

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



1938 INTERNATIONAL D15R

It may have taken 23-years to complete the restoration of my D15R International, but the end result is more than impressive having taken it from the paddock to the showroom.

As strange as it may seem, I have never been involved with trucks or the transport industry in anyway prior to 1995. I am a dreamer, and have been so since I was a kid. Ever since watching vintage and classic cars pass by on their Sunday drives, I have dreamed of owning my own and driving with them.

Time just flew by me at a rapid rate, I built up a career, got married, raised a family and built a home. By the time I was actually in a position to realise my dream, the cost had exceeded my expectations. I had to rethink my options.

In 1938, Chamens Store in Condobolin, NSW, became owners of a brand new International model D15R tray-back delivery truck, which they used for the next quarter of a century.

Subsequent owners all lived around the Lake Cargelligo area of NSW, they were Marbour Brothers from 1965, the Hayward Farm from 1975 and then Ernest Hayes who owned the truck from 1994, the year before I purchased it from him.

The truck was manufactured in the month of September 1937 in the US as a 'flat-back cowli' before being exported to Australia. It was common practice for nations around the world to protect their home industries after the Great Depression, and Australia was no different. Truck chassis with grille, front guards, bonnet and flat-back fire wall were imported and the cabins were made and fitted by local Australian coach builders. The International D15R fitted this criteria.

Thursday, September 21, 1995, on page 87 of *The Land* newspaper an advertisement appeared "vintage trucks for sale, 1930 1 tonne International, very good order..." By the

following Saturday I was the D15R's fifth owner. The International was located in the Lake Cargelligo area in western NSW, and I was fortunate in getting the truck for a reasonable price. The truck had been in a paddock, open to the elements, and hungry livestock had been grazing on the upholstery. While the truck was 95% complete it needed a full ground up restoration. It was in a bad way when I first saw it, the cabin, mudguards and doors were full of red mud and rust, and the doors had no glass, window winders or door catches. The engine hadn't run for some time and the rubber seals, brakes and wiring had deteriorated beyond recognition, and the timber tray was rotten. I didn't know exactly where to start the restoration but the strange thing was I fell in love with the 'old girl'. I opened her own bank account from which I have paid all costs of her restoration.



In the beginning

The mechanic who serviced my everyday car was of some help initially, providing a place to store and slowly dismantle the truck. The guards, grille, radiator, bonnet, cabin and doors were removed, and the engine was taken out and sent to be completely rebuilt and converted to run on unleaded fuel. I removed the timber tray and took it home to be used as a template for the new replacement at a later date.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly, until the time the mechanics workload eased off and he and his assistants set about removing parts from the truck without recording where they were removing the parts from. Over time, vital, irreplaceable parts of the truck were lost, and I then had to spend a lot of time searching the internet for replacements, or organising for new parts to be made.

I didn't realise how big the problem was until the time came to check up on the radiator. The mechanic had sent it away for assessment, and then had forgotten to follow it up. By the time I was chasing up the radiator, the guy had gone out of business and the radiator had been thrown out along with other stuff.

As soon as I bought my own place with a big shed and plenty of workshop space, I moved all the parts stored at the mechanics across to my place, which allowed the restoration process to really be able to start moving ahead.

With the rebuilding of the engine underway and the truck essentially stripped, work could start, sand blasting the chassis, repairing and re-tensioning the leaf springs and overhauling the brakes. Not having the technical expertise myself, work on the suspension and brakes was executed by specialists in the field.

Building the timber tray

When the time came for me to build the tray, I was fortunate to have the framework of the original timber tray to use as a template. The old tray frame was sitting on its side leaning up against the wall in my shed. Taking measurements was a delicate matter, as the old twisted mudguards were still attached and tended to bite me. I must have measured each stick of timber on the original frame about a dozen times. Each time taking the dimension and writing it down then double checking that 1; I had measured correctly, 2; I had written the measurement down

correctly and 3; that I had applied the measurement to the correct designation – main chassis, beams, cross members or edge rails. Then when happy with my shopping list complete, I set off looking for the correct timber for the project, keeping in mind that the old timber was imperial size and the new framing timbers were in metric sizes. Kiln dried hardwood from a reputable timber yard would be required, and I wanted timber that would not twist and warp as soon as I got it home.

The old chassis beams were made up of two separate size timbers one on top of the other, being 4 x 2 inches and 3 x 2 inches. The later was shaped to accommodate the hump in the chassis over the rear axle. I made the executive decision to use a one-piece member 200mm x 50mm, and cut out the hump where required. This provided better stability and support for the cross members. Each of the chassis beams was 10ft long, just over 3 metres, and damn heavy for me to handle. Setting each beam alongside the chassis rail I scribed the shape of the rail on the side of the beam, then using a jigsaw with a suitably long enough blade I

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set about cutting out the required shapes. It was hard going and tiring work. It took about 5 hours over two days to cut the first piece, then taking several hours longer to cut the second piece, as the blade was blunt and kept ripping out of the machine. I also cut out a curved piece where the fuel tank filler pipe passed through.

