



*Nick Fisher...*

... established a new van rental firm in 1997 and realised that Fiat had great products but some pretty awful dealers; quickly Nick had to become an expert on the Ducato and has not looked back since



# Keep your Ducato going

What are the common faults found on older Fiat Ducatos and what can you do about them to keep your Ducato-based motorhome on the road?

## PRE-1994

Early Fiat Ducatos (and its Talbot Express, Peugeot J5 and Citroën C25 cousins) were market-leading when they were introduced. They were mechanically tough and drove well. The fact is, though, that these vehicles are now quite rare (except among motorhome owners) and suffer badly from corrosion and, more latterly, a lack of replacement parts.

Gearboxes were simple and lasted a long time and engines were strong in terms of build but lacked the kind of power that we have become accustomed to. Petrol engines were more common than diesels in the early-nineties and, while more refined than early diesels, they lacked torque so would normally end up being revved a lot to make good progress.

This did little to prolong the life of the engines and used a lot of fuel but, in the end, it has been rot and the dearth of parts like headlamps

and electrical problems that have consigned these pre-1994 models to the 'true enthusiast' market.

If you are looking for your first motorhome, I'd give these a miss. There are quite a few out there; some are in lovely condition, but it may not be a sound proposition for a newbie.

## 1994-2002

The big news here was a more modern and car-like cab along with more powerful engines and a five-speed gearbox. The gear selector was moved to the dashboard and was operated by cables, which worked well and probably served as inspiration for most other manufacturers.

The cables were reliable and caused few problems, but the mounting of the gear selector was not strong and was prone to bending or cracking. This would effectively alter the position of the cables at the gearbox end and

make gear selection difficult.

The fifth gear was basically the four-speed 'box with an extra compartment bolted to the end. Oil circulation in this area was not good and led to failure of many fifth gears and their synchromesh. It was not a difficult job to repair because the cover could be removed without removing the gearbox so, unless the selector forks had become worn as well, it was more of an inconvenience than anything else.

Recently, it has been noticed that many of the gearbox parts for these vehicles are no longer available. This is going to be a problem.

The other great advance was that the bodywork was galvanised to prevent corrosion. This was the first time that a commercial vehicle had been so treated. However, while the bodywork remained rust-free (unless it was repaired badly) the chassis and particularly front cross-members were