

Adam Williamson says there are plenty of things to keep you busy before you hit the roads next spring. Tackle those odd little jobs now and reap the rewards the next time you tow

# ALL THOSE LITTLE WINTER JOBS...

GET THOSE JOBS DONE NOW FOR NEXT SPRING!

A thorough clean before the winter not only keeps the body beautiful, but also means you can spot deterioration early. If using a power washer, take care it doesn't damage joints

This is a multiple choice question. During winter do you a) get out with your caravan as often as you can, or b) try and find something remotely bearable to watch on Sunday afternoon television, or c) attend to all those little jobs so you are ready for spring and your investment doesn't rot away on your driveway?

If you answered c) this proves you are a wise investor who knows that caravans deteriorate quicker when in storage than they do in actual use. A stitch in time can save more than nine, and if you have just woken up to the fact that there are plenty of odd jobs to do on your caravan during the dreary winter months – well, these are some of the jobs you can look forward to – as well as next spring, of course, when you can hit the road again.

#### KEEP IT CLEAN

Bird droppings, rotting leaves and muck washed out of the air are all highly corrosive elements. So every six weeks give your caravan a gentle but thorough wash with lukewarm water and a good quality car shampoo. Take care, though, if you use a pressure washer – or even a high-pressure hose – and try to keep the jet away from the body joints in particular. The water can blast the sealant out.

#### KEEP IT SHINING

A caravan protected by a good polish looks better and lasts longer than one left to the mercy of the weather. Concentrate on the roof, meaning a tall set of step ladders. *Don't* lean across the roof. If you dent it water won't drain away, and you may break the roof-to-sidewall sealed joint.



Keeping the body clean and well waxed is money in the bank. Never let it get as bad as this (top) or you'll pay



### KEEP IT AIRED

All living creatures generate water and, in the enclosed space of a caravan that water is absorbed into the structure. At least every six weeks open the door, windows and roof vents to help dry it out. Better still leave an Ebac dehumidifier switched on inside the caravan. We once got an amazing six gallons of water out of a caravan which didn't have any water leaks (Ebac Ltd: 01388 602751).

### KEEP A LIST

Make a list of all the small jobs which need doing during the winter, and tick them off as you do them. Don't delay; if you leave your list till spring you are bound to forget things, and will have to put up with yet another summer of that locker door flying open and depositing cereal all round the caravan every time you're out on the road!

### KEEP IT BALANCED

You shouldn't store a caravan on its wheels because it can flat-spot the tyres. While the wheels are off take them to a tyre specialist and have them checked for balance. You could be surprised how out of balance some caravan wheels are. Balanced wheels improve stability and roadholding, and help the suspension and tyres last longer.

### KEEP IT GREASED

Most caravans only have two grease nipples – in the over-ride mechanism. However, bear in mind that corner steadies and brake linkages also need a blob of grease if they aren't to rust solid. Just don't forget to make sure the caravan is well supported on proper stands when you crawl underneath; never use bricks, as they can crumble.

### KEEP THE LIGHTS WORKING

Come spring, your caravan's rear and side lights will probably be full of green mould – and the lights won't work! Remove the lenses and clean the insides. Once done, file a small 'V' groove in the bottom face of the lens and then smear some Vaseline to seal it to the housing.

### KEEP THEM MOVING

Double-glazed windows have a habit of sticking to the rubber seals fitted to the caravan's body. To prevent this, lightly dust the part of the seal the window pane presses against with French chalk. Or if you can't get that use talcum powder, but not the expensive perfumed variety! Failing this, there are special products aimed at car sunroofs which you can use effectively.

### KEEP IT RUST-FREE

Most caravan chassis are galvanised, that is zinc plated, to stop them rusting. But with time rust patches will appear on the chassis rails. Use wire wool to remove the rust thoroughly, and then give the affected areas a thick coat of zinc-rich paint.

### KEEP ON UPGRADING

If you are planning to follow our Sam George's regular advice and tips to upgrade your caravan, do it now, even if the weather isn't conducive to working on your caravan. It's worth it because most dealers have special sales offers on items like toilets, cookers and television aerials during the quiet winter months – so you'll save money.



Periodically vent the caravan well. Better still, invest in a dehumidifier, which can fully dry out the structure and interior



Always keep a methodical list. It's surprising how easy it is to overlook some repairs you've been itching to tackle...



Caravan wheels need balancing as much as car ones; it makes a tremendous difference to stability and tyre life



A good grease-up is worth its weight in gold over the winter. Don't forget the corner steadies and brake linkages, too



Deal with rust before winter really bites. Prepare affected areas well before applying a good-quality, zinc-based paint



Remove all soft furnishings such as seats and curtains and store them indoors. Keeps them dry and helps prevent theft

### KEEP IT THIEF-PROOF

Stored caravans are a magnet to thieves; have you protected yours with hitchlock and wheelclamps? Also remove the soft furnishings. Without them the caravan is less attractive to steal, and they can be stored in your house where they will stay dry.

### KEEP IT MARKED

Take advantage of the quiet winter months to mark every single bit of the caravan with your

CRiS or chassis number. Thieves hate marked property. It will take at least a full day's graft to mark all internal wood surfaces on the average four-berth tourer, but it's time well spent.

### KEEP IT HYGIENIC

Caravans can be a breeding ground for germs. So wipe all work surfaces with a solution of Milton fluid or Anti-Bac. Flush the waste pipes out with bleach before rinsing with cold water.

### KEEP IT PRIVATE

You may not use your caravan as an extension on your home – that's the Law – but there is nothing to stop you saying you are going to work on the caravan, disappearing inside, putting the portable television and heater on and escape from family life for an afternoon. It's a lovely thought...

### KEEP ON PLANNING

And the best thing you can do during the winter? Get the guide books and the back copies of your favourite magazine – *Practical Caravan* – and start planning where you are going next year! 📖