



CREDIT-CRUNCH CHALLENGE

HAVING ACHIEVED HIS AIM OF BUYING A CAR/CARAVAN OUTFIT FOR LESS THAN £3000, DANNY COBBS SETS ABOUT SPRUCING UP HIS NEW HOME-FROM-HOME

IF YOU'VE been following my quest to acquire both a car and caravan for less than £3000, then you'll know last month I managed to buy a five-berth Swift Danette Diamond, which effectively marked the first stage of a surrender to caravanning. All I have to do now is convince the rest of my family.

Before I can do this, and break them the news that we are swapping our normal pilgrimage to one of Europe's hotspots – and with it all the hassle that comes with air travel in the 21st century – I want to present them the Swift as the finished article. It needs to be habitable, comfortable, clean and a mode of Swiss Family Robinson-esque adventure (or in our case, Swift Family Robinson, geddit?).

Don't get me wrong, I've been very, very lucky with my buy and the Swift is already in good condition. It just needs a little TLC to make it into the caravan I think they'll be happy to spend a few nights in.

So I've conjured-up a two-stage plan. The first part – which took place this month – was to give the outside a good, old-fashioned spit-and-polish job. The second element would concentrate on the interior and render it with a Laurence

Llewelyn-Bowen type makeover. There is no budget for either, though, so from here on in, everything I do to try and pimp my caravan up has to be done on the cheap.

The exterior, considering its age, really wasn't too bad. All it needed was a good scrub-down with a liberal amount of elbow grease.

I'm not averse to any amount of hard work, but when Jonathan from Fenwick's volunteered to teach me the finer art of cleaning a caravan, it seemed a logical solution to the problem. Armed with a whole host of his cleaning products we set about shining up the Swift.

He was mildly disappointed to see it in such good condition. You see, Jonathan was rather hoping it would be covered in moss and slime so he could really show off how little effort is needed when using his brand of goods. In fact, because it was so clean, he was slightly



Cleaning solution is applied by sprayer



Giving grime the brush-off



A final polish brings surfaces to a superb shine



Jonathan from Fenwick's gets to work on the Swift

worried the difference wouldn't be that noticeable.

His reservations were unfounded. Two cap-fulls of Fenwick's Caravan Cleaner were diluted in a gallon of water (cost: 16p) and we applied the solution to the bodywork with nothing more than an every-day garden sprayer. Working from the ground up, thus insuring the fluid dried evenly and didn't leave any streak marks, it became apparent just how much grime the Swift had collected over the years.

To give it that factory-finish sheen we then rinsed off with Fenwick's Bobby Dazzler, while stubborn marks and scuffs were abolished with pea-sized amounts of Windowize (another of Jonathan's products) on a soft, dry cloth or polishing pad attached to his Black & Decker.

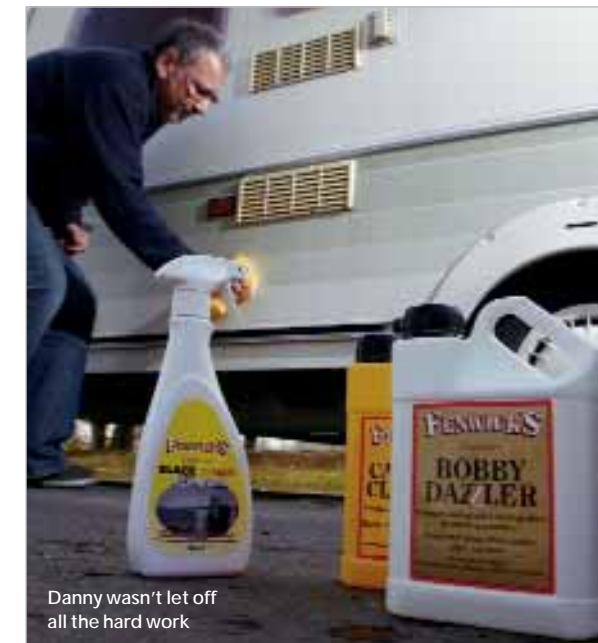
In less than half a day, my Swift had gone from a rough Danette Diamond to glistening gem. Okay, calling it a glistening

gem might be stretching the point a little too far, but nonetheless it certainly now appears brighter and fresher than it did, and not a million miles from the way it must have looked when it was new.

How much did all this cost? Well, apart from a few hours of mine and Jonathan's time and a new chamois leather, we calculated the true cost of materials used was less than two quid.

So now the bodywork has been taken care of, next month I'll be turning my attention to the inside. I'm thinking Moorish chic meets classical neo-Georgian flamboyancy with faux leopard-skin print accents. Failing that, I might just settle for getting the upholstery covered. We will just have to wait and see. ■

Thanks to Amberly Fields Caravan Club Site, Crawley, West Sussex and Fenwick's – see fenwicks.info



Danny wasn't let off all the hard work