



CL INFORMATION

Full details of the CLs mentioned in this feature, and others, can be found in the 2003/4 Directory under Shropshire and Wrexham: see Ellesmere (p390), Whittington (p393) and Chirk (p474). Or see pp392, 395 and 478 in the 2005/6 edition

Chris Warren took one look down at the river, woods and fields 125ft below, closed her eyes in horror and stumbled down the steps in search of indoor comfort and security. Which was surprising, really, as Chris and her family were not only on a boat but on a canal.

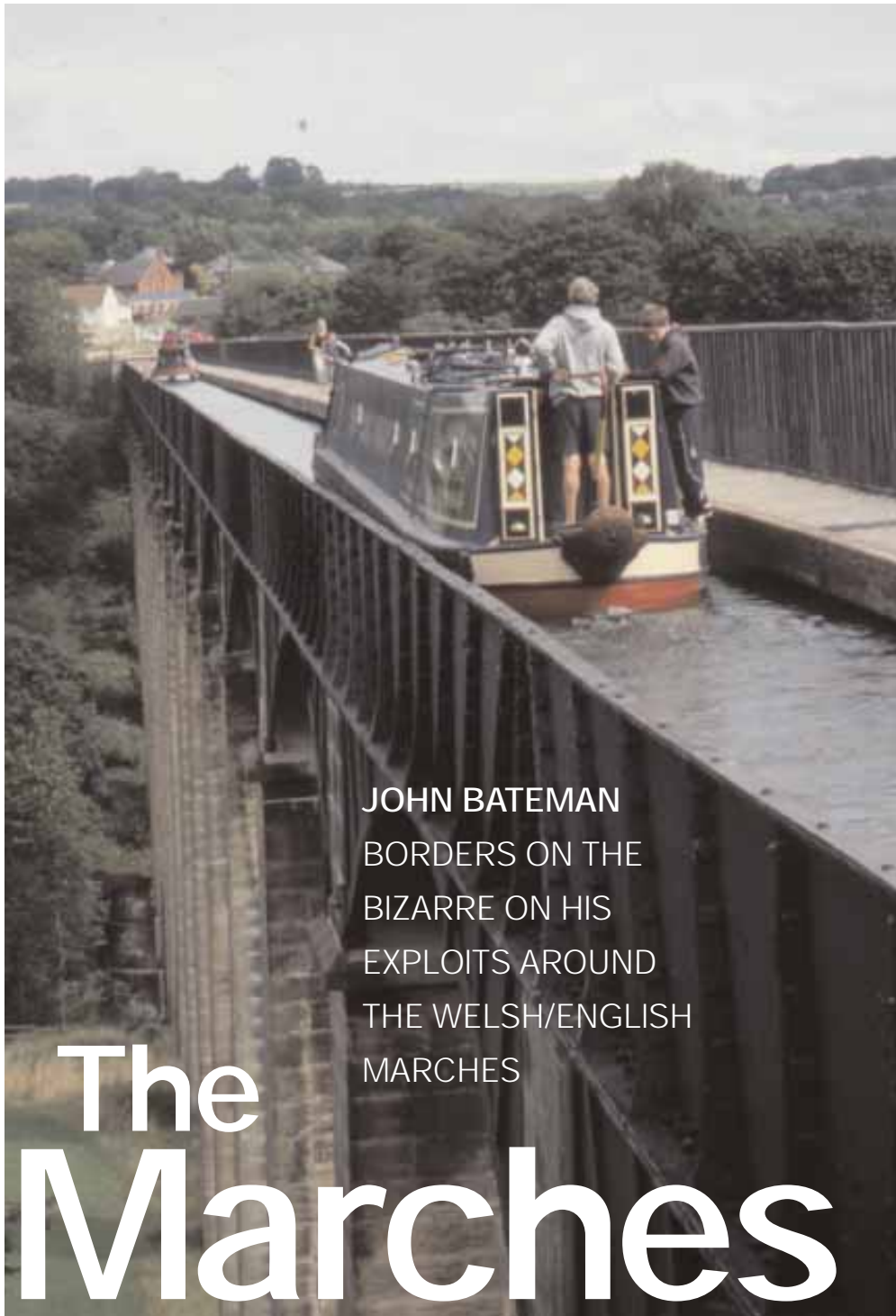
Anyone with a fear of heights could be forgiven for thinking that a caravan holiday on a rural CL, combined with a canal trip on a hefty cruise boat, would keep them on pretty safe ground, so to speak. But no, take nothing for granted – a CL trail can be a journey into the unknown.

How often have you rolled up at a site to be asked whether you'd prefer a ground or first floor pitch? Or when did you last marvel at a Club member's astonishing collection of oil cans, or be met by a CL owner with the somewhat disturbing greeting of: "Goodbye, I've sold up and I'm leaving"?

The Club's network of CLs is a remarkable mix that seems to lend itself naturally to tales of the unexpected and all these little oddities occurred during an enjoyable look at a scenic slice of borderland country.

