

Northern Shires

A tour in mid-summer by Mel Harvey, and Lesley & Jack Dempsey

A tour of Yorkshire, Lancashire & Derbyshire

We met up with Ruth & Bryan Parkin, and Mel at a C.S just off the M5/M50. It was a bit boggy, and the toilet & elsan were a long way from the camping fields, but at £10 per night with electric, it served it's purpose.

After dinner, a wonderful curry which Ruth & Bryan cooked and bought with them, we walked around the fishing lakes before turning in for the night.

We had planned to depart at 9.00am on the Thursday morning, and make for the Three Counties Show Ground. However, at 8.00am, Mel decided to walk and find a post box, and visit a farm shop, which he found out didn't open until 10.00am! Meanwhile, we had packed up his van, driven it off the levelling blocks, and parked it on firmer ground. (We were tempted to hide it and our selves, & see how long it took him to find us, but we didn't as he had left his phone behind as well!) Mel came strolling back at 9.15am minus his longed for bacon!

We were off! We were headed for the Western Motor Home Show at Malvern. The Country and Western Group of the MCC had a corner of their own, and we needed to be there first to park our members up. We had 26 vans this year (4 last year!) It was nice to park amongst friends.

There was a lot going on all weekend; - apart from the trade stands, there were re-enactments; displays of Indian Dance; and wall to wall music including our Bob Oakley. In the evenings Ruth, Bryan Mel & I roamed from hall to hall seeking the best music, and the most space for dancing. Jack stayed behind in the van as his pain was high.

On Saturday morning MCC Country & Western members congregated together to celebrate the 30th wedding anniversary of Elaine & Mike Greaves with glasses of Champagne & Orange juice.



Saturday night, Mel & I went up to hear the Johnny Cash Tribute Show. It was very good; - we enjoyed it enormously. Jack was unable to go as his pain was too high and he was blacking out. The trilogy on Sunday night was a disappointment. I had gone with the hopes of learning something, and improving ours. - I think we do better. - Their flags were not co-ordinated; some men did not take their hats off in the correct place; one couple turned their backs on the flags, more intent on facing their friends. - It was a shambles!

It was a good weekend, but very tiring. We had a positive response from the MCC recruiting stand. Brian Dilley dressed up each day & drew attention to us. - Our photo board was there too. Brian enjoyed himself, and it slowed down his spending, - although he did buy himself a Winchester!

Monday morning, after doing the rounds saying goodbye, Jack, Mel & I set off for Nawton, near Helmsley in North Yorkshire for a few weeks. Jack travelled lying down for most of the way.

We stayed at a lovely CL, and used it as a touring base from which we visited Eden Camp; Viewed a village hall at Stockton on Forest; Spent an easy day dodging the showers at Helmsley; and a hot tiring day visiting Whitby by train.



Stockton on Forest Village hall was superb, and will be a great venue for our rally in October 2010.

Eden Camp

This is no ordinary Museum - Not another Military Museum - Not a glass showcase Museum - They have reconstructed scenes using movement, lighting, sound, smells, even smoke machines to transport you back in time, to make you feel that you are there taking part in history.

In early 1942, a small contingent of Army personnel, under the command of a Sergeant, arrived at Malton, midway between York and Scarborough in North Yorkshire. Their task was to construct a barbed wire enclosure and erect tents to house the steady flow of enemy prisoners of war captured in North Africa. The site was named Eden Camp and the first inmates were two hundred and fifty Italian prisoners. These prisoners were put to work constructing a larger permanent camp, consisting of forty five huts. The Italians were at the Camp from 1942 to 1944, then the Germans from 1944 to 1948. While at the Camp the prisoners worked on the local farms under the control of the War Agricultural Officer.

The huts have been re-equipped to tell the story of The People's War, the social history of life in Britain from 1939 to 1945. So many Museums simply display exhibits in cabinets and on walls and are pretty dull affairs, but not Eden Camp. Realistic tableaux, with moving figures, authentic sounds and smells have been created to "transport you back in time". In one scene there is a living room of a typical wartime home in Britain. The family are seated in front of the fire, listening to the radio as Chamberlain announces "the declaration of war". You see the man move his arm to adjust the wireless set, the woman breathes, the tin bath sits in front of the flickering fire and the scene comes alive.

