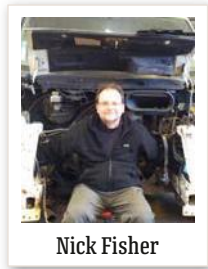


Tech help!

Our panel of motorhome-owning experts are here to help you solve your motorhoming problems, however small

TECH HELP EDITOR



Nick Fisher

Base vehicle expert

Q Can we repair the Seitz roller blinds in our motorhome?

I have an Auto-Sleeper Ravenna, circa 1999, which I have owned since 2017. I have maintained the 'van in good condition and it is used frequently, even during the winter.

The motorhome is fitted with two large Seitz windows, which have both thermal blinds and flyscreens on rollers. They are becoming increasingly tricky to close; they stick when pulled to the bottom of the window.

We have been able to fully retract them by using fingers to rotate the rollers, but even this is becoming difficult. I think the spring mechanisms are fine as they work until they get to the bottom of the

window and seem to work better in the summer.

So, I was wondering if there was any way of lubricating the ends of the rollers without recourse to removing the windows completely and what to use? Any help would be appreciated.

Jim and Margaret Boyd

ANDY STOTHERT The older they get, the more interesting they become is an apt way to describe both motorhomes, and the people who use them. This Ravenna is now teetering on the edge of being a classic and that, really, in truth, just means more interesting. Mainly



because they command more of your attention fixing them, and they no longer look like everybody else's current flashmobiles.

The Auto-Sleeper Ravenna has certainly now got the looks and atmosphere of being an oldie, but is equipped with all the comforts, facilities and conveniences of modern living. That said, if they are based on the Peugeot, or the later Transit chassis, they also possess almost modern driving characteristics, too. However, the much nicer-looking earlier Transit is the one with all the charm, even if it does drive like a 1960s Massey Ferguson 135.

All of this is irrelevant as far as the windows and their blinds are concerned, though, for (as far I know) they were all fitted with the



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MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Andy Stothert

General advice



Clive Mott

Electrical expert



Mike Hill

Bodywork expert



Barry Norris

Technical & legal advice



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Cleaning & chemicals



Andy Harris

TV & 12V expert

very smart and still modern-looking Seitz windows. The blinds are built into the structural frames of the inner window frame and are generally very reliable, within the context of how much use the average motorcaravan gets.

The Tech Editor of MMM has a hidden, but quite large streak of a lighter and less technical side to his seemingly studious and sombre role, and he suggested (jokingly I think) 'filling it with WD-40' to cure its reluctance. Well, in my youth, about five years ago, one of the Seitz blinds fitted to our campervan started getting a bit sticky, and whilst they are very good to use when functioning properly, they then become much worse than just a pain in the rear end.

And, in that youthful (almost logical) state which suggests WD-40 could very well be the saviour of our (DIY) species, I filled it with WD-40. With instant and miraculous results. For about a year.

During that year it gradually got a bit 'grubbier' to look at, and then started sticking again, and derailing itself at any available opportunity. This is the blind rather than the flyscreen. Taking it to bits was inevitable, and thankfully, it's not that difficult.

However (there is always a 'however' if anyone says that doing something which looks impossible is easy), there is an outside chance of everything going very wrong. Mainly due to the two halves of the window frame having to be separated.

If the outside seal is of the

Chops away

Chopping boards are a pain to store. Here's my top tip using two offcuts of 16mm mini trunking and some double-sided tape. Simply stick the trunking to the underside of the shelf. Time taken: two minutes.

Chausson Dave

NICK FISHER I absolutely love this one. Cheap, effective, and uses otherwise unused space. Brilliant, simply brilliant.



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Sikaflex polyurethane-type sealant/adhesive, then it should stay in place if the inside half of the frame is removed. But, as a worrier of some experience, I would still recommend that the outside frame is duct-taped to the body to prevent it falling to its death should the sealant or glue be compromised.

This leaves the inside half exposed and available for dismantling, cleaning and rebuilding. The screws which hold the frame together are hidden behind several small, recessed blanking plugs in the inner frame. The blind itself came clean easily with soapy water and the rest was

cleaned and lubricated with silicone spray. Coincidentally made by WD-40.

Whilst the unit is split, replacing the outside seal is optional, but well worthwhile. Sikaflex EBT+ is very good for this, but there are probably other brands available.

If Jim (or indeed Margaret) can't be bothered to dismantle everything, then I suppose that a few squirts of silicone spray into the two roller ends, at different stages of the travel of both blinds, might be worth a try. But c'mon, it's a classic. It's there for entertainment, education, and prevailing against the odds.

