

Introduction

Just before Christmas 1992 the last wagons rolled off the production line of the Standard Railway Wagon Co Ltd (SRW), L&Y Wagon Works at Heywood, Lancashire, after 129 years of continuous production. These wagons were the very sophisticated ‘Octopus’ ballast delivery wagons for British Rail Network SouthEast. They were electrically powered and had vibrating hoppers and an under-body conveyor system for accurate delivery of ballast. They were wagons which symbolised the progress and development in wagon sophistication evident during the final 20 years of SRW manufacture.

Railway freight wagons had been produced at the Heywood wagon works from 1863 until its closure in December 1992. After 100 years of producing relatively simple wagons, Standard Wagon expanded into building modern high capacity, high-speed wagons for the private wagon industry. Under extreme competition from the road transport industry the need was to maximise the efficiency of freight trains and wagons. The problem was to utilise the limited train length to its full potential in wagon design and reduce the tare weight while retaining the structural integrity.

Standard Wagon worked hard to provide customers with innovative wagon solutions to their special needs. The SRW sales team were good at identifying customers requirements and setting the design team the task of developing the right kind of wagon to suit the specific duty.

This book provides a brief history of the Heywood works and chronicles the wagon fleet produced by Standard Wagon, mainly for the UK Private Wagon Industry, but including some significant exports, from the mid 1960’s until its closure in 1992. During this period SRW was at the leading edge of wagon design and development in the UK. The company produced freight wagons for almost every conceivable bulk product to be carried on rail, many of which were at the forefront of innovative wagon design, driven by the industry’s need for faster and more efficient load-carrying wagons.



Above
Early production at the L&Y wagon works Heywood. Sign writing on a build of coal wagons for the Foxfield Colliery Staffordshire during 1906.
Photo Reddy family collection.