

## Profile 47

## PX030 Sheerness Steel Bogie Steel/Scrap Wagons

<b>Build Details:</b>	1974 Procor, Wakefield
<b>Numbering:</b>	PR3000-PR3007
<b>Bogies / Suspension:</b>	Gloucester Clasp Mk2
<b>Dimensions:</b>	51ft long, 37ft 8.75in bogie centers
<b>Published Drawings:</b>	n/a
<b>Areas of operation:</b>	Sheerness to scrapyards nationwide, now Swindon-Liverpool
<b>Main liveries:</b>	Light/dark blue

### Summary:

Although only 8 were built, these wagons were of interest in being among the first modern private-owner bogie steel wagons. In appearance they were similar to the BR-built BBA wagons but with higher ends. After just a few years service they were rebuilt as open wagons for carrying scrap metal, a role in which they continued following the end of traffic to Sheerness. A transfer to infrastructure duties was shortlived, having resulted in the derailment and withdrawal of 3 of the class.

### History:



PR3005 PXA (steel) at Sheerness, 24th August 1980.

*Paul Bartlett*



PR3001 PXA (scrap) at Sheerness, 30th June 1991.

*Paul Bartlett*

Built by Procor in 1974, this batch of 8 wagons were the first modern bogie steel-carrying wagons for a private owner. At 51ft long and with stepped solebars, the type was very similar to the BBA wagons being built for BR at the same time. However, they were fitted with much taller ends with substantial re-inforcement, and also featured larger section side stanchions that extended to the height of the ends. Another difference was the fitting of Gloucester Clasp Mk II bogies centred at 37ft 8.75in.

The design was allocated BR diagram number 6/455 but this was soon replaced by the issuing of design code PX030A and TOPS code PXA. The running numbers were PR3000 to PR3007, these being the lowest numbers in the private owner series used for new-build wagons. The batch was hired to Sheerness Steel to carry finished steel products from the privately-owned steelworks on the Isle of Sheppey and was painted in their house colours of dark blue (solebars) and light blue (ends and stanchions) with appropriate lettering on the solebars. One source gives the colour of the ends and stanchions as being grey but this has not been evidenced in photographs.

The main use of these wagons was to carry steel rod, although the destinations and services used are not known. However, the tall ends fitted to the wagons limited the length of rod that could be carried and the BR-owned BDA type was found to be more suitable. A new use for the relatively young PXAs was needed. Sheerness Steel received scrap metal by train and this was at the time carried in elderly 16t Mineral wagons. With a view to replacing these, the first four of the PXAs were rebuilt in 1981 as bogie open wagons. Sheet sides were fitted between each end, and the original stanchion positions became vertical ribs with additional diagonal ribs in between. PR3000 featured bodywork built up to the heights of the ends and had no diagonal bracing on the end panels of the sides. PR3001 to PR3003 had the ends extended by about 300mm and gained diagonal bracing on every panel. Other minor modifications were the removal of the strap tensioners from the solebars, and the fitting of steps below the headstocks at the left-hand end.

The bodies of the modified PXAs was painted light blue, the solebars remaining dark blue. Originally planned to be recoded POA (with design

code PO011A allocated) this was changed shortly after delivery to PXA. There seems to have been a decision made that the POA code was to be reserved for 2-axle wagons. At least two wagons (PR3002/3) operated for many years displaying the incorrect POA code. PR3001 to PR3003 were given new design code PX030B while the shorter PR3000 was to PX030C. The type soon became a familiar sight on Speedlink trains across the country, and their success was to lead to the construction of a batch of 40 purpose-built scrap wagons for Sheerness Steel in 1982.

The four remaining steel carriers remained as such, being mainly limited to use between Sheerness and Ridham Dock. In 1985 they too were rebuilt by Procor as scrap carriers to the taller PX030B design. In the TOPS code recasting of 1990 the type became JXA and the design codes were amended to JX030B and JX030C. Over the following decade, traffic to and from Sheerness Steel was affected by take-overs and restructuring, and also by the cessation of Speedlink services. However, the 8 original JXA wagons were transferred to other work in 1995, including use as spoil wagons in connection with infrastructure works. This role brought the type infamy when, on February 2nd 1997, a spoil train derailed on an arched viaduct near Bexley station in southeast London. Several of the wagons tipped over and hundreds of tons of material spilled onto the track and adjacent premises. The first wagon to be derailed was PR3002 and suspicion fell on this type as being the cause. Compared to similar types designed for spoil and aggregates traffics, the ex scrap carriers were designed for less dense loads. When loaded with spoil, with no opportunity to weigh the amount being put in, it is possible that the wagon exceeded its maximum gross weight. PR3002 was scrapped, possibly on site, while the other derailed wagons included two other JX030s, namely PR3003 and PR3007. These were removed to Hoo Junction where they were grounded. Interestingly a TOPS report from 1999 included all three wagons and showed them as being temporarily deregistered. The type had obviously been barred from further infrastructure work as the remaining five examples were by then reallocated to an EWS pool for carrying scrap metal between Swindon and Liverpool. At least one of the five (PR3005) had received a new design code of JX030E. This suggests that JX030D had also been issued, perhaps to one or more of the wagons that were withdrawn.

The next report available (2008) showed four of the batch still engaged in the same traffic, PR3001 having been withdrawn sometime in the intervening period. Pioneer PR3000 had been re prefixed VGT3000 with a revised design code of JX030F but the others were as before.

## Updates