

The Operation of Private Owner Wagons

CHRIS CROFTS follows his major wagon study with some notes on their use:

Following publication of my series on wagon construction (*MRJ* Nos. 12-15), interest was expressed in the correct running of wagons. These notes hopefully will go part of the way towards satisfying the needs of those modellers who wish to run their private owner wagons in the correct manner.

It would be quite impossible to detail the journeyings of the wagons of every private owner, even if the information still existed. Instead, I shall try to explain the *principles* from which traffic flows can be deduced. Although stone, petrol, chemical, and tar wagons are worthy of modellers' consideration, I shall confine myself to wagons running in coal traffic, as these were in the vast majority. First, though, I offer a list of references which I have found useful.

1. *Working timetables – goods* (latterly freight). These can be consulted at the National Railway Museum, York, or the Public Record Office, Kew. Even if your line is fictitious, the working timetable of a real railway in your chosen vicinity will give you an idea of traffic in the area.

2. *Private owner wagon registers*. The railway companies kept a record of all private owner wagons 'at home' on their systems, and many of these records survive:

Midland Railway, PRO, Kew. Document numbers RAIL 491/920-930.

Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, PRO, Kew. RAIL 343/814-7.

LMS, PRO. RAIL 422/120-122.

RAIL 422/123. This register continues the L & YR series.

LMS, PRO. RAIL 422/124. The PRO classifies this as Midland, but in fact it is LNWR and lists owners and their wagons, rather than the more usual arrangement based on register plate numbers.

MSL/GCR, NRM, York.

GER, NRM, York.

SR, still in British Rail possession, but I have been able to copy (by hand) the section relating to 12-ton wagons. The SR register had only reached 824 wagons by the end of 1939. There was also a 10-ton wagon register, which still exists, though I have not made a copy. It finished in 1924, after which no 10-ton wagons were built.

LNER. Some registers at the NRM, York, others still in British Rail possession, though I have been able to do some limited copying. These registers appear to continue the GCR series.

NBR, said to be in West Register House, Edinburgh.

Conspicuous by their absence are LMS from plate No. 110001 upwards, GWR, LNER ex-GN, and all pre-grouping other than those mentioned. Most of these missing registers have probably been destroyed. However, we must be thankful for what has survived.

3. *Colliery Year Book and Coal Trades Directory*. This publication listed everybody engaged in the coal business. Sheffield Public Library have copies from 1924 to 1939, and the NCB Library, Doncaster, has a 1939 copy. There are doubtless others around.

4. *RCH lists of private owners, 1926 and 1933*. The RCH introduced two commuted charge schemes, and published booklets listing wagon

owners who participated in them. The lists are not necessarily complete, as some owners may not have joined the schemes at the outset. The PRO, Kew, have a 1926 list, but I cannot give its document number since I consulted it at the old Porchester Road office, before the move to Kew. I do not know of a 1933 list that is available for public inspection, though I have a photocopy. Wagons belonging to owners participating in the 1926 scheme carried the



Not a stoneware pipe wagon, but a coal wagon. It is secondhand, and would originally have run in South Wales (toothed brake rack, commode handles, foot-treads on buffers). James Oakes & Co. were colliery owners. The wagon is to 1907 specification. GRC & W Co.



This wagon would certainly have been seen in Buxton sidings on its journeys between Grassmoor Colliery and Edgeley via the Dore and Chinley line. GRC & W Co.



A scene at Buxton c.1934. The Birley, Sheepbridge and Thorncliffe wagons must have travelled via Dore and Chinley. The Pentrich wagon would arrive via Ambergate and Millers Dale. S. Taylor, Frith and Bibbington are local lime wagons. The presence of a Darwen & Mostyn Iron Co. Ltd. wagon is interesting. LMS wagon 403325 (last digit not clear) is a rare example of a wagon to Diagram 1896 photographed in service. Note that the Thorncliffe wagon is carrying coal – not Izal!

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letters 'Cc' on a yellow background, while those of owners in the 1933 scheme had a yellow star.

5. The LMS produced a booklet, with maps, listing collieries connected to its system. It appears to date from the late 1930s. The only copy I know of is in the PRO, but again, I cannot give the Kew document number.

