



Celebrate good times

FLASHBACK
ISSUE NO 1 FEB 1961

**Welcome to
1,500,000**

Last year, no fewer than one and a half million holidaymakers in this country chose to spend their annual vacations under canvas or in youth hostels. This figure, stupendous though it is, still does not take into account all those who camped for odd days and at week-ends, or enjoyed some other form of completely outdoor holiday, or went camping abroad.

Taken as a guide, this record total underlines, in unmistakable fashion, the unprecedented attraction camping and the outdoors have for all of us. It is because of the urgent need to cater for this greatly expanding interest that we are launching the new magazine **POPULAR CAMPING**.

By introducing this magazine, we are expressing our faith in the future of camping — a future which is brighter today than it has ever been. Bound by no restrictions, and owing allegiance only to our readers, we shall make it our honest endeavour to promote camping and its allied activities for the benefit of everyone.

POPULAR CAMPING is designed to meet the needs of all enthusiasts, from the lone teenager to the family group. Our readers will number every type of camper — whether he, or she, uses a car, cycle or scooter, or travels on foot, and regardless of whether camping forms part of another outdoor activity such as hiking, rock-climbing or canoe-touring.

It will be our aim to help readers with their problems; to provide them with ideas for getting the best from their camping; to review and report on new equipment; to inspire them with accounts of holidays under canvas here and abroad; and, of course, to present the solid facts and news which the up to date camper needs.

Backed by all the resources of a modern large-scale publishing group, **POPULAR CAMPING** will be in the fortunate position of being able to provide camping with a powerful voice which, matched by the growth of camping itself, cannot fail to ensure a new era of development and opportunity to the advantage of every camper.

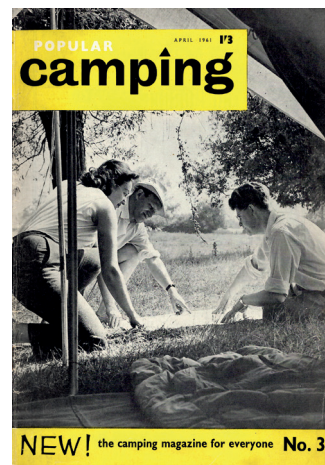
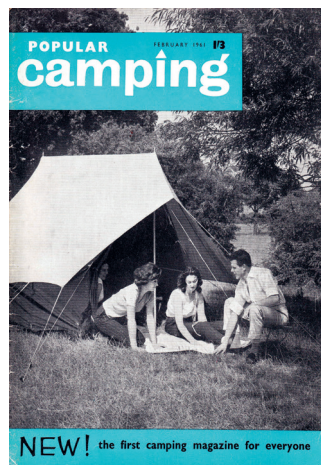
Camping editor **Iain Duff** looks back through the magazine archives to find out how tent life has changed in the last 60 years

In February 1961, the UK had an estimated 1.5 million campers. It was the perfect time to launch the first ever magazine aimed at this growing army of outdoor lovers.

Popular Camping, as it was called back then, gave readers all the information they needed to choose the right tents and equipment for their adventures, as well as advice on where to go and essential camping skills.

In some ways, things have changed a lot since then. Tents and equipment are massively different, for a start. And we've changed, too.

These days we're more than simply a print magazine; we reach almost one million people across our online, digital and social media platforms. But what hasn't changed is our knowledge and expertise and that's why we remain a trusted voice for campers like you.



SUPER 70s





AWESOME 80s



The eighties was the era of beige cars, giant mobile phones and big shoulder pads. But it wasn't all bad news.

Camping was as popular as ever and was starting to become even more accessible for families. While specialist outdoor shops were still the main source for camping equipment, high street stores were starting to get in on the act with lower-cost gear. So while you might go to Taunton Camping, Field and Trek or Tiso to pick up something from Vango, Saunders, The North Face, Wild Country or Ultimate, you now also had the option to visit your local branch of Argos instead. Camping accessories were also becoming more user-friendly, although many of the "lightweight" rucksacks on the market were more akin to small refrigerators than today's compact models. Lightweight tent innovator Bob Saunders



is a legendary name in British camping. In 1985 he launched one of his most famous models, the futuristic Space Packer.

