

WHEATHAMPSTEAD

The story of the wagon



The nameplate on the wagon shows the number 118718. This tells us that it was designed and built in Swindon in 1931 for the Great Western Railway (GWR). Known as a "four wheel five plank open", it was one of the commonest types of wagon on the GWR and was used for carrying general merchandise or stone such as limestone or granite. When the railways were nationalised in 1948, it could have been used by British Railways anywhere in the country and

for any general purpose until it became redundant. It was later bought as a derelict by the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway Ltd from whom we bought it, at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, in 2012. Thanks to John Titmuss who paid for the wagon.

The first job was to strip off all the rotten wood-work and loose ironwork. This was done at the Winchcombe workshops so the bare frame could be sand-blasted to remove the rust and given two coats of priming paint with a rust inhibitor.



The wagon was then transported to Wheathampstead on a low loader and, on an exciting day in March 2013, it was hoisted by crane up over the trees and down onto the rails that we had laid in 2012. Thanks to T&B (Contractors) Ltd who paid for and arranged the lift.



Restoration

Once the wagon was on our site, work could begin. While we were working, it became apparent that many years of hard labour by the wagon had resulted in parts of the ironwork becoming bent and distorted so repairs were needed before the woodwork could be added.



Painting

The first job was to paint the ironwork. We applied two undercoats and an additional rust-proofing coat where it was needed (especially under the floor) plus two black topcoats. Each coat took about 50 man-hours to apply, the detail of the wheel spokes being particularly fiddly. The paint is made to a special BR specification for rolling stock.

Complete restoration took 12 months.

Woodwork

Most of the planks are 7" wide by 2 1/4" thick, with one in each section being 10 1/2" wide. These were machined specially for this job since the sizes are no longer in standard use. We ordered 150 metres of planks, cut into suitable lengths. Each one of these had to be cut to shape to fit over rivets and distortions in the frame from years of work. Each plank was then given three coats of preservative with the painted sections having two preservative coats, one undercoat and two topcoats. The lettering is protected with a coat of lacquer. The planks, most of which were paid for by our generous sponsors, are fitted to the frame using more than 250 bolts.



Technical information

The wagon specification

Origin:	Great Western Railway
Type:	5 plank open wagon for general merchandise, granite or limestone
Build date:	1931
Serial number:	118718
Load weight:	12 tons (upgraded to 13 tons during World War Two)
Tare weight:	5-16-3 (5 tons, 16 cwt and 3 qtrs.)
Wheelbase:	9 feet (axle to axle)
Over head stocks:	17 feet 6 inches
Height from rail:	7 feet 3 inches

Mechanisms

The ingenious coupling mechanism under the floor is designed to ensure that there was no strain on the main frame of the wagon. As you can see in the photograph, a single bar connects the hooks at each end, with a coil (or "helical") spring in the middle to absorb the shocks when the train stopped and started. This bar is completely detached from the frame of the wagon.



Also under the floor are four shock-absorbers, one for each of the four buffers.

Brakes

As you can see on the wagon, there is a hand brake operated by a white handle on each side.



Sponsors and volunteers

The project team (Eddie Cornell, David Johnston, Patrick McNeill, Terry Pankhurst and Peter Ryan) would like to thank the many residents (too many to mention) who have helped us restore the site giving up their spare time, labour and expertise.

We would also like to thank (in alphabetical order) the following for their generous support for the platform and wagon restoration project:

Andrew Robley, Bertram Coates, Carl Sturges, Cutler & Woolf (Steel) Ltd, Dennis Toyer, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway volunteers, Harpenden Recovery Service, Ian Scott Photography, John Burgess, John Titmuss, Michael Ward, Peter and Sue Holland, Richard Dawes, St Albans District Council, T&B (Contractors) Ltd, The Jarvis (Harpenden) Charitable Trust, Tony Budge, Wheathampstead & District Preservation Society (WDPS), Wheathampstead for Enterprising Business (WEB).

Wheathampstead Parish Council who own and maintain the site, and have given their full support to the project from the beginning.

Dedications

In order to raise sufficient funds to restore the wagon we asked Wheathampstead residents to sponsor individual planks. In all there were 35, each costing either £100 (end planks) or £60. We are grateful to these sponsors who have helped to make it a real community project and added a personal touch to the completed railway wagon.

Plank 1 Dedicated to the Holloway Family of East Mount	Plank 2 In Loving Memory of Ralph Thomas Stoker and Grace Lilian Stoker	Plank 3 Sponsored by Brian and Joan Joyce
Plank 4 In Memory of Charles & Marjorie Rowe of Waterend	Plank 5 Sponsored by Annie Brewster Mayor of St Albans City & District 2013-2014	Plank 6 In Memory of Elizabeth Anne Johnston 1920-1986
Plank 7 In Memory of Pat Robinson (1930-2001) George Robinson (1926-2001)	Plank 8 Sponsored by Peter Day	Plank 9 Sponsored by Dr Mark Patten Medical Director
Plank 10 For Luton and Dunstable Hospital	Plank 11 For the Duggett & Newland families past, present and future. 2014	Plank 12 Sponsored by The Whiting Family
Plank 13 Sponsored by Edna & Ken Lark	Plank 14 Sponsored by Joanne & David Davies	Plank 15 Sponsored by Kirsty O'Neil Fuchsia Pink
Plank 16 Sponsored by Peter and Sarah Ryan	Plank 17 Sponsored by Hazel Poulter	Plank 18 Sponsored by A D Practice Ltd. Quality & imagination in the built environment
Plank 19 In loving memory of Alfredo Fernandes Le Moulin (1910-2014)	Plank 20 Sponsored by Corinne Heath	Plank 21 In Memory of Gwen & Ernest Whitehouse Who Loved this Village
Plank 22 Dusty Loves it Up Here!	Plank 23 Sponsored by Peter and Jan Woodhams	Plank 24 Sponsored by Philip and Linda Halford
Plank 25 In Loving Memory of Graham Lambert (1929-2010) He loved to walk this path	Plank 26 In Memory of Judith Millac 1934-2012	Plank 27 Sponsored by Nic Homan and Vicky Puttock
Plank 28 Sponsored by Paul, Hannah, Isabelle and George Nichols	Plank 29 In Loving Memory of Frederick Stanley Bangs Love Dave, Sue & Family	Plank 30 Sponsored by Cassidy & Tate Estate Agents, Wheathampstead
Plank 31 Sponsored by Patrick and Jenny McNeill	Plank 32 In Loving Memory of Charles George Hearl and Daisy Laura Hearl	Plank 33 Sponsored by The Whitwoods: Norman, Jean, Jenni and Sophie
Plank 34 Sponsored by Leo & Margaret Holloway	Plank 35 Dedicated to T. Brewster Georgina & Joseph Moore Twin grandchildren. X	

How to identify a plank:

Planks are numbered top to bottom beginning to the right of the open door and moving anticlockwise around and facing the wagon.

