

The

**LAIKA**

CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN



# NEWSLETTER

[www.laikaclub.com](http://www.laikaclub.com)

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**Chairman:** John Welham

**Treasurer:** Ken Bradshaw

**Membership Secretary:** Diane Bradshaw

**Rally Coordinator:** Graham Tonks

**Newsletter:** Katherine Elliott

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

It seems not very long ago that I was writing the Chairman's Chat prior to going on a tour of Morocco with 5 other members of the club, plus 3 other units from the UK and Switzerland. Whilst it was not an official club rally, it certainly felt like it from the moment we all met up in southern Spain.

I think it is fair to say that we all started to suffer from 'enjoyment fatigue' part way through because, not only was it almost continuous great fun being in the company of friends, but we also covered a lot of distance and saw a lot of places, in a relatively short space of time. You will be reassured to know that our sturdy band of Laika Club members drew upon their reserves of strength (usually in the shape of a gin bottle) to see the tour out in the grand style that we had set out in, and completed the 3200km in excellent spirits.

The moral of this tale is that, firstly, if you are interested in going to Morocco in the spring of 2012 on a tour led by the same people as we went with, (Blue Camel Tours), see a short information piece later in this edition. Elaine & I will not be going again next year, but are happy to help organise the event with BCT, to get a group discount, and with advice and ideas, much as we did for the tour this year. Secondly, if you have any ideas of foreign places to go that might be of interest to others in the club, and where you might feel more comfortable in a small group, do not hesitate to put an article in the newsletter to see if there is anyone else interested. The types of places I have in mind are off the usual European beaten track, places like the Baltic states, Slovenia, Croatia, or perhaps Scandinavian.

Coming closer to home, we have had a very good start to the year regarding rally attendances for the first 3 rallies held so far, and it looks like we will have a bumper group at Cartmel in June where the list is already approaching 30. As far as I am aware, 3 out of these first 4 rallies are at venues that the club has not been to before, and came from ideas put forward by club members. Each rally has included some organised events that could either be enjoyed or declined at will. On your behalf I would like to thank all those in setting up and running these rallies. This all shows the value of local knowledge in proposing suitable sites. We are starting to think about the rally programme for next year, whilst we already have a couple in the book, we would like to hear your ideas as well.

Now here comes the arm twist. Our rallies succeed because we have enthusiastic volunteers to run them. Graham Tonks, our Rally Co-ordinator, could do with a few volunteers to help out with some of the rallies in the second half of THIS year please. At the moment Graham and Trish seem to be running most of these rallies, which is not how it is meant to be. So hands to the pumps please, and give Graham a call to offer your help.

Don't forget about the club website as a source of useful information and tips, plus an early look at the newsletter and the up to date rally programme. You will find it at [www.laikaclub.com](http://www.laikaclub.com). You will find the members' password in past newsletters, or you can contact Alan Wilson or any of the committee members for a reminder. You can use it to offer your surplus motorcaravan kit for sale, and find a valuable series of articles on technical fixes that members have submitted. The website is updated on an as and when basis as material becomes available to Alan Wilson, so make it a regular place to visit

**John Welham.**

Welcome to New Members

Yvonne and Nigel Kelsall, Biddulph, Staffs.  
Teresa and Graham Lacey, Chipping Sodbury, S Gloucestershire

## Rally Report for Standlake, near Witney, March 2011

Today is the 28<sup>th</sup> May (Monaco Grand Prix and Champions League Final) and Mrs Elliott has asked me belatedly to write up the report on the March Rally on account of her cutting the grass, cooking the meals, hoovering up and compiling your newsletter, as opposed to my watching Homes under the Hammer, Escape to the Country, American Hot Rod and other important activities.

So the rally was held 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March and attended by 17 units. (6 Laikas and 11 Pirates). We took advantage of finer and drier weather to walk along the Thames to the Ferryman Inn, a walk denied us in 2007 because of severe flooding. Ralliers visited local centres of interest at Oxford, Witney and Abingdon. A pleasant evening meal was enjoyed in the Black Horse.

That's basically it as Andy Murray is just about to serve in the French Open and England are batting in the first Test. I really don't know how I fit it all in! Over to my secretary!

**Peter Elliott**



Waiting to use our bus passes!

## Rally Report for Cleethorpes, April 2011

Warm sunshine greeted 13 vans on the first club visit to Cleethorpes organised by Pete and Barbara Oliver. An enjoyable meet and greet started off the week-end with old and new friends renewing acquaintances.

On Friday morning an extended !!! walk to Tetney Lock finished with the weary walkers enjoying a pint and tucking into a sandwich and a well earned break. Saturday dawned with the weather getting even better by the hour. We organised an interesting trip round the Grimsby trawler Ross Tiger followed by a tour round the National Fishing Heritage Centre. The excellent evening carvery at a local pub was the culmination of a very enjoyable day. A walk along the sand dunes to the local yacht club on Sunday for yet another pint and snack sat on the veranda overlooking the Humber estuary and again the weather was glorious. The day finished off with a communal B.B.Q courtesy of our celebrity chefs Graham and Peter.

