



Text: David Photography: Simon Cooke

# BORDER RESTORATION

**Border Restoration, near Shrewsbury, was set up by Marc and Michelle Bebb five years ago to specialise in full and part restorations of classic dubs and buses. Over that time the quality of their work has made them into one of the best respected restorers around**

Coming from a VW background, they specialise in the restoration, repair, and modification of air-cooled VWs (especially basket cases!), though they also take on repairs or MoT work, and even help customers source vehicles through a network of contacts made over the years. As well as all of the usual tools that are required in a busy restoration workshop, Border Restoration also has a fully enclosed Shotblast facility, which is also a family-run business established many years ago. Shot-blasting has to be done very sympathetically, as using the wrong media, nozzle or pressure can damage panels, so almost all projects have all interior, seats, dash, glass, engine, gearbox, running gear

and wiring loom removed before being put on a roll frame then pushed over to the Blast Room, where it is stripped inside, outside and underside of all paints and fillers. This process does reveal all hidden problem areas, but is key to a proper restoration and often, until this has been done, the full extent of work is unclear!

One of the first questions customers ask is "how much will it cost?!" Until the bare metal body is revealed however, there is no way of telling how much work there will be, so giving an exact cost is impossible, though rough parameters can be established. Border Restoration work very closely with their customers from the first meeting to visits to the workshop to see the progress on their bus, and for customers who live a long way away



Part of the team: From L-R: Nick, Gaz, Michelle and Marc.



With the underside painted work begins on refitting the front axle and running gear for the 1955 Samba.



Nick busy at work welding in a new full corner section.



This Early Bay ('72), known as 'Maisie', is now in final Pastel White paint ready for rebuilding, with all the parts stored carefully with her.



How mad is this? This '63 Split is almost ready to receive a Subaru 2.5 engine!

they keep in touch via email, phone, and upload photos to Facebook on a regular basis, where each bus has its own album. If any issues arise that weren't obvious at first inspection then they don't just carry on regardless, but contact the customers to explain and discuss options. And, of course, all work is photographed to document the history of the vehicle's restoration. Michelle tells us, "we aim to treat people the way we would like to be treated ourselves, and to see people drive away in their bus with

a massive smile on their faces is the best satisfaction the job can give."

Aided by Gaz, Nick, and Josh in the body shop, and John Bebb and Sam who deal with the media blasting, Border Restoration is well used to taking on projects many would shudder at. Probably the longest job thus far is on a 1955 RHD Samba, dragged out from a forest in Sweden – not only have the main chassis rails, cross members, outriggers, sills and lower sections had to be replaced, but also trees had fallen on the roof pushing in the roof and window apertures. The brief from the customer was to keep as original as possible – even to leave the bullet hole in the side and bits of moss on the roof!

Wherever possible, parts had to be NOS, all joints had to be lead loaded and the paint used has been old school paints with reduced gloss levels, fading out to primers and bare metal in places to replicate the original patina paint on other untouched areas of the bus!

For customers wanting interior refits, Border Restoration use (or can recommend) a variety of trusted third parties for all interior panels, trimming, electrical, and furniture needs, meaning you don't have to take your bus to several different

**Border Restoration is well used to taking on projects many would shudder at, such as a rotten 1955 RHD Samba with tree damaged roof, dragged out from a forest in Sweden!**

places to complete the project.

When we visited the (very clean) workshop, as well as the 1955 Swedish Samba project, which was having its underside painted and front running gear refitted, there were two Early Bay full restorations under way (one in primer, one in paint), a 1967 LHD split which is being converted to an ice cream, and a wild 1963 custom Split with Subaru 2.5 supercharged engine and flared rear wheel arches, as well as several other buses! And in between this, Marc is finding the time somehow to complete work on their own '72 Bay (watch out for the upcoming feature).

The family feel and friendliness of the team has led to many customers becoming good friends – and there is now even an exclusive camper club called BCC (Border Camper Club) for people who have had buses restored by Border Restoration. ☺



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