

Erik the Viking – a restoration in many parts – 21st August 2016

Spend since last report: £288. Total hours labour since last report: 12.75.

Our other van Poppy has moved to the car port, whilst Eric has taken refuge in the garage and has been for a couple of operations. He lost both front doors which are heavier than you think, all the windows and rubbers and some of the floor in the cargo area. Armed with a trusty angle grinder and a supply of cutting disks, with the Haynes manual at the ready, the work started. No genies popped out, only sparks and it was hot, noisy work.

Your bay window has two main chassis rails under the middle of each front seat heading back reasonably straight to the back by the engine. On top of those in the cargo area are beams called top hats from side to side, about eighteen inches apart, and the back one is level with the front of the rear wheel arch. At the back of the front wheel arch and front of the back wheel arch are similar support beams. Under those beams are the outriggers and jacking points. Making it all into a square are the sills: inner sills on each side are welded to the ends of the top hats then middle sills for strength and outer sills that are the ones you see at the bottom of your bus.

At least that is the theory.

The floor between the top hats was cut out into rectangles, and then the floor that was welded to the top hats was drilled out. Top tip – spot-weld drill bits are annoying, an air chisel would have been better. Two of the top hats were removed and the third, rearmost one has lost the outer six inches or so. Since you cannot buy just the ends, it will probably also come out. Then came the chopping out of the sills. Removing the top hats ended up with a hammer causing poor Eric to rain rust from multiple places underneath! Both support beams feel like papier mache but used to be metal and need replacing. All outriggers and jacking points are in a similar condition. The nearside chassis rail has started to go where the front support section has rotted away, too.



The nearside sill was nearest the work area - keep me covered, I'm going in! Chop off the outer sill which is only a trim panel it says. Check. Then cut horizontally through the middle sill from the outside and the inner sill from the inside. Erm. The middle sill is missing barring the front six inches and even that is frillier than my Friday night outfit. The inner sill is there for the most part but at crucial points is either filler, fibreglass, underseal or holes - rarely good metal - and given my size it is not easy to get to the right angle to chop it, but progress is being made.

Once the nearside sills are fully removed, the whole lot will be replaced barring the top of the sliding door track and the step that it sits under. This is going to bring much needed strength once the chassis rail work starts.



Tools have been added to the collection including a compressor, an air chisel, an air spot-weld remover, an air joggler to replace the rubbish one previously reported and lots of connectors, just yet to fire it up. The main consumable is the 1mm cutting disks which can last only minutes on some sections. Courtesy of one of the many web sites, Eric has also acquired some chassis repair sections.

Frustratingly slow progress due to working long hours on the day job, which restricts the restoration time, and having to read what on earth you do next. Rust and dust everywhere. Loving it apart from the next imminent work. Need to buy some more parts.... nearside sills, offside sills, top hats and support sections plus the whole floor. Now where did I put the padlock key for my wallet?