

Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – August 2021

Spend since last report: £471. Total hours labour since last report: 31.3

Recap

For those who had forgotten and for those who have joined as new members recently, I will start with a recap. My name is Nick, I am 50 and since I was a teenager, I have always wanted to restore an old vehicle. My previous experience and skill until I bought this first project was minor tinkering with renovating a set of brake disks, and replacing an alternator. My wife Lorna bought a 1972 Volkswagen called Poppy back in 2011 and that gave us the bus bug and we joined the committee of this club back in 2016, you may have met us on the club stand at some point.

Six years ago this month, I put in a bid on a 1973 converted panel van online having never seen it and I knew nothing about which is a good one to buy. My offer was accepted and Eric the Viking came to live with us. Named after my comedy hero Eric Morecambe, the panel van came with a plastic full length roof called a Viking roof and the most famous Viking being Eric, it all seemed to work and Eric was born. At that point I owned minimal tools and had never used a welder. I went online, started reading, bought a book on restoring Volkswagen Bay windows and started having a go. If you try woodwork and make a mess of it, you throw it away or glue new bits on. When working with metal, if it goes wrong, you take the angle grinder, chop out the wrong part and have another go. No-one knows! Well they know if you write about it at length in a club magazine.

The more recent story

Apologies for the delay in further work, you may have heard of this COVID thing. I spent the first month of lockdown in the garage every day then I was asked to help dig some footings in the garden. 6 months later, every weekend had been spent building walls, foundations, a sun terrace and a lot of new lawn planted. Winter came, spring came, then more gardening and Eric was left languishing. Finally in July, I decided to get back to the grind (literally).

Pull up your drink of choice and join me on my next journey of discovery about how badly treated Eric was under previous ownership.

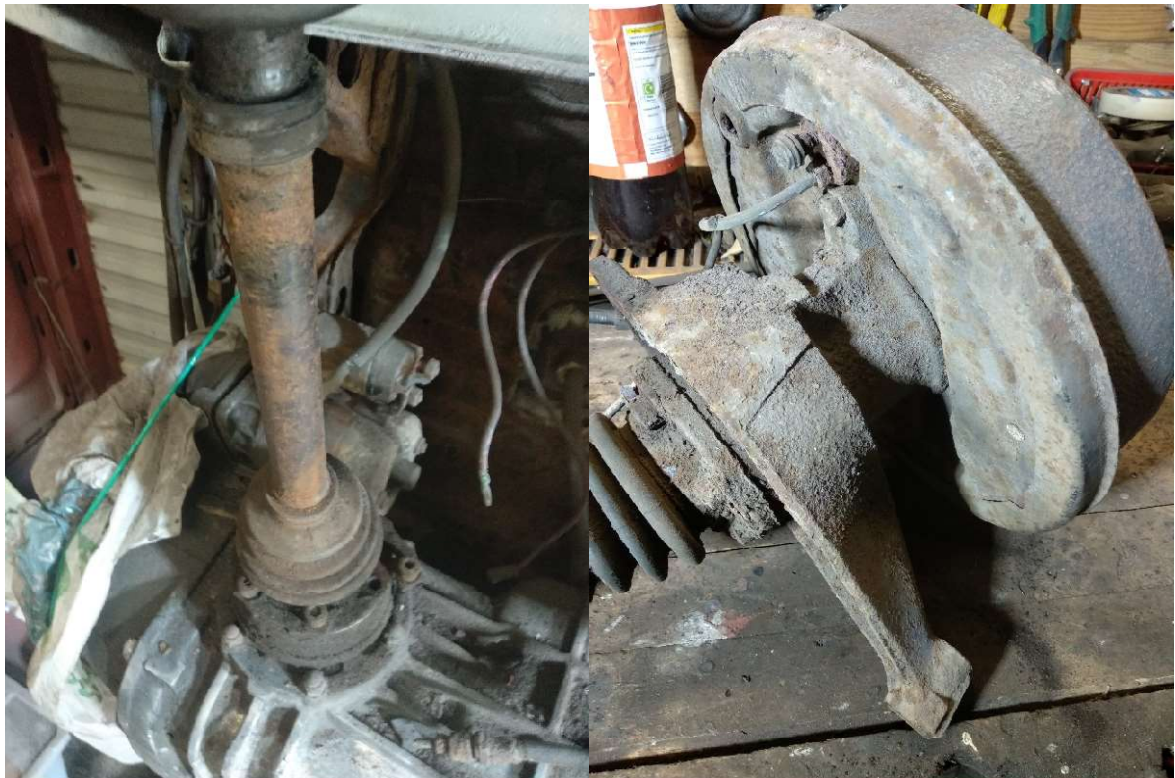
Rear brakes

Rear brakes on my Bay are drum, and with Eric spending a lot of time rotting outdoors, they were in a shocking state. The castle nut in the middle of the rear wheel was so rusted to the end of the hub that no amount of leverage would shift it but an hour with an angle grinder got it off in pieces! Then the drum refused to budge until a lot of heat and persuasion on the bench freed it off. Inside looked ok at first but a CV joint bolt was jammed and needed cutting off which meant that I had to chop through the brake back plate to access it!



