

# Letters

Your chance to have your say

The writer of our star letter now receives a copy of our guide to Continental touring – *Caravan Europe*



## STAR LETTER

### Caravan convert

THIS IS a public letter of apology. You see, several years ago I announced very publicly that I would rather poke my eyes out with rusty nails than have a holiday in a caravan, let alone buy one of the wretched things!

Just before I find a queue of members at my door wanting to do something nasty to me involving awning pegs and an Aquaroll, let me explain. While we were building our farmhouse, our family of five spent three and a half years living in a mobile home, so spending a holiday in a caravan would have been a little like sending coals to Newcastle.

However, things change. With the children all having left home, my husband, who is a very keen aero-modeller, decided with some friends to camp out at a weekend event. He came home wet and cold and decided that he was going to get himself a "dirt-cheap caravan" to go to such events.

We started looking around and I, in a sort of off-hand remark kind of way, said that if the caravan had the kind of equipment that I wanted, we could perhaps spend a little more.

We found a 1989 two-berth Coachman complete with every single bit of kit that we could possibly need.

We joined The Caravan Club and set off for our first ever weekend away. Luckily, my other half has a lot of experience of towing farm tractors and trailers, so that was one less thing

to worry about. It rained and the wind howled and our little caravan rocked from side to side, but we loved it.

In April last year, we went into our local caravan dealer, supposedly just to see if we could get a replacement part, but we spotted a 2005 Coachman Pastiche with fixed bed. We bought it on the spot.

When we joined the Club, we thought that it would just get us the *Sites Directory* – we hadn't really taken any notice that we would also get the wonderful monthly magazine as well. When it drops though the letterbox, there is always a fight to see who gets to it first.

So, thank you Caravan Club for changing my mind about caravanning. We use our caravan ('Vanda') a lot. Last July it provided overflow accommodation when our middle daughter got married and we had 20 people staying in the house.

Finally, we have found the kind of holidays we long thought weren't possible. No waiting at airports and wondering whether your accommodation will look like what it was in the brochure.

Taking the dog along is another bonus. Usually, the fees for a CL site are less than putting him into kennels.

I am a true caravan convert and proud of it. The children think it's hysterical that we are such converts but the eldest two tell me that they want the caravan after us!

**Kay Enk, via email**

### Money matters

AS FUEL prices are so high, my wife and I have decided to change the way we enjoy our caravan holidays.

Since 1973, our main holiday has been spent on the Continent, travelling as far as Hungary and Croatia. It now costs us about £500 to get over to Calais from home (diesel, Red Pennant and ferry), and that's before we even start our holiday. From April to October last

year, all our caravan holidays were in the UK. Not only that, we only travelled within a radius of 100 miles from home and stayed on CLs. We had a wonderful time and only spent a fraction compared with previous years. It was such a success that we will do the same this year.

So, if you want to save money on fuel and still have a great time, you might like to consider the same?

**Alan Puw, Gwynedd**

CLs are a cost-effective option



### Bailey connection

MY REASON for writing is that I am in the habit of passing my Club magazines on to my dad, a gent now in his 90s. He recently made a comment to me along the lines of how great today's caravans are and that he would love to be able to go and see how they were built, especially Bailey models.

I asked why he had singled out Bailey. It turns out that he lived in Bristol as a young lad and had a good mate who had just started working for a new company called Bailey (the guy was eventually his best man).

One day, this friend took my dad along to the factory and he watched as the frames for the first Bailey caravan ever made were laid out on the floor.

My dad is now quite infirm, but I wish he had told me this years ago. I would have loved to have been able to take him to see Bailey's modern facilities and watch caravans being constructed.

**Max Hamilton, via email**

## Have you got something to say?

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## Shower talk

A RECENT conversation with some caravanning friends of ours regarding caravan layouts led to an all-out debate on the subject for almost an hour. Between us we own four caravans, each with a different layout – yet not one of them ticked all the boxes. We agreed that the old saying that you can please some of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time, rings true regarding this subject.

However, we did all agree on one point. Not one of us uses the onboard shower – it is used as storage space.

Each of us has since asked other caravanners whether or not they use their onboard shower. Out of 30 or so couples asked, only one said that they did, but only occasionally at a rally or festival where there are no facilities.

I wonder if the manufacturers would consider making a model without a shower cubicle? Until that day arrives, we are booking our caravan into a workshop to have the shower cubicle removed, to be replaced by a full-sized sink and storage units.

