As company founder and Managing Director, Mark ran *The Bus Station* (2002–2013) and *Vintage Werks* (2006–2007), companies heavily immersed in the VW scene, importing classic Volkswagens from around the world, carrying out sympathetic restoration work and gaining an international reputation for out of the box thinking, high quality suspension modifications and turning out magazine feature-worthy cars.

Under Mark’s control, *The Bus Station* was responsible for the introduction to the UK and Europe of several suspension modifications and products which were, at the time, unavailable.

Having closed The Bus Station in 2013, Mark continues to write for specialist VW magazines including *Volksworld, Volksworld Camper & Bus* and, formerly, *VW Camper and Commercial magazine.* Mark’s main area of expertise is within the ‘How to’ technical features, where he imparts his honest knowledge, including tricks of the trade from 11 years’ modifying and repairing Volkswagens on a professional basis, and vehicle feature writing, where Mark’s vast knowledge of the marque is evident.

Being an advocate of lifelong personal growth and self improvement, Mark has, more recently, begun writing and blogging in this area and also runs the blog [www.theauthenticguy.com](http://www.theauthenticguy.com) where he provides his own slant on men’s issues relating to dating, relationships and personal growth.

Mark also now writes about his travel and road trip experiences in *Volksworld magazine* and is currently developing a second blog — [www.barefootdriver.com](http://www.barefootdriver.com), to document this area.

Get in touch for more information or additional writing samples
Mark has been a monthly contributor to IPC Media/Time Inc. since 2012, writing 60+ features over four years.
Swedish Roadtrip

First published
VolksWorld magazine
2016
**Adventure 'Wagen**

Yet another example of the perils of Facebook. Only this time the end result is another great VW escapade.

Words and photos Mark Walker

It's funny how sometimes when you're not looking to buy a car, something just seems to fall in your lap.

Having closed my business (The Bus Station) and been through a divorce recently, I've become a little bit more content with what I have, and don't even really look through the usual VW classifieds sites any more.

But I was scrolling through my Facebook feed on my phone one day and saw a picture of the '67 1500 Beetle you see here on one of the many groups I'm subscribed to. Even with one picture, the price of 18,000 Swedish krona – around £1,400 at the current exchange rate – seemed too good to be true, so I fired off a quick message to the vendor and he supplied a few more pictures within the hour. The car had a nice original tan/gazelle cloth interior, a factory Eberspächer heater and looked pretty original, right down to the stock beige running board mats (I have a fetish for coloured mats). The owner said the car was up and together and "the best Beetle he'd ever owned."

The facts were: 1) The car was cheap. 2) I needed to get away for a bit of an adventure. 3) I had some money in my savings account (very unusual!) and 4) I had a roofrack to pick up in Sweden that I'd bought in 2012.

Having established a few more facts about the car (I would reply in English, the vendor in Swedish and I would use Google translate) and the fact he was happy to sell to someone outside Sweden, I got on Google again and searched for flights. With a reasonable flight to Stockholm secured for the following week and some research through Swedencolour. A lovely drive through Sweden

...it and we exchanged emails. We started the car, it turned out this was the Stockholm Icebar – around £1,400 at the current exchange rate – seemed too good to be true, so I fired off a quick message to the vendor and he supplied a few more pictures within the hour. The car had a nice original tan/gazelle cloth interior, a factory Eberspächer heater and looked pretty original, right down to the stock beige running board mats (I have a fetish for coloured mats). The owner said the car was up and together and “the best Beetle he’d ever owned.”

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Drinking Lingonberry Vodka in the Stockholm Icebar

Early '51 survivor Bus with no rear window. One of the coolest Split Buses I've ever seen.

A full tank, clear roads, nice weather and autumn colour. A lovely drive through Sweden.

Bengt and his Barndoor rescue truck. What a guy!

Words and photos Mark Walker

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Having established a few more facts about the car (I would reply in English, the vendor in Swedish and I would use Google translate) and the fact he was happy to sell to someone outside Sweden, I got on Google again and searched for flights. With a reasonable flight to Stockholm secured for the following week and some research into insurance and ferry prices, I fired over a 5,000 krona deposit and started packing.

With the cheapest flight being very early in the morning, I caught a train from Portsmouth to Gatwick on Thursday evening and booked into a budget hotel. The only trouble was, my ex-girlfriend decided to come and meet me and I missed my flight. £120 later and I'd secured the last available seat on the next flight to Stockholm. No drama.

I'd planned to hit Stockholm on the Friday and do some sightseeing. I'd looked up the Red Bus Tours, which looked cool online, but were unreliable. I still managed to see a fair bit of the city before hopping on the Tunnelbana (tram system) to head to Tungelsta, south east of Stockholm, to collect the car. I arrived at the station in the dark at 8pm – not a great way to buy a car, especially not abroad.

It was already parked at the station, the engine was warm and I could smell burning oil (as it turned out, a result of being over filled, nothing more). I was approached by a guy with a full face tattoo and, just as I was getting ready to fight, it turned out this was the vendor. We started the car, I had a quick look around it and we exchanged owner said the car was up and together and "the best Beetle he'd ever owned."

The '58 "Swedish Binz" currently has no chassis attached, but will live again.

"I was approached by a guy with a full face tattoo"
I took a chance driving into central Malmo at night with dodgy electrics, but I had the sightseeing bug, and I was hungry.

money for keys. The car was a bit tatty compared to the pics, but it was cheap and I was there now.

With money and pleasantries exchanged, the vendor jumped in a Volvo and roared off. Needless to say, when I went to start the car again, there was nothing. As if by magic, a Facebook message appeared letting me know about rockling the car in gear to get it started sometimes. Having got the car going, I decided to do a quick check of the lights. It was then I realised the car had no rear lights, it was dark and the hotel I’d booked in Sala was 95 miles away. I fiddled around and got one rear light working, then had no option but to head off.

The car drove nicely, much more responsive and quiet than my ’68 1300 and all was well, until about 40 minutes into my journey when the car started to lose power. My immediate response was to push in the headlamp switch and the car picked up again. Oh dear...

