



Cold cures

John Wickersham on how to prepare your pride and joy for winter storage

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES prevent many of us from taking caravanning holidays during winter. As a result our touring and motor caravans might remain unused for a fairly long spell. Before laying-up your pride and joy, though, several jobs need to be done.

Many owners' manuals now include specific sections on 'laying-up for winter'

(some add useful tick lists as well) but some vehicles come with no more than a pack of leaflets supplied by manufacturers of individual appliances. Buyers of second-hand caravans also face a potential problem because manuals have somehow been lost.

A lack of model-specific guidance can lead to trouble – especially if the buyer has

never owned a caravan before – as post-season precautions are crucial. Forget to drain-down the water, for example, and you'll be faced with a large repair bill before your caravanning activities are resumed in the spring.

There isn't sufficient space on the two pages here to discuss all tasks relating to every model of touring and motor caravan. But don't be too concerned by this brevity. I worked with the Club's technical advisors when they prepared *Wrap up for Winter*, one of about 50 technical leaflets which members can obtain free of charge. The Club can post you a copy on request or you can download one from caravanclub.co.uk. Meanwhile, here's a pictorial tick list which presents a selection of pre lay-up tasks to consider. >>

If your caravan's tucked up for winter, make sure it cannot get damaged

OUTDOOR ISSUES

1. Try not to park where branches, leaves and sap are liable to fall on a caravan. Green coatings can appear on a vehicle parked outside over winter – firms like Fenwicks sell Overwintering Caravan Storage protection fluid



2. Brakes can jam if left applied for long periods. If the ground is level and location sheltered, it is best to chock a caravan's wheels securely and leave its handbrake off



3. Provided it's not powering a burglar alarm, it is advisable to remove the leisure battery and connect it to an automatic stage charger



4. For safety it's wise to remove gas cylinders. Store in a cool, ventilated location (never indoors or in a cellar)



5. Use a cover with breathable fabric so damp isn't sealed in. Also ensure the caravan is cleaned before the cover is fitted and that all sharp projections are covered



6. Don't try to protect acrylic plastic windows with kitchen film. Research suggests that its sticky coating can react with the plastic



AVOIDING FROST DAMAGE

1. Before draining water pipes, open the taps and shower control. With lever taps, always 'park' the lifted lever in its central position. Leaving all water outlets open prevents pressure build-up if trapped hot/cold water freezes



3. Water heaters must be drained-down long before frosty periods. Many older caravans still use a Carver Crystal heater – a good product but this early model takes ages to empty completely



2. Some touring caravans and many larger motor caravans have a Trumatic Combi space/water heater. Combis have an automatic drain valve which triggers at 2°C-4°C but there's a manual control, too



4. After Carver ceased manufacturing water heaters, the Truma Ultrastore product has been fitted in the majority of new caravans. Its drain-down tap is a conspicuous yellow lift-up lever



5. Residual water left in cartridge 'taste filters' often freezes and cracks the casing. Remove these before the weather gets cold – you can buy a replacement at the 2009 price, ready for fitting next season



GENERAL JOBS

1. Waste water systems can start to smell if water and trapped food is left in pipe downturns. Some motor caravans suffer from waste tank odours, too. Make sure you plug your sink, basin and shower tray



3. A fridge must be clean inside and the door left ajar to prevent it getting mouldy inside



5. It makes good sense to clean out fresh water containers with a steriliser like Milton. There are also cleaning products available for waste tanks



2. Leave the toilet valve open. If a damp valve is closed for long spells it can stick to the rubber 'lip seal'. Even better, spray on Thetford's lip seal lubricant or smear on some olive oil



4. Roller blinds present a dilemma. Manufacturers warn that recoil springs get 'tired' if a blind is left closed for long periods. But leave a blind open and anyone can peer in and your upholstery might start fading



6. It is a good idea to transfer all cushions, seat backs and bases to a warm room to keep them in prime condition. Thieves are also less inclined to steal caravans bereft of upholstery



WHAT NEXT?

This is just a selection of pointers and further guidance appears in the *Wrap up for Winter* leaflet and various caravanning books. Other pre-winter topics include awning care, oven cleaning and ventilation