

# THE TRECKER



Issue 86

June 2020

## Editor's Corner

It was rather sobering to look again at the piece I wrote in the previous issue of *The Trecker* in early March. I mentioned the arrival of the first new-style Yearbook and how I was looking forward to the start of the summer rally programme and probably heading across the Channel to France or Spain at some point. Little did I know what lay around the corner and it soon became clear that the only thing that mattered was for us all to do our utmost to stay safe and well.

In the meantime, we've published a couple of issues of a new *Mini-Trecker*, to prove that we haven't gone away, and some of you even said they'd enjoyed reading them. At least the outlook now looks a lot more optimistic than it did at the start of the lockdown period. Restrictions are being eased gradually and many campsites are planning to reopen after 4 July, with Covid Secure rules and with social distancing in place. With luck we may even be able to salvage some of what's left of the rally season, but not until August.

Something you'll notice about this issue is that we don't have any rally reports, for obvious reasons. Even the last of the winter rallies had to be cancelled, not because of Covid-19 but because of ongoing problems with the site water supply. However, we do have something else, as a few members have told us about their endeavours to forsake the British winter for warmer climates.

Geoff Heyes  
PPO

## Chairman's Chat

Here we are again as another *Trecker* lands in your inbox or is delivered by the Royal Mail. Firstly, let me say a big thank you to Geoff Heyes and John Furley for the last two mini issues. It is quite difficult to produce topical newsletters when everything is at a standstill!

I feel sure that the majority of Treckers like Jenny and me are itching to get out on a rally and meet up with old friends and maybe make some new ones. We decided at the end of last summer's rallies that this year we would try and do more home rallies rather than going abroad for most of the summer. (Man plans; God laughs).

Fingers crossed that we might get a few rallies in before the end of the summer.

It's quite depressing when every time we go in our bedroom, we see the motorhome languishing outside the window. Last time it went anywhere was for its MOT in March...

Now another thank you, this time to Monty Toplis for coming up with the idea of Zoom meetings on a Friday and Saturday morning, so we can all keep in touch. Jenny and I have joined in with a few of them so far and it has been great to meet up online with some old friends and hopefully a few

new ones. It seems to be growing week by week and I hope a few more of you will join us. The meetings start at 10.30 but you can join in at any time.

Well I won't bore you all any longer, so I will just say I hope you are all social distancing and keeping well. I hope we can all meet up on a rally field before too long.

Peter Chapman  
Chairman

## Rally Organiser's Report

The lockdown has decimated the rally calendar but the weather has been absolutely gorgeous! I just hope that all of you have kept well and safe and to those who are under the weather at the moment I wish you a speedy recovery.

I have contacted all the rally sites as to their intention after July if the government allow camping and caravanning to recommence. Most have said that they will follow the advice given by the government, however, seven sites have informed me that they will not be allowing visitors to their sites for the rest of 2020. I have listed those below.

RALLY No	VENUE	REASONS WHY
51	Abdess Roding	Cancelled Covid 19
54	Cambridge Outdoor Club	Cancelled Covid 19
58	Valley	Cancelled Covid 19
61	Cilan	Cancelled Covid 19
63	White Rose Club	Cancelled Covid 19
68	Sungrove	Cancelled Covid 19
73	Western Sunfolk	Cancelled Covid 19

There may be other clubs and sites that take the same course of action but to date they haven't contacted me with their decision. This also brings me to those rally officers who have volunteered their services for those rallies that may go ahead in August and to the end of the season, what I need to know from you is do you want to continue or would you prefer to withdraw from your rally because of health concerns etc. I can then make informed decisions on how to proceed with those rallies.

It's not been all bad news, Monty our continental rally organiser has arranged virtual coffee mornings via Zoom which has proved very successful. I hope whilst the lockdown is in force more of you take advantage of this initiative.

You may be aware that Malcolm Burland has stood down from his role as Winter rally organiser. No one has so far come forward, so if any of you want to take this role on then please let me know.

I have been in my current post for the last 13 years, since the 2007 AGM, and think new blood is called for. Therefore, I will not be seeking re-election when my current tenure of office ends and would welcome applicants for this post. I will give my full support and any advice necessary.

Steve Wagstaff  
National Rally Organiser.

## **Membership Matters**

### **Membership Fees - 2021**

Following much discussion at the latest (virtual) committee meeting on 7 June, we have decided that since we have had to cancel all of the rallies at least until the end of July, there should be a concessionary rate for existing members to renew for 2021.

