

Triple crown

Lee Davey visits Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset – three of the country's most unspoilt counties

THIS MONTH'S SITES



1. CADESIDE

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p105 of the 2015/16 Directory.



2. SMEDMORE HOUSE

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p124 of the 2015/16 Directory.



3. HURN LANE

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p112 of the 2015/16 Directory. **Facilities include a playground.**

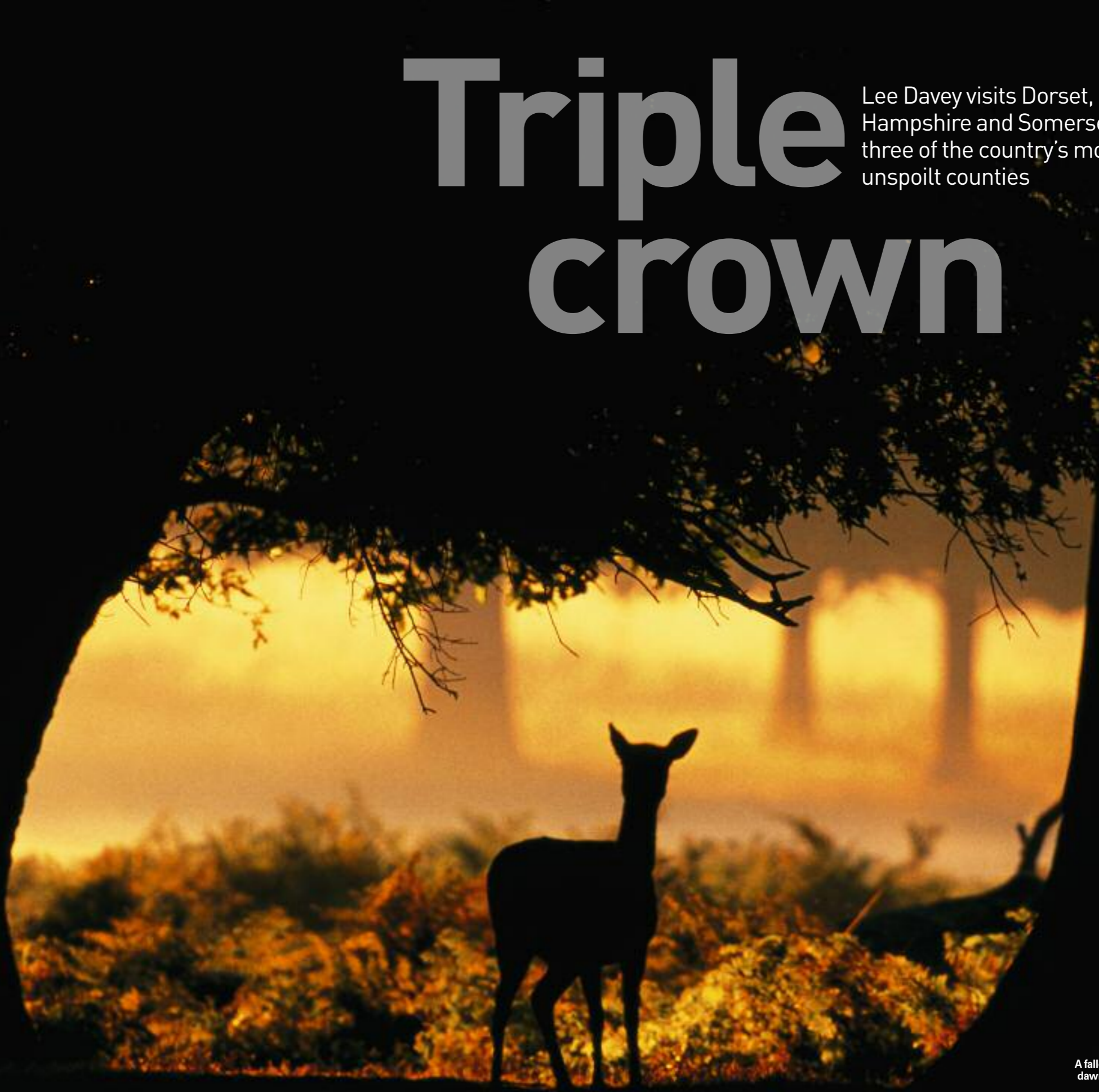


4. NEW FOREST CENTENARY

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p118 of the 2015/16 Directory. **Facilities include a playground and play area.**



You can book your pitch online at caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook or by calling our Advance Booking Service on 01342 327490.



