



## SUFFOLK CENTRE

### TIPS AND IDEAS



(Researched and written by Chris Sanderson)

#### Important Newsflash

**AL-KO Spare Wheel carrier** – some time ago in the Tips & Ideas column I drew attention to a possible problem regarding the positioning of the spare wheel itself on the AL-KO chassis mounted spare wheel carrier. At the time, I suggested that any owners of caravans with this type of spare wheel carrier should familiarise themselves with its operation ensuring that they could remove their spare wheel in the relative comfort of their driveway or storage lot instead of having to come to terms with its operation by the roadside.

Having recently changed my caravan to one just 9 months old and equipped with the AL-KO spare wheel carrier, I decided to check its operation.

Having removed the knurled retaining knob and lowered the carrier to the driveway, I proceeded to withdraw the spare wheel. Having moved some six inches or so, the carrier jammed solid in such a way that I could neither withdraw nor restore it to its original position. Needing to remove the weight of the spare wheel to investigate further, it was necessary to jack up the caravan to give clearance to enable me to remove the retaining nuts holding the spare wheel in position. With the retaining nuts removed it was possible to manoeuvre and remove the spare wheel towards the rear of the caravan, which due to the weight of the spare wheel is not an operation that one would wish to repeat too often!

Having removed the spare wheel from the carrier, I was still unable to get the carrier to operate correctly, the two tubes that form the carrier refusing to slide within each other.

The only option was to remove the carrier completely from the chassis, which is facilitated by removing the four split pins on the retained end of the carrier, removing the black plastic end caps and then sliding the carrier tubes out of the rubber grommeted holes.

On investigation it was apparent that little or no lubrication existed on or in the carrier tubes and that metal-to-metal contact coupled to a small amount of corrosion had caused the tubes to jam. I separated the tubes (\*) and thoroughly cleaned and liberally re-greased them and then reassembled. Problem solved.

(\*) It will be noted that the tubes have been crimped to prevent their separation under normal operation. The tubes can be separated however by rotating through 90° to enable the small lugs on the inner tube to pass the crimped area of the outer tube.

I would strongly encourage all owners to check the operation of their spare wheel carriers, playing particular attention to whether the tubes have been sufficiently lubricated.

I am suspicious that the operation/lubrication of the carrier is not a service schedule item – so don't think it will be ok because the vans been serviced recently. A few minutes spent now could save a great deal of agro later.

