

Bluebell Railway - Historic Wagons Strategy

Introduction

The Railway's current Rolling Stock Policy states:

The role of the historic wagon fleet is to provide an opportunity for the public to understand the importance, role and implementation of goods transport by steam railways. The policy is therefore to create and maintain a fleet of vehicles typical of the era, to provide representative goods trains for operational and display purposes.

The Railway also maintains an operating fleet of engineering vehicles for its own internal maintenance purposes.

The 2007 "Objectives, Aims & Plans of the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society" further state:

The C&W department will aim ...

v. To enhance the works and yard facilities to assist the repair and maintenance of carriages and wagons

...

vii. To restore and maintain brake vans and engineers' vehicles for service purposes

viii. To restore and maintain heritage goods vehicles for display at each station

and, in the context of Kingscote as a...

typical country station of the early days of British Railways Southern Region ...

To establish in conjunction with the museums department, a goods display on the dock with ancillary items in the goods shed and preserved wagons in the dock roads.

This strategy details how we consider that policy should be implemented, from the starting point of the vehicles currently operational, and awaiting restoration, and identifies gaps in the collection which it is considered should be filled as and when the opportunity arises.

We are here concerning ourselves only with the "historic wagon fleet", and not the engineering fleet, although clearly there are vehicles which are "historic", but which are also usefully employed for engineering purposes. There is no reason why some more robust vehicles such as well wagons, bo-rails and brake vans cannot feature in both roles.

Outline of the strategy

There are three clear historical periods which the Railway already presents, pre-grouping, grouping and early British Railways. We run locomotives and carriage sets, and have stations representing these three periods. Our wagon fleet is also capable of the same, so it is logical to consider a strategy such that we are better able to run goods trains representing each of these three periods. The "Objectives" clearly indicate that goods vehicles representing the early British Railways period, which we have not hitherto given much thought to, are just as important as those of earlier periods.

In addition to considering "period", wagons can be categorised by use and type. Open wagons were the most numerous type, and carried a wide variety of traffic, including in earlier times merchandise under tarpaulins which would later have been carried in covered vans. Tarpaulins should be fitted to early open wagons, since it is both prototypical, and helps conserve the body and underframe.

There were many other special use wagons, of which we already have some examples, and as many of these types should be represented in the fleet as is practical. In most cases, one example would suffice, coming from any period or railway.

There are good reasons for having a geographically diverse fleet, since wagons frequently worked through from other areas into the South of England, and such a mixture is necessary for a historically accurate portrayal of goods trains. Clearly there would be a preponderance of southern vehicles, and the current balance of the fleet represents this reasonably well. Any moves to dispose of non-southern wagons are generally deprecated for this reason.

Brake vans

Guards vans are both operationally essential and have heritage value in themselves.

In order to ensure there is always at least one van available for each period of train, it is necessary to have two from each period. In the case of pre-grouping vehicles, ideally the brake van should be of the same company as the engine used, so SECR, LSWR and LBSCR vehicles are required. The GWR Toad should be available for use when a goods train is hauled by the Dukedog (or a suitable visiting engine), and could also be used in a Grouping-period train.

In addition, the availability of vacuum-fitted vans is important since it gives the opportunity for brake van rides, as well as for engineering purposes. We should therefore retain all three such vans.

Pre-grouping:

5706	LSWR Road Van (1898)
11916	SECR "Dance Hall" (1923) [in need of overhaul]
11934	SECR "Dance Hall" (1923) [under restoration] - owned by SLL members
17908	GWR "Toad" (1913) [nominally operational]

Grouping:

55993	SR "Pillbox" (1930) [operational]
56290	SR "Queen Mary" Bogie Vacuum Brake (1936) [operational]

BR Period:

DS 62864	BR (SECR design) "Shark" Ballast Plough with vacuum brake (1949)
49018	WD "Pillbox", with vac brake (1942) [operational, in need of overhaul]

This last vehicle should be restored as BR M360328 (as it was from 1949)

