1 licence category which is no longer granted to those passing the driving test since the beginning of 1997. Those of us who did pass the test before this date will have been given the C1 licence automatically. However, the retention of this category once you reach the age of 70 is not automatic. The expiry date of the licence held by anyone under the age of 70 will be the date of their 70th birthday. You can renew your licence online up to 90 days before you turn 70 but unless you take certain steps the C1 category will be removed on renewal.

For most, losing the C1 category will be no hardship but a number of Murvis will have been upgraded to over 3,500Kg either after purchase or at purchase as upgrading to 4,250Kg is now available as an option on some models.

To answer why you might want to upgrade the GVW I suggest loading your Murvi as if you were about to start a trip. With all the clothes you think you might need plus food, wine, beer, dog(s) and full water and fuel tanks take it to a local weighbridge. It is possible, if you haven't done this before, the result might be a bit of a surprise! It isn't just the GVW which might be nudging 3,500Kg, there are also limits on individual axle weights which need to be assessed. To get the axle weights the simplest method is to weigh the complete vehicle then drive off and stop with the front wheels on the ground and only the rear axle on the weigh bridge. Get another reading taken and subtracting the two gives you the third figure you need of the front axle weight. There will be a plate at the front of the engine compartment which will show four figures. The top one is the GVW, the next is the maximum train weight which is the weight including a trailer. The third and fourth are the front and rear axle limits respectively. These must not be exceeded. If the vehicle has been previously upgraded a new plate will have been stuck somewhere showing the revised limits. A company called SV Tech are the acknowledged experts in upgrading, it is not something you can do yourself even though it is usually just a paper exercise with no physical changes required on the vehicle./

If you need or want to retain your C1 licence it is necessary to apply using the D4 Medical examination report available from the DVLA site here: <https://tinyurl.com/b8j9fadt>

If you are lucky your doctor may not charge for this but most practices do. If successful your licence will only last 3 years at which point you have to go through the process again.

If you don't take steps to keep your C1 it is possible to apply for it to be reinstated later. Take a photocopy of your pre-70 licence with the C1 category on it before you return it to DVLA if you think you might want to get the C1 back at some point in the future. This may make the process easier.

Vehicle Write-Off and Value – Dick Constable and John Laidler

Should the unthinkable happen and your Murvi was written off, how much would your insurance company offer you in compensation? The cynical answer is probably a lot less than you would need to buy a replacement.

The term “market value” is likely to be the starting point of any discussion but how, given the relative rarity of Murvis, is that to be calculated? And what about any extras you have added? Typically, in the second hand car market extras don't add a lot of value compared to how much they might have cost originally.

If any members have had the unfortunate experience of being in this position it would be useful to hear about their experience. Members are also invited to offer their suggestions on the best way to address this problem. At least one company, Adrian Flux, will give cover based on an agreed value, there may be others doing the same and if so it would be nice to hear about them. Of course the cost of the premium will be a factor and some may prefer to go for a lower premium and accept the risk of having to have a fight to establish a realistic value should something serious happen.

Members are invited submit their thoughts on vehicle insurance, either directly to the Editor at rjohnlaidler@gmail.com or in the Google Groups Chat Forum. A summary in the form of a “letters page” will appear in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Murvi Club Newsletter – Summer 2022 Edition

The Summer edition of the Newsletter will be published at the end of June. Input from members is of course essential and the Editor would be very grateful for items to be submitted by 27th June, 2022. As usual Word format is preferred and any illustrations should be sent as individual files and not imbedded in the document. 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.