



ALC e-News

February 2023



Welcome to the February e-News. A big thank you to everyone who has sent in an item for this issue - there will be more Pennon's and Badges on their way to contributors this week! Thanks also to those of you who have emailed with comments, questions or just to say thank you - it makes a real difference to know that someone is reading all of this. The Winter Meets programme has two events left - Canterbury 17 February and Delamere 17 March. If you are a spontaneous camper and would like to know about last-minute availability, please email me so that I can keep you up-to-date. This edition of the e-News has several reports from the Oxford Meet, a reply to a query about the meaning of 'lightweight', a kit review, a winter themed poem, a quick, backpacker-friendly recipe and some great photos. Now we need your photos, news, questions, etc. for the March edition! **Susan**

What is a lightweight tent?

We've just had this query from Bill: ***What is the general permissible size of a tent? I now use a Vango Galaxy 300 (I need the vestibule height).***

I actually have a Galaxy 300 myself and, like Bill, I got it for the head height and because it came within our (previous) weight limit for a 3 person tent. However, the ALC Council recently voted to relax our rules - partly because some members are moving to canvas tents which would never have fitted our weight restrictions!

We now ask for **small, easily transportable tents and equipment** without specifying any sizes or weights. We're hoping this will allow many more Club members to get involved in the Section and come along to our Meets.

Obviously, this can be affected by the type of pitch we have booked - the Winter Meets that specify **'backpacker style tents'** are by special arrangement on pitches that are not open for booking in the winter to protect the grass. Our small tents won't damage the grass in the way that a large set-up might.

If you are planning to attend a Meet and have any doubts about your tent, just send us an email and we'll confirm if your unit is OK for our pitches. **Susan**



A Galaxy 300 with Vango Trek Tarp and windbreak

Election of ALC Council members 2023

In the January e-News we explained the process for submitting a nomination for the election of Council members. Nominations have now closed and we move on to the next stage of the process, which is handled for us by the Club.

This is an electronic voting system (in the same way as you already receive an invitation to vote in the National Council elections). All members will be sent an email with a link to a voting site to cast their votes. Members may also request a postal ballot.

We will put a voting reminder in the e-News when the voting process starts.

ALC Meets 2023

(All at Club sites apart from Watlington)

Devizes 2 nights from 10 March

Hayfield (Easter) 4 nights from 7 April

Kingsbury 3 nights from 19 May (ALC AGM Sat 20May)

Canterbury 3 nights from 2 June

Scarborough 3 nights from 7 July

Watlington 5 nights from 3 August (ALC Birthday Meet)

Wolverley 2 nights from 15 September

Cambridge 2 nights from 6 October

To book a place at any of these Meets, please contact Rich Forrest
sites@lightweightcampers.org.uk

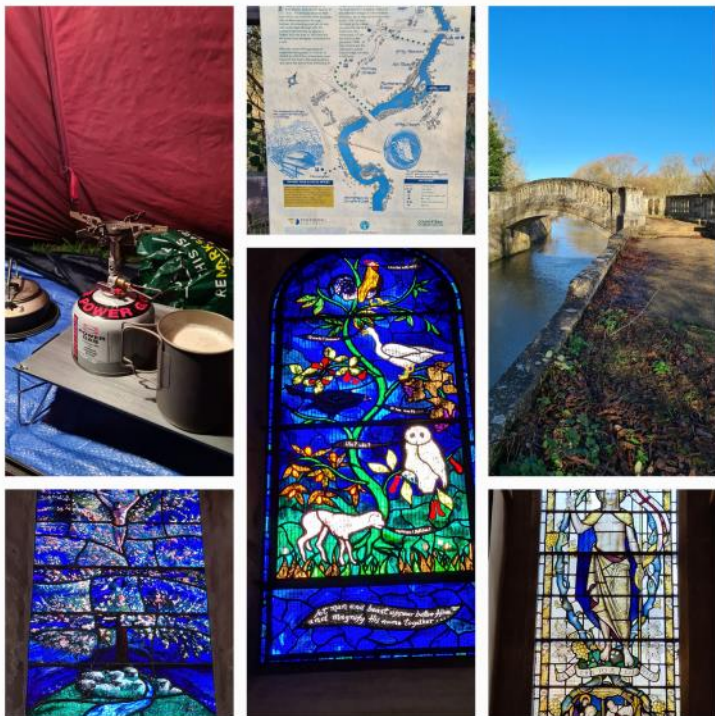
Club sites price per unit night: £7.50 solo, £10 couple.
(Watlington price tbc)

The OXFORD Meet Jan 2023

Julie: Due to work commitments I arrived at Oxford Wednesday afternoon as I was having to return Saturday. I just managed to get the tent pitched before the heavens opened so I resorted to inflating my bed in the comfort of my car. I took a wander to Go Outdoors, conveniently placed at the entrance of the campsite only to find buckets placed everywhere collecting rainwater. It was a long night with the rain and an accompanying strong wind and I was thinking I much preferred the cold but dry conditions of Hertford.