Each hut covers a different aspect of the story, starting with the rise of the Nazi Party, Hitler and The Outbreak of War. Other topics include: Rationing, the Utility Scheme, 'Save It' Campaigns, Evacuees, Propaganda, Home Guard, Home Front, The Blitz, Air Raid and Gas Precautions, Animals at War, The Street at War, Women at War, The Land Army and Timber Girls, The Munition Factories, The Observer Corps, The Auxiliary Fire Service, The WVS, The Red Cross, Civil Defence, The Rescue Services, The Bevin Boys, etc.

Other huts have been allocated military themes – War at Sea and U-boats, The Home Guard, Bomber Command, Path Finders, R.E. & R.A.F. Bomb Disposal, Escapers and Evaders, Resistance, Women at War, The life of a Prisoner of War etc.

Military and political events of the Second World War around the world are covered in detail. Scenes such as Dunkirk, The War in the Desert, War at Sea, The Dambusters, The Great Escape, D-Day, V.E. and V.J. Days etc can be found along with displays covering The Holocaust, The Middle East, The Far East, Italy, Europe, Palestine, Cyprus, Egypt, Suez, Malaya, Korea, Kenya, Aden, The Falklands, The Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and information is being added about the

Another hut takes you back to World War One. Visitors experience what life was like in the trenches, brought to life with realistic sights, sounds and smells.

It was still warm when we got back to the camp site, time for a glass of wine in the sun!



Cherry Tree Park, Nawton.

The view from our van

Helmsley

On the southern edge of the Yorkshire Moors on the River Rye, Helmsley is an attractive and popular market town and a good stop when visiting the area's attractions

Helmsley still has the market, held on Friday's in the main square, with its statue of Lord Feversham.



The castle was built on a slightly rocky eminence between 1186 and 1227 by Robert de Roos. There were originally two moats surrounding a rectangular complex of a D-shaped keep and outer walls. The only buildings still in good repair today are the west tower and the later mansion built by Edward Manners, the 3rd Earl of Rutland who owned the site from 1563 to 1587.





The Deli


We found a nice pub for Jack & Mel to sample while I took Max back to the van.



We then explored the delicatessen, buying huge sausage rolls for tea, and the coffee shops, where we had lunch.



<p style="text-align: center;">Whitby</p> 	<p>We set off for Whitby by train from Pickering. The station car park was full, so we parked in the long stay car park. It wasn't too far away, & Jack had his scooter.</p>	
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We caught the train from Pickering to Grosmont, where we had to change trains. Unfortunately, it was school holidays and the trains were so crowded that 3 coaches were laid on to meet every Pickering train! We were unable to go by coach because of Jack's scooter. We ended up crowded into an over full train. It wasn't pleasant. Whitby was crowded too, it was regatta week! And it was so hot.

	<p>Jack wanted a sticky bun, which he ate while Max had a paddle in the harbour, and we ate sandwiches. The lady in the shop said "up there" they called the big iced buns with a cherry in the middle, "Tits".</p>
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	<p>The streets were very crowded, and it wasn't pleasant negotiating the narrow streets in the heat. We did find a pub with very cheap beer. Mel said he could have stayed there all day!</p>	
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Unfortunately, the return train was equally crowded. We shared the guards van with an old man, who, once seated, started to remove his trousers! He also had a bag of very old newspapers which stank of fish. Jack said he was reading the racing page from a 1948 newspaper. – Perhaps he wanted a dead cert bet! We were glad to return to Pickering, where we enjoyed fish and chips before returning to our camp site, and watching the farmer cut and bale the hay. He worked until at least 11pm when we fell asleep, but next morning it was all done. Just as well as it started to rain.

<p style="text-align: center;">Hawes</p>	<p>Leaving our camp site on the Friday morning, we made our way to Hawes and Bainbridge Ings Camping site. The site is fairly big. All tents are pitched along the drystone walls of the fields, leaving a huge area for play.</p>
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We were in separate fields for the first night, but then Mel was able to move his van next to ours when the motor home next to us cut their stay short. A lot of campers were doing the same as it had become very wet. I think Mel had a good view from the back of his van though.



