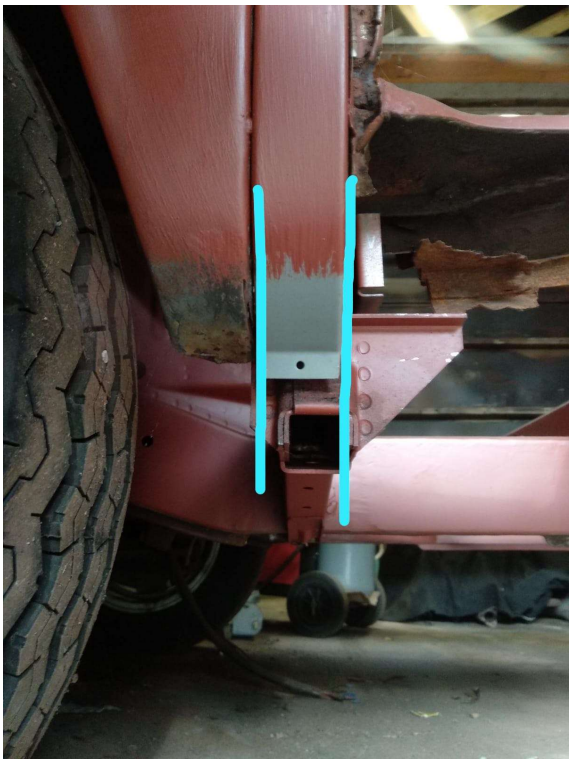
Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – October 2018

Spend since last report: £1,600. Total hours labour since last report: 62.50

B-post. Behind the front doors and in front of the sliding door / matching other side panel is a pillar called the B post. It is pretty much a hoop of steel that runs from the chassis rail on a T1 to T4 (and maybe later, I have never checked) outwards, up the side of the doors and into the roof. Underneath the vehicle it forms a section strong enough to jack up your vehicle. Maybe. Therefore it all needs to be in good order, made of steel not body filler or rust and importantly needs to be connected at the join from underneath to the side.

Eric's front cross member that starts this hoop runs across behind the front seats with jacking points below and SHOULD meet the edge of the B post.



Unfortunately it was 10mm away from lining up and therefore I had fitted the cross member incorrectly. Since that one is parallel to the other 5 cross members, potentially they were all incorrectly placed as well. My heart sank. I enlisted some professional help from a talented friend who just happens to have been restoring VW campers for 30 years professionally and after a good deal of investigating and measuring, we were able to conclude that my cross member was correctly placed. My heart lifted. Unfortunately, my wheel arch, sliding door threshold plate and bottom 12 inches of B post were all in the wrong place. My heart sank. The angle grinder makes short work of removing the incorrectly places pieces, but that leaves a lot of work to put it all back correctly.

Now that all of the wrong metal was missing, including the heavy angle iron added 2 years ago for strength but in completely the wrong place, we were able to add in some good new metal in the right place. Firstly, we removed the threshold place that you step on when entering the sliding door, we were then able to add the inner sill, then the middle sill. With those welded in place, the bulge can be fitted.

The bulge panel is really just a flat sheet of metal with a dent for the feet of the bus passengers but the bulge does add strength to that panel. That panel forms the front of the B post. Then a “cover” goes on the outside to be visible and the rear side of the square section and the inside piece of the square were fabricated from sheet steel and hammered with the pressings required. Finally a flap coming into the van along the rear of the bulge was folded and this new metal in the shape of a W was welded in. See the spot welds on the back of the bulge panel, attempting to replicate the factory original.

We also filled in the hole above the bulge to replace the previous rot and the top of the bulge was whacked repeatedly to make the pressing just above the bulge. It isn't perfect, but is sufficiently close that once the primer and paint are on, it should not be visible.

With that metal all looking good, the threshold plate could go back in over the top of the inner and middle sill, the wheel arch could go back in too. Then the passenger seat floor was joined to the back of the seat. All of this was done with a porta-power levering the B post straight from top to bottom as the issue was a sagging van making the bottom of the B post 100mm off true. It is just a big gas ram to hold the metal square as the sections are welded together to stay in shape.

After about 4 man days, the old threshold plate, along with a new bulge, new inner and middle sill and some newly cut and fitted sheet steel are all in Eric, he is a lot stronger and it is all in the right place. 4 man days is a lot less than the 62.5 hours noted at the top, more next time. Stay dirty everyone.