The Welsh/English Marches around Chirk, in the green swathe between Wrexham and Oswestry, support my viewpoint. Gaze around and everything looks leafy and conventional, pastoral and predictable. But dip into the CL pool and splash around a bit in their locality and there's a surprise around almost every corner – even overhead.

The somewhat disconcerting "hello, goodbye" greeting occurred at Ebnal Hall, Rhosygadfa, Oswestry (Shropshire, Whittington) where Heather Jones explained with a smile that she was off to live in the Channel Islands. The good news is that the superb site she was leaving is in safe hands; new owners



JOHN BATEMAN
BORDERS ON THE
BIZARRE ON HIS
EXPLOITS AROUND
THE WELSH/ENGLISH
MARCHES

The Marches



Martin and Kath Cap settled in last season and Kath, who runs the CL and adjoining commercial park, quickly learned that caravanners love the place as much as they do.

The *Directory* accurately describes the ³/₄-acre site as quiet, with WC, hot and cold running water and electrics. But

that tells only half the tale. This is a lovely spot, immaculately designed and superbly tended, with nice views, too.

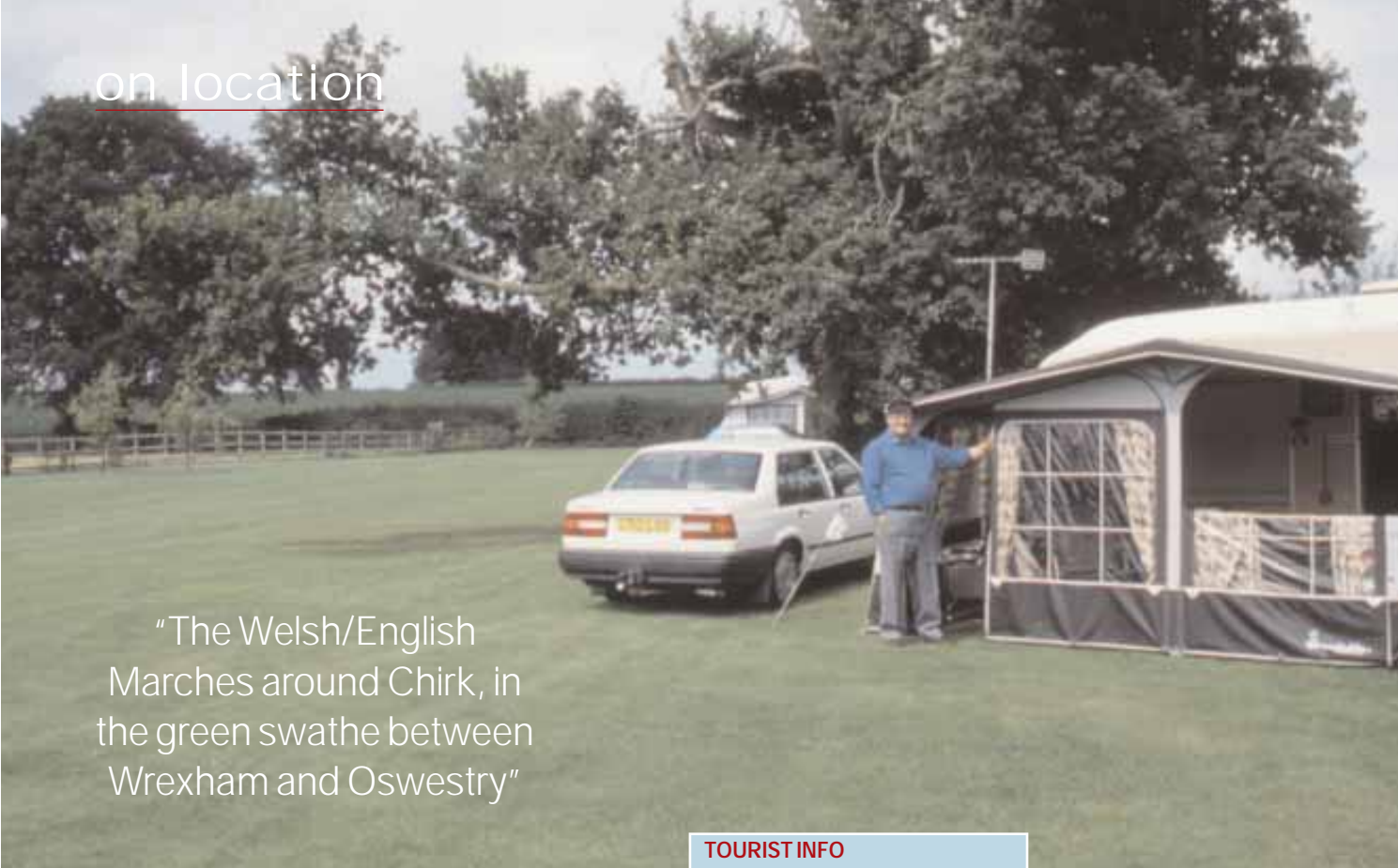
Denny and June Parvin, from Staffordshire, discovered Ebnal Hall three years ago and have been visiting ever since. "Just superb," purred Denny, "CLs don't come much better than this."