On the Saturday after a huge fried breakfast cooked by Mel, we drove ½ mile to the Wensleydale Creamery. We were going to walk, but Jack was blacking out. As it happened he didn't get out of the van at all.

Mel & I, however, went around the museum and the creamery, watching cheese making in progress, before going into the shop and tasting Wensleydale Mature; Extra Mature; With Herbs; Ginger; Cranberries; Blueberries; Apricots; Mustard; garlic, and even a blue Wensleydale and a sheep's milk cheese. – All that was missing was the crackers.



Wensleydale cheese has been made in Wensleydale since 1150, when the Cistercian monks first settled in the dale, and established a monastery at Fors, just four miles from Hawes. Some years later the monks moved, because of hostile natives and inclement weather, to Jervaulx in Lower Wensleydale. These French Cistercian monks brought with them their special recipe for the making of cheese, which continued to be produced at Jervaulx until the dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century. From that time the art, which the monks had developed, passed to local farmers' wives who, for more than three hundred years, produced the cheese in their own farmhouses. Only milk from Wensleydale is used at the creamery. Farmers are not allowed to use artificial fertilisers or pesticides, and are not allowed to cut the grass until a certain time of year in order to allow wild flowers and herbs to flourish.

After coffee (even the milk tasted sweeter and creamier) we parked in the town car park and explored.



Hawes Village Centre



View from my van

There didn't appear to be an awful lot there; - a small Spar; a book shop; a rope makers; Chip shop; sweet shop; several coffee shops, and lots of pubs. – In one place 4 in a row! We had to sample the beer before going back to the van to check on Jack, and our camp site.

Sunday started out with nice and sunny weather, and we set out for a drive over the moors. We stopped en-route at Bolton castle. Jack didn't want to go in as he knew he wouldn't be able to manage to get around. Mel & I went in to the shop and used the loo's, but there were quite a few steps to get just that far, so we decided Mel's knees wouldn't make it, and returned to the van.



We continued our tour through some very pretty and tiny villages before climbing up over the moors to Tan Hill, and the highest pub in Britain at 1732 ft.



Upper Swaledale and Arkengarthdale are highlights of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Here is Nature at its best. There are high mountains at the head of these valleys whose evocative names such as Blea Barf, Great Shunner Fell and Rogan's Seat echo the voices of the Vikings who settled here over 1,000 years ago.



Sparkling moorland streams cascade down the valley sides through pastures touched by a thousand shades of green. The River Swale, England's fastest flowing river, threads its way through a maze of fields dotted with stone barns. Over generations the people of these Dales have shaped the landscape and left a legacy of history, folklore and legend. The language of the Vikings can still be heard all around in the local dialect and the village place-names. The hills tell a tale of a lead mining industry that began with the Romans. There are ruined monastic buildings, ancient churches, packhorse bridges, attractive villages and old-fashioned country pubs.



We had Roast Lunch at the Tan Hill Inn; a dinner plate sized Yorkshire Pudding, which held new potatoes and ½ a chicken. Squeezed onto the plate were carrots, peas, cauliflower, broccoli and leeks. Having seen the size of the meals as we ordered, - I asked for a child's portion for Jack, as he is no longer a big eater. He had 3 huge slices of Beef, 2 potatoes, the rest of the veg the same as us, and ½ a Yorkshire pudding! – Mel had to help him out with the Beef!

While I was in the loo, 2 sheep called Donna & Shishk, which belonged to the landlady, walked into the bar. Max was scared!! He got his own back by barking at them when we were outside. Jack & Mel thought it was very funny. There was also a folk group playing which took up a fair bit of room in the bar, but the place did a brisk turn over with cyclists, bikers and walkers.

By the time we left, it was raining and the clouds lowered, obscuring a lot of the view. The scenic bit was nearly over though, - at least the best bit was, as we made our way via Kirkby Longsdale back to Hawes on B roads.



Next day, not being able to extend our stay, we left early to visit Hardraw Force. There is no car park at this amazing place, but by being early we were able to park on the road (having left Mel's van in a car park in Hawes). The access to the waterfall is through the bar of the Green Dragon PH.

The waterfall is their grounds which has a small camp site for backpackers and cyclists.

Following a well kept path, we walked along the river which was Brown with peat, and flowing quite fast to the waterfall.

