

Words James Peene Pics Matt Richardson

# From a land down under

**Some couples go out to dinner** to celebrate their anniversary, Jon and Kathy bought a Camper, and with it a new way of life



**W**e have such a lot to thank Australia for. I mean, it's a country that gave us such wonders as the Minogue sisters, Hugh Jackman (who else could play the Wolverine?), the electric pacemaker, Crocodile Dundee and, er, Rupert Murdoch. Okay, some of those are a bit tongue in cheek, but you get where I'm coming from. The land down under has given us some pretty cool exports over the years and another is, can you guess? Yes, that's right, award yourself a gold star, rot free RHD Buses.

Getting them from one side of the planet to another is a bit of an obstacle, but where there's a will there's a way, right? And if you will insist on having an old VW with the steering wheel on the right side (literally) but don't want to spend half your life welding up rotten sheet metal, then an Aussie import makes a heck of a lot of sense.

Two people who we're sure will agree with that sentiment are Jon and Kathy Goff, the owners of this '74 Bay Window, which began life as a Sunliner – a home grown Australian conversion. Sunliner began building Campers the

same year this Late Bay trundled off the production line and are still in existence today, although they've moved on from working on VWs, and this VW has moved on a heck of a lot since then, too.

## Right first time

Jon and Kathy had never owned a Bus before, but a friend of theirs owns a Split and, in Easter 2011, they decided to get in on the action themselves and do some touring and camping. "We've been married for 40 years, and she is our present to each other," Jon and Kathy told us, "hence she's called Ruby. ☺"



MCJ billet tiller and colour-coded dash brighten up the cabin

"We'd previously owned a sailing yacht and thought we could adapt to camping in a Camper Van. We didn't want to go down the motorhome route, though, as we wanted something we'd be proud to own, something with character. However, at our age we wanted

including both heated front and rear windscreens, a fresh canvas for the pop-top (colour matched to the lower bodywork), front roof rack, side step, VW Kampers tow bar, and everything else a full ground-up rebuild entails. In their own words, "Every part of this Camper was rebuilt or replaced with German quality parts. This was a no-expense-spared build". All the parts on Ruby are brand new, from the Hella front lights and indicators all the way through to the rear taillights, you get the picture?

To really enhance Ruby's makeover, a set of chromed SSP Fooks (replica Fuchs) were bolted up and shod in Yokohama tyres measuring 185/65 x R15 all round.



The Bus has been lowered a touch, but the side step comes in handy

a Camper with all mod cons and, most essential of all, a reliable engine.

"We were really lucky to find Ian Harris at VWKampers in Henfield, West Sussex (www.vwkampers.com, tel. 01273 493032). He talked us through all the options, researched and found the right vehicle and then converted her with full consultation with us throughout."

The Bus was 100% rust free, unwelded and still in its original paint, but Ian soda blasted the whole shooting match back to bare metal and applied over 13 layers of rust prevention and paint to make it as shiny as it is now. "The same amount as a Rolls Royce!" chimes Jon.

The blasting, prep and paint was all handled in house in the VWKampers media and paint room, Jon and Kathy opting for the original colours of L90D Pastel White for the top half and L380 Turkis Green on the bottom.

The Camper had new glass all round,

### Get down

Jon and Kathy might have recently celebrated their ruby wedding anniversary but they're still down with the kids, thanks to the Creative Engineering adjusters nestled in the front beam. They brought the front end three inches nearer the ground and the back was turned down a spline to level everything up again.

KYB shocks make for less bounce to the ounce and, to keep the braking system in line with the rest of this handsome machine, everything old was swapped out for new – the front discs, the rear drums, the master cylinder, hoses, backing plates, calipers, hard lines, pads, everything.

With the brakes and suspension done and dusted, the only mechanical stone left to turn over was the engine.



## Every part of this Camper was rebuilt or replaced

Remember how Jon and Kathy stipulated reliability as a prerequisite to Bus ownership? Well, with that in mind, the old lump was put out to seed and a brand new 2.0-litre Type 4 unit was bought in from VEGE to fill the void it left in the engine bay. It came with a two-year warranty for peace of mind and twin Weber carbs for added oomph.

It's all pretty standard, with the exception of the exhaust – a one off stainless system exclusive to VWKampers, which both exits the gases and blings up the blunt end a touch.

### Changing rooms

Moving inside, and if you were hoping to see what a Sunliner conversion looks like, you'll be sadly disappointed. The Antipodean conversion is all long gone, replaced with an entirely new camping interior by Ian and the rest of the VWKampers' crew.

With the green light to give it the works, that's exactly what they did, although in this instance the works were actually the wurks, a Van Wurks Kompact unit with buddy seat, one-off rear overhead locker in walnut with matching kick panel and fridge panel.

However, before all of that could go in, a brand new headliner was fitted, along with full sheep's wool insulation and Dynamat in all the door and panels for maximum warmth and soundproofing.

Soft furnishings come courtesy of Newton Commercial, who supplied the front seats from their Suffolk range and

trimmed them in cream with Morris Minor green piping to complement the exterior colours.

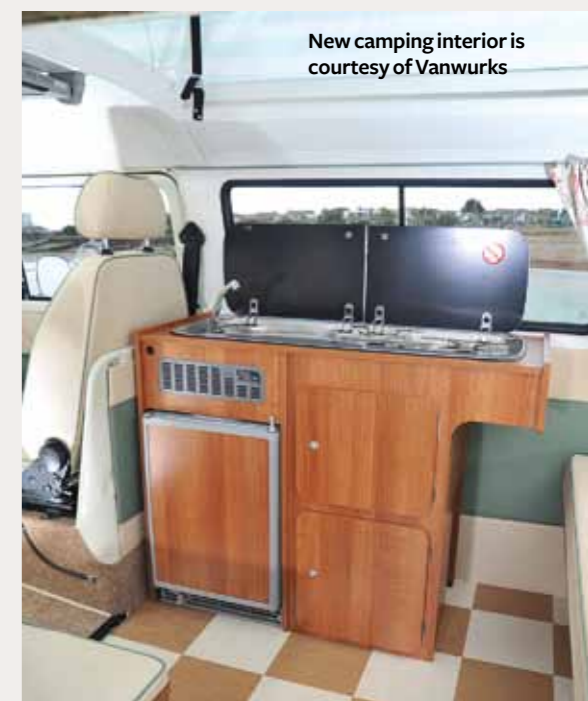
Newton Commercial also supplied the commercial-grade front carpet set and replacement door panels all round.

A range of useful accessories and boys' toys were added, and these consist of a smart charge electrical system, full 240 / 12v Propex heating system, a safe bolted through the floor, a smart tracker system, full LED lighting, swivel front captain's chair and a modern DAB Kenwood stereo with iPod connection.

Sounds come courtesy of Kenwood three ways in the front and rear, whilst vision is enhanced via a drop down DVD player with Bluetooth and remote control pumped into four speakers.

If all of the above still isn't enough to sate your appetite, how does the colour-coded dash grab you? We think it looks the business, along with the MCJ billet alloy and rosewood steering wheel.

We reckon it's safe to say that this old Camper has come a heck of a long way in recent years. Not only has it travelled half way round the world, it has also undergone a truly fantastic restoration at the hands of Ian and his henchmen down at VWKampers. Sure, Jon and Kathy could have spent less and bought something bigger and more comfortable, but it wouldn't have had the soul and character of this old Bay, would it? It's the perfect way to kick back and relax now that they're retired and, at the end of the day, isn't that what it's all about? ☺



New camping interior is courtesy of Vanwurks