

BR 12T PALVAN B781861

In 1960, B 781861 was built at BR Wolverton in Lot No. 3310 to design diagram 1/211. This design weighed 10 Tons empty and could carry up to a 12 Tons load. The four wheel chassis was equipped with vacuum brakes and a lever operated hand brake with Oleo buffers. It was coded VPV. Between 1952 and 1961 BR workshops at Faverdale and Wolverton constructed a total of 2,388 "PALVAN" S vans

The fitment of large 8ft 5ins side doors was one of BR's first attempts to respond to changing methods of goods handling. It was intended to cope with cargo, moved by fork-lift trucks, on wooden pallets. They had steel floors and offset loading doors. Unusually the bodies were made entirely from plywood which, unfortunately, proved insufficiently robust to cope with frequent loading of palletised goods.

Unfortunately, with small loads being loaded at one end or on one side only resulted in rough riding which risked the possibility of derailment. In fact, a serious derailment involving PALVANS did bring into question the stability of these vehicles while running at speed. After a thorough investigation their maximum speed was reduced to 35mph across the whole network.

They had a very short life and were replaced by the far stronger diagram 1/217 'VANWIDE' vans. After withdrawal by BR, B781861 was purchased for use by the Ministry of Defence. It was numbered WGB 4255 and, at some later stage was re-numbered ARMY 47469.

It was purchased from MoD Marchwood Port in Hampshire and moved to Swanage. Refurbishment was completed and, currently, B 781861 contains crane spares for both FBC1 and FBC 2 at Norden.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 12th October 2021