Suffice to say, I had a pretty scary drive to Sala with no lights at night, only just making it, as the battery was running on empty. I had bought the roofrack in 2012 and had it stored at a friend, Bengt’s, house. Bengt is a total old school VW guy, Barndoor Bus collector and very friendly to boot. At 8am the next morning he turned up at my hotel in his ’54 Single Cab to remove my battery and put it on charge at his shop, where he had to spend the day at work. I bussied myself in Sala then, in the afternoon, we went for parts, then food, then spent a chilly evening working on the car. The car was 6V, but had been fitted with a 12V regulator, so the first job was to put an NOS 6V regulator on the car that a friend of Bengts supplied and wouldn’t take a penny for.

I bought these amazing lined Swedish mittens in Stockholm’s Gamla Stan (Old Town) and they came in handy on the cold mornings.

I had a pretty scary drive to Sala with no lights at night. It was just before it plunges into an underwater tunnel, because of nearby Copenhagen airport.
next morning, the car started and I headed over the Oresund bridge to Denmark, before turning south to catch the Rodby-Puttgarden ferry into Germany. I had arranged to stay overnight with my brother in Cologne, but I was still three hours away when it started to get dark. Within about 20 minutes of switching on the lights, I felt the car losing power again and pulled into the Wildeshausen services to let it sit and charge. But, as the engine promptly died, I realised the dynamo had given up once more.

As I had insured the car on the chassis number before setting off, and paid the extra £55 for European breakdown cover, I called Footman James and they arranged an ADAC tow to an HGV specialist nearby. I booked a room in a hotel in the village for the night. Despite the garage being clueless, charging me 140 euros for a 6V battery just to diagnose the fault and the total bill being 342 euros, I got off quite lightly. Axa assistance paid for a three-hour taxi ride to my brother’s house, a flight back to the UK and repatriated the car, which took a couple of weeks.

At the time of writing, the ’67 has a fresh MoT and I’m awaiting the UK registration number from the DVLA.

With this done, Bengt re-polarised the dynamo and fitted different brushes. Having initially been greeted by a negative output, the dynamo was now pumping out 7V. Next morning, I hit the road south, thanking Bengt for all his help and hospitality. Once I reached the motorway, the charging light came on, so every hour or so, I would stop and let the car idle for half an hour, or until the charging light went out. Fortunately, I had been given two keys, so I could lock the car with the engine running and get food.

The car got me to Malmo by 5pm and I booked into a cheap room, as I didn’t want to chance driving with the lights on. The

The road trip portion of my adventure ended here. Follow my exploits on Instagram @ barefootdriver
How To: Cargo Door Repair

First published
Volksworld Camper & Bus magazine
2015
Cargo door repair

Got a split with rusted out cargo doors? Probably. Don’t replace them, restore them. Here’s how to do the job yourself, properly.

Words and pics Mark Walker

The cargo doors on any Bus are notorious rot spots, but are often worse on a Camper as condensation builds up on the inside from the exhaled breath of people sleeping in the Bus on cold nights. Often, people misguidedly use wool-type insulation too, which retains moisture and holds it against the panel, causing the doors to rust from the inside out.

Add in the fact it is a tricky area to repair well, which means it comes in for a lot of bodging with filler, newspaper, seam sealer, expanding foam, or simply from the old patch welded over a rusty door bottom trick. Your Bus deserves better, so here we will show you how to do the job properly, using high quality Auto Craft Engineering repair panels.

Of course, you could try and source a rust-free replacement door, but good ones are big money these days. Thanks to Simon at Specialist Motorcaravan Services (tel. 07791 345880) for allowing us access to photograph this repair procedure being carried out.

**JOB INFO**

**TOOLS USED**
- MIG welder
- 115mm angle grinder
- 1mm cutting discs
- Wire wheel
- 40-grit flap discs
- Various clamps
- Hammer and dolly
- Drill with spot weld cutter
- Finger grinder

**SKILL LEVEL**
- 1 2 3 4 5

**TIME TAKEN**
- 10-15 hours

**COST**
- DIY: £60 parts and materials
- Pro: approx. £650

**01 Preparation**

First job is to remove the door and support it on trestles, or similar, in order to be comfortable while carrying out the repair. You can tackle this job with the doors in situ, but it's hard work. As you will be doing a lot of welding and grinding, it's wise to remove the glass and trim from the door before commencing work, as stray sparks will damage upholstery and embed themselves in the glass, causing it to rust and rendering it scrap.

At this point we also elected to remove the stickers from the Auto Craft panels (www.autocrafteng.co.uk) with a sharp blade and remove the light oil coating they're supplied in with thinners.
**Mark out and clean**
With the freshly degreased panel in hand, offer it up as best you can against the inner door and mark along its upper edges with a marker pen. Once this is done, don suitable protective clothing and take a wire wheel on an angle grinder to the area below these lines in order to find out where the spot welds are that hold the inner section to the outer skin.

**Drill out spot welds**
With the weld indentations exposed, take a spot weld drill bit (available on eBay) and carefully drill out each of the spot welds. Go slowly, wear eye protection and try to only cut through the top layer of metal.

**Remove lower inner panel**
Our door was bad enough that the inner panel was able to be drawn down the locking rod and off the bottom of the door with very little effort. If yours isn’t quite so bad, you will need to make a few extra cuts around the sides and underneath the inner panel to remove the main part of the panel.

**Cut lower inner panel**
Now take a 1mm cutting disc on the angle grinder and cut around 10mm below the lines you marked. Don’t go too deep where the locking rods are or you will cut through them! You will, however, need to cut through the outer skin, too.

**Clean up inner structure**
Once the main part is out of the way, you need to remove the remains of the inner panel so we can use the outer skin as a guide to fit the new inner panel. We chose you use the wire wheel again, followed by the air finger grinder to remove all the rusted remnants.

**Trial fit new panel**
Now you can work on fitting the new inner panel. Cut it down in stages and keep testing your progress. The plan is to get it sitting inside the original outer skin for now, before it is welded in position. On the door we were working on, we found it necessary to make a couple of pie cuts at one side of the panel to adjust the widths of the inner frame and seal channel (the cuts were welded up later and ground smooth). To be honest, we were being a bit anal but, if a job’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right, right?
God Bless The Freaks

First published
VolksWorld magazine
2014
When someone proclaims to run a ‘one-stop drop shop’, and drives one of the lowest, patina’d Early Bays on the scene, we need to know more.

