

MAY 2007

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THE NEW MAGAZINE FOR THE VW BUS FAN

# Camper & BUS

## FAMILY AFFAIR

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Buses



**2** FREE VW BUS  
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belts. It's the law!

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MAY 2007 £3.95







## Quickfit fixes

Quickfit boss Stuart Quick has a wealth of knowledge garnered through years of fitting seat belts to cars – including classics and Camper Vans. He says the only real headaches come when anchor points are too rusty to provide a secure anchor point – and here, welding in new plates is the only solution.

Buses where the upright of the rear seat is located over the front of the engine inspection cover also present headaches, but Stuart says a rod can be welded in across the width of the Van, to which belts can be fitted.

On conversions where the seat cushions are fixed with Velcro, Stuart recommends making a more secure fitting to prevent submarining.

Meanwhile, on early Bays, where the rear seat is made of thin ply, he often beefs them up with structural reinforcement to make them a safer base for belted passengers. And if you're interested in an additional 'buddy' seat but want one with a three-point fitting, then Stuart can supply these and fit them to a rail on the floor, from £350.



**ABOVE** Quickfit fabricates all the belts itself, so can customise length and fittings to suit any application – allowing belts to be fitted to even the earliest Sambas

until April 1981 only require a two-point belt to be fitted. After April 1981, the driver and passenger furthest away from them must wear a three-point belt. After 1987, all front seat passengers must wear a three-point belt.

Legally, seatbelts are not required on fold-down seats in the back of Camper Vans, providing the vehicle is not overloaded. But the Department of Transport told us it is vital that passengers remain safe when travelling and it recommended that they remain "strapped in".

But dodging the regulations is missing the point, because where your family's safety is concerned it would be daft to look for loopholes.

What's more important is to establish whether your Van has seat point anchor points, and much of this will depend on whether your Camper was supplied as a panel van or a Caravelle – you can tell by the fit and shape of the rear side windows; on converted Vans there will be a section of rubber between the outside panel where the glass rubber sits, and the inside panel which will have a plastic covering strip to hide the edge where the hole for the window was cut. With the former you may need to add your own anchor points.

But whichever design you have, fitting new anchor points isn't a problem – Just Kampers and Brickwerks both sell mounting plates. You drill out the holes in the two flat sections on the sloping surface under the bench seat and fit the plate behind.

At the rear, there is

## Useful contacts

**BRITAX**  
www.britax.co.uk  
**VW HERITAGE**  
01273 495800  
www.vwheritage.com  
**BRICKWERKS**  
01484 519800  
www.brickwerks.co.uk  
**JUST KAMPERS**  
0845 1215656  
www.justkampers.co.uk

sometimes a seatbelt point behind the trim on the panel behind the side rear window, but this is only for a static belt and is usually too low to properly guide a belt over your shoulder. A common remedy on the side without furniture is to fit what's called a 'single sense' belt which can be mounted horizontally. The reel bolts directly to the anchor point and the webbing travels straight over your shoulder. The problem is, not only is it



**ABOVE** Belt length is crucial. The original lap belt buckle on the Westy was too long, and would fall over the hip bone, which would do damage

still too low, but also because it functions on belt speed alone, it really isn't very comfortable, or efficient, as a conventional dual sense reel. Needless to say, the other side, where there's usually a wardrobe, presents a bit more of a challenge.

## THE 3-POINT SOLUTION

On the side without wardrobes, fitting a proper inertia reel three-point belt is simple. You undo the two crosshead screws holding the external plastic vent grille in place, drill two holes (a lower one for the reel and the other one for a loop bracket) then place a threaded mounting plate behind so they can be secured. Quickfit used pop rivets to hold the plates in place while the reel and bracket were tightened, but you could just as easily use tape.

For the wardrobe side, GoWesty sells a kit which allows the belt to travel through the Westfalia furniture, but as it's a deep cupboard, the route's tortuous and we have to question its effectiveness. Additionally, you lose most of your storage space in the process. However, passing a belt can be done with shallower units, says Stuart, and here a door can be left slightly ajar to allow the belt to exit.

That leaves just one possible fix – one that's visually pleasing to the eye, safe, and doesn't impinge too much on space. And that's to mount the inertia reel on the curved inside surface of the roof, close to the rear window, and thread the webbing directly through the overhead cupboard. A twin section belt allows easy folding of the rear seat when converted into a bed. The picture sequence explains everything.

The whole job took a morning to do from start to finish, and cost around £250 (including belts) – but the peace of mind it provides is priceless.

Thanks to: Quickfit Safety Belt Service, Inertia House, Lowther Road, Stanmore, Middlesex, 0208 206 0101, www.quickfitsbs.co.uk.

