

A Short History of our Carriages

Railholiday

We bought the railway station as a derelict building in 1992. It took six years to convert it. In 1996 we started clearing rubble in the garden and discovered a siding. It was this discovery that inspired the search for a carriage to use for accommodation, initially the idea was to put up friends who came to stay.



The Old Luggage Van – LSWR PLV 1353 of 1896

We found the Old Luggage Van in a builder's yard in Liskeard. The Old Luggage Van had come from a site in Wadebridge, where it had been used as accommodation (at least one person was born in the Luggage Van in the 1930's). The title of Luggage Van is slightly misleading – it was in fact

designed to look like a passenger coach so it could be added to the back of passenger services to get perishable goods such as fruit, vegetables and fish to market quickly. A friend who converted vans into campers had just become redundant, so we employed him to do the work. In order to recoup some of our investment we decided to rent it as holiday accommodation and this proved so successful that we thought it would be worth expanding.

Harvey in Hayle – a BR Mark 1 compartment coach of 1957

Our next project was a 65-foot long 1950's compartment coach. After speaking to the railway and finding a large site to rent at Hayle station, we bought Harvey and converted it in situ on a siding beside Bodmin Parkway station. This was filmed by the Discovery Channel for their programme Amazing Conversions. Moving Harvey was our first experience of large-scale carriage transport. There are a few UK firms that specialise in this – we used Moveright International. A rail bridge is created between the trailer and the track, from which the carriage is then carefully winched forward. It is a fairly nail-biting event to watch! Harvey was moved on site in July 2001 and has become very popular for family holidays and with people who want to stay in a compartment coach that is just like the ones they remember.





The Travelling Post Office – GWR TPO 841 of 1889

Running a business an hour and a half's train ride away had proved challenging, so when Port Eliot Estate kindly offered to lease us the land beside East Hill we were delighted. We had already set our heart on a really special coach in Brecon, an ex broad gauge Travelling Post Office that had been behind the City of Truro when it had

broken the 100mph barrier in 1904 – perhaps it had even carried the gold bullion! However at 48 feet long it was too big for the new plot. After much head scratching we decided to move the Luggage Van into the new site, which we did by laying tracks and pulling it behind a tractor. The wheel-sets Dave made worked well! Moving the TPO from Brecon to Cornwall involved two cranes and a 120-foot low loader that had to reverse two miles back to the main road at Brecon! Since moving to St Germans the TPO has gained popularity and fame after Michael Portillo stayed the night for his programme Great British Railway Journeys.

The Nut Tree Hill Holiday Carriages

In 2008 Port Eliot kindly offered us a lease on the site below the station. We started work on the site in 2009 and moved our first coaches in that year. In the same year we received a phone call from a restoration society offering us Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee coach, the first GWR dining saloon and the last remaining GWR Slip coach. Despite having vowed never to touch any more carriages with clerestory roofs or over 30 feet long we said yes of course!

Mevy - GWR Dean Clerestory Slip Tricomposite 1091 of 1898

Mevy is a slip carriage. These carriages were used behind fast trains, and instead of the train halting at the station would be uncoupled on the move; then the guard would bring the carriage to a stop at the platform. As a result slip carriages were unusual as they have all three classes of compartment as well as a guard's room. The complications of storing slip carriages, and needing a



shunting engine to move them about while at the station, meant they were phased out by 1960. Mevy came from Buckfastleigh in February 2012, where it had been clad all over in cedar wood. We're very proud of the conversion, which we have done to the highest environmental standards, using recycled and locally made products wherever possible. Mevy is the last remaining slip coach in the UK.



Millpool – 2639 GWR brake third van of 1896

Millpool came from West Cornwall. We have our friend, the late Jon Wood, to thank for Millpool. As a young man in the 1960s, Jon travelled on his bike around the Penwith area looking at old carriage bodies. He offered to help us find a suitable conversion project, so in the summer of 2009 we travelled around

the area with Jon, searching the old haunts he knew. Many had signs of recently destroyed carriages; a burnt patch with rusting nails, a small shed or bungalow in the footprint of where a carriage had stood. We were almost despairing when we found Millpool, which had been taken out of service in the 1930s and been a home for the farmer's mother for many years. Despite being in a very derelict state, Millpool fitted the bill perfectly. We wanted something we could convert into wheelchair friendly accommodation, and as Millpool had double doors and was stripped of any compartments inside it was perfect. Originally consisting of three third class compartment and a guard's room (hence the ducket windows). Like Mevy, Millpool still has some of the original picnic basket adverts above the doors. Millpool took a lot of restoring; when we stripped the outside panels we discovered the end frame was rotten inside, so had to rebuild it using sweet chestnut from our woodland, a mammoth task as each piece has to be hand carved. Millpool was completed in 2018.

Also on site awaiting and in the process of Conversion. Some imagination is required as to how they will look in the future!

The Royal Coach - GWR 264 Clerestory Saloon of 1897

This wonderful coach was built by GWR in 1897 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Five coaches were built for the royal



train at a cost of £40,000, a royal sum, even in those days. Currently the job of the moment, as of January 2023 we have stripped the wood of paint (thanks to Dave's Dad John!) Repair work has begun on the frame and our next task is to make the roof watertight.

Gorseblossom - TVR 210 3rd class carriage of 1889

This rare third class Taff Valley Railway coach was bought on eBay. TVR were incorporated into GWR in 1923. This carriage had been at the now closed Gorseblossom Railway near Newton Abbot, and it was from here we purchased it. Gorseblossom is currently being used as our paintshop.



The Dining Carriage - GWR 250 Celerestory Restaurant First of 1896

This was GWR's first ever dining saloon. They were later than other companies to introduce dining cars, primarily because selling picnic baskets was so profitable! It spent time at Liskeard station where it was used as a Women's Union meeting room, then a junk shop. It had been the first carriage we ever tried to buy,

but as providence would have it we missed our opportunity and it moved first to North Cornwall then Buckfastleigh before it was offered to us. It's a very interesting carriage, built to high spec with mahogany panels and an original butlers pantry. This is currently in use for storage, and as a studio and flower arranging area.

Beaworthy - an LSWR Brake Third

This carriage is one of two very derelict carriages bought on eBay for only £27. Because they were both so incomplete we took the decision to dismantle the second, less interesting, 3rd class carriage to use as a donor coach for when we restore this one. Both carriages were from the 1880s, but we have been unable to find any numbers that would date them. Currently the LSWR brake third is being used as our woodworking workshop.



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