Words Mark Walker  Photos Thru-a-lupe photographic

God bless the freaks
If you’ve frequented any UK-based VW shows in the past few years, you will have probably happened upon Ben Lewis’ gnarly, slammed Early Bay at some point. Riding super low with its punched-in nose, it has a tough look for sure, but is built to cover the miles in comfort and at speed. But how did one of the UK’s premier VW restorers come to sell a show-winning Beetle to roll it ratty all over Europe?

It all started in the summer of 2007 when Ben embarked on a European tour that took in the first European Bug-In at Chimay, Belgium. Ben’s ride for that trip was his multi-award-winning Oval, ‘Fendered ’57’, but sometimes it’s the company you keep that ultimately shape the direction you go in. And as everyone else on that trip was piloting an original paint Early Bay, Ben decided he needed one in his life, whatever the cost.

That cost was his Oval. Once back in Blighty, the decision was made to sell the ’57, with half of the proceeds being used to start up his business, Evil Ben’s (www.evilbens.co.uk) and the rest siphoned off for a suitable Bus. Alex at nearby Transporterhaus in Truro, Cornwall, had a freshly imported L90D Pastel White ’71 Westfalia, but it was already sold, to a couple who were going to paint it orange. Fortunately, the deal fell through and Ben wasted no time stepping up with a bundle of folding to seal the deal. He was now the owner of a stock Early Bay...
The ‘71 was pretty solid, and came with a cool history, having been owned by some ageing hippies in San Francisco, California and still bearing many of the stickers from the hippy heyday.

With the Bus safely out of orange’s way in Ben’s workshop, the restoration could begin in earnest. Well, when we say restoration, that may be overstating things a little. The only metal repair it needed was a pair of cab floor corners, and a 4cm square section of the battery tray, which was invisibly butt welded into place. Ben could have used his metalwork skills to repair the splash in the nose panel but, seeing as it was this that attracted him to the vehicle in the first place, he decided to leave it alone, along with all the numerous other battle scars it had acquired over the course of the previous four decades.

With the Bus 100% solid, and the chalky, oxidised paint given a tickle with a machine buffer, work could start in earnest on the suspension. As with most drastically lowered vehicles, the suspension modifications on this Bus have evolved over the last six years. Initially, it was lowered with a CB Performance, two-inch narrowed, link pin beam, which was then narrowed another two inches and fitted with modified lower trailing arms, with the shock mounts shortened so the shocks sit vertical. A set of pre-‘64 dropped spindles and Porsche pattern CSP front disc brakes were then added to the front, whilst the rear uses Porsche-pattern wheels and drums from Creative Engineering. Being a US-spec ‘71, the Bay came equipped from the factory with a brake servo. If you’ve never driven a servo-equipped Bus, you really don’t know what you are missing, as the pedal effort and strength needed to stop a Bus is vastly reduced, giving a pedal that feels more akin to a modern car. The Bus was then fitted with the chrome and detailed Flat 4 Fuchs, which measure 4.5 and 5.5-inches front and back respectively. To these were added 165/50-15 Bridgestone front tyres and 205/75-15 Maxxis treads in the rear.

Ben drove the ‘71 around like this for a while but, not one to rest on his laurels, he has kept modifying and improving it to enhance the way it sits and drives. The rear of the chassis, for example, has been notched no less than five times, as Ben sought to bring the Bus closer to the ground, and also to improve the ride quality. ‘To get it to its current incarnation, however, Ben took the Bus off the road last year, stripped the interior out and invested a further 280 hours’ work in it, in between customer jobs. Ben: “As the Bus got lower, the geometry got worse and worse, hence the massive amount of work needed to get everything dialled in.”

**Raise it up**

Working from the front backwards, the CB beam was raised 45mm into the Bus, and the caster angle was increased. With the flipped, link pin, dropped spindles that most people tend to use, the standard Bus caster angle is decreased, and most narrowed beams do nothing to correct this (though there are some narrowed beams with an increased caster angle on the market so make sure you check before you buy). The result is a vehicle that wanders all over the road at speed, needing constant correction to stay in a straight line. Not good. In a vehicle with the correct caster angle, the steering should self-centre and it should track straight down the road. Add too much caster, however, and the steering at slow speed will be too heavy. Ben told us he worked with an angle of 15 degrees, which was taken from a Type 3, which everyone knows are great handling VWs. According to Ben, it works a treat: “When I followed a mate to the last EB-I, his Bus was wandering all over the road and doing involuntary lane changes, whereas I can cruise without any hands on the wheel and it still tracks straight.”

The minimal beam raise doesn’t make the walk-thru a trip-thru, as some more radical beam raises we’ve seen do, and required only some small bumps fabricating in the cab for clearance. Why a beam raise? Basically, it means you can go lower, but it also has the knock-on
are model's own aged. Dents and dinks gold stripes were laid '70s freak Bus theme, in keeping with its expanse of white, and 0 3 0

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notched no less chassis has been “The rear of the 1971 WESTFAlia FEBRUARY 2014

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…however, the bed mechanism has been modified to clear the rear tubs, and there’s now a fuel pipe in the wardrobe. No comments about that’s why Ben smells so nice!

A bit of form and function, with Deluxe over rider protectors and yellow-lens fogs
“I wanted it to ride low, but drive well and not smack the floor all the time”
The '71 is scooted along by a stout 1915cc Type 1 engine with twin 40mm Dells. There's a five-gallon Viair air tank and compressor under the rear seat to send the psst, psst to the air shocks and 'bags. Neat, bead-rolled tubs are just one of the many ingredients in this highly modified Bay Window. It takes a lot of effort to run this low and drive properly but, thanks to a lot of notching, a beam raise, air ride and a lot of experience, Ben can honestly say his Bus does just that.

The beam raise meant the brake servo had to be relocated, and some large c-notches cut into the front chassis legs for tie rod clearance. Add some subtle front tubs for tyre clearance and the front was done. Airlift combined air bag / shocks from Evil Ben's stock mean the front can now be raised up to four inches, while at full drop the Bus has just 10mm ground clearance.

Moving onto the rear suspension, horseshoe plates were used in combination with modified Creative Engineering spring plates. Ben reckons horseshoe plates are the only way to maintain the stock geometry and correct the additional toe in that happens when you go this low. "I haven't found a set of adjustable spring plates on the market that are long enough to correct toe in on lowered Buses, so I needed the horseshoe plates to get the geometry right, as excessive toe in equals poor handling and premature tyre wear." A set of Evil Ben's own rear air bag mounts are fitted, with a pair of Airlift 2500 air bags, and the rear of the chassis has been massively c-notched, too. As Ben was adamant he wanted to run 205/75 rear tyres, the rear now has some large tubs to provide the necessary clearance when aired out. In fact, they are so large the rock 'n' roll bed had to be completely re-worked, including changing the pivot point, for it to fit and function correctly.

