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LOWLIGHT

LILY 1972 BESPOKE CAMPER CONVERSION

When Paul Dodd came across this lovely low light Camper in 2006 he could hardly believe his luck. Unwelded, unrestored, in original paint with an immaculate condition interior, the bus has won awards at the few shows it has been to and, though Paul has added a few touches of his own, the bus is still basically as it was 25 years ago!

The bus (affectionately known as Lily) actually started life as a Panel Van. Built in July 1972 on chassis 2122233461, and finished in Pastel

White (L90D) it was sold, along with an identical Panel Van (carrying the sequential UK plate OYA 426L) to a retired aircraft engineer from Bristol, who had plans to set up a new camper conversion business, using Panel vans as the base, in his retirement. Both buses were kitted out between July and December 1972, and both registered on 1st January 1973. Sadly he suddenly

died whilst converting the third Panel van so these two are the only ones that remain as testament to his craftsmanship.

Most Panel Van conversions use side windows which are flush with the body but the windows he sourced and fitted are completely different and are shaped with a recessed frame detail and highly polished. He bought the aluminium framed, slightly tinted, windows from VW and cut them into the side of the van, leaving a space on either side at the rear (as per 11 window splits) allowing for the installation of a storage cupboard on one side and a wardrobe on the other.

The interior itself is also very distinctive and finished to a very high standard. Inspired by Devon for style and light oak finish, every inch of space has been carefully thought through to maximise storage space and flexibility of use, and the entire rear area has been panelled in soft white vinyl. Behind the passenger seat to the left of the sliding door entrance is an oak unit which houses the sink with Whale pump and hinged Formica top, waste pipe and storage underneath for the water container. It also has two smaller cupboards for plates etc and a small drawer which even still has the original cutlery in mint condition. On the right, there is a double ring cooker in excellent original almost unused condition, with a Formica hinged top with a folding plate drainer inside the top which can be used when it is in the up position, more storage cupboards and another drawer for salt and pepper and cups and glasses etc. Behind this, there is also another Formica hinged-top cupboard that has the original correct size plastic waste bin in it.

Behind the rear double seat there are two deep side units in oak, the offside being a small wardrobe unit for hanging shirts and jackets, on the nearside a full height storage cupboard and at the rear of this the spare wheel. Between the two is an oak overhead storage area, under which



More drawers are sited behind the rear seat back.

The woodwork is all hand finished in light oak with storage in every conceivable area of space and the whole rear interior has been panelled in soft white vinyl.

The interior design has been carefully thought through to maximise space. The table has had the sharp corners removed to make for easier access and the floor unit can be accessed from the front or the top.



A folding plate drainer is fitted inside the top of the cooker lid which can be used when it is in the up position. Next to the cooker unit is also another formica topped hinged cupboard that houses a convenient plastic waste bin.



the Formica topped oak table slides under for storage when not in use (a feature pioneered by Devon in the 50s). Between the two side cupboards over the engine bay there is a chest of two drawers on the left hand side which has a matching pair of drawers accessible from the tailgate and a storage chest from front to back with a hinged top. All cupboards and the table top storage track have a rotary oak retaining catches.

Under the rear seat is storage for the table leg and the two oak veneer bed sections that clip into place between the seat behind the driver's seat frame and the walk through area, to make up part of the base of the double bed. Between the rear double seat and the single seat along the offside wall, there is a three section folding low level storage cupboard top in Formica/oak that also makes up the rest of the bed with all four seat cushions making the mattress. There is also additional storage under the single seat, which is where Paul has now installed a leisure battery, split charger and fuse box, adding small ventilation holes into the oak base.

The bus changed hands three times over a period of ten years before coming into the ownership of Derek Barrett in January 1983 at 33,000 miles. Derek was a retired mechanic, who serviced the bus himself and kept careful records during his ownership, including details of all dates the vehicle was put into his garage for the winter storage periods. He also wax oiled it every year and it never went out in the rain. It is a credit to Derek that the bus is in the condition it is today and he used it solely for what it was intended for, camping trips to the southwest and Europe. He finally sold the bus on in May 2005 due to lack of use with his age. The next owner changed the curtains and rear seat covers to update the look, even though the originals were still in excellent condition. Loose lay carpets for the front and rear were also added at the same time. The changes are period correct and Paul actually prefers the materials to the original fabrics (he has photos showing the original upholstery). The camper was hardly used and a year later was sold on again to a new owner, who, although he loved it, really wanted a Split Camper! And so it passed into the care of Paul Dodd ...

Paul had previously owned a modded LHD non walkthrough '64 13 window Deluxe M130 hard top, but his wife Jan really did not like being a passenger facing the scary sight of oncoming traffic. They also liked the idea of a walk through interior so Paul was persuaded to part with it. Then they saw Lily up for sale and knew she would be just perfect for them. To find an unrestored original condition camper with the added bonus of a bespoke interior is a dream all bus owners share!



The stock 1600 twin port had been replaced at 56,000 miles due to dropped valves and with new stainless steel valves runs beautifully on unleaded fuel. The original bumpers had been resprayed in Cloud White due to stone chips but that apart the

bodywork was fully original and rot free; the paintwork, though faded, just needed T cutting and polishing to look like new again. Since owning her Paul has carried out some subtle mods and upgrades that are fully in keeping with a period look including changing the

tired, original optional front fog lamps to a period NOS circular type with yellow tint, adding Deluxe alloy trim to the front air intake grille and fitting new stainless steel wipers. He has also restored the original 14" steel wheels, painting them in Kansas Beige (correct

for the year) and adding stainless steel rings, split bus/'68-70 bay domed hubcaps and Wolfsburg valve caps. Other extras now include jailbars, Safety Star light, leisure battery and 12v outlets in the side of the seat base and in the dash for the SatNav. A

modern retro style CD / MP3 player sits discretely in the dash with the speakers mounted in the front kick panels to avoid cutting the door panels.

When asked about any future plans Paul smiled and said, "I have naughty

dreams of slamming her, installing a full length ragtop and painting the bumpers and roof in Kansas Beige to match the wheels, but having only entered her in two shows, Stonor Park and Southsea, this year where she won best in class for original Bays at both

of them, then what do I do? Having said that, I would not do anything that could not be reversed... I have spent hours and hours making sure she is kept in the best condition I can and I intend enjoying her for what she was meant to be used for." ☺

// I HAVE NAUGHTY DREAMS OF SLAMMING HER, INSTALLING A FULL LENGTH RAGTOP AND PAINTING THE BUMPERS AND ROOF IN KANSAS BEIGE //



The cab area, side panels and seats are unmarked and as clean as the day they left the factory.



Drawers in the cooker unit house the utensils and crockery. There is even a built in wine bottle holder!



The rear luggage area houses a twin unit comprising a drawer section and lidded storage box.



The original cutlery supplied with the camper is still intact and the quality of the workmanship can be seen in touches like the green baize lining for the cutlery drawer.



The sink unit has a hinged formica top with bowl, drainer area, Whale pump and storage for the water container.