**John Abbey, Doncaster**

## A fair deal 1?

IN SUPPORT of Mr Gott (Letters, April issue), we decided to return to caravanning in 2008 after a four-year absence. We went to the NEC show that year, buying from a dealer some 250 miles away from home, as they offered this model some £1,700 cheaper than our local dealer, 20 miles from us. We were assured that there'd be no problems with servicing or any warranty work, as there was a network of dealers that would undertake any work required.

## What is it?

IT MAY be a long shot but I wonder if you are able to give me any information regarding the caravan shown in the attached photo?

The person in the white flying overalls, standing to the left of the caravan door, is my father's cousin. He was Flt Lt Henry Michael Ferriss DFC and was a Hurricane fighter pilot in the Battle of Britain. He was a notable RAF fighter 'ace' and was killed in action on 16 August 1940.

From research at the Imperial Air Museum, it appears that the photographs were taken at Wick Airfield in the north of Scotland on 27 or 28 February 1940. Further research has revealed the pilot on the right to have been killed in the Battle of France on 19 May 1940 and the dog to have been killed in the bombing of Croydon Airfield on 18 August 1940. The pilot sitting in the doorway survived the war.

I have done my best to track down details of the caravan but have had no luck. I wonder, therefore, if your archives and/or your members may have any information relating to the

We collected the caravan during the first week of November and stayed locally at the dealer's expense to try out the caravan. We found one minor defect which was corrected.

Everything was fine until the following October, when we noticed water ingress from the front window. We contacted our local dealer who accepted the caravan into his workshop but later discovered that we had not bought the caravan from him – so I had to remove it from his premises.

We are fortunate that we have a local independent repair centre that carried out the work under warranty.

Then, in the following February, the fridge failed. I thought this could be fixed when I had the caravan serviced, but the dealer said it could not service the caravan as it was outside the six weeks that is allowed from the anniversary of purchase. So I had to pay £250 for the fridge repair, which I later claimed back.

These weren't our only problems – the wardrobe collapsed, the electric panel twice came loose and the front GRP panel cracked.

It's time that caravan manufacturers insisted their dealer network should accept work from owners of their caravans, regardless of where the model was originally bought. With regards servicing, I bought my caravan



name, make, model age etc of the caravan. It will also be interesting to know if interior plans are available, if other photographs of the model exist and indeed if any of this model are still around.

In the family, these photos are known as 'Michael's caravan photos' and they appear in many books on the Battle of Britain, the Hurricane and the RAF in general. They have also inspired an American artist to design a jigsaw puzzle picture around it and the artist has portrayed himself as standing in the doorway.

I shall be delighted to know of any information you and/or your membership can offer.

**Gerard Ferris, Barnet**

*Comment: What a fascinating photograph. Identifying the caravan in the image won't be easy, I fear, as many models were visually very similar around that time. Common makes would include Bertram Hutchings, Car Cruiser and Cheltenham, for instance, but there was also a wealth of small manufacturers and quite a lot of kit-built or home-built one-offs as well. I'm fairly sure that it's not a Bertram Hutchings as they tended to have a curved top to the entrance door, while this is square. I have an inkling that the model shown might be a Cheltenham, but this is a guess. Can anyone else help?*  
*Martin Spencer, Technical Manager*

in October and to comply with the manufacturer's warranty, it would have to be serviced between October and December – I was not aware of this until it was pointed out to me. I should have read the small print. Who wants to have a caravan serviced, only to put it into storage for three months? It makes much more sense to have it serviced prior to the start of the new season, but doing so in my case would have invalidated the maker's guarantee.  
**L James, by email**

## A fair deal 2?

I READ Mr Gott's issues with repairs at distant supplying dealers with some familiarity. However, it doesn't have to be this way and the Club's legal advisors pointed me in the right direction when I had similar issues with my new caravan.

Dealers always seem to hide behind the manufacturer's 'return-to-base' warranties. However, the revised Sale of Goods Act requires that faulty goods are repaired in a timely manner with as little inconvenience and cost to the purchaser as possible. Citing this to my (300-mile round trip) dealer instantly resulted in a local dealer being appointed to carry out the repairs to my caravan.

Thanks to the Club's legal advice, I saved many hundreds of pounds of fuel

costs and much inconvenience and loss of use of the caravan.

This still didn't excuse the poor quality of our caravan supplied by the manufacturer but it certainly lessened the pain. The Office of Fair Trading website ([oft.gov.uk](http://oft.gov.uk)) has a useful guide to the Sale of Goods Act. It's well worth a read.

