



# A Buyer's Guide to:- Static Holiday Homes

# Queensberry Bay Holiday Park

*You're welcome...*

Powfoot - Annan  
Dumfriesshire  
DG12 5PN

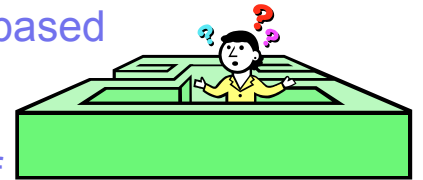




## Introduction

This guide is intended as an aid for anyone contemplating buying and owning a static holiday home.

It is a **general guide** only and the opinions expressed here are based on our own experiences and those we have seen and heard of.



All parks are different and all van sellers have different ways of doing business.

As such this is not intended as a definitive guide for any one individual or circumstance - and we accept no responsibility for any damages or loss, financial or otherwise, that may result from following any advice given here.

The recurring theme of this guide is crucial - the only way to be sure that you have the right van on the right park is to **ask questions**.

The next step is to **ask more questions**.

Finally, **ask some more questions**.

Never, ever, be afraid of asking questions - no matter how daft they may seem!

Happy hunting!

*John, Joanne and the Team*

# Buying a static caravan



## How can we help?

# relax . . .

### Choosing a new car can be scary

there are so many **models** and **colours** with Gti this and VRM that - & the uninitiated can easily get it wrong.

#### So how do we choose?

We ask friends, check the web, read the magazines. We get the sort of information that we need to make an informed decision.

### Choosing a static holiday home can be scary

there are so many **models** and makes with GTS this and XLZ that - and the uninitiated can easily get it wrong.

#### So how do we choose?

We ask friends, check the web, search the magazines - **BUT** would you believe **the only people who write about static**

**holiday homes are the manufacturers!**

**Can we believe all they say?**

### Let us help you

We're a family run private business with **no axe to grind** - come with us through the maze of buying a static holiday home so that, whether you choose to buy here or elsewhere, you'll at least have enough information to hand to make the right choice for you.



## Caravan prices

### Why are caravans so expensive?

A good question!

Static caravans (and lodges) like everything else depend on the cost of **raw materials** and labour as well as on the market in general.

This past year has seen quite a hike in caravan prices - which we're told is direct result of the increase in **steel prices**.

In addition, since every van or lodge has to be hauled to location from the manufacturer, the price is directly affected by the **cost of fuel**, as well as rises in the **minimum wage** (which has a knock on effect across the board, of course).

Finally, the idea of a static holiday home is just that - the latest breed of caravans come quite literally with **all mod cons** and domestic standard fittings - they are indeed a second home - and on that basis they are in most cases a more readily achievable alternative for most of us to bricks and mortar.

Bear in mind too that the parks where you'll site your van tend to be in **splendid locations** - where a bricks and mortar alternative would either never come up or would be beyond the reach of most of us.

**Remember - with a new static holiday home you're buying a lifestyle.**



## Manufacturers

### Why don't the manufacturers give a guide price?

They do - and you should check out the manufacturers' web sites to see the recommended retail price for any caravan or other unit you're interested in. This will give you a rough idea of the price band you're looking at.



The prices aren't always easy to find - but they're usually there. If they're not - move onto the next manufacturer.

### Who are the major manufacturers?

This varies year on year as in the car market, but in the UK the major players are currently Willerby, Atlas, BK Bluebird and - a relative newcomer to the static holiday home market - Swift.

### Which is the best?

Now there's a question!

As noted, the list changes year on year - and a couple of very well known manufacturers aren't on that list right now because of problems with build quality and after sales care .

The names we've given are well known, reliable and have a solid after sales history.





## Warranties

### Aren't they all the same company?

Ah!

There has indeed been a trend in recent years for buy outs by Willerby. Willerby continues to run the bought companies in their own right and with their own range.

Some see this as stifling competition - and as one of the very few small private companies left in this industry we can fully understand that view.

