



Produced by Enthusiasts  
for Enthusiasts

# TRAIN TALK

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Arthur Hayes

WHET Landsborough in general traffic 1973.



WHX were constructed by Commonwealth Engineering Salisbury between April 1959 and November 1960. All up 300 wagons were built (31308 – 31607) to supplement the 200 WH class wagons to carry bulk wheat. At first they were mainly used to carry bulk wheat from the Darling Downs to the State Wheat Board terminal at Pinkenba. Wagons were unloaded on a tippler. Wagons also conveyed wheat to various flour mills on the Downs and Brisbane.

The wagon floor footprint was 12 185 mm by 2 440 mm, and the sides were 1220 mm high, 140 mm higher than the earlier WH wagons, giving them 36.25 m<sup>3</sup> cubic capacity. The wagons had a nominal tare 13.4 t and could carry 30.2 t on "S" (20 TAL), "A" (15 TAL) and on some "B" class lines, or 26.1 t on all lines (10 TAL). Supplement to the Working Time Table allowed them to carry full loads on most branch lines on the Darling Downs.

The wagons were fitted with "Premier" (later known as D2) drawgear, drawhooks with fixed screw couplings at each end. Bradford Kendall cast steel QR 9 Bogies were fitted to the wagon, 850mm (2' 9½") wheels running on SKF rolling bearings. A chain/ratchet hand brake secured the wagon from movement when not in a train. I would think these were the first wagons to be fitted with this type of hand brake. Wheel hand brakes were on BLC wagons and various tank wagons, but they were the screw type. The chain/ratchet hand brake is still being fitted to wagons today.

A single tarpaulin was used to protect the load from the weather. Seven supports along the wagon kept the tarp off the load and provide fall to enable water to run off during wet weather. The supports each side of the doors pivoted to allow a ridge bar to telescope inside each other across the doors. Early photos of the wagons suggest this may of been added later, they are standard on wagons in 1969. The tarps were 48 feet x 14 feet (13 700 mm x 4 000mm), originally they were green in colour. With the introduction of P.V.C tarps around 1972, the colour changed to yellow. During the trial period of P.V.C tarps for a short period in the early 70's, some were orange. Prior to 1962 grain tarps were numbered by the year and the wagon number. I.e. Q ^ R (first line) 62 (second Line) 25561 (Third line).

After 1962 the number was the year of manufacture and the number made for that year i.e. 82-11. In later years the QR was replaced with the logo.

The wagon class was changed to WHE in 1964/5, the new ROA coding being introduced at the time put a new meaning to the letter, the “X” on the end of a wagon class identified the wagon as being able to be bogie exchanged. The new “E” class indicated 11/12 ton axle load vehicle.

On trains, WHE wagons having the stronger drawgear (D2) than the WH class wagons (D3), were generally at the front of the train to obtain the maximum load for the hauling locomotive.

The wagons were also used to carry barley to Whinstanes when in season. The wagons were unloaded by a back hoe. A “U” shape scoop with sides that could be moved out was fitted to the rear arm. The barley was pulled towards the open door into a hopper fitted with an auger to load trucks. Previously I referred to the pivoting trap supports, by folding back the supports and removing the ridge pole, the scoop could reach to the far side of the wagon. Grain in the corners was shovelled out to within the reach of the scoop.

General Appendix states the wagons should remain covered at all times, loaded or empty. It also indicates particular attention must be paid to avoiding tarpaulins sagging between supports.

A full load for a 90 ton DEL (1450, 1460, 1502, 1270, 1300 class etc.) from Toowoomba to Brisbane varied a little over the years. In 1976 it was 1120 tons for D 1 & D2 rollingstock, 880 tons for D3 and 630 for D4 wagons. WH wagons, on QR 5 bogies had a gross of 36 tons and were D3 class drawgear. That’s about 24 wagons and a van for a full load. In the early 1970’s these wagon were fitted QR 17 bogies and reclassified WHA, a fully loaded wagon had a gross of 39 tons, that’s about 22 wagons with a van for a full load. WHE wagons fitted with D 2 drawgear fully loaded were 44 tons, that’s about 25 wagons with a van for a full load. Most trains had a mix of classes, WHE wagons would be marshalled on the front to achieve the maximum load for the hauling locomotive. Thus the number of wagons on a train would alter from train to train. The leading 240 tons (6 wagons) must be WHE wagons.

