



## SUFFOLK CENTRE

### TIPS AND IDEAS



(Researched and written by Chris Sanderson)

#### The “small” details, or are they?



Checking out what each of the caravan manufacturers were offering at last years Earls Court show it soon became clear that many of the caravans now had larger fridges, microwave ovens, more lights, larger wheels etc etc the list goes on. Wonderful you might say but this all comes at a price, not necessarily more expensive than last year’s models but certainly a lot heavier. As an example, in three years the Swift Challenger 480SE two berth has grown to the extent that it’s MTPLM is now 1410kg an increase of 125kg over its 2002-year predecessor. Considering the towing aspect, the maximum weight now takes this caravan over the 85% kerb weight figure of a Land Rover Freelander Td4, which to the competent driver shouldn’t necessarily be a problem but it’s still weight that has to be moved and your tow cars fuel consumption that will suffer.

For me one key aspect of a caravan design is practicality, for example checking to see if all the gas taps are placed in one convenient place. For what can only be cost cutting requirements some manufacturers still see the most practical approach is to site their taps a various points around the van, unlabelled and of the same colour. Good for their costs but not so good for “poor aunty” who has to be hauled from her seat from under which numerous items then have to be removed before the forgotten gas tap to the water heater can be located and turned on. Perhaps the most noticeable aspect concerning gas was the fact that Hymer had chosen to ignore the revised gas installation arrangements now used by British manufacturers and instead had retained the “regulator on the bottle” approach. Not only did this allow them to retain the spare wheel within the front locker but they had also provided storage for water and waste carriers as well as a clips for the jack and wheel brace. Common sense approach?

We all want different things in and from our vans - we pays our money, the choice is down to us.