Monday morning came with everyone saying their good-byes to what was a very successful week-end enjoyed by all.

**Peter and Barbara Oliver**



At the Yacht Club



It's a hard life!



## Isle of Wight Rally at Sandown in May 2011

After enjoying over 3 years as members of the Laika Club Ruth and I agreed that it was time to take the bold step of organising a Rally (which sounds a good enough word to describe our antics when we are at play).

I suggested the Old Barn Touring Park to our Rally Organiser Graham and he was enthusiastic in his response so I commenced research and recalled experiences of two previous visits to the Island. There was an information stand on the Caravan and Boat Show at NEC which also gave me some ideas.

It is more complicated arranging a ferry and camp site, but Lesley Welti from Old Barn Touring Park gave me all the information I could ask for, and arranged ferries in a seven day pack. It was December, and after a ring round to gauge initial response I decided that May would be an ideal month and I needed to get it booked. I therefore booked 20 places provisionally and placed a deposit with site.

All of the enquiries were made by phone as our Newsletter editor was on a trip to New Zealand, although an advance notice had indicated that a visit was being planned and a couple of members had indicated their interest.

Quite quickly we had 20 vans and this seemed adequate to proceed and ask for deposits from Ralliers. Arrangements were confirmed by e mail in every case and I found this to be the most expedient method to keep everyone in touch.

Everyone was able to express their choice of ferry times so that they could travel independently and I also tempted controversy by randomly pre-allocating pitches to ralliers rather than letting everyone sort themselves out.

### **The events included :-**

Welcome meeting on the first afternoon,

Cycle ride for 20 bikers on a cycle path near the site visiting a Garlic Farm & Tea room and ending at a Pub.

An Evening Meal at Fighting Cocks Pub with taxi both ways

Quiz in the Old Barn after the meal

Walk organised by Peter & Geoff to Wroxall Down with pub lunch 9 miles!

Island bus tour with stops at Alum Bay, Yarmouth, and a Wine Tasting.

Day trip to Osborne House with organised bus out and local bus passes back

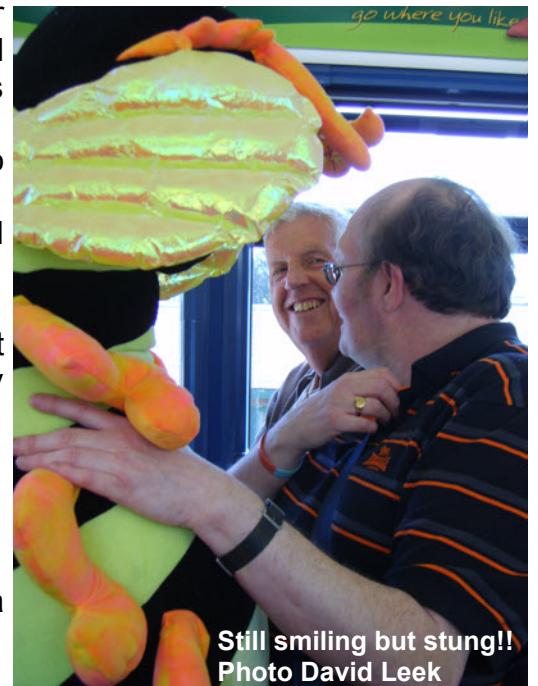
On both trips we were fortunate to have Ron as our driver (of Southern Vectis) who is also lead guitar in a band, natural comedian and gave us the benefit of his wealth of knowledge of the Island.



OAP cycle race!  
Photo Roy Gretton



OAP walk to the highest point on the Island  
Photo Roy Gretton



Still smiling but stung!!  
Photo David Leek

On the way back from Osborne House I sat next to and was entertained by a man who had a huge toy Bee (he collected toy animals) on his knee in a very crowded bus and David Leek took the photo.

It was a brave decision to choose Friday 13<sup>th</sup> as the start date of the stay but we were blessed with good weather and fortune throughout.

It does take time to organise such an event and you need to start the process a few months before the Rally. We were overwhelmed by the level of support we were given by the Members for the events that were organised and would be happy to organise another at some future occasion.

Our thanks to everyone who took part in this event and encouraged us by enjoying themselves. Special thanks to Lesley and her Team.

**Richard & Ruth Moss**

### **BE PREPARED**

Here's an activity which might usefully employ all the navigators made redundant by the advent of sat.nav. Think of the nightmare situation of having to abandon your van, then make a list, either mentally or on paper, of what you would retrieve from it. It happened to us, I was woefully unprepared and failed miserably.

