

## BESSACARR E450

DARLINGTON 6½ HEIGHINGTON 2  
SHILDON 4½

# COMPACT PROFILES

## Bessacarr E450 and Chausson Welcome 55



Words & pictures  
by Dave Hurrell

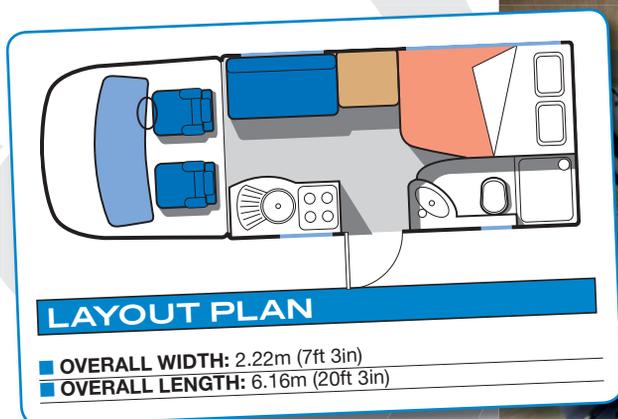
*Six-metre low profiles offer fixed-bed convenience in a user-friendly package*

**M**MM award-winning dealer Barrons is also celebrating 50 years in business this year, so it seemed very appropriate that I pay the Darlington branch a visit, intent on finding a couple of compact, value-for-money low profiles capable of whetting my motorhoming appetite.

The low profile, fixed bed motorhome is as French as Brie and baguettes - and this month's

twin test compares just such a 'van with an alternative that's British through and through.

Bessacarr's E450 and Chausson's Welcome 55 both offer a fixed lengthways double bed in the rear with washroom alongside. Upfront there's a kitchen and lounge/diner. Overall length is just over six metres for the Bessie, just under in the case of the Chausson. This places them in the compact class and contributes to reduced-stress

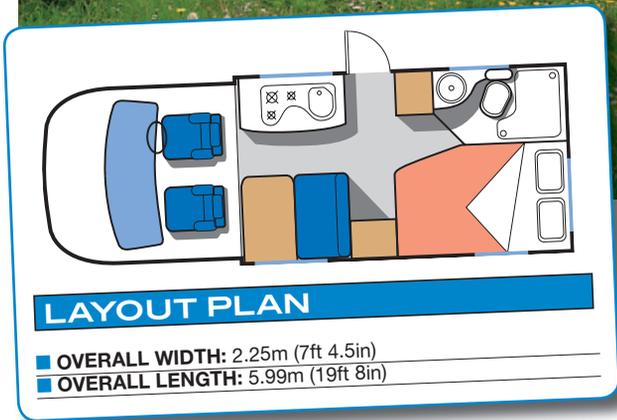


**RIGHT:** Bessacarr cab is one up on its rival, with ABS and driver's air bag.

**FAR RIGHT:** Chausson version of the Fiat Ducato rides on a lower platform chassis.



# CHAUSSON WELCOME 55



motorcaravanning on the road as both are easy to drive and park. Chassis in both cases is courtesy of Fiat, with the ubiquitous Ducato here offering its 2.3-litre power plant, one of the best mid-range engines in the business. Underpinnings, however, are different as the Bessie's built on a traditional chassis cab with ladder-frame rear end riding on good old-fashioned cart springs. The Chausson keeps the cart springs too but here they're mounted on a platform cab chassis. This consists of a Fiat-built frame topped off with a steel floor - the motorhome body's wood-and-insulation living area floor sits on top. This method of building is commonplace with Continental manufacturers (but is unlike any British-built motorhomes I'm aware of) and has the advantage of producing a 'van with a lower overall height. Indeed, the Bessacarr is 220mm (8.5in) higher than its rival and this is immediately apparent on entry, as a twin-tread external step is needed to get you aboard.

A conventional approach to bodywork build and looks reveals the Bessie as a very traditional beast. Simple, but nevertheless good looking, GRP-clad coachwork has a budget feel as it uses alloy strip where sidewalls meet roof. However, the Bessie makes up for this by sporting strong alloy skirts down below where many rivals feature 'wobbly' plastic.

