

Eric the Viking – a restoration in many parts – June 2019

Spend since last report: £1,584. Total hours labour since last report: 64.8

Last time, I was making brilliant progress and was working towards putting the rear offside wheelarch in place to start fabricating the missing inner metal. That is taking longer than expected, so instead, I will tell you about Eric and his new hat.

Also since last time, courtesy of the last magazine and club member Bob Grimley, Eric has a new door skin. Bob and his son renovated their stunning late Bay “Baldrick” that you can read about in the last magazine. The photo album Bob showed to me showed the unrestored condition and the determination required. Seeing Baldrick in the flesh (metal) at the Club camp and AGM at Great Bourton brought a real lift – if they can do it, so can I! I would love to read a fuller story about that project as I am sure it will inspire others too. It bought the door skin for later fitment to Eric’s original but rotten late Bay door as Bob replaced his door instead of reskinning it. Thanks Bob! One day, I will bring Eric to meet Baldrick!

I have to admit to getting outside help on Eric’s hat and I called on a Banbury based professional restorer who interrupted the work on his own split screen roof restoration. The theory is actually quite straight forward. Buy a replacement metal roof. Reinforce the vehicle using 3mm wall, 1 inch box section steel welded to all of the posts of the vehicle and braced across each other for strength. Weld guide markers for the front windscreen and rear hatch so that you know exactly where the new roof goes. Choppy chop. Place the new roof on the posts. Weld up.



The old roof was inspected, it was originally a panel van and someone had cut a hole in it and added a Paris sunroof complete with the leather ragtop. That had perished significantly and was letting in all of the weather for many years before I bought him. That weather had got into the roof frame and there was precious little of the frame left that was not rotten. The visible outer roof was reasonable on the big surfaces but the gutters were completely rotten too. It really was not salvageable.

A new roof was found online as a rather dented but not rotten cut from a Deluxe late Bay brought in from California. It came with part of the roof lining, an incredibly dirty sun visor and the wiring for the lights.



The back door mechanism is bent and in need of surface rust removal but a good basis on which to start. Removing the roof lining was easy, manually grinding off the spot welds of the window surrounds was time consuming. Removing the sliding door runner from a left hand drive roof was fiddly since I have a right hand drive sliding door. After about 6 man hours, the roof was ready and my hands ached!



In the meantime, the steel box section had gone into Eric's interior, all welded securely to the posts to stop Eric falling apart and to give us a guide for the new roof (top middle of the above picture).

Once everything was checked, the angle grinder came out and the tops of each post were sliced, and the old roof was removed a piece at a time leaving only the roller channel of the sliding door in place, which was fortunately in reasonable order. At this point Eric was a flimsy pick up truck!



The new roof is not as heavy as you may think, but moving it in a small-ish garage and getting it over the top of Eric was quite fun. Enlisting the help of Events Manager and wifey Lorna plus my ever-helpful parents, the 5 of us were able to get the roof into position.



For the first time in many years, Eric has a metal roof with no rot and as you can see, further metal in the new floor as reported earlier this year. That passenger door is the one that will get a new skin in due course. With the roof in position, a few ratchet straps pulled things into place, the angle grinder neatened things up and the new roof was sitting on the front and rear temporary supports.

A Split Screen roof has a single skin of each post (A post between the windscreen and the front door, B post behind the front door etc). Not as strong and VW decided on a shaped tube of metal covered with another visible outer panel for the Bay window. This means that to access the inner from outside you peel back the outer at each point, weld up the old inner post on Eric joining it to the new inner post on the new roof. Once that is safe and strong, a slightly larger repair can be made to join the old outer metalwork on Eric joining it to the new outer post on the new roof.

All of those joints were fabricated pieces a few inches each way made from lightly galvanized Zintec steel bought last year. I have recently published an article on the web site about fabricating for those who have not seen it. Some of the new roof pieces were removed first like the complex bends around the front doors so that we could gain access to the posts, these were then cleaned to bare metal, trimmed appropriately, covered liberally in Frost's anti rust solution and welded back in.

Finally, after 7 rather long man-days, we had a roof over Eric. It is a little dented, not the colour we want above us and is not perfect but then again, that goes for my head too.

Now that the roof is on, I can start to tackle the back end! Until next time, I hope to see some of you at shows and camps over the next few months. Enjoy your bus.