TOOWOOMBA MODEL RAILWAY CLUB INC.

Produced by Enthusiasts
for Enthusiasts

TRAIN TALK

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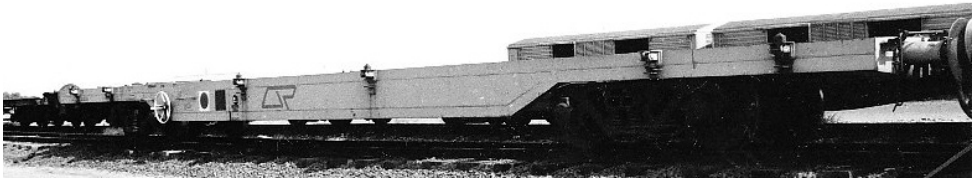
"B" class Container Wagons.

Weekly Notice 24/77 dated 15th June 1978 advised the entry into service of five (5) new wagons. These wagons are of skeletal flat wagon design designed specifically to carry two (2) "QRRC" Containers, but provision is made to carry two (2) standard 20 ft containers or one (1) 40 ft container. The wagon is provided with angular paten floor plates at the centre and ends.



Basic features:-

Running numbers 40128 – 40132

Tare - 16.7 tonnes. Carry 23.9 t all lines, 46.3 t "S" and "A" class lines, 32.1 t Some "B" class lines (Roma to Charleville for example).

Length Unit – 3.5

Bogies – Cast steel roller bearing – QR 37 with 760 mm dia. wheels.

Red Circle wagon available for Express freight trains (80 km/h). Drawgear classification - D1.

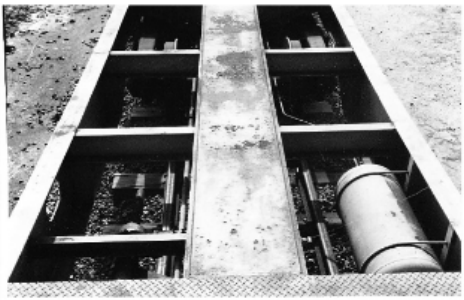
Draft Equipment – Automatic Couplers and Transition Couplings. Wagon diagram No.352.

The wagon length was 16 460 mm over headstocks and 17 520 mm over coupling lines. Bogie centres at 10 970 places the bogies some distance back from the headstocks.

Loaded, the floor height was just 933 mm above rail. The floor on timber floored wagons was around 1030 mm above rail level. At the time "B" wagons were the longest wagon in traffic.

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16

When ISO containers entered traffic they were eight feet (8') / 2.438 mm wide, eight feet (8') high and twenty (20') feet long, some were forty (40') feet long. These containers exceed the maximum height dimensions set out in the General Appendix and as such represent "Out of Gauge" loading. It didn't take long before the height of containers increased providing many issues for a 100 year old rail network.

The 1979 Supplement to Working Time Tables was the first to provide information on the conveyance of containers on the QR network. Containers had been on the network for over 10 years on set allocated wagons and routes. Eight foot (8') high containers were allowed to travel on most lines without restrictions, except locations like between Park Road to Roma St, Roma St to Brunswick Street, lines west of Cairns etc. Additional restrictions were placed on 2.591 m (8' 6") high containers. Ipswich to Helidon unless loaded on a PC, B or PFCC wagons. For travel in the South-West Division (SWD) on the same class wagons, but not between Helidon and Toowoomba. (With restrictions and permission they did travel on these wagons between Helidon and Toowoomba). Other restrictions in the SWD included not to travel the platform roads in Toowoomba and Dalby, speed not to exceed 15 km/h passing through platform roads at Warwick and Roma or over the Condamine River Bridge at Warwick. What I recall, ISO containers conveyed grain and cotton from Toowoomba, Oakey, Dalby and the Goondiwindi area in the SWD. In later years export meat from northern New South Wales was conveyed from Wallangarra to Fisherman's Island. Small numbers of export goat meat came out of Charleville. Most of this traffic was in 8' 6" high containers. I could tell a story of a 9' high container that went to Toowoomba more than 20 times before tripping the Container Gauge at Rosewood. Yet, from time to time loco cabs on coal trains would activate the gauge.

New domestic containers including R.A.C.E. (Railways of Australia Container Express) containers with a height of 2.650 m (8' 8½") and 2.502 m (8' 2½") wide were given set routes they could travel, mainly the North Coast Line, Mt Isa Line and the Central line Rockhampton to Winton. These containers were not allowed west of Ipswich in the SED and SWD. The wider containers (8' 2½") allowed two (2) Australian pallets to be loaded across the container.