The Chausson is every bit the Continental low-

wobbly. That platform chassis shows its mettle here as no external step is needed to gain the

profile motorhome, its swoopy Gallic-style overcab blending very well with the Fiat cab below. Here, GRP-clad walls are joined to the roof with more modern-looking plastics while the ABS plastic skirts below aren't too

interior. The Chausson also scores points overall lengthwise, as, coming in at just under the six-metre barrier, it'll be cheaper on the ferries (much cheaper, I'm told, on those in Scandinavia).

### MOTIVE POWER

Two out of three motorhomes built in Europe are based on the Ducato so it was no surprise to discover that both the Bessie and the Chausson



BESSACARR E450



I LIKED

- Willing 2.3-litre engine
- ABS
- Driver's airbag
- Interior ambience
- 'Proper' lounge
- Superior, well-equipped kitchen
- Comfortable rear bed with headboard
- Big underbed storage

I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- Lower cab seats
- An extra reading lamp in the lounge
- Better washroom storage provision

I DISLIKED

- Close proximity of dining table to kitchen

**FROM THE TOP:** Bessacarr's layout places a longitudinal sofa opposite the kitchen.

The rear nearside bed with washroom alongside.

Lounge lovers will be very tempted by the Bessie, as it offers genuine relaxing space.

The freestanding table comes a tad close to the kitchen opposite.

are provided with motive power by this trusty and seemingly omnipresent Fiat product. You will have read by now that a brand-new Fiat Ducato base vehicle is on the way, so bear in mind that - if you're looking to buy soon - the chance of a bargain 'van built on the old chassis may not be beyond the realms of possibility.

Both cabs feature central locking, although you need to stick a key in the lock to achieve it on the Chausson - the Bessie offers more convenient remote operation. The Bessacarr turns out to be safer too, featuring ABS and a driver's airbag as standard. Other cab toys such as electric mirrors and windows are, as expected, present in both 'vans, but only the Bessie offers a CD/radio. Do bear in mind though that the standard unit fitted here is a lacklustre beast - I'd fit something a bit better in the Chausson or maybe 'negotiate' for a unit to be included before I signed on the dotted line.

The gutsy and willing 2.3-litre mid-range engine is a beauty and it makes short work of propelling both Bessacarr and Chausson at very respectable velocities to provide confident touring - you should have no problem keeping pace with traffic flow.

ROAD MANNERS

Five-speed gearboxes both feature the Ducato's infamous high top gear, which becomes almost unusable in some big motorhomes. Here though it's fine, and provides a useful 'overdrive' for relaxed motorway cruising in these smaller 'vans with their windcheating low-profile bodies. Do bear in mind, though, that changing up to fifth at any speed under about 60mph can be a mistake, as modern turbo-diesels require good levels of engine speed to spin the turbocharger that helps give all that power. Indeed, 110 horses and plenty of torque from this common-rail unit should mean that driving pleasure is rarely threatened.

The Ducato is legendary for the quality of its gearchange, the dash-mounted unit being quite slick and easy to use. Steering and brakes, too, are excellent, the former being light and positive, the latter powerful and car-like. Handling between the two 'vans is very similar. Only the higher standard chassis cab of the Bessie displayed a touch more lean when cornering, though both felt safe and predictable at all times.

The Chausson sports a window in its rear wall, so some through-vision was possible via the internal mirror. The Bessie's blind rear wall makes this 'van the perfect customer for a rear-view camera.

Cab and conversion noise in both was almost absent too, although the Bessie's big slot-in cooker provided a tad more tympani than the Chausson's separate hob and grill set-up.

In all that it's good, the Ducato has one or three faults - one of which is created, in part, by the fact that it's been converted into a motorhome. Both 'vans feature swivelling cab seats, allowing them to be used as part of the living area, and both have identical swivels fitted twixt seat and base. These swivels raise the cab seats by around 30-plus millimetres creating further problems for the Fiat's already questionable cab ergonomics. The result here is that cab seats are quite high when in driving mode - shorter passengers may find their feet swinging, while drivers need to duck to see under a lowered sun visor.

Draughts around the tops of the cab doors when on the move are also a Ducato 'chestnut' but, thankfully, neither Bessie nor Chausson

suffered in this way during the test.

Finally, there's the heater. This is also a bit of a lacklustre unit - there's plenty of heat available from face-level vents but getting the unit to warm feet or demist screen can be difficult.