A fallow deer pictured at dawn in the New Forest

FOOD + DRINK



The Old Station Tea Rooms

Based at Holmsley and within cycling distance of the New Forest Centenary site, these tea rooms are perfect whether you're in the mood for a quick cream tea or a long, lazy lunch. There's a children's menu too, with a junior roast available on Sunday.

Contact: 01425 402468, stationhouseholmsley.com
Nearest featured site: New Forest Centenary



The Skylark

Within walking distance of Cadeside, The Skylark offers a pub chain-style menu that should suit all tastes. There is also a very appealing two-for-one deal on certain main courses.

Contact: 01823 618979, skylarkpub.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Cadeside

Clavell's Café and Restaurant

Clavell's is a 30-minute walk from Smedmore House and is well worth the effort. Lovely venue, great food and children are made very welcome.



Contact: 01929 480701, clavellscfe.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Smedmore House

Weston Beach Café

If it's delicious, freshly-cooked, reasonably-priced fish and chips, you're looking for, then search no more. The great beachfront location and outdoor seating area means your children can play in sight while you finish your meal in peace.



Contact: Looking at the pier, you'll find it 100 yards on your left or visit its Facebook page – facebook.com/WestonBeachCafe
Nearest featured site: Hurn Lane

Clavell Tower – a Grade II listed Tuscan-style building on top of Hen Cliff, east of Kimmeridge Bay



A decade or so ago, when we were still relatively new to touring, I asked a more experienced caravanner to name his favourite site. "Smedmore House near Kimmeridge Bay in Dorset," he replied, without a moment's hesitation.

Since then, we've stayed at that site on numerous occasions and it remains a firm family favourite. Smedmore House offers a genuine feeling of 'getting away from it all' as you lose yourself in landscapes made famous by Thomas Hardy and Enid Blyton.

There are 48 pitches (two hardstanding) situated in a tree-lined field but a short walk and even shorter drive to the unspoilt beauty of Kimmeridge Bay. If you are driving, remember to take plenty of coins for parking – especially if you are in a motorhome as it costs £10 per day.

The information hut at Kimmeridge Bay, containing such essentials as buckets and spades, fishing nets as well as lots of details about local attractions, is the only man-made object for miles. You can spend many a happy hour searching for fossils on this stretch of English coastline aptly named the Jurassic Coast.

Another great attraction close to Smedmore House is the village of Tyneham. Time has stood still here for more than 70 years after the village was evacuated as part of preparations for the D-Day Landings. What marks Tyneham out is that no-one ever came back – and there are plenty of eerie reminders of how life just stopped in December 1943. The site continues to be managed by the MoD, and is not open at certain times of the year, so it is best to check on the website before you head out (dorsetforyou.com).

"Smedmore House offers a genuine feeling of 'getting away from it all' as you lose yourself in landscapes made famous by Thomas Hardy and Enid Blyton"



Smedmore House itself

Continuing on a military theme, the New Forest Centenary site (another family favourite) was built on a former Second World War airfield and is divided into sections bearing the names of some of our greatest fighter aircraft. With 275 pitches (125 hardstandings), it's quite a large site but spacing is generous. There is a good selection of facilities including a dog walking area, a wildlife sanctuary, a playground and a football field complete with goal posts. >>

FOR THE FAMILY



Blashford Lakes

It's difficult to imagine but the reservoir and nature reserve was once another Second World War airfield. With six bird hides, a number of viewing screens, education centre and a trail guide, it's a relaxing way to watch nature at work.

Contact: 01489 774400, hiwwt.org.uk
Nearest featured site: New Forest Centenary

The Tank Museum

This Bovington museum boasts more than 300 tanks on display in six exhibition halls – covering conflicts from the First World War to the present day. This has to be my son Charlie's number one attraction of all time. Fascinating!

Contact: 01929 462359, tankmuseum.org
Nearest featured site: Smedmore House



Diggerland

A construction-themed adventure park in Cullampton, Devon, where you can drive, ride and operate earth-moving machinery in a safe and family-friendly environment.

