



SWIFT

**MOTORHOMES
OWNERS CLUB**



Newsletter No 134 - Winter 2023/24



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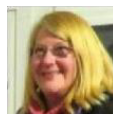
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www.swiftmotorhomesownersclub.co.uk



RALLY PROGRAM 2024

February

7th – 14th

- Woodland Waters (Ancaster, NG32 3RT)

March

5th – 12th

- Newlands Holiday Park (Charmouth, DT6 6RB)

April

17th – 24th

- Woodhill Park (East Runton, NR27 9PX)

May

9th – 16th

16th – 20th

- Bath Marina (Bath, BA1 3JT)
- The Southern Motorhome & Campervan Show (Newbury, RG18 9QZ)

June

7th – 10th

10th – 21st

- Camping du Pont de Bourgogne, Chalon sur Saône, Burgundy, France
- Camping le Coin Tranquille, Les Abrets en Dauphiné, Rhone Alps, France

July

11th – 15th

19th – 26th

- Vintage for Victory Festival (Whitchurch, Cardiff)
- 35th Anniversary Rally - Salisbury Rugby Club (Salisbury, SP1 3SA)

August

1st – 5th

8th – 15th

15th – 19th

- Gloucestershire Vintage & Country Extravaganza
- Bakewell Showground, (Bakewell, DE45 1AH)
- Malvern Country & Western Show (Malvern, WR13 6NW)

September

5th – 9th

11th – 18th

19th – 23rd

- Halfpenny Green Vineyards (Bobbington DY7 5EP)
- AGM Rally - West Midlands Showground (Shrewsbury, SY1 2PF)
- Lincoln Motorhome Show (Lincoln, LN2 2NA)

October

8th – 15th

- Southport Victoria Park (Southport, PR8 1RX)

November

20th – 27th

- Christmas Rally - Tudor Caravan Park (Slimbridge, GL2 7BP)

CHAIRPERSON'S CHAT

Happy New Year to everyone, I hope you had a wonderful Christmas with family and friends.

I really can't believe that a whole year of rallying has gone by and what a great one it's been, starting in Wyton Lakes in February and finishing only a few weeks ago with our Christmas rally at Milestone Caravan Park. In between we travelled far and wide including the many miles we covered exploring France in June. You can of course read about these many adventures in our newsletters.

Despite all the types of weather, both the UK and France threw at us, we have had some great social gatherings together, in snow, wind, rain or sun you will see our members having a great time. These memories are of course due to the involvement of our rallying members, many of whom were on their first rallies with the club and of course the fantastic support of our marshals who all put their own unique mark on proceedings. It's great to see new marshals volunteering for our 2024 program, albeit shadowing others so that they can ease into things.

Next year's program is very varied, with some old favourites reappearing in the club's 35th anniversary year, as well as some new experiences such as a Vineyard Rally and the Vintage for Victory Festival in Wales. We also have a new Warners venue, Newbury which is in May. Our 35th Anniversary celebration rally is in Salisbury in July, more information is in the next newsletter, but don't forget to block the dates out in your diaries.

Once again we are off to France and it's great to see so many signed up, including many new members. Whilst bookings are officially closed if you are interested please contact Ray Collinson (contact details on pg2) and he can see if we can squeeze you in.

My sincere thanks to all those on the committee for all your support in keeping the club running this year.

Finally, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible this year at one of our rallies and sharing the odd drink or two.

Best Regards

Heather (Chairperson)

EDITORIAL

Happy New Year and welcome to 2024 in what is the 35th year of the club!

I do hope that if you are not still travelling about in your motorhome, you have fully prepared it for winter, paying particular attention to the water system, which should be fully drained down. Particularly important is to isolate the pump and surge damper after ensuring they are free of water and to drain down the boiler. We did hear of a number of members who had some nasty leaks and unexpected replacement costs when they started venturing out in the Spring, so it really is worth doing. There are some very good check lists online which go into greater detail on the things to do to prepare you motorhome for Winter.

In this Winter edition we have the proceedings of the 2023 AGM in Rutland and the associated rally musings, plus others from rallies at Malvern, Lincoln and Cardiff. You can also read a very sad but informative article, written by Marilyn Miland about her and David's visit to Oradour-sur-Glane, a village frozen in time as a memorial to the atrocities carried out in WW2.

A full list of next years rallies can be found on pg3 and we now have all rallies up until Bath in May available to book, as well as all the Warners shows throughout the year.

When booking rallies please don't forget to include your £1 per person rally fee (this is per week and not per day!) and please remember to quote your "Members Portal" order number when making payment. The rally fee also applies to Warners shows, although please note that you will also need to book and pay direct to Warners via their Out and About Live website.

I hope to see you on a rally soon, however if you have any ideas for rally venues or articles for the newsletter or better still want to contribute something then please get in touch.