**LOUNGE AND DINE**

Having made the decision to buy a low-profile fixed bed motorhome, a major factor to consider will be the lounge and dining facilities on offer. It's here that the Bessacarr E450 and Chausson Welcome 55 have their major differences. Both lounge/dining areas sit opposite the kitchen (offside in the Bessie, nearside in the Chausson), but approach the problem of providing adequate, comfortable seating and eating space in a completely different way.

In the Bessie, swivel cab seats turn to join a two-seater, side sofa and provide sociable lounging for four in an area that has a real feeling of space. The kitchen opposite looms large but doesn't get in the way, while the combination of Bessacarr's signature dark woodwork and ice-cream colour fabrics generate a traditional cosy feel, albeit with a modern twist. One simple but clever idea is the inclusion of a flip-up TV table at the aft end of the sofa. Once in operation this unit is at the perfect height and distance from the swivelled cab seats to allow comfortable viewing (and the adjacent wall is equipped with the relevant sockets to make connection of your TV easy).

Come mealtimes, a freestanding table is extracted from dedicated storage in the adjacent wardrobe and set up in front of the sofa. Here it provides good quality dining for two as its decent size coupled with well-judged sofa height make things comfortable when eating. The main downside with this arrangement is the fact that once erected, the table comes very close to the kitchen making it difficult to cook and serve in one operation. The trick is to prepare any meal before you set up the table. A compromise I know, but this is the price paid to allow the inclusion of a proper lounge in a small 'van.

Indeed, Bessacarr seems to understand the limitations of this design as it has thoughtfully provided a second table that, thanks to a dogleg mount, should be able to serve the cab seats. I say should because although the tabletop was present in the test 'van its leg was not, so I was unable to try it out. Even so, it would appear that this modestly sized unit would serve well for drinks, snacks and light meals and solve at least some of the problems associated with the large table.

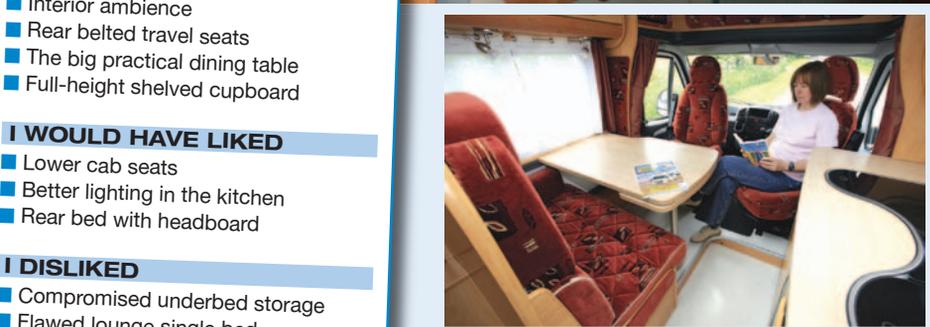
The Chausson's cab seats turn to face a half dinette, a feature that, these days, is found in a very large number of foreign 'vans but has yet to catch on among British manufacturers. Here, the tables are turned, as the Chausson's half-dinette set-up makes a far better eatery than lounge. You could, of course, remove the table and open up this area for lounging. However, in reality, the table's generous nature is its downfall as it's very heavy and there's nowhere to put it, save maybe on the rear bed.

As an eatery this area is superb. The table is big and solid with a clever extension that pops up from under the outboard end to help it offer excellent dining for four people. Interior ambience is equally attractive as the Bessie, with light wood and darker cloth conspiring to create the same kind of cosiness as its test-mate.

It's horses for courses at this stage - if you desire a lounge in your motorcaravan the Bessie will be easy to choose. However, there's another good reason why so many Continental 'vans feature a half dinette and that's because



**CHAUSSON WELCOME 55**



- I LIKED**
  - Lower platform cab chassis
  - Willing 2.3-litre engine
  - Interior ambience
  - Rear belted travel seats
  - The big practical dining table
  - Full-height shelved cupboard
- I WOULD HAVE LIKED**
  - Lower cab seats
  - Better lighting in the kitchen
  - Rear bed with headboard
- I DISLIKED**
  - Compromised underbed storage
  - Flawed lounge single bed

**FROM THE TOP:** Chausson's Continental layout opts for a half dinette opposite the kitchen, which does offer two belted rear travel seats.