This list does not claim to be exhaustive; it merely states the references I have found useful, together with a few that, although of little interest to me, will possibly help other modellers. What I hope to do, then, is show how I have used these references to determine the wagons likely to have appeared on the line which is of particular interest to me – the Dore and Chinley line of the LMS (ex MR). I shall also incorporate more limited references to workings in other areas.

A little thought will make it clear that a section of railway being modelled could fit into one of three categories:

(a) Railways in coal-producing areas. Here one would see wagons belonging to local collieries but not, usually, ones from more distant coalfields. There would also be wagons belonging to coal traders from quite distant parts, perhaps 200 miles away.

(b) Railways in coal-consuming (or coal-shipping) areas. On such lines one would find wagons of local traders (but not ones belonging to traders in other areas) together with colliery wagons from various coalfields.

(c) Railways linking the two types of area. On these there would be colliery and traders' wagons, loaded wagons travelling one way and empties the other. So, unless you can devise a method of loading and unloading wagons, you

will need to model loaded wagons and empties in about equal numbers. The Dore and Chinley line falls into this category. However, before looking at its traffic in detail, it might be a good idea to look at the privately-owned coal wagons running in 1939.

Of a total of 590,000 wagons 72% were colliery-owned, 22% belonged to coal distributors and 6% belonged to large consumers, such as gas and electricity boards.

The wagons were split fairly equally into 10- and 12-tonners, with about 5% 8-tonners. I suspect that many of these were in Scotland; information on English 8-ton wagons is not very plentiful.

Reference to the 1939 working timetable reveals that the following trains used the line in the down direction:

Grimesthorpe–Buxton or Gowhole
Staveley–Gowhole (trains were propelled

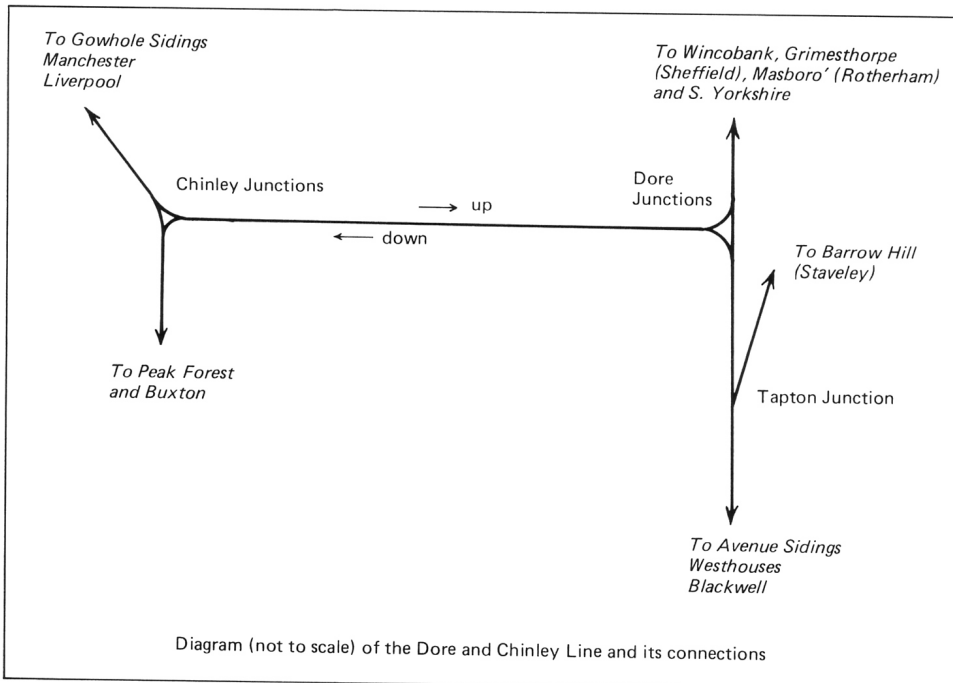


Diagram (not to scale) of the Dore and Chinley Line and its connections

between Tapton Junction and Staveley)
 Avenue—Gowhole
 Westhouses—Gowhole
 Carlton—Cheadle (one train daily)

This last train was double-headed, and could therefore have loaded up to the line maximum of 43 wagons. It could have been a block working of Carlton Collieries Association wagons, but I would welcome confirmation.

