

The

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CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN



# NEWSLETTER

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

**ISSUE No 73**

**Winter 2020/21**

## Your Laika Club Committee

<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Paul Lawrence</b>
<b>Vice Chair</b>	
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Charles Chodkowski</b>
<b>Membership Secretary:</b>	<b>Jacqui Chodkowski</b>
<b>Rally Co-ordinator:</b>	<b>Murray Chisholm</b>
<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	<b>Tim Sheppard</b>
<b>Web Master:</b>	<b>Eric Gould</b>

## Chair's Chat

Well these are certainly strange times and certainly not what I would have wished for my first Chair's Chat. I had hoped that I could have shared some experience that Ruth and I have had on the road to some far flung place but the nearest I can get to that is a bracing stroll along our local promenade and all that the North Sea brings at this time of year.

I do hope that you are all keeping well. I am seeing a number of messages of members getting vaccinated and let's hope that the momentum can build so that we can all get back to doing the things that we love, out and about in our outfits of course but also and maybe more importantly all those other things that we are missing from our lives at the moment.

The committee has already met this year (virtually of course) with a view to trying to plan the club year ahead, albeit looking into an uncertain world. You may have already seen our plans for a rally programme this year and with the help of members we look forward to adding to that – all suggestions, ideas, and offers of help are most welcome. The Health Secretary is giving encouraging messages about his vision for the summer so we can only hope that this comes to be. Allied to that I see quite a bit in the media about a 'stay at home' summer this year and a significant increase in bookings for UK holidays. This will undoubtedly have an impact on campsite bookings and we should expect some difficulties in securing pitches for the coming season. I would therefore urge that if you are considering coming on any of the rallies that you let us know of your intention as soon as possible. This will give us the best chance of securing additional pitches if needed.

Despite encouraging signs these are still unpredictable times so please take care, stay safe, and I hope to see you out and about before too long.

Paul Lawrence

## **The (not so) revolutionary Motorhome Accessory**

A Satnav is a driver's friend that can tell you where to roam.

I have a little Satnav that sits in my Motorhome.

The little Satnav I possess sometimes gives me strife.

It's different to the other ones – my Satnav is my wife!

It gives me full instructions, especially how to drive,

'It's sixty miles an hour.' it says, 'You're doing sixty-five'.

It tells me when to stop and start and when to use the brake,

And it tells me that it's never, ever safe to overtake.

It tells me when a light is red and when it turns to green.

It seems to know instinctively just when to intervene.

It lists all vehicles up in front and all those to the rear

Taking this into account, it specifies my gear.

I'm sure no other driver has such a good device,

For when we leave and lock the van, it still gives me advice.

It fills me up with counselling, each journey's pretty fraught.

I hear you say, 'Exchange it and buy a quieter sort'.

Ah well, it cleans the house, it keeps me properly fed,

It washes all my shirts and things and keeps me warm in bed.

Despite all these advantages and my tendency to scoff,'

I only wish that now and then I could turn the bugger off!

Mark Snowden (with apologies to Chris !)

## Laika Dealer Update

When our copy of MMM arrived in the post in early January, we immediately spotted that it contained a 4 page evaluation of the new Laika EcoVIP 3019. Even more interesting, it mentioned that Laika now had 4 UK Dealers.

A quick check on the Laika.it website quickly identified that the new dealers are based in South Wales and Scotland, so still no southern dealer to replace Southdowns.

3 A's Leisure, Carmarthen Showground, Carmarthen, Dyfed SA33 5ES

01267 234 459      carmarthen@3asleisure.com

Roseisle Luxury Campervans, 34 Whitecraig Road, Edinburgh EH21 8NE

0131 653 5023      info@roseisle.com

Roseisle have taken up the offer of an advert in this newsletter, but 3 A's Leisure haven't responded to my email.

Tim Sheppard

## Cycling the Moselle

Having had a knee replacement in May 2019, Charles had not ridden his bike through the summer months. However, after attending Katrina & Tim's wonderful rally in Bradwell, using his new electric bike and feeling good, we decided to cycle the German section of the Moselle river valley. September saw us arriving at Ernst after a three-day warm-up on the Rhine, just south of Kablenz.

Aires or Stellpatz, as they are called in Germany, are numerous on the banks of the Moselle, sometimes only a mile or so apart. They were superb, good facilities, most with metered electric (not expensive 1€-2€), and 7€-10€ per night.

