

STORAGE

This leaflet is prepared by The Caravan Club as part of its service to members. The contents are believed correct at time of publication, but the current position may be checked with The Club's Information Office. The Club does not endorse the listed products and you should satisfy yourself as to their suitability. As always, check that the installation of an after-market accessory does not invalidate your warranty.

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If the caravan is to be stored for any length of time, the following procedure is advisable:

1. Location

If possible avoid siting the caravan beneath trees or near dilapidated buildings, where strong winds may dislodge branches or slates that can damage the caravan. In exposed conditions ground anchors may be advisable. Be wary of low lying areas that may be prone to flooding.

2. Covers

Large polythene or tarpaulin sheets should not, in the opinion of most experts, be used to 'seal' the caravan against the elements. Condensation and mould growth may be encouraged and any flapping material or guy ropes could scratch acrylic windows.

If you feel a cover is absolutely necessary because of where the caravan is parked, however, purchase one that is made of "breathable" material, eg: Specialised Accessories Tel: 01943 864828 or Purple Line Tel: 01473 824082.

3. Ventilation

Caravan vents should be left uncovered to provide adequate air circulation inside the caravan; however if in an exposed or salty location the vents on the side of the prevailing wind and/or the 'fridge vent may be closed off for the winter. If you have regular access to the caravan, you could place some moisture absorbing crystals (available from DIY stores) in cupboard corners to reduce the risk of condensation, but these will require fairly frequent changing. There is a low wattage heater which maintains a low level of localised background heat, minimising damp and

condensation and keeping the worst of the chills at bay. Three models are available - The TUX120, costing around £20, the TUX240, costing around £27 and the TUX360, costing around £34, inclusive of VAT. For further details telephone Dimplex on 0845 6005111.

4. The inside

To prevent possible mould growth over the winter, clean and vacuum carpets, curtains and upholstery and if possible remove the soft furnishings and store in a warm, dry place (e g attic). Refer to the caravan manufacturer's handbook which should say if certain materials are dry-clean only. If not possible to remove the cushions, store on edge away from the caravan walls, allowing air to circulate around them and cover with an old sheet to prevent fading in the sunlight.

Walls and ceilings should be wiped over with a mild anti-bacterial solution (eg Dettox) and can be polished afterwards if desired. Cupboards should be emptied, cleaned and vacuumed out. Small doors can be left ajar to assist ventilation, but larger doors should be closed or they may warp.

The refrigerator should be emptied, cleaned with a solution of bicarbonate of soda or anti-bacterial solution and the door left ajar.

The hob/oven should be thoroughly degreased and cleaned. If using one of the stronger oven-cleaners on the market be sure to allow plenty of ventilation whilst working. If necessary burner jets can be brushed over with a stiff brush, and blockages cleared with a high-pressure air line. Never try to clear blocked jets with a piece of wire which can damage or enlarge jet holes.

Blinds and flyscreens should be fully retracted so as not to cause detrimental damage to the return springs.

5. The Water System

- Opening all the taps

If there is a pump switch, ensure it is in the OFF position, then open all the taps including the shower control. Opening all the taps allows air into the system and the drain-down process then proceeds more quickly.

- Dealing with lever-type taps

Make sure the lever is midway between hot and cold positions. Be certain to lift the lever upwards to its limit. If the lever is to one side let us say the 'hot side' then there will not be a release of pressure from the 'cold side'. On some of the latest lever taps from Whale there is a warning sticker to make this clear.

- Fresh tank

If your motor caravan or tourer is fitted with a fresh water tank, this should have its own drain-down tap. Release all the water. Sometimes the drain tap for fresh water is situated well away from the tank to make it easier to reach.

- Waste tank

Flush out then empty the waste tank and either close the tap to keep out inquisitive insects or cover the outlet with gauze. Put plugs in the sink, basin and shower tray. You do not want smells to come up from the waste pipes because it leaves odours in the living area. Using plugs is a wise strategy even with caravans that do not have a permanently fitted waste tank.

- Draining the fresh water system

Empty all the water from the supply pipes via the drain tap. Regrettably many manufacturers do not fit a drain tap for the water pipes. Without a tap, you have to disconnect a hose or pipe coupling in order to release any captive water. Bear in mind that water will not drain back through a caravan water inlet. That is because a one-way valve is usually fitted near this coupling point.

- After the drain-down is complete

Leave the taps and shower control open throughout the winter storage period. If there is any trapped water left behind in the pipes this will expand when it freezes. If taps are left closed, the expanding ice creates pressure in the pipes which sometimes breaks a coupling or a component, so leave the taps open.

