

Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – October 2024

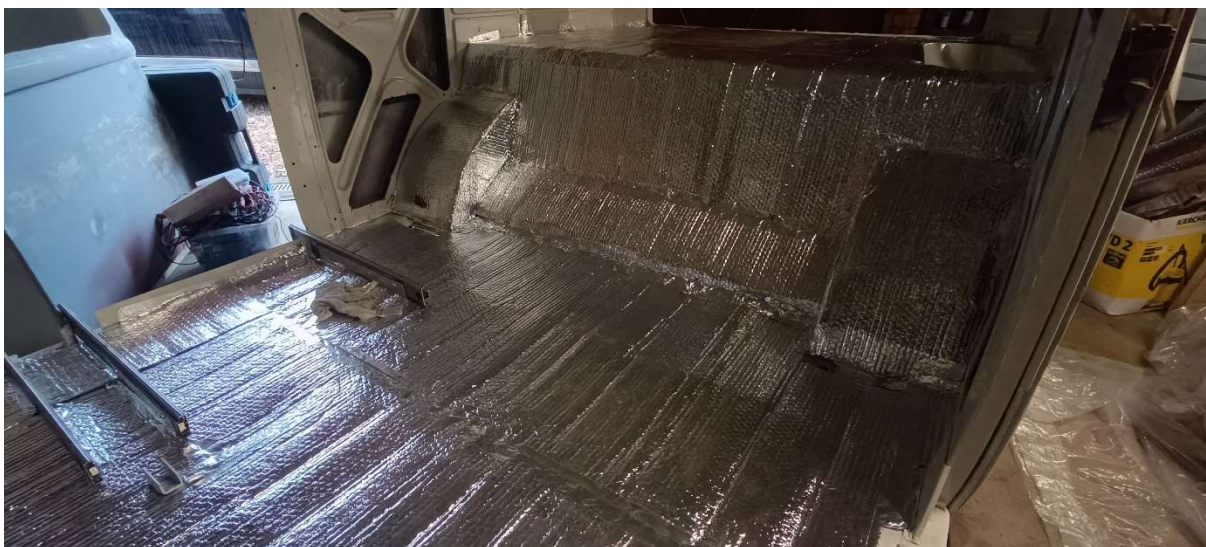
Spend since last report: £440. Total hours labour since last report: 72.2

Yes, 72 man-hours spent working on Eric in just under 2 months, averaging just over 80 minutes every day of the week. Huge progress.

Front seats. The seat backs never received the steel cable around the edges, but I still had the reel. This was welded to the zigzag serpentine and the springs making the seat back look much more like a seat back! At the same time, I was not happy with the mountings for both base and back. I welded a new piece of heavy box section to both B posts, added a captive nut inside and added a hole to the upright for an M8 knurled bolt to hold the uprights in place. A further M8 knurled bolt on each side holds the seat back to the upright. Much stronger and not much extra time to flip things over.

Underneath the rear windows you will find covers for the sliding door track and these sit into V channels. Eric's ones had long since rusted away, I bought some years ago which are somewhere in the garage and had to buy yet more. These are just a one metre long, flat piece of metal folded in half to make a channel. I drilled holes in the front and smaller ones in the back to weld the channel to the van. This was a pain, and the clamp slipped causing the first one to move by 2mm. Removing it was more of a pain. The next morning, I slapped my forehead. For the second channel, I drilled the holes into the van below the window, clamped the channel to the van and welded from inside. Sometimes the obvious solution appears just after the horse has bolted but they are on now!

The whole cargo area received a coat of L90D Pastel White topcoat using my lovely spray gun after a while covering the entire garage in plastic sheeting – spray paint gets everywhere like a mist! The end result of spraying two-pack is wonderful, it just goes so smooth, but you do need to wear a decent mask. After the paint had fully cured, I then added heat insulation (foil-based roof insulation) to the cargo and rear plus sound and heat insulation (bitumen based) to the cab area. Everything was suddenly silver and uniform.



On top of this into the cargo area went some 18mm thick ply with bolts from under the van through the factory holes into threaded inserts in the ply to hold it down. In the slide out

kitchen pod I used 5.5mm ply to keep the weight down after adding heat insulation there as well. With the slide out hinges all cleaned of dust, dirt and metal grinding dust from several years, I applied new grease and bolted them in place. A friend came over and we lifted the pod onto the runners, bolted it in place and slid the pod into the van. It stopped 6 inches short and refused to budge. The nuts protruding were thought to be the issue and were swapped for rivets which popped off during the next trial. Nearly 10 hours were spent on diagnosing this and it turned out that one of the runners was just under 3mm from where it should be stopping everything from sliding home. I could have ground off the bracket from the cargo floor, welded it, repainted around it and under the floor where the heat would have inevitably burned off the paint. Instead, I added 3 small washers to the bolt and everything slid home, albeit with the grinding noise of metal against metal – the side of the pod rubs on the C post now! Grr.

I was planning it anyway, and the fix was to add a guide wheel on each side of the pod to maintain the distance between the pod and the B-post and another guide wheel on the C-post. Now the metal of the pod stays parallel. To improve the strength of the pod that is effectively a box with the inside face missing, I added the kitchen worktop and wooden sides underneath for the cupboard. Once the front goes on and is glued and bracketed in place, it will be a lot stronger. I even managed to cut out the worktop holes for the sink and cooker unit.



With my parents coming to visit, I cleaned the dashboard, mounted the car stereo and the glove box lid, dismantled the instrument panel, washed it in the dishwasher and put it back together with clean glass and put it in. Looks fabulous and much more like a van now!



That level of procrastination meant that I could put things off no longer. I slid myself under the van, into the engine bay and removed the fuel tank and its associated pipes. It took some wrestling, but it came out eventually and I slid across the garage floor and took out a surprisingly good fuel tank. I am not chancing things and sourced a brand-new German quality tank though. The tank sender unit was removed, and I followed the club article on testing the sender – either the sender has failed or my trusty multimeter has failed. Close examination found the metal fingers that send the resistance to the gauge had rusted and snapped. The sender was confined to the bin and a new one ordered along with new filler neck pipe and new soft pipe for the joints for the emissions control system.

With everything out of the engine bay, there was some remedial welding needed in a few minor areas, some smoothing out, rustproofing, priming and top coating again in L90D. I also did the firewall and the inside of the engine lid as well.

What a transformation!



Again, I slid into the engine bay and got the new tank into place, attached the sender unit wires, pushed the new soft pipes onto the emissions pipes and connected the filler pipe from the side of the van to the tank. There was swearing. Don't wear anything warm when doing

that, you'll sweat buckets. Don't wear a watch or other wrist adornments, you'll get stuck. Don't do this in front of impressionable children, they will learn new words! "Push both ends of the new rubber pipe on and tighten the jubilee clips" plus the little rubber joints took me 2 hours!

With the engine bay clean, I can now start putting the wiring into the right places and maybe test the circuits. I still have no idea what I am doing, but I am starting to think that I might actually do this.