It was a beautiful September day, we had just left a French Laika rally and we were heading south. Around mid-day we decided it was too hot to continue driving so we stopped at an attractive site close to St. Emilion. While I booked in Mike decided to fill up with water and was still by the tap when I returned. "We have a problem," he said "It won't go." I tried the ignition and there was no response. It seemed unbelievable when the van had purred along all morning without a hiccup. We were blocking a main route through the camp site, so within minutes our insurers were contacted and we were assured that help would soon be with us. I still thought it would be like an AA visit, a few minutes twiddling and all would be fine and was shocked when a pick-up truck arrived from a Fiat garage.

I thought sir was being alarmist packing together his clothes, removing our folding table and chairs. However, after trying the ignition and muttering something about a fault in the engine management system, the mechanic and his mate were loading our van and I was given less than 5 minutes to get a few bits together. First thought was the perishables in the fridge, then the tea, coffee basics, then my washbag and a swimsuit and towel as I'd spied an inviting campsite pool.

I felt quite optimistic. The site had hired us a mobile home, and a week-end spent lounging by the pool or playing table tennis seemed quite inviting. It was for an hour, then suddenly the poolside grew chilly and the heavens opened as I raced back to our new home. Then I realised I'd no extra clothes. Not a real problem as Mike's tracksuit bottoms fitted. The second problem that evening was more serious - we had nothing to do. It was too wet to take a walk and we'd no books, cards or even scrap paper to play "hangman."

Next morning some curious English "tuggers" called to see if they could help, offering to get us food from a supermarket. We took the campsite shuttle bus into St Emilion, hoping to buy some playing cards, but it was a very smart town and the only cards were 20E presentation packs. We weren't that desperate. That evening other caravanners loaned us Monopoly - my least favourite game which always brings out the worst in Sir.

On Monday we discovered our van was in a yard behind a garage some miles away and the friendly caravanners offered to take us there to pick up more clothes and books. We discovered it just as we'd left it - no work had been done as some paperwork was missing. As we were about to leave Mike tried the ignition - and it worked. We were on our way with cries of "c'est l'electroniques" from the mechanics.

We had no more trouble that trip but the story wasn't over. On our way to the Laika Christmas Rally we broke down again near Peterborough - same problem, but this time we packed all our perishables and returned to Southampton like bag people by coach. The problem was sorted with a spare part being sent over from Italy.

The moral of this tale is Be Prepared. Of course, it won't happen to you - but it might, and a list of necessities, either mental or written, would be a great help.

**Joan Johnson**

### LIMESCALE IN YOUR BOILER? by John Welham

You will all be aware of lime scale deposits forming in your kettles at home and in your motorhome. After 5 years' use we started to see scale forming on tap outlets in both the kitchen and bathroom sinks of our motorhome. Not surprising, given that we have drawn water from many sources over that time, and some of these will have been hard water. These deposits suggested that there would also probably be some limescale deposits within the boiler unit itself. Although the unit does not actually boil water like a kettle, (max temp usually around 60C), there are bound to be local hotspots where scale will form more readily.

Ours is a typical Truma water heater so I turned to the user manual for information. It was very brief, and recommended the use of a Truma proprietary descaler, but gave no advice how best to do it. I then rang the Truma customer care centre at Burton upon Trent. The chap there was very helpful, as I have always found them to be. He recommended a solution of White Wine Vinegar and water, in the ratio of 1 to 5 respectively. Apparently, Truma Germany recommends equal parts of vinegar and water, but he said a weaker solution worked well enough. The process is to fill the boiler with the solution, then heat it up to the maximum temperature ~60C. Leave it to cool, and then drain it and flush through with a couple of refills of fresh water.

Why white wine vinegar and not some domestic descaler? Apparently the latter contain strong chlorates that attack the internal seals of the boiler, whereas vinegar will do the descaling bit without the problems. I recall reading an article in the French Camping Car magazine a couple of years back recommending white wine vinegar, and it appears in the various web forums, where a solution of 1 to 10 is cited as being adequate.

The next trick is how to get it into the boiler. The boiler holds about 12 litres, so I bought 4 litres of vinegar, made up the solution at about 1 to 4, slightly stronger than recommended, and poured the 20 litres into the holding tank. I switched on the pump and opened a hot tap to draw the water into the boiler. The problem was that as the tank level dropped to near empty the pump started to suck air, and as yet there was no steady flow from the hot water tap. I added another few litres of water to the tank, and finally got a steady flow from the tap indicating the boiler was full of solution. The additional water would have diluted the solution, but I was happy that it was still strong enough. The French article recommended disconnecting the vent tube that comes out of the side of the boiler and filling the boiler using a small funnel to introduce the solution to the boiler. If you have a water system that uses a submersible pump, then it should be quite easy to dunk the pump into a container of solution to fill the boiler.

