

Parts are especially hard to find for older caravans



Spare a thought

Broken panel, faulty fridge or spoiled upholstery? **John Wickersham** tells you how to go about sourcing your replacement parts

GETTING HOLD of spares for caravans or motor caravans is not always easy. To speed up the supply of parts, the National Caravan Council compiled a guide to good practice.

This was published several years ago and one section specified the maximum time that it should take to obtain key components. For example, it was agreed within the industry that it should take no longer than eight weeks to receive replacement body panels or windows, and six weeks for upholstery items. Not exactly 'next-day delivery' and a time-scale that could conceivably ruin your holiday plans.

The NCC guide also proposed that spares for caravans should continue to be

available for at least eight years after a model's final date of manufacture. In practice, that proposal might go to the wall if a manufacturer winds up its business. Thankfully there are specialist owners' clubs concerned with older caravans from which members can often glean helpful advice.

Diverse range

The term 'spares' covers a diverse range of items. On one hand there are large external components such as body panels, entrance doors and locker lids. Then there are smaller items that are 'bought-in' like appliances, soft furnishings, cabinet catches and awning accessories. The key

to finding replacement parts is knowing exactly who to approach.

Dealers

The usual way to obtain spares is to seek help from a dealer who supplies (or supplied) the make of caravan that you own. In some instances, owners can get advice directly from a manufacturer's customer services department, although parts orders and payments normally have to go through a retailing dealer.

Original equipment suppliers

Members can sometimes buy appliance components directly from a distributor or factory. Companies that operate customer service assistance include Al-Ko Kober (chassis and running gear), Truma (heating and water systems) and Whale (heating and water components). Others might not operate 'direct-to-customer' retailing but have nationwide service centres instead. Dometic is one such example.

Independent component suppliers

Many touring and motor caravan owners also buy components from specialists that operate mail order services. For instance, Caravan Accessories Kenilworth (CAK) is a noteworthy source of parts and the



Getting new window units sometimes takes a long time

Replacement body panels can often be sourced via your caravan dealer



Spares for awnings are often on sale at outdoor shows



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company's free annual catalogue is a tome worth keeping at home.

A further supplier whose components are often stocked in dealer accessory shops is W4. Then there's the catalogue from Towsure – a mail order specialist with retail outlets in Birmingham, Sheffield and Southampton.

Wholesalers

Visitors to major indoor caravan exhibitions will also see accessories displayed by several leading wholesalers.

In fact, the door catches I'd been struggling to find turned up on Nova Leisure's stand at the NEC last October. Of course, wholesalers have stands at exhibitions principally to make contact with leisure industry suppliers and the OEMs (original equipment manufacturers). Members of the public seldom have access, but Nova staff do extend a welcome to caravanners when time permits. They won't sell products, of course, but they'll provide visitors with the part numbers of items they distribute, thereby making it easy for a caravan dealer to order for them.

End-of-line parts

When touring and motor caravan models are changed, factories often have surplus parts available. Several enterprising firms buy these end-of-line parts to sell to the public.

For instance, Ken Carter of Magnum Motorhomes in Grimsby has several warehouses packed with brand new doors, windows, internal patterned plywoods, worktops, cupboard fronts and so on.

I've recognised products in his showroom from Auto-Trail motor caravans, worktops that Swift once installed, and so on.

Caravan breakers

Parts sold by breakers are not new but you needn't presume that they've all come from relics. The Caravan Centre in South Wales, for example, dismantles over a thousand caravans every year, some of which are remarkably recent examples. Rear-end shunts write-off caravans whose chassis is distorted and



Information on Al-Ko Kober's products is available from the company's customer services department



Whale is noted for good product advice and accessory guidance



CAK (mail order) stocks a huge array of components



Nova sources a huge range of items that are then sold to the trade



Brand new doors are available from Magnum Motorhomes



Reclaimed gas locker lids are stocked at The Caravan Centre

panels are crushed. However, nearly-new appliances and sets of upholstery can be retrieved and offered for sale. The Club publishes addresses of similar breakers from all over Britain.

Specialist replicators

If double-glazed 'plastic' windows, shower trays, washbasins and moulded body panels still can't be traced, you could look for a replication company.

As long as you can provide remnants of a damaged window, EECO can manufacture a replacement. As regards replicas of plastic mouldings, we've previously reported on two specialists who can take an item such as a cracked shower tray or caravan front, repair it, create a 'fibreglass' (GRP) copy mould and then produce a new one. V&G near Peterborough or The Caravan Panel Shop near Preston are companies to look for. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

■ **Al-Ko Kober**, Southam, Warwickshire (chassis and running gear advice/parts) – call 01926 818500 or see al-ko.co.uk
 ■ **CAK**, Kenilworth, Warwickshire (large mail order component catalogue) – call 0844 414 2324
 ■ **The Caravan Centre**, Blaenavon, Wales (caravan breaker with parts shop) – call 01495 792700 or see caravanbreakers.net

■ **EECO**, nr Halifax, Yorkshire (bespoke plastic window maker) – call 01274 679524 or see eeco-ltd.com
 ■ **The Caravan Panel Shop**, nr Preston, Lancashire (copy mouldings) – call 01772 691929 or see caravanpanels.com
 ■ **Magnum Motorhomes**, Grimsby, Yorkshire (caravan surplus items) – call 01472 353520 or see magnummotorhomes.co.uk
 ■ **Nova Leisure**, Hannington,

Northamptonshire (detailed component manual held by dealers) – call 01604 780022 or see novaleisure.com
 ■ **Towsure**, Sheffield, Yorkshire (mail order accessory catalogue) – call 0114 250 3025 or see towsure.com
 ■ **Truma UK**, Derbyshire (heating and water systems) – call 01283 586050 or see truma.co.uk
 ■ **V&G Caravans**, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire (copy mouldings) –

call 01733 350580 or see vandgcaravans.co.uk
 ■ **Whale**, Bangor, N Ireland (heating and water components) – call 028 9127 0531 or see whalepumps.com
 ■ **W4**, Arundel, West Sussex (components and accessory packs) – call: 01243 553355 or see w4limited.com
 ■ **Caravan Club Technical Leaflet: Breakers and spares** – see caravanclub.co.uk/practical-advice