The cliff face from which the water cascaded, was shaped like an upside down bowl. Rocks overhung our heads. Standing at the foot of the falls, which was very noisy, we were dripped on by recent rains seeping through the rock and down along tree roots. Max didn't like the noise, so he stayed back a little way with Jack, whose scooter couldn't go any further due to steps.



It was a lovely place; and well worth the £2 entry.



We then went back to Hawes to collect Mel's van before heading down B roads to the Ribbleshead Viaduct, where we were able to gaze on the viaduct we had ridden over on an earlier tour. The trip over on the train didn't make you appreciate the engineering feat which built the viaduct.

Leaving The viaduct, we headed for Morcambe. Why? Because Jack & Mel had never been, and a club member had told Mel it was a nice place.

Morcambe

We stayed at Glen Caravan site. The site was clean and tidy, and despite of our pitches being close to the main road, very quiet, especially at night. However, the last bit of the journey was frustrating. For the first time ever, sat nav let us down! Firstly, it tried to take us down a road with a 6ft width limit! (Some joker had turned the road sign round so we did not see it until we were leaving the road). Then it took us into a travellers site! – We should have heeded the warning and left Morcambe.



However, we found the camp site (which backed onto the travellers site), and were pitched opposite each other. Having ensured the vans were safely locked up we walked into Morcambe. I'm still not sure why! It was dirty, dingy and run down. Even the menus in a coffee shop we went to, to escape a heavy shower, hadn't been wiped down & had vinegar and goodness knows what else splashed on it. Needless to say we made our way back to our vans, stopping en-route at the Co-op to buy veggies. Surprisingly, we had a good nights sleep, and were underway with a full fresh water tanks and a boiler full of hot water, and filled thermos flasks.

We made our way to Lytham St Annes on minor roads, stopping at St Michaels on Wyre for lunch. Mel wanted to treat us to a nice meal (not pie & chips), so Jack had a Pizza, and Mel & I had.....home made Chicken & Leek Pie!
They sold Theakstons Mild. – 1st time I have seen it for years; Shame I was driving!

The Roses Rally



We were soon checking in at reception at the K.E & QM School, St Annes for the MCC Roses Rally, hosted this year by Lancashire.

We were quickly shown to our pitches. Mel was 5 rows over but dead in line. (British made vans were not mixed with continental vans, to avoid door opening onto the same space, and the erection of awnings that touch). It was a big task for the marshals as they had 325 vans!

We stayed in our vans on Tuesday night, reading with a glass of wine or beer & whiskey to hand. Mel & I went and explored St Annes in the rain on Wednesday. We walked in, and just got to “Costa” as it poured down. So we lingered, and read their newspapers. (Jack did not want to come.) Eventually, we decided we couldn’t stay any longer. Once outside, the rain didn’t seem to be as bad as it looked. I bought some books for Jack in a cut price book shop. We also bought him his daily cream cake.



We caught the bus back to our “site”. We stayed in again that evening, as we are not Bingo fans, which was the entertainment that night.



Thursday dawned dry and bright, and we headed to Clithero for its market, as Jack wanted some sweets from the sweet stall. (the biggest everton mints he has come across). It wasn’t market day! Only ½ the stalls were open, but Jack got his sweets in an old fashioned sweet shop. We then made our way up the main street to a coffee shop, and Jack had Apple Pie. Leaving Jack in the coffee shop with his pot of tea, Mel & I went off to try and get walking stick badges of Clithero at the castle, with no luck. Mel then went in a few newsagents while I went into Cowmans Sausage shop to get traditional pork sausages for our dinner. While out and about we bumped into David & Nita Mills, members of the Country and western group. They live at Blackpool and were on a day out in the car!



We made our way back to St Annes on B roads. The boys enjoyed the views. Jack pointing out where he used to live as a child. The sausage, mash, peas and red onion marmalade went down really well for dinner.



Mel & I went over to the hall in the evening for a while, Jack did not want to go. Tony G Ford was singing and playing a keyboard. He was OK. – Easy listening. We bought raffle tickets and found a table, sitting with Neville & Barbara who were from Lancashire, and were there with their grandson, Jordan.