I went through the heating and flushing processes, and job done! There was no after-taste left by the vinegar, and in theory at least, the boiler should be more efficient. As you cannot see into the boiler, there is no way of knowing if there was significant limescale deposits in the first place, nor whether the vinegar dissolved them, but I felt better about trying to remove them.

### **A CASE OF SQUEAKY MOTORHOMEITUS! by John Welham**

#### **PLUS A BIT OF A RUMBLE**

Getting the van ready for a summer outing last year I took it for a run around the local area for a bit of a shake down. After a while I noticed that every time I applied the brakes one of the front brakes squealed loudly. There is sometimes squeaking from the back brakes where the brake dust tends to accumulate more readily, but the front are usually quiet.

Applying a temperature sensor to the front brakes, ie, my hand, I discovered that one of the wheels was very hot, indicating that the brake pads were rubbing against the disc as we drove along. The usual causes of pad contact are either a sticking calliper piston or the floating calliper does not back off when you release the brake. Back home, off came the wheel, off came the pads and calliper, out came the brake cleaning fluid. Having cleaned up all the components, I exercised the pistons and floating slides to make sure they had free movement. All ok, I put it all back together and went for another test run.

Not as hot, but still warm enough to indicate pad contact. At this point I took some advice from my local Fiat man, who had a look at the components. He agreed that every thing was free and functioning properly, but a close look at the pads showed that they were swollen very slightly at the leading edge of the pad, causing to the pad to maintain contact with the disc even when the brakes were released. This swelling, about only 1mm, was caused by corrosion between the pad friction material and the steel backing plate. A new set of pads and the problem was fixed.

Our vehicle was 5 years old; had done about 35000 miles; and the pads were original and only about half worn. If, however, this had been used as a commercial vehicle, in 5 years, the base vehicle would probably have done at least 100000 miles or more, and had the pads changed at least twice in that time and corrosion would not have become an issue. Although our van is well used compared to some motorhomes it did not prevent corrosion starting up over time in a very exposed component. This was a classic case of a problem developing that was directly attributable to relatively low use that a motorhome chassis experiences compared to a chassis in commercial use.

#### **Whilst I think about it, on the subject of noises, the van has also had a Rumble that took a bit of tracking down.**

There was a rumble that appeared to be coming from the front off-side wheel. Running in a straight line, there was a constant rumble. When the steering wheel was turned left, increasing side load on the bearing, the noise increased. Turning the wheel right, unloading the bearing, the noise all but disappeared. This all suggested the wheel bearing was on the way out, and seeing that we were soon to go to Morocco, I took it to the Fiat man. A road test seemed to confirm the front off-side wheel as the source of noise. Front wheel bearings are a known weak point in this vintage of Ducatos, so it was agreed that they would change the bearing.

Once out, the bearing did not seem to be particularly worn, certainly not enough to create the noise level we were experiencing. A new bearing was fitted, and a road test supported that assessment. The noise and its behaviour with steering were still there.

A series of tests on the van followed. This generally involved Fiat man lying on the floor with his ear to the wheel arches as the van was driven around Devon lanes, listening for rumbles. The main source of noise still appeared to be at the front, but it was also present at the rear off-side wheel. Back in the workshop, with the van up on the hoist and spinning the wheels as best can done by hand, the listening stick was used to confirm the REAR off-side wheel as the source of the noise. (Listening sticks can vary from a piece of well worn wood, to big screwdrivers, to stethoscopes, to electronic listening devices.) Out came the rear bearing, and low and behold, a brown mess of grease and water surrounding a roller bearing that might have been ok on a wheel barrow, but was not going to see out a Morocco trip. A new bearing fixed the problem.



The cause of bearing failure was probably a failure of the seal that allowed water into the bearing, leading to poor lubrication and corrosion. Why was the front bearing originally identified as the culprit? The noise was clearly transmitting along the Alko chassis rail that attaches to the cab just under the off-side seat. Seeing that front bearings are a known weak point, it seemed the most likely cause of the problem. Because they got it wrong in the first place, Fiat man offered a reduction in the bill without prompting, which I thought was a very fair gesture.

One final point, if you are inclined to change a bearing yourself, be aware that both front and rear bearing are huge compared to anything you will find on a car. I have changed car bearings using suitable hammers, drifts and a freezer, but the Ducato's bearings are about 10 cm in diameter and 8 cm wide, containing double, tapered roller bearings. You will need at least a 10 tonne press to extract and refit bearings to the hubs.

