

## SR 12 TON VENTILATED VAN S 48367

This vehicle was part of a batch of 500 vans ordered by the Southern Railway (SR), on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1935, as part of Lot No. A866. It was built at Ashford Carriage & Wagon Works to design diagram 1458 which stemmed from the South Eastern & Chatham Railway period. These were constructed very quickly as the entire batch took only around four months - from May to September 1936. On entering service the batch was numbered 48277 to 48776.

48367 had body planking of even width fitted to the (by then) standard 4-wheel, 10 ft wheelbase chassis. A lever hand brake was fitted to either side operating a total of four brake shoes. It was also fitted with automatic vacuum brakes, using one standard 18 inch SR design brake cylinder, and the vehicle weighed 7 Tons 9 cwt in working order. It was designed to carry a load of up to 12 tons evenly distributed across the wooden flooring.

A total of 2,885 similar 12 Ton Ventilated Vans, to Diagram 1458, were constructed by the Southern Railway. Unfortunately, nothing of S 48367's working life with SR or BR has been unearthed until withdrawal from Capital Stock.

S 48367 was then moved into Departmental Service, apparently on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1947, to serve as a mobile welding vehicle at Ashford Locomotive Works and being allocated the number 421S. It would have been fitted a generator as well as racking for various gas bottles and other equipment to undertake this role.

After Nationalisation, BR renumbered the van to DS 421 but, on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December 1964, it was relegated to Internal User status receiving the number 082268. It was still noted at Ashford towards the end of 1982 but it is uncertain if it was then still actually in use or just waiting in a siding for the decision on it's future.

After being 'condemned' finally, it was purchased from Ashford by the Tenterden Rolling Stock Group arriving on the Kent & East Sussex Railway in 1984 where it was restored to original SR livery. It stayed there for many years before being bought by two members of the (then) Southern Steam Trust.

It moved to Swanage in January 2000 and, in 2004, it was repainted into post-1936 SR livery [complete with small insignia] before resuming it's former duties as a stores vehicle for the Swanage Railway's Carriage & Wagon Department. At the same time, it received two pairs of replacement doors.

Coming more up-to-date, S 48367 is currently undergoing a complete bodywork rebuild in the Goods Shed at Swanage. The even-width panelling planks were found to be in worse condition than anticipated on both sides and ends. Much of the beginning of 2022 saw much time spent in trying to remove hundreds of rusted-in screws.

During the early part of 2023, the one-day-a-week volunteer wagon gang continued to rebuild SR box van S 48367. All replacement bodyside planking was completed and, as at June, only one set of side panels and one end needed to be refitted. One set of doors were found to be salvageable and these were rubbed down and primed.

However, the other set of doors were more than a little rotten so a new pair were made. Once fitted and primed the surfaces were prepared for undercoat, top coat and varnish.

During this time, discussions continued as to the final livery.

A contact was made with the Transport Museum at Wythall, north Worcestershire – near Birmingham. In Hall 2 they have a large collection of battery electric vehicles one of which is an Express Dairy milk float and, coincidentally, it has a Bournemouth & Parkstone connection.

The Museum's history page mentions that it:

*“.. may look extraordinary today but, in London and much of the south of England, the [Electruk] 'Rider Pram' once reigned supreme in its field. Express Dairy at one time ran well over 2000 battery-electric trucks in the London area. T H Lewis Ltd of Watford, owned by Express Dairy from 1931, constructed a huge number of them, assisted by other manufacturers.*

*The exceptionally small wheels help to give a low deck height and improve turning in confined streets and courtyards. The cab and body are made of aluminium. Express didn't consider busy roundsmen had time to sit down between stops so the trucks can be driven while standing or sitting, neither comfortably! RLW 610 belongs to a contract for 168 placed with Ross Auto & Engineering which all carried Helecs Vehicles chassis plates.*

*RLW 610 was sold in the mid-1960s to the Bournemouth & Parkstone Co-operative Society. It was resold in March 1978 to a Bournemouth private dairyman. Mr Eric Read had just the one truck for his delivery round under the name Muscliffe Farm Dairy [not far from Throop Mill]. He sold the business to Unigate Dairies in July 1990.” It was then sold to a private collector in 1983 before being passed to the Museum in 1988.*

Although it is understood that our van, S48367, was not one of the three similarly-designed SR vans to carry this striking Express Dairy blue livery (with white lettering) it was decided to paint it thus to provide an historical record for future generations to admire.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Updated by Pete Short; George Moon and Jeremy Weller  
Acknowledgement also to the Wythall Museum webpage:  
<https://www.wythall.org.uk/vehicles/vrlw610.asp>

Further updated 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024