

THE TRECKER



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Editor's Corner

Climate change has been in the news again recently, highlighting the effect it's already having on our weather in UK. This has certainly been reflected at some of the rallies we've been lucky enough to have attended recently, with brilliant sunshine at Carbeil, blistering heat at Blackthorns and some torrential rainfall during our stay at Liverpool Sun and Air. Nothing, of course, in comparison to the terrible flooding in Germany and Belgium last month, but perhaps a worrying sign of things to come.

On a more positive note, we've had much more encouraging news on the pandemic as our vaccination rate gets ever higher and all of the remaining restrictions were eased on 19 July. Most of the *Treckers* we've met recently have still been behaving cautiously, but it hasn't stopped us from enjoying ourselves. Many of the rallies have been very well attended, with the numbers boosted by several members who would probably have been rallying on the continent in more normal times. Speaking of which, we had some very positive news at the virtual AGM when we learned that the 2021 continental rally programme will be resurrected for next year and there's also a very good chance that we'll soon have some winter rallies to look forward to. You can read more about both of these later.

Finally and on a slightly more unusual subject for *The Trecker*, some of you may have noticed that the national press recently made a bit of a fuss about a group of naturist ramblers who regularly walk in Sherwood Forest. Long-term member John Cole stuck his head above the parapet and wrote to *The Times*, as you can see below.

<p>THE  TIMES Saturday August 14 2021</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Rose Wild Feedback</p> 	<p>The bare facts John Cole wrote from Woodstock, Oxfordshire, after we published a news story about naked men running amok in Sherwood Forest. "Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of the matter, the report referred to them throughout as 'nudists' rather than 'naturists'. For 20 years my wife and I have been members of several British naturist clubs and visited many more. I can honestly not remember anyone referring to themselves as a 'nudist', rather than as a 'naturist'. 'Nudist' is used non-pejoratively in America but in this country only by those who disapprove. Could your style guide please recognise this?" I'd like to extend an olive branch, or perhaps a fig leaf, but I'm afraid my dictionary (Collins Online) doesn't support this distinction. In fact it states, rather bluntly, "Naturism is the same as nudism." In the circumstances, I think the style guide can stay silent.</p>

Full marks to John for trying, but without the support of the dictionary it seems to be an argument he can't win – not that I can throw much light on the matter. Much as I'm happy

to be referred to as a naturist, I've never given much thought as to whether the term nudist is appropriate or not. Instead I'll finish with a rather tongue-in-cheek suggestion. By all means go naturist (or nudist) rambling if you wish, there's no law against it, it's a healthy form of exercise and in good weather the dress code is highly appropriate. However if you choose to spend your time attending as many of our rallies as possible, then you can simply be referred to as a "*Trecker*" and we'll all be happy!

Geoff Heyes
PPO

Chairman's Chat

Hello everyone

Let me introduce myself, my name is Steve Wagstaff and most of you will know me as Suntreckers National Rally Organiser, a role I started in 2007 and have finally relinquished at this year's AGM, a grand total of 14 years.

I thought that I would be standing down from the committee, but Peter Chapman offered to resign as Chairman if that would make it easier to replace his wife Jenny in her role as Company Secretary. I was then asked if I would stand as Chairman and my wife Tess as Company Secretary, we were duly co-opted onto the committee in these positions. There is one proviso that these roles would be short term, that is until the next AGM when it is hoped new blood will be voted in to take over from us.

Talking of new blood, I would like to introduce you to two new committee members, both of whom were co-opted immediately after the AGM. They are Eddie Silk who is our new National Rally Organiser and Martin Hodgson who is taking on the role of General Member. Both, I am absolutely certain, will excel in these jobs.

Now a great big thank you to those of you who attended the virtual AGM in July. There were 63 members, all in good humour and all joined in a robust question and answer session which took place at the end. A number of points were raised and will be dealt with by the committee throughout the year.

The one thing that impressed me was the friendliness that was evident amongst the members both at the AGM and immediately afterwards. There is always room for robust debate but no need to fall out with one another and I am very pleased to say we said goodbye as friends.