### Tales from Sicily and Provence.

Well off we go again on our mystery tour across Europe. Yes, you have guessed it we chose January to drive across the Alps etc, so onwards and literally upwards. We were on our way to Sicily through France / Belgium / Holland / Germany / Austria and Italy. Bizarrely we encountered no problems. We went through a slight snowstorm near Munchen, but you could not make this up. We passed dozens of vintage motorcycle and sidecar enthusiasts, battling their way through the white stuff. Mad or what. Next stop Austria, where we were again ripped off to the tune of 100 Euros for our 'Go Box', to allow us to use their motorways. Don't get me going on that issue again. Through the Bremen Pass and the only problem was I needed my sunglasses because of the glare. Blissfully no challengers all the way to Villa San Giovanni to catch the ferry to Sicily. Very thoughtfully they have moved the ferry terminal in Messina to right in the middle of town. Previously it was on the outskirts. We motored through there until we came to a magical roundabout. Not sure which turnoff to take, so blindly followed a German motorhome. Not a good idea. There followed 45 minutes of hell passing through some idyllic villages. Well they would have been if we were on a bicycle. Motorhome not so good. As all adventures go, it is impossible not to encounter a challenge. This lived up to the bill.

Onwards to our destination. Only minor upset was when one of our stainless steel wheel trims came loose near Syracuse. One almighty bang, followed by 5 miles of deafening noise, until we could get off the motorway. The wheel trim had very kindly welded itself to the back wheel. Thankfully no major damage. We arrived at Scarabeo Camping Punta Braccetto. It was the usual nightmare of dodging trees, concrete bits everywhere positioned exclusively to test your driving skills and nerve. We were at last settled in our new temporary home. This campsite is extraordinarily inexpensive. Stop for 30 days or more and it is 7 Euros per night. You get your own toilet and the fabulous beach is only yards away. Even great Internet access in your motorhome at 6 Euros for 100 hours use. For us it was perfect. We find a decent site and have the use of our motorcycle. We stopped 2 months here and covered approximately 2,000 miles sightseeing.

Whilst on the campsite you meet some very interesting people. Over the years you might have read of one or two of our catastrophes. By comparison to this guy, we have had trouble free journeys. He was travelling alone and pulling a car on an A-frame. He forgot to take the steering wheel lock off his car and that's where his troubles began. The front wheels of his car then caught fire. This in turn set fire to the back of his Hymer motorhome. The car was a complete right off and the bumper plus back window of his van had melted. Makes your problems seem insignificant doesn't it. For people who have known us for a few years we used to pull a car at the back of our motorhome. Our next-door neighbour on the site was listening to the sad story. I also recounted the horrors of using our A-frame, which we still had. Unbelievably this guy then said do I want to sell the A-frame for cash unseen. Too right I did, so cash was handed over and he has collected it from our home. It's a strange world out there.



Sadly we left this campsite together with a number of friends we had made and travelled to Palermo to catch the ferry to Genova, Northern Italy. When we got to the ferry terminal we were advised that we must pay a parking fee. Thankfully one of our German neighbours from the campsite was waiting to catch the same ferry. They advised that it was a scam and ignore them. This we did with no problems other than the ferry was 3 hours late leaving. The two things are not connected. What a scruffy dump of a boat this was. Just too add icing to the cake we arrived 3 hours late at Genova. It was a further two hours before we actually got off the boat. They had put us in the hold together with many lorries, only to put what seemed like 100's of trailers without units in front of us. Only one entrance and exit on this ship. To say it was frustrating, well you know what I mean.

Onwards to Frejus for our next stop. We stopped at a useless campsite not too be recommended but we were only there for 10 days. In that time we visited some fabulous places. Cannes, St Tropez, Grand Canyon but to mention a few. Having moved from rural Sicily to this beautiful area was a culture shock. The only upset here was our first trip to St Tropez on the motorbike. Had a great journey out there but for the first time in my life when we returned to Frejus, could not remember where the campsite was. Of course we did not have the sites address or telephone number. Only thing I could think of after negotiating that horrible sinking feeling, was to call at the tourist board. For those new to France, tourist boards tend to open at 10am, have 3 hours for dinner, close at 3pm., shut Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays etc. A slight exaggeration but you get the picture. Wondrously their tourist office was open late Saturday. To top it off the guy was brilliant inside and gave us a map etc. Not only that when I was studying the map outside a motorcyclist stopped who could not speak a word of English. With a few strategic gestures on my part beckoned us to follow him and took us right to the campsite. Just shows you. Hang your head in shame all those people who have called the French.

Well that's it. Another holiday come and gone. Only excitement coming back was near Lyon. A car coming in the opposite direction containing 4 youths threw something at our van as they past. There was an almighty bang but on investigation only a minor scratch. Just like everywhere in the world there are good people and \*\*\*\*\*s.

### Ken and Diane Bradshaw.

#### Only in America

Sometimes it *does* take a Rocket Scientist! (This is a True story!)

British scientists at Rolls Royce built a gun specifically to launch dead chickens at maximum velocity at the windshield of airliners and military jets.