- Filters

Water held in filter casings can freeze, expand and crack the unit. Avoid this by simply removing the filter. Fresh water taste filters need changing regularly and the start of a season is an obvious time to fit a new one. It makes sense to remove your old one now, buy a replacement, and have it ready for fitting next spring.

- Shower

The looped hose feeding a shower head can often retain water so check this. Leave the shower head hanging into the tray below.

- Pumps

Few pumps these days retain sufficient water to cause a problem, nevertheless, shake any drips from a submersible pump.

- Water heaters

Early Carver Cascade water storage heaters take a long time to drain down completely. They often 'glug' away for an hour or more, this is normal. More recent Carver water heaters had an air release screw which speeded up the process. Trumatic Combi heaters have a frost activated automatic drain down valve, but this can be over-ridden, as it is a nuisance if water gets released when the caravan is in use during a winter trip. A Truma Ultrastore water heater is easily drained simply by lifting a yellow lever that is mounted near the appliance. Carefully read the drain down instructions for your particular water heater; procedures vary a lot.

- On a Thetford bench style cassette toilet, flush water is drained via a plastic pipe. The Thetford swivel bowl toilet with a built in flush tank is drained by repeated flushing. Dregs are finally released by removing a bung at the back of the unit. Again, check the instructions relating to your particular product.

6. Battery

Unless powering an alarm system, the 12v battery should be removed, wiped over, the terminals cleaned and smeared with petroleum jelly. The electrolyte level should be checked and topped up with distilled water if necessary. Trickle charge from the mains until you obtain a reading of 12.6v on a voltmeter or 1.27 on a hydrometer. Store the battery in a cool, dry place and check the state every 6-8 weeks. Top up the charge as required. Further information on battery care is available on a separate sheet.

Electric clocks, smoke detectors etc, if fitted, should have their internal battery removed. Battery powered burglar alarms may benefit from a new set of batteries for the winter.

7. Awning

The awning should be spread out on dry grass or concrete and brushed with a broom to remove any mud. If the canvas is stained try removing the marks with a stiff brush and plain water. If this fails pure soap flakes can be tried, which will mean re-proofing is necessary afterwards, but never use detergents. If stains are stubborn there are proprietary cleaners such as Fabsil Universal Cleaner, available from caravan accessory shops, or contact Grangers International Tel: 01773 521521. Any mildew spots can be treated with a weak solution of hydrogen peroxide - scrub into the affected area and allow to dry before re-proofing (spot test a hidden area in case colour is affected). Such severe treatment will weaken the awning material so live with stains if you can! Clear windows can be cleaned with methylated spirits if water doesn't work, but nothing stronger. Examine seams and repair any broken stitching and replace perished rubber tensioners. Give the awning a good shake and pack it when completely dry, trying not to put too many creases in the window. Store in a dry, vermin free area.

Awning poles need little attention other than a wipe down with a damp cloth. Don't oil or grease them as this may get onto the canvas. Pegs can be cleaned and straightened and any badly damaged ones can be replaced ready for the next season.

8. The outside

Look over the rubber window seals and replace any that look perished. Coat serviceable rubbers with olive oil. If you have a damp meter check around the inside for any trouble spots and re-seal suspect joints. Any major damp penetration problems should be resolved before storage. Minor leaks might be cured using Captain Tolley's Creeping Crack Cure. Major leaks require complete renewal of the sealant; both products should be available from caravan accessory shops.

The caravan body will benefit from a thorough clean using a car shampoo (household detergents are corrosive) and a coating of good quality polish. Take care when washing the windows as they scratch quite easily. Small scratches can be removed using a liquid metal polish such as Brasso; Duraglit wadding may also prove successful. Farecla Products, tel no 01920 465041, and Fenwick's, tel no 01270 524111, make a polish especially for use on acrylic windows. Farecla's Caravan Pride Scratch Remover is also available by mail order from Autovan Services, tel no 01202 848414 – RRP 5.75 inc VAT + postage. Door locks and hinges can be squirted with WD40, wiping off any excess. Fenwick's Overwintering Caravan Storage Fluid, priced around £10 inc VAT, protects the exterior of the caravan during the winter months, it is available from selected caravan accessory shops or contact Fenwick's.

9. Chassis

The chassis should be brushed off, or if exposed to corrosive elements, eg road salt, thoroughly washed down. Any surface rust can be removed with a wire brush or sandpaper and the chassis and axle tube can be painted with a rust inhibitor, suitable paint (eg Hammerite) or Finnigan's Waxoyl. The coupling and all winding mechanisms should be de-greased, examined for wear then re-greased.

10. LPG cylinders

LPG cylinders should be removed and stored in a cool, ventilated location. Some storage compounds will insist they are removed to comply with fire safety regulations. The regulator and/or pipe end can be covered with a stocking or similar to prevent the entry of debris or insects that can block the gas supply.

