

Part 2

General improvements



VALETING

It doesn't take long for your caravan to start looking tired and worn. By the time our Bürstner had seen its first birthday, it was looking remarkably neglected.

There are several reasons for this. One is that our atmosphere contains

a lot of dirt, and this accumulates on the roof of caravans. From there, rain washes it down the walls, leaving those black streaks that we all recognise. But that's not all, as the rest of this section will demonstrate.



Picture 1. Würth has produced workshop consumables for car repairs for many years, but this was the first time I had used them extensively on a caravan. Included in the range shown here are upholstery cleaner, copper grease for keeping threads free of corrosion, and non-staining lubricants for locks and catches, and a whole lot more besides. I used the product shown in the following picture sequence, while my wife Shan took most of the photographs, and helped with the work between photohoots.

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Picture 4. ... before pressing down lightly. Do one or two metres at a time, and don't press down TOO hard until you're sure it's positioned correctly. Use a wet sponge for the final smoothing.



Picture 5. As you saw earlier, you go right over door and access hatch openings, then go back later and carefully cut to fit. Some favour a sharp knife – but don't scratch the paint.



Picture 6. Fitting a graphic is a similar process. Because of its size, it's much more likely you'll trap air bubbles. So sponge some soapy water onto the panel. While still wet ...



Picture 7. ... and after peeling the vinyl graphic off the backing paper, get ready to place it on the panel. It's best to wet the graphic before peeling: it will inevitably wrap around on itself ...



Picture 8. ... and wetting the graphic prevents the self-adhesive layer on the back of the graphic sticking to itself. Slide the graphic (which often consists of separate parts) onto the paintwork. Don't worry, it WILL stick when the water dries.



Picture 9. The main section of this particular graphic is being placed on the panel. It will slide around very easily, but keep your fingers wet, too – it makes it much easier to handle!



Picture 10. It's vital that you spend time aligning the graphic correctly, AND that you squeeze all air bubbles out. For larger graphics, use a squeegee, removing air gently from the centre, outwards.

To have graphics made, most graphics printers will need you to take a good quality photograph, taken straight on to avoid distortion, and without any shadows or reflections visible. You'll also need to specify the exact overall dimensions of the finished graphic.

Then, subject to the photograph being good enough quality, Eco-Nomical will be able to make you as

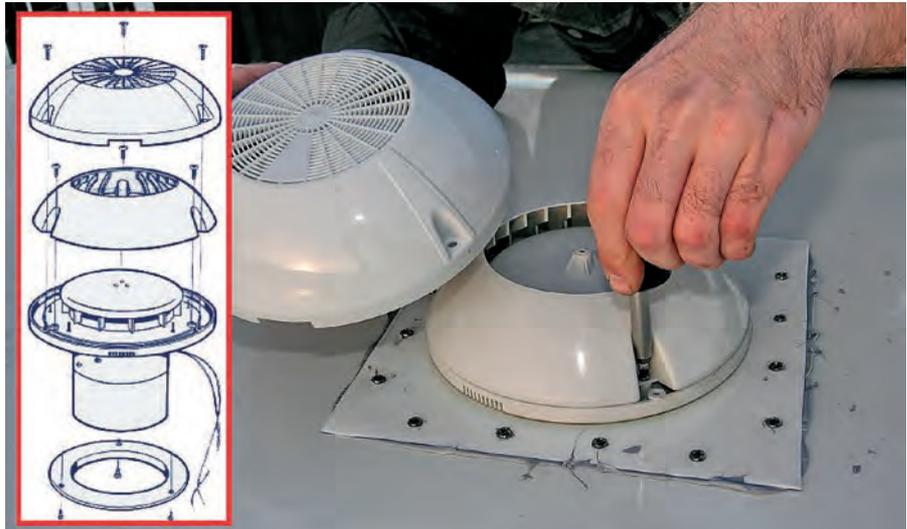
many copies of the graphic as you want.

Note that if you've seen a graphic you like, and wish to use it, don't assume that you can simply copy it: it's almost certainly protected by copyright. Renewing existing graphics on your own caravan is probably okay, but copying someone else's design is illegal.

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Picture 5. The Dometic vent unit came with its own neoprene seal that had to be fitted in the sealing groove around the base of the top flange on the unit.