Our first stop, Ernst, 10€ per night (run by vineyard owners, but you did get 10% discount in their shop! Plus free wine tasting!). We were fortunate to get a place on their new section – all block paved, located opposite the Moselle with a dedicated cycle path, where we stayed for the next few days.

This part of the Moselle has some of the steepest (up to 75%) sides. Vines are tended and harvested by means of steep rail tracks and aerial cableways, not a job for the faint hearted. Despite this, cycling was a dream on our electric bikes. Approaching an exit of a site, we had to stop for 6 Amphicars, whoa! What a sight, 5 looked like old triumph Herald convertibles, the last an army-type, painted with camouflage and military markings.

Cycle tracks along the main German rivers are wonderful! We have cycled along the Danube, the Rhine, finding their tracks to be well marked, mostly good repair and, in most cases, free of motor vehicles, but most importantly they were FLAT!

Back at the motorhome our German neighbour was playing his harmonica, we complimented how well; big mistake! Minutes later he came with stool, table and briefcase. No English, us no German, he wanted us to sing with his playing! He produced song sheets of traditional German folk songs, translated to English. Struggling to oblige, he soon saw it was not to be.

So out came the Abba songs, his wife rescued us by calling him in for dinner! Phew!

There was a flea market on the parkland and cycle path next morning, selling all sorts, attracting hordes of eager German shoppers. So we quickly cycled away to Cochen, a bit like Stourport on Severn (mini Blackpool). Very busy, had to dismount and push bikes, stopped for drinks looking at river and wonderful scenery, and what did we see! The six Amphicars coming down the river, water only inches from the top of their doors, what an amazing sight!

Back at the aire our harmonica friend, before we even put the bikes away, was on the doorstep, with his harmonicas, at least 6 of them tucked into his

waistband (Apparently they play better warm). So for the next hour, he played, much to the amusement of the others on the aire. His wife rescued us once again. Soon after, one of the onlookers arrived carrying glasses and a bottle of schnapps to help revive us. He even left the bottle, saying we deserved it!

It was a real pleasure cycling alongside the river, through the vineyards, small towns and villages. Weather was superb and the co-habitants of the aire were really friendly. Time to move to Erkirch, found a 200 place aire, spacious and right by the river with metered electric, only 7€ per night. The cycle path was only yards from the van so, South then North, we explored, enjoying brilliant weather. The river valley was now much wider and we had left the Moselle Gorge behind.

The popular town of Zel next, famous for it's Black Cat! Legend has it that when Wine merchants came to buy its best wine, a black cat on a wine barrel hissed and spat at them. This convinced them it was the best and, because the cat was protecting said barrel, they promptly bought the barrel. The wine proved very popular, so every year they returned, buying more, with the symbol of the black cat!

Travelling South, we were unable to get on certain Aires, so crossing the river we stopped at Minheim and found a lovely Stellpatz about 60 places with spacious marked pitches and electrics. Only 7.20€ per night, right on a cycle path with nearby marked walks which took you through vineyards. This area is famous for Piesporter and with the town only a few miles upstream we of course had to visit and sample said product.

Relaxing that afternoon we spotted our harmonica friend; he promptly came over with his stool, table and briefcase, but this time brought along some song sheets. I (Jacqui) promptly called a neighbouring German to come over and join in the singing! Little did I know that she was also a harmonica player!! So, she joined in the musical soiree, but was soon in disagreement with how some of the tunes should be played. An amusing time was had by all.

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## ESCAPE FROM (ALCATRAZ) ALCOSSEBRE

Our first experience of the impact of COVID 19 hit us last March at the Tropicana Campsite approximately 40 miles north of Valencia on the outskirts of the coastal town of Alcossebre.

The Spanish 'Lockdown' came into force ten days before we were due to leave to catch the ferry from Bilbao to Portsmouth and as there was a well-stocked supermarket on site, a pleasant beach immediately outside the campsite to walk along and many miles of quiet country roads to cycle around, we, like the vast majority of campers, decided to 'stay put' until our due departure date.

Three or four days later gave us a better idea about what the lockdown actually meant. The supermarket shelves were full of red wine, mouthwash and bread but little else as campers on site started panic buying, two armed policemen prevented campers leaving the site unless it was to visit the bank, pharmacy or in-town supermarket, the beach was off limits unless you were a dog walker and two campers who had sneaked out the back gates on their bikes had already had spot fines of 60 Euros for breaking lockdown rules. (With money to burn, one of the two ventured out the same way a couple of days later, was stopped by the police and was fined 600 Euros on the spot!) No cases of Covid had been reported on the campsite but daily gossip told of a slow but steady increase in numbers in the locality.