Wagons available to form the three period trains:

The pre-grouping goods train:

3346	LBSCR Open High-Bar (1917) [operational]
16194	SECR 7-plank Open Goods (PBA 59252) [operational]
16358	SECR 7-plank Open Goods (PBA 58162) [dismantled for major repairs]
50899	SECR 5-plank Open High-Bar (PBA 60011)
87782	GWR 5-plank Open High-Bar – could also be used in Grouping train
2773	LSWR Covered Van
8112	LSWR Covered Van (1912)
8196	LBSCR Covered Van (1913) [operational]
1590	LBSCR (1908) van body
15750	SECR Covered Van (c1919) [operational]
567	SECR 2-plank Dropside Ballast Wagon [being rebuilt]

Grouping-period goods train:

5542	SR (SECR built) 7-plank Open Goods (PBA 59542) [operational]
9608	SR 5-plank Open (PBA 59425)
10013	SR 5 plank (built on LSWR running gear) (PBA 59239)
12058	SR 5-plank Open Merchandise Wagon (1946) [under overhaul]
30004	SR 8-plank Open Goods/Mineral (PBA 58164) [operational]
37786	SR 8-plank Open Goods (1939) (PBA 60026) [operational]
PBA 59685	PO Mineral, built by Cambrian Wagon Co. (possibly 1943)
PBA 66071	LMS 5 plank Open Merchandise Wagon (1934)
44611	SR Covered Van (1931 on LSWR running gear) [operational]
47588	SR Covered Van (1931) [operational]
39617	SR Motor Car Truck "ConFlat D" (1933)
57889	SR Bogie Bolster (1936) [under overhaul]
57949	SR Bogie Bolster (1944) [operational]
4497	SHELL/BP Class A Spirit Tank wagon (1930)
62002	SR Dropside Engineers' Wagon (1928) [operational]
100677	GWR Sleeper Wagon (1938) [operational]
61107	SR Well Wagon (1944 or 1945) [operational]
1748S	SR 12 Ton Hand Crane (1943) [operational]
1748SM	SR Match Wagon for Hand Crane (1943) [operational]

Early British Railways goods train:

411245	LMS 5-plank Open (1937/8, in BR condition) [operational]
474558	LMS 3-plank drop-side Medium Open (1937, in BR condition) [operational]
M480222	BR (LMS design) 3-plank drop-side Medium Open (1949) [operational]
B458525	BR steel drop-side "Medfit" Open (Ashford 1951) [operational]
B461224	BR steel drop-side "Medfit" Open (Ashford 1952) [operational]
B741381	BR "Pipefit" Dropside Open Wagon (1956) [operational]
524178	LMS Covered Van (1945) (MOD(Navy) 813)
570027	LMS Banana Van (1946) [operational]
B761349 or B772972	BR Pallet Van (1954 and 1956) – one of these should be retained for use in the British Railways-era heritage train.
1921	ESSO Class B Spirit Tank wagon (1942) in BR condition [operational]
B904134	BR 'Lowmac MU' Machinery Wagon (1957) [under overhaul]
87720	BR Insulated Fish Van (1960)

In addition, some Grampus wagons and/or Dogfish hoppers could be used in this train.

Vans

It is quite appropriate that some of the Railway's passenger-rated vans should be, on occasions, attached to a goods or passenger train. Either they or some vacuum braked wagons might be used prototypically as a "fitted head" behind the locomotive on a goods train. The Bluebell practice of only using one guards van, and shunting it to the rear of the train during run-round frequently marks us out from other railways. The shunting of carriages or a fitted head when a mixed train is formed, also adds interest for the visitor, and is consequently both appropriate and worthwhile as part of the run-round procedure.

So far as SR passenger rated vans are concerned, a van train might consist of 2 BYs, 2 PLVs, 2 CCTs, the bogie scenery (elephant) van and the GBL. The SECR PLV could operate with the pre-grouping wagons.