DIGITAL 90s



With the end of the century looming, camping was beginning to undergo changes in the 90s. Family camping was becoming far more accessible than it had been in the past. Bulky frame tents were on the way out and being replaced with large dome tents, that were much easier to transport and pitch. Flipping through the pages of *Camping* magazine it's surprising how many recognisable names there were among the manufacturers. Vango,

Khyam, Sunncamp, Vaude, Wild Country, Outwell and Coleman are still with us but others like Saunders, Ariel, Freeman and Conquest have fallen by the wayside. Surprisingly, tent prices haven't really changed that much in the last 20 years – a Sunncamp Globetrotter dome tent cost around £399 in 1998 while frame tents started at around £180. Khyam introduced the Ridgi-Dome range of easy-pitch tents in 1998, using the unique 'quick erect system'. The tents ranged from two-berth to 10-berth and were advertised as providing increased height and storage as well as being simple to put up. The internet was in its infancy in the late 90s but camping was beginning to make its mark online. Apparently, in 1998 there were 1,200 mentions of 'camping' on the world



wide web (a Google search today throws up around three billion!). A mag feature on this baffling new world warned: "Although messages are usually genuine, some can be hostile, racist, pornographic and bigoted." Some things never change... Naturism was a big thing in 1998 (careful now – Ed) and even *Camping* got in on the act, with a four-page feature of nudist camping in France – but don't worry, there's no chance of the current editor stripping off for the cameras.

CELEBRATE 60 YEARS OF CAMPING



THE NEW MILLENNIUM

It seems a bit strange to describe the 2000s as history. After all, it was just a couple of years ago, wasn't it? No way, that's impossible... 20 years ago, you say! Where has the time gone?

It might not seem that long ago, but camping has changed a fair bit even in the last two decades. There were plenty of familiar names in the shops, like Sunncamp, Khyam, Outwell, Easy Camp, Vango and Coleman. But while tunnel tents are now the most common style of tent on UK campsites, back in the early 2000s, domes were by far the most popular family tent around.

Tunnels were slowly coming onto the scene and that coincided with a move away from smaller tents. Family tents in all styles were starting to become hugely popular. Or just huge. As the editor of this very magazine pointed out: "In recent years there has been a tendency for campers to think small and compact, but there does seem to be a

bit of a wind-change taking place. Several manufacturers now offer 12-berth family dome tents and there are even one or two family tents with 15 and 16 berths!" The mind boggles...

And speaking of mind-boggling family camping, hats off to reader, Michele Walden and her husband. They wrote in to tell us about the wonderful camping holidays they were having with their kids... nine-year-old twin boys and five-year-old triplet girls. The phrase, "rather you than me" has never seemed more apt!

It makes a change for costs to go down while quality goes up, but that's what was happening with tents in 2003. Outwell's six-berth Hartford (a three-bed dome) cost £299, while Gelert's top-of-the-range Satellite 6 Deluxe was on sale at £330. As *Camping* editor of the day, John Lloyd, said: "It's fair to say there's never been a better time to buy

a tent."

In the spring of 2003, Yeomans opened a new store in Northampton, taking the number of branches around the UK to 50. The new shop was a bit of a departure, featuring a display of more than 60 tents. Meanwhile, Sheffield-based retailer CCC was planning a new concept store in Coventry. Go Outdoors would open the following year.

In 2011 – the year I became editor of this magazine – Vango launched the AirBeam range of inflatable tents, which have helped revolutionise camping and opened it up to so many more people.

Finally, how do you describe a tent that has a dome area for living/sleeping and a tunnel for storage? A "dunnel" apparently. I suspect this was the brainchild of the same stupid idiot who later dreamed up glamping and staycation. Or "stidiot" as they'd probably prefer to be called.

