

## Eric the Viking - A restoration in many parts – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016

The trouble with welding is that it looks like it should be easy. All that metal at home, in your car, on the handrails in the office. Nice and neat. You buy a welder (a minefield in itself), the tools, helmet, gas and other paraphernalia that goes with it. You angle grind rusty metal. You sand the metal until it is nice and clean before discovering that you got it too hot and it is now a bit warped.

Then you try to apply the nice smooth metal wire out of the nice, smooth welding gun onto the nice smooth metal of the sliding door. Wearing heavy gloves, a visor that means you can't see and basically you are wrestling a snake, in the dark trying to get its teeth through the eye of a needle.

By now, you may be detecting that the welding isn't going as smoothly as the metal to which I want to attach it. Since Christmas I have been keen to get things moving forwards. The sliding door has had the lower half angle grinded / ground / grinded, smoothed, I've even got fed up and etch primed the parts that were sanded to make at least SOME progress.

The lower two inches inside the door was missing so some random bits of metal were added and welded. The new outer skin was offered up, measured, ground down and welded. About half of the length of the join is solid, the other half has a hole and any additional work just warps the area and makes the hole bigger. A chance meeting at a local air cooled club gave me the information about a juggler. What's a juggler I hear both of you asking - I'd never heard of one. Cut out the rot and grot with your grinder, take this glorified pair of mole grips and move the edge of your new hole back by 1mm to make a flange allowing the new metal to sit flush with a goodly overlap. Then it has a hole punch attachment for the new metal so that you can plug weld it all in place. Brilliant. Well, apart from the hole punch part not working properly, but we are making progress.

Next up comes the bus itself, now under a custom built car port to keep the worst of the weather off him. The alloys are those cheap repro Fuchs alloys that look like a five leaf clover but they need refurbishing and the tyres are so bad they have gone flat so the bus won't move. Do you think that it is the wheel that is in the open air or the one that is the most difficult to access up against the garage wall where the rain deposits the mud on the driveway? Yes, you guessed right. Until the tyres get sorted, things cannot move forwards and new tyres will be at least £150 and need 4 axle stands and either a contortionist or a teenager, neither of which was available at the time.

Progress came in the unlikely form of Stonor Park camping weekend, VW show and autojumble. The day was fabulous, it is a bit east of Oxford and there is an option on camping the night before. Definitely a fun evening and the glorious sunshine brought out a lot of VWs on the Sunday. At the autojumble was a chap with several sets of alloys including a nice set from a Mercedes with 5 good tyres for £80 - cheaper than new tyres, makes changing them easier and I don't then have rubbish wheels and good tyres. Into the bargain I can also sell the Fuchs to get some/most/all of that money back.

Then an important discovery for anyone fancying joining me on my journey - did you all know that there is a book on exactly how to restore from start to finish a VW Camper? A chap named Frederick Gillett (no relation - different spelling) has written a book and restored a 1979 Bay window from grotty rust bucket to prize winner and the book is part of the Haynes Restoration series so if you like a Haynes manual, this is one for restoring not rebuilding. What a great find from one of the many Facebook groups. Anyone who uses Facebook, I would really recommend that you join and use the Type 2 Owners Club Facebook page - use it or lose it, just post questions, answer the questions, post pictures of your vehicle, latest trip. If you sit back and do nothing, it will wither and die! I will be posting pictures of my progress in there once I get work under control!

Of course, winter is too cold to do any work which is why I'm trying to get the van mobile so that I can move it into the garage. Summer is too nice to stay at home and tis the season to be off on a jolly. In addition to Stonor Park, we also trekked in our other van "Poppy" over to the Just Kampers weekend for a lovely sit and catch up, relax and chat with Christie and Derek, Don and Pauline, Rosa and Dennis, Oli and numerous other possible members, non-members and non-van owners down in Odiham. It isn't a big meet, there's no loud music, very few stalls, no autojumble but equally no hassle and no agenda. We had a fabulous time, there are some great vehicles there for a chat and a wander and for the second year running, we had a great time.

Back to Eric. We now have wheels and tyres so we can move him. We have a juggler, so I can pop out to the garage for a quick joggle. I have a new sliding door inner to replace the bodged extra bits at the bottom that look ridiculous. I have a new

sliding door outer to replace the one that I've warped, so that I can joggle it and get things looking fab. I have a new window repair section and two corners as (in theory) the only other bits that I need to finished that first panel.

In a more than passing reference to Henry and (dear) Liza, the trouble with welding is that it looks like it should be easy.