

Chapter 1

Buying a van for conversion

KNOW YOUR TRANSPORTERS

The original Transporter (split-windscreen or T1) was built from 1950 to 1967 and was replaced by the Bay Window model (or T2), from 1967 to 1980. Neither is covered here. The two models here are the last of the rear-engined Transporters, the T3 (1980-on), and the first of the front-engined vans, the T4, built from 1990 to 2003.

- Older versions, such as the T2 (South America) and T3 (South Africa) continued to be produced, sometimes in modified form, after the dates shown above.
- Water-cooled engines were fitted to the T3 from 1982.
- In 1991, VW called its new van the T4. Soon afterwards, it renamed the previous three models T1, T2 and T3. Very few people use the terms T1 and T2.
- The 2003-on van is the all-new T5.
- ALL VW vans are traditionally called 'Type 2', the Beetle being 'Type 1' and another VW saloon the 'Type 3'. Therefore, T3 vans are 'Type 2' NOT 'Type 3'.
- Other 'non-official' names for the 1980 to 1991 T3 include 'Type 25' (the digits '25' appear at the start of most T3 part numbers), 'Wedge' (which it emphatically isn't!), and others.

If you're buying a VW van for conversion, it's important that you buy right first time. It's too late after the



1-1. We're going to put the end at the start, so to speak, because that's what this book is all about - ending up with a motor caravan that you can use and enjoy. The author and his wife had this Volkswagen Transporter converted by Leisuredrive and, at the time of writing, the vehicle is still going strong. Here, it's parked at a Camping and Caravanning Club site at Hayfield in Derbyshire, a site only accessible to tent and motor caravan owners, not caravanners, because of the tight, tricky roads in the area - another advantage of VW Transporter motor caravanning!

vehicle's finished for you to decide that you don't like the base vehicle, so put some

time into researching exactly what it is that you want from your motor caravan.

EXTERIOR STRUCTURAL WORK



2-2-1. This T3 Transporter van has already had its new high-top roof fitted and is now ready for the side windows to be fitted.



2-2-2. Barry Plumridge starts by identifying all of the wiring so that it can be safely removed. Where it's connected to components, such as a rear interior light, the connections should be removed and it may even be necessary to cut the wiring in some places in order to remove it safely and re-route it where necessary.



2-2-3. Barry uses an air chisel to cut through both ends of this strengthening rail and also to cut between the rail and the outer panel where the two are bonded together with strong sealant. Hand tools would work just as well; they'd just be slower.



2-2-4. Barry now removes the rail exposing the panel to be cut away.

THE CAMPER CONVERSION MANUAL



2-2-14. Before using a jigsaw to cut out the unwanted steel, Barry R covers the shoe of the jigsaw with fresh masking tape so that it doesn't mark the paintwork.



2-2-15. In this instance, Barry R is cutting out the panel from the inside because, in this case, the cut is adjacent to the strengthening rib, so no marking out was necessary.



2-2-16. Where the cut has to be made from the outside, Barry puts several strips of wide masking tape over the paintwork that he doesn't want to be damaged.



2-2-17. It's best to make the starter hole for the jigsaw a little way inboard of the cutting line, then redirect the cutting position of the jigsaw precisely to the line, obviating the risk of the starter hole having been drilled in the wrong place.



2-2-18. Wearing the obligatory eye protection, Barry cuts carefully to the outer of the two pencil lines.

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EXTERIOR STRUCTURAL WORK



2-2-27. They're there for a very important reason: the glass has to be pushed firmly inwards as the rubber lip is pulled over the panel on the inside.



2-2-28. Barry P fits this sliding glass panel, which is done in a completely different way, the surround being fitted to the bodywork first.



2-2-29. The sliding panel is then slotted in from above ...



2-2-30. ... pushed into position, and the lip on the previously-fitted outer panel is eased over the sliding glass frame.

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2-4-14. These brackets enable you to offer up the furniture and screw it into place in the correct, pre-determined position. Note that the wiring has been run into this particular model's construction ready for fitting an interior light.



2-4-15. Back on the Volkswagen T3, Barry is fitting the shallow cupboard at the rear of the van's steel roof.



2-4-16. There are no brackets in this case, so Barry drills through the strut on the cupboard and into the rib which runs across the roof.



2-4-17. An appropriate size and length of self-tapping screw is driven into the rib. It's important that the screw isn't too long, or it will push right through the rib and damage the roof.



2-4-18. At the rear of what will become the shallow cupboard, another timber panel is screwed to the van's bodywork. It then only remains to screw the cupboard base onto these two panels to form an enclosed, shallow storage cupboard.