

SR 8 PLANK GOODS WAGON S 59342

This vehicle is something of an enigma. The Port of Bristol Authority, from whom it was purchased, kept no record of their wagons' original numbers which is of no assistance to historians.

Purely from the look of it, PBA 59342 appeared to be a typical example of the 8-plank open goods wagon prevalent from London & South Western Railway (LSWR) times through to the Southern Railway (SR). They were built to carry general merchandise although, if no purpose-built mineral wagons were available, it could be used to carry coal.

PBA 59342 has the characteristic 3 part side door, and general styling, used by LSWR but it is impossible to ascertain confirmation of vehicle identity. However, it is probable that it 'only' dates from the SR period as there are some signs indicating that it might have been built to SR's design diagram I379.

The only details ascertained on arrival from Bristol were that it had a 9 ft wheel base; eight plank sides and ends; weighed 6 Tons 8 cwt empty and was painted in an all over matt light grey livery with the number PBA 59342. Probably it's carrying capacity would be something like 10 or 12 Tons. Not much to go on.

Incidentally, under the Bristol Dock Act 1848, Bristol Corporation purchased the Bristol Dock Company, including City Docks, meaning it became the responsibility of the Docks Committee under the commercial title of the Port of Bristol Authority.

The purchase of Avonmouth and Portishead Docks occurred in 1884; Royal Edward Dock was constructed in 1908 and Royal Portbury Dock in 1972. Over the years, the PBA amassed a collection of different types of wagons and vans from various railway companies, many at knock-down prices, for use moving goods around their docks system.

In the 1970s Bristol's City Docks closed as a commercial working harbour and the Council took full control from the Port of Bristol Authority. Following a period of substantial losses, Bristol City Council sold Avonmouth and Portbury Docks on 150 year leases to First Corporation Shipping in 1991.

Quite a few vehicles were bought by, and still survive on, heritage railways. Part of the former PBA railway complex is operated now by the Bristol Harbour Railway, a heritage railway operated by Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives.

Having been purchased for use on the Swanage Railway in 1981, 59342 joined 37064 in moving locomotive ash and clinker, from the Swanage shed area, and being unloaded along the line to help 'bolster' various embankments as well as create safer walking routes. This task is now undertaken using redundant skips moved by our road/railer machines thus allowing 59342 to form part of our Steam Galas demonstration goods trains.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 16th October 2021

Checked by Jeremy Weller 13th June 2022