Five days before we were due to leave, a mild state of concern began to drift across the campsite as rumours of borders being closed and ferries being cancelled began to spread. The following 24 hours left the campsite staff and Rally stewards chasing their own tails in an unsuccessful attempt to get some concrete information from anybody about anything. French, German, Italian and Scandinavian campers were packing up belongings and quickly leaving the site to head home in anticipation of worse to come. That afternoon, (Tuesday,) it was confirmed that all ferries from Spain to England

were cancelled leaving ourselves and approximately sixteen other units 'high and dry.' Some campers decided to stay but Chris got straight on the phone and managed to book a tunnel crossing at twenty past midnight on the Saturday morning so like a couple of Whirling Dervishes, we 'broke camp' and packed up, stocked up with red wine, mouthwash and bread and collected paperwork from reception that would allow us through France without undue delay.

We were told all French Aires were closed so much against our better judgement but with little choice, we decided to use the Lorry Parks at Motorway Service Stations. Being wedged in between huge 'Artics' felt quite secure but not all lorry drivers appreciated our company. We found the larger Service Stations to be open with a limited range of provisions and facilities and with the aid of a gallon of Red Bull managed to cover over a thousand miles by Thursday night.

We were stopped a couple of times by police in France at Motorway Toll Booths but as soon as they realised where we had been and where we were heading they stepped well back and waved us on without ceremony.

Friday was a more relaxed drive. Fewer miles to cover, next to no cars on the road (as we'd experienced throughout the trip), plenty of mouthwash to get us home and easy access to fuel.

We arrived 3 hours early at Calais and were surprised to be offered an earlier crossing. We had expected the terminal to be packed but it was deserted. We drove through Customs Control right onto the train without meeting a single vehicle and completed the channel crossing on a train with us and one other car – unbelievable!

Everything had run much smoother than we had anticipated and we began our two hundred and twenty mile UK leg of the journey at about 9.30pm on the Friday evening. What a treat that was! Weekend roadworks and major road detours – we must have passed every bollard, yellow detour sign and road repair vehicle available throughout the UK, well, it felt like it anyway!

Eight hours and a Macdonald's take-away later, we arrived home to take full advantage of the UK lockdown and the benefits of filling our petrol tanks less often, fewer hairdressing appointments, getting down to our last two hundred toilet rolls and binge watching TV box sets.

We look forward to returning to Spain...but not just yet!

Who would have thought that nearly a year later the situation would be so much worse?

Mark Snowden

## **Request for Rally Volunteers in September & October 2021**

I am sure like Karen and I, you are itching to get out in your Vans and at the same time know when the Government will relax restrictions enough for us to do so. The pace of vaccinations is amazing and there is some improvement in new case numbers so hopefully by the end of March we may see some relaxation.

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel the Wicks Farm Rally at Chichester. The campsites are taking no bookings at all until Government restrictions are announced.

We have a slightly reduced Rally Programme for this year as detailed below. However, it would be really good if we could add a couple of Rallies to the programme in September and October.

Do let me know if you would like to organise a Rally local to you or at a favourite campsite. Just e mail me with your suggestion and I will give you a call back to discuss.

Thank you.

Murray Chisholm, Rally Coordinator

## 2021 Rallies and Get Togethers

The current lockdown and uncertainty about future restrictions on travel and group meetings means that our 2021 programme of events has to be provisional and dependent on what regulations are in place at the time.

<b>April</b> 8th to 13th (5 nights)	Delamere Forest C&C Club, Station Rd, <b>Delamere</b> CW8 2HZ	<b>Stewards</b> Katrina Lancaster and Tim Sheppard	Book direct with site
<b>May</b> 24th to 29th (5 nights)	Cheddar Bridge Tour- ing Park , Draycott Rd, <b>Cheddar</b> BS27 3RJ	<b>Stewards</b> Eric and Dee Gould	
<b>June</b> 20th to 25th (5 nights)	Ilkley Rugby Club	<b>Stewards</b> Peter and Jane Wood	
<b>July</b> 5th to 9th (4 nights)	Ludlow	<b>Stewards</b> Charles and Jacqui Chodkowski	
<b>December</b> 2nd to 6th (4 nights)	Teversal, Notts AGM/Christmas rally	<b>Stewards</b> Kath and Peter Elliott	

**Delamere Forest 8th to 13th April 2021 (5 nights Thurs to Tues)**

**Delamere Forest C&CC, Station Rd, Delamere, Northwich CW8 2HZ**

Assuming that we are allowed to travel in April, Katrina & I will be at the Camping & Caravan Club site in Delamere forest and look forward to an informal get together.

