

Although the *Burford Branch* is currently operated by a fleet of BR rolling stock, I am still working on earlier vehicles with a view to putting the clock back when a reasonable collection of earlier rolling stock has been completed. Having built a number of goods wagons for the layout, I decided it was time to turn my attention to some examples of non-passenger coaching stock, known on the GWR (on account of their livery) as 'Brown Vehicles'.

Traffic on the branch would have justified a couple of Milk Vans ('Siphons'), a Horse Box or two ('Paco') and the occasional Prize Cattle Van ('Beetle'), but this has not prevented me from buying kits for a rather wider variety of Brown Vehicles and, pleading modeller's licence, I shall have no hesitation in running these other vehicles on the layout, no matter how unprototypical this might be. They include a couple of Fruit Vans, for which I cannot think of any plausible excuse. If the local green-grocer ordered a few boxes of fruit from Oxford, they could have been conveyed in the luggage compartment of the branch passenger train (assuming they were not in fact collected or delivered by road). Fruit Vans usually ran from ports such as Weymouth or Avonmouth, or from fruit-growing districts like the Vale of Evesham, to London or to major regional centres such as Birmingham.

Y2 Fruit Van ('Fruit A')

My model of the small Fruit Van built to Diagram Y2 has appeared previously in these pages. I described its original construction in MRJ No.40, but that was nearly 20 years ago, and I have included it in this article primarily in order to illustrate its painting and lettering; but, for those who may not have seen the original article, I will briefly recap on the materials and methods used.

This model and the other Fruit Van described here (a 'Fruit C' built to Diagram Y9) are both examples of models produced from kits intended to represent other prototypes, but which lend themselves to adaptation so as to extend the available range of vehicles which can be modelled. This kind of kit-bashing is something I rather enjoy doing; not only does it widen the choice of rolling stock, but the process of planning and executing the alterations is fun in itself.

The GWR produced two variants of the Y2 design. In one case there was a chamfered vent between every plank, and a very nice whitemetal kit of that version of the van is available in the Great Western Wagons / David Geen range. My model was built before that kit became available, and so I chose to reproduce the other variant of the design, on which the chamfered vent occurred only between the topmost planks on each side, which made it a lot easier to model.

The starting point for my model was the Coopercraft kit for the V5 Closed Goods Van (wooden 'Mink') (product reference : 1003). The only alteration to the body itself was the formation of the single line of chamfered vents on each side, cut with the point of a craft knife, but the floor also had to be fitted slightly higher than normal, so as to accommodate the 14mm Mansell wheels while keeping the buffers at the right height. An oil lamp top (from IKB Models) was stuck on top of the roof and a rain strip was also added over the doors. The buffers I used were MJT 2308 2ft passenger-type wagon buffers. The bases of these buffers

should be rectangular, whereas the bases of the MJT castings are rounded, with a small segment cut off one side. This is not the sort of thing that bothers me, so I was happy to use the castings as supplied.

The major changes were below the solebars. The W-irons and springs were cut off and the brake gear went into the spares box. I have long since given up fitting compensated suspension to wagons, but in this case the easiest way of fitting the wheels was to use a set of commercial W-iron units, spaced to give a 40mm wheelbase. I used the old Studiolith stampings, but various etched brass W-iron units could equally well be used. I did fit one of the W-iron units so that it would rock, but they could both have been fixed rigidly to the floor. If you use P4 wheels, some slop in the bearings is enough to keep the wheels on the rails, and with 00 or EM wheels you don't even need to do that.

Clasp brake shoes were fitted; I used Kenline No.48 castings, but several alternatives are available from various manufacturers. If you hoard bits and pieces like I do, you will already have a variety of these to choose from in your cupboard. It is clear from photos of the model that the yokes for the brake shoes are all but invisible under the vehicle, and a piece of wire to join the brake shoes would be sufficient to represent this feature. In practice, I used some etchings from D&S Models (DS100 BG3) on this model, but if you don't have some to hand, a bit of wire would do equally well.

The springs and spring-hangers used on these vehicles were distinctive, and I was lucky enough to get some spare castings from Dan Pinnock which had been produced for the D&S GWR outside frame brake van kit (AA16). I am not sure what one could use as an alternative. The brake cylinder and associated V-hangers were from ABS (F.311).

