

## Profile 35

## OTA Timber Wagons

<b>Build Details:</b>	Various
<b>Numbering:</b>	Various numbers in 110xxx, 112xxx, 200xxx, 201xxx and 210xxx ranges
<b>Bogies / Suspension:</b>	
<b>Dimensions:</b>	
<b>Published Drawings:</b>	n/a
<b>Areas of operation:</b>	From Scotland to various destinations, plus south east England
<b>Main liveries:</b>	Red, blue, light green, dark green, maroon (see text for details)

### Summary:

The OTA type first appeared in 1985 when some surplus air-braked opens were rebuilt into timber carriers following an increase in this traffic. At first using OCA source wagons, the conversions involved the removal of the wagon sides and replacement with tall stanchions, plus the extension of the existing ends. Later rebuilds were from VDAs (retaining the van ends) and OBAs. Prior to this, timber was carried in open wagons such as the OBA, or in specially converted vacuum-brake wagons, donor types having included Plates and Bogie Bolsters.

### History:

112365 OTA Timber Open diag OT001A 46t GLW.



OTA (ex OCA, square top)  
112365 at Swansea Burrows,  
18th July 1992.  
*Paul Bartlett*

112188 OTA Timber Open 46t GLW.  
diag OT001A convert 20/12/85



OTA (ex OCA, angled top)  
112188 at Exeter Riverside, 13th  
January 1986.  
*Paul Bartlett*

112286 OTA Thames Board Ltd  
Timber 46t GLW. diag OT001C



OTA (ex OCA) 112286 in  
Thames Board livery, Dundee,  
1st August 1989.  
*Paul Bartlett*

An initial batch of 50 wagons was modified at Cardiff Cathays from mid-1985, followed by further batches to make a total of 126 in use by March 1986. Two designs of wagon end were featured, the first batch having square topped extensions, while the remainder had taller extensions with angled corners to fit the loading gauge. The square section side stanchions were removable (and featured small hoops in their tops to facilitate this) and fitted into pockets on the edge of the floor. The early wagons had 11 pockets on each side and were to TOPS code OTA-A and design code OT001A, while the last 25 (intended for use by Thames Board Mills) had 9 pockets and were OTA-C, design code OT001C. On both types, several strap reels were fitted to the edge of the floor between the stanchions. When carrying logs, the nylon straps were used to secure the load.

With most of the bodywork removed, the livery on these wagons was limited to the ends, the edge of the floor, and the stanchions, the underframe being black. The first few wagons featured Railfreight red ends but several others were painted in a light green colour and carried name boards for 'Shotton Paper' on the ends. The Thames Board Mills batch were light blue, again with name boards on the end. Some of the Shotton batch were later repainted fully in green, including the stanchion pockets (although the stanchions remained white), solebars and suspension units.

As would be expected, the main use of these wagons was from the foresting areas in the Scottish Highlands. Destinations were mainly paper mills and included Shotton and Workington (for Thames Board Mills) and the wagons were often conveyed in Speedlink (and later Enterprise) wagonload services. An interesting development in 1987/1988 was the use of several OTAs in the South East of England. This was a result of the storms of October 1987 bringing down many trees.

The South also saw the first use of the next batch of OTAs from March 1988. Converted from VDA vans, again by Cardiff Cathays, these 50 wagons retained the van ends and therefore had curved tops, and were



OTA (ex OCA) 112317, repainted in green. Swansea Burrows, 18th July 1992.

*Paul Bartlett*



OTA (ex OBA) 110211 at Aberdeen, 13th March 2004.

*Paul Bartlett*

wagons retained the van ends and therefore had curved tops, and were fitted with 8 stanchions on each side (OTA-D, OT002A/B/C/D). Among the conversions was wagon 201070 which had earlier been converted as a prototype curtain-sided van with TOPS code VHA. This remained recognisable by its modified ends and was assigned design code OT002E, but it was later transferred to departmental use as a ZDA sleeper carrier. By mid-1988 a further 35 VDAs had been stored for conversion, some of these appearing as OTAs later in the year. Included was 200944, fitted with fixed stanchions with curved fillets at the base and painted in a green livery for the Forestry Commission. Presumably unique, this was assigned TOPS code OTA-E and design code OT002F. Some of the previous batch, which had emerged in red livery, were quickly repainted into a blue livery for customer Kronospan.

The cessation of Speedlink services in 199x affected the OTA fleet and by 1993 just 92 of the 165 wagons then in stock were in use, working from Shotton. However, new traffics did emerge and the fleet was increased again in 1998 with the conversion of another 66 VDA vans. As before, these retained the van ends but featured a new type of side tapered stanchion that fitted in pockets mounted on the solebar. The conversions were painted in EWS maroon with red stanchions and were to TOPS code OTA-B (design code not known). 22 OBA open wagons were also converted as OTA-F with the angled-top end extensions of the ex-OCA type combined with the revised stanchions of the ex-VDA OTA-Bs. The total number of conversions to OTA is believed to be about 268, 257 being listed as current in 1999. By December 2005 the total was down to 204, comprising 94 ex OCAs, 89 ex VDAs and 21 ex OBAs.

Many OTAs were put into storage in 2006, following the awarding of the Kronospan contract to Amec Rail. This new freight operator made use of RIV-registered bogie flat wagons and later had some bogie ferry vans modified as timber carriers and renumbered in the domestic series.

## Updates