The locality is pleasant for touring, with Oswestry only three miles away, but it's the canal cruises *Directory* entry that hints at the drama awaiting those who take to the water. Thomas Telford, my lifelong hero, is the man Chris Warren can blame for her moment of terror.

Telford was a genius, a powerhouse of an architect and civil engineer who, in the



TOP LEFT: Two sites for the price of one – this is the upstairs at Birch Hill CL
ABOVE: Pontcysyllte aqueduct, 125ft above Llangollen Vale
LEFT: Don't look down!



“The Welsh/English Marches around Chirk, in the green swathe between Wrexham and Oswestry”

ABOVE: “Just superb”, says Denny Parvin of Ebnal Hall CL
BELOW: Navigating the Chirk aqueduct

18th and early 19th century, built roads, bridges, harbours and piers – opening up travel, commerce and industrial opportunities in previously isolated and deprived areas. But it was his canal building expertise in his Shropshire days that elevated him from youthful promise to the pinnacle of national acclaim. Telford masterminded canal aqueducts and tunnels as remarkable now as they must have been then.

Telford’s Chirk aqueduct reaches 70ft in height to cross the river Ceiriog before it enters his 460-yard tunnel. Amazing – but all this is dwarfed by his masterpiece at Pontcysyllte where his ‘stream in the sky’ sees boats floating in a cast-iron trough, more than 120ft above the Vale of Llangollen and over the river Dee.

Now, if you’d like a nice CL from which to marvel at all this, plus

TOURIST INFO

- Ellesmere: tel 01691 622981 and 624488
- Oswestry: tel 01691 662488 and 662753 or email ot@oswestry-welshborders.org.uk
- Llangollen: Tel 01978 860828, email llangollen.tic@virgin.net
- Wrexham: tel 01978 292015, email TIC@wrexham.gov.uk

Shropshire’s ‘lakeland’, Ellesmere offers choice and Ian and Janet Kelly’s lovely home, Birch Hill, The Cross, is the CL that has an ‘upstairs or downstairs’.

The option stems from a previous owner’s plan to have two sites, separate grassy areas on different levels. Now, as one CL, the Birch Hall site is spacious indeed, with pitches down below the farmhouse beside a stream, or on a drier, elevated meadow with broader outlook.

There are hook-ups on both plots, a woodland walkies track, information packs for newcomers and, unsurprisingly,

Ian and Janet (kept on their toes by baby James) earn plenty of plaudits. “Great site, lovely location and always a warm welcome” said Joan and Roger Green, from Denbigh. Then, with a flourish, up went the Volvo’s tailgate to reveal more oil cans than you’d find in the Middle East. “Just a hobby,” said Roger. “More than 200 and I’m still buying more.”

Ellesmere itself is an attractive medieval town straddling the Llangollen Canal, and Ian and Janet offer tips on eating out, good bakers and things to do or see.

Just room for one more? Well, try something different. Under Wrexham (Chirk) is listed the Quinta Christian Centre, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, where the CL sits in 50 acres of greenery and has something of a split personality. The Centre’s manager, Peter Bevington, readily affirms that the Quinta is unusual as its usual peace and quiet can change suddenly if large numbers of people turn up for, perhaps, a sports fixture, before melting away to leave the place deserted.

The CL, flat, green and with a pleasant outlook, has electric hook-ups and other home comforts, plus estate recreation options. It was all in quiet mode when I was there and Peter and Barbara MacMillan, from Hertfordshire, on site with grandchildren Scott and Holly, described their visit as a “happy return”. Said Peter: “We were here 10 years ago and it is now much improved – a lovely spot and ideal for the youngsters.”

This borders area has a lot to offer and, on site or off, you’ll find that Land Rover does not have a monopoly on discoveries.

IDEAS FOR DAYS OUT

- **Chirk Castle**, Chirk LL14 5AF. Tel 01691 777701 or see nationaltrust.org.uk. A 700-year-old fortress right next to the Club’s Lady Margaret’s Park site. A camera-clicking spectacle, the castle offers the usual attractions – tea room, gift shop, gardens and so on
- **The Mere**, The Mere’s Visitor Centre, The Mere, Shropshire. Tel 01691 622981. Ellesmere, largest of six meres, not only good to look at but offers shoreline walks, woods, birdlife etc
- **Park Hall Farm**, Park Hall, Oswestry, Shropshire SY11 4AS. Tel 01691 671123 or see parkhallfarm.co.uk. A 130-acre farm with museums, restored buildings, activities and hours of family fun. Good bad-weather target with lots of cover.
- **Llangollen**: just gaze at the scenery or hop aboard a boat. Llangollen Canal, 46 miles to its meeting with the Shropshire Union Canal, offers the Pontcysyllte and Chirk aqueducts, great tunnels and lift bridges. Towpath walks highly recommended
- **Wrexham**: festivals and events throughout the season, with Bellevue Park, Multiplex Cinema, theatre productions and markets. If you like dancing, check what’s on at the Memorial Hall