Effect of improving the ride quality as the trailing arms sit at a less acute angle. Ben: "When I first got the Bus, I put adjusters in the original beam and it was horrendous, so I just kept playing with it. The beam raise and air suspension were done because I wanted it to ride low, but drive well and not smack the floor all the time." The beam raise meant the brake servo had to be relocated, and some large c-notches cut into the front chassis legs for tie rod clearance. Add some subtle front tubs for tyre clearance and the front was done. Airlift combined air bag / shocks from Evil Ben's stock mean the front can now be raised up to four inches, while at full drop the Bus has just 10mm ground clearance.

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Location, location, relocation
It doesn't stop there though, the gearbox and engine have also been raised 1½ inches. Those of you that know Early Bays pretty well will know this is a good modification to carry out, as their gearboxes sit particularly low, but the main reason it was done here was to rectify the crazy angle the driveshafts were sitting at and to prevent the CV joints binding. The rear air bags have eight inches of lift, meaning they also have the added bonus of lifting the Bus high enough to allow the rear wheels to be removed when required (something that is notoriously difficult to do on static slammed Buses). The rear shocks, which have been relocated on custom mounts, still need to be undone to change a tyre, but that's no big deal. Due to the size of the...
As Dolly Parton once said, it takes a lot of money to look this cheap. And in this instance, a lot of time, effort and skill, too.

Evil Ben-produced sticker says everything you need to know about his attitude to lowering. More is definitely more!

rear tyres, and the subsequent tubbing of the inner arches, the fuel filler has been moved to the roof of the Bus, with the original filler flap now hiding a nifty battery isolator switch. If you’re wondering how the fuel reaches the tank, a tube runs down through the wardrobe.

The engine is a 1915cc, Type 1-cased lump with a trusty Engle 110 cam, full-flow oiling and dual 40mm Dell’Orto carbs. The exhaust gases exit through a stainless steel Vintage Speed muffler, chosen as it also provides adequate ground clearance. The bigger capacity engine is a very torquey combination, and the large rear tyres help up the gearing, meaning Ben can cruise everywhere at 70mph, whilst keeping the revs at a less than ear-shattering level.

Moving inside, Ben was lucky in that the original Westfalia interior was in pretty good original shape so, apart from the aforementioned rock ’n’ roll bed modifications, it’s pretty much stock, though the bed base now houses the air tank and compressor for the suspension, as well as some 6 x 9 speakers. The original front seats were swapped for a pair of Race-Trim pews supplied by SSP, which are a lot comfier for the many long trips Ben takes in the Bus, with an added benefit of being narrower than the stock seats so they sit neatly atop the front tubs. Matching black TMI door cards were also supplied by SSP and now house some very ’70s speaker grilles, while the cool ’70s rear floor mat was a £5 Vanfest bargain. A coir cab floor mat and bamboo parcel tray under the dash complete the look, the latter providing somewhere for the air suspension controls to sit.

Finally, the signwriting and gold stripes were added by Ben, using cellulose paint and low-tack stencils, and mean the bus earns its keep as a rolling advertisement for his business. Whilst he was at it, Ben got his brother, Mawgan, to cut a stencil based on one of the original stickers, hence the “God bless the freaks” lettering on the rear hatch. Never was a truer word spoken in jest.

“Ben can cruise everywhere at 70mph”

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BEHIND THE WHEEL

So what’s a super-slammed Bus like this really like to live with? Well, with all the well-thought-out modifications this one has had done and four and eight inches of adjustability in the suspension, front and rear, Ben says he is pretty chuffed with how it all works. He claims the ride quality is pretty similar to stock, albeit without so much of the notorious sidewind wobble, and with the ’bags aired up it can clear any obstacles or rough terrain. Ben: “Before the air suspension, it was pretty horrendous to drive as it was so low, but I did 2,600 miles around France last summer in the Bus, at 70mph all the way. The ride quality is great, and the airbags take all the trauma out of driving a lowered Bus. I tend to drive with the bags almost fully aired up as, at 41, I’m too old to be scraping the floor. In general, people seem to love the look this Westy has, and yes, before you ask, it’s definitely a keeper.”
How To & Shop Tour

First published
Volksworld Camper & Bus magazine
2015
**Split flipped spindles**

You’ve heard the term, but perhaps you’re not sure what it really means. Here we show you what’s involved in turning stock spindles into flipped spindles.

Words and pics Mark Walker

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**‘F’ipped’ dropped spindles on the front of a Split Bus (or a link pin beam-equipped Bay) allow you to drop the ride height around 3.5 inches, and also narrow the track 9mm per side. The best thing about them, though, is the ride quality remains the same as stock. As a result, they have become a staple component when lowering a Split and, when paired with a narrowed, adjustable beam, allow you to go really low, too.**

Whilst it is possible to buy some flipped spindles, this guide aims to show you how to save a lump of money by building your own. However, be aware, doing so does require the use of some specialist tools so, if you can’t yet fathom out an oil change, it may be best to buy a set. Whether you choose to make some or not, this will show you what’s involved in their construction.

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**01 Remove and strip spindles**

Before we dive into the job, you should read the whole how to and amass the tools you will need to do the job. Although it is possible to press in and ream your own king pin bushes and ream the track rod reverse taper yourself, we chose to have a machine shop do the bushes as it is a laborious task. We had the necessary tools in stock to do it, but were lacking the time. If you have to buy the correct tapered and adjustable reamers, it makes this job much more expensive, so again it may be better to pay a machine shop to do this part of the job for you. Press tooling is another thing. We made our own out of scrap steel, but again, a good engineer should be able to press the spindles in and out for you if you are struggling.

