

PBA FLAT WAGON No. 131

This flat wagon was purchased from the Port of Bristol Authority sale of wagons in 1981.

No identification of its original number has been found but, from evidence on the underframe, it is possible that it was once a tank wagon of some sort. The tank must have been cut off, before or during service with the PBA, to create a flat wagon. PBA 128 is not fitted with vacuum brakes relying merely on a handbrake lever on either side to secure it in sidings for example.

It is also equipped with 'Instanter' couplings. These were first patented as long ago as the 1890's and were widely introduced in the first years of the 20th century. In this system the centre link of the three link chain was in the form of a cast steel distorted triangle, almost a Y or T shape. In one position the longest side of the triangle formed the link, in effect loose coupling. If the wagons were shunted together, however, a shunter could move the centre link round until the shorter side of the triangle formed the link. In this position wagons were held with buffers just touching, eliminating some of the banging about during journeys.

The Swanage Railway used it, in its early days, to carry Permanent Way items such as sleepers, etc. Later, a former lorry-mounted HIAB hydraulic crane was obtained and installed, with a petrol engine to power the hydraulic system, on one end of this wagon. It was very useful in lifting items weighing up to around one Ton. Counter-balancing weight of scrap concrete sleepers was present on the wooden floor and the crane had hydraulic outriggers to further aid stability during lifts.

It is currently out of service awaiting thorough refurbishment.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 18th October 2021

Checked by Jeremy Weller 13th June 2022