

Shop 'til you drop

Steve Rowe talks shop as he finds three CLs conveniently situated for those who like a spot of retail therapy



One of the most popular activities on any caravan or motorhome holiday is surely the trip to the local shopping centre? I vividly remember childhood holidays in Cornwall, when a shopping expedition in Penzance or Helston was always the rainy-day default option.

I also recall that my father used to hate these shopping trips – he would stand forlornly in the street outside Littlewoods or Debenhams while my mother was trying on the latest maxi skirt!

Today, the shopping experience has changed, thanks to the development of numerous out-of-town malls, where coffee shops and pubs give hobbies the chance

to relax and read the paper while their wives take the opportunity to spend the kids' inheritance!

Since there are Caravan Club CLs all over the country, you'll always be able to find one near the shopping centre of your choice (just check the website or your copy of the *Sites Directory & Handbook*). To give you a taster, I visited three sites that have some interesting shops on their doorsteps.

LOWER KILLIGORRICK FARM

Sites Directory & Handbook p315

This CL, set on a small Cornish farm, boasts electric hook-ups, a toilet and shower room and a useful farm shop, while one of the five pitches is hardstanding. Just a short drive away is Trago Mills, a huge discount shopping centre set in the wooded Glynn Valley – as well as a variety of stores, it offers numerous opportunities to grab a bite to eat.



Location: St Keyne, Liskeard, Cornwall
Call: 01579 320268
Pitch type: grass and one hardstanding
Facilities: electric hook-up, fresh water and toilet/waste-water drain point, toilet and shower block
Dogs allowed? yes
Adults only? no
Opening dates: all year

MEET THE OWNERS

We chat with Janet and Chris Rose

Why did you set up the CL?

"We bought the farm nine years ago, when looking for a semi-retirement business. Originally, I wanted to buy a small caravan site and Chris wanted to buy a smallholding, so this farm, with an up-and-running CL, was the perfect compromise."

Who is a typical visitor?

"We are open to all ages and tend to get a few families visiting in the main summer season, but most of our visitors are older couples. Most make at least one visit to Trago Mills. Indeed, we get people staying here in November and December so that they can do their Christmas shopping. Sightseeing and fishing are other reasons to stay here."

What has it been like running your own CL?

"We really enjoy running the CL and meeting people. We have gradually developed the site since taking over and also like to be as eco-friendly as possible – we use captured rainwater to flush the toilet waste point, as well as growing our own fruit and vegetables for the farm shop. Chris also keeps bees and is thinking of running beekeeping courses in the future, which visitors to the CL could sign up to."

What does it take to run a good CL?

"You need to be sociable and to love meeting people, as well as being organised. Apart from cutting the grass and keeping the toilet block clean, it doesn't require a huge amount of work to run the site, so we would thoroughly recommend it."



CULLY HALL FARM

Sites Directory & Handbook p301

Situated between the cities of Bath and Bristol, this CL is ideally placed for shoppers – Bath's Christmas Market (22 November to 9 December) is especially popular. The site boasts electric hook-ups, fresh and waste-water points, plus a toilet. Owners Ronnie and Florence Nesbitt have lived at the farm for 35 years, and have been running the CL for some 20 years.

MEET THE OWNERS

We chat with Ronnie and Florence Nesbitt

Why did you set up the CL?

"When we first moved here we started to run a B&B to boost the farm's income. We then started the CL as an additional source of income and have since closed the B&B. We love meeting the huge variety of people who come to stay with us, including Club members from overseas, and we get many repeat visitors."

Who is a typical visitor?

"Most of our visitors are older couples, but we also get families, especially in the main summer holidays. As well as people who love shopping, we attract cyclists – you can ride right into the centre of Bath using the Avon Valley Cycle Way which runs alongside the Avon Valley Railway. We also have visitors who are the caravanning parents of students at Bristol University. There's a good bus service from the bottom of the lane, so people often use their bus passes to travel into the centres of Bristol or Bath. Within easy walking distance are a couple of pubs which both serve food."

What has it been like running your own CL?

"Compared to running a B&B, maintaining the CL is much easier. As long as you keep the grass cut and all the facilities up to date, then there's not too much hard work involved. We like meeting people and it's probably best if you enjoy socialising if setting up your own site."



Correction: In last month's CL Sites article we stated that Setley Ridge Vineyard CL accepts dogs. It does not accept dogs. Sorry for any confusion caused.

GUBBINS HOLE FARM

Sites Directory & Handbook p447

This farm site is just a 10-minute drive from Bicester Village, a discount shopping outlet with numerous clothing stores for men, women and children, as well as a variety of restaurants and cafés to satisfy your refreshment needs. If you're not shopped out, you may also wish to head to the nearby historical city of Oxford. The well-planned CL gives caravanners the option of either hardstanding or grass pitches, all with electric hook-up – there's also a small toilet cabin.



Location:

Marsh Gibbon, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Call: 01296 770259

Pitch type: grass and hardstanding

Facilities: electric hook-up, fresh water and toilet/waste-water drain point, toilet room

Dogs allowed? yes

Adults only? no

Opening dates: all year

MEET THE OWNERS

We chat with Joe and Jackie Taylor

Why did you set up the CL?

"We have owned the farm for 40 years and started the CL about 30 years ago. We saw an ad in a farming magazine which proclaimed, 'Meet lots of new friends, open a CL!' So, this gave us the idea of opening our own site, plus we used to caravan as a family anyway, so knew about the small CL sites."

Who is a typical visitor?

"When families stay here, the kids usually love being on the farm, with lots of space to run around, but most of our visitors are older couples. Many of the people who stay here are also members of the National Trust and there are some impressive country houses in this area, including Waddesdon Manor. A lot of people visit Bicester Village while they are here, plus Oxford is also a popular destination."

What do visitors like most about your CL?

"People say they like the peace and quiet here, plus some love to watch the local wildlife, which includes owls and pheasants. Others come here to enjoy walking or cycling and there are a couple of Sustrans cycle routes which run near to the site."

STAYING ON THE CL

Brian and Joan Pinner are from Suffolk

Why did you choose this CL?

"We've been members of the Club for 15 years and often use the CLs. We are just returning home after a three-week holiday, staying on several CLs, and this is our last stopover. This site is well located, close to Oxford and not far from the M40, so it seemed like a good choice."

What do you like about this CL?

"Like most CLs, this site is quiet and offers plenty of space, plus there's a nice view over the surrounding fields. We plan to visit Bicester Village while we are here, for a spot of retail therapy before returning home."