Picture 7. Stainless steel screws were provided by Dometic for each of the three 'layers' to be fixed in place. Our aluminium plate was also screwed down, with excess sealant wiped away later.



Picture 6. Fitter, Dave, added two strips of butyl sealant. Caravan manufacturers use this to seal some joints, and it never sets, allowing removal in future if necessary.



Picture 8. A smaller ceiling plate was fitted, and finished off with the Dometic trim plate. The stainless steel screws we used came from Screwfix Direct – quite inexpensive.



Picture 9. This step must be done by a qualified electrician. A large hole cut in the shower trim allowed access to the cables. The fan positive terminal was given a permanent (fused) connection.



Picture 10. The fan body protruded slightly: if you haven't enough head room, plan to fit it to one side. The wiring was neatly trunked to the ceiling (arrowed).

We had already fitted a Dometic CK155 cooker hood ventilator to our caravan, to deal with smells and steam from the cooking area. Adding the Dometic GY11 roof vent meant that we could now enjoy the shower without steaming up the rest of the caravan.

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LOCKER LOCK REPLACEMENT

Caravans are often notorious for having hard to find special fittings

installed by the manufacturer. Here's how to fit a 'standard' locker lock.



Picture 1. On this fibreglass (GRP) caravan, the locker lock broke, and we couldn't find a like-for-like replacement. It was simpler (and probably cheaper) to remove the old lock and fit a standard item, for which replacement keys could be found if necessary. We used a version from CAK.



Picture 2. The old locker lock was a strange and difficult device to use, even before we lost the last remaining key! You have to ensure that the latch on the replacement ...



Picture 3. ... is, or can be, bent, to match the distance from the back of the old lock. The hole in the locker door wasn't large enough, so the door was removed ...



Picture 4. ... and a strong piece of scrap wood tightly clamped to the back, before carefully and accurately drilling a pilot hole, right in the middle of the hole for the old lock.



Picture 5. The piece of wood was used because a hole cutter (used to make the larger hole) can't enlarge an existing hole unless there is something to support the centre of the bit.

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Picture 8. Graham fixed the control box in place. Luckily, he found a fused 12V feed from inside the wardrobe base (otherwise, he would have run a new one from the battery).



Picture 9. Next, power and antenna cables were connected to the control unit. One button raises the dish to the exact required elevation; another folds it away again.



Picture 10. Turning the dish to 'find' the satellite comes next. This Avtex TV/DVD player is widely praised for presenting high quality satellite images to their full effect. Cheaper sets display pixelation.

You don't need to pay much for a little satellite dish in a box, but ones that 'finds' satellites automatically are very expensive. The Maxview Omnisat Semitronic seems, to me, to offer the best compromise.

Setting the elevation requires pressing a button until the angle

shown on a chart appears on the control box. Turning the dish takes much longer, up to 30 minutes at first, though experience 'tuners' can do it in two minutes.

Self-fitting is fine provided you're fully proficient, and you don't drill through anything important in the roof.

SELF-SEEKING SATELLITE TV SYSTEM



How can you connect instantly to all the digital TV channels, anywhere in the country, at the touch of a button? With a Maxview Satellite Dome.

While installing a Maxview Dome isn't rocket science, you do need to be a reasonably accomplished DIYer.

The Maxview receiver is preset to the correct satellite for UK channels, but other satellites are easily selected. Once installed, all you have to do is park, switch it on, and watch TV, with a typical search time of less than 30 seconds.



Picture 1. Adventure Motorhomes' Nick Stevens started by positioning the new dome on the centre of the roof. He then marked the position of each of the mounting points on the roof ...



Picture 2. ... before thoroughly degreasing both the roof, and all of the mounts. He then gunned a top quality adhesive over each mounting point, and repositioned the dome accurately on the roof.



Picture 3. Nick drove stainless steel screws through the mounting holes, having first put a dab of sealant into each hole so the screw thread sealed itself. Be careful: the aluminium is thin.



Picture 4. Inside, Nick had already calculated a wiring route through wardrobe, lockers, and bed boxes, but needed to add self-adhesive white plastic cable trunking alongside one of the window blinds.



Picture 5. Maxview provided a waterproof access point for the cable on the roof, held down with double-sided tape. You may need longer cable, depending on where you locate the dome and TV.