Priorities

Clearly beyond completion of the overhaul of the Bulleid wagon, SECR 2-plank and 7-plank, and the Lowmac, there is a fairly free choice as to what wagons should be overhauled next. The pre-grouping train might be extended by the overhaul of the SECR 5-plank, the GWR open and one of the LSWR vans. The SECR Dancehall brake and WD pillbox could both do with overhauls now that the Queen Mary is available to undertake footplate days and ways or engineers duties. Tarpaulins should be fitted to the SECR open wagons, and the SR-built 7-plank repainted to its appropriate livery once more actual SECR wagons are in service. Restoration of the LSWR road van to traffic should also be a priority.

For the SR-period train, the 5-plank serving as “Scruffy” should be re-habilitated in the medium term. The older LMS wagon is capable of being overhauled to original condition, as is the Shell-BP tanker. The Conflat should be restored complete with appropriate container, and the bo-rail, the overhaul of which was started, should be completed at some stage. The Bulleid well-wagon should be returned to SR condition. The steel-sided PO wagon is a unique survivor and deserves inclusion in this train.

Priorities in the BR-era train should be to build this up to the state where it can sensibly be used along-side the other two. Overhaul of both the Shark brake and the currently operational WD brake (which was in BR service, but never SR, and should be restored to that authentic condition), together with the fish van and one of the Pal-Vans will be a start here, with the addition of a 16-ton mineral wagon which has long been considered a major omission from our fleet.

It should be noted that some of the numbers chosen for unidentifiable PBA wagons have been carefully researched as being appropriate for the vehicle, and from a wagon withdrawn in the year that the wagon in question went to Bristol. On occasions re-numberings have been applied on a whim, which has not always resulted in appropriate numbers being carried.

Possible Disposals

GWR Tool Van No. 92 of 1922 – this is not a typical goods train vehicle, and if not required for use as a tool van for the steam crane etc, should be disposed of.

Second Pal-Van, since we only envisage retaining one example of this innovative, but unsuccessful, design. Should be broken for spares, although experience shows that these are not easy vehicles to break up!

Shell-BP Class A Petroleum Products Tanker No.1603 of 1965 – probably for disposal once no longer required for water supply at Kingscote.

Additions to the fleet

The Railway’s agreed policy, so far as carriages are concerned, states:

A “one out, one in” policy is operated to prevent overcrowding by unused or unrestored vehicles. Additions to the fleet will be agreed to only if they contribute towards the objective of improving the quality or historic breadth of the fleet.

Up to now there has been no such formal policy in place for wagons, so it is proposed that this policy should also be applied. Additions to the fleet are thus only proposed where they fit with this policy by improving the historic breadth of the collection.

Vehicles of which an example should be acquired as and when they might become available are:

Any further items of LBSCR goods stock which might become available, especially open wagons and a brake van. This is an open-ended requirement for the present, since it seems unlikely that we could obtain “too many” LBSCR goods vehicles during the currency of this policy.

Cattle wagon – any railway, condition or period due to rarity

Private Owner wooden-bodied open wagon

SR meat or other specialised-traffic van

SR shock wagon

SR plywood-bodied goods van

SR (SECR pattern) 4-wheeled machinery wagon

BR standard 16-ton mineral wagon

BR standard goods van

Further details of the reasoning behind each of these is given in a detailed note, as Appendix 1.

Agreed by Rolling Stock Sub-committee, 15 March 2008

Adopted by the BRPS Committee, 30 May 2008

Appendix 1

BLUEBELL RAILWAY CARRIAGE & WAGON ROLLING STOCK COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACQUISITION OF NON- PASSENGER ROLLING STOCK

a) to h) below are vehicles agreed at the rolling-stock sub-committee meetings held on 1st August and 12th September 2004 as ones which should be added to the Railway's collection to broaden its scope if the opportunity arises. Because they contribute to the enhancement of the historical range of the collection, they qualify as additions to the fleet under the 'one in one out' policy. i) is a further addition, made in the light of discussions held in the formulation of the present document.