However it must be said that build quality on some static makes had been poor - and Willerby's input and expertise has undoubtedly improved that.



Finally, Swift is not one of the Willerby playmates - and their entry into the market has stirred up quite a storm and has certainly raised the bar a few inches. From that point of view competition is indeed a good thing.

### If the manufacturers are so good why don't they give a decent warranty?

A fair comment. - and you need to be very clear on the terms of any warranty you do get from them. Many for example will give a warranty that's not transferable if you sell the van within the warranty period!

This is quite clearly **ridiculous** and we hope will change in the near future with pressure from the parks and retailers.



Even if they do allow transfer of the warranty, many manufactures will only give 12 months! That's not long on a caravan or unit that might cost you £70 to £80,000!

There's been a shift of late in response to buyers' demands. Many parks - and we do this - work with a company that will give a **5 year warranty** so long as the van's serviced each year by that company.

We feel this is currently the best option given the manufacturers' stance - but not all parks do it and even we may change direction if the market changes - so do check before you commit to anything.

## I've seen the van I want - can I put it on finance?

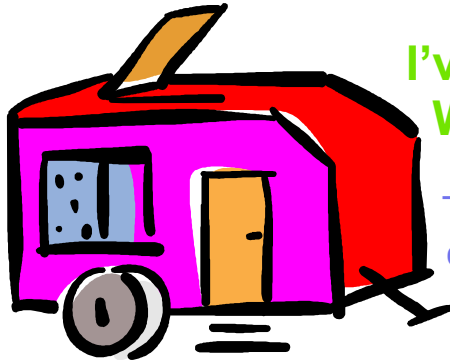
At one time the only way to buy a static holiday home was either cash (or cheque) or by a personal loan. Lenders regarded static caravans as high risk as they could "disappear".

Thankfully times have changed and you can now get finance on vans subject of course to status and all the other criteria. Some lenders will even stretch to 10 years - but the norm it has to be said is three to five years.

Most parks either offer finance or know a man who does.

However, only the bigger parks tend to push finance (as they tend to have fired up sales teams that make money from it) so if you're interested in financing your van and - no-one mentions it - make sure you ask when viewing.

## Finding a park



**I've bought the van I want but no-one will let me site it. Why?**

There are very few parks that will take either a pre-owned static caravan or one that you've bought yourself **even if it's new.**

The pre-owned argument is fair enough.

By insisting on new vans only the park aims to maintain its appearance and status.

*We for example have a front row of static holiday homes that is highly visible as you enter the park. Because this is our showcase we have a van age limit on that row of 10 years and we don't allow vans to change hands on the front row - if sold the vans must move back.*

We also do take static caravans from other parks - and are in the minority here - **BUT** we take a reference from the previous park owner just to make sure that the caravan owner isn't someone who's been put off another park after a raft of problems!

**As for the van you've bought yourself - you've bought this cheaper precisely because it wasn't sited on a park!**

If something seems too good to be true it generally is!

A static van that's not been bought either through a park or through a park's agent **hasn't had the haulage and siting costs added** - see below. If you



## Price add ons

find a park that will take the caravan (and bear in mind that most parks have restrictions placed on them by planning about caravan size, colour etc) you will still have these costs to pay.

In addition the costs will undoubtedly be higher to make up for the lost profit element of the van sale - the park has no room here for deal making.

**As always the only way to be sure is to ask.**

For more information on choosing a park, see our Buyer's Guide on the subject - or come and speak to us.

**I've found the van I want.**

**I've found the park I want.**

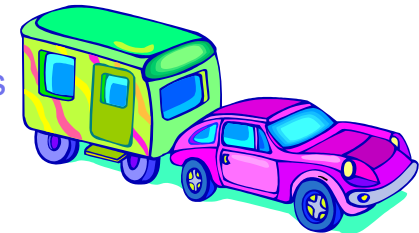
**But the park's price for the same van is much more than the manufacturer's price.**

**Am I being ripped off??**

This is a major bugbear for anyone buying a new holiday home.