The rear half is a mirror image with the bed on the offside.

In the Chausson, lounging is somewhat compromised by the big table.

At mealtimes, the Chausson comes into its own, offering good dining for four.

this arrangement offers two belted travel seats in the rear. So, if you need to carry passengers, the Chausson will be the more attractive (or possibly essential) choice.

**COOK'S QUARTERS**

The lines of demarcation between Brit and Continental motorcaravans poke their noses over the parapet yet again in the kitchen. Both galleys are linear and side-mounted up front, the Bessie's on the rear, the Chausson's on the offside.

British motorhome galleys tend to be far more appliance-friendly than their Continental cousins and here is no exception, as our Bessie's kitchen is resplendent with a domestic-style slot-in cooker. A hinged glass lid conceals three gas rings and one solid mains electric hotplate, while below there's a separate, full-sized grill and oven (all benefit from electronic ignition).

The Chausson's cook centre is much more modest with a three-burner ignition-less hob and a Smev mini grill, albeit with pushbutton ignition and internal illumination.

Bessie offers a big stainless sink and removable plastic drainer that, when stowed, reveals a good chunk of worktop to the sink's right. The Chausson's sink is an integral part of the hob, forming a B-shaped device that lacks a drainer but leaves a small piece of work surface to the front of the unit.

Fridges are both by Dometic, both manual energy selection and both good-sized (nearly 100 litres capacity).

Bessie's low-level storage is limited to a narrow cupboard with pullout trays, and, just when I despaired at finding no cutlery drawer, I discovered a modest, but capable unit that pops out from under the worktop. Up top, there's a couple of

overhead lockers plus a tambour-doored item that - while it lacked a socket - seemed spot-on for siting a microwave. In fact, a glance at the options list confirms that £145 will see you equipped to 'nuke' supermarket ready meals when you can't be bothered to do 'proper' cooking.

It's the Chausson's lack of a big cooker that gives it the edge storage-wise as there's room for a decent-sized cupboard and cutlery drawer below the small grill unit. Above, two overhead lockers have shelves; one is a clever wire mesh device with adjustable 'bookends' that can grasp tins and the like for rattle-free travel.

In a them and us classic confrontation, Bessie and Chausson's cook's quarters epitomise the difference between the home-grown and Continental motorhome kitchen.

The French take their holidays, more often than not, during good weather, so the outdoor



**ABOVE TOP:** In the kitchen, the Bessacarr wins, with a superb cooker.

**ABOVE:** A separate shower graces the washroom, but it's modestly sized.

**MMM HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA – BESSACARR E450**

**PRICE**

- From: £31,770 OTR
- As tested: £31,770 OTR

**BASICS** (\*manufacturer's figures)

- Berths: 2
- Three-point belted seats: 2 (including driver)
- Warranty: 3 years base vehicle and conversion
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: Yes
- Construction: GRP-clad sandwich construction low-profile coachbuilt, with alloy skirts
- Length: 6.16m (20ft 3in)\*
- Width: 2.22m (7ft 3in)\*
- Height: 2.94m (9ft 8in)\*
- Wheelbase: 3.70m (12ft 1.5in)\*
- Rear overhang: 1.54m (5ft 0.5in)\*
- Maximum authorised weight: 3400kg\*
- Payload: 507kg\* (after the weight of driver (75kg), 90 per cent fuel, 90 per cent fresh water, weight of two 90 per cent full gas cylinders)

**THE VEHICLE**

- Fiat Ducato LWB chassis cab
- Engine: 2.3-litre common-rail turbo-diesel producing 110bhp
  - Transmission: 5-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
  - Brakes: Servo-assisted with ABS, front discs, rear drums
  - Suspension: Front; independent. Rear; rigid axle
  - Features: Driver's airbag, electric windows, electric mirrors, remotely operated central locking, twin door bins, adjustable steering column, flip-up map holder

**INSIDE**

- Layout: Swivel cab seats ahead of offside sofa, nearside kitchen, fixed lengthways double bed in rear offside corner, separate shower washroom alongside
- Insulation: Floor 44mm, walls 32 mm, roof 34mm
- Interior height: 1.97m (6ft 5.5in)