It is not presently intended that the acquisition of such vehicles should be approved in advance by the Railway's management, but a rapid decision by e-mail discussion will be required in such cases, so that action may be taken immediately on any offer of the vehicle types listed.

It is envisaged that it will take quite a few years to achieve all of these aims.

a) Cattle Wagon

A typical visiting wagon, to be found at any rural station. All our stations had cattle docks.

Of considerable educational value, it emphasises that at one time everything was transported by train.

An opportunity to purchase one was lost recently because there was no authority to acquire one.

Very few cattle wagons have survived. Any vehicle that may come to our attention is unlikely to be Southern or Southern type. It may only be possible to acquire a body which has been used as an animal shelter in a field. A body presents a further challenge as cattle wagons were built to a non standard length.

b) I6T BR Standard Mineral Wagon

A feature of any post-nationalisation goods yard. Hundreds of thousands were built in about twenty years to replace the wooden bodied wagon fleet for the traditional handling of domestic, industrial and export coal traffic.

Educational value: demonstrates the past method of delivering domestic fuel in a form virtually unknown today.

There are many survivors at various sites, many in a fairly decayed condition.

Any acquisition would probably require complete replating but this was common practice in the later BR lives of these wagons. Any acquisition should be an early, unfitted example as the later vacuum braked wagons had limited use and short lives.

c) Wooden-bodied, Private-owner Mineral wagon

The all-wood 12/13T (or less) predecessor of the 16T wagon above. Before world war II these wagons were owned by the trader who used them and painted in their own often colourful livery.

Education value is similar to that of the steel mineral wagon. It also illustrates the early railway custom of traders providing their own vehicles to carry their goods. Under privatisation this practice has again become more common.

A few all-wood bodied wagons do survive on various sites generally in a very decayed condition. Any acquisition would probably require a complete reconstruction (as the Brighton van). We did have two of these wagons but decay and lack of interest led to their demise.

d) Any Brighton wagon

To strengthen the Brighton imprint on our preservation activities.

Educational value: to illustrate that when virtually all goods transported inland went by rail and that the railway company had a fleet of wagons to meet trader's requirements.

A few Brighton wagons do survive on other sites. These are generally high opens like our existing wagon and have also been acquired from military sites.

Again any acquisition is likely to be decayed and require the same treatment as the Brighton van which has already been restored.

In pursuance of this objective the body of a second Brighton goods van has recently been acquired.

e) SR Meat or other specialised-traffic van

Represents the pre-nationalisation railways' efforts to provide vehicles for perishable goods originating within their geographical areas (e.g. Southampton Docks – owned by SR).

This vehicle type is not represented in preservation. At this late stage, can only be acquired as a grounded body.

f) SR Shock Open

The Southern was the second company to adopt this wagon type in an attempt to prevent damage to consignments during transit.

Educational value, illustrates a railway company's attempt to meet its customer's requirements. Also shows unusual wagon construction practice.

g) SR plywood-bodied goods van

Represents post-war "Bulleid" era of goods rolling stock design.

Hardly represented in preservation. At this stage, may have to be achieved by matching a grounded body to separate underframe or running gear.

h) SR 4-wheeled machinery wagon

An occasional visitor to any rural station with end loading facilities which our stations had. Typical load would have been delivery of bulky farm machinery.

Educational value, illustrates that the railway was obliged to be available to carry all classes of goods.

SECR pattern. Several examples exist at other preservation sites. This was the only type of special wagon the Southern Railway built in any quantity.

i) BR standard goods van

Although ubiquitous elsewhere in preservation, that is because they were such a common vehicle. They were to be found in virtually every mixed goods train. It is thus an obvious vehicle to acquire to enhance the breadth of the collection and the early-BR period train.

As stated the above list is intended to broaden the scope of our heritage collection. It is not intended to be absolute but a guidance note so that appropriate opportunities can be pursued without delay.