# How it's done



**01** Our Westfalia already had under seat belt anchor points, but drilling new ones isn't a hassle because you can buy mounting plates with nuts



**02** The easy side first. Having removed the rear plastic air vent, we fitted two mounts in the rear quarter to mount the reel and bracket



**03** Annoyingly, the overhead cupboard has to come out to get access to the double-skinned section at the back where the reel mounts. A threaded plate has to be slid behind



**04** An angled spacer is made to allow the reel to sit properly on the curved surface at the back of the roof



**05** Our man marks and drills the fitting for the reel, fits the angled spacer and mounts the reel before cutting an aperture in the back of the cupboard for the webbing



**06** A suitable hole is cut in the base of the locker so the belt can exit properly. A specially adapted bit of trim will prevent any chafing

**07** Quickfit uses a belt extension which allows the seat to be conveniently folded without trapping any of the webbing. The buckle retracts out of the way. Very neat



**ABOVE** Customers send their original belts with fittings so that Quickfit can match them precisely, right down to the colour of the webbing



# BELT-UP!

**FITTING THREE-POINT BELTS** in the back of a Camper has puzzled many pundits, so we visited the country's foremost belt-buckling experts to find the perfect solution

WORDS AND PICTURES Ian Cushway

**H**ere's the deal. You've just bought a Camper Van and you're all excited about making some great trips to shows and weekend family outings. Then, slumping on the sofa – mug of tea in one hand, campsite guide in the other – you hit on a problem that's suddenly got you reaching for the classifieds again. It dawns on you with horror that there are no proper restraints in the back of your Van, which means that you and your family won't actually be going anywhere this year. But worry not, as where there's a will, Middlesex-based seat belt experts Quickfit (0208 2060101, [www.quickfitsbs.co.uk](http://www.quickfitsbs.co.uk)) will find a way.

"We fit belts to two to three VW buses a week on average – Splits, Bays, T25s, you name it," said Quickfit boss Stuart Quick. "There's very little we can't do, and we can even retro-fit belts using period webbing and chrome fittings – although we wouldn't recommend chrome for children's seats. Of course, making rear passengers secure in a Bus is even more important than in a saloon because they've got further to travel forward if you brake suddenly."

Comforted by his words, we went along to see Quickfit in action and get some insider advice on how to make your Bus safe in the back – even on the side which has wardrobes fitted.



**ABOVE:** You can swap your manky original seat belt fittings with shiny chrome replacements – anything's do-able

## IT'S THE LAW

It became compulsory to wear seat belts in the front of a car, where fitted, in 1982, and for children to wear rear belts in 1989. It became law for adults to wear rear belts in 1991. However, it was the introduction of tighter regulations concerning child safety last September that will most concern Bus families. And here's why. The latest set of rules state that, where seat belts are fitted, any child over three and under the age of 12 or under 1.35 metres tall must use an appropriate child restraint

**RIGHT:** Quickfit in Stanmore makes its own belts and can supply webbing in any colour to suit your Bus's interior



– and that means a booster seat or booster cushion. If they're taller, but under 12, it's OK – they can wear an adult belt without a booster. But here's the rub. You can't properly secure one of these with a lap belt, so you'll need to carry out some mods to your wagon to be able to fit three-point belt fitting – so that's out too.

If you have children under three, there are other options. For instance, Britax makes the Renaissance and Eclipse seats for children weighing between 9-18 kilograms, which can be secured via a lap belt which has its own harness. For younger children and babies, the only real option is to sit

them in a rearward facing seat in the front. Of course, you can't do this on vehicles with an airbag, but that won't affect us Bus boys. Lots of people suggest the Maxi-Cosi EasyBase for carrying children aged 0-12 months in the rear of Vans – the seat simply clips in. But checking the specs, this too requires a three-point belt fitting – so that's out too.

## GETTING TO THE POINT

Not all vehicles require seat belts. Specifically, Camper Vans with an unladen weight not exceeding 1,525 kilograms made prior to 1967 don't require front seat belts, while those made after that date up

## Going for a Römer

OK, so you've got lap belts but don't envisage treating your offspring to a ride in your Bus on a regular basis, and you don't want to modify your Van. Well, apart from sitting them on a booster chair in the front seat, there's only one other solution, and that's to use a Römer Vario, which can be used with either three-point belts or – get this – lap belts. It's suitable for children from approximately 15-25 kilograms (3-7 years) and the child is restrained via the safety table, which is fastened with the existing car seat belts. It costs £49.45 and you can buy it from [www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk](http://www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk).



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