

Profile 22

SOV/ODA Pipe Wagons

Build Details:	1949-1958 BR Wolverton (plus others)
Numbering:	B484150-B484199, B740000-B741449, B741500-B741949, 113000-113049
Bogies / Suspension:	
Dimensions:	25ft 7in LOB, 12ft 0in wheelbase
Published Drawings:	
Areas of operation:	Nationwide
Main liveries:	Grey, brown, Railfreight red/grey

Summary:

Although classified as a steel carrying wagon by BR, the Pipe wagon was really just a drop-sided open and its later uses reflected this. Based on two very similar designs (LMS and LNER), all BR pipe wagons had a 12ft wheelbase and a 5-plank body, the sides of which were made up of two drop-side doors each. The four different diagram numbers issued related to minor changes in the underframe and body fittings. 1150 of the 1950 pipe wagons built by BR were vacuum fitted from new, while most of the remainder were so modified later on. This, coupled with the loading flexibility afforded by the full length drop-sides, saw many of the wagons being retained even when their original traffic declined.

History:

The main numbering sequence was from B740000 to B741950. However, 50 wagons from lot 2845 were cancelled and the numbers B741450-B741499 were not used. This may be related to the fact that lot 3070, also built at Wolverton in 1956, covered 50 wagons to the same design but designated as 'High Goods - Dropsides' and numbered in the open merchandise series as B484150-B484199. These were intended for newsprint traffic and were initially assigned diagram number 1/053, this being changed to 1/462 (a Pipe diagram) at a later date.



SOV B741938 at Willesden on 29th March 1987.

Tom Young



ODA 113038 at Severn Tunnel Junction, 29th May 1985.

Paul Bartlett



ZDA (ex ODA) KDC113041 in Satlink livery at Newcastle, 12th August 1991.

Paul Bartlett

By 1966, some 2065 pipe wagons were in traffic, suggesting that some LNER-built examples remained. The total included just 12 unfitted wagons, the rest having been built or modified with vacuum brakes. The most common livery would therefore have been bauxite, with the unfitted wagons presumably being grey. The last unfitted pipes were probably withdrawn before 1974 as there is no evidence of the TOPS code SOO having been issued. 1556 SOVs were in traffic in 1977 and it is likely that many of the balance had been transferred to departmental use as ZDVs. If repainted, these would have received olive drab livery.

By now in fairly general use, a growing traffic for the type was in connection with the Ministry of Defence. The new generation of air-braked opens and vans had long wheelbase underframes, which were unsuited for use at some of the army and navy sidings due to tight curves. To allow the traffic to be retained it was decided to upgrade some of the pipe wagons with new brakes and running gear. New TOPS code ODA (in the open merchandise series) was allocated and the wagons emerged from Shildon works between February and May 1983. The first lot was for 50 wagons and it was initially planned to renumber these into the air-braked series as 466000-466049 (ie, the steel carrying series). However, to reflect the more general use intended, they actually became 113000-113049, following on from the previous air-braked opens (OCAs 112000-112399). As well as being air-braked, the suspension was changed to the UIC double-link type, and the bodywork was repainted in Railfreight red/grey.



ZDW KDB740135 in
Mercury livery at Bescot.
Martyn Read

In 1984 there were 469 SOVs still in stock, around 100 in use on army traffic and the remainder either in store or on loan to departmental use. Their numbers gradually declined over the next few years as wagons were either formally transferred or condemned, and by 1991 there was just one left (and this was technically 'lost!'). The reduction in MoD traffic (and upgrading of facilities to handle longer wagons) impacted on the ODA fleet and almost half were transferred to departmental use in 1991. These all went to the S&T engineers fleet as ZDAs, with KDC prefixes being added to the numbers. All but two of the remainder followed by 1994 but developments over the next few years saw the distinction between departmental and revenue fleets becoming blurred. As such, the ODA code saw a resurgence, with 36 being listed in 1999.

The pipe wagons transferred to departmental use came into the spotlight in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the adoption of two bright new liveries. Up until then, most such wagons had run in as-acquired bauxite, or engineers olive. Both liveries were for the Signal and Telegraph Engineer's feet and they comprised Satlink (red with top two planks in yellow) and Mercury (overall light blue). Many of the wagons were also recoded ZDW following the fitting of through air pipes, while some of the Mercury wagons gained a mesh roof supported by metal tubes. 460 BR-built pipe wagons were in departmental use in 1990, this being halved by 1994.

In 2007 just 23 pipe wagons were still registered on TOPS, comprising 16 ODAs, 2 ZDAs, 3 ZDVs and 2 ZDWs.

Updates