Two different types of hand brake levers were fitted to these vehicles – Dean-Churchward (D/C III) or long levers. Having built several wagons with D/C III brakes, I decided to fit long levers to this model, using a pair of etched levers from Perseverance (P.502) which were cut and bent to fit. As with other components, various alternatives are available from other sources. A ratchet and handle guard were made up using a broken piercing saw blade for the ratchet and nickel-silver strip for the guard.

The double footsteps were made up from 3mm x 1mm brass angle and wire, and the final addition was a set of vacuum and steam hoses from the ABS range (F.335 and F.U29 respectively).

When first built, these Fruit Vans had been painted and numbered as goods vehicles, but they were repainted and re-numbered in the passenger vans series before the First World War. There is some doubt as to the actual colour which would have been applied, because between 1912 and 1922 GWR passenger coaches were painted in a version of Crimson Lake. These vans may have been painted the same colour but, on the other hand, there is a suggestion that they were always painted brown. My model was assumed to be running in post-1922 condition, and so I painted it brown in a batch with other Brown Vehicles.

There is a persistent tradition that the GWR painted its non-passenger coaching stock a lighter shade of brown than the lower panels of its passenger coaches. The evidence is inconclusive, but Precision Paints manufacture a colour which is claimed to represent this particular shade, and I employed it in painting this batch of vehicles. I have to say, though,

that the difference compared with Coach Brown is hardly noticeable, and is entirely undetectable after the vehicles have been weathered.

Up to about 1927/28, when running numbers ceased to be painted on the ends of goods wagons and Brown Vehicles, the ends of Brown Vehicles were painted brown like the side; after that time, the ends were painted black. This has been doubted, but there is clear photographic evidence of the practice, which has been confirmed by the personal recollections of former company servants, such as the late Jim Russell.

I used different lettering on each side of the van. On the one side, I used yellow 'Methfix' lettering (now supplied by the HMRS), working from published photographs. I applied the 16-inch 'G W', as used from about 1920 onwards. The GWR roundel or 'collar stud' totem would have replaced this lettering on repainting after September 1934. I also used the 'Methfix' transfers for the running numbers on the ends of the vehicle. The 20 vehicles with the single line of vents were built on Wagon Lot 35 [new series] in 1894. When re-numbered in the passenger vans series they had running numbers from 2321 to 2340. The load was 6 tons and the original tare weight was around 7 tons 10 cwt.

On the other side of the model, I experimented with some waterslide transfers produced by CPL Products, using the large 24-inch 'G W', which would have remained visible on vans which had not been repainted since 1920. As mentioned above, it is a moot point as to whether this size of lettering should be applied to a brown-painted van, as it might possibly have been painted Crimson Lake at the relevant time. The CPL transfers have the advantage of being very thin, but are slightly translucent, so that the body colour tends to show through, but this is less noticeable after the model has been weathered. All transfers were later protected with a sprayed coat of matt varnish, followed by weathering. I may get around to adding some chalk markings later. Couplings were Smith's Fittings screw-type (LP5).

I painted the roof of this and some of the other Brown Vehicles white, with a view to weathering them down later by spraying them with soot colour, but so that the original colour would not necessarily be totally obscured. The ex-works white colouring on coach and van roofs certainly did not last, but it took a few months before traces of the original white colouring were completely obscured by soot, and in some cases there was a hint of the underlying colour even after a few years.

When first built, this model was generously weighted with a large lump of plasticene inside the body but, as a result of experience gained with various rolling stock, I have revised my views on the weight required to keep vehicles on the rails (whether they have compensated suspension or not). I now consider that the minimum weight per axle which is required is 20 grams, with an optimum figure of 25 grams. Thus it suffices to weight most 4-wheel vehicles to no more than 50 grams in total, and you can get away with a minimum of 40 grams if there is insufficient room to get more weight in. So, in the case of the Y2, 'Fruit A', the plasticene which had been placed inside the body was taken out, and a piece of lead was substituted, so that the vehicle tipped the scales at just 50 grams. [However, if a vehicle is run in the same train as whitmetal rolling stock, the weight of any lighter vehicles does need to be evened up to match that of the whitmetal models.]