Okay, all set? Cool. Then let us begin. Jack up and secure the Bus on stands and remove the front spindles complete. With the worst of the crud cleaned off and the spindles on the bench, take the 13mm and 17mm spanner and remove the steering stop bolt from the king pin. With this done, you can put the spindle in the press tool you constructed earlier in the hydraulic press and push the king pins apart. Alternatively, take your spindles to a reputable machine shop, or a good motor engineer, who can do this for you.
**02 Dismantle and degrease**

With the upper king pin pressed out, you can strip the spindle to its component parts. Tap out the spacer collar and you can then pull out the lower king pin. Discard all the grease seals, which will be well past their best, but carefully remove the fibre thrust washers from each king pin and put them somewhere safe for now. If your spindles still have them in place, knock out the lower grease caps with a socket extension, or similar, and put them to one side with the fibre washers. Now remove the large grease fitting with a 15mm spanner and the three smaller ones with a 9mm spanner and store them, too.

Now it’s time to clean things up. I prefer thinned for degreasing and a paint brush. You don’t have to go too mad at this stage, especially if they are going to a machine shop, but clean off any caked-on grease so you can get an idea of the condition of the king pins themselves.

**03 Fit new bushes**

The first thing to do once your spindles are degreased and have dried off is to wrap the bearing carrier surfaces well with masking tape, as they are easily damaged. Put it on thick, you can cut it off with a blade at the end of the job.

Our new phosphor bronze bushes were supplied by AH Schofield (tel. 01457 854267) and were given to the machine shop with the spindles. If you look ahead to the pictures later in this article, you will realise the king pins are re-mounted upside down in the carrier, so be sure to give specific instructions when you drop off the parts. If there is any minor damage to the pins themselves, you have a couple of options: the first is to purchase new pins, the second is to ask the machine shop to clean the bearing surfaces up for you. My local machine shop does this on a crankshaft grinding machine, as they are hardened steel, so a lathe just won’t cut it. Literally.

If you want to fit and ream your own bushes, you will need to buy, or have access to, a 21-24.5mm adjustable reamer, and a lot of patience.

Due to the change in the configuration of the spindle when ‘flipped’, the steering arms sits closer to the chassis, which means you have to ‘flip’ the track rod ends insert them from underneath rather than on top (note you also need to run ‘68 and later outer track rod ends). Again, depending on your mechanical competence, you may find it easier to get the machine shop to cut the reverse tapers in the steering arms for you.

**04 Grind spindles**

So, you have your spindles back from the machine shop with sparkly pins and new bushes fitted and reamed to size. Do a quick visual check to ensure the bushes were drilled at the grease points, otherwise you will not be able to grease them when installed!

Now it is time to modify the spindle bodies. As you have now mounted the king pins upside down, you will need to fit the link pins the other way round to original, or the camber will be out way. Basically, you will be running the pins in a back-to-front configuration. If you insert the upper king pin (originally lower) into the upper bush, you will see that a fair amount of metal needs to be removed for the pin to turn through 360 degrees.

To achieve this, you will need to mount the spindle securely in a vice, using soft jaw inserts so as to not damage the bearing surface. Take a 4.5-inch angle grinder with a metal grinding disc fitted and put on eye, ear and lung protection to be safe. You will also need to wear some sturdy gloves. Once you are set, carefully grind away material in the area shown above, stopping regularly to check the fit of the king pin. You are aiming to remove as little metal as possible to allow the king pin to work in its new location. We find it beneficial to ‘dish’ the area slightly, so it retains its strength at the edges. Once the pin turns all the way round, swap to a 40-grit flap disc and go over the area, polishing it so it looks ‘factory’. A top tip here is to fit the link pin into the king pin at this stage and check the rotation. Some aftermarket pins are pretty ‘fat’ in this area and need to be clearance with a flap disc. Either this, or remove a little more material from the spindle itself...
**05 More grinding**

Okay, so now you have clearance the spindle to fit the king pin, but there are a couple of other areas still to attend to. Not all dropped spindle builders do this, but over the years I have found going a little bit further makes the spindle fit and work better, so I will talk you through why we are doing them. Look at the picture here and you will see the spindle with three distinct areas ground down. The first is the one you attended to in step 4. The second area is on the bottom of the spindle, where it can come into contact with the lower link pin, potentially causing the steering to jam or have a tight spot. The third area is as a result of the lower pinch bolt in the trailing arm being very close to the steering arm when the spindle is re-fitted. If the steering arm catches on the pinch bolt at any point in operation, it will lock the steering which, needless to say, is very dangerous. Some people choose to grind the pinch bolt head down, but I prefer to remove a little metal from the underside of the steering arm (indicated by my finger in the picture above) in this area to aid clearance.

Running the king pins in this configuration means the pins are 4mm further apart than they were originally. Some people have the lower bearing face machined to correct this, but this makes the lower pinch bolt clearance even worse. As you will see, I do it a different way.

**06 Grind king pins**

With the spindle body modifications finished, attention can move to the king pins. As you are now running the pins back to front, the side of the king pins that fit up to the torsion arm needs to be flat, otherwise you won’t be able to run the grease seals. “Just don’t run the seals” tends to be the advice given here, but this will greatly accelerate wear and, besides, it is very easy to get the seals to fit, with just a little more work here. In the picture above, my finger is pointing to the ‘notch’ on the king pins I am referring to, while the ones to the right of it have been modified. To do this, clamp the king pin securely in a vice and use a flap disc on the angle grinder to gently grind this area off, making it flat on both upper and lower pins.

**07 Ream out track rod end holes**

As explained earlier, you will need to use 1968 onwards track rod ends, which will be run upside down ie inserted into the steering arms from below. If you had the machine shop do this procedure for you earlier, you can skip this step. If you don’t have the correct tapered reamer, and do not wish to purchase one, you can buy ready tapered bushes, so all you have to do is drill an oversize hole and press the new bushes in. Butty’s Bits sell these, as do Retrodubs, amongst others. Personally, I prefer to ream the holes, so mount the spindle in the vice and go slow with the tapered reamer (above), stopping regularly to check the fit of the later track rod end.

**08 Clean and degrease**

That’s the end of the modifying parts section, so you can now clean the spindles in preparation for paint. If yours have a lot of rust and paint build up, you can either blast them, or use a wire wheel on a grinder to take them back to nice clean metal.

With this done, clean everything with a degreasing solution. You are aiming to clean not only the outer surfaces, but all the inner ones too, and inside all the grease fitting holes. It is very important there is no swarf left anywhere that could accelerate wear, or worse, so run a tap through all the bolt holes and the grease fittings, and clean carefully to make sure everything goes together easily.
09 Prime and paint spindles
With everything cleaned and dried, it is time to put some paint on the spindles. You don’t have to do this stage, but it makes assembly more pleasant and keeps your Bus looking nice and tidy underneath. You can mask off any bearing surfaces or do as I do and hold them in a gloved hand to paint them, then clean off the excess on the bearing surfaces with thinners once dry.

