

NOVEMBER 2007

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE VW BUS FAN

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SHOP TOUR CAMPER SALES

SHOP TOUR VW CAMPER SALES

WHAT'S IN A name? Doing exactly what it says on the tin may be adequate when it comes to varnish, but for something as special as a Camper it's reassuring to find a company that goes the extra mile – that's where VW Camper Sales comes in

Words James Peene Pictures Anthony Butler



Rob Williams (inset) and his Camper Sales business is a one-stop shop for anyone looking for pretty much box-fresh T4s and T5s

Like some latter day Stanley (the famous journalist and explorer, not Oliver Hardy's sidekick), it was our Editor, Ivan, who first came across VW Camper Sales for us. He was enquiring about a 'Go-faster' South African Type 25 Rob Williams was selling, although by the time Ivan was on the phone the go-faster Bus had already gone. Still, while Ivan had missed out on a new ride, I got a day out of the office and the chance to talk to Rob, and you get to read about what I gleaned from him right here.

It doesn't take a genius to work out what VW Camper Sales is all about; the clue is in the name. But what you can't tell from the name is the sheer amount of experience they can draw on. VW Sales might be what they're about, but Rob, the man at the helm, strives to provide so much more. You see, buying a vehicle is potentially the second biggest outlay most of us will ever make after our homes, and Rob goes the extra mile to make that a smooth and memorable experience (for all the right reasons).

Think for a second how you feel when you come up against a snooty salesman or disinterested/uninformed member of staff in a shop or showroom. It leaves a bitter taste in the mouth, doesn't it? And that's the polar opposite to the sort of



Painted exactly as the maker intended is not a feature to gloss over unless you're really into bare-metal resto's



As many owners will tell you, TDI could stand for totally dependable, cc engine

experience VW Camper Sales do their utmost to provide.

MAN AND BOY

VW Camper Sales has been in existence for the last three years. Until six months ago they called another unit a stone's throw away in Horley, Surrey home, but their new, larger premises is already looking as though it might be too small. Now three years might sound as though they're spring chickens, but Rob has more than 20 years of experience working with VW's finest. He started out as a Saturday boy at a local Camper conversion specialist and from washing Buses he moved on to working on their mechanicals, before graduating to carrying out conversions and then spending the last 10 years as the Sales Manager, so he already knew his onions before branching out on his own. The desire to do things his own way led to the birth of the business and he's never had cause to look back.

Of course, back when Rob started out, the Bus of the day was the Bay Window, so he's had plenty of experience of them, and has seen the wedge and T4 era come and go. Privately, he's owned everything from Crew Cabs and Pick-Ups to Beetles and everything in between, so you know you're talking to a man for whom this is more than just a way to pay the bills.

We don't sell Campers that need paint or dents fixing

TOUGH CRITERIA

Visit their Redhill showroom and, at any one time and you'll find around a dozen Buses to choose from. If there's ever any less than that it's for a very good reason, and that is because Rob is incredibly picky about the calibre of Buses VW Camper Sales offers. Sure, they're happy to take anything in as part-exchange, but if it doesn't come up to snuff it goes straight onto eBay. All of the vehicles sold by VW Camper Sales have to meet a very strict criteria. To earn a place on the VW Camper Sales' forecourt a vehicle must show low mileage, usually have just one former keeper and need nothing in the way of bodywork. When I asked if they have a paint shop Rob looked askance and replied, "We don't sell Campers that need paint or dents fixing". Fair enough.

What you get with one of their Campers, apart from a warranty and service with a smile, is the assurance that you're buying a well-sorted machine. "People can travel miles to see one of my Campers and they won't be disappointed when they get here," said Rob. "I only buy peaches and I know the vehicles I sell. Take the T5 in the corner, for example. It was owned by an elderly retired couple so is still like new inside and out. I never stock anything over 10 years old, as they're not the sort of the thing I sell. Today, that means mainly T4s and T5s and when the T5 first came out I immediately went out and bought two brand new ones from Volkswagen so I could see for myself what the differences were with the old T4."



Lift the lid at Camper Sales and you'll find Rob knows his VWs inside-out



NUTS AND BOLTS KNOWLEDGE

Customers come to a showroom looking for information on a vehicle, so a salesman should know what he's selling. If that vehicle's a T5, you can buy a used or a brand new one from VW Camper Sales. And whichever one you go for, Rob will take you through the finer points of your purchase. When it comes to Westfalias, Rob clearly loves the factory-built conversions.

"People might pooh-poo the Westy having the sliding door on the driver's side, but it makes no real difference. Unlike some British conversions, a Camper like this isn't a Panel Van at birth, but a specification more akin to a Caravelle. The shell has factory-fitted sliding windows, safety belt mounting points, rear passenger heater, passenger door pockets and many other refinements as standard.

"Volkswagen and Westfalia have invested millions into developing these vehicles and they're kitted out by proper German engineers. All the interior panels are proper moulded items and all of the seats have been crash tested. You can see the quality wherever you look."

You can rest assured Rob knows his way around them, and he's full of little hints and tips about owning them – the

sort of stuff someone in a VW showroom wouldn't know, but someone with two decades of experience would. Like how the seatbelts can get trapped when operating the rock 'n' roll bed, or how the fold-out table is easily damaged if not folded away correctly.

Tellingly, what Rob was most keen to impress upon me is that VW Camper Sales is trying to get away from the whole car selling shtick. He's not about shifting units and meeting sales targets but providing real customer service. If you buy a left-hand drive Camper from him it's not like buying one from someone who whips over to the continent to buy one on the cheap and shifts it on. The headlights are swapped for pukka right-hand drive dipping units, and he's had proper speedo templates manufactured to convert the faces to miles per hour. Details. And, with the brand new right-hand drive T5s he's now able to offer, Rob hopes to pick up the side of the market who were deterred by having the steering wheel on the 'wrong' side.

So whatever side of the Van you sit, you're sure to find a T4 or T5 to tickle your fancy at VW Camper Sales and buying one from Rob is sure to start get you off on the right foot.



Talking shop: Camper Sales' Rob (left) and Volksworld Camper & Bus' James Peene get down to business



Moving up in the world: a recent move to larger premises was a necessity for Camper Sales



Left: Yet another way Camper Sales goes the extra mile is by converting the speedo from kph to mph



You'll find desirable T4 and later T5 models on the forecourt



The late 'Cal' lookers from VW are much lusted after models

Developments in surfing and Camper motoring make happy bedfellows at Camper Sales



VWs in detail: To get intimate with a T5, Rob went out and bought two!!

Volkswagen and Westfalia have invested millions into developing these vehicles



Standing room only: something to shout about



Silver dream machine: for the modern VW fan

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