



Short-term GOLD

Fancy a few days near one of the country's top attractions? **Barry Williams** checks out a temporary Club site in Windsor

THIS COUNTRY is home to thousands of diverse events and attractions – and if you can reach the one that appeals from the comfort of your caravan, all the better. Trouble is, you may not be able to find a nearby pitch on a Club site or CL.

However, an increasing number of Club Centre and Regional committees are organising temporary sites in the vicinity of popular events, giving you the opportunity to make the most of your caravan or motor caravan. Just bear in mind that to some extent you need to be self-sufficient. However, you will be guaranteed a warm welcome and help on hand if you need it.

Windsor, renowned for its castle and beautiful setting alongside the river Thames, is always a hit with visitors, but in May there were additional reasons to

go there – the Royal Windsor Horse Show in the Great Park and, for the third year, the spectacular evening Tattoo at the castle itself.

Goodness knows how much a hotel room would have cost – if you had been lucky enough to find one – but just up the road, volunteers from our own Buckinghamshire Centre had organised 150 temporary pitches at Windsor Racecourse. You could arrive on Wednesday and stay until Sunday for the princely sum of £48, or book for just two or three nights (£25/£36.50) if you wished.

All the pitches were on well-kept and freshly-mown grass; the racecourse is very well maintained and remarkably quiet on non-race days. Fresh water and toilets (but no showers) were available in the racecourse buildings, and if you were >>



Top: the Royal Windsor Horse Show gets into full swing

Above l-r: event organisers Gordon Taylor, Gill Pope, Jenny Preedy, Ruth Taylor, Derek Preedy, Judy and Tony Bullock, Mike Pope

Right: Horse Show sponsor Land Rover was on hand to display its vehicles' capabilities





The Caravan Club can provide electrical distribution equipment, conveniently stored in small trailers, for temporary sites

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quick enough off the mark you could even have reserved an electric hook-up for an additional fee. Forty-eight pitches were supplied with 6A hook-ups, courtesy of a generator and distribution equipment provided by the Club.

I turned into the temporary site to find Gordon and Ruth Taylor, stalwarts of the Buckinghamshire Centre, waiting to greet arrivals with tea and coffee, biscuits and a wealth of information. It's the third year they have used this venue, which is close to their home. With the benefit of local knowledge, they had organised leaflets on local attractions, pre-booked local walks with official Blue Badge guides and made a special deal with a local car hire company to whisk caravanners between the site and the town centre and beyond.

Those looking for a leisurely route into town could head for the racecourse jetty and take a ferry along the Thames; others chose a brisk 20-minute walk.

Gordon had previously set up temporary sites in the Great Park, but three years ago he decided to organise

a site aligned with the horse show, and was able to secure space at the racecourse. "We had 60 outfits the first year and 100 the next. This year we planned for 150 and have ended up turning people away," he said.

The majority of people staying at Windsor (about 65%, says Gordon) were non-Centre-registered, so they weren't typical rally-goers, and they came from all parts of the country. I saw addresses from as far afield as Cumbria, Cornwall and Pembroke on the list of attendees. There was even one visitor who came all the way from Australia – though he hadn't travelled 12,000 miles just to go to this event!

About 35 couples (and they were almost all couples) had been to events similar to this before, but some were using their caravans outside a 'proper' site for the first time. I didn't meet anyone at Windsor with anything but praise for the way in which the site had been organised, showing once again how much time and effort some members are prepared to put into the Club. ■

INFORMATION

Temporary sites such as the one in this article, organised for you by volunteers from Club Centres, Regions and Divisions, are run all over the country. Go to caravanclub.co.uk and click on 'Local groups' to download a whole series of *What's On?* leaflets. Do remember that each of these events is unique. At some you may have to rely solely on your caravan's onboard toilet, shower and 12V system – after all, that's what they are there for! Don't be embarrassed about asking fellow members or the Club's Technical department for advice.



THE TAYLORS

One of the more unusual outfits on the racecourse was Bob and Jill Taylor's Niesmann + Bischoff Arto motor caravan. Bob (above) and Jill, from Norfolk, have owned the A-Class motor caravan since 2003 and describe it as "perfect", though they recognise it's a bit big to use for a trip to the shops. Bob, a retired engineer, found the solution in a Blackjack three-wheel kit car, based on a Citroën 2CV, which he winches onto a trailer behind the Arto. "It weighs just 310kg and I really don't know it's there," said Bob, "but I've installed a rear-view camera so I can keep an eye on it." A few days exploring Windsor fitted in well with the Taylors' active retirement plans.



THE CHALKLEYS

Sandra and Richard Chalkley, from Luton, told me they use Club sites most of the time and don't belong to a Centre. "We have been to two National Rallies but that's all," said Richard. The Chalkleys have been caravanning for only three years and use a Land Rover Discovery and Bailey Vermont, mainly in the UK. "We love the freedom it gives to visit places you wouldn't otherwise consider," said Sandra. "We read about this in the Club *Magazine* and thought we'd give it a go. There was a really friendly welcome when we arrived and everyone has been so nice."



THE MEADS

Bill and Val Mead have been members for about 15 years. When they retired from the family refrigeration and air conditioning business they spent three and a half months on a grand tour of Europe, but since then have stuck to Club sites, towing a Lunar Clubman with their Volkswagen Touareg. "We have registered with our local Centre but we've never been to a rally. This event seems very well organised and everyone is really friendly," Bill told me. "It's a good, level site and having mains electricity is a bonus." The Meads booked in from Thursday to Sunday and planned to make the most of their time with a visit to the Royal Tattoo at Windsor Castle and possibly the horse show.