Thursday morning I walked along the Thames and looked around the Indoor Market before heading to the Jericho District once again picking up the waterways back in to the centre. Friday and the weather was improving so once again headed off along the Thames in the opposite direction to Iffley, a lovely conservation village just over a mile from the campsite, catching a bus from here I once again made my way in to Oxford to take in a couple of museums. A quick look at the Ordnance Survey map and I could see a route back to the campsite via Hinksey. Many more campers had arrived and it was lovely to see some new (to me) faces.

Saturday morning and it was time to pack up, Rita wasn't going to let me go before having a slice of cake - thank you x Another lovely ALC meet.



Chris: On a nice sunny Friday 3 of us left the site cycled about 30 miles to Woodstock via Bladon. We went at a leisurely pace through Oxford city using cycle routes and paths where we could find them, eventually getting to the outskirts and some easy to find cycle paths. We stopped to see some model

railways, then on to Bladon Church to see Winston Churchills family graves. After looking around a bit. We then went on through the park at Blenheim to Woodstock for a very nice lunch. It was a nice sunny day, just right for cycling. We followed NCN5 to get back, until we found a bridge was missing, we did wonder about playing Evil Knievel to get over the gap but decided against it. Having lost the signs we then found our own route into Oxford and then back to the site. All in all a very pleasant ride.



Sheelagh: Two of the group decided to set off early on the Saturday morning to take part in the local park run. We took the bus from the very conveniently located Park & Ride opposite the site entrance into the centre of Oxford. A short walk through the park and we were merging with all of the other runners. Recent heavy rain had forced many other park runs to cancel but being mostly gravel tracks the University Parks Parkrun was confirmed to run and consequently attracted a lot more runners than usual.

On the warm up I took in the JRR Tolkien memorial bench as featured on Google maps with almost 30 reviews. Although I am not sure what I was expecting as I have to admit to being somewhat underwhelmed to discover it was just a bench!

The route was a flat, two lap course around the park taking in the cricket green and some woods. The friendly marshals encouraged the runners on a surprisingly warm January day. Following the run we quickly caught the bus arriving back at the camp site just as the heavy rain started and in time to enjoy a piping hot shower before starting the rest of the days activities.

Sarah: On the Saturday I used the Park and Ride facility conveniently located directly opposite the campsite to travel into Oxford and explore the museums and bookshops. The busses are good value, run several times per hour and have drop off and pick up points in the city centre close to the main shopping areas and colleges. Being a bookworm, I particularly enjoyed spending time in Blackwell's bookshop on

Broad Street. It really is tardis-like. A regular looking shop from the outside, it initially seems unremarkable on the inside too until you go downstairs to the Norrington room and stare open-mouthed as a cavernous underground space opens up, shelves and tables of books stretching away into the distance. It's no exaggeration to say you could spend hours here. I did! The atmosphere is very relaxed and there is an in-store café, armchairs and also wooden chairs looking out from the upper gallery. Best leave the credit card at home unless you are planning on buying some bigger bookshelves.



Brown Bear I was glad that some ALC members came to visit me at the Natural History Museum in Oxford. Although exhibits like me are really put there for children, adults seem to be quite taken with the life-sized bears – one brown and the other white, placed close to the museum entrance. John, Pippa, Susan, and Martyn, as well as Rita, were all amongst my visitors. As it was not raining, despite threatening clouds, I was very happy to have the extra attention.

I heard that the wind had been quite strong on site, but all the tents survived well. One wigwam tent looked a bit sorry for itself as it had rained during the night and a few pegs 'fell out'. One camper, in a tiny tent, kept on losing her things, but surely this is part of the fun? Some stoves took a while to be lit, quite a few matches were needed - the wind was a bit on the wild side. Those with stoves which lit with flints were better off.



