

PROJECT WENTWORTH



GENTLEMAN JACK BANCROFT

Our GENTLEMAN JACK's latest 'van means the world to him: in part two of his new series, he gets some expertly fitted security devices

After buying our replacement motorhome, the first thing we always do is take it to the longest established fitter of motorcaravan security systems in the country, to have 'it', 'us' and 'ours' properly linked up and protected. 'Vans are worth a lot of dosh in their own right; but ours is worth far more to us than it would be to some earwig of a thief, because it is integral to our lifestyle.

Transport, adventures, exploring, walking trips, foreign holidays, mob-handed family weekends away, even romantic meals for two watching the sun go down on a jaw-droppingly beautiful view: our motorcaravan is essential for most of our leisure activities. If our 'van was stolen, it would be tragically life-changing for us.

Horse, stable-door, shut and bolted... rearrange these into a well-known saying. I'm afraid that, as my old dad used to say: "Experience is a good school, but the fees are high." Thus we first telephoned Van Bitz while shutting that stable door after the horse had bolted. Someone had broken into our motorcaravan while it was parked on our drive, and had bypassed the inadequate alarm. It was only the dog barking that alerted me to his presence and cut short his unwelcome visit. Watching me give chase down a busy urban street in a flapping dressing gown and moth-eaten slippers – and not much else – is still the cause of sleepless nights for our former neighbours.

Seriously though, it was obvious that the 'car alarm' fitted to our coachbuilt needed

replacing with something designed and purpose-built to protect our motorcaravan and accessories, such as bikes on a rack. We wanted a system that would prevent earwigs stealing equipment such as gas cylinders, too, so full protection for every exterior-access locker was a 'must'. Also, we hankered after something that was so loud and uncomfortable that it would prevent miscreants from staying in the 'van and removing all of our personal belongings, in the unlikely event of them breaching the perimeter security.

After researching the subject, it became clear that there was only one supplier and fitter who had their alarms made to their own exacting specification, were keen motorcaravanners themselves (and so understood the specific

and different requirements to those of car or van owners), plus were approved by insurance companies. Thus I enlisted the services of Eddie Jones at Van Bitz (www.vanbitz.com). Proprietors Eddie and Lynn have owned most types of motorhome over the years, from humble campervans to rolling palaces.

My break-in was two decades ago, and I reckon the company has remained ahead of the game ever since; which is why I'm still a customer.

Don't just take my word for it, though: do your own research as to who fits the best alarms. Just remember that you want the best value, not the cheapest quote. Van Bitz produces helpful and informative booklets to guide you through the maze of security products available to protect your 'van.



First, all the details from the VIN plate are recorded and then all the 'van's electrical systems are checked before work commences



All the senior staff are time-served engineers and installers. Here a bespoke wiring loom is being made for the Wentworth

THE SECURITY-FITTING PROCESS



Stock control here is excellent: that's what I call an organised electrical equipment store



Simple systems are sometimes the best. Before work commences every locker or door that has to be protected gets a bit of black insulating tape. After it is wired up, the tape is removed. Easy!



Anything that had to be removed (in this case the headlight pod) was carefully stored on adjacent trolleys by Van Bitz; there's no chucking it on the bench or simply leaving it on the floor



The Peugeot instrument housing needed to be deconstructed to make the additional wiring (a) unobtrusive and (b) secure



In order to achieve the neat fitting of the three auxiliary control switches, some serious dismantling and reassembly was necessary



In passing, they found that my electric rooflight wasn't working and tested its remote



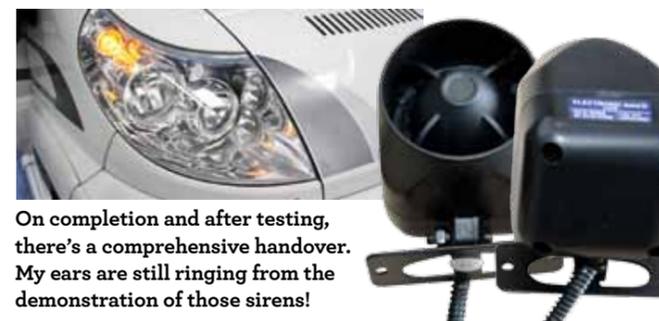
Visual deterrents work on casual thieves. The system has bright LEDs and sirens (below)



Some competitors will just tuck wiring under carpets, but Vanbitz removes the step moulding to ensure a neat job



A hard-wired gas detector is part of the system's comprehensive armoury



On completion and after testing, there's a comprehensive handover. My ears are still ringing from the demonstration of those sirens!



Finally they hand over the documentation and an easy-to-follow instruction book, with locker and window stickers

THE SYSTEM'S LIGHTS, SIRENS AND SWITCHES

We've had a Growler system fitted, which uses the same basic Strikeback alarm as we've had before, but also includes some extra, very useful accessories and features. Here is a summary of the key advantages.

- Three exterior sirens create a wall of sound
- Two internal sirens
- Three LED high-intensity warning lights: front, rear and next to the entrance door
- The bonnet is protected by a tilt switch (not by a relatively unreliable pin switch)
- The interior is protected by a high-frequency sensor. This has better coverage and is more reliable than PIR detectors
- Perimeter-only protection can be selected so Fido or Top Cat can pad about inside when their owners are out and the 'van is left with the alarm on
- Bikes, generator and WHY are protected by an accessory loop
- A panic button on the key fob triggers the alarm, whether 'armed' or not. This could come in handy if you return to the motorhome and see thieves are in the process of robbing you. It would also deter would-be car-jackers
- It's approved by Thatcham and leading 'van insurers (some give a discount, too)
- A hard-wired gas detector can be fitted as an option
- A lifetime warranty for the original owner.

CONTACT

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Strikeback Alarm
From £599 fitted
Growler comprehensive security package including Strikeback
£999 fitted (one night's camping included).