**KITCHEN**

- Sink: Circular stainless steel sink with monobloc mixer tap, inset chopping board and removable drainer
- Cooker: Stoves slot-in model with three gas burners, one solid hotplate, separate

- grill and oven, all with electronic ignition
- Fridge: Dometic RM7361L three-way, capacity 92 litres

**WASHROOM**

- Toilet: Thetford swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- Basin: Vanity unit with mixer tap set into countertop
- Shower: Separate compartment with rigid bi-fold door, dedicated shower mixer/head

**BEDS**

- Fixed rear double
- Length: 1.89m (6ft 2.5in)
  - Width: 1.31m (4ft 3.5in)

**EQUIPMENT**

- Fresh water tank: Underslung, insulated, 82 litres (18 gallons),
- Waste water tank: Underslung, 62 litres (13.6 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Ultrastore, gas/mains operation
- Space heater: Truma Trumatic convector with blown-air and Ultraheat, gas/mains operation
- Leisure battery: 110 amp hr
- Gas: 2 x 7kg cylinders
- Lighting: Four ceiling-mounted halogen downlighters and one dome lamp provide general illumination. One adjustable halogen spot in lounge. Two halogen downlighters in kitchen. Two adjustable spots above bedhead. One downlighter in washroom, one dome lamp in shower compartment.
- Sockets: 230V: three (kitchen, lounge, TV locker); 12V: three (cab, lounge, TV locker)

**OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

- Fitted to test vehicle
- Base: None
  - Conversion: None

**Other options**

- Base: Alloy wheels (£455), reversing sensors (£150), Blaupunkt Chicago Satnav/DVD/MP3/CD/RDS radio with LCD colour screen (£2165)
- Conversion: Roof rack and ladder (£450), rear corner steadies (£125), TV aerial and booster (£125), pair of scatter cushions (£50), reversing camera (£450), microwave oven (£145), cab side window screens

lifestyle beckons and fully featured kitchens are less important. We, however, often use our 'vans when the weather is less than kind and the Bessacarr's kitchen is capable of producing complicated meals to order, thanks mainly to its magnificent cooker but also because it offers a small, but significant area of work surface.

**BATHING SPACE**

Separate showering areas in both 'vans set the tone for washroom capabilities, and there's no doubt about it, being able to rise in the morning and step into your own shower is a boon. This feature is especially important if you plan to use more basic sites - Caravan Club CLs or foreign aires for example - where facilities are minimal or non-existent.

Taking pride of place in the centre of each washroom is the omnipresent Thetford swivel-

bowl loo - in both cases sporting electric flushing.

Washrooms alongside fixed beds tend to be compact so floor space is often an issue. My first port of call when testing is to sit on the 'throne,' close the door, and gauge the level of comfort and amount of space. I'm pleased to report that both Bessacarr and Chausson have plenty of room to use the loo in comfort but floor space when using the basin in both is a tad limited. When looking for your ideal 'van it's vital to 'try before you buy' and testing the amount of space in the washroom is elementary. Indeed, those of a larger stature may find that the 'long and narrow' washrooms that this layout dictates may be unsuitable.

Nevertheless, both examples here are pretty good and representative of the majority of the breed. The Bessie's shower takes the form of a fully-enclosed compartment with rigid, bi-fold

door; it's very good too, but not for someone large of frame. Chausson offers a separate showering area that conspires to allow more space when using the loo (you can face towards it and easily sit with your feet in the shower tray). This is enclosed by a concertina screen and again is of modest size - the screen runs along a serpentine track that leaves one side a bit narrow.

Vanity basins feature in both; capacious and easy to use, the countertops they occupy have good areas of space for your toothbrush and smellies.

Storage is a different matter and the Chausson sports no less than three lockers - one below and two up top, while the Bessie makes do with one cupboard under the sink. In one of the Chausson's high-level cupboards, a set of elastic straps makes the secure storage of cosmetics easier too.

