

# WD GOODS BRAKE VAN M 360329

M 360329 is a fictitious number for this brake van which was purchased from the Army where it was allocated the number WD 11030 and later renumbered Army 49012. A batch of 20 similar 'Pill Box' brakes were constructed for the Ministry of Supply during the Second World War in 1942.

Vacuum braking cylinders added to the basic Southern Railway 'Pill Box' design along with a large sand hopper at each end to aid braking capability on slippery rails. An emergency brake application valve was fitted inside the cabin for the Guard's use. The profile of the edge of the roof was non-standard on these vans, which the Ministry of Supply termed "Express" Goods Brake Vans.

M 360329 formed part of Lot number A1852 which related to a batch of 20 vans, to design diagram 1579, and was placed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1941. They were built at Ashford Carriage & Wagon Works being released to traffic on March 1942. As the vans were "privately" owned they had to be registered with SR number WD(S) 1030, to travel to their allocated WD depots. M360329's original painted number was WD 11030.

Over succeeding years, the War Department became the Ministry of Defence with the Army taking over responsibility for all rail operations. Our van ended up as ARMY 49012. It's duties over many decades has been impossible to detail although it is known it was used on inter-depot military goods trains. However it ended up at a World War Two explosives depot that was built with dozens of underground bunkers which may have housed chemical weapons.

The Yardley Chase Ordnance Explosives Stores Depot (OESD) on Denton Road south east of Northampton was constructed by McAlpine Ltd in 1942 to store bombs and other missiles. According to experts at Sywell Aviation Museum, 36 bunkers in two distinct groups were built at the site along with associated railway lines.

The bunkers measured around 39 ft long and 20–25 ft wide - spacious enough for rail and vehicle access for bomb transfers. The two munitions storage buildings are surrounded by water-filled moats and earthen banks, with both measures in place to help limit the damage of a blast in the event of an accident. The eastern and western sites were connected by a rail track, as was each bunker. Three diesel shunters were purchased for use on the site, which closed for depot purposes in 1980.

M 360329 was purchased from there in 1981 and moved to Swanage. A solid fuel stove was fitted for both heating the cabin as well as warming food/drink. The original vacuum braking equipment has proved most useful on goods and permanent way trains over the years.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Updated by Pete Short 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022