The idea was to simulate the frequent incidents of collisions with airborne fowl to test the strength of the windshields.

American engineers heard about the gun and were eager to test it on the windshields of their new high speed trains. Arrangements were made and a gun was sent to the American engineers.

When the gun was fired, the engineers stood shocked, as the chicken hurled out of the barrel, crashed into the shatterproof shield, smashed it to smithereens, blasted through the control console, snapped the engineer's back-rest in two and embedded itself in the back wall of the cabin like an arrow shot from a bow!

The horrified Americans sent Rolls Royce the disastrous results of the experiment, along with the designs of the windshield and begged the British scientists for suggestions.

The British replied with the one-line memo

'Defrost chicken'

(Taken from the Oswestry Church magazine May 11th )

## MOROCCO

### FANCY A TRIP TO MOROCCO IN THE SPRING OF NEXT YEAR (2012)?

There are 2 approaches for a trip to Morocco.

One, find somewhere warm (and relatively comfortable) in the early part of the year, where you can sit and enjoy the sunshine, with easy access to the essentials of motorcaravaning. This mostly means heading for the Atlantic coast and parking yourselves on a campsite of some sort, surrounded by (probably) many others doing the same thing.

The other approach is about discovering Morocco, from the high and cold, to the flat and hot. It has some fantastic scenery, and lots of very interesting cultural aspects. I assume interest lies in seeing the place, warts and all.

We first went with Blue Camel Tours, [www.bluecameltours.com](http://www.bluecameltours.com), in 2007 and if you have read my write up in the newsletter (September 2007) you will have some idea of the practical issues involved. We have been again with Blue Camel this year, this time in the company of 5 other club members. We enjoyed it even more the second time around. Firstly, because we were in the company of some very good friends; and secondly, because we had been before, we very quickly got back into 'Morocco' mode.

Blue Camel is planning another English trip in March of next year.

The tour leader has all the current contacts for places to stay, what to see, and what and where to buy. Even better, he travels the route ahead of you to check out the roads and the night-stop. In Morocco, unlike Europe, there are few alternatives in any given place if your planned night-stop is not available, and it takes time and local knowledge to sort out an alternative.

**Be aware that** this is not a sit in the sunshine on the beach tour. The tour leader will give you all the information you need to get to the next campsite, but you do not get there in a big convoy, just looking at the van in front of you. You get there in small, self made up groups of 2, 3 or 4 using the maps and navigation instructions supplied. The campsites are usually rudimentary at best, and sometimes just even car parks. You get the luxury from the facilities you carry with you! You will be travelling on most days. There are 3 stop-overs where you stay for 2 nights, but the day has other visits planned. These are, typically Fes, Marrakech and Tafraoute. In the words of the tour leader, Edy Ebner, "It is the journey, not the destination, that provides the interest".

Blue Camel Tours charge a rate that covers their own costs on top of the actual costs of tour members. The majority of the price covers the ferries, campsites, entry fees, some taxis and a couple of typical meals. For a group of 3 or more they will offer a 10% discount. According to their website, next year's price for a 6.5m van and 2 people is €1680, which with a discount, that makes it just over €1500. Even with extra ferry cost for a larger van (€80 per metre over 6.5m), I believe you could not do the same trip for any less, and as such, Blue Camel offer excellent value for a fascinating trip through the country. Out of interest, the Camping and Caravanning Club charged £2400 for a tour this year, and according to one of our group that had a chat with people on that tour, that did not include many of the extras that are in the price with Blue Camel.

#### **If you are interested I suggest you do the following:**

Have a look at the Blue Camel website to see if you think this is the kind of thing you want to do.

Have a look at the report we wrote when we came back from the tour in 2007 and at the report from this year's group that should be available soon. I will ask Alan Wilson to make it available on the club website.

If you want more information do not hesitate to get in touch with me or any of those members who went this year.

**If you are interested, either get in touch with Blue Camel directly ([info@bluecameltours.com](mailto:info@bluecameltours.com)), and be sure to tell them that you belong to the Laika Club, or if you get in touch with me and I will ask Edy to contact you.**

**John Welham**

# RALLIES

**Thursday 28th July to Monday 1st August 2011 (4 nights)**  
**Bourton Rovers Football and Social Club**  
**Rissington Road**  
**Bourton on the Water**  
**Gloucestershire**  
**GL54 2DZ**

We welcome you to the Heart of England for our July rally, set in the charming village of Bourton on the Water amidst the beauty of the Cotswolds and the Gloucestershire countryside. For the cost of £9/night we have drinking water, toilet, wash hand basins, waste disposal and use of the social club and bar. All this is only a couple of minutes stroll from the charming village through which the river Windrush meanders and all its facilities, local speciality shops, pubs, restaurants, special attractions such as the Cotswold Motor Museum, Cotswold Perfumery (factory tours can be arranged), Model Village (1/9th scale model of Bourton, Cotswold Pottery, Birdland Park and gardens. There is excellent walking locally with all the beauty of Cotswold stone buildings. Bus transport is available from the village to most parts of the Cotswolds. We are not limited to a maximum number of units as there is plenty of room, **BUT WE DO HAVE TO HAVE A MINIMUM OF 10 UNITS** to constitute a Rally and we have to **CONFIRM NUMBERS** to Bourton Club **BY THE END OF APRIL** as this is an extremely busy and popular venue and we have exclusive use of this for the days in question.