**Martin Woods, via email**

## Frosty reply 1

IN REPLY to Susan Turner's letter in the April issue lamenting the omission of frosted windows in caravan washrooms, we have an answer.

We visited a big DIY store and found a roll of vacuum-backed plastic, called Window Static Brilliant. You can buy it in frosted glass design or brightly-coloured patterns.

If, like us, you don't get the measurements right first time you can peel it off without any problems and do it again. It is also washable and still lets in the light. Hope this helps.

**Hazel & Roy Bartle, via email**

## Frosty reply 2

I WAS surprised to read Susan Turner's letter, as last September we took possession of a new 2011 Adria Adora 612DP which has a frosted window in the toilet compartment. Further to this, I would suggest that if you are



All Wight: Southland Club site

considering buying a new caravan that you should go to one of the national exhibitions with a list of priorities of what you would like to see. We went to the Birmingham NEC show in autumn 2010 with a list of what was important for us and we were able to compare different models all in the one place.

This meant that when we were ready to buy a new caravan, we knew exactly which make and model to look for. Of course, there is a downside to this as you will no longer have anything to complain about as, hopefully, the caravan will fit more closely your personal requirements!

**Graham Miles, via email**

## Give me space!

IT IS possible to become rather blasé about what we do and the knowledge we pick up along the way. We were all new to this lark once, but there are a few occasions that being new is no excuse.

We had a lovely sunny weekend at the Club's Southland site on the Isle of Wight in March. The site was almost empty, which allowed everybody to have a row to themselves.

We had been for a cycle ride on the Sunday and when we returned we

found a caravan pitched right next to us. And I mean right next to us. I know they were first-timers as I spotted brand new sealed bags with awning tracking etc within.

Now, we were leaving the site that day, so it did not matter much. But had we been staying I would have had to move our caravan elsewhere.

The newcomer's awning edge was close to our caravan and we had to close our window blinds along one side to gain some privacy.

I know it's tough when you are new to caravanning, but we go to the country to get away from the crowds. At busy times on site you can't help but be close to your neighbours, but at very quiet times like this we don't need to invade other people's privacy.

So please, if you can, pitch away from other people's caravans. You may like being close, but I prefer some degree of isolation.

**Anthony Miller, via email**

## A warden's plea

DURING THE past couple of years, Club staff have spent a great deal of time, effort and cost introducing recycling facilities on most sites.

As a warden on one of those sites, and a member, I have to say I am a little

## Two-berth shortage

WE'VE BEEN caravanners for over 30 years. Our family has fled the nest and we now enjoy our touring as a couple.

Our two-berth provides most things we need. However, we are getting a little bit past the compromises that most caravans demand. The end bathroom in our model is superb and we want the same quality and space in a new caravan.

Most two-berths on the market boast a traditional front lounge arrangement, which we find a hassle when converting into a bed.

We would like one of the new Swifts with an end washroom and two single beds. But these all come with a full bed/dinette making them



four-berths, and longer and heavier than we need.

Is there not a huge market for the true two-berth? A model with all of the usual attributes but a shortened dinette that was truly a lounging and dining area only with no need to convert into a bed? The seats could then be made more comfortable, the caravan could be lighter and, hopefully, cost less.

**Peter Nelson, via email**



disappointed at the way some members use this facility.

Today, I did my regular bin run and, of the six mixed recycling bins, the contents of five had to be disposed of in the general waste skip (so not recycled) due to the fact that such things as dirty nappies (not in plastic bags), dog dirt (also not in a plastic bag), food stuffs and the contents of a vacuum cleaner bag had been put in. This obviously meant that those members who had been thoughtful enough to separate their waste need not have bothered.

My request is please take a little time to look at the bin into which you are putting your rubbish. We all have to do this at home or the local authority won't take it. Please don't think that someone else will sort it on site, as I am sure most people will understand we wardens have more important things to do than sort out rubbish – if it is contaminated, it will not be recycled.

Thank you to all in anticipation.  
**Keith Murray, Site Warden,  
Durham Grange**

## CL booking woes

OVER THE years, you have printed letters from CL owners about 'no shows'. However, I have had the shoe on the other foot, so to speak.

I had booked a night on a CL site in Oxfordshire, en route to returning home from France. On arrival, the owner told us that he had forgotten we were coming and already had the maximum five outfits on site.

On another occasion, I had booked a pitch on a CL in Yorkshire for a weekend. Again, on arrival, the owner said he didn't realise we were coming, and again the site was full.

