



ELDDIS GETS STUCK IN

George Hinton reports from Co Durham where the big news for 2013 is a new construction method that almost eradicates the need for screws and bolts

New construction methods are always big news in the caravan industry. Three years ago it was Bailey's Alu-Tech, now it's Consett-based Elddis's turn with 'SoLiD' (an acronym for 'Strong, Light, Dry').

In essence, this method of manufacture is disarmingly simple. The sandwich walls, floors and roofs stay much as they were, with softwood perimeter framing, but instead of screwing and bolting them together, a groove is machined out in both halves of the joint, be it floor to wall or wall-to-roof, and the two parts are joined by gluing in a plywood tongue with a high-tech, two-part waterproof bonding agent.

Elddis says the advantages include negligible increases in costs and production time, a huge increase in joint strength with evenly-distributed stresses, the elimination of water ingress and easy repairability. It should mean an end to black streaks down the bodywork, too!

The new system has been in development for three years in conjunction with Henkel, an industry leader in 'bonding and sealing solutions', whose client list

includes Aston Martin, McLaren and BMW. Not only has it allowed the number of metal fastenings to be reduced by over 90%, but the bonding process has also been applied to fixing the floor to the chassis. Such is the increase in strength that many intermediate timbers have also become redundant, allowing further reductions in weight.

There is no change in external appearance, but all 2013 model year motorhomes and caravans use the new construction, and there is an increase in the bodyshell integrity warranty to 10 years.

Apart from this major technical change, Elddis has launched a new premium tourer range, the Affinity, and introduced several new pieces of equipment. One that many will welcome is the new Whale Watermaster IC, an electronic device that 'intelligently' controls the submersible pump and switches it off when water has run out.

The latest Whale two-way water heater is being fitted to three ranges: the Xplore tourers take the eight-litre model, while Avanté tourers and Autoquest motorhomes are given the 13-litre version.



Above (top): Affinity 574's stylish exterior



Above (bottom): Buccaneer Fluyt's twin single beds

CARAVANS

One brand new range and many new models are the story here. All 2013 tourers carry European Whole Vehicle Type Approval, so at present only the entry-level Xplore models do not.

The Affinity is the new medium luxury range with a high specification, but due to the lighter SoLiD construction, the single-axle models are all under 1,500kg MTPLM. Features include Alde wet central heating, Grade III Thermal Insulation, a GRP underskin, alarm with PIR detection, solar panel and 230V connectivity and external satellite and barbecue points. The whole thing sits on the renowned BPW V-Tec chassis fitted with a Winterhof stabiliser and IDC stability control.

Inside, there's Alde 1/2/3kW radiator central heating, an Avtex seven-way TV with Freeview and DVD player, radio/CD player with iPod and MP3 inputs, 24mm locker construction and dual-fuel hob.

All four models (530, 540, 550 and 574) can sleep four and there's just one price, £18,999. You have a choice of fixed bed, French or island, two single beds or a midships dinette. All have 6ft 3in-long parallel front sofas.

The existing high-luxury ranges, Crusader and Buccaneer, continue with significant improvements, switching to GRP for increased durability of the bodysides, silver in the Buccaneers, matched by a GRP weatherproof skin to the floor underside. Buccaneers share the Affinity cabinetwork, while Crusaders have a lighter finish.

They also boast full LED interior lighting, memory foam mattresses, Seitz dark-tinted privacy windows, the Whale IC water controller, Avtex TV and more 13A sockets than any other maker.

As far as Crusaders are concerned, the six-berth Tempest EB has been revised for 2013. It boasts six-foot-long front sofas together with rear bunks and a midships dinette, for £23,999.

The Buccaneer range has it all, including a 40-litre onboard water tank with dual pump and AutoFill system and, for security, comes with a BPW Diamond wheel lock and Suretrack Thatcham-approved tracking system with first year's subscription included. The jockey wheel has a built-in noseweight indicator and many will appreciate the external hot and cold shower. Internal luxuries include Alde heating that can be controlled from your mobile phone and a motorised Heki sunroof with automatic rain sensor.

A significant new model here is the single-axle Fluyt (pronounced 'flight' and costing £24,229), a rather lovely 2/4-berth with fixed single beds, full-width rear washroom and the usual parallel-settee front lounge.

Meanwhile, entry-level Xplores sport ash-framed roof lockers with positive locking, a new light worktop laminate, redesigned centre chest of drawers, Avtex high-gain aerial for all four radio bands and a door flyscreen as standard.



Above: Affinity 530, featuring Elddis's new body construction

Two of the five models are new this season: six-berth 505 (£13,999) with 6ft front sofas, large centre dinette and rear children's bunks with their own TV area; and the 530 (£13,799), a 3/4-berth with a huge rear washroom and 6ft 3in front sofas.

Finally, the most popular Avanté range gets some improvements and a pair of new models.

Freshly-styled locker fronts, a dual-fuel hob, Avtex aerial and larger bathroom sink are the measure of the changes, while the new models are the single-axle 576 (£16,599) and twin-axle 636 (£18,649), both offering six-berth accommodation. Both boast a midi-dinette that extends to make what Elddis claims is a three-quarter bed big enough for two, while the former has twin bunks with children's TV area and large rear washroom.



Below: inside the Avanté 576

MOTORHOMES

The UK's best-selling motorhome range, the Autoquest, gets many upgrades for 2013 - including new curved locker doors and Avtex high-gain omni-directional aerial. The floor is fully underskinned in GRP, lighting is upgraded to LED throughout with concealed lighting above lockers and wheel trims become standard, not forgetting the new water heater.

The optional Lux Pack is upgraded to include a door flyscreen and leisure battery, while the Heki 2 sunroof is replaced by a Midi Heki. The range goes up to eight models with the addition of the new Autoquest 175, a lowline two-berth with 6ft 3in front settees and a huge rear washroom, the kitchen sporting a tall fridge-freezer. Prices from £33,449 to £37,449.

The four-model Aspire luxury range features a new top 265 model, a four-berth

with rear fixed bed and short front settees/travel seats. Luxury upgrades for 2013 include Alde radiator central heating uprated to 3kW, silver sides now skinned in GRP for added dent resistance, an Avtex seven-way TV with Freeview and DVD player and a GRP floor underskin, while the AutoFill water system has been discarded in favour of a simple water filler cap.

Continuing standard features include cab air-con, reversing camera, cruise control, Thatcham Cat 1 alarm, radio/CD player with MP3 and Bluetooth inputs and alloy wheels with a steel spare.

The range topper leaves £1 change out of £50k, with the 240/255 at £48,999 and the 215 at £43,899.



Above: the Peugeot-based Autoquest gets a number of upgrades for 2013



Left: classy 265 extends the impressive Aspire line-up for the new season

Top left: Affinity 530 kitchen

Top right: Xplore 505 interior