**Rally Stewards**  
**Trish and Graham Tonks**

**PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE WELL BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE.**

**WESTERN SHOW at MALVERN SHOWGROUND**  
**Thursday 18th to Monday 22nd August**

There could hardly be any better place to spend a few days than in and around the Malverns at any time of the year. We have a Laika Club reserved area in the showground for the duration of the show. As many will know, the theme for this relatively small but interesting show is "WESTERN", and many of the visitors are suitably dressed, and themed shows /music take place during the daytime as well as the evening. There are many RV'S on show and stalls, in addition to the "normal show" stands and exhibits. All in all, it can make for a very enjoyable weekend, in addition to which we would hope to have at least one good BBQ. The Club has reserved an area in the show for approximately 15/20 vans. We will send one booking form to each interested van owner upon request, who has to complete the form and return it, together with the appropriate payment directly to Warners. You can also use the forms supplied in the various magazines.

**Please contact TRISH and GRAHAM TONKS initially to receive the form and then to let them know you have booked.. They will be no official rally stewards at this venue.**

**Contact Trish and Graham Tonks**

**UNFORTUNATELY DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES THE PRE SHOW RALLY  
AT THE SWANN INN AT NEWLANDS HAS HAD TO BE CANCELLED/POSTPONED.**



# FRENCH DOUBLE RALLY SEPT 2011

**La Fleche (NE of Angers)  
Thursday 1st to Tuesday 6th (5 nights)**

**Machcoule (SW of Nantes)  
Tuesday 6th to Friday 9th (3 nights)**

## **LA FLECHE**

Camp Municipal La Route D'Or.  
Allee de la Providence,  
72200 La Fleche.  
Tel : 00 33 243 945590.

Site is shown in the caravan club book. This site is right in the excellent town of La Fleche (500 metres) which makes it handy for all outings (commercial or otherwise!!), and is close to the river for walks etc. It has all the facilities required, plus swimming pool(s), tennis courts, WIFI, cycle hire and canoe hire adjacent. We have reserved 15 to 20 "emplacements" at the moment at 13.10 euros/night for a unit of 2 people + electric hookup.

**We need to know numbers attending this rally ASAP so we can tell the site the number of pitches required.**

## **MACHCOULE**

Camp Municipal La Rabine.  
Route de Challans.  
44270 Machcoule.  
Tel: 0033 240 023048.

Site is shown in Caravan Club Book. It is central for this small but interesting town that has an excellent market down the main street on a Wednesday (day after our arrival). The wardens are very friendly and helpful. Facilities are good as are the shops etc in town. Walks and cycling are good from the site. We have reserved 15 to 20 "emplacements" at the moment at 10 euros /night for a unit of 2 people + electric hookup.

**We need to know numbers attending this rally ASAP so we can tell the site the number of pitches required.**

**To register and reserve your place for both of the above**  
Contact Graham Tonks

## DECEMBER CHRISTMAS RALLY AND AGM 2011

Thursday 1st to Monday 5th December 2011 (4 nights)  
Barnstones Touring Camping and Caravanning Site  
Great Bourton  
Near Banbury  
Oxon  
01295 750289

Due to the disappointing numbers for the 2010 AGM and as discussed at the AGM, we have combined the Christmas rally with the AGM for 2011 and hope that the revised dates together with the central location, will result in a good turnout.

We used the site in 2009 and both the availability of the village hall (for the AGM meeting), plus the local village pub met with a favourable response from all.

We have therefore booked 20/25 pitches at £9.00/night including electricity for the above dates. We have reserved the village hall for the Saturday afternoon for the AGM meeting, suggested time 3.00pm.

We need a £20.00 /unit non refundable deposit to be paid by **END SEPTEMBER 2011**. Cheques to be made out in this instance to **The Laika Club of Great Britain** and sent to our home address.

**For those of you who depart for Europe or beyond before the above date please ensure payment is made in advance.**

We intend to arrange an evening meal in the Bell Inn for the Saturday. They will make us "hot pot specials", salads and sweets (very seasonal!!) and costs for this will be advised close to the time when numbers are known. When booking please give your arrival and departure dates.

Suitable local walks will be arranged as usual by Peter/Geoff and we look forward to receiving good support for this new AGM date.

