



Judi Spiers on Monday

Read Judi's column every week in the Western Morning News

The joys of another caravan holiday...

I'VE just had a holiday in one lounge/kitchen with five cupboards - each cupboard door requiring a different technique to open it.

They weren't actually cupboards, but rooms. For this was 'caravan land', or 'static caravan land', to be accurate. I'm sure Bilbo Baggins, Frodo and friends from the Shire would have luxuriated in the space. However, after a week with my husband, our two fully grown friends and their nine-month-old Springer spaniel Jack, let's just say there was very little we didn't know about each other.

To add to the treat, we'd chosen a week in which the Westcountry saw some of the heaviest storms it has seen this year, which meant we were confined to quarters for much of the time.

I was a little on edge before the holiday, anyway, as it was with the very same friends I have written about before in this column.

Yes, that's right, the couple who we joined on their mini-moon (pre-honeymoon) in which the husband

suffered a heart attack. Then the following year there was the ill-fated barge holiday in France, once more in storms, in which an out of control barge, supposedly being steered by an Eastern European family, henceforth known as 'Bouncing Checks', careered into us whilst we were static in the lock, breaking off a piece of our bow.

Oh, and the over-excitable Klargester toilet meant that none of us got a good night's sleep as it erupted every time someone attempted a sneaky midnight tinkle... and then decided to back up ALARMINGLY! We got a group discount therapy session after that incident.

Then... (oh yes, there's more...) last year we took our first static caravan holiday together in deepest Cornwall, and on arrival the husband with the heart condition discovered he had left his medication at home.

We're not talking a couple of packs of Nurofen and Paracetamol. We're talking heavy-duty stuff that goes into double figures!

Now you might be thinking there

is no joy to be got from the second kick of a mule, so whatever possessed us to consider a holiday with these same friends again?

Well, I like to be positive. Glass half-full and all that. Lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place. Although I suspect Roy Sullivan, the United States park ranger in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, would have something to say about that. He was hit by lightning on seven occasions and lived to tell the tale.

Anyway, we were offered the caravan a few months ago and all said: "Yes, let's do it, what could possibly go wrong this time?"

You might be thinking there is no joy to be got from the second kick of a mule, so whatever possessed us to consider a holiday with these same friends again?

Well, I'll tell you what. Whilst walking with Jack on Woodbury Common the week before the holiday, he was bitten on the back of a leg by an adder!

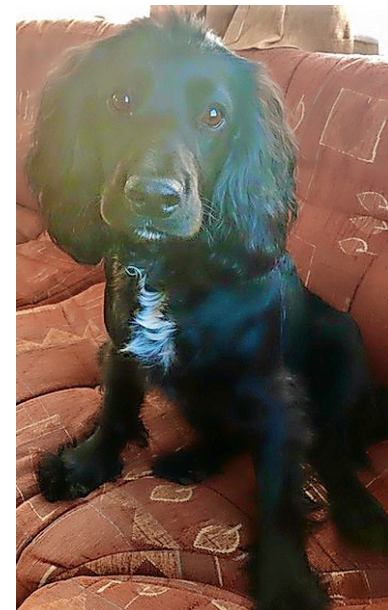
Now snake bites are an emergency. With treatment, most dogs recover, but some bites are very serious, cause severe illness and in some cases death.

I'm pleased to say Jack was kept calm and taken straight to the vets, anti-venom and pain-killers administered with a warning to keep an eye on the wound to make sure no infection started up.

Thankfully, being young and strong with boundless energy, he recovered quickly and the holiday was able to go ahead - all of us convinced that things would be plain sailing from then on.

Sailing being the operative word, as the rain and winds were so strong we more or less sailed down the A30 to the campsite!

There has been no mention of another holiday together yet. But, if there is, I'm telling you - there won't be any flights involved.



> Jack, the nine-month-old Springer spaniel - who thankfully recovered from his adder bite in time for the holiday to go ahead

Glen King PR

Western Morning News

MP's killing is an attack on us all and the democracy we cherish

THE shocking killing of an MP at a constituency surgery in Essex has once again highlighted the dangers those in the front line of politics, indeed the front line of many sectors, face when dealing with the public in arenas where tensions can run high.

Sadly, the death of Sir David Amess, which is being treated as a terror-related incident, and similar acts serve to undermine the open systems we hold dear.

Politicians on all sides have united in grief and a determination that such atrocities should not weaken a resolve to ensure democracy in this country is accessible and tolerant, reflecting the freedoms we cherish. And yet, as concerns about security

are rightly raised, so our MPs may increasingly distance themselves from the local constituents they represent.

One of the positive elements of our democracy is that constituents can see their parliamentary representatives face to face across a table at regular Friday surgeries.

The ability to flag concerns with an MP, and to hear their counter-arguments, is at the heart of our system of parliamentary representation.

Now such weekly surgeries could be characterised by police standing guard over discussions.

Protection for MPs while they are holding talks with constituents is

one of the options being considered under a "whole spectrum" of measures to address safety concerns after the Southend West MP's killing on Friday.

The safety of our politicians is paramount. Two serving MPs have been killed in the past five years, and those who hold public office should never live in fear for their safety.

Labour shadow foreign secretary Lisa Nandy admitted she did not feel safe when going about her Wigan constituency and said she was not sure the situation was "recoverable" for public servants following the tragic deaths of Sir David Amess and Labour MP for Batley and Spen, Jo Cox, who was murdered in 2016 as

she was on her way to a constituency surgery.

Home Secretary Priti Patel is adamant that MPs should continue to be accessible to the public, despite the attacks and the barrage of threats, saying: "This should never, ever break that link between an elected representative and their democratic role, responsibility and duty to the people who elected them."

She is right. Those who attack MPs, attack our democracy and should never be allowed to win.

Widening the gap between politicians and the electorate, fracturing the open relationship that has persisted for so long, may increase voter frustration and distrust. And yet the

dangers cannot be ignored. Social media has become a breeding ground for extreme views.

The ability of people to anonymously 'troll' those in the public eye has to be tackled. The bullying and threats which would not be tolerated in public should not be tolerated online. Allowing it to continue unchecked runs the risk of such hatred spilling over from the virtual to the real.

Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Sir David, and our hopes are that the democracy he championed as an MP in touch with his electorate remains a legacy that will not be weakened by his tragic loss.



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