Andy (Newsletter Editor)

Letters and other contributions published in the SMOC Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Committee. It is a condition of publication that all contributions may be edited for grammar, length and/ or clarity

A very warm Swift Motorhomes Owners Club welcome to our new members

Ada & Ray Fielding - 3536
Amanda & Rodger Tudor - 3537
Sue Ritchie & Siobhan Delaney - 3538
Sarah Powell & David King - 3539
Gary & Marilyn Batten - 3540
Sarah & Simon Jones - 3541
Claire & John Dale - 3542
Duncan & Lynda Layland - 3543
Mia & Neil Matheson - 3544
Andrew Reston - 3545
Robert & Helen Lockwood - 3546
Glyn & Susan Morgans - 3547
Kim & Darren Rapper - 3548
Ian & Sally Ross - 3549
Tanya & Spencer Drake - 3550
Colin Foster - 3551
Catherine Jenkins - 3552
Yvonne Clowes - 3553
Carol Arnold - 3554
Michelle Denny - 3555
Gordon & Eve Hamilton - 3556
Jeremy & Lesley Barnes - 3557
Kevin Lee - 3558
David Murdoch & Margaret Hay - 3559
Michael Dillon - 3560
Carole & Alex Walker - 3561
Adrian & Jaruwan Vaughan - 3562
Janine Close - 3563
Stephen Tomlinson - 3564
Christopher & Angela Ellis - 3565
Anne & George Linley - 3566
Alan & Sandy Hamilton - 3567

**I wonder why it is that when I plan a route too carefully, it goes to pieces
whereas if I blunder along in blissful ignorance aimed in a fancied direction I
get through with no problem - John Steinbeck**

SWIFT MOTORHOMES OWNERS CLUB

33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

GREETHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE, GREETHAM LE15 7NG

Saturday 16th SEPTEMBER 2023 – 10.30 a.m

Present: Chair: Heather Hartell, Vice-Chair: Bridget Hubbard, Secretary: Val Dobbin, Rally Secretary & Newsletter: Andy Hartell, Membership Secretary: Robert Hubbard, Regalia Organiser: Marilyn Miland, NEC Events Organiser: Jane Steward, Co-opted Members: Ray Collinson, Keith Morgan, Ann Halford.

1. Heather welcomed everyone to the 33rd Annual General Meeting.
2. Apologies for absence received by the secretary: Barbara and Graham Ball; Bob and Wendy Mason; Phyllis Simcock; Bill Hoggett; Ronald Twinning; Trevor and Sheila Howard; Jim Smith and Barry and Jane Kelly.
3. The minutes of the 32nd AGM (published in Newsletter 130) were accepted by all present.
4. Matters arising from the minutes. None.

5. Chairperson's report:

Welcome to the 33rd Swift Motorhomes Owners Club AGM here in Rutland, who would believe a whole year has passed since our last very sombre event in Herefordshire, which was sadly marked by the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, hopefully, this one won't be as momentous.

On a brighter note, this year has been very positive with respect to both our membership numbers, our recruitment activities, and our rally attendance. We have enjoyed rallies across the length and breadth of the UK and abroad and those members who attended these have had some great times, whether that's exploring the local area, enjoying fish and chips together or a drink at the local pub and of course our legendary raffles.

This year we had the Swift Group Rally at Driffield, which included the Swift factory tour. During the rally, a great night was enjoyed at the "Last Night of the Proms" evening where the club retained the "Best Dressed Table" competition thanks to Ann Halford and her team, and we all raised a lot of money for charity to boot.



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We would not be a club without you, our members, who contribute to the enjoyment of rallies and our other social activities. A big thank you to all those who brought rally prizes, ran the rallies and wrote our interesting rally reports. Our rallies would not be the success they are without those members who marshal our events throughout the year, so again a big thank-you from me. The money we raise from raffles and our rally fees allow us to enjoy many social activities throughout the year.

One of our big successes over the last couple of years has been our recruitment activities, either at the NEC or Peterborough, both led by Jane Steward and helped in great part by members who did a great job in selling the club to many new members. If you want to help at these recruitment events then please let Jane know. Next year is our 35th year as a club and we are hoping to mark this with a series of events, one such being a Hog Roast in July at Salisbury RFC. We are also looking to have a special 35th Anniversary plaque for our members.

We are always looking for willing volunteers to help, either by running raffles, writing rally reports or as marshals and of course as committee members, remember we still need someone to take on the role of Newsletter Editor. The important thing is that it's your club so please let us know if you have any ideas, this could be about rally venues, social activities, newsletter items or any other aspect of the club.

Finally, I want to say a massive thank-you to our committee who work tremendously hard to ensure the club works as seamlessly as possible, and although what they do is often unseen, they all do a great job for all of us and because of them the club is the success it is today.

Heather Hartell: (Chairperson)

6. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the Annual Accounts:

Firstly, my apologies for not attending but the recovery of my bungalow post the May flood is underway and I need to be there.

The past year has been quite eventful from the Treasurer's point of view. It is the first time that I have had to make international payments to cover the French Rally. Initially, an interesting exercise but once I had the hang of it, all went well.

Members seem to be getting the hang of WebCollect which has certainly streamlined the Rally booking process since its introduction. As well as saving members stationery and postage which is considerable now.

The increase in bank Interest Rates led me to transfer £1000.00 to the Business Account as it is now attracting over £6.00/month in interest. The Business Account now stands at over £10,00.00 which gives the club a nice buffer should it ever be needed.

At the last AGM, I expressed concerns that we should have an assistant Treasurer as I was the only person who had full access to the “online banking” system and control over the club finances. In the event that something was to suddenly happen to me, it would present a difficult problem for the club. To that end, Ann Halford agreed to take on that role and we are in the process of getting that in place. (It is a tedious matter to add someone new to access the accounts)

I would like the AGM to discuss if additional members should (or need) access to the accounts. This can be “Full Access” or limited access such as “Read-only”.

As I write this report only myself, Marilyn and David Miland have access to the accounts and I don’t think that they have “online banking” access. Ray Rolfe was also listed but I have requested his removal as he is no longer with us.

I have again produced a Cash Balance Sheet which clearly shows the state of club finances which I am pleased to say is in a very healthy position. I have not attempted to produce a full printed version of the accounting spreadsheet due to the ink and paper required.