Aim to get at least a couple of light coats of suitable primer and a couple more of a decent chassis black on the spindles, allowing the paint to dry thoroughly between coats.

10 Assemble spindles
A word here on king pin seals. There have been a lot of problems with the original-style seals currently available for some time. They tend to split and fall off after a few months, meaning pressing apart the spindle again to rectify. This has been well documented on various VW forums. Consequently, I have been using nitrile o-rings for years now with no problems. To find the correct size, either take your spindle and kingpins, complete with thrust washers, to an o-ring supplier and ask them to find the perfect size, or give Martin at Ginger’s VW (www.gingersvw.co.uk) a call as he keeps the correct size in stock. You will need eight in total.

To re-assemble, insert the greased fibre thrust washers onto the king pins, then fit an o-ring to each one. Having greased the pins and bushes, fit everything together, so the spindle looks like the picture above to the right. Don’t forget the two o-rings on the spacer either, which can take a bit of jiggery-pokery to get in place. With this done, insert the lower pin into the upper pin, ready to be pressed into place. To press the pins back together, you will need a hydraulic press. You can build a fixture to keep the pins in line when pressing, but I find a couple of old driveshafts turned down to fit into the link pin bushes works a treat. I then just eyeball it as the pins are pressed together. Don’t lean on the press too hard, as you may make the spindles unnecessarily tight.

11 Final assembly
With the spindles pressed back together, there are a couple of final tasks to attend to. If you remember, I mentioned earlier on that there will now be a 4mm difference in the pin spacing. This means to get the M8 bolt into the upper pin you will need to grind the pin a little. A rotary burr on a die grinder works best for this. Keep checking the bolt as you go, as a snug fit is optimal. Remember the grease caps you knocked out earlier and set aside? Dig them out, clean them up and flatten them if needed. As the upper kingpin now has an open bearing surface, it is advisable to tack weld a grease cap to the top of the spindle to stop ingress of dirt and premature wear. If your original grease caps were missing, you will have to make something. With the caps tacked in position, you can carefully touch up the paint.

Remember to check the offset of the trailing arms and shim the link pins to factory spec when re-fitting the spindles to the Bus. John Muir’s book, How To Keep Your Volkswagen Alive has the best explanation of this. Finish.
Having been a staple of the UK VW scene since 1999, we decided it was definitely time to pay Swansea-based FBI VW a visit.

Words Mark Walker  Pics Michael Whitestone
Having been a staple of the UK VW scene since 1999, we decided it was definitely time to pay Swansea-based FBI VW a visit. Words: Mark Walker

What exactly do you specialise in?

We import VWs. It used to be mainly Buses, but we now stock a lot of Beetles, too. We try to focus on quality rather than quantity, and always buy vehicles we wouldn’t mind owning ourselves. At any one time we have around 20-30 vehicles in stock and, of these, we usually have two at any one time undergoing restoration or renovation.

The sort of vehicles available nowadays usually need the odd metal repair, a bit of paintwork and some mechanical or interior work, so we focus more on this than complete restorations these days.

Running alongside this are the parts sales. The decent parts are getting harder to find, but we’ve built up a good network of contacts over the past 15 years, so still get a lot of interesting stuff through the doors. If we don’t have it in stock, we can generally source it through our wide range of contacts.

If you’re searching for a replacement original part for your VW, a body cut, rare accessory, or even an entire project vehicle, there are a number of places you can call upon rather than turning to the internet. Being involved in the VW scene since 1999, FBI VW Services not only have a lot of cool stock, but also the expertise and know how to back it up. The fact that Graham, Keith and Phil at FBI are all old friends and really into VWs goes a heck of a long way too, so we set our compass for Swansea to check out what’s in stock and find out what the future holds.

How did FBI VW services start?

I’ve been into VWs since before I could drive, so it was inevitable I’d turn my passion into a business. After finishing art college and university and a trip to California, where I found a lovely 1960 Mango Green Bus, I returned home, quit my job and went for it. In the early days we did a lot of repair work for customers in a smaller unit. Back then, we did a lot of Beetles and, living on the coast, there were always a lot of Bay Windows that needed welding, too. As the business grew though and the import side of things picked up, we decided to stop working on customers’ vehicles and focus solely on the cars we import. What this effectively means is we can choose our own timescales - if the mail order side gets busy, we can all down tools and focus on that for a while instead.

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Who works there at FBI?
There’s myself, Graham – I’m still very much hands on and do some of the metal repair and fitting / mechanical work. There’s also Phil Davies. We were friends before I started FBI, and he’s been here pretty much since the start. Another friend, this time from art college and university, Keith Usher, has also been here a long time and handles the majority of the metal repair, although he tends to bugger off to California for a few months of every year. As we’re all old friends, we all just do a bit of everything, and I know if I’m out of the shop everything will be handled just as well as if I were there.

What do you find yourselves working on the most?
There’s a lot of variety. At the moment there’s a Bay Camper undergoing a full repaint, new rubbers and some mechanical work, another Bus having a bit of metal repair and some paint blended in and we’ve just finished a 56 Beetle. It was a solid, original car that came to us with a bad respray, so we stripped it back to the original paint, gave the engine a top-end rebuild and did a lot of general recommissioning work on it. That’s just gone to a chap in Luxembourg. We seem to be selling a lot of the nice original cars to European customers at the moment.

Have you found anything interesting recently?
We had a lovely original paint 1950 Split Beetle a little while ago. It was lowered on original EMPI Sprint Stars but still on cable brakes with lovely patina. Apart from that, we have a few early Oval Beetles in stock and there’s a Montana Red...
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Have you found anything interesting recently? We had a lovely original paint 1950 Split Beetle a little while ago. It was lowered on original EMPI Sprint Stars but still on cable brakes with lovely patina. Apart from that, we have a few early Oval Beetles in stock and there’s a Montana Red Shop tour 1970 Westy fresh out of resto that is a very nice Bus – very, very pretty. The one car recently that got all our collective juices flowing was, unusually, an early Mk1 Golf. It was so different from anything we’ve done before that it just got all of us a little heated, although it still felt very much like a classic car to drive.