This will not be a formal rally so members need to book direct with the C&CC Site, but do let us know if you are planning to join us.

Delamere Forest (972 hectares) is known for its fabulous walks and bike rides. Delamere railway station is adjacent and is 9½ miles east of Chester on the Mid-Cheshire Line. There is an hourly service each way between Chester and Manchester. Bus stop is 1.25 miles.

Chester has the most complete city walls, the oldest racecourse and the largest Roman Amphitheatre in Britain, plus a 1000 year old Cathedral with Europe's finest example of medieval carvings, Roman remains, river with promenade and boat trips, city walls

The Rows are continuous half-timbered galleries, reached by steps, which form a second row of shops above those at street level along Watergate Street, Northgate Street, Eastgate Street and Bridge Street. They are unique in the world to Chester, and nobody is quite sure why they were built in this way. Some original 13th century buildings, including the Three Old Arches.

Visits – Liverpool and River Mersey etc, Port Sunlight model village (Lever Bros fame), Manchester, Anderton boat lift and salt museum at Northwich, Beeston Castle, Catalyst Museum, Widnes (history of the chemical industry)

Possible final evening meal at <http://delamere-fortune-palace-restaurant.co.uk/>

We will have lots of information with us on the area so come and join us.

Katrina Lancaster & Tim Sheppard

## **Cheddar Rally 24th to 29th May 2021 (5 nights Monday to Saturday)**

This is the replacement for the rally that had to be cancelled last year as a result of lockdown 1.

Details, unsurprisingly are still to be confirmed with the site owners but we have a provisional booking for 8 hard standing electric pitches. As you can

see from the list I already have 8 expressions of interest. I suspect securing more pitches will be difficult with many more staying home for their breaks. So please if you want to go get in touch now and if your name is on the list and you have changed your mind also let me know. I will hold a reserve list. It is too early to say what will be on offer by way of walks, meals outings etc. but we shall try and make the stay as interesting as possible.

The touring park caters for those that would prefer quieter surroundings, it is exclusively for adults (over 18) with a comfortable relaxed atmosphere. Cheddar Bridge is a picturesque caravan and camping site in a riverside setting with luxury facilities. It is within close walking distance of the historic village of Cheddar, its amenities and leisure centre, the spectacular Cheddar Gorge and Caves and the Mendip hills. The river Yeo passes through the caravan site with many camping pitches next to the riverbank. Enjoy the wonderful view of the Mendip Hills from the pitches. The site is part of a Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Norman Ancient Monument. Cheddar Bridge is a high quality central touring base for Wells, Bath, Bristol, Weston-Super-Mare, Wookey Hole, Glastonbury, Street, Somerset Levels and its villages.

1. Dee & Eric
2. 2. Elaine & John Welham
3. 3. Jacqui & Charles Chodkowski
4. 4. Paul Hipgrave
5. 5. Malcolm Eldridge
6. 6. Alma & Keith
7. 7. Richard and Ruth
8. 8. Kath & Peter

Dee & Eric

## **Ilkley June 20th to 25th (5 nights Sunday to Friday)**

### **Ilkley Rugby Club**

Details to follow.

**Rally Stewards:** Peter & Jane Wood [peterwood878@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:peterwood878@hotmail.co.uk)

## **Ludlow July 5th to 9th (4 nights Monday to Friday)**

### **Westbrook Park, Lych Lane, Little Hereford, Ludlow SY8 4AU**

Website [westbrookpark.co.uk](http://westbrookpark.co.uk)

We have been able to reserve a great area, all 10+vans together, having all weather, fully serviced pitches with 16amp electric, water, tv hookup and drainage point. All this by the river Teme, with half mile river bank fishing. Extensive dog walk with exercise area and good local footpaths, also short walk to local country pub. (It's just across the river).

We would like some commitment from those who would like to join us. It will be £28 per night, £1 per night for each dog. (It is height of season). A deposit of £25 per unit is required as per recent email.

**Rally Stewards:** Jacqui & Charles Chodkowski

## **AGM Rally December 2nd to 6th (4 nights Thursday to Monday)**

### **Christmas Rally & AGM - Teversal, Notts**

The detailed programme for our Christmas Rally and AGM is still being planned, but we are returning to Teversal Camping and Caravanning Club site for our 2021 Christmas Rally and AGM.

Good opportunities for walking and visiting historic houses.

Full details to follow.

**Rally Stewards:** Kath & Peter Elliott



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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

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