

History of Heywood Works

Railway wagon production started at the Heywood Wagon Works in 1863 and in June 1900 the Lancashire and Yorkshire Wagon Company Limited was incorporated. It is not believed that the works had any formal relationship or direct link with the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company but it seems that it took the name because of its location next to the L&Y railway line from Bury to Castleton and next to the Heywood station and sidings, which is now the easterly terminus of the East Lancashire Railway (ELR). The company later changed the name to the L&Y Wagon and Engineering Company Limited.

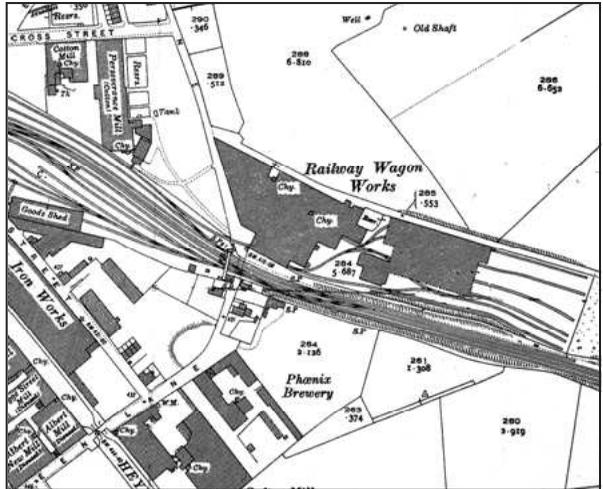
For the majority of its life the L&Y Wagon Co produced wooden framed coal wagons, during which time the works also included, a foundry, large blacksmith shop and a wheel shop where segmented tyred wheels were assembled.

The Standard Railway Wagon Co Ltd (SRW) was formed in Reddish, Stockport, adjacent to Reddish South Station on the 21st April 1933 by Sir Stanley Bell. His younger brother, Roland Bell, was appointed Chairman and Managing Director. The Bell family had a long

rail wagon manufacturing background dating back to 1880 with the Bolton Railway Wagon Co and from 1910 with Central Wagon Co of Wigan. Sir Stanley Bell was also chairman of a finance company called Astley Industrial Trust, which had offices in Quay Street, Manchester. Astley took control of Standard Wagon in 1954, SRW becoming a subsidiary company of Astley. When Sir Stanley retired in the early 1970s, Astley Industrial Trust became part of the Mercantile Credit finance group and later Mercantile Credit in turn became part of the Barclays Bank plc. Roland remained Chairman and Managing Director of Standard Wagon based at his beloved Reddish works until his sudden death in 1976.

Because of their limited size, the L&Y Wagon Co and Standard Wagon, along with a number of other small producers, were not nationalised with the rest of the rail industry, when British Railways was formed. They continued in private ownership producing freight wagons for the local coal mines and other private wagon users.

In the early 1950's Standard Wagon sub-contracted wagon manufacture to the L&Y Wagon Co, which it eventually took over on 29th July 1954. Although now named The Standard Railway Wagon Company Ltd, the Heywood site retained the postal address of 'L&Y Works, Green Lane, Heywood'. The company continued to manufacture a range of low speed unfitted (unbraked) wagons for the coal, steel and general traffic.



*Above. Extract from 1941 map of Heywood showing the location of the L&Y works.
Courtesy Heywood library*