The manufacturers do try to explain the issue on their own sites - but it's not always very clear.

The price of a static holiday home is made up of two things:



## Striking a deal

- The caravan itself - with any optional extras you may choose (central heating / double glazing etc) and
- The costs involved in getting that caravan from the manufacturer, onto the site of your choice, and safe for your use.

It's the second part that the manufacturer doesn't know (there are so many parks available and they all have different charges) and cannot guess.

As a **very** general guide, you can be looking at an add on of anything from £2,000 to £10,000 over and above the manufacturer's price.

Do bear in mind that this **isn't straight profit for the park owner** - haulage alone from the manufacturers in Hull to our park in Powfoot costs us just on £1,000 for example. The park also has to site and have the van commissioned by a qualified engineer - and all this costs money.

### How do I know what these costs are?

**The only way is to ask!**

Some parks - and we do this - will quote an all -inclusive price.

Others work on a low starting price to grab your attention and then add on the extras as the deal progresses.



## Drawing a line

**Neither approach is wrong** - but it's important that you're clear on what those costs are from the outset as that's the only way you can compare two similar holiday homes on two different parks.

This also raises another major point:

**Never, ever feel bad about asking for a breakdown of figures.**

You're potentially spending a huge sum of money.

You need to be absolutely sure that you know what you're getting for that money.

**I think the park's charging too much for the caravan - what can I do?**

That's easy.



The park's charges are what they are. There may be some room for negotiation of course and you should always ask if there are any deals to be had. But at the end of the day **if you're not happy** with the prices or with what you're getting for your money - **walk away** and move onto the next park.

It's no different in that respect from shopping in Tesco for example - if the same flour's cheaper down the road, we go down the road to buy it, we don't try to haggle with Mr Tesco at the check out!

**BUT** if the Tesco flour is better for us for some reason - whether it's better for our kids or suits our diet or whatever - we buy that flour at the price it is.



## Setting priorities

Remember - buying a caravan is about finding the **park that's right for you** and then deciding if the deal on offer is also right.



**So is choosing the right park more important than the caravan?**

Undoubtedly.

Having a holiday home means having somewhere that **feels like home** and where **you know you can relax** the second you sit down with your first brew.



If you choose your park well you may well be there for 20 or 30 years. In that time you may change your van up to three times say - but the park itself (hopefully) will remain the one constant.

Home,  
Sweet Home



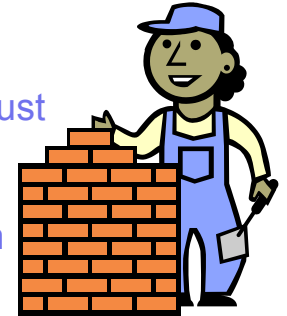


## Age limits

### How often do I have to change my van?

It depends on the park - **but this is a very important point** and one that you must clarify early on.

Most parks have an age limit of some kind. This isn't just to encourage new van sales - even a top of the range static holiday home only has a set life.



**Remember you're not paying for bricks and mortar (in the location you chose that is - anyone could find a cheaper house on an inner city housing scheme!) and you can't expect your caravan to last as long as bricks and mortar.**



**Experts reckon a van should be changed every 6 to 7 years - as at this age you get the best balance of personal use and resale value.**

Any park that's a member of the BH&HPA (British Holiday and Home Parks Association) will give you a guaranteed 10 years on a pitch with a new static van.

Many BH&HPA parks (and we are one) will even give 15 years with one of the modern new static caravans and on specific pitches.

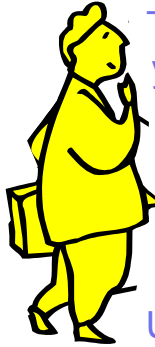
Lodges are given rather longer.