Plans for the future? To be perfectly honest, no. We’re quite happy with what we do and have a great time doing it, too. After the Golf we did recently, we will probably do a few early water-cooled cars in the future – it just seems like a natural progression for us, and the early stuff is getting very difficult to find now in good condition.
Product Focus

First published
Volksworld Camper & Bus magazine
2015
Drop shop

When it comes to lowering your Bay or Split Bus, there’s a world of options available. Here’s our pick of products to get your VW in the weeds the right way.

**Split Screen flipped spindles – £595 (–£200 when you return your original spindles)**

These ‘flipped’ spindles (so called because the king pin runs the opposite way to stock) come re-bushed, with refurbished king pins, reverse tapered track rod end mounts and custom billet grease caps. They drop the front of your Split (or link pin-converted Bay) 3.5 inches without the need for any other modifications. www.type2detectives.com

**Bay Window dropped spindles – £495**

Until quite recently, the only Bay Window dropped spindles available were either welded ones or ones using flipped balljoints. If you have a 1973-’79 Late Bay Window, or want to upgrade to the late-type discs, you can now buy brand new, forged spindles with a built-in 2.5-inch drop. Those currently available for 1968-’70, or 1971 /’72 Buses are still welded versions. Note: these spindles will widen the front track by 10mm per side.

www.milandearlybay.com

**Red 9 independent front suspension – from £2,062.50**

If you’re more interested in making your Bus feel more like a modern car to drive, then a Red 9 wishbone suspension might be for you. These kits bolt to your Bus’ chassis, replacing the beam, steering box and all associated linkages. They come complete from stub axle to stub axle and include tubular upper and lower wishbones, rack and pinion steering, column support brackets, bevel box, a universal-jointed link to the steering rack and all necessary fixings. The set up offers 7.5-inches of ride height adjustment and is adjustable for camber and caster. Track is reduced by 40mm on a Bay and 24mm on a Split.

Complete independent rear suspension kits are also available. www.red9design.com

**Adjustable spring plates – £244.99**

If you lower the front of your Bus, chances are you’ll want to bring the back down to match. These stepped, adjustable spring plates from T2D will lower your Bus and give you the ability to fine tune your ride height. They are also slightly longer to allow easier tracking of a lowered Bus. www.type2detectives.com

**Adjusters – £49.50 each**

If you’re planning on keeping a stock width front beam and just want to drop a few inches, then these CSP axle adjusters are perfect. Once welded in the small teeth allow for minor incremental adjustment, so they’ll lower or raise your Bus to the exact height you require. Perfect for fine tuning the ride height of a Bus lowered on dropped spindles. Two required. www.machine7.com

**Split Screen front tubs – POA**

If you’re going really low with your Split Bus you may need some tubs to prevent tyre-to-wheelarch rubbing. Trailer Queen Restorations (TQR) offer these neat tubs to fit ’55-’67 Buses, either Walk-thru or bench seat, that are designed to look as non-intrusive as possible. Bead rolled for strength and with a pre-drilled flange for ease of welding into place, these are the hot ticket for anyone who needs extra clearance on a heavily lowered and / or narrowed Split. TQR. Tel. 07977508907
This replacement Slam Beam from T2D is a brand new, jig built from steel that comes with Drtron bushing a raised center pin for improved ground clearance. These beams also require the use of a pair of forward/rear rock box, a universal joint to the pinion steering, column support brackets, from stub axle to stub axle and include associated linkages. They come complete replacing the beam, steering box and all mounts and custom billet grease bushings, a raised center pin for improved ground clearance, brand new, jig-built front axle that comes with Delron plates from T2D will lower your bus and match. These stepped, adjustable spring plates – £244.99 Adjustable spring discs, you can now upgrade to the late-type bay Window or want to – £595 (-£200 when you use these if you want to lower the rear of your bay and retain ride quality. If you're going low enough to need tubs on a split bus you'll need to address the steering box hanging down at the front of your bus. If you're going low enough to need tubs on a split, you'll need to address the steering box hanging down at the front of your bus. Note: because of the way they fit, these Csp axle adjusters are perfect. Once you return your original spindles, you can take, but the cheapest, and consequently the most popular, option is to run a pair of air shocks on the front with an onboard compressor. If you are considering the options, please speak with one of the specialists who can talk you through the process.

If you're more interested in making your bus real low and want to run your bus. We generally recommend using oil-filled shocks on the front of your Bus. You choose the length you need and the level you need to run your Bus. We generally recommend using oil-filled shocks on the front of your Bus. You choose the length you need and the level you need to run your Bus.

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Import Report
1968 Beetle

First published
VolksWorld magazine
2013
It's easy to make the mistake when buying a running, driving car of thinking it will go straight through an MoT, or will take just a day's work to get it back on the road. I'm guilty of this as much as anyone and still fall into the trap of running through in my mind what needs doing and then underestimating the time it will take to do.

Project '68 was a case in point. The car was solid, it ran, drove (albeit badly, and only onto the trailer) and it stopped. How bad could it be? The answer is not that bad, but the actual recommissioning work did take a fair bit longer than expected. The car had been sitting since the TÜV (the German equivalent of our MoT) ran out in 2011. The German tests are every two years, which meant it was last inspected in 2009. Add to this the fact the elderly lady owner was using the car less and less, then presumably passed away (it was purchased from a relative) then you have a possible four years of it being parked outside, in a ski resort, with little or no use.

After the long trip to collect the car, followed by buffing the paint — purely to make me feel a little better about purchasing the car — it was time to get serious and put it back on the road.

The first job was to get it running better. Initial inspection showed the engine bay to be full of leaves, the odd cobweb and pretty dirty and oily. The oil was black and, upon removing the rocker covers to set the valve clearances, was gunged up inside. Naturally, the oil was changed, and I took the opportunity to clean the oil strainer and fit new gaskets throughout. The rocker assemblies were cleaned up as much as possible, the valve clearances set and the rocker covers re-fitted with fresh gaskets.