I have included the Income & Expenditure Sheet which shows in more detail how your money is spent. The accounts spreadsheet is available to any member on request, it fully reflects all transactions that I make on your behalf throughout the year. The way that the spreadsheet was created it is virtually impossible for it not to be exact to the nearest 1p.

The accounts were audited again by Carol Collinson and passed muster. I would like to thank Carol for her time and patience in carrying out this thankless task.

I am happy to continue as Treasurer for a further year when I would like to hand over the reins at the end of 2024-25 after several years in the post.

Bob Mason: (Hon Treasurer)

7. Appointment of Financial Examiner for the Accounts:

Once again Carol Collinson has again kindly agreed to volunteer, the committee thanked Carol.

8. Other reports:

8.1 **Membership Secretary’s report**

We have had 72 New Members join since September 2022 up until the end of August 2023.

As with all clubs, some join and some leave throughout the year.

Approx. 30 members joined us at the NEC show on October 22.

Thank you to all the Members who helped us at Peterborough in 2022. We had 20 new members sign up thanks to Jane's promotion. Sadly, of those 72, 36 did not renew their membership this year.

We are now getting to grips with Webcollect and seeing what the benefits are. Webcollect on the Members Secretary's side alone has had a saving to the club of approx. £125 by not sending out reminders to each member by post. To send our reminders by E-Mail is a lot easier and with no cost.

Approx. 11 memberships still have to go by snail mail as not everyone has an e-mail address. 3 reminders are sent to each member if there is no response. If they then reply a Membership Card is sent, which would make a postage cost of $78p \times 4 = £3.12p$. Compared with no cost for reminders sent by E-mail.

The cost of Membership Cards sent by post is 78p (plus the envelope) $172 \times 78p = £134$.

We also save money on the reduced size of the New Members Pack as the newsletter is now smaller in thickness, reducing the cost of sending out New Members Packs from £1.68 to 78p.

Altogether we had 67 members leave us in this last year. We now have approx. 172 current members.

Robert Hubbard: (Membership Secretary)

8.2 Rally Secretary's report.

As we near the closure of yet another rally year, the clubs 34th what have been the highs and lows. Since last year's AGM, we have had 12 rallies with an average of 15 Motorhomes at each rally. We have explored parts of the UK & France, as far North as Alnwick, as far West as Tavistock, as far East as the Dordogne and as far South as Bayonne. In total members have booked 1,108 nights since the last AGM. In this current year i.e., 2023 we have had a total of 180 individual bookings from 61 members, this represents 35% (32% - 2021/22) of our membership. Of these 2023 ralliers, 15 were first-timers (17 – 2021/22) with 6 of these coming back for more. Whilst positive this return rate is still something we should try to improve on.

Of the 61 (54 - 2021/22) who rallied in 2023 a total of 19 came to more than 4 and this group made up 69% of our rally bookings this year (25 made up 79%) so a big thanks to all those members because without you our rally season wouldn't fly. That said increasing the number of those coming to more than 4 rallies is something we should work on, perhaps by broadening the places/events we go to.

Bookings and payments for rallies are almost entirely conducted via the "Members

Portal” with 173 online bookings/BACS payments made and just 7 paper bookings/cheque payments (3 members only)

The year 2022 closed out with rallies in Tavistock, followed by a very enjoyable and well-attended Christmas rally, despite the best efforts of the weather. This theme followed us as we sat outside at Wyton Lakes in February in unseasonably warm winter sunshine and then even snow didn’t stop us in March in Harrogate. April saw us in Driffield with the Swift rally and factory visit, where incidentally we cleared up, winning pretty much everything (Ann). This was followed by a rally in Gloucestershire and then in June, several of us had a great time in France, exploring 3 very different sites, each with their own unique experiences. Over the last 2 months, we have also visited Minehead, Alnwick and Malvern.

As in previous years, our average number of ralliers does dip in the summer months as members have other pulls on their time and we tend to move to non-sites more, mainly due to availability and price. I’m not sure how we can address this dip.

I am still concerned about the Warners shows as we continue to struggle to achieve the required 11 units to hold our own rally, we only just managed to scrape over the line with both Malvern & Lincoln this year. Peterborough on the other hand was well attended, perhaps due to it being the last time at this venue which provided us with another great recruitment opportunity with 20-plus new members signed up.

So now looking to the 2024 program we once again will try to move around the UK and overseas as much as we can. Also in our 35th year as a club, we will be returning to some old favourites as well as some new events, such as the Vintage to Victory Festival and a Vineyard!

The overseas rally is once again in France (it’s a big country) and Ray & Carol Collinson, who will be hosting next year’s event, have further details about the itinerary, costs and booking, so don’t forget to speak to them.

Hopefully, you will agree that we have a varied program in terms of geography, type of site/venue and importantly price, which should help to address the pressures our members continue to face. We haven’t included follow-on or pre-meets unlike last year as these did not seem popular.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank-you to those members who have volunteered to marshal rallies over the last 12 months, without you, one of the core reasons for our club’s being (our rallies) would not be possible. So it remains just to say we “Need You!” for 2024, and any other members who would like to give it a try, it really is great fun! So if you want to have a go or even co-host one, please, please, please let me know.

Andy Hartell: (Rally Secretary)

8.3: Newsletter Editor and Webmaster's report.

As you may recall, it was Heather who stepped in to cover the Newsletter Editor role after Ray's retirement, something she did so that we could continue to be able to produce our popular newsletter, as no one willingly stepped forward to fill Ray's shoes. However as we both went through quite a steep learning curve with the publishing software that we chose to use, I sort of took over, sorry Heather!