In the up direction, we had:

Buxton or Gowhole—Masboro' or Wincobank
 Gowhole—Staveley
 Gowhole—Avenue
 Gowhole—Blackwell

Although nothing to do with coal traffic, trains from the Buxton area tended to convey limestone traffic. Similarly, limestone empties were conveyed on Grimesthorpe—Buxton trains.

Also nothing to do with coal wagons, the analysis indicates which sheds had workings over the line — Grimesthorpe (20A), Staveley (18D), Hasland (18C), Westhouses (18B). What the analysis does not indicate is that engines from Rowsley (17D) and Heaton Mersey (19D) also worked over the line.

Once the traffic flows have been established, it is quite easy to determine from *Collieries Connected to the LMS Railway* the wagons likely to be seen in any train.

To or from Grimesthorpe/Masboro'/Wincobank: Denaby group (Denaby, Dinnington, Maltby, Rossington), Thorncliffe* (Newton Chambers Ltd), Doncaster Collieries Association group* (Brodsworth, Bullcraft, Firbeck, Hickleton, Markham Main, Yorkshire Main, DCA — wagons common user within group), John Brown*, Birley*, Dalton Main*, Nunnery, Tinsley Park, Rothervale* (United Steel Cos. Ltd).

To or from Staveley: Staveley*, Bolsover*, Hardwick (Ramcroft Colliery), Sheepbridge* (Glapwell Colliery), Oxcraft, Shireoaks (from Whitwell Colliery), Eckington* (J. & G. Wells Ltd), also possibly DCA group from Firbeck, Denaby group from Dinnington or Maltby, Rothervale (Thurcroft Colliery), all via South Yorkshire Joint line.

To or from Avenue: Clay Cross*, Hardwick, Grassmoor.

To or from Blackwell or Westhouses: Blackwell, New Hucknall, Pilsley*, Babbington (Tibshelf Colliery, later owned by Sheepbridge, I am told), Stanton (Silverhill, Pleasley, and Teversall Collieries), plus, possibly, traffic to or from Avenue. Traffic for the north-west from south of Westhouses tended to go via Pye Bridge, Ambergate, and Peak Forest.

Wagons marked * are known from photographic evidence to have used the Dore and Chinley line.

What about wagons belonging to coal traders? Well, first of all, wagons belonging to any of the big traders who covered the country would be quite at home on the line — Stephenson Clarke, Wm. Cory, Ricketts, Thrutchley, Charringtons, etc. Traders whose wagons are known from photographic evidence to have been seen include Lowe Bros. (Birch Vale), CWS Manchester, Hugh Wood, Stockport, A. S. Williams, Liverpool (empty to Hardwick Colliery), C. H. Atkinson, Liverpool (empty to Treeton Colliery). Wagons from North Wales photographed at Buxton include Deinislun Co-op and Davies Coal & Coke Co., Llandudno.



Although this picture has been published before, it is included to show two wagons from the Doncaster Collieries Association. They probably arrived from the same colliery, which need not have been Firbeck or Markham Main. Note that the Firbeck wagon is lettered 'on the sweep' — an earlier livery. 29th August 1936.

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Since another example of the latter was photographed at Aldwarke Main Colliery (near Rotherham) it must have travelled via Chinley and Dore. In addition, Stanton, Staveley, Sheepbridge, Bolsover and Rothervale wagons were photographed at Oldham. The coal could just as easily have gone in Oldham merchants' wagons. It would thus appear quite reasonable to use Lancashire, Cheshire, and North Wales traders' wagons on the Dore and Chinley line, even where direct evidence does not exist.

What do you do if you can't find enough wagons for a particular train? I have to admit that, even after years of searching, I am still rather short of information for some trains, notably Avenue—Gowhole. Certain subterfuges have to be adopted to cover the deficiency. For example:

1. Why not run a block train of Stephenson Clarke wagons? Such a train was photographed at Dunford Bridge; similar ones could have run via Dore and Chinley.
2. Make up weight with common users (railway-owned wagons). These need not necessarily be minerals; mineral trains often conveyed some merchandise traffic as well.
3. Don't forget loco coal wagons.
4. Use a 3F rather than a 4F. Lower load limit, so fewer wagons needed.

Other parts of the country

Not everyone may wish to model the Dore and Chinley line (!) so, although I cannot give a full analysis, I offer some ideas on wagons from other parts.