**Rally Stewards**  
**Diane and Ken Bradshaw**

**Cheques to The Laika Club of Great Britain and sent to**

**FRANCE: JUNE 2012**  
**The Puy du Fou Experience**  
**Thursday 14th June to Saturday 16th June 2012**

Don't miss the chance of a lifetime to visit the "Grand Parc du Puy du Fou" in the Vendée  
Come! Enjoy the sights, sounds and displays in the deep forest by the lake and château.  
2000 years of French History slide past your eyes in a kaleidoscope of special shows,  
themed villages, woodland and lakeside walks.

A large Aire 500m from the Grand Parc entrance, costing €5 a night, awaits your motorhome  
for the duration of your visit.

The main shows last from 35 to 45 minutes and the spectacles include:

A Roman Amphitheatre, complete with Gladiators, racing chariots and tigers

A Viking Invasion

A display of superb horsemanship by the students and staff of the resident riding  
academy in a medieval adventure to discover the mystery of the lance.

You can watch the remarkable exploits of Richlieu's Musketeers.

See the incredible 'Dance of the Phantom Birds' (should you have seen hawks  
displaying with their handlers elsewhere, forget them! How about 250 birds of prey,  
ranging from little Owls to the Giant Condor going through their displays, in some  
cases, close enough to brush your head as they glide past. The climax comes with  
over 100 raptors in free flight. It is a magical experience.

One aspect of Puy du Fou is supreme! Come with me to 'La Cinéscéniè', a magnificent late  
evening performance featuring the largest stage in the world, including a castle, lake, field,  
working windmill and a road in your scenery. Add horses, cattle, pigs, geese and 1100  
actors taking part on that stage depicting the last 1000 years of French history (minus the  
English bits of course) up to the end of world war II.

A translation headset is available for the shows including the Cinéscéniè.

Prior to this, a large level camp site with full motorhome amenities, and a large swimming  
pool, awaits us to meet up for a few days before the short journey to Puy du Fou.

If you subscribe to ACSI the cost for each night at Camping La Bretèche is €13 this year  
including 10 amp electric. (€16 a night without ACSI)

The coast between La Rochelle and La Baule is within 1½ hours drive. Cycling and walking  
routes are available and the beautiful small towns and villages in and around the Sère valley  
await your exploration.

For 3 days at the Grand Parc and the incredible evening performance of La Ciné Scénic the  
cost is approximately £60 subject to the Euro exchange rate.

**Brian Shaw**

**IF YOU HAVE DECIDED TO GO PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING  
PAGE.**



**FRANCE JUNE 2012**

**Camping La Bretèche** 1km north of Les Epesses on the D752.  
**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June**

This is a large, level, well run campsite with good facilities including a M.V. Service point. It is 3 miles from Puy du Fou on the edge of the small town of Les Epesses. It has spacious pitches and a free 300 sq m heated outdoor swimming pool. If you have the ACSI card the cost is €13 per night including 10amp electrics in 2011. Without ACSI the cost is €16 plus €3 for electrics although a 10% reduction for those in the group without ACSI is being negotiated. Tennis is available at extra cost.

Bring your Boules!

**Puy du Fou**  
**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June**

14 units have so far declared an interest in visiting the Puy du Fou experience, including La Cinéscénie. This is a unique late night extravaganza. Le Grand Parc du Puy du Fou is exceptional, La Cinéscénie is Supreme:- the biggest evening show in the world 1200 actors, 8000 costumes as well as horses, cattle, pigs and geese actually taking part in the show.

**Cost is £60 per person.**

**THE CLOSING DATE FOR BOOKING IS FRIDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2011 WITH MONEY UPFRONT BY THAT DATE.**

I hope to be at the Bourton on the Water Rally and the French Double Rally if you wish to hand your cheques to me personally otherwise make sure it arrives **before** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

**Cheques to be made payable to B. T. Shaw and send to**

Money is needed so far in advance because of the rapid take up of tickets for the Cinéscénie which is normally booked up by the end of October!

Brian Shaw.

*Thankyou from Judy Brockbank (4th May)*

*Thanks to all at the Cleethorpes rally  
for the lovely plant and biscuits.  
I am making slow recovery but glad to be home.*

**May 2012**

Whitby

Details to follow.

**Rally Stewards  
Alma and Keith Pitcher**

Next edition

Report on the 2011 Trip to Morocco

**Please, please let the rally stewards know as soon as possible if you have to cancel and make sure when you book that they have got correct email addresses and mobile phone numbers in case they have to contact you.  
Thank you**

The information and opinions in this newsletter are those of the contact name or names given. The Laika Club of Great Britain does not necessarily agree with nor endorse their comments and/or views. It is a totally independent Club, governed by its constitution giving no preference to any Publication, Dealer or other club. This however, does not prevent, with Committee approval, the fostering of mutually beneficial relations.