



1979 CAMPMOBILE DELUXE

# THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE

Text: David Photography: Ashley Lovering

The Berlin layout, introduced in 1975, saw a very different version of Westfalia, with a kitchen unit comprising storage, hob sink and fridge, arranged under the windows, continuing to the rear where a wardrobe was sited. What added to the layout was having a swivelling passenger seat as standard and another innovative feature was the collapsible spare wheel (necessary as a wardrobe occupied its normal carrying space), stored with a compressor behind the driver's seat.

From 1978 US export Campmobiles (the generic name for Westfalia Campers) followed the Berlin layout and were available in both standard and deluxe versions. This particular version, finished in Mexico Beige, was built in 1979, towards the end of Bay production, and converted by Westfalia as a US Californian export Campmobile Deluxe (P27), meaning it was fitted with elevating roof, collapsible spare tyre, two way fridge, mains water hook up, gas cooker and under slung gas tank. It was bought new in 1980 by a family, who christened it Millie, and who then kept it for

the next twenty six years, and, judging from the full service history and receipts for every job done since 1980, clearly cared for and cherished it! It was finally sold on in 2006 and imported to the UK, restored and then spotted for sale by enthusiast Chris Jones, who was desperate for a replacement as his newly finished Helsinki had just gone up in smoke ... but we need to rewind at this point.

As a child Chris and his brother used to go abroad in the family's 1967 Audi 70 and whiled away journey time by playing the 'my coloured Beetle' game, where you had to be the first to spot a Beetle and say "My yellow Beetle" or whatever the colour was.



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ever since, owning a succession of Beetles and Golf's including a show standard 1965 Beetle and Mk1 Golf Cabriolet.

He never really thought about campers until he visited a mate Mike Williams who had just bought a Bay window camper from Graham in FBI. He was immediately smitten and, "With no money saved I started looking for a camper and found a 1975 airport fire bus which was a half panel bay window on eBay. I bought it and spent two years just welding it before finally admitting defeat and selling it for less than I paid for it and having spent £3000 on the body alone!" He then spotted another camper on eBay, a 1977 Westfalia Helsinki finished in Taiga Green. The wife's daily driver, a Mercedes C230 Kompressor, was sold in order to finance the purchase and after getting it MOT'd the family used it all summer, spending money and doing jobs on it while using it. Like many projects however, costs spiralled out of control



The units continue to the rear with a wardrobe and roof cupboard and a ¾ rock and roll bed provides daytime seating.

and Chris spent £12,000 over the next eighteen months getting it to show standard. The plan was to finish it off over the 2008 winter ready for the 2009 show season. They decided to take the family summer holiday in Scotland (and visit Laurie Pettit who had done an excellent job building the engine) and tour round the various Loch's etc...

However, disaster struck on the by-pass between Newtown and Welshpool. Chris vividly remembers, "The van suddenly lost power so I pulled in off the road with

my children screaming at me that they could see and smell smoke. I took the keys out of the ignition, got my family out and proceeded to fight the fire in the engine with my 2 kg dry powder fire extinguisher." Although at first it seemed to do the trick the fire soon re-ignited then a kind passer-by stopped and used his 1kg foam fire extinguisher. For a moment this seemed to do have controlled the flames then the fire re-kindled and the dash board ignition lights etc illuminated as electrical cables»



The Berlin had a swivel passenger seat as standard, creating a large flexible space by the sliding door.

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began to melt. "It finally dawned on me that my van 'Chug Chug' might actually go up completely in flames," says Chris, adding, "That night was one of the worst I've ever experienced. It was heartbreaking to watch Chug Chug disappear before our very eyes engulfed in flames." Watching all that hard work go up in smoke was traumatic for the whole family but they were determined to find a replacement.

Eventually the insurance company paid up and before long Chris found a potential replacement, in the shape of 78 Berlin Deluxe, finished in Mexico Beige, at Kief and Klok in Holland, but, just before booking his flight ticket online, he checked eBay once more and found another Mexico Beige Westfalia Berlin Deluxe in Carlisle! Lee Moses had bought the vehicle from the original owners two years previously and then set about restoring it to its former glory. Lee stripped all the parts off Millie and cleaned her back to bare metal. Luckily no welding was needed although he did weld up some of the factory holes that would serve no further purpose like the USA style side markers. The van was then prepped and painted in 2 pack DuPont IMRON (paint code YR548M), which is actually a Honda colour but is exactly the same shade as the Volkswagen Mexico Beige. The bus was then lacquered and polished to give a mirror like finish. All new window rubbers and seals

were fitted, the engine was rebuilt to the standard specification and all the ancillaries and tinware powder coated in all the correct colours. Many of the other parts have been detailed including the white powder coated wheels with white wall tyres, the bumpers and under side gas storage tank. The interior cabinet work was in good shape but cushions tired and worn so they were replaced and re-upholstered in a caramel suede like fabric, which harmonises with the exterior colour. All the mechanical parts, brakes, gear box, steering, suspension were also refurbished and Lee even wax oiled the bus everywhere including the underneath, box sections etc.

Finding Millie more than made up for the sad loss of the previous camper and this time there was the bonus that all the major work had been done.

Since acquiring Millie last year Chris has overhauled all the electrics, fitting a new silver chloride heavy duty battery, replaced the US spec headlights with UK spec Hella units, rewiring the side lights so they are now in the headlight instead of the American spec indicators, and re-wiring the American 110V system with a 230V UK spec



mains hook up unit, charging unit etc. Also fitted is a Becker Cascade Sat Nav unit and Alpine S type co-axle speakers in the front doors. The overall look remains basically stock, with mild custom touches from an ally side step and whitewall tyres. Soon to be fitted will be chrome Deluxe beltline trim and rubber bumper trim at the rear to match the front. Future plans include a mild lowering job using the Red9 system and fitting a genuine Westy period tow bar

USA spec over-riders and a Propex heater. At some point Chris may recover the cushions with original style Westy plaid fabric but for the moment he is quite happy with the look as it is saying, "I have no plans to sell Millie as my beautiful wife (Yvonne) and two lovely children (Amy & Katy) love

her and we are planning to have many trips and weekends away in her, including a trip to Germany to the Westfalia factory and the Hanover factory. I am going to keep Millie in tip top running condition using her regularly and hope to enter her in lots of shows and win many trophies; having won the Top Five award at this year's Oktoberfest, I'm sure she'll win many more." ☺



In a departure from previous Westfalia layouts all the kitchen and storage units run under the window.



**Chris would like to thank:**

Dean Phelps of Britannia Tow Bar centre; Darren James, Simon Howath & neighbour Erik Lanfear for the help with various tricky jobs; wife Yvonne & the kids for their enthusiasm and help; his mother Marlene for doing the curtains; workmate Kevin Jones "for letting me go early when I'm off to various shows & listening to me talking Volkswagens all day"; Kevin Sommers for doing the re-laminating; Ian Dakin for various paint work jobs; Ashley Lovering for taking all the great pics and "all my mates on the SWT forum - feel free to join up its free & we're a friendly lot" www.southwalestransporters.com" and also the guys on the forums HTT, Airdiction, Cumru Campers, Just Kampers, VZI and The Samba for all their encouragement and help.