

Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – February 2019

Spend since last report: £11.99. Total hours labour since last report: 40.7

Despite the snow and the cold, progress has continued. Yes, I have spent over 40 hours in the garage since Christmas Day including eight consecutive days at one point (and bought some sanding disks). My back issues are not solved but I now have an osteopath who has diagnosed something different than the physiotherapist (see previous magazines for details). Various manipulations, traction, exercises and walking are all helping. Things are moving in the right direction. Speaking of which, I have news from the garage on Eric.

As the editorial deadline approached last time, it spurred me on, and the main cargo floor was finally fitted. This left a series of missing vertical pieces that connect down to that floor from the inner real wheelarches and that funny sloping panel between the arches.

Starting with the one that was easiest to access by request of my back, just behind the sliding door, I took an empty pizza box and started back on the CAD once more – cardboard aided design. Sufficiently funny to use the acronym again! Then traced that to a flat piece of steel and shaped it before welding it in vertically in position.



The picture was taken after the first rust proofing paint coat went on, not the last! It isn't perfect, as I am still working out how to identify Eric's good metal from his bad. If I take off too little, I end up blowing holes in the extremely thin stuff. Once enough primer was down and the floor had its black

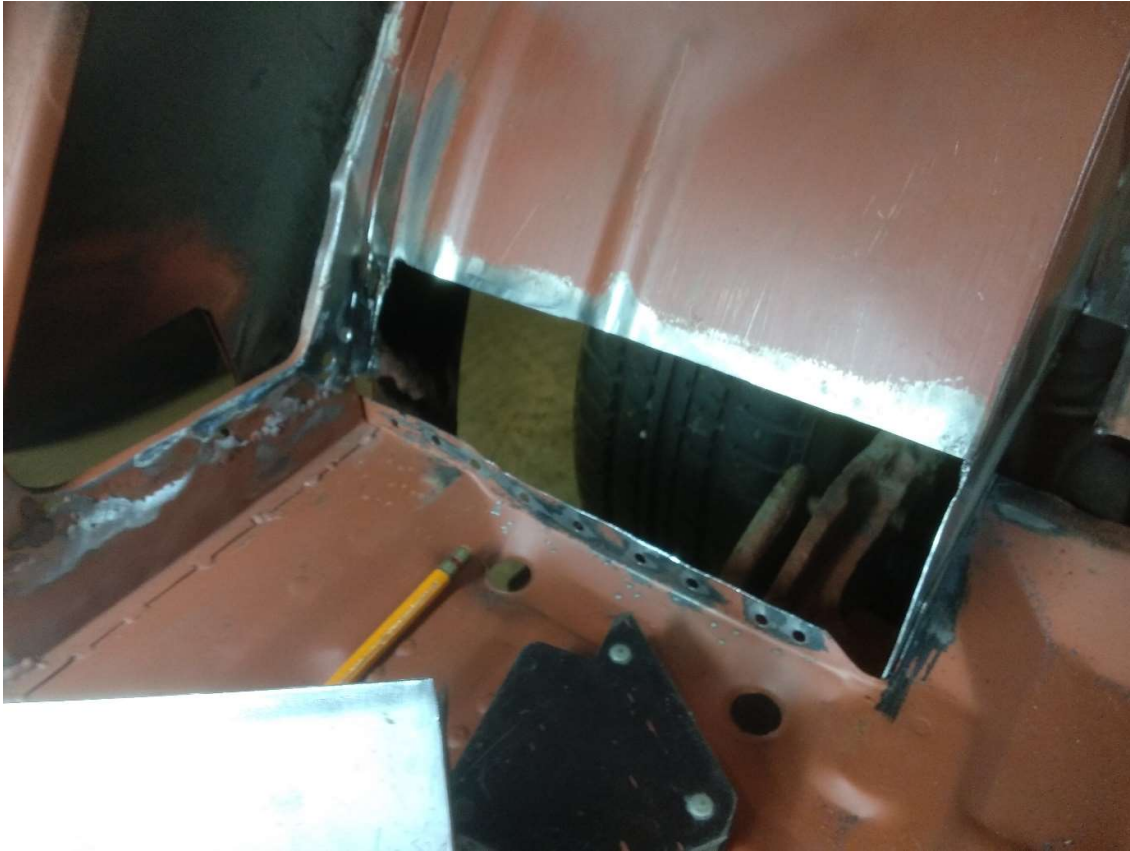
transit paint removed, you can see the missing metal that needs shaping and fitting, which sounds trivial!



Offside rear wheelarch did not need shaping for the first piece, which makes things faster!



The difference in colour between the top original metal and the infill piece is the galvanized coating of the replacement steel, hopefully it will help the longevity of this high impact area. The top join is butt welded to keep it completely flat. The wheelarch then joins the floor where the floor is folded vertical and the two pieces were spot welded. MUCH faster than butt welding but not always possible. Now a complex piece:



The front curve of the rear driver's side wheelarch. See the folded edge of the floor and the holes for the spot welds, that should not be too complex but how far under the floor do you go when you have no way of seeing the original? Then how far outside to go when the piece connecting to the outer (visible) wheelarch panel is also missing due to rust? Once those decisions are made, the new piece needs to curve as it goes upwards with folded flaps to join to the previously pictured piece and similarly at the other side and there needs to be those little strengthening dimples too.

Again, more pizza box cardboard was cut and shaped, laid flat on the Zintec steel, cut with an angle grinder cutting disk, final-shaped with some tin snips / steel cutting scissors and sanded to remove rough edges. Then put on the vice and the indentations made to get the dimples. Further details on shaping metal and the simple tools required are covered in the "Poor man's metal fabricating kit" web article that will be published on May 31st 2019 as I have so many other articles that I am trying to publish to help out you lovely lot!



The fabricating of that piece probably took 90 minutes including the cardboard and the hammering of the dimples. Welding it in took similar as the top was butt welded since the original would have been a continuous run of metal all the way down and butt welding needs to go slowly due to heat build up and then needs grinding. Once ground back, I then put a light on the far side, in this case inside the wheelarch, and look for pinholes in the join and weld those up before applying some paint. Turned out nice again (nod to George Formby who I hope will be heard at a club camp again this year, much

fun!).



About 8 more hours sorted the passenger side in two pieces. Yes, I will sort out the glob of weld at the right of that curved wheelarch in due course! The primer is covering the spot welds where it joins to the floor and will be ground back but I was going to be busy working and entertaining for a week and I wanted to keep the air away.



I knew that the C-post that separates the sliding door from the rear window was good down to nearly floor level and was entirely missing below that where it needs to join solidly to the middle sill. This is a structural piece and needs to be strong. Two pieces of roughly quarter circles were welded in and a cover bent around their outside was added. Very pleased with the results!



Until I remembered that I need to put the outer visible panel on there and I'm not sure it will fit over that one. Oops. Because this is new steel, I should be able to use a cutting disk to reshape the quarter circles to something smaller, which will cut off the cover. Once trimmed, a new cover can be cut, shaped and welded in.

Finally managed to be fit enough for the work in between the wheelarches. This was a mess of rot and is still not fully complete but at least the main strength has been added joining that panel that has been floating for two years onto the new floor. You cannot get access underneath to weld as per the original and there are 3 main ways to achieve a similar result.



Not exactly pretty or original but it will be strong and once covered in primer, top coat (white), a wooden floor and a rock n roll bed, it should not be much of an issue.

Next jobs are to finish the far left of the last picture to join that panel to the offside wheelarch, finish any final detailing and celebrate the inside cargo floor completion. Spring is coming, much planning of events with the club and excitement about making progress on Eric. See you next time!