Friday dawned overcast, and very windy, - the edge of a hurricane in America. Jack didn't want to go out and risk getting a chill, so Mel & I decided to go to Blackpool. Once on the bus we changed our minds and went to Cleveleys. Although windy, it wasn't cold, and we wandered the town, stopping for coffee (Mel also had a steak pie & me a Bacon barm cake), at a pie shop which served Italian coffee. It kept our feet on the ground when standing on the prom. Although Mel was only 20ft away from me while I was taking photos, I couldn't hear him speak, the wind just whipped the words away!



We returned via Blackpool, where I was able to buy fruit pudding to go with eggs & bacon for breakfast. While there, we stood under Blackpool Tower and watched it "move" against the clouds.

It was the opening night of The Roses rally, and 4 men sang songs representing England, Ireland, Scotland & Wales. In the hall that evening we sat with Neville, Barbara, Jordan Edith & Geoff, and two couples from Newcastle, who were telling us rhymes in broad Geordie. We had trouble understanding each others accents.



On Saturday, we went to Preston by bus & train . It was nice and dry, and warm enough to sit outside for pie & chips for lunch at a shop called scrumptious. The market was a disappointment, as half the stalls were empty.



In the evening, the entertainment was by Nashville Angels. There was nothing angelic about them! We left halfway through as it was too loud, and they hadn't done their sound checks, as the microphones were not balanced to the backing tracks. It was actually painful to our ears.

There was a car boot sale on at Fort San Antone at Birchwood Country Park on Sunday morning. So we went. We wanted to look around as well, with a view to having a rally there. It was only a few miles down the road. The car boot was a normal one, not "western" orientated as we had hoped, but we bought a hat for me, and some bananas for Jack!



Having done the boot sale, Mel & I went to investigate the camp site and facilities. Jack stayed in the van. They say first impressions speak volumes. – This was a NO from the start. The vans and tents were too close together. Electricity was on a first come basis. If we wanted to camp together we had to arrive together. – No separate area for a rally. The stage and hall were OK, quite well laid out, but the toilets were terrible. The bottom of the doors in the ladies looked as though they had been kicked in, and there was only one cubicle with a lock on it. The tiles were falling off the walls; it was just dirty and dilapidated. The gents stank as I walked past. Mel said it was cheap chipboard between the toilets with a thin coat of paint. I wouldn't want to stay there as a gift.

We were back in time for "The Battle of the Roses," Team games Lancashire v Yorkshire, including "Wellie Wanging", (Wellie throwing). Mel & I signed up for the Gents and ladies Yorkshire teams.

(Despite having more vans than Lancashire, Yorkshire didn't have enough team members). Mel threw ok but mine went straight up and down, closely missing Jack on the sidelines (better luck Next time)!



We met some really nice people there though. Amongst whom were Jordan (Left), and his Grandparents, Barbara and Neville. Jordan kept us entertained with Kung Fu moves. He ate a box of sweets a night, even though he had a wobbly single tooth at the front. We heard it fell out soon after the rally. Jordan was a little bit shy, but took to Mel very quickly.

We enjoyed our first Roses rally, but were ready to depart, and made our way to Derbyshire, avoiding motorways. Our route took us through some very run down parts of Manchester, but also through some of the most amazing countryside

Derbyshire

Our camp site was small, very clean, with a good flow of water in the hot showers. It was tucked away behind a pub (very handy). They served exceedingly good food too!

Our first full day was spent in Castleton, which is an outstandingly pretty village situated at the head of the lovely Vale of Hope, in the heart of the Derbyshire Peak District National Park. Castleton is surrounded on 3 sides by steep hills and the mighty bulk of Mam Tor looms high, 2 miles to the north west of the village. On a hill, overlooking Castleton, is the ancient Peveril Castle.



We visited Peak Cavern (also known as "The Devil's Arse) which is the source of the village river, Peakshole Water and as such it is the only Cavern that has to be closed during the winter due to flooding. In the mouth of the cave, the largest in Britain, rope makers use to live and work. Their cottages have been demolished but 'rope walks' are still to be found. Mel took part in making a length of rope, which stank (a sort of mixture of sheep & dung).

Jack couldn't get round, but sat talking to the lady in the kiosk. Max was allowed to come round with us. He was very good. He did however, do a wee in the "pure" water in the cave! The cave gets its nickname, The devil's Arse due to the noises made by draining flood water. Of course we had to find a coffee shop, which sold cakes for Jack.