More recently, I booked a stay on a CL in North Wales for Easter and left a deposit. Because of the two incidents already mentioned, I then rang nearer the time to check our booking, only to be informed that the site was full. Our booking had not been transferred from an old diary to the new one. Although I was able to book another CL, I have still not had my deposit returned.

It, therefore, comes as no surprise that I am not very impressed with the above CL owners – but you cannot say all the apples in the barrel are rotten.  
**David Thomas, Preston**

## Freedom of choice

IN RESPONSE to the letter from Mr Steve Gleed in the March issue, I feel I



Lady Margaret's Park

must make the following observations. First of all, I hope that Mr Gleed is happy and content in his new twin-axle caravan, fitted with this, that and the other. And, because of the apparent weight involved, I trust that he has a suitable vehicle to pull it safely and legally, and has the appropriate driving licence to remain legal.

I must also assume that he uses sites with electric hook-ups or has a generator to operate all the electric kit.

One of the advantages of caravanning is that we can do our own thing and have our own views, as long as they are legal.

As most of my caravanning is of the rallying type – ie no mains hook-up – I am dependent on the battery, so if that goes flat I am in trouble. I know I could carry a solar panel or generator, but it just seems to defeat the object of a reasonable-cost caravan holiday.

I bought the biggest battery I could find and I can happily caravan for at least a fortnight without the need for hook-up. By choice I very rarely carry a television, but take books and a radio.

If you are happy with your caravan, all well and good, and if it is fit for your purpose, even better.

**Alan Duckworth, via email**

## Standard issues

LAST MAY, we suffered a wheel detachment from our two-month-old caravan. We were told by both the dealer and the manufacturer that because "...I had not torqued the wheels, our repair could not be done

under warranty." We were instructed to go through our insurance company.

We were not satisfied, so contacted Trading Standards, who advised us that the dealer had to repair the caravan under the Sale of Goods Act. The dealer still refused, stating that we had to prove there was a fault.

The Sale of Goods Act specifies that during the first six months of ownership, the Burden of Proof lies with the dealer, not the customer. We advised our dealer that we intended to have the caravan repaired and would be sending them the invoice. Should they refuse to pay, we would take them to the small claims court. They refused, so we went to court.

The judge found in our favour and awarded us all monies plus court costs and expenses.

After 42 years of caravanning, I now check the torque of my caravan's wheels regularly and, because of our experience, I would advise everyone to do so too. Anyone in a similar situation should not be fobbed off with going through their insurance company.  
**Christine Howard, Cornwall**

## A lucky escape

I HAVE owned a Sterling Europa 490 from new (2006). At the end of last season, I experienced a problem on my journey home where my car was losing power.

While waiting for the breakdown company to arrive, I started checking around the caravan and noticed that one of the tyres was very close to the motor mover. On closer

## Helping hands

I'D LIKE to thank the wardens and assistant wardens at Lady Margaret's Park in Chirk for their kindness and the help they gave my wife while I was in hospital at Gobowen, originally for a knee replacement operation but then for some heart problems.

The wardens were excellent while I was in hospital and, when I was discharged, they were there to help us get the caravan off the pitch and hitch it up to the car for my wife to drive home. This is why the Club is such a success – when nothing is any trouble, for a warden, even when they are busy doing their jobs.

**Irene & Brian Kelly, via email**

inspection, I could see that a lug on the mover had come into contact with the tyre and started to cut a groove in the tread.

After dealing with my car's coolant problems, the mechanic kindly adjusted the mover away from the caravan tyre. I decided not to change the tyre for the spare as I was only a few miles from home. I decided that I would at a later point change both caravan tyres before the start of this season as they were now six years old.

The problem was forgotten about until last week when I started to check over the caravan again. When I removed the wheels, I was able to get closer look at the damage to the tyre and noted that the damage was only over a quarter of its circumference.

Closer inspection still showed that the tyre had started to bulge outwards and it was this bulging that caused it to come into contact with the lug on the motor mover, which subsequently cut a groove in the tread.

I believe this problem has almost certainly occurred as the caravan had always been kept at the side of our house during the winter months and the wheels had not been turned. I reckon that this then caused the internal plies to start to break down inside the tyre.

I consider myself very lucky not to have suffered a blow-out while I was travelling. It shows the importance of checking the condition of your caravan's tyres, especially if you store your model away for a period of time.  
**Pete Doggett MBE, via email**

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