

Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – February 2017

Spend since last report: £0. Total hours labour since last report: 19

The winter months are long and dark. More to the point they are cold and damp, so the enthusiasm for restoration remains but the enthusiasm is dampened by the erm...damp. After a 3 month hiatus of any form of warmth, dryness or renovation, the overalls were donned once more and work started again on that nearside chassis rail. Before we can go any further, we need that solid base on which to build. A section of chassis about 18 inches long was rotten but if you just chop it out the bus will fall apart! To get around this we left the best bit which was the top and chopped the sides and the bottom off (see first picture on the state of it). Then we bought a new chassis section, chopped off the top to fit and welded the side and bottom in, now we have some strength along the whole length. Then we removed the rusty top from the bus and then welded that new top back on to the side it had arrived with. I think you'll agree that the newly red undercoated chassis looks a bit better than before!



Of course, it isn't quite as easy as that and around the torsion tube was a bit frilly and needed strength too. I bought a 300mm square piece of 2.5mm steel and we borrowed a metal folding machine off a mate - it looks just like a mangle for those of you that remember them. We ran this through and through making it more and more curved until it was nearly a 120mm cylinder and started welding that to the torsion tube in sections where the chassis will meet it. Then weld the chassis to it. Then ultimately we'll fit some covering metal to make it all look pretty and protect it from the weather. Next job was to complete the missing fourth side of the box section since you can't buy this piece of the chassis and have to make it from bits that are similar. Cardboard templates at the ready, transfer the final shape to the new steel and start to weld that in.

Much grinding of welds has to happen and I use four items a lot!! I have my grinding disk, the hard almost stone disk that sands metal very quickly but is not subtle. Then I have the cutting disk about the size of a CD that cuts neatly. Then I have a sanding disk that smooths as a final go on welding. Lastly I have the wire cup brush that is brilliant at getting paint and rust off. With just one grinder I am constantly changing disks, which does waste quite a bit of time and it is a bulky piece of kit that is a bit big for the current area with so many bits of metal in the way. Oh for a vehicle turner and a larger garage!

The welding practice continues and I hope that the welding quality is improving. Horsepower of a different variant loomed again with the imminent birthday of a friend and hearing his wife note that he rather likes my welly boot hanger, I decided to make him one plus a mud remover and welly remover combo - a lot faster than I made the first ones! You stand on the lower horse shoe, remove the welly from your heel with the open end of the upper horse shoe and the flat metal in the middle can be used to remove mud. It won't make me rich as I spent about 4 hours on the two pieces.



Further progress on the planter for my lovely wife as well. That is almost finished and has been undercoated but do I chop a little section to straighten up the front (it had to be the front didn't it?) which got too hot and warped? I'd like to point out that I mean the planter not my lovely wife. Only the outside is being painted, the inside is galvanised steel which won't rust and mild steel welding that will rust so I'll put paint or sealant down the edges.



With the weather due to warm up, the days getting longer and the season due to start soon, I'm as eager as ever to carry on welding or sitting in fields with T2OC members drinking wine and sharing the passion for old vehicles. The one downside there is that after the AGM last year where the fuel pump packed up on the 1972 crossover called Poppy, she's still in disgrace facing the wall. If we've treated her to a new engine, fixed the errant flywheel, given her a full service and all sorts of other fettling, the least she can do is travel more than 15 miles without breaking down!

Until a field beckons and we have a fuel pump that works, this is your correspondent in a damp-ish garage alternately donning welding mask or ear defenders and grinding glasses signing off and heading outside to do manly things with rusty metal.