So what do I expect from you and what do you expect of me? Well the answer to the first part of the question is easy, I expect you to attend as many rallies as you want, support the rally officers who always strive to do their best, and of course enjoy yourselves. As for me I hope to carry on the fine tradition of previous chairpersons and that is to be open, transparent in the committee dealings with the club and try my best to listen to your opinions and act on them whenever possible.

That's all from me at present, but don't forget if you have any problems on rallies etc, we have a skilled committee team who will always do their utmost to help.

Steve Wagstaff
Chairman.

Rally Organiser's Report

As your new National Rally Organiser, please let me introduce myself. My name is Eddie Silk, married to Pat for 56 years, and members of Suntreckers since 2013. We are regular rally officers.

All through the early summer while Tess and Steve were trying to drum up a replacement after 13 years of sterling service I thought “someone will step up to the plate”; “not me, I’m too old to hold the job for very long”; “there are those better equipped than I”. Of course, the silence was deafening so in desperation I volunteered, hopeful that I may engender a little more enthusiasm among you, the members, to “do your bit” – after all this club is run by the members for the members: no professionals, all volunteers.

The figures illustrate the apathy. In this year’s rally programme, out of a total of 288 member units, we had 32 rally officers running 60 UK rallies and 2 rally officers down to run 5 continental rallies. Of the remaining 254 member units, 13 have declared they will never run a rally and of the remaining 241 units 41 said “not this year”. That leaves 200 member units, not one of whom responded to an appeal to take on any of the 5 cancelled rallies.

There are others such as committee members and regalia/equipment providers who do their bit but even so, my friends, that is scandalous. Every year, Steve and Tess invested untold hours arranging rallies for your enjoyment; untold hours pleading with the membership to step up, untold hours preparing the yearbook, untold hours looking after the Rally Officers, ensuring they are equipped to do the job: their reward? Apathy and cancelled rallies.

On behalf of the entire membership I extend a heartfelt massive thank you to Steve and Tess. I hope I won’t let them or you down. I hope Steve can enjoy his golf and Tess the peace that brings. I’m all fired up and ready to go but without your support my efforts will be wasted. So please, please, get behind me.

Not only do we need rally officers – we need rally sites. If you get just the whiff of a potential site, don’t keep it to yourself, tell us. Not all the current catalogue of sites is guaranteed to continue ad infinitum and if the upsurge in interest in naturism translates into new members we’re going to need more sites of every description.

Next year’s programme will be very similar to this with just a few tweaks initiated by the sites and perhaps an additional site or two. If you have any suggestions as to how the programme could be better arranged or how untapped clubs, commercial or field sites could be brought into play, please make constructive comments to me.

Finally if you think running a rally is too difficult or there’s too much paperwork, think again. The preparation is nothing more than a bit of correspondence with the ralliers and the site – you don’t have to be computer literate, just keep records. The rally itself is what you make of it. The reporting is simplicity itself and for next year even simpler. The cost is zero or better. I’m looking forward to having to turn potential rally officers away or rationing the distribution.

Eddie Silk
National Rally Organiser.

2021 AGM

As reported above this year’s AGM was again a virtual event, using the Zoom video-conferencing app. 63 members attended and as well as dealing with the election of officers etc were able to take part in a question-and-answer session after the main business had finished. An interesting discussion took place on the future of our coffee mornings – should we continue with “bring your own” as per Covid guidelines, or should we revert to everything being provided by the rally officer? In a straw poll where attendees were asked the question: “On a rally, would you prefer to take your own supplies to coffee mornings?”, 55% said “Yes”, 12% said “No” and 33% had no preference.