Q Why does my motorhome have a problem starting?

I have a starting issue with my 2014 Fiat 2.3-litre diesel motorhome which I hope you can help me rectify. I attached the crocodile clips of my Ring 900 tyre inflator to the positive and negative terminals in the engine compartment without starting the engine and then turned the inflator on. I heard a loud 'pop' from the engine compartment.

The tyre inflator didn't work, although it did when attached to a standalone 12V battery. I thought that a fuse had blown but couldn't find anything.

Since then, the motorhome has struggled to start and the battery sounds as though it lacks power.

I fitted a brand-new battery, checking that it was fully charged at 12.6V. I also fitted a new main fuse as the existing one showed slight corrosion, but the problem continued, no change. It was still struggling.

A strange thing is that when it has been on a run and then the engine has been turned off and left for a short while, it will generally start OK with no symptoms of struggling.

I have had it looked at by an auto electrician who tested the electrics and fuel pump, he said that all was OK. He suggested that it may be the glow plugs, but didn't know for sure.

Would these symptoms point to a problem with the glow plugs? Listening to the engine trying to start I feel that there doesn't seem to be enough power coming from the battery.

Mike Biggs

NICK FISHER The points that you used to get a power supply for your inflator should have been suitable for the purpose; indeed, that is where you would attach jump leads or a jump pack if you needed help with starting the vehicle. Yes, these terminals are designed for adding power, not taking it out, but it should have worked just fine for the relatively small current that you were taking.

Why the pop happened is a mystery at this point, but my guess would be that you heard an arc from the vicinity of the engine earth strap. I am still not really sure why the device did not work, or why you are having more difficulty in starting since then, but maybe what follows can help?

Never rule out coincidences. They do happen and can lead you down investigative rabbit holes. This happens to the most experienced of us, trust me.

These earth straps are pretty useless and deteriorate over time. They are the only way that the engine, its electronics and, crucially, the starter motor obtains an



earth. In the same way, it is how the alternator replenishes the vehicle battery.

Warm engines, with warm oil, are a lot easier to turn over and start, so I would expect that with less load on the starter motor, you would start in a stronger fashion. Starting is always more difficult in cold weather. This supports my theory.

The first thing to do would be to establish a better earth connection. The easiest way to do this would be to use one cable from a pair of jump leads.

Attach one end to the earth point as you did before, and the other to the lifting eye on the engine, or in the rare case where you cannot see one, to a metal stud on the right side of the engine looking at it from the front. There are a few accessible points around the EGR pipework, but you must make sure it is a metal stud, and not the pipes themselves.

A 'before and after' check with a multimeter should show an increase in the voltage between the positive and negative points under the bonnet. Now, after making sure that the jump cable is not hanging down in front of the engine where the fans are, try starting the engine from cold. It should turn over more strongly and start more quickly than you had previously noticed.

If this is the case, you definitely need to get another earth strap fitted. From experience, you will benefit from doing this anyway... everyone with a Fiat or sister vehicle (Citroën Relay and Peugeot Boxer, for example) built since 2006 will.

The location on the chassis where the original one was is normally OK once cleaned and the other end is better attached to the exposed studs on the engine, mentioned before. Suitable cables are made of what is commonly referred to as welding cable and have crimps fitted to the ends with 8mm diameter holes in them.

Depending on the vehicle layout, the optimal length can vary from 18 to 24 inches, but if you get the longer one and it is more than you need it can be rotated into a 'pigtail' and placed so as not to rub on anything.

Access to the stud on the chassis is easier with the air filter lid removed, and easier still from underneath if

you have access to a workshop ramp.

If the original cable is still intact, maybe with just a little green oxidisation, it is OK and can be left in place. More is always better. If it is powdery and fragile, it is not worth leaving there.

If I was right, that should be the end of your worries. If not, further investigation may be required.

Glow plugs are not so critical to the starting of the engine as they once were, so if you have an engine that is turning over slowly, or taking too long to start, causing strain on the battery, the problem is much more likely to be a defective injector (or two). If they are leaking back

to the fuel tank and therefore preventing the correct pressure in the common rail to be achieved, the ECU will not allow the engine to fire until there is enough pressure. Cranking can build pressure up, but really bad leaks are too much to overcome.

The next step would be to get a diesel injection specialist or any good workshop to carry out an 'injector leak-off test'.