**MMM HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA - CHAUSSON 55**

**PRICE**

- From: £30,090 OTR
- As tested: £30,090 OTR

**BASICS**

- Berths: 3
- Three-point belted seats: 4 (including driver)
- Warranty: 3 years base vehicle and conversion
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: No

**CONSTRUCTION**

(\*manufacturer's figures)

- GRP-clad sandwich construction, low-profile coachbuilt, with ABS plastic skirts
- Length: 5.99m (19ft 8in)\*
- Width: 2.25m (7ft 4.5in)\*
- Height: 2.72m (8ft 11in)\*
- Wheelbase: 3.70m (12ft 1.5in)\*
- Rear overhang: 1.40m (4ft 7in)\*
- Maximum authorised weight: 3400 kg\*
- Payload: 620kg\* (no mass in running order details available)

**THE VEHICLE**

Fiat Ducato LWB platform cab

- Engine: 2.3-litre common-rail turbo-diesel producing 110bhp
- Transmission: 5-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Servo-assisted, front discs, rear drums
- Suspension: Front, independent; rear, rigid axle
- Features: Electric windows, electric mirrors, key-operated central-locking, twin door bins, adjustable steering column, flip-up map holder

**INSIDE**

- Layout: Swivel cab seats ahead of nearside half-dinette, offside kitchen, rear nearside fixed double bed, separate shower washroom alongside
- Insulation: Floor 30mm, walls 25mm, roof 30mm
- Interior height: 1.95m (6ft 5in)

**KITCHEN**

- Sink: Cramer stainless steel unit with hinged glass lid (in combination with hob), monobloc mixer tap
- Cooker: Cramer 3-burner hob with hinged glass lid (in combination with sink), no

electronic ignition. Smev mini grill with internal illumination and push-button ignition

- Fridge: Dometic RM7401 three-way, capacity 97 litres

**WASHROOM**

- Toilet: Thetford swivel-bowl electric-flush cassette
- Basin: Circular vanity basin and mixer tap, set into countertop
- Shower: Separate showering area with concertina screen and dedicated mixer/head

**BEDS**

Fixed rear double

- Length: 1.88m (6ft 2in)
- Width: 1.30m (4ft 3in) max

Dinette single

- Length: 1.75m (5ft 9in)
- Width: 1.03m (3ft 4.5in) max

**EQUIPMENT**

- Fresh water tank: 130 litres (28.6 gallons)
- Waste water tank: 125 litres (27.5 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Combi C4000S gas operation only
- Space heater: Truma Combi C4000S blown-air gas operation only
- Leisure battery: 95 amp hr
- Gas: 2 x 13kg
- Lighting: Two domed fluorescent ceiling lights illuminate living area, two adjustable spotlights to lounge/diner, one downlighter to kitchen, two adjustable spotlights at head of rear bed, two halogen downlighters in washroom
- Sockets: 230V: two (kitchen and TV locker). 12V: two (cab and TV locker)

**OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

Fitted to test vehicle

- Base: None
- Conversion: None

Other options

- Base: None
- Conversion: None



ABOVE TOP: Chausson's galley is typically Continental. ABOVE: There's more and better storage in the Chausson's bathroom.

**BESSACARR E450**



*FROM THE TOP: Bedtime in Bessie brings almost total bliss. There's plenty of space under the bed. More storage and the water heater is found under the sofa.*

Both washrooms do a good job: providing separate showering facilities in motorhomes of this size is no mean feat. Here it's the Chausson's bathing space that takes the honours with a bit more room to use the loo and superior storage provision.

**BED TIME**

Fixed bed bliss should be the experience after buying either 'van, and, as my own motorcaravan is a fixed bed model, I can report that an ever-ready bed to flop into after a hard day's holidaying is bliss indeed.

The Bessie is a straight two-berth and its double bed is pretty close to 'as good as it gets'. The windowless rear wall means there's a proper headboard at the head of the bed, which is of a good size and riding on a sprung-slat base. The mattress is comfy too, and the washroom's sliding tambour door means the foot of the bed is not too narrow. Only the lack of a shelf for night time necessities prevents this berth from scoring absolute top marks.

Chausson claims three berths for the Welcome 55 as a single bed can be made from the dinette. This could be seen as a 'welcome addition' as the presence of rear belted seats and dining for up to four means an extra person (a grandchild perhaps) could travel safely and live aboard. This bed is made by lowering the table and placing the seat cushions (plus one infill) to create a bed base - the foot of this berth is provided by the squab of the swivelled cab passenger seat. Unfortunately, said seat comes far too high to the main bed base to create a usable bed - so all seems a waste of time.