If you choose to renew, then you will receive the full benefit of membership for 2021 at a total cost of only £10, which will include a new set of printed pages for the Yearbook ring binder, hopefully full of rallies that can proceed as far as possible in the normal way.

Anyone who joins or has joined Suntreckers after the lockdown date on 23 March 2020 will pay the normal £30 plus a £10 joining fee as usual but will receive full membership until 31 December 2021.

### **Zoom**

As you may know, we have been using the free Zoom software to hold committee meetings since the lockdown began and this has been remarkably successful. Apart from conforming to the lockdown rules, using Zoom avoids a lot of travelling for committee members and can save at least £250 on the cost of hiring a venue and reimbursement of travel costs. Zoom has also been used for Friday and Saturday coffee mornings, hosted by Monty Toplis.

In view of this, we have decided to invest in an annual subscription to Zoom Pro at a cost of about £144, which will give us some extra facilities and allow us to host meetings of up to 100 people for up to 24 hours, (although we're hoping that committee meetings don't actually go on quite that long). Even after lockdown has eased, we are likely to continue using Zoom for some committee meetings because of the convenience and lower cost.

### **Annual General Meeting**

The use of Zoom Pro is also proposed for the Annual General Meeting, which we are legally obliged to hold within 15 months of the previous one, but we are unlikely to be able to physically meet as usual. Under our Articles of Association (or Constitution), we can only hold an AGM if we have a quorum of at least 31 voting members represented, so we plan to use Zoom Pro and proxy votes to ensure that we are quorate and hold the AGM as advertised at 1pm on Sunday 26 July 2020. According to Section 28 of the Articles, provided a member can exercise their right to speak and vote at the AGM (using Zoom or by proxy), they can be counted in the quorum, without having to be physically present.

Full details of the AGM and how to either access it using Zoom, or how to register a proxy vote for someone else to represent you will be sent out at least 30 days before the date of the AGM.

John Furley  
Membership Secretary

### **Webmaster**

With the possibility that we may be able to get away in the coming weeks here is a reminder that you can make rally booking easier by booking online. Who knows this could be for rallies in August so book now to make sure you have a space!

The Suntreckers Facebook group had 32 members a few months ago but now has nearly 80. It's good to see people keeping in touch with a variety of topics. If you haven't joined the

group yet and log on to do so, please don't forget you must answer all three questions before the Admin will approve your request.

Alan Ingram  
Webmaster

## Yearbook Change

Please note one change to the details given for Rally 69 - Kingfisher Farm.  
New email address for Eric and Crystal Hill: [ericehill17@outlook.com](mailto:ericehill17@outlook.com)

## Winter Adventures

Instead of the usual rally reports we are able to bring you news of how some of our members spent the winter, culminating in a couple of unexpectedly arduous return journeys as the Covid pandemic started to bite. We'll finish this section with news of one well-known Suntrecker couple who are going further and making sunnier climes more of a permanent home.

### To Spain and back (just!) 1 - Ian Sinclair

Knowing that present circumstances mean there won't be any rally reports in *The Trecker*, how about a Suntrecker non-rally report? During the winter months, besides the UK winter rally programme, there are quite a few meetings of the not so hardy Treckers who prefer sunny naturism to frost and snow.

I am an inbetweenner, attending the winter rallies from the end of the summer season up to, and including the pre-Christmas rally at Greenhill Park in early December. That rally is *my* Christmas, and once over (and we have all listened to Big Ben chiming and sung *Auld Lang Syne*) I start preparing for the sunny non-rallies. Passport - tick, ferry ticket - tick, van serviced and European breakdown cover up to date - tick. Then, once Big Ben has chimed for real and I've checked the oil and water and loaded my teddy into the van I head south to Dover. Boarding the ferry is the start of the holiobob, a bit late now if there's something I've forgotten to pack.

With the satnav set to kilometres, the key turns in the ignition, the ferry man waves you forward, and with a clunky clunky the wheels drop off the big bow doors onto French tarmac. Weather dictates progress, but usually 48 hours later I'm in shorts looking at the Mediterranean on the Spanish side of its border with France. The second afternoon in Spain, keeping the big blue glittering bit on my left and the mountains on my right, I'm south of Barcelona and enter a little camper stop in Cubelles. Opposite the pitch I choose is an English van with a reg number I recognise, ex-Treckers I've kept in touch with over the years. Four days of relaxing in deck chairs, banter, laughter, coffee mornings, afternoon tea, and evening get-togethers follow, with the occasional bike ride into the village (well one has to do the occasional bit of exercise!)