So now on my 3rd publication (it does get a lot easier after the first one) what have been the highs and lows.

Firstly, I would like to give a big thank-you to everyone who contributes to the newsletter, whether that be through the writing of entertaining rally reports, technical articles, travel reports and funny stories, as without this input the job of Newsletter Editor would be nigh on impossible.

I would also like to thank Ray Collinson who kindly volunteered to continue to liaise with our printers, and who still carries out (ably assisted by Carol) the fulfilment task, ensuring you all get your newsletters. Also, Ray thanks for your patience as I got to grips with things.

As you will know we have several companies that advertise with us, and we have gained a new one thanks to Ann & Nick Halford. If you haven't noticed they are a company called Greenfields, a Motorhome Service Company based in Surrey and all club members get a discount. The support these companies provide us as a club and particularly the newsletter, is very welcome, so many thanks to them.

So, what would help, is firstly more pictures, members take lots at rallies and these non-formal images really bring our club alive to the reader, remember that still over half of our members have never been on a rally. Also, if you are on a rally and the request goes out for a willing volunteer for the rally report please don't shrink into your seat, stick your hand up, as it can get a bit stale if it's only the world according to a few report writers. That said thanks to those who do and please don't stop. Plus, if you have any area of knowledge or interest relating to our hobby then send in an article, you might think we know everything, but we certainly don't. Remember it's your newsletter so any ideas or suggestions are always most welcome.

Finally, a plea... whilst I am happy to continue in my caretaker role, I would rather not have 2 jobs (I'm supposed to be retired) so if you fancy a go then please have a chat with me.

Andy Hartell: Newsletter Editor and Webmaster

8.4: Secretary's Report.

Good morning, everyone. Everything has gone extremely smoothly this past year thanks to our online systems. Most members receive their AGM documents by email, this year I only posted 6 via Royal Mail. Our public liability insurance is up to date, again this is now done by email and the payments are sent by our treasurer Bob. I take this opportunity to thank Bob and Andy for their support and assistance throughout the year. When I took on this post of Secretary, quite a few years ago, the position of secretary was quite involved, now it is quite simple, so don't be afraid to put your name forward next year should you wish to give a committee position a try.

Val Dobbin - Secretary

9. Election of Management Committee

As none of the committee posts required a vote, the committee remained seated.

Chairperson	Heather Hartell	Proposed – Gwen Smith Seconded – Pauline Hayward
Vice Chair	Bridget Hubbard	Proposed – Barbara Ball Seconded – Graham Ball
Treasurer	Bob Mason	Proposed – Val Dobbin Seconded – Ray Collinson
Secretary	Val Dobbin	Proposed – Bridget Hubbard Seconded – Robert Hubbard
Rally Secretary	Andy Hartell	Proposed – Gwen Smith Seconded – Pauline Hayward
Membership Secretary	Robert Hubbard	Proposed – Barbara Ball Seconded – Graham Ball
Regalia Organiser	Marilyn Miland	Proposed – David Miland Seconded – Val Dobbin
NEC Events Organiser	Jane Steward	Proposed – Jane Kelly Seconded – Barry Kelly

10: Proposal of Motions – all those present agreed by a show of hands.

11: Any other Business

Stephen asked if it would be possible to send out a survey to find what the membership wanted out of a rally, to encourage more members to attend.

Andy would investigate this.

Esther asked Marilyn (Regalia) if it would be possible to have small booklets of what was available, Marilyn replied, she had put a few leaflets on the tables, however the firm had gone online only and they did not have a current catalogue in print. It is possible to view this online via their website. However, Andy is planning to put something on the members portal.

Esther also asked if get-well cards could be sent to members of the club. This was thought, by the committee to be, whilst a wonderful idea, very hard to manage in not offending any members not sent a card, and possibly intrusive to some members who wished to be private.

12. Date and Place of the next AGM.

10.30 am 14th September 2024 at Shrewsbury Show Ground.

Heather closed the meeting at 11.15 a.m.

Malvern Show Rally (17th - 21st August 2023)

This was a Rally that Gillian and I had intended to arrive early for, due to the fact David had an online educational tutorial about the latest hearing aid technology at 12:30, so the plan was to attend the tutorial via the internet at Malvern. But then, that Thursday morning was the only time the Carpet fitters could attend, so the plan shifted and David attended the tutorial before leaving. The result was that we were the penultimate van to arrive on Thursday afternoon. On the positive side, we had a warm welcome for our friends, who were already set up. At 6:00 pm there was a general meet-up with an assortment of beverages and chat to catch up with everyone's gossip.



Thank you to Fred & Sylvia for being the Rally Stewards, even though Sylvia was not able to attend, we hope she is making a good recovery.



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The weather was damp to start with but the weekend brightened up. Friday was predicted to be a wet day, so we went on the bus trip to Worcester with the view to Christmas shopping in the dry. We lined up by the puddles just outside the exhibition and had a pleasant journey to and from Worcester. Having four preschool grandsons



we, David, enjoyed looking in the toy shops. Gillian thought it would be a good idea to look for lingerie in M&S, but I have to say she left the store without knickers. All in all, the mission was successful, we returned fully laden with gifts and clothes.

Saturday morning, we experienced the failure of our primary leisure battery, without which the hot water and refrigerator stopped working. This

necessitated David driving off to find a suitable replacement, thankfully we had brought Annie, our tow car with us. By lunchtime, all was good with the electrical power supply.