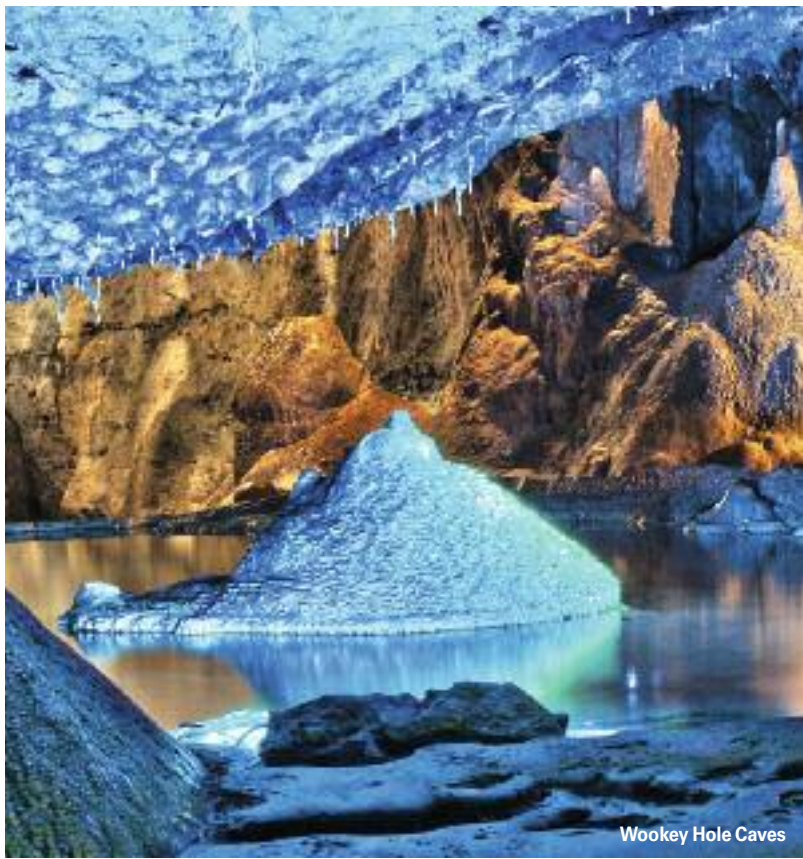
Contact: 0871 227 7007, diggerland.com
Nearest featured site: Cadeside

Wookey Hole Caves

Featuring a new 4-D Lost World experience, fairy garden, caves and the famous Wookey Witch, this is a fantastic rainy-day destination. The cave tour was great and Charlie couldn't believe cheese was matured in the tunnels. He also couldn't believe that what he ate was genuine 'cave cheese'!

Contact: 01749 672243, wookey.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Hurn Lane





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“Featuring a new 4-D Lost World experience, fairy garden, caves and the famous Wookey Witch, this is a fantastic rainy-day destination”

The New Forest is a cyclist’s paradise, with mile after mile of family-friendly routes, many of which are traffic-free – and there always seems to be an ice-cream van in the vicinity, too!
Lymington is just over 10 miles from the site and from there you are but a short ferry trip to Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight. For foot-passengers, it can make for a

reasonably-priced day trip and there is plenty to see and do in Yarmouth itself, including an aquarium, model railway and numerous cafés.

As an area, the New Forest has a lot to offer – and the beautiful open spaces never seem to be crowded, no matter what the time of year. Granted, the towns and tea rooms can be chock-a-block on sunny bank holidays but escaping is easy if you retreat towards the green stuff. Just be careful that the ponies don’t pinch your packed lunch!

Moving into Somerset, we stopped at Cadeside, one of the smallest Club sites with just 16 pitches. Most of the site has been devoted to year-round storage and its proximity to the M5 (just two miles away) would suggest that peace and tranquillity may not be top of Cadeside’s list of attractions. But when we visited it was amazingly quiet and actually has the feel of a CL. Cadeside is the perfect base from which to explore the Quantock Hills to the north, the Blackdown Hills to the south and, if you still want more, Exmoor National Park is to the north-east. >>



Weymouth’s child-friendly beach

CULTURE

The New Forest Airfield’s Memorial

Situated just outside the New Forest Centenary site, the memorial commemorates those who served on the New Forest airfields during and immediately after the Second World War.



Contact: winkton.net/fonfa.htm
Nearest featured site: New Forest Centenary



Fyne Court

A wild garden and folly hidden away in the Quantock Hills. The house was destroyed by fire in 1894 and you can find out what happened on an ‘eye-opener’ tour. Fresh air activities rule here with giant Jenga, tree climbing and den building.

