

Hi Fellow Knausers!

Jill & I hope those of you who attended York enjoyed your weekend. We were unable to be with you having just returned from a two-week trip to Belgium, Holland and north Germany. We have also booked to spend the Christmas week at the Caravan Club site at York. We shall be there with caravanning friends and look forward to a different Christmas in our motor home.

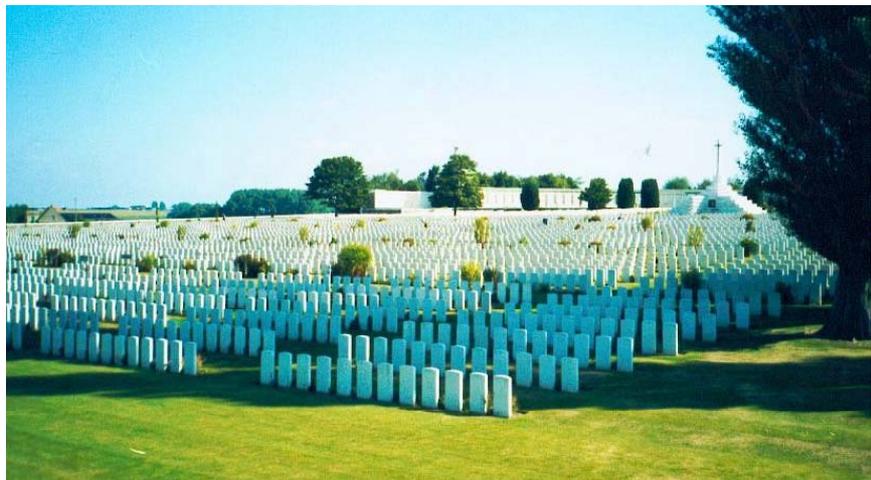
We left for our trip to Europe on Saturday 6th September and on leaving Calais on the way to Dunkirk spotted a Knaus Traveller with British plates, heading in the direction of Calais. This was about 9.45 am continental time. The usual wave took place, but we had insufficient time to make recognition. Was it one of you?

The purpose for our journey was, one to get a repair done to our integral Omnistor awning and secondly to visit friends in north Germany.

During the summer our awning became rather unstable and was likely to open of its own accord once the handle had released the catches. We were able to get it back into its cover and secure it, but were not prepared to use it again. A British firm, advertised in MMM felt they could not repair an integral fitted awning, but made contact for us with the Omnistor British agent. Having explained the situation it was agreed we would visit the Omnistor factory in Menen, Belgium for the repair. This was arranged for September 9th, so we decided to stay on a site in Ypres area and tour the First World War battle area.

My father had served in the Ypres Salient and had spoken of Hill 60 and Hell Fire Corner, so to see these places and realise the terrible suffering that took place made one feel very humble. The stay included a visit to the 'In Flanders Fields' museum, the Tyne Cot Memorial and we attended the evening sounding of 'The Last Post' at the Menen Gate. This has been played *every* night at 8 pm since 1928, except for a short time during the German occupation in the Second World War.

The largest War Grave Commission cemetery at Tyne Cot which holds 11,871 fallen soldiers, the vast majority of them British, and is surrounded by a circular monument inscribed with the names of 35,000 more who went missing in action in the Ypres area after April 16, 1917.



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Arriving at Omnistor we were expected and sent to an area to be met by their engineer Yannik. On seeing the problem it was soon established that this was a fault whereby the aluminium lugs in a winding 'square' had worn, allowing the awning to go into 'freefall'. Happily a retooled part, which has a solid square, was fitted and of course the awning operated perfectly. It appears to me this was an earlier design fault that had been noted by the company. Although out of guarantee Omnistor waived any charge – for which we were more than pleased.

It was then on our way, with an overnight at a farm site in Meerkerk, Holland. Here there was an exceptionally friendly reception with a welcome cup of coffee or chocolate and a chat. This site was the head office for the SVR. Stichting Vrije Recreatie, a network of farm sites similar to CL's. For 10 Euros a year you can have access to the network via email or telephone and be advised of sites in the area you intend to visit.

(Their website is www.svr.nl - their information is in English too).

The next stop was to Neunburg in north Germany and a stay with long standing friends. Trips to a school museum, where we became pupils in the year 1910, and to Grietsiel – a picturesque North Sea harbour where we sampled the Ost Friesland tea ceremony. Other visits were to a Peat museum, the Spa town or ‘Kurort’ of Bad Zwischenahn where smoked eels are the local delicacy, a walk in an ancient forest, a family birthday party and the brewery town of Jever all kept us busy.

School just as it was in 1910 – boys one side, girls the other and *definitely* no talking.



Greetseel a picturesque north German fishing harbour, now protected by modern flood protection

Holland is not the only place to find windmills



There was also an open-air harvest church service on the Sunday, together with craft, beer and food stalls in the town square. All this followed a procession of about 20 decorated floats from the outlying villages and farmsteads.



Church harvest thanksgiving service in progress surrounded by stalls & beer stands all in full swing!



Just one of the 20 or so floats in the procession

An overnight stay on the coast and a further two nights near the German/Dutch border near Kleves, (Henry VIII's wife, Anne of Cleves), saw us back to the Belgian coast where we enjoyed a *free* night on the designated motor home parking area at Blankenberg.



There is a feeling, however, that some of these are under pressure to be closed, the pressure coming from campsite operators. Their objection is obviously debatable since although trade may be lost to a campsite, local shops, restaurants and tourist attractions must benefit.

In conclusion, we had a great two weeks with perfect weather – so far this year we have had 106 nights away in the van – not bad, but perhaps other club members can do better?

Regards from - *Mike & Jill Dixon*