Hopefully, the earth test and remedy will be the answer that you need. It is easy to do and quite cheap, so it is the go-to first step for a lot of common issues.

Please let us know how you get on.

Q Can I swap out my fitted cooker to create more storage?

Is it possible to remove the cooker from my motorhome, but reinstate the gas hob and grill? It is a Stoves Newhome number 050517101.

I never use the oven and never will, so this will give me more space for storage. Obviously, I will use a gas-registered engineer if my idea is practical.

If I can separate the gas hob, will it fit back into the space from whence it came? If the grill is integral and can't be separated, then I don't mind that but I would really like to reuse the hob.

Mark Thomson

ANDY STOTHERT I had to read this twice to get my head around the whole concept of chopping a cooker up, and then reinstalling some of it back it into the remnants of the surrounding furniture. Visions of taking an angle grinder, plasma cutter, oxy-acetylene torch, or any other metal butchering tool to a motorhome cooker flashed before my eyes. Followed by the task of welding some of the tortured and jagged bits back together again.

And, no, this request for assistance didn't arrive at the MMM Dodgy DIY Department help desk anywhere near 1 April.

The initial gut reaction was no. Definitely not. Without even considering the complications of the modified gas system and trying to reassemble the mismatched remnants safely afterwards.

This advice, though, to run a mile from the whole idea, won't necessarily quite satisfy that inner demon which compels blokes to change things once a very minor matter has buried itself in the male psyche. After all, many of us would (and do) change the whole 'van for reasons like this.

I informed the owner of my (unusually) restrained opinion in a considered and tactful way, but by this time he had removed the cooker and had a while to work this out for himself. However, that small gnawing thought worm was hard at work deep within his inner workings, and he is still determined to replace the cooker with a new hob unit. This will require a lot of work, and that work will need to be of a high standard if the interior appearance of the 'van isn't to be spoiled. Or worse.

The possible reduction in value will probably not be as important with a motorhome of this age, but

is still a factor when considering making considerable modifications to any professionally built motorhome.

There will probably have to be a new worktop to carry a flush-fitting hob unit, new furniture doors to be constructed, and getting it all to look acceptable, or match the existing kitchen furniture will be very difficult indeed. Even for the competent experienced professional operative which the owner hopes to find to do the job. It will also be very expensive.

And all this for the benefit of a very marginal increase of storage space in a large motorhome? I'd be tempted to keep the existing cooker and use the oven as a cupboard rather than risking bringing all this expense and possible grief into my life.

That said, the owner has promised to let us know how it goes. I may be proved wrong...



Q Can I swap out my starter battery?

My Globecar has a nine-speed automatic gearbox fitted with stop-start. The engine battery has failed (and will not hold a charge above 4V, but it is four years old, etc) so I must replace it.



The original battery is a Varta EFB and I would like to know if I can replace it with a Varta AGM battery without having to make any other changes to the BMS or otherwise.

John Moore

CLIVE MOTT That's a good question and basically both types of battery can be used in stop-start applications. Upgrading from EFB (enhanced flooded battery) to AGM (absorbent glass mat) is generally recommended for better performance, higher-cycle stability and improved longevity, particularly if you have added extra electrical consumers or drive in demanding

conditions with your automatic nine-speed Ducato. However, there are other very important things you need to do.

Because the Fiat Ducato uses a smart battery management system (BMS) that monitors battery health, you must register the new AGM battery with the vehicle's computer. Failure to do this can lead to premature failure of the new battery or incorrect operation of the start-stop system. This, I assume, means taking the vehicle to a Fiat dealer for the computer to be plugged in to change the required settings.

Or simply change batteries like for like.

Q Should we leave our 'van plugged in when not in use?

I'd like to ask the team's opinion on an issue which my son-in-law and I disagree on concerning whether to leave a campervan connected to the mains when parked on the driveway when we're not using it, or not.

My 'van is an RS Equinox two-berth on a 2014 Mercedes Sprinter with the 2.2-litre six-speed automatic and his is a 2006 Renault Master two-berth. I'm fortunate to have it parked beside the house with access to an external power point so I'm able to leave it connected to the mains when we're not using it. Over winter, I open all the cupboards and drawers and use a dehumidifier in the 'van.

My son-in-law is in a similar position, but needs an extension lead to his garage to do the same as me. He tends not to do as I do because of the inconvenience of having the cable trailing down the path. He says there's no need to keep it constantly connected as the campervan will charge both the leisure and vehicle batteries once

started and running.

