

Eric The Viking – A restoration in many parts – Part 1 - August 2015

My finger was poised on the button, it was 5.20pm and we were supposed to have pulled away at 4.30.

The van had been packed for a weekend in Wiltshire and the endless summer VW show in Basingstoke. I had driven it to the office in the morning ready for a getaway before the M4 snarled up with weekend trippers. 4.30 sped past like a modern car as I ran slowly towards the end of my day like an asthmatic 1584 going up an incline. My fiancée joined me at my desk, ready to head off for our planned “sitting in a tin box in a field”, the food and champagne was in the fridge, the wine was in the main storage and the fuel tank was full. Four years of steady restoration, improvements and practice makes for a slick weekend of relaxation.

I showed her the classified advert. 1973 bay window. Green and white. Well the photos look more like grey undercoat and rust. Good price if you like a monumental amount of hard work. I lingered. It would be a great project and a full restoration is something that I have wanted to do for over 25 years. Oh well, a quick and cheeky low offer, head off for the weekend and wait until Monday for the offer to be rejected. Click. Erm, Honey.... it was on an auto offer and I just bought me a project.



That is how we came to get Eric. Ok so he is a rag top but the rag isn't really doing much, seemingly he has been outdoors a long time in all weathers with leaks inside all over. He now sports a Viking roof hence the name of the most famous Viking not to mention my comedy hero Eric Morecambe. The car transporter chap got him home although the initial viewing in the rust nearly caused me to pass out. I have never done welding or panel removal. Or anything much beyond a small amount of engine work, some electrics and the wood interior. And that, ladies and gentlemen of the jury is how Eric came to live with us. This could be a longer story than war and peace you know.

September 2015

We ventured out after a week of drizzly rain to see what we had bought.



New carpet rolled up, dozens of new kitchen floor tiles, wood screwed to the wall and the back of the driver's seat divider. Rust. Lots and lots of rust. The picture shows the driver's side back window up into the roof and the back door hinge mechanism with daylight above the glass. Once it was empty, we started sanding paintwork to see what was underneath which is a mix of rust, rot, grot, filler and in places some metal. Sliding door removed and on the bench as the easiest bit to do in the garage. Passenger door lock rekeyed to take the ignition key which was easier than expected although fiddly. Bumper off and starting the strip of that back to bare metal too. The main battery tray is almost non-existent with a block of wood the only thing that would keep a battery there. Offside whole corner needs an awful lot of work on the whole panel and can't be saved. Nearside rear corner only needs the lower half and since I'm at it, I'll change the battery tray on that side too ready for a leisure battery. With the sliding door lower outside repair panel that makes 5 new panels ordered on the weekend that Just Kampers had their sale.

A battery borrowed from the other van and after roughly adding the air filter bought from eBay and checking there was some oil in the engine, we carefully turned on the ignition. Not a dashboard light in sight, no throttle cable but enormous amounts of surprise when the starter turned him over easily first time and a dip of the throttle with a finger under the carb and he started second time albeit as rough and lumpy as his owner. That is a job for the winter then.

Into the garage and attacking the sliding door with the sander taking it completely back to bare metal, YouTube helping on how to remove the glass without breaking it. All mechanisms into paint stripper due to some Herbert deciding they would look better painted badly in white. Progress made, welding course found, protective gear purchased and champing at the bit – you know what, I might just be able to do this.