11. Electrics

12N and 12S plugs should be inspected and cleaned and the pins coated with vaseline. WD40 should not be used as it may 'melt' some plastics on contact. The plugs should be protected from the weather but not fully sealed in polythene which will encourage condensation. Road lights should be checked and any water ingress cured, full inspection and cleaning can be done now or left to the springtime service

12. Axle stands

Ideally the caravan should be jacked up and supported on axle stands with the wheels clear of the ground. Wheels can be removed if desired and stored in a cool, dark place at normal inflation pressure, protected from sunlight, heat sources, ozone concentrations and fuel/oil spillages. They can be covered with a natural material (eg hessian) for protection, but not plastic. Inspect tyres carefully and make a note to renew any suspect ones before using the caravan again. The corner steadies should be lowered and rested on blocks if they do not reach the ground. The handbrake should be left off and the wheels rotated from time to time to keep the bearings lubricated.

13. Security

Finally remove any valuables and documents from the caravan and make it secure; thieves do not hibernate for the winter!

14. Motor caravans

It is preferable not to lay up the motor caravan for the whole period, if at all possible. The engine should be started approximately every four weeks, and taking the vehicle for a short run (or a long run, weather permitting) would be ideal. This will keep the engine etc in good condition. However, if circumstances dictate that you must lay it up, then ideally treat it as a caravan as far as wheels and tyres are concerned. The handbrake should be left off with the vehicle in gear and wheels chocked.

Turbodiesels are liable to wastegate corrosion over long periods of non-usage; a spray with anti-corrosion fluid would help here if you can get at it (with engine cold). Brake disc corrosion will also occur. Car manufacturers now often use loose-fitting cardboard or plastic shields over the discs while vehicles are in open storage to help prevent moisture rusting the discs, but we know of no retail sources. You could cut your own using a cardboard box and adhesive tape, but do place a note reminding you to remove them later!

The help of John Wickersham, regular Caravan Club Magazine contributor and author of several books on caravanning and motor caravanning, is gratefully acknowledged in the preparation of this leaflet. John's books, The Caravan Handbook, The Caravan Manual, The Motorcaravan Manual and Build Your Own Motorcaravan available through Haynes Publishing.

CARAVAN and MOTOR CARAVAN STORAGE

What to look for when choosing a secure storage site

Below is a list of important points to bear in mind when looking for a suitable site on which to store your caravan:

1) Perimeter Protection

This is probably the most important, as it is the first line of defence, and can take several forms:

- i) fencing
- ii) electronic beam
- iii) earth mounds
- iv) water filled ditches

2) Access Control

The fewer the better, ideally just one exit/entry point, with card control.

3) Closed Circuit Television

A CCTV camera is a very effective measure, particularly with a video recording system.

4) Security Lighting

Another good deterrent, but it is important to remember that incorrectly placed lighting can give would-be thieves shadows in which to become 'invisible'.

5) Landscaping

Low growing shrubs can act as a buffer zone, but avoid sites with tall shrubs, which can be used as hideaways, as well as tall trees near to perimeter fencing, which can be used to get 'over the wall'.

6) Fire Risks

It is important to ensure that the correct fire extinguisher is used for the protected risk – see The Club's information leaflet, 'Fire Alert'. Gas bottles should be stored in a locked compound.

7) Legal Obligations, eg public liability insurance, occupier's liability, etc.

Take legal advice.

8) **Storing at Home**

Storing your caravan or motor caravan at home is convenient and cost-effective, but many vehicles are stolen from domestic locations, even when precautions have been taken. Remember:

- a storage position which is easy and convenient to access for you is also easy and convenient to access for a thief;
- residential areas are often quite sparsely populated during the day. Do not rely on your neighbours keeping an eye on things if you are out;
- do not skimp on security devices, and definitely consider a security post to block removal of the vehicle, and to which a caravan can be locked;
- consider that when your caravan or motor caravan is not there, this may be an indication to thieves that your house is unoccupied because you are on holiday.

If The Club does not have a storage facility or capacity in your locality (see pages 280-281 for a list of seasonal pitches and storage sites in the 2009-2010 Sites Directory and Handbook), find a company that offers at least some of the above defences.

CaSSOA (Caravan Storage Site Owners' Association) is a dedicated storage organisation whose member sites are assessed using the above criteria. Points are awarded taking into account the security protection in place, the position and location of the site, etc. Prime sites are awarded Gold status, followed by Silver and Bronze. Owners may be able to upgrade their site from, say, Silver to Gold, providing they are capable of meeting the required standard.

CaSSOA can be contacted on telephone number 0115 9349826, or search for a storage site in your area on website address www.cassoa.co.uk.

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