

Chugging Along

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When the Jones family saw their VW dream go up in smoke, there was only one thing for it...



Ain't life a bitch!? You spend months, maybe years restoring your dream Bus. You then take it out at every opportunity with your family, enjoying the fact that all the other road users stuck in their boring people carriers cannot understand the sense of achievement you feel driving something you love and, more importantly, something you've put your heart and soul into. Then out of the blue you notice a scrape on the bumper where someone has reversed their Ford Blandeo into your pride and joy. To make matters worse, they've driven off and left you to pick up the pieces! Oh, get over it you drama queen! It's only a scrape and it'll buff out. And besides, it's a daily driver – it happens! Now, to really put things into perspective, let's meet Chris Jones, who can most definitely trump your half-inch scrape with a truly horrific story of how it can all go so horribly wrong.

Chris hails from Swansea and is a VW enthusiast in the true meaning of the word. He loves his VWs and puts his all into restoring them, maintaining them and most importantly, using them with his family.

To give you the background to this story we need to go back to 2006, when Chris bought a Bay Window Westfalia. The restoration began and he recorded it on VZi for all to see, myself included. It was a great build thread and gave an insight into a man who loved his Bus and had a vision of how it would look. Chris spent the next two years and £15,000 restoring the Bus and the longest it was off the road during that time was three months. The Bus was named Chug Chug and it was decided that the family would spend their summer holidays touring Scotland in it. Sadly, not long into their trip the engine caught fire and the Bus went up in smoke. The fire ravaged the Bus in minutes, leaving the family barely enough time to rescue one or two of their possessions from inside. Thankfully, nobody was injured but the entire family was very shaken and upset. With Chug Chug no more, Chris and the family didn't know whether to take the incident as a sign and move onto something less flammable, or to pick themselves up, dust themselves down and get right back into another Bay Window. By now it should be pretty obvious that they went out and bought another Westy.

The search began for a replacement Westy once the insurance money had come through, but it just wasn't happening for Chris. He knew what he wanted but couldn't find it anywhere. He looked on all the usual websites and internet auction sites but nothing floated his boat. What he was looking for was a Mexico Beige Westfalia Berlin Deluxe. Pretty specific I grant you, but they are rather tasty don't you think? He had seen one for sale abroad and was planning on flying out the next day to buy it, so while buying his plane ticket online, his wife Yvonne suggested he try the internet once more, which he did, even though he knew it would be a fruitless exercise. But it wasn't. What he found on eBay was a new listing for a 1979 Westfalia Berlin Deluxe in Mexico Beige.

Action stations!

"I rang the seller, Lee Moses, immediately and asked him to end the auction once we'd agreed on a price," said Chris. "At first he wanted a deposit but once I told him the story of Chug Chug he could see I wasn't going to waste his time. At 5am on a September morning I got up and met up with Darren James, who →

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your
van

Chris Jones
'79 Westfalia

Chris Jones, 39, shares his life with his wife Yvonne and his three children Amy [19], Katy [17] and seven-month-old Leah. He is an electrician by trade but is setting up a new business, www.vintagevweddings.co.uk. He has picked himself up after a traumatic incident and got back into the VW lifestyle he and his family love.



was heading to Scotland to collect a new Harley Davidson. I met Lee and test drove the Westy, 'Milly'. I had to have it so we headed to the bank and I got the cash. In exchange I not only got the Bus I wanted but I also got all of the spare parts Lee had for it, including the original air-conditioning system. I smiled for the duration of the six-hour journey back to sunny Swansea."

Chris has Lee to thank for the excellent condition of the Bus. Lee had also looked for a Bay for a long time and found Milly on eBay in the US. After winning the auction he imported it. What he'd bought was a low owner VW with only 48k miles from new. The body was in perfect shape without any rust and only a few parking dents, with the original paint burnt through in places, which made a perfect base for a respray in the original

Mexico Beige once the holes for the side markers had been welded up and smoothed over.

Once put back together, Lee had planned to use the Westy but as is often the case, personal circumstances meant it had to find a new home and it certainly found a loving home in the Jones' household.

Since buying 'Milly', Chris has brought it right up to show standard as well as making it a practical and usable Camper. The first thing to go were the US-spec sealed beam headlights and in their place are some RHD lights. The original wheels have been powdercoated white, as have the bumpers and over-riders, which were originally bought for Chug

Check out the plaid and neat Westy touches like the cab tray!



He'd bought a low owner Bus with only 48k miles from new



Chug but were never fitted.

The roof has been plastic coated to maintain that super-clean look for many years to come and the windscreen has been replaced with a quick-clear heated front screen, which was supplied by Danbury Motor Homes.

The interior, being such a low-mileage one, is original bar the front seats, which Chris had David Raul re-cover in brown Westfalia plaid that was purchased from VW Heritage. Another VW Heritage purchase was the caramel coloured inertia seat belts front and back.

Bright spark

Breaking from the original look is the EMPi quick-shift and the audio system. As Chris earns his crust as a sparky it's no wonder he's brought this area up to spec. The first thing on the list was to change the hook-up from the US spec of 110V to the EU spec of 240V, as well as changing the old wiring and fusebox for a new Haeger unit complete with MCB and RCB protection. Double sockets have been installed throughout so the girls can use their hairdryers and straighteners whilst camping!

On the sounds front, Chris has fitted a Becker Cascade BlueTooth head-unit which has sat-nav, voice recognition and MP3, all of which is hooked up to Alpine



2.0-litre Type 4 engine is original, as this US import Westy turned out to be peachy in every respect

6.6-inch S Type speakers up front and Alpine 4-inch speakers in the rear – loud enough to let the kids know that Frankie did in fact say relax!

With such low mileage the engine is the original 2.0-litre Type 4 unit and has only required regular servicing to keep it tip top, though it will be taken out one day for a rebuild to ensure it stays as strong as it is. Other plans are to lower the front with a Red 9 Design kit, and install a rear Safari-style window.

To sum this Bus up is very easy – it's perfect for the Jones family. It has given them the opportunity to enjoy quality

time together in a stunning piece of German metal. In 2009, Milly took them to France, Belgium, Holland and even the VW factory in Wolfsburg, Germany. If all of that wasn't enough, they managed to take in European Bug-In 3 in Chimay and it was at Chimay that Chris met the team from Just Kampers, who were so moved by his story of the demise of Chug Chug that they kindly donated and installed one of their Automatic Fire Extinguisher Systems. 2010's holiday was spent touring West Wales, so as you can see, this Bus gets used. There's just no keeping up with the Joneses now. ☺