The afternoon was spent by some members watching the Ladies Football match while we looked round the Motorhome exhibition and it was encouraging to see so many motorhomes of varying designs and prices. It is surprising that however often we visit the shows there is always something to buy! This time amongst other things we purchased a rose because its name is Amelia, our daughter's name. The evening was spent in the Severn Hall and we enjoyed the music.



Sunday being a day of rest, we woke up to the sound of the refrigerator beeping because the gas bottle was empty. So, a quick walk at 9:00 am to the gas supplier and a replacement bottle was being delivered by the time David walked back. When the texted receipt arrived, it was interesting to note that this was the third annual gas bottle exchange at the Malvern rally. David purchased a very lightweight folding step ladder and proceeded to spend much of Sunday cleaning the outside of our Motorhome.

Before Morning Coffee, Sue suggested to Keith that he should ‘pack the van’ so Keith duly ‘packed the van’ and to tessellate the packing he put the flat items in the bottom of the motorhome garage. So, when it came to morning coffee, the chairs being flat easily tessellated at the bottom of the garage. So, Keith learnt that ‘pack the van’ means ‘pack the van’ but think about ‘packing the van’. We waved everyone off during the day except for Jane and Anthony and we had the pleasure of their company in the evening listening to the music in the Seven Hall.

David & Gillian Reed - 3172

Rutland AGM Rally (13th -20th Sept 2023)

We were not quite the first arriving at the Rally, two other motorhomes had beaten us. It was our second visit to this campsite, at least it was sunshine this time, unlike the last visit in February 2020 when snow greeted us within an hour of our arrival.



Like the last time we visited Rutland, it was Andy & Heather who greeted us on the grassed rally field of about three acres. Once we filled up with water which took 20 minutes! We got to our pitch which was grass as there were only 8 hard standing pitches and we like grass when it’s dry. It was not long before 8 more motorhomes arrived, all queuing to get water, it probably came from Rutland Water which was about 2 miles away.

Because we had this expanse of a field we all decided to erect our pop-up gazebos in a circle a short distance away from the Motorhomes, with our Swift Gazebo as the focal point, meeting area and a place for our snacks & goodies. The motorhomers that arrived on Wednesday all met up for the meet & greet at 5 pm.

On Thursday we went to visit Oakham by car and that evening we all met in the Plough a quintessential English country pub in the heart of the village of Greetham, where we took part in the weekly quiz. We made several other visits as well, including Friday Night Fish & Chips, Sunday lunch and a social drink on the last night of the rally.

On Friday we went to Melton Mowbray to get our supply of Pork Pies and several other members made the journey, either by bus from Greetham or by their Toad, (Tow Car) also visiting Stamford's traditional street market which is held every Friday on Broad and Ironmonger Street.



Saturday was the AGM in Greetham Village Hall, followed by a trip back to the hall in the evening for an American Supper-style buffet evening, which everyone contributed to by bringing loads of tempting food, in fact too much really! The village hall opened the bar for the night and we all had a great evening.

Sunday at 10am as usual is raffle time with the prizes donated by the members. Julie & Gwen did a great job and extracted £61 from all the members.

Most days the field was a hive of activity, from meetings in the Bedouin tents in the middle of the rally field to members trying their electric bikes out, unfortunately, Pauline fell off Gwen's bike when one of her dogs thought it was great fun to chase her, Pauline decided to abandon the bike, but her wrist did not fair well with the ground. I decided to exit my motorhome without touching the steps, no harm was done, only pride as several members were nearby watching.

Monday evening was blustery, but Heather, Bridget and Ann managed to cook beef burgers in their motorhomes, to everybody's delight as no one had to cook.

Wednesday came quickly with members heading home although some stayed overnight in campsites elsewhere, as 6 motorhomes were heading to the Lincoln show. Being the Marshals for the show we went straight to Lincoln. Even though it was only a 40-mile journey it was not a good one, as the wind and rain were so strong, I lost a fridge grill, and setting up had to be delayed because of the weather.



Lincoln Show Rally (21st - 25th September 2023)

As new members of SMOC (we joined at Peterborough), Alan, Pepper and I were excited about joining our very first club rally. We've been touring in our van (a Swift Kon-Tiki) since 2017 and this year we became full time van-lifers, but this was our first outing with a group. We were keen to meet other SMOC member and to swap tales of travels, trials and triumphs in our vans.



Lincoln Showground was well laid out, which made finding the SMOC rally site quick and easy; just follow the road until you reach the club areas then look for the signs. On arrival at the SMOC spot, Robert greeted us, invited us to the Welcome drinks and guided us to a suitable spot to pitch up. There was plenty of space to make ourselves at home.

Unsure what would be involved, we joined the gathering for the rally intro. After the welcome drink and a tasty burger, conversation turned to unusual topics including the significance of upside down pineapples on cabin doors aboard cruise liners and why you should not plant pampas grass in your front garden. Thanks to Andy for his take on these and many more subjects over the course of the night. We also heard some fun tales from others about their travels and views on touring the UK and abroad and shared our alcohol stashes. In the wee small hours of the morning we finally headed for bed, none too steadily!