Continued on page 18

 Continued from page 17

In the years to follow, the height of containers grew higher. 2.74 metres (9') by 2.5 metres, 2.9 metres (9' 6"), 3.0 metres (9' 10"), 3.05 metres (10'). Over time with modifications to bridges, tunnels, platform awnings and a new fleet of container wagons, 2.65 metre (8' 8½") high containers could travel on most lines on the network (except Roma St to Mayne via Central) on selected wagons. Loads on flat racks was subject to the loading gauge in the General Appendix or Operational Route Manual, today called the loose loading gauge by many rail operators. Box type containers are a fixed load, most networks have maps showing route available for containers of a particular height.

In the original wagon classification code, "B" class wagon was a six (6) wheeled box wagon. Most were converted to Grover's bogies "BG" wagons, in later years they were allocated to carrying explosives and by the early 1970's all were out of service. This left only one wagon group with a "B" classification, the BLC class louvered box wagon. The classification would be more correct to the code had it been called CLB, a few wagons had this what I call reverse coding. Soon after the "B" wagons entered service came the "BR" wagon. They were followed by the "BRM" container wagons being the first three (3) slot container wagon, all following three slot container wagons have carried the "B" classification.

Container loading guide issued in the late 1990's showed "B" wagons could carry 1 or 2 containers at 6.1 m and 7.6 m long and one container 12.2 m, or 13.8 m or 14.7 m long.

April 1987, around the time when wheel/axle requirements for passenger vehicles was changed, and when most of the red diamond wagon fleet (QLX's) was being downgraded to red circle status, B 40132 carried a red diamond. Around 1990, QR commenced removing buffer and transition links from the container wagon fleet including the "B" class wagons. In the later part of the 1990's, the class was listed for upgrade as part of the North Coast Line 100km/h project, "BY" classification was allocated. However with the entry into service of the new BEZY class wagons, this did not happen. A few years later with PNQ commencing operations on the QR network with their own fleet of container wagons, the class were placed into storage and later scrapped.

To expand my modern wagon fleet these wagons looked to be a simple project and would give me a unique wagon for the layout. Plus I had recently purchased a couple packs of SDS QRC refrigerated containers on special. A great choice for this wagon as the wagon was designed around this type of container. These containers on most other conventional wagons robbed a loading slot.

Another issue I wanted to test was the swing in the headstock given the bogie pivot beam is some distance back from the headstock. Under certain conditions on the prototype this has caused derailments which has resulted in modifications to wagons or rules around marshalling of these vehicles.

 Continued on page 19

Continued from page 18

Rollingstock on model railway layouts operate on much smaller radius curves than the prototype and without springs like the prototype which affects the wheel to rail interface at the best of times. On top of this, most of my wagons have a smaller coupler yoke than the standard “Kadee” coupler box.

The plan was for these wagons to convey containers on both slots. This made construction easier, the skeleton section of the wagon would be under the containers. The frame and fish belly sides were made from .040 styrene sheet, open areas were covered with “Slaters” checker plate. The wagons were fitted with Southern Rail bogies and weighted to 80 grams using lead sheet under the floor. Once completed the wagons went to the layout for testing and passed with flying colours, you just need to be careful where you leave them, there is a good chance they will roll away if your track is not level on the layout.

These unique containers were built by Domino Industries between 1980 and 1983. Thermo King refrigeration unit mounted on one end. 100 SRC containers were jointly owned by NSWPTC and Queensland Rail. 100 QRC containers were owned by Queensland Rail. The containers mainly carried perishable and frozen goods to northern centres on the North Coast Line returning with fruit for both the local and interstate markets. A small number were used on the Mt Isa as cool cars for local perishable and frozen goods. There was a period where they could be found on the front of the Inlander. 25 QRRC Containers were built between 1977 and 1979.

Basically they were a 20’ container with a fridge unit and a fuel tank attached. Q-Link allocated units (2012, 2022, 2023) had two compartments, one chiller and the other a freezer. The first 10 (2011 – 2020) only have end doors. Mainly, the containers were conveyed on early “B” series wagons (B, BR, BRM, BMM) and QFC class wagons. Using these wagons, the container didn’t require two loading slots. The containers were maintained at Ipswich Workshops and conveyed between Moolabin/Acacia Ridge to the shops on MPJS wagons. By the mid 1990’s 20 plus and 40 plus refrigerated containers replaced them. There was a period where longer containers were used, but these were too heavy for road transport when fully loaded.

Continued on page 20

This wagon is conveying COD fruit, both are SDS Containers.

The TNT Container is a Walthers SceneMaster HO 949-8650 20' Smooth Side Container, Undecorated that has been painted and Chickadee Models decals applied. The ASP container is a Lima Container repainted and specially made decals by Ted Freeman added to complete the project.

Since starting modelling container trains, I have found not all 20' container models are the same size and vary considerably in the way in which they mount onto the wagon. Some consideration needs to be given to how the containers are on the prototype, you could end up with gaps when containers butt up in the centre of the wagon that is not on the prototype if working from the ends inwards.

Trust you found the information helpful. It's been great to have a hobby in these trying times of late. Have fun in your modelling.

Arthur Hayes.