Rested and revitalised I move on. Valencia for a night and day, and onwards, making good progress with the Mediterranean Motorway (AP7) now being toll free, a night and day in El Campello, and I'm soon parking up on the cliff top in Torrevieja for two nights listening to the waves and taking in the sun, then on south to Cartagena and El Portùs.

Trecking is not just about naturism, it has its practical side. Just before leaving UK I was contacted by Liz and Rod Stewart, members now in Portugal. Could I liaise with her daughter to collect a prescription drug that could not be posted as it needed refrigerating and take it with me to El Portùs where they would be for Christmas and New Year.

Liz booked me a pitch, and the precious cargo was handed over, followed by meals, boules matches, coffee, more banter and laughter, etc.

Liz and Rod headed back to their project in Portugal, and I was on the road and heading south with a new cargo, a book that was Liz and Rod's going to new owners, members Adey and Clark Jarvis who I knew were down at Vera Playa, my next port of call.



*Enjoying a meal with Adey and Clark.*

A few days on the beach and parked on the naturist pitches on the Cuevas Mar campsite with Adey and Clark meant enjoyable meals together, coffees, teas, banter, laughter, and finding there were also other Treckers there, like David and Noreen Whittaker who organised a quiz in the clubhouse to add to the entertainment.

Getting itchy feet and wanderlust, I headed back to the Mar Menor area, and got settled in on a camper stop in San Javier/Los Alcazarea, where it became quite busy - my mates from Cubelles were there, the owners of Greenhill Park, Andy and Sue turned up, and then our webby, Alan and Jackie Ingram rolled in, so lots of meals, coffees, teas, banter and laughter again.



*You just can't beat winter sun, can you?*

Unfortunately, Covid-19 then reared its ugly head and Spain went into lockdown, closely followed by France, so there were a few worrying days of changing ferry bookings and dashing back up to ferry ports.

Although I'm widowed, I'm never alone on my travels. As a Trecker our Trecker family are always welcoming wherever I go. I have only mentioned the few friends and members I met up with this last winter and I'm sure many more members take advantage of Spain's warm winters. So jot down your names, and rough dates/destinations and let's look forward to meeting up next winter, if we are allowed to travel by then that is. Here's hoping!

### **To Spain and back (just!) 2 - Mike and Wendy Clarke**

We like to spend winter in Spain these days and arrived at Vera Playa in November. We had a lovely Christmas Day on the beach with a German friend and enjoyed a mid-day skinny dip on New Year's Day. We spent many of the following days cycling, swimming and sunbathing, right up until Friday 13 March when there was much talk of an imminent lockdown. We walked to the chiringuito on the beach for a lovely meal - our last before restrictions were imposed the very next day.



*Christmas Day on the beach with a friend.*

At first, we hadn't appreciated what was involved and on Saturday we set off on one of our bike rides. We soon passed a beach bar being taped off by police, looking a bit like a crime scene. In Puerto Rey all the bars were closed so we found somewhere to sit with our flask, but before we could pour the tea a police car drove up and we were ordered to go home.

For the next seven weeks we were only allowed out alone and only for going to the supermarket or pharmacy. Gloves and masks had to be worn in the supermarkets, where

there were a lot of empty shelves at first, but stock levels soon returned to normal. Staying at the Bahia de Vera complex we were the lucky ones. Unlike at some other locations we were allowed to walk around the grounds, although the pool area was closed. With only 40 of the 220 apartments occupied it was never busy, but we were able to talk to a few neighbours. These were worrying times with news of more infections and deaths every day. On some days it was too hot to sunbathe on the terrace and we had to stay indoors with the blinds closed.

On 2 May a gradual easing of restrictions started. We were allowed out for exercise between 6am and 10am, going no further than 1km. Initially we set off nervously towards the beach. There were a lot of people about, all keeping their distance with police patrolling everywhere. A bit later we could go further afield, but only within the municipality. Then on 16 May some bars opened their outside terraces with no more than 50% occupancy. We had lunch at the Millionaire bar in Puerto Rey to celebrate my seventieth birthday and the next day we booked lunch at the Irish Rover, ten miles along the coast, where we didn't see any other cyclists on route.