Rear suspension

The rear offside was dismantled last year, stripped and primed. That left the driveshaft (whatever that is) and the CV joints (vaguely heard of them) attached to the gearbox somehow. In other words, I was vaguely familiar with the concept but that was about it. Everything was filthy covered in rot, rust, grease, grot and generally in need of love.



Front suspension

Waiting on parts deliveries from Just Kampers (don't forget your club discount), I turned my attention to the front suspension and brakes. Calipers are expensive to replace and generally only need a good clean, reassembly and new rubbers on the ends of the pistons. I did that job 15 or so years ago on my Matra Bagheera as the only job I really did on it. Quite pleased with the bright green caliper paint finish and you can follow 2 articles on how to do it that are on our club web site (thanks Jonathan!) as well.



Starter motor

The starter motor was in the way of getting to the underside of the fuel tank to restore that, so I unbolted it, separated the two cylinders and cleaned them before spraying them black.



Underside

Eric has been on his side now for 20 months and I finally got him ready for the topcoat on his bottom. I chose to use L90D synthetic enamel as I wanted hard wearing and easy to apply since I am a novice.



Front suspension

Attached to the front beam are the front suspension arms. Pressed into the tops of 2 of these on each side of the Bus are the ball joints. I dutifully borrowed a ball joint press, inserted the arm and ball joint but could not work out how to press it out. I tried various options, I made a little jig out of 10mm steel railing, I watched Youtube videos and eventually with the help of friends, I found out the trick. The ball of the ball joint sits in the cup of the joint, if you angle grind the shoulders off the ball joint, you can remove the ball, once that is done, you angle grind from the top, cutting just the top of the ball joint and not the arm holding it.





Once the top of the ball joint is ground through into a hole with the angle grinder, you need to cut it with a hacksaw to split the ball joint cup into 4 pieces being careful not to cut the arm at all. It is back breakingly tiring, hot and dusty. Each one took an hour and I have the other 2 on the other side later this year – if anyone has any faster ideas do please get in touch! FINALLY the 2 ball joints were clear of the arms allowing those to be cleaned up ready for top coat and with their ball joint holes ground back of dirt and rust ready for the new ball joints to be pressed in using the borrowed press.

More another time, hope to see many of you at Busfest!

Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – October 2021

Spend since last report: £427. Total hours labour since last report: 52

Last time I had finished the offside suspension and the brakes were in progress. This time I've managed to do rather a lot!

In order: The front suspension and front brake is back together on the offside, the gearbox is out, the underside of the fuel tank was then accessible to get its rust removed.



The steering box has mostly been cleaned up, so has the gearbox and Eric is back on his wheels.



A large chunk of the current work was the cab floor. The driver's side was pretty ropey and the outer half needed replacing. I chose to remove more good metal than was really necessary to give a straight line of seam weld to reduce the visible change. I was also able to rust proof the tops of the chassis rails at the same time. The passenger side was less rotten and was a smaller patch plus a final rectangle in the middle just behind the handbrake and we have good strong metal all welded in.



Then primer time but my spray gun had a fault and it looked rubbish and will need smoothing before top coat. Nonetheless rather improved!



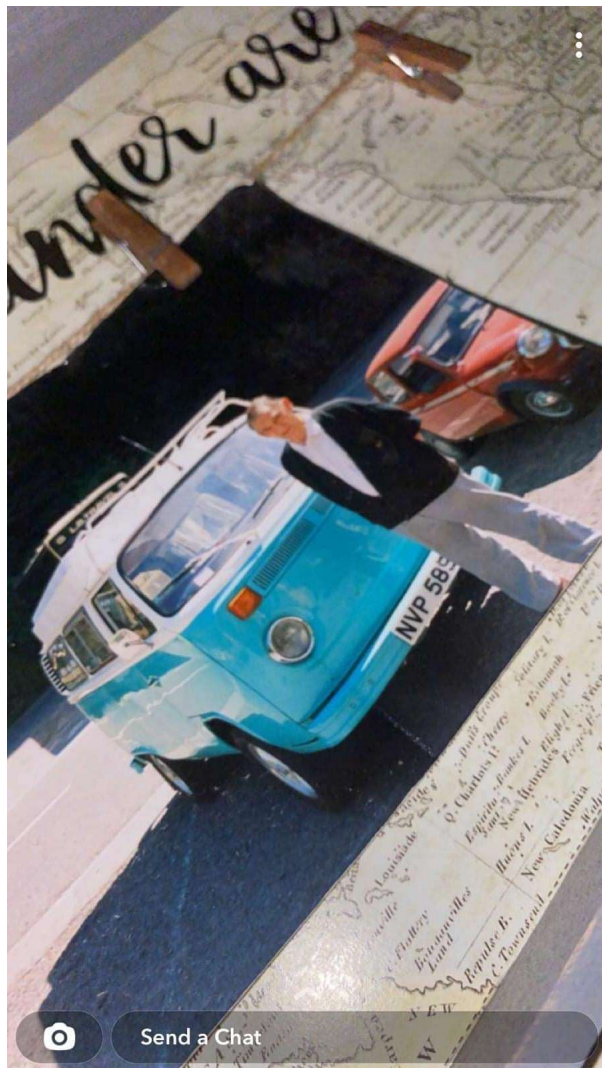
The next part of the project is going to be interesting! The offside middle panel opposite the sliding door is a fixed panel. Several years ago I replaced the lower part of that panel and the outer sill with a cheat panel that is all joined together. It looks ok but the top of the original panel had been damaged in an accident many years ago and there was a lot of filler. I also cut the edge off the lower replacement panel as it was slightly too large but welding that cut in looked rubbish.