**That said, a static caravan is not for life** - even if it's well looked after - and there are always new models and new features (and new energy saving measures) coming out.



## Getting it wrong - the van

### What if I choose the wrong van?



That depends on all manner of things including when exactly you decide you've made a mistake.

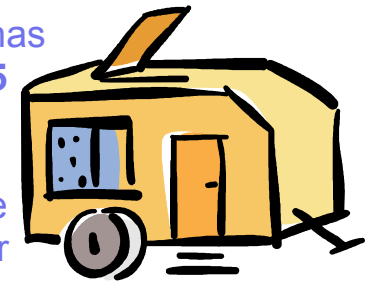
When you agree to buy a caravan you'll be asked to pay a deposit. The amount varies from park to park but with us it's 20% of the final sales price. This is a mark of commitment on both sides and at that point that caravan is taken off the market.

Under the latest BH&HPA guidance you have a **5 day cooling off period** after committing to a caravan purchase and making that deposit.



Because vans are usually ordered specifically for you, this cooling off period has to be followed - and in fact **no order will normally be placed until the 5 days is up.**

After that if you decide to change your order most parks will accommodate your wishes so far as they can. However if you decide to pull out altogether **you will lose your deposit.**



**Please bear this in mind at the start.**

If it's not until some time later that you decide it's the wrong van, you'll need to refer to your park rules to see what action is required.

Again, most parks will do what they can to help you out of a bad situation - but you must be realistic in your expectations. You can't expect a park owner to bale you out at their expense when they've done everything by the book.



## Getting it wrong - the park



On the other hand, you can expect a park owner to go through the options with you and do their best to help.

Remember though a caravan's like a car - as soon as it's off the forecourt - or on its pitch - the value drops substantially. For this reason a pre-owned van is often a better buy than a new caravan as they've already lost that initial chunk of depreciation.

Talk to the park and ask the question - and see what their reaction is.

### What if I choose the wrong park?

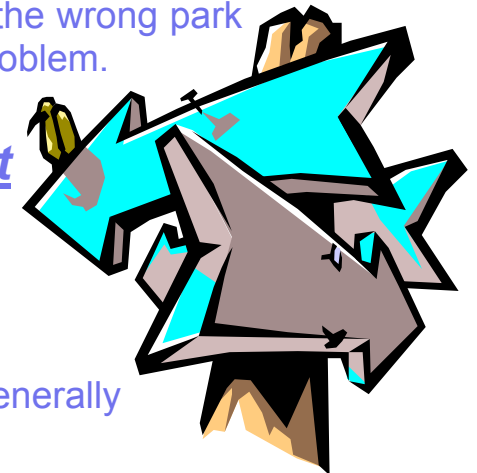
We said above that the choice of park was more important than the choice of caravan. We can't stress this enough.

Choose the wrong van and you'll have a number of options - choose the wrong park and even the greatest park owner on earth will struggle to solve the problem.

***It really is vital to make sure you've got the right park to start with.***

See our Buyer's Guide on choosing a park if you need any help here.

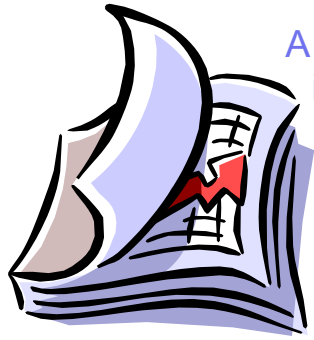
If you find you really can't tolerate life on the park you chose you'll generally have the following choices:



## Selling options - to the park

- To sell the caravan to the park (if offered)
- To sell the caravan yourself (with restrictions - see below)
- To sell the caravan through the park as agent
- To remove the caravan from the park and sell it privately

### Why would I sell to the park?



A sale to a park is usually (but not always) at Glass Trade Price. Just like the car industry, there's a Glass Guide book on caravans. This is the trade point of reference for anyone buying or selling caravans.