*Birthday celebration in Puerto Rey.*

We had planned to set off for home on 19 March but couldn't get our motorhome out of storage because of the lockdown. It wasn't until 19 May that we could finally begin what was to prove a long and arduous journey after obtaining the paperwork necessary for crossing the border into France.

We set off in the evening and slept at the services on the AP6 near Mazzaron, ready for an early start the next day. After 397 hot, sticky miles we passed by Zaragoza and spent the night at Sobradriel Services on the AP68. We reached the French border the following day and were waved through with no need to show our papers. It was another very hot day and after 303 miles we were happy to park up for the night just north of Bordeaux. Dinner followed by a shower and an early night put us in good stead for the next day's journey, when it was mercifully cooler, 22C and rain - bliss! After another 456 miles we stopped for the night at Aire de la Baie de Somme, only 60 miles from the tunnel.

The final leg of our journey from the tunnel exit in Folkstone to Shropshire saw us complete another 255 miles and after a total of 29 hours of driving, we finally made it home.

Wendy and Mike Clarke

## New home in Portugal

Many of you will know Rod and Liz Stewart as 'full-time' motorhomers, who for several years now have been roaming freely, alternating their time between southern Europe in the winter months and returning to the UK in summer, well in time for the gala rally. Sensing their lifestyle was threatened by the increasing chance of a no-deal Brexit, they found a solution by becoming European citizens. To achieve this they had to apply for a residency permit, but first they had to buy a property. They eventually found one in the historic town of Tomar in central Portugal.

The pictures below show the bungalow as they found it at the beginning of October last year.



*The overgrown front*



*"View" from the back door*

As you can see it needed a bit of work before they could move in, so at first they stayed at the motorhome aire close to the town centre. Unfortunately, they had not long started work on the house when they both came down with flu, having missed getting jobs in UK. For Liz it turned into a chest infection, so she effectively lost three weeks.

They also went to visit friends in Spain over Christmas and New Year and it wasn't until the end of January that work began in earnest. A reliable local builder was found but once the

lockdown started in March the aire closed so they could no longer use the facilities there. Mains water was now available at the property and once the wet April weather had abated a digger arrived and work started on installing a new septic tank.



At the end of April work started on the biggest (and most expensive) part of the job, taking down and rebuilding the partly demolished extension, reinforcing the walls with pillars and adding a new roof. The chimney had to be removed as well before installing new windows, front door and internal doors.



*Old extension down and start of new.*



*Floors levelled and walls going up.*



*The chimney came down from the outside...*



*...and the inside.*



*Leaving it looking quite spacious*



*BBQ lunch, salad, crisps and wine!*

Around the middle of May Rod found out that the motorhome aire was open again and when we last heard from them, they were spending their days parked in the shade and returning to the bungalow later as the builders finish work. They can then act as security guards overnight and as they have no neighbours, enjoy a strip wash outside.

## **Continental Rallies**

Sadly, both of the September continental rallies have now been cancelled because of continuing uncertainty over foreign travel. Let's hope for better luck next year.

## **Lockdown insanity?**

Be careful because people are going crazy from being in lock down! Actually, I've just been talking about this with the microwave and toaster while drinking coffee and we all agreed that things are getting bad. I didn't mention anything to the washing machine as she puts a different spin on everything. Certainly not to the fridge as he is acting cold and distant. In the end, the iron straightened me out as she said everything will be fine, no situation is too pressing. The vacuum was very unsympathetic... told me to just suck it up, but the fan was more optimistic and hoped it would all soon blow over! The toilet looked a bit flushed when I asked its opinion and didn't say anything but the door knob told me to get a grip. The front door said I was unhinged and so the curtains told me to... yes, you guessed it... pull myself together.

## **Thank you to Malcom and Maureen**

Our thanks are due to Malcom and Maureen Burland, who for several years have organised our winter rally programme and helped with printing of *The Trecker*. Malcom has now stepped down as winter rally organiser and printing duties are no longer required as we have now purchased our own laser colour printer.

## **And finally...**

Members' contributions for *The Trecker* are always welcome, as are photographs, which should be sent as separate files and not embedded in a document. Please remember that you need permission from everyone in your photograph.

Please send all contributions to [ppo@suntreckers.org.uk](mailto:ppo@suntreckers.org.uk)

Thank you to John for sending this newsletter by email and for printing and sending out the paper version. Also thanks to Alan for putting it on the website.