All the service items — plugs, points, condensor, rotor arm and leads — were then rusted on the dynamo, leaves in the engine bay and caked-on dirt on the carb all signify an engine bay that has remained firmly shut for years. A good clean up is the first job on the list.
changed for new and the grimy carburettor was removed, cleaned thoroughly and rebuilt with new gaskets. The carb has zero play in the throttle spindle, leading me to believe it isn’t anywhere near as old as the car. To make all this work worthwhile, I drained out all the old petrol and fitted new fuel lines before attempting to start the car. It’s a good job I did as the old fuel hose was literally falling to pieces and the petrol that came out was discoloured and smelled bad.

**False economy**

With all this ticked off the list it was time to sort out the loud exhaust. Looking underneath confirmed the heat exchangers and silencer were still genuine VW ones and, whilst their condition was remarkably good, someone had fitted poor quality replacement tailpipes, and pushed them in too far, causing a rust hole to appear around one of the tailpipe sections. Whilst I would never normally advocate welding an exhaust, as it’s usually a false economy, being a genuine VW silencer I decided to do a localised repair. It helped that I had just removed a rusty exhaust from another car that was perfect in the area I needed, so after chiselling out the old tailpipes, which were seized in place and literally came out in pieces, I cut the rusty section out and welded in some nice new metal. This was followed by fitting two stainless tailpipes.

There was much anticipation when turning the key after all this work, only to find the car ran as badly as before. That’s when I called Martin at Ginger’s VW in Waterloo (www.gingersvw.co.uk) who popped round on his way home from work one evening and diagnosed a faulty vacuum unit on the distributor. With that sorted, the engine runs sweetly and the car is an absolute delight to drive. Normally, when recommissioning any car that has been standing idle, I would recommend at the very least replacing all four flexible brake hoses, as they have a tendency to swell internally with age, causing the brakes to bind. On this car though, all the hoses looked to have been replaced fairly recently, so I decided to just change the brake fluid and remove the drums to inspect the internals, all of which turned out to be fine. A careful test drive after re-assembly showed the brakes to be working well, so the car was a huge step closer to passing an MoT.

Next, it was time to tackle the seized wipers. When I first bought the car I switched on the wipers, which promptly moved half-way across the windscreens and stopped. This left no option but to remove the wiper motor and dismantle the linkage. To do this on a post-1966 Beetle, you need to first remove the fresh air box.

"I would never normally advocate welding an exhaust"

We also took the precaution of emptying the fuel tank of old petrol and fitting a new filter before topping the car up with some fresh stuff.

That’s not a new carb above, just the one on the left cleaned up with thinners. Looks better, eh? Use new gaskets when re-fitting.

We also took the precaution of emptying the fuel tank of old petrol and fitting a new filter before topping the car up with some fresh stuff.

Old, perished fuel lines are a fast way to an engine fire. Check and change if at all unsure.
and pipework and disconnect the control cables. With the assembly on the bench, one spindle was found to be seized so, once I had managed to remove it, it was cleaned up with some emery cloth and re-fitted with plenty of spray grease. Whilst the other spindle was free, it was thought prudent to dismantle and grease it up, too.

With the motor installed and working well, attention could turn to the washers. One of the washer hoses had split where it pushes onto the back of the switch, causing pressurised water to leak directly onto the fusebox. Not good! Trimming the perished end off the hose at the switch end and re-fitting it had the washers functioning, then cleaning out the washer jets with a pin had the water actually hitting the windscreen. We were on a roll.

**Brassed off**

Or so it seemed... The headlamps would only work on dipped beam and the column flasher didn’t function. Changing the original VW relay for a new one made no difference. It was at this point I noticed the brass contacts on the column flasher switch weren’t touching when the switch was operated, so off came the steering wheel. This clearly showed the problem – the brass contacts are riveted to a piece of plastic on the face of the switch, and the plastic was broken, meaning the contact was loose. As I was in a hurry, I fixed it with Araldite, reasoning I could fit a new switch at a later date. With the headlamps now operating correctly, I decided to replace the new headlamp relay with the 45-year old one I had just removed, reasoning that if it had lasted this long, it would go on for a few more years.

The final job before MoT time was to replace the lower balljoint rubbers as they were both split and this is now an MoT failure. Once again, thanks go to Ginger’s VW, who were kind enough to let me use their hydraulic lift to replace the balljoint rubbers, even supplying coffee and biscuits whilst I was there.

With all this work completed, the car was booked in for an MoT and passed. It was now time to register the car and press it into daily use.

**The use of a two-post ramp makes life much easier, but all the work we have done here is easily achieved at home with a trolley jack**

**A lack of maintenance will eventually lead to seized wiper arms. Dismantling and lubricating is the only answer**

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**Registering an import**

Registering an imported used vehicle in the UK is not as straightforward as it may seem. In the last year, however, a lot more red tape has been introduced, so it can now be a time-consuming process. In days gone by, you could take all your paperwork to a local DVLA office, together with the registration fee, then wait a maximum of three working days for a registration number.

Unfortunately, cost cutting at the DVLA means all local offices will be closed by the end of December this year. In preparation for this, all car registration operations were centralised to Swansea in July so, even if your local office is still in operation, your paperwork will all be sent to Swansea by second class post (including your driving licence and replaceable car documents). The target for processing has also now gone up to 14 working days. The best way to get it done in a more timely manner is to send all your documents to Swansea special delivery, and include a special delivery bag for their safe return.

**To register a used vehicle, you will need the following:**

DVLA form V55/5. This can be ordered online from www.dvla.gov.uk/dvlaforms

You can also get a vehicle registration pack from the same address.

A NOVA letter / certificate. If the vehicle has been imported from a country outside the EU, it will have been submitted through the new NOVA process and you should receive a letter stating this from your customs clearing agent.

If the vehicle has been imported from a country within the EU, you will have to submit it manually to NOVA at www.hmrc.gov.uk/agents/nova/online.htm You will not be allowed to register a car with the DVLA now until you have proof of NOVA registration. The registration must be done within 14 days of the car being imported to the UK.

A valid MoT certificate if the vehicle was built in 1960 or later. Pre-60 vehicles are now exempt from MoT.

A valid certificate of insurance.

Original vehicle documentation proving the date of manufacture or original registration in the country of origin. Alternatively, a birth certificate / heritage dating letter from VW.

Identification showing your name and address and photo ID.

The registration fee of £55 (plus six month’s tax if the vehicle is not exempt).

It helps to put a contact number with all the information in case there are any queries. If you want your original vehicle documentation to be returned, include a covering letter requesting it be returned.

Send to: DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1BA