

# **GWR 'TOAD' 20T GOODS BRAKE VAN 17861**

Great Western Railway (GWR) 20 Ton Goods Brake Van 17861 was built in May 1914 at their Wagon Works in Swindon to design diagram AA13 as part of Lot No. 779. This was a batch of thirty 4 wheel brake vans having a 16ft wheelbase. Diagram AA13 was updated so that the verandah half-height wooden sides and ends were replaced with steel sheeting.

The van's total body length was 24 ft and, in working order, weighed 20 Tons. Unlike other companies Goods Brake Vans, the GWR's unique single verandah design meant that they had to be turned before return journeys. Incidentally, 'Toad' was the GWR telegraphic code for a brake van.

It has not been possible to discover anything unusual for 17861's usage during GWR and British Railways revenue earning service. After withdrawal, BR moved it to Departmental Service becoming DW17861 around 1964.

The open verandah was enclosed with wooden planking and inward opening full height doors (one added on each side). Two LPG bottle holders were installed at one end, under the solebar, to supply gas cooking equipment, etc. Orange window curtains were fitted at the sides and ends as well as to the doors to ensure privacy when used for sleeping.

Initially, this rebuilding created a Messing & Sleeping Van for use with GWR Crane 382 in the Bristol District. Later, DW17861 was re-allocated to the Chief Civil Engineers Department. It was noted in this guise at Swindon on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October 1980 in pristine condition – presumably fresh from another re-painting.

After withdrawal from BR Departmental Service it was condemned in 1985. DW17861 was purchased in June 1986 and moved to the West Somerset Railway during December 1986. It left WSR metals arriving in Swanage during 1994.

It carried on it's Messing, but not sleeping, duties for the (then) newly created Crane Department. Ownership of 17861 changed in October 2016 becoming an asset of the Swanage Railway Company.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021