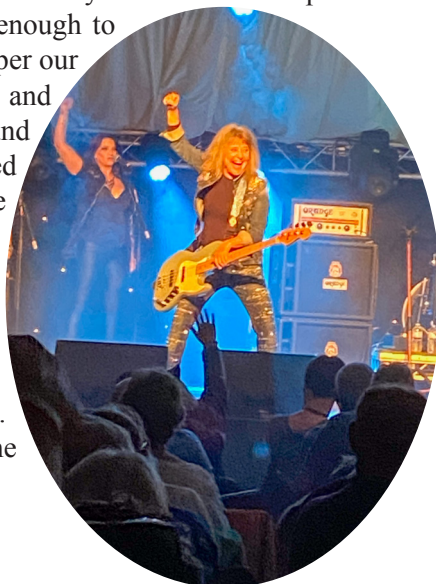
Over the following three days we explored the many stalls and exhibits, did a little celebrity spotting (we chatted to Darren the Urban Motorhomer and glimpsed the Roaming Radfords). We even took our shots at the archery (taking the ladies prize for highest scorer). Pepper also had the chance to meet many new doggie pals as we strolled around the showground.



Being a Warners show, we were treated to a variety of aural entertainment by the food area during the day and each evening in the Marquee. By far the star turn for us was Suzi Quatro on Saturday night – we listened her bass driven rock ‘n’ roll, mixed with stories of her musical journey through the decades and those she met along the way. She played and sang up a storm, and looked pretty amazing for 73!

Sunday was a wind-down day, starting with the rally raffle and catchup at 10 am. We turned up just in time and were lucky enough to win a couple of prizes in the draw. Even Pepper our cheeky little dachshund joined the gathering and made new friends, including a mini dachshund who lived with fellow rally newbies parked on the next pitch. So it was sad to when the gang started heading off on Sunday - we were almost last to leave, staying until the Monday.

Huge thanks to Robert and his lovely wife for being top notch rally marshalls, and to everyone who made us feel so welcome. We look forward to joining another rally in the not too distant future.



Susie Dyke - 3518

Cardiff Rally (10th – 17th October 2023)

We arrived on the Monday before the rally started having spent three days near Cardigan at a CL near the Internal Fire Museum, to which we can thoroughly recommend a visit. The road down to Cardiff was a bit of a pain as it seemed the speed limit changed every couple of hundred metres from 30 to 50, back to 20 back to 30, back to 20 then back to 50. A real challenge not to get caught!

The site is right on the edge of the lovely Bute Park, and Cardiff and its castle are only about a fifteen-minute walk away. All pitches were hard standing, which was a blessing considering how wet Wales can be; and also had their own water point. We had fifteen ralliers in total although not everyone stayed for the whole week and we welcomed Pauline and Keith Caldicott from Pontypool to their first rally with us.

We challenged everyone with a “Pub Name game”. You have to illustrate the name of the pub you were given when you arrived, pop your artwork in a window and then wander around all the motorhomes trying to work out who had what pub. Everybody managed a few but the winners were Jan and Jim.

The weather was kind to us with rain mostly at night. Unfortunately, it was really quite cold and windy so although we planned to run quizzes etc. in the evenings it was not possible. We did manage to get together for our welcome meeting and a glass of wine (or two) on our last evening. We also celebrated two birthdays, Heather Luke and Ray Cannon, who shared a cake we bought. I cannot say which birthdays they were, but I could not get enough candles on the cake!



From the site, there was a flat circular walk across the two bridges that span the river Taff which was about two miles on a tarmacked path which many people did with their four-legged friends. If you were feeling particularly fit, they also had a fitness trail with various challenges on the route where you could perform dips, back stretches, sit-ups and lots of other tortuous exercises for the very fit (and young) amongst us.



Other areas of the park have football and rugby pitches which seemed well used and wooded areas and loads of foot and cycle paths to follow. Cardiff itself has a lot to offer with the Castle and several Museums to visit and a very good “Toot Bus” which ran every half an hour so you could get on and off and see most of the attractions. Eating out was not a

problem as there are so many restaurants and pubs to choose from and we found at least two Wetherspoons where you are almost guaranteed to find at least one pair of Ralliers at lunchtime. Mind you within five minutes’ walk of the site there was an excellent Chinese takeaway which we indulged in.

Several members went off to visit the Royal Mint, only to find that they have so many UK coins in stock, they are only minting Euros for other countries now. The problem seems to be that more and more people and businesses are going “card only” nowadays. It might be a while before we get any coins with King Charles III on.

From the park, there is a water bus which goes to Cardiff Bay and Mermaid Quay every half hour. Down there you can see some of the history of the docks and



also see what a wonderful regeneration has taken place. The Welsh Assembly is also based there so it is possible to tell them what you think of the 20 mph speed limits!

The Pierhead is a Grade I listed building, originally built as offices for the Bute Docks Company (later renamed the Cardiff Railway Company). In 1922, the Great Western Railway took over and the Pierhead became its head office. Following

the decline in the coal industry, the Pierhead became disused - it was eventually revived as part of the National Assembly for Wales.

The restored Norwegian Church built to serve the Norwegian sailors who docked in the city. has attractive white clapboard cladding and pointy spire features and an interesting gallery and café with a patio offering views across the Bay.

Another popular place to visit was St. Fagans National Museum of History where houses from all over Wales have been rebuilt. It stands in the grounds of the magnificent St Fagans Castle, a late 16th-century manor house donated to the people of Wales by the Earl of Plymouth. There are workshops where craftsmen still demonstrate their traditional skills. There is one of the last working clogmakers in Wales, a weaver working in an 18th-century woollen mill and a miller producing flour in the 19th-century corn mill. Best of all entry is free!



Technology isn't everything!

I had just spent an hour in the bank with my father, as he had to transfer some money. I couldn't resist asking: "Dad, why don't we activate your internet banking?" "Why would I do that?" he replied.

"Because then you won't have to spend an hour here for things like that transfer. You can even do your shopping online. Everything will be so easy!" I was so excited about introducing him to the exciting world of online banking.

