

1967 Kombi Restoration : Part 6

Putting it back together

By January 2009 I could sense I was getting closer to realising my dream to have my kombi back on the road. I had also made another commitment: towards the end of 2008, the daughter of a very good friend had asked if she could use my Kombi in her wedding, which was set down for mid April. So for the first time in 9 years I was working to a deadline. That really gave me an extra push – I was determined not to let Clare down.

The body was painted, all the electrics and accessories cabled in, glass tinted, motor standing by, complete set of body and glass seals at hand. The time frame was looking feasible.



I spent a few weeks tackling more filler jobs, while leaving the paint a chance to harden up. I cleaned up the fuel tank and hit it with POR fuel tank sealer, prior to fitting it back into the engine bay. This is one task which was made far easier through installation of the engine inspection hatch.

My son Andrew then helped colour sand the body, doors etc. We erred on the conservative side, preferring to leave a bit of ripple in the finish rather than risking rubbing too far. Once the wet and dry was finished, we washed everything down several times and then moved on to cutting compound. We did try a buffer on the roof, but stuck to hand rubbing on the remaining panels. Slower, but much more forgiving.

Because I had the good fortune of pulling down a complete, straight car, I knew the panel fit was going to be fine: all the doors and hinged parts were the original items and fitted very well. New seals were fitted to all the doors, the engine bay and tailgate. I purchased a set of metric taps and ran them through the threads to clean them up. One thing that made reassembly easier was spending up on a selection of stainless steels and bolts. Any time a panel went on, it was treated to shiny new hardware.

Although it sounds a breeze, this work consumed the majority of February and March. I worked

every weekend all weekend and every night, usually til 10pm trying to get things done. I also had to fit in around my work commitments, with trips to NSW, Vic and New Zealand during this time. Every day away meant one less day working on the Kombi.

All the window glass was then installed. I have to confess to a moment of stupidity here. I fitted the side windows and then one of the windows in the cargo door. I then grabbed another piece of glass and tried to fit the seal to it. Lo and behold, the seal was too large. I hunted high and low but couldn't find another seal which would fit. How, I mused, did I luck the right rubber for the other cargo door? I resigned myself to ordering another seal and waiting for it to arrive. Imagine my disappointment when it failed to fit! It was only then that I realised that it was not the seal which was wrong, but the glass. I had picked up a piece of glass for the pop-out window by mistake. After swapping the pop-out glass for the correct piece, I was relieved when the seal fitted like it should. Then I turned to the pop-outs themselves (with their smaller glass). I had purchased some new frames from Brenton Arnold, as mine were too far gone to use. The pop-outs end up with 3 separate seals: one around the glass, one around the body and a third around the outside of the frame. The trick in assembling the pop-outs is to wet them up with water and washing up liquid. The seals then slide in nicely.



The motor was fitted and all the electrics and plumbing connected. As the gearbox was originally used with a 6V motor, we had to clearance it for the larger flywheel. The tried and proven technique is to bring the motor up in to position, start the threads on the mounting bolts and then turn the crank over with a spanner; nip up the nuts, turn the crank. A slow process, but easier than removing the gearbox and having it machined. Once the engine was all the way home, the bolts were undone, the engine removed and the bell housing cleaned out of all the magnesium shavings. The clutch was fitted &

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the engine bolted up once again – this time to stay.



The advantage of all this hand cranking is that it gives the oil plenty of time to circulate. A battery was located and everything made ready to give it a run. A few litres of fuel was poured into the tank; the distributor cap removed and the engine cranked over until it built up enough oil pressure to extinguish the oil warning light. Then it was back on with the distributor cap and turn it over again. Imagine my joy when it fired up and settled down to a lumpy idle (did I mention the cam has a "Porsche" grind?).

Comfortable that the engine was fine, I turned back to some of the other remaining jobs. Some of these included must-have accessories: in particular a lovely hand brake extension, which allows you to apply and release the handbrake without having to fumble around under the parcel tray; and a SCAT shifter.

The front and rear bumpers were prepped and painted and fitted with nice new stainless bolts. It was when I went to re-fit the valence that I realised that the beetle exhaust which came on the motor, would not work in the Kombi: the pea-shooter outlets point straight into the bumpers. The solution? Remove the pea-shooters, cut the mounts back and then weld in a couple of "S" bends, hastily bent up by the local exhaust shop. Not overly elegant, but symmetrical and quite neat. The full set of extractors and new muffler which I had ordered would not arrive in time to be fitted, so would have to be installed at a later date.

As 67 was the last year of the Splitties, VW were making running changes in readiness for the new bay body. One of these was a change in the gearshift mounts. After having ordered a shifter for a splittie, I had to send it back and order one for a Bay. Just another small delay – but always something else waiting for attention. It is amazing how good those shifters feel. They have a short throw and very precise operation. And the lockout for reverse is much easier to manage than the old push in and left of the original.

In what seemed no time at all, Easter had arrived. Good Friday was a real milestone: for the first time, I was able to start the car, put in gear and drive it up and down the driveway. What a feeling. Although there were still a few jobs to be done, I was now confident that we would make the wedding. I had to borrow a few parts from Andrew's car: his beautiful, re-trimmed seats; windscreen wipers (the shafts on mine had seized solid and broke when I tried to free them); a few bits of engine tinware and a few sundry bits and pieces. I adjusted the headlights, checked all the other electrics and made sure that the alarm/immobiliser was working properly. The headlights have internal indicators but, because I like the original indicators so much, left the indicators (with new lenses) operational and wired the in-lamp globes to flash when the alarm is set.



I took a morning off to take the car through Rego and headed off to pick up a hire trailer. On attempting to hitch the trailer, I found someone had pinched my towbar tongue. An hour and \$90 bucks later I was off again, loaded up the van, down to Regency, more waiting & another two hours later I had a set of clean, shiny plates.

And the wedding? Went off without a hitch. A brilliant day and a fantastic first outing for the Kombi. It ran like a dream and you couldn't prise the smile off my face with a pinch bar! The bride & bridesmaids were giggling with glee as I drove them to the church. And the groom? He rolled up in his beautifully restored Datsun 1200 Coupe. Couldn't get over the reaction the kombi got on the road & at the beach. Makes all the hard effort worthwhile.

The only question now is "What car to do next?". Will it be the T3 Ghia as originally planned, or do we get one of the Country Buggies ready for the Ratex rally in 2010? Decisions, decisions.