Some wagons photographed at Toton or on the Midland main line: Anderson (Whitstable), Watkins & Leonard (Bristol), Cash (Birming-

ham), Harold Nickson (Manchester), Borough of Bedford Electricity, City of Coventry Gas, Peterborough Co-op, Pierson (Hitchin), Pankhurst (Brighton), N. D. Francis (London), C. Busby (Fulham), J. D. Firmston (Putney), Baker Bros. (Reading), Weller & Oxlade (Wembley), William Rowland & Co. (Cardiff), Bradford (Yeovil), G. Heywood & Sons Ltd. (Exeter), Benjamin Evans (Newcastle under Lyne).

Some wagons photographed at the Butterley Co.'s collieries in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire: Withers (Nottingham), A. J. Walthal (Skegness), Hull Corporation Electricity, Ellis & Everard (Leicester and Bedford area), Mansfield (Thrapston), White & Beeny (Hailsham), F. H. Silvey (Bristol), Bannings (Boscombe), Jarrett (Bream), Linney Bros. (Manchester).

East Anglia seems to have been dominated by May, R. Collier (Peterborough) and J. O. Vinter (Cambridge), all of whom have far more entries in the GER PO wagon register than small local merchants would require.

The extreme South-West seems to have boasted only a few private owners. I suspect much of the trade was in the hands of Messrs. Renwick, Wilton, later Renwick, Wilton, and Dobson. A New Rock Colliery (Somerset) wagon was photographed at Bodmin, while Manvers Main (Yorkshire) and Stephenson Clarke wagons have been reported at Penzance.

Coal travelling to Goole or Hull is reported as going in block trains from North Derbyshire or the Doncaster area, though trains originating at any of the pits in the Doncaster Collieries Association could be lettered for any of the six member collieries or just DCA.

1939 and after

On 1st September 1939 virtually all privately owned coal wagons were pooled, an arrangement that generated much ill-feeling, as the owners were still charged for repairs, even though they might not have seen the wagon for years. With pooling, wagons could be sent to any destination, though in practice, many did not stray too far from their pre-war haunts, though this was not always obvious. Thus, for example, a White and Beeny wagon from Hailsham was photographed at Avenue Sidings around 1944, but, as we have seen, these wagons always had travelled to Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire to load.

After 1939, wagons tended not to be re-painted, though the diagonal white stripe to indicate the end door seems to have been added during the early war years. By the end of the war, the original large lettering on private owner wagons was rapidly disappearing, both through fading and the replacement of planks, which were often not painted. Red oxide paint faded to pink. The white lettering wore away, often leaving the black shading. Where the lettering had been, the body colour was protected, so the letters appeared in body colour shaded black. Where weathering or plank replacement had gone too far, a patch would be painted in the bottom left-hand corner and the owner's name painted on in small letters, together with the wagon number. Memory suggests that by 1948 there were few wagons left with a recognisable livery, at least to the casual observer. The few that survived in good condition tended to be photographed as enthusiasts of the period realised what was happening. The last wagon I saw with its old livery in reasonable condition was a Bolsover wagon, seen in about 1960 (certainly not before) in Chesterfield station yard, only about 5 miles from its original home. Survivors as late as this were rare indeed. It follows that you shouldn't run private owner wagons – certainly not clean ones – with blue diesels.

A few pitfalls

1. Don't use 1923 standard wagons on a pre-grouping layout. This sounds obvious, but reference to magazine photographs shows that it is not.
2. Don't assume that because a wagon was photographed or drawn with a particular livery it had always been, or would always be, like that. Liveries changed, even if ownership didn't. Two of the finest 0-gauge layouts ever built in this country had wagons in liveries 20-30 years too late for the period modelled.
3. Don't run wagons just because the livery takes your fancy, or because a commercial model is available. Choose the wagons to suit your area.
4. Some owners had the names of some of their products painted on the wagons, which were not necessarily used for carrying these commodities.

This 1945 view at Gowhole sidings shows the post-war appearance of private owner wagons. In the train: Oxcroft (3rd wagon). Back row of sidings: Gloucester Gaslight Company, to right of it: Bolsover (small letters). In front: Balgonie, Fife; Yorkshire Main; Stephenson Clarke. With the exception of the Balgonie wagon, any of these could have been seen within 30 miles before the war.

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