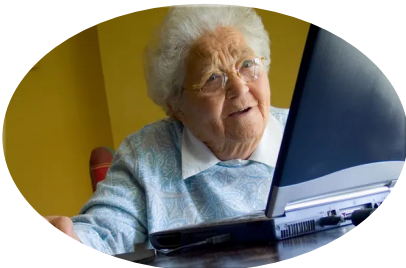
He thought for a minute, then answered "If I do that, I won't have to step out of the house?"

"Yes, yes" I said. I told him how even grocery can be delivered to your front door now, and how Amazon delivers everything! His answer left me speechless.

He replied "Since I entered this bank today, I have met four of my friends and I have chatted for a while with the staff who know me very well. You know that I am alone, this is the company that I need. I like to get ready and come to the bank. I have more than enough time, it is the physical touch that I crave. Two years ago I was ill and the shop owner, where I buy my fruit, came to see me and sat by my bedside and cried. When your mum fell down a few days ago during her morning walk, our local grocer saw her and immediately brought her home, as he knows where I live. Would I have that 'human' touch if everything became online?

Why would I want everything delivered to me, forcing me to only interact with my computer? I like to know the person I'm dealing with and not just the 'seller'. It creates bonds and relationships and keeps me active. Does Amazon deliver all this as well?"

Technology isn't life and if we let it life as it is now will be gone, stop saying you have no time to shop local because local to some is all they have. So spend time with people and not with devices and online , a sunny day and a walk out is sometimes all the medicine you need.



Oradour sur-Glane

I always wanted to visit this village and after the French rally we found ourselves close by and took the opportunity. What we found was extremely distressing.

Until 10th June 1944 the village was a peaceful Limousin market town near Limoges. Prosperous and tranquil with plenty of fish in the river Glane. On that day it became a horrific part of French history.



At around 2.00 in the afternoon a detachment of the Das Reich Division of the SS arrived, they parked in various places round the village, but no-one was very worried at that stage as they had seen such soldiers before and assumed that they were just looking at identity papers as usual. Soon the whole village was surrounded by vehicles and lines of soldiers. The village drum was sounded to summon all

the villagers to the village green. They were then divided into groups; women and children on one side, men on the other. The women and children were taken to the Church, which they assumed was for sanctuary and so felt safe. The German officer in charge demanded hostages before they searched all the houses looking for weapons. Bravely the Mayor, Doctor Paul Desourteaux, offered himself and his four sons. Sadly some young people were cycling past the village at that time and were also seized.

The SS then divided the men into several groups and led them into three barns, two garages, a warehouse and a hanger. At around four o'clock there was an explosion which signalled the start of the massacre simultaneously in each site. The men were machine

gunned low in their legs and they kept firing until nobody moved. They then covered the bodies with straw, hay, wood and anything else that would burn and set fire to them, including those that were still sadly alive.



The women and children in the church heard the awful rattle of the machine guns. However, worse was to come for them. Two soldiers came to the church and placed a large container with fuses coming out of it on the floor. Once lit it filled the church with a cloud of acrid smoke and everyone tried to run for cover but could not get out of the locked doors. Eventually the doors of the church were half opened and the soldiers fired their guns continuously until they ran out of ammunition. Again they piled up the pews and chairs and set fire to them not knowing or caring if the ladies and children were dead or alive. One lady managed to get out and although badly wounded collapsed in a nearby garden where the leafy plants covered her, so she survived to bear witness to this barbaric act.



Later that evening the tram from Limoges tried to enter the village and was stopped by the SS. The passengers were divided into those who lived in Oradour and those who came from other villages.

The Oradour people were lined up in front of a fence and had a machine gun trained on them; the remainder were told to go back on the tram to Limoges. Strangely enough they were not shot, just kept for hours and then set free, but could not go back to Oradour and had to go to surrounding villages for shelter. Meanwhile the German soldiers raided the houses for food and drink and left the next morning having shelled and burned the village to the ground. They returned two days later and tried to cover up the evidence and threw all the human remains into pits.



Later local inhabitants were authorised to look for bodies. The job was horrific trying to piece together what was left of their friends and relations and most were unable to be recognised so they were buried together in a special grave and a Mass was said over them.

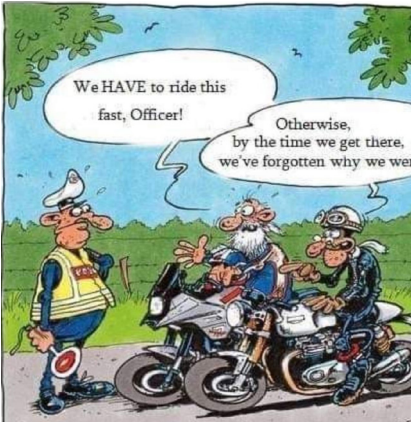
The French Government declared that the village should not be rebuilt but be left as a memorial to those who died and although it has been tidied up there is not one house left undamaged and cars, cooking pots, sewing machines, baby carriages and bicycles were left where they fell.

Why this happened no-one really knows. There are several theories; it was thought the Germans should have gone to Oradour sur-Vayres which was an important centre of the Resistance, or was it revenge for two German soldiers being killed locally, or for an ambush fired on another SS column?



In all 642 villagers died ranging in age from a three-month-old baby to a lady of 92. Photographs of most of them can be seen in the corridor leading from the Museum into the destroyed town. The only German officer to be tried for this massacre was found in 1981 and sentenced to life imprisonment having lived in East Germany under his own name all that time. He had no regrets and said he had just obeyed orders “In wartime one acts harshly and with the means available”.