At the rear, the double bed is excellent and only loses out to the Bessie's because of the aforementioned window in the rear wall. This lets in lots of natural light but severely compromises any 'propped up in bed' type activities such as reading or partaking of the essential morning cuppa. In spite of the Chausson's claimed extra berth, the Bessie has the edge come bedtime.

**STORE ROOM**

The consequence and advantage of a fixed bed layout is a big storage space under that ever-ready berth, with room to stash all your bulky holiday kit safely out of sight. The Bessie's underbed locker takes the chequered flag here, as the whole of the area below the double berth is up for grabs storage-wise. Chausson uses this area to house the heating boiler so there's far less space for chairs, barbecues and the like.

Inside, the Chausson fights back with a floor-to-ceiling shelved cupboard, perfect for folded clothes storage. Both 'vans have good numbers of overhead lockers outside the kitchen - the Bessie offering additional useful on-site space in the form of open shelves in the lounge and above the bed. I say 'on-site' because storing items here during travel is potentially dangerous as they could fly around the interior during emergency braking or in an accident.

Each has an overcab locker too, but the Bessie finally trounces the Chausson with informal storage in its sofa base, accessed through the top. Space to store without decent payload is useless unless you plan to pack lots of pillows, so always check the payload of any 'van you plan to buy before you sign.

Thankfully, both Bessie and Chausson are blessed with over half a tonne of carrying capacity.

**LIFE SUPPORT**

Hook-up, charger and leisure battery provide both Bessie and Chausson with electricity

- mains and 12V power helps make each a comfortable home from home.

The main differences between the two become apparent when looking at plumbing and heating equipment. The Bessie's superior internal storage provision is down, in part, to the fact that its fresh water tank is mounted underfloor, freeing up space within. This tank is insulated, giving year-round use potential but it is considerably smaller than the Chausson's big, inboard-mounted unit, which is located under the forward-facing dinette seat.

Heating systems too are very different. The Bessie sports one of my favourites - Truma's Trumatic convector with blown-air and Ultraheat. This can be used on gas or mains electric, or both, as a convector for near-silent heating or with blown-air for faster warm-up that also heats the washroom. Water is heated courtesy of a Truma Ultrastore unit, again functioning on gas or mains.

Chausson, however, fits Truma's Combi which space heats by blown-air and incorporates water heating too. Sadly, the unit fitted operates only on gas, compromising the maximum use of hook-up and boosting gas consumption.

Both 'vans offer a good range of lighting, including general illumination from ceiling fittings; the Bessie only lacked a second reading lamp in the lounge to make it perfect, while the Chausson's single downlighter in the kitchen seems a bit mean.

**CONCLUSION**

Bessacarr's take on the Continental concept, fixed bed, low-profile motorcaravan produces very interesting results, especially when compared to a foreign 'van that epitomises the breed.

There's nothing in it value-wise and both seem equally well-built, bearing in mind their near mid-range price status. They're well equipped too, with only the Bessie's superior heating system likely to bring more of a smile to the average Brit motorhome's face. Both motorhomes are capable of providing comfortable long-term touring for two in a compact package that should work well. Only the Chausson's flawed third berth annoyed, as, coupled with its rear travel seats, this could have offered the capability to take occasional trips with a grandchild.

Away from the almost equally good double beds, the real differences between the two lie in the way we, and our Continental cousins, might enjoy our motorcaravanning days. Sleeping, washing and eating in the Chausson, would then probably see you more comfortable outside enjoying the good weather. In the Bessacarr you can be more relaxed inside when the weather is less than kind. A superior kitchen, too, gives the Bessie the edge when bad-weather motorcaravanning. What can be better than sumptuous meals cooked inside when the thought of a barbecue is laughable? Of course the lounge then compromises things at mealtimes, but I've spent enough wet weekends away to appreciate the benefit of having somewhere good to relax.



**CHAUSSON WELCOME 55**



**VEHICLES LOANED FOR EVALUATION BY:**

Barrons North East Motorhome Centre, Burtree Gate (A68), Darlington, County Durham DL2 2XZ (tel: 01325 383333; web site: www.motorhomedeals.co.uk) **E&OE**

*FROM THE TOP: Chausson fixed bed is equally comfortable, but the window at its head can get in the way.*

*The underbed store is compromised by the Truma heater's presence.*

*The potentially useful front bed is flawed by the height of the cab passenger seat.*