Presentations

There were no presentations this year because of the short rally season and no gala rally. Long service awards are being posted out to the following members, although there are no 10 year plaques available at the moment:

10 Years

Mike & Wendy	Clarke
Leo	Collins
Andrew	Good
John & Sue	Muscroft
John & Shirley	Pitt
Tony & Hilary	Pratt
June	Salmon
Eddie & Pat	Silk
Frank & Julie	Tebbit
Richard & Rachel	Thompson
Monty & Trina	Toplis

15 Years

Bill & Ann	Bailey
Mike & Sue	Bennett/Watts
Terry	Gascoyne
Mike & Carol	Kersey
Ray & Trish	Moore
Richard	Walshaw

20 Years

Carl & Anita	Clayton
John & Sue	Cole
Grahame & Maureen	Fox-Dowden
Fritz & Maria	Henning/Frank-Eiffert
Alex & Margaret	Melrose
Steve & Tess	Wagstaff

25 Years

Bob & Rosemary	Barwick
Lennie & Yvonne	Betts
Peter & Dorothy	Lawrence

30 Years

Robert & Joan	Hopper
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35 Years

Mark	Atkinson
Alan & Ann	Beck
Ray & Dorothy	Couzens
Graham & Gillian	Fraser/Hardwick

Committee News

Although we now have a full complement of committee members following the appointments immediately after the AGM, we have heard since that our treasurer Iris Montgomery plans to step down soon. We will therefore be looking to recruit someone to fill this important role as soon as possible, so if you think you could help please get in touch with a committee member.

Rally Reports

Rally 44 – Blackthorns - A virgin rally officer's account of his first rally

We are on site at Blackthorns, with some trepidation waiting for our first *Treckers* to arrive. We are also members of Blackthorns so I can get it in the neck from two directions if I get it wrong!

I should not have worried. After pitching 15 units, mostly large and heavy, only one had to be winched out and put on steel plates. Thank goodness the man I needed to do this was on site.

What soon became obvious was that if the weather was hot and the pool was open (and warm) we would be fine - and so it came to pass. We had a Saturday evening BBQ, all based on BYO which I had prewarned everyone about. We retained social distancing by spreading out on the patio, six to a table. This was followed by a display of belly dancing courtesy of Sue, which attracted members and *Treckers* alike! Thank you Sue for making

the occasion very different. To add to the atmosphere the pool was illuminated and swimming could continue right up until midnight.

On Monday evening we bought in fish and chips followed by a quiz. By now *Treckers* and members were mixing freely so I had no problem giving prizes to the winners who were Blackthorns members. The Pétanque competition was won by Lennie and Yvonne. The weather did break on Tuesday evening, but otherwise we could have been in Provence rather than Bedford.



Not sure why the rally officer is hiding



Winners of the pétanque competition - Lennie and Yvonne

Thank you to all on the rally for following the COVID protocols required by the club and above all thank you for being so gregarious to friends new and old alike. Blackthorns want you back next year, you will get the same welcome although I cannot guarantee the weather.

Alan and Margaret Taylor.

Rally 47 – Liverpool Sun & Air Society

This was our first visit to the Liverpool club, although the area is very familiar to both of us. I was born and brought up about four miles away and Eileen hails from not much further afield – not that we knew it existed at the time.

We'd run a couple of winter rallies before but were still first-time rally officers as far as the summer programme is concerned. Not that we need have worried – the club made everything very easy for us, allowing us to use all their facilities and inviting us to join in a couple of their events.

We were a bit disappointed by the low turnout, only six units booked in out of a possible ten, made worse when John and Lyn had to leave us on the second day, having been “pinged” overnight by the dreaded NHS Covid app. Thankfully they were both none the worse after their three days of isolation at home.

Fine weather on the first day allowed the full complement of ralliers to gather outside the clubhouse for an evening get together and chat but sadly when we reconvened indoors for the Friday coffee morning, we had already said goodbye to John and Lyn. We were fortunate that the club had by now relaxed most of their Covid restrictions and in the evening we took advantage of a “carry-out”, aka take-away in the clubhouse, allowing us to socialise with some of the members as well as using the jacuzzi and sauna if we wished.

Saturday evening was probably the highlight of our stay as the club had organised a Hawaiian-themed evening with an excellent three-course meal provided.



About to enjoy a Hawaiian starter

This was the first such social event since the start of the pandemic and lots of members turned up to make it a really special evening. It was good to see that the *Treckers* didn't huddle together on their own table but mingled with the members who made us all extremely welcome. Indeed one couple we had chatted to even invited us round to their chalet for coffee the next morning.

The meal was followed by a quiz to keep us all entertained. It would be good to report that one of the *Trecker* tables had won but I'm afraid that is not the case.