Between Toowoomba and Brisbane it was a common sight to see a full train load of grain wagons. The depots on the Downs didn’t have a huge loading capacity, many in 2002 still had equipment that could handle about 150/200 tons per hour. Grain sets were split up over two or three locations. Turnaround time was around 2 to 3 days.

Some photos suggest small numbers of wagons were conveyed on local goods



trains to Toowoomba. A few years back there were 13 sets of grain wagons with up to five (5) loaded trains a day coming to Brisbane when a ship was in port.

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In 1969 all goods/freight wagons were painted grey. After mid 1970, some had QR logos added to the side.

Around 1972, automatic coupling with transition links were progressively fitted to the wagons, converted wagons were classes WHET, D 1 drawgear. Fitting of the stronger drawgear paved the way to multi – unit operations resulting in bigger trains. With the introduction of QGX wagons with bottom discharge, commenced the start of WHE wagon being used for other traffic, wagons allocated to general traffic were classes WHES/WHETS. A number of wagons were allocated to Fertilizer traffic, WHEF/WHEFT.

Around the mid to late 1980's grain export moved to Fisherman Islands, only bottom discharge wagons could be used.

A number of open grain wagons were allocated to Coal & Minerals, WHETC was given to these wagons. WHEU identified Rollingstock Maintenance allocated wagons (Traction Motors 31607/31557). 30 WHE wagons used in the Thalanga (ND) Traffic (91) until the arrival of the PHY wagons.



## Brake gear.



In the late 1980's, the underframes of WHE wagons were being using to replace older

wagons in other traffic.

WSC 31330 Trial Sheep wagon fitted with W A G R Containers, became PCS Sheep wagons. Carry 208 head of sheep.



**Continues next month**





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# WHE Wagons.

Arthur Hayes

## Continued from the December 2021 issue

WSC 31330 Trail Sheep wagon fitted with WAGR Containers, became PCS Sheep wagons. Carry 208 head of sheep.



Containers were removed (95) reclassified PCEX.

PWH Pineapple Wagons, end extended to carry CQ bin three high.



WHW Wheels wagons. (Wheels between Workshops and Depots)



Other changes in code and uses.

WHEW Winch wagons for recovery rail.

PW Loco Bogies. WCC Bulk Cement Wagons (5 x 5 ton bins).

I

BJX Plough Wagons



IBXR Ballast Cleaning Machine. (Tank & Generator)

Tank Wagon underframes, various classes. ARHS Sunshine Express March 1993 shows 72 tank wagons were fitted with new underframes, 22 were from WHE wagons.



VR Bitumen wagons VTBY 518 & 523 mounted on WHE wagon frames to become Shell OBET 43941 & 43942.



WSE Water Wagons, later Molasses Wagons. (Some WSE wagons were BLC underframes).

A couple of WHE wagons were used as cover wagons for Kuranda cars when conveyed between Cairns and Townsville.

## Models.

The wagons are P.G.C Scale Models. The kit is a one piece body, 2 hand brake wheels with wire, 4 ladders for side steps, Bogies (disc wheels), Etch brass tarpaulin supports, brake cylinder, 4 buffers, and decals.





Assembly is straight forward, add detail items to the body, paint, add decals, bogies, couplings and weather.

For the layout these wagons are to be grain wagons operating in the sixties. Some extra brake gear was added. Kadee # 115 coupler boxes fitted with 158 scale whisker couplers were used. Ridge poles were added to the tarpaulin supports across the door. The wagons were painted with True-color Weathered Black.

For my money, black wagons had spoked wheels. H0 Steam Era bogies were modified to take Steam Era 9.5 mm 12 mm wheel-sets. Some lead sheet was added to the floor to bring the wagons up to 55 grams. The tarpaulin was made from thin plastic sheet off a large medical wound bandage, which was blue in colour. The plastic sheet was cut to size as shown above and fixed to the wagon with super glue.

The tarp was painted green using Humbrol #2 with # 22 white added. The amount of white varied between each wagon. Home made decals tarp number were added thanks to Ken Edge-Williams. The completed wagon was sprayed with gloss coat, then with dullcote.

Weathering was completed using Vallejo.

More prototype wagon photos are on the Blog <http://westgateswr.blogspot.com/>