Marilyn & David Miland - 2378



Feeling stressed? Relax in tranquil countryside.

Newlands Holidays
Charmouth, Bridport, DT6 6RB
Tues 5th – Tue 12th March 2024

A firm favourite in our 2021 program, we once again will pay a visit to Newlands Holiday Park which is nestled besides the lovely World Heritage village of Charmouth and is the perfect spot for exploring Dorset's Jurassic Coast.

All pitches are terraced, overlooking the valley near Lyme Regis and the surrounding countryside.

The Tow Bar & Restaurant provides a great backdrop to our rally, offering an open plan feel with tucked away cosy areas. The bar offers west country ales, wines, spirits and soft drinks as well as barista coffee and teas, plus a range of specialist gins. All food is freshly prepared with locally sourced ingredients and the venue is open for breakfast, lunch and evening meals.

The indoor heated pool and Jacuzzi are open daily (please note extra charges apply)

There are 2 bus routes that pass the Park. Route 31 that goes from Axminster - Weymouth via Dorchester, and Coastline X53 which goes along the coast from Exeter - Poole taking in the beautiful Chesil Beach along the road to Weymouth. Weekly tickets can be purchased from the driver and are usable on both routes.

Access to a number of clifftop walks is possible from the campsite and the town of Charmouth is a 20 minute walk away.

Pitch Fee: £33 / unit per night including hardstanding pitch & EHU

Rally Fee: £1 per person (Guest £10 per unit)

Rally Marshals: Andy & Heather Hartell

Closing Date for bookings: Tues 23rd January 2024

**No arrivals before 11am or after 8pm
(unless by prior arrangement) on any day)**



Woodhill Park Caravan & Camping

East Runton NR27 9PX

17th – 24th April 2024

Situated on the clifftops overlooking East Runton Beach, Woodhill Park offers breathtaking views of the seaside and the nature surrounding it. There is a small shop on the site, as well as a launderette and a large recreation field with a petanque court, tennis nets, and crazy golf.

The Park is an ideal base from which to explore all of the local attractions in the beautiful and unspoilt county of North Norfolk. Nearby East Runton once a traditional fishing village outside Cromer but now a popular holiday destination for camping and caravan holidays. The villages of both East and West Runton are situated between Sheringham and Cromer and are just one mile apart. With quiet unspoilt Blue Flag beaches, miles of footpaths, bridleways and commons with benches to relax on, it is a great place to visit. Both villages have a good variety of shops with fresh produce as well as camping equipment, a butchers and small supermarkets. East Runton has two pubs and a small tea room/bakery.

Cromer a traditional seaside town famous for its delicious crabs and wonderful Victorian pier as well as Banksy's Great British Spraycation artwork, and Sheringham, with a sprawling National Trust park, are two of the most popular spots for holidaymakers and locals alike to experience the best of the north Norfolk coast.. The North Norfolk Railway begins at Sheringham and ends at genteel Holt, a fabulously handsome market town which has become a mecca for discerning visitors looking for independent shops. Most of Holt was burned in its famous fire of 1708, and in its place rose a splendid Georgian town focusing on an appealing Market Place.

Pitch Fees: £23 / unit per night including hardstanding pitch & EHU

Rally Fee: £1 per person (Guests £10 per unit)

Rally Marshals: Bridget & Robert Hubbard

Closing Date for bookings: Wednesday 6th March 2023

No arrivals before 12pm on any day



Bath Waterside & Marina and Caravan Park

Bath BA1 3JT

9th – 16th May 2024

A wellness retreat for the Romans and elegant Georgian architecture around every corner – Bath is the city that has it all. But look beyond its UNESCO World Heritage status and discover a destination bursting with cultural and gastronomic delights, from live music and comedy to captivating tours and experiences.

From a paddle down the River Avon, to touring the Bridgerton filming locations made famous by Netflix's smash hit series – you won't be short of finding adventure. From shopping and exploring the Roman baths, to taking a dip in the mineral-rich waters of the rooftop pool at Thermae Bath Spa, this is one place not to be missed.

Shopping in Bath is simply irresistible, offering a memorable experience with a fabulous selection of small independent shops and stylish boutiques alongside familiar big name stores. The city centre is compact and easily walkable with grand Georgian streets and picturesque passageways to explore

Beside the River Avon, Bath Waterside & Marina and Caravan Park is just two miles from the city centre—ideal for you to stroll along the riverside, cycle or take the park-and-ride bus into beautiful Bath itself. Nestled amid grassy banks and shady trees, the caravan park is located on one of the most treasured stretches of the River Avon. Each of the 88 pitches offer hard standing, free wifi, 16 amp electric and a television connection point. You may choose to cycle or stroll along the towpath taking time out to discover one of the many river and canal side pubs nearby whilst taking in the abundance of wildlife on offer.

Pitch Fees: £30.50 / unit per night including hardstanding pitch & EHU

Rally Fee: £1 per person (Guests £10 per unit)

Rally Marshals: Ann & Nick Halford

Closing Date for bookings: Thursday 28th March 2023

No arrivals before 12pm on any day



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[SmartBox DUO]

***NEW** for October 2019 TowAFrame in partnership with Tow bar Solutions Wales and Wessex Nissan are pleased to announce our exciting new offer. We can now supply a Brand New Nissan Micra – supplied ReadyToTow with TowAFrame.com system installed & Nissan Wessex Finance options available. View the new Demonstration RTT Nissan Micra in the Atrium area Site E.

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