People sometimes choose to sell to the park because the sale is quick, the value easily available and there's no risk to you of the caravan not selling.

It's a "clean" sale.

That said, not all parks offer this facility at all as there's a risk that the caravan won't sell quickly and the park will therefore have to finance that cost.

That's why the van's cheaper under this scheme.

In addition, the parks that do offer this facility may not always be prepared to buy your van - it would depend on what other stock they had on their books at the time.



## Selling options - own sale

### What if I sell my own van?

Most parks will allow this to some extent - but it helps to understand why **this isn't the preferred route** for park owners.

*It has nothing to do with profits and everything to do with managing the park's status quo.*

When you first go onto the park you are (whether you know it or not) interviewed. Every park has a target market and park owners and managers do their best to ensure that any purchasers fit that market profile.

**There's nothing sinister in this** - if you're in your 50's and are looking for peace and quiet you really wouldn't want to be next to a large family with three teenagers into heavy metal.

It's an extreme example, but demonstrates the point. Of course, it could also work the other way!!



If you sell your own van - if the park rules allow you to do so freely - you will still require the park owner's or manager's permission for the transfer of the right to station the caravan there.

Your purchaser therefore has to be "interviewed" to make sure that they also won't upset the apple cart.

Maintaining the status quo is a fine balancing act and we don't always get it right - but we do try!





## Selling options - via the park

### Why would I sell the van through the park as agent?

Some parks insist on this - and charge a commission. Ours is 15% plus VAT and most parks are there or thereabouts. Other parks don't insist on this method of sale but all parks prefer this route for the reasons set out above.

**It also makes it easier for you** - the park will have a sales area, sales leaflets, a web site, the ability to market the unit and someone on site to show round prospective purchasers.

That's what the commission is for - it's an advertising and management charge much like any estate agent would make.

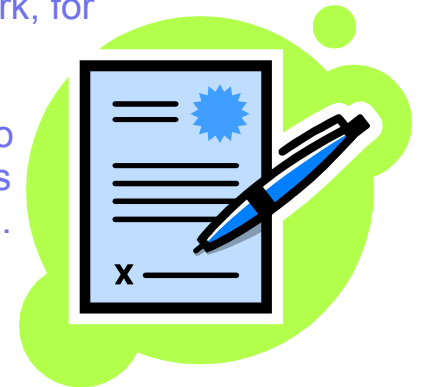


### Who pays the commission?

As always it varies from park to park and is something you should know.

In our case for example where we sell as agent we guarantee the vendor **Glass Retail Price** and set the price of the caravan to include our commission and any other costs - entrance fee to the park, for example.

We also aim to recover site fees for the year to repay to the seller - but can't guarantee that as site fees for the year are often a "deal breaker" on second hand van sales.



# Selling options - off park

Where we act as agent we have a **formal sales agreement** in place with the vendor and all our costs and charges are fully detailed there. Any BH&HPA park will do the same.

## Why would I sell my van off the park?

You may have decided to sell the van privately and then not found a buyer - which does happen.

You may be wanting to give up your van and can't sell on the park because the van is too old.

Alternatively, you may know someone who would be interested in your van but on another park.

Where you sell the caravan to go off park there is of course no commission to pay but there are **disconnection charges**.

These vary from park to park but are the cost for the park of disconnecting the caravan from the park services and getting it ready for transport.





## Scrapping



### What happens at the end of my caravan's life?

This is something that many of us don't even consider - but with the emphasis now on conserving the environment this is of course an important question.

If for some reason you're the last owner of a caravan that's come to the end of its usable life, you are legally responsible for having it properly disposed of.

Parks used to offer this facility but the laws on caravan scrapping are now so complex that all but the big guys contract the service out.

There is of course a charge involved - and most parks like us have no input into setting that charge. However, most parks will be able to put you in touch with a scrapping agent.



Perhaps the best piece of advice is to make sure you're not the last owner and - and that you upgrade and trade in long before that time comes!