Next day, Jack's pain being high, and Mels' knee aching, we went for a scenic drive, up through Winnats Pass, where Heavy Goods Vehicles and buses are banned, and for the rest of us who are adventurous enough to use this road, it descends at a rate of 20% or 1 in 5, and you may need a hard hat to dodge the falling rocks! No rocks were to be found falling on this trip though.



Winnats Pass, is a long collapsed limestone cave system. The name Winnats is short for 'Windygates' and on a windy day you can see why it came by that name, for the wind seems to swirl around everywhere. The 'pass' part of the name is something of a misnomer - Winnats is a steep-sided limestone valley with cliffs on all sides, which climbs out of the Hope Valley onto the limestone plateau area above. The valley was created by the action of water eating away at the limestone rock - water gradually dissolves the limestone and the streams tend to find their way underground by gradually enlarging the natural cracks and fissures in the rock.

There are numerous underground stream systems in this area and one of these created a large cave system beneath the edge of the cliff overlooking Castleton. Eventually the rock underground was worn away until the whole cave system collapsed, leaving the steep-sided valley. Moving on from the spectacular gorge, we made our way to another “pass”, via Glossop. We drove along Snake Pass, which at its summit is 1680 ft above sea level. It was a lovely drive, but you can see how it gets cut off in winter weather.



We stopped off for a late lunch, at the Snake Pass Inn, and enjoyed steak sandwiches and chips. While there it started to rain, which reduced visibility a bit. I walked Max while waiting for Jack to eat a pudding.

Then we carried on with our journey stopping off at Ladybower reservoir.



It is the lowest of the Peak districts three reservoirs that occupy the beautiful Derwent valley, the other two being the Howden and Derwent Reservoirs. Ladybower Reservoir was completed shortly after the end of World War II, when it was opened by His Majesty King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, our late Queen Mother. It was primarily built to supply drinking water to the north of England and the midlands. The Howden and Derwent Reservoir's were of particular importance during the war years, for this was the place where 617 Squadron experimented with Barn Wallis's famous bouncing bomb, it is also the place where much of the famous film portraying the story of the "Dambusters" was filmed.



Max & I went for a walk down to the lake side, but Mel & Jack stayed in the van. A bit further along the road, Mel & I got out to look at the view. Jack didn't want to. Even though it was dull and overcast, the views were great. Worth getting out of the van for! Even the rain had stopped.



All too soon, it was time to head South wards, which we did on B roads. It was a much nicer drive, took ½ hour longer than the motorway, and as it rained most of the journey, we avoided the spray kicked up by other cars. Our destination was the Forest of Dean, so that I could let Max off for a run. Once at Monmouth, I deviated from Sat nav, and took a route up the narrow gorge of Symons Yat. It is single track with passing spaces, and at times the van had only inches to spare between cliff or brick wall! Mel wasn't amused by the time we got to the camp site, but it turns out some white van man had given him a load of grief for taking that road!

As we were only staying for one night, we thought we would stay in “Woodlands”, but it turns out it is no longer a touring sight. – The forestry commission are building cabins on it. What a shame as it was nice to camp in the woods, and listen to the birds singing.



Never mind, we pitched up at Bracelands. The ground was firm, and we watched the sun set with glass in hand, while making plans for the following day.



As it happens, we went round in circles for the first part of the morning as the road to Monmouth was closed! Eventually, we gave up following sat nav in ever decreasing circles, and made for Ross on Wye, and then picked up the main road.

Tintern

Once in Monmouth, we crossed the bridge and headed for Tintern Abbey. We have been past it many times, but never been able to park. It was our lucky day. – loads of space.



We were able to wander around, even Jack's mobility scooter got him round most of it. We stopped at the coffee shop for lunch, but they took so long in coming round to take our order that we got in the van and continued on our way.



Neither Mel or I like the old Severn Bridge, so we made our way to the new one, which meant we needed to go past it, and turn round at a service station, where we also stopped for lunch.

Once over the bridge, we met the biggest traffic jam ever! So we lead Mel all through Bristol and onto the A38. We rejoined the M5 at Bridgewater. We were soon home and then I had the task of unpacking and cleaning the van ready for next time!