I accept that being so close to my old stomping ground could lead to a degree of bias, but I can't recall a warmer welcome from any other club we've visited and I am definitely planning to come back next year, ideally with better weather and a few more ralliers.

Geoff and Eileen Heyes

Winter Rallies

We have some excellent news for those of us who believe that caravans and motorhomes are for all year round use as Terry Gascoyne has been working on a winter rally programme, starting in October. We have dates and venues for four rallies at the moment, with the possibility of adding another one later for 2022. Some of these are still provisional, but as soon as they are confirmed they'll be added to the website booking system and further details will be sent to all.

Thu 7 – Tue 12 October	Greenhill Park – 5 night rally
Thu 4 – Mon 8 November	Stoney Stanton, Fortway Farm – Fireworks rally
Fri 3 – Mon 6 December	Greenhill Park – pre-Christmas rally
Fri 27 – Mon 31 January 2022	Telford Naturist Club – Burns night rally (Max 10 units)

Continental Rallies for 2022

Although Monty has no wish to continue and we're still looking for a replacement continental rally organiser, he has agreed to resurrect the 2020 (and 2021) programme for next year, with all last year's dates adjusted by one day. The programme is as follows:

Tue 24 May – Fri 3 June	Devèze
Mon 6 June – Thu 16 June	Domaine de la Gagère
Mon 20 June – Thu 30 June	Club du Soleil de Touraine
Fri 2 Sep – Sun 11 Sep	Lous Suais
Wed 14 Sep – Sat 24 Sep	Le Couderc



Tips and Tricks

A couple of members have suggested a "tips and tricks" section for *The Trecker*, to contain useful ideas gleaned over many years of camping and caravanning experience. Here's a really simple one to start it off. To dry a damp towel after showering, simply place it on a clothes hanger suspended from the awning. It sure beats draping it over one of the door mirrors or bike rack and waiting for it to blow off.

We're sure many of you must have some really good tips to share with us. Just send your idea, together with a picture if possible, to ppo@suntreckers.org.uk and we'll try to include it in the next issue of *The Trecker*.

Down Memory Lane

Membership Secretary John Furley recently received the following letter from John and Anne Stephens, which some of you may find interesting:

Dear John,

We have sadly contacted you to say we will no longer be renewing our membership of Suntreckers. Clearing out some of our stuff I came across these 2 pennants which we thought someone might like to make use of. One is an unused standard flag which we all had in the early days. The second is a hand produced version which was the work of one of our early members. At the time he made them you had to be in favour to own one, quite unique.

Our joining the Club was by way of a route that I have not previously spoken about. I used to be a Whitehall press officer/spokesman for the Department of the Environment (a Civil Servant). At that time it was a very big Ministry, including policy covering caravanning usage taking in issuing Certificates of Exemption for Caravan Club rallies. They knew I was an active caravanner and would occasionally ask me for my opinion on various decisions or problems that may arise. On the occasion they were considering Suntreckers first application I just happened to be speaking to them. I remember giving a positive response saying I could not see any reason for rejecting it, providing the Club operated within the caravanning requirement of the Certificate. What I did not tell them that we might be interested in joining sometime. Incidentally, there were two applications being considered at that time, the other was not granted.

We were caravanning in France with our good friends David and Elsie Brown. They told us that they had just joined Suntreckers. They were surprised that I already knew about the Club and needed no further encouragement to join.

At the time that the Club's application was being considered little did I realise that it would eventually give so many good times, making so many lifelong friends. It has been an absolute privilege for us to have been members.

Thank you

John and Anne Stephens



Early Suntreckers pennant and hand-made flag.

John also received the following letter from Avril Gorham with this table runner.



Dear John & Lyn

While sorting out my airing cupboard I came across the enclosed together with the sheets I used to supply each year for the AGM. It was made by John Clayton's wife Anne and sat in the middle of the committee table with the wooden plaque made by Clive Own in the middle of it. Hopefully you will still be able to have the AGM once again this year after missing out in 2020. I will be thinking of you all.

I still play boules with the U3A on a Monday morning at our local park and am taking part in a match this evening

Kindest regards

Avril (Gorham)

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

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