The next task was to cut the shape in the beam where it cantilevered over the rear of the chassis. It didn't seem to take as long but it was still hard going even though I had mastered the knack, speeding up the process. All up it took about four weekends to complete all the curved work. My arms, shoulders and back needed a break after this

strenuous work, so I didn't touch the project for a month afterwards.

With all the curves cut out, I moved onto making all the square cuts. The cantilevered ends of the main beams and each end of the cross members had to have a 200 x 20 triangular wedge piece cut off the underside. Once marked up, the circular saw made reasonably short work of this step.

Next the fun part of putting the framework together and in place, for the marking out of fixing and bolt hole locations and the drilling the holes. Once again, the measurements were checked and triple checked before picking up the drill. With the frame

fixed down to the chassis the edge rails could be cut, drilled and bolted.

I took a short break while researching a source for the decking material. I wanted a pale timber deck with wide boards, finally deciding on 125mm x 19mm Stringy Bark. Before fixing the boards to the framework they were cut to the required length and trial fitted, allowing for an in-floor cool box between the main beams. Each board was coated with three coats of Tung oil floor finish, all round top, bottom and edges, lightly sanded between coats then set aside to fully cure. The framework was then dismantled and sent away for three coats of primer, being sanded between coats, and then having two coats of colour applied.

Once the frame returned home it was reassembled and bolted in place, then the boards were fixed down using stainless steel countersunk head screws – with all holes pre-drilled. The deck received a final light sanding and a fourth coat of Tung oil floor finish.



The Cabin

Initial repairs to the doors and guards were carried out by a panel beater recommended by a friend. Unfortunately, the result was less than satisfactory, and all work had to be re-done.

Restoration of the cabin was finally undertaken by the craftsmen at Warwick's Autobarn of Kenthurst, NSW. Warwick specialises in bringing classic vehicles back to better than new, with an eye for detail that is second to none, and close enough is just not good enough.

The firewall and rear wall were removed from the rest of the cab to reveal the full extent of the damage caused by rust. The damage was extensive. The cab was completely sand blasted, primed, repaired, lead wiped and then re-primed. The following items were replaced with all new hand-made sections or panels.

- 1 The rear main structural beam
- 2 Seat box
- 3 Double curved apron panels under door openings
- 4 Bulkhead behind the windscreen
- 5 Sill boxing under the windscreen
- 6 Structural door hinge boxing (both sides)
- 7 Double curved bottom rear corners
- 8 The jelly bean window was just a hole in the rear wall of the cab and needed reinforcement to stop the window glass from vibrating loose and falling out.

The doors were another story. Each door was a different size to the other and did not close properly into the opening. Previous repairs to the doors had to be re-repaired and fixed before proceeding. Both doors were

acid dipped. Warwick trimmed the openings in the cab, cut down parts of each door and modified the hinges until he was satisfied that they fitted the openings with the same clearance all round. New shaped panels were made and welded in to replace the rusted-out bottom parts of the outer door skins which were also heated treated to provide the required curves to match up with the curves in the cabin. Modification was also required to take different locks as the originals were broken and beyond repair, and replacements were impossible to source.

Nothing was left to chance with regards to previous repairs on the guards. The primer coats and bog was removed using an emery wheel. It took many hours of hard work, revealing that the inside of the guards were never sandblasted to remove surface rust, and welds were never ground smooth where rusted areas had been repaired. The guards were then dust blasted to remove surface rust without creating heat which would change the shape of the guard. They were then etch primed for correct repairs to begin.

By June 2013, a considerable amount of repair work had been achieved, and a trial fitting of the cab, doors and guards to the chassis took place. Adjustments still had to be made before Warwick was happy to apply paint – and that was 4 months away. By June 2014, the painted cab was fitted to the chassis.

During the three years that followed, the fitting of ancillary items such as electrics and upholstery was carried out.

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INTERNATIONAL



Work had almost reached completion by October 2017, marking 23-years since the restoration of the truck had begun with its dismantling. There was one thing still to do, and that was to start up the engine to see how it would run. After several revolutions it coughed into life. Even with some carby adjustments it still ran roughly for about 10-minutes then it stopped.. "epic failure". Sump oil mixed with coolant spewed all over the floor. There was a hole through the No.2 cylinder into the

water jacket. Long story short, I was fortunate to get hold of another engine in reasonable condition. The head was blocked, cylinders machined and I sourced new oversized pistons, rings and bearings. Within four months I had a rebuilt engine. Just to make certain that there was no chance of debris causing damage to vital parts of the engine, Warwick washed out the block with kerosene and used compressed air to blow out all chambers clear. The engine was sand blasted, painted and mounted into the engine bay and kicked over and ran without a hitch. In April of this year, the 1938 International D15R was registered and ready to be driven under its own power to shows to be appreciated by all, but mainly myself. *Michael Dodds



1938 INTERNATIONAL D15R

ENGINE

Make International
Model GRD-233
L-Head Cylinders Six
Displacement 232.65 c.inch/
approx. 3.8litres
Power 92hp @3400rpm

GEARBOX

Make International HDS
Type Synchronesh
Gears 3 forward