Despite blustery conditions, two campers even had pancakes with lemon, sugar, and honey for breakfast – where were mine....could I ask? There was even cake – coffee and walnut I believe, that does sound good. I am very glad to have visitors from the 'Great Outdoors' only next time remember **'Bears like honey!'**

Nigel: A group of four of us went along to the Isis River Farmhouse pub for an amazing night of great music. Firstly, the pub itself is unique, it's only accessible by foot or bicycle from the River Thames footpath. We walked and it was pretty dark on the way back, luckily nobody fell in the river!

The music session was very special, this is how they describe themselves: "This is a Bastard English Session. Meaning that it's an English Session, but with Abba, and Motorhead, and Joshua Hall. (And, lately, a surprising amount of early 00s hip hop.) And even your own material."

We arrived quite early and musicians kept arriving and joining in. It seemed almost everyone who walked in was carrying an instrument of some kind! In the end there were probably 20 musicians, all amateurs (as in not getting paid, the quality of music was certainly NOT amateur) all were remarkably well led by James Bell, a local composer and musician himself. We had great food and all agreed it had been a very special night!



Susan: I was able to visit the Khadija Saye exhibition, *Dwelling: In This Space We Breathe*, at the Pitt Rivers museum, which was very powerful. Khadija was a talented young artist whose work was exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2017. She died in the Grenfell Tower fire the same year. I will revisit when I am next in Oxford - having first done some research on Gambian amulets, beads and horns for greater understanding.

Galanthus nivalis (*snowdrop, flower of hope*)



Today, I watched a curved, old man with a wheelchair, pushing, pushing. Half-hidden beneath the bare hedge, snowdrops, pure shy maids, luminous.

He paused, bent forwards, gently turned her head, pointed out the white blooms. Her tired eyes welled, lips almost smiled. He picked a single stem, time stopped.

The years rolled back, a lovers' tryst sealed with a posy of snowbells. Symbols of hope reborn each Spring, marking the years, counting their love.

Kit and stuff...a 6/5 and a 0/5

For the first time ever, an Alpkit review that is not entirely positive. The Hertford Meet coincided with my birthday, and the Camping Widower had bought me a Qark head torch because he knew that I'd been mulling over the pros and cons of getting a rechargeable battery. It was given to me fully charged and working, but when I needed it on site - nothing. The battery appeared to be completely flat. This was tricky, because it was snowing heavily and pretty much dark inside my Soloist (who would have thought that the 3 season Soloist would stand up to heavy snow? Well done on that one, Alpkit, 6/5). Anyway, the instructions say remove the battery to charge it, so I took it out, gave it a boost with the power pack and replaced. No joy.

I've since written to Alpkit for advice. They asked me if my battery had two 'pins' - I checked and it had just one. Customer Services explained that care needs to be taken when charging the battery as the small pins can be easily broken off rendering the battery useless. I had no idea I'd broken anything, but then again I was charging the battery in a tiny tent covered in thick snow, not easy.

Looking at the reviews it's clear that many people are very happy with the Qark. However, the small number of poor reviews were illuminating. It seems that in very cold weather, Qark won't switch on, so my battery may not have been flat at all. And as well as broken pins, the battery casing may crack - and yes, I can see a fine crack in mine.

I'm sure the Qark is great if you can charge it at home but for winter camping, its apparent aversion to cold weather, and the need to remove a fiddly battery to charge it make it unsuitable. Sadly it's 0/5 for the Qark from me. **Susan**

Backpacker 'Risotto'

If I'm backpacking to a site that does not have any nearby shops, I can squeeze the ingredients for this into my pack so that I'll have something hot, filling and tasty that doesn't use up too much gas, adds very little weight to my pack and is quite nutritious.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp of dried onion
- 1 tbsp of finely chopped dried tomatoes
- 1 tbsp of finely chopped dried mushrooms
- Small bag of rice cooked and frozen in advance

Measure out the dried ingredients and put them into a suitable container for transport. I like to use an aluminium screw top tin, which avoids plastic and is perfect for rehydrating the veg on arrival - just fill the tin with water, put the lid back on and leave the dried veg for as long as possible to soak up the liquid.

When you want to eat, just bring the veg to the boil in a small pan and simmer **on a very, very low flame** until they are tender. This might be 2 mins if they've been very well soaked or up to 5 mins - keep testing, add water a little at a time as needed to keep it moist.

When the veg are soft, stir in the cooked rice (kept cool by stuffing the frozen rice in amongst your clothes!) till it is heated through. Then grab your spork and eat it straight from the pan. **Eieio**