I had bought a replacement lower sliding door panel which is the same on both sides and I picked up a new outer sill at Busfest because otherwise it was £17 for the sill and £7 postage!

Outer sill joins the middle sill which is new metal, so it was quite a quick win. More on this next time as I have a plan so cunning that it could be a fox who has just been made Professor of Cunning at Cambridge University.

Talk about a small world – only 15 more owners to find and I will know the whole history.



Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – December 2021

Spend since last report: £294. Total hours labour since last report: 12.2

What is the key upside of our camper vans over motorhomes? The Type 2, from the first split screen, the Bay, the T25/T3/Wedge/Brick, T4, T5 and even the T6. They can all be driven on a car licence, because they are all small enough to be about the same footprint as a standard car. No need for special car parking spaces.

What is the key downside of our little camper vans over motorhomes? Space inside.

Have you ever been a little frustrated at permanently having to move things around? Or finding that the cupboard or drawer has something in front of it or on top? Trying to navigate the tiny floor space past a loved one?

In general, across all models that are termed the Type 2, we have a similar layout. Seating at the front, sometimes that swivels, a seat towards the rear and maybe boot space behind that. In between all of that is about 5 feet or 1.5 metres each way of floor for the living quarters. That gives you maybe a buddy seat, the sink, the fridge, the cooker, the toilet. Perhaps the removable dining table on a pole, or a cupboard but not much else as there simply is not the room.



During an evening conversation with a T5 owning friends, he mused that it would be great if our little vans had a sliding side like the huge expensive motorhomes and so an idea was planted. Fast forward several months, a lot of thinking and some hours experimenting in the garage. The non-sliding door panel can be seen in some models as a traditional sliding door, sliding backwards and called a double slider. Therefore, Volkswagen are happy that this does not impact the strength of the vehicle and that

is good enough for me. As noted in the last write up, Eric's non sliding panel has seen some accident damage and the repair was not great by me a few years ago and was removed. With that composite side panel and sill gone, I added a new outer sill.



Some extra heavy duty kitchen drawer runners were purchased and the original idea of two runners and two roller bearings has now become four runners at the bottom and two at the top. These runners will slide the external panel of the vehicle including the middle window out from the van. To make it secure and weatherproof, new steel will be added to form the floor on top of the runners, sides of the structure and a roof. The entire unit will be on an

electric ram and the entire kitchen will be in there.

In summary, the floor space taken up by the fridge, hob, sink and associated cupboards will move away from the van giving back all of that floor to the inside. In addition, with easy access below the sink, the water bottle can then live outside giving more cupboard space inside as well.

An item called a linear actuator was ordered, which is the gas ram that pushes and pulls. Not expensive and then I also got the controller for it... Effectively an in button and an out button and it stops at any point along the way. Sheet steel picked up from the local ironmongery is hopefully big enough and the project started.

The two outermost runners are within an inch of the B post and C post to give strength at the edges. Then a further pair on the van floor between those runners but only six inches apart which means that one is just under the other side of the fridge and the other is just under the corresponding place for the other cupboard. Under the centre of the whole unit will be this actuator to push and pull everything. The slide out tray then received a little box to hold the worm screw of the actuator plus the whole tray had some strengthening lines pressed into it and the sides folded up to attach to the pod sides in due course.



Now we have a working plan. A tray sits on runners and slides out of the van. Attached to that is the outer wall of the van complete with the window. Attached to both of those are vertical sides either side of the window and the whole thing has a roof that will be inclined not flat, to help water run off.

The tray is the easy piece. Finding exactly where it does against the outer wall when the outer wall is not fitted is a little trickier.



Trying to shape the sides as the outer wall is not flat is quite fun, and the sides need a 90 degree flare to attach to the outer panel as well. After much wasted time, I finally made a template from wood of the inside wall and transferred that to the flat sheet steel.

Having four runners means that to get them working they need to be perfectly parallel for the tray to sit on them. Lots of adjustments there, plus making brackets to attach them to the floor and the tray plus clearance for everything to move.

It is not finished by a long way, but the kitchen takes up around five square feet (3.5 feet by 1.5 feet) or half a square metre (1 metre by 0.5 metres). When your floor space is about 25 square feet / 2.25 square metres, you can potentially gain 25%. That's a lot of floor space.

Next time, I hope to be able to report that the majority of the box is built. Courtesy of eBay, I have an inexpensive fridge already, and I managed to get a three ring new cooker with glass lid as well for a great price too. "All" that I need now is to assemble it all and hope that it glides in and out!