The question is, is it OK to leave my 'van connected or should it just be left until next used? Both of our 'vans have solar panels so perhaps he is right?

Thanks for a great magazine.
Alan Ingram

CLIVE MOTT Your 2014 Equinox is most likely to have an intelligent charger which, having first fully charged the leisure battery, will then revert to a lower maintenance voltage. I would also hope that your Equinox charger will also put a small charge into the starter battery once the leisure battery has first been charged.

I don't have a user manual for any RS motorhomes so you will need to read this up for yourself to be sure using your own manual. I would be happy leaving this permanently connected to the mains if the solar panels were not sufficient by themselves and the arrangement did maintain both

leisure and starter batteries.

Your son-in-law has an older 2006 Renault Master two-berth and I would not be quite so sure that it has an intelligent charger which includes a maintenance mode. Again, a read of a supplied user manual should provide the answer to this.

My initial approach for a 2006 vehicle would be to leave it on hook-up charge for one night every couple of weeks. I am afraid it is down to reading the small print in the electrical section of the user manuals to be able to be more definitive.



Q What caused my two-year-old automatic gearbox to fail?

In 2023, we watched Peter Vaughan road test the first Globe-Traveller Voyager Z in the UK. My wife and I drove to E S Hartley in Ellesmere Port to view it.

The quality of build was superb so we bought it.

Two years on and just out of warranty (June 2025), the automatic transmission failed. We phoned Stellantis and on its recommendation took it to a Fiat Ducato specialist in Glasgow, close to where we live.

Long story short, the automatic transmission needs a new gearbox at a cost of £10,200.

I feel that a gearbox should last a lot longer than two years and 25,000 miles. My vehicle is a Fiat Ducato 180hp with the nine-speed automatic transmission.

We have contacted Stellantis and have been told that, as it's out of warranty, we need to pay.

The Fiat specialist in Glasgow recommended a new transmission. There are no details in the receipt as to why it needs a new gearbox. So, I am in the dark on that one.

As the 'van had been with the specialist for over six weeks it asked me to take the 'van home to free up space at the depot.

The 'van changes gears smoothly despite the dreaded red cog on the dashboard.

After a few miles a separate yellow warning appears saying 'transmission overheating' which suggests to me it left the makers with insufficient oil in the gearbox.

D Allan

BARRY NORRIS As the owner of a Fiat Ducato with the nine-speed gearbox I do recall reading about problems, but these seemed to

only affect engines with the 180hp engine. I was speaking to a motorhomer a few months ago with a 2025 Ducato which was suffering problems with his automatic transmission but that was an eight-speed box.

How widespread these problems are I don't know. Some of the problems are down to software failure, although the problem you have suffered appears to be more substantial than software failure.

Has the Fiat specialist indicated what the nature of the failure is? Presumably, it must be some major mechanical failure to necessitate total replacement. I am assuming that there has been no indication from the specialist or Fiat that the problem has been caused by abuse.

Under consumer law, the seller has to repair or replace an item if a customer returns it within six months, after six months the seller has to repair or replace if the buyer can prove the item was faulty when they bought it.

There is also the aspect of consumer law requiring products to be of satisfactory quality and one aspect of this is durability.

I advise you to seek some expert advice from a specialist automobile engineer who is experienced in this field. You will be able to find appropriate specialists from the membership of the Institute of Automotive Engineer Assessors

W iaea-online.org

Using the 'Find an Engineer' section, there are fields of experience such as mechanical failure and commercial vehicles which will help to locate an



appropriate person. Once you have an expert opinion favourable to your case you can consider litigation through the courts or a mediation procedure.

At this point you need to seek some legal advice, starting with a free consultation with Citizens Advice. It maybe that your dealer and Fiat will revise their view on your claim once they have seen the report of your expert assessor.

NICK FISHER The reader was going to look into getting an independent assessment carried out, but we are informed that, after letters to E S Hartley (the motorhome dealer) and Fiat it appears as if something may be forthcoming. We will update you all when we hear more.

What I would like to know is how widespread is this problem?

Please let us know if you have had a problem with the fully automatic, nine-speed gearbox, and whether it was remedied within the warranty period or after that had expired.

An automatic gearbox is not a fragile and complicated mishmash of a manual gearbox, traditional clutch with automated operation; it is a tried and tested, integrated system that has been used for decades.

It is my opinion that in the case of an automatic gearbox, the manufacturer should have to explain exactly how they feel that the customer has broken it or repair/replace it without question.