Contact: 01643 862452, nationaltrust.org.uk/fyne-court
Nearest featured site: Cadeside



Portland Castle

Built in the early 1540s, Portland Castle was one of Henry VIII’s finest coastal forts – it also had a role to play in both World Wars. We visited during Weymouth & Portland Armed Forces celebrations but there are fascinating things going on throughout the year.

Contact: 0370 333 1181, english-heritage.org.uk
Nearest featured site: Smedmore House

The Walled Gardens of Cannington

Set in the grounds of a medieval priory in the village of Cannington, the gardens have plenty of eye-catching flora plus a lovely tea room providing locally-sourced seasonal food and refreshments. Open all year and dog-friendly, too.

Contact: 01278 65504, canningtonwalledgardens.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Hurn Lane



OUTDOOR FUN



Great Wood

With well-surfaced forest tracks and clearly-marked trails, Great Wood at Nether Stowey on the edge of the Quantocks is great for bikes and buggies, riders and runners. There's also a good-size picnic area with stone barbecues for public use.

Contact: 0300 067 4800, forestry.gov.uk/greatwood

Nearest featured site: Cadeside



Cycling

National Cycle Network Route 2 travels along the south coast of England, and the section through the New Forest takes you from Hythe in Hampshire to the bustling Dorset town of Christchurch.

Contact: sustrans.org.uk

Corfe Castle

Corfe Castle dates back 1,000 years and, although partially destroyed by Cromwell's armies during the 17th century, it remains an imposing structure that still watches over much of Purbeck and beyond.

Contact: 01929 481294,

nationaltrust.org.uk/corfecastle

Nearest featured site:

Smedmore House



Brook Bank Shooting Ground

If you fancy having a go at clay pigeon shooting, Somerset's Brook Bank Shooting Ground is the place for you. An instructor is on hand to show you the ropes, making it a good day out for sharp shooters of all ages and abilities.

Contact: 01749 871055, brookbankshooting.co.uk

Nearest featured site: Hurn Lane

But if you are looking for a more urban experience, Exeter is a short, 30-minute hop down the M5. The members we spoke to were frequent visitors with an equal division between those who liked to soak up the compact and bijou feel from a sun-lounger to those who used it as a base to explore nearby Wellington and the surrounding countryside.

Weston-super-Mare was our final stop as we wanted to take in the annual beach race in which vast numbers of motocross, enduro and quad bikes compete along the water's edge. We stayed at the Hurn Lane site – just a 20-minute drive from the seafront where you can experience the great British seaside holiday in all its glory. The Sovereign Centre offered easy parking and we found a very affordable fish and

chip shop that had wonderful sea views just a little bit further along the seafront.

Hurn Lane Club site is situated in Berrow and has 140 pitches in total, 81 of which are hardstanding. Immaculately kept and a short stroll from the beach via the Sundowner Beach Bar, it's perfectly placed for a seaside break and, if you have young (or not so young) children with you, nearby Brean Leisure Park will keep them amused come rain or shine.

From sticks of rock to the Quantocks, from Jurassic Coast to Second World War outpost, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset have a tremendous amount to offer and, even after a decade of visits, we're still finding sights, sounds and snippets of history to entertain us all. Here's to the next 10 years.

MEMBERS' VIEWS



Jan and Mick Hannah from Hertfordshire and **Vic and Wendy Andrews** from Bedfordshire were all staying at the New Forest Centenary. "This site is one of our favourites and it's close to Dorset, which we love. The coast and New Forest are also very accessible from the site and it's perfect for us. Plus the wardens are very helpful and friendly."

John and Vivian Ranson from Cheshire were enjoying a three-and-a-half week tour of Dorset when I caught up with them at the Smedmore House site. "We chose Smedmore House as it's close to the sea and the coast path and, not having stayed here before, we're very happy with our choice. We like to do a county tour each year and 2015 is Dorset's turn."



Rosemary and Roger House from Cornwall were revisiting Somerset after moving to Cornwall six years ago. They were staying at Cadeside. "This Club site is



perfect for visiting friends in and around Wellington and we know the area quite well. We've stayed here a number of times before and it's a lovely, pretty site."

Club Together

The online community that just keeps growing

To read even more member views, see our fantastic online forum at caravanclub.co.uk/together