

A Railway Carriage by the Common



by

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A Railway Carriage by the Common!

First time visitors to Westleton Common will be surprised and intrigued to see a vintage railway carriage neighbouring the Mill Street entrance. It belongs to Tony and Anne Ingram of The Cleeves and it stands on land in private ownership outside the defined Westleton Common. The following is an article by Tony relating the history of the carriage.

'The Carriage next to the Common.'

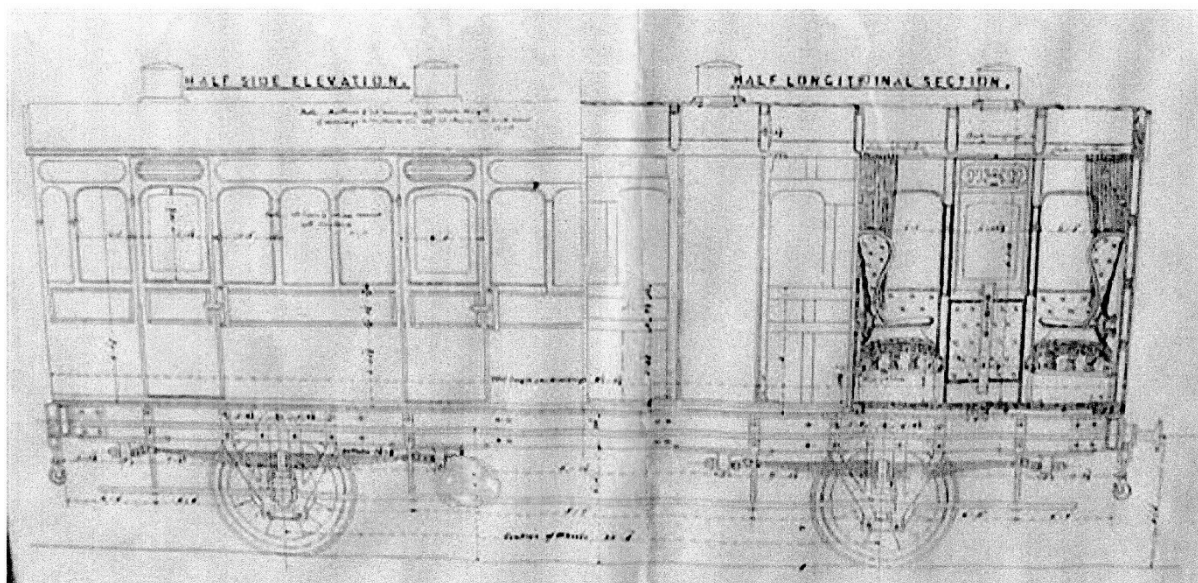
Tucked away at the top of Mill St on the western edge of the Common lies an old railway carriage. This Carriage and Buildings and the surrounding land has been well-documented as part of The Cleeves Freehold for about 100 years. Both the carriage and the land that surrounds it have historically been, and continue to remain, in private ownership.



The carriage around 2000 coated in black bitumastic.

The Carriage itself is considerably over 100 years old. It was built as a 24' 4' GER four-compartment First Class built by the Metropolitan Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. at Joseph Wright's Saltley Works in Birmingham probably between 1882 and 1884.

In addition to having built rolling stock for practically all the home railways, Joseph Wright successfully completed contracts for Egypt, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Spain, Italy, South America, India and Australia. Much of it of the very highest class and described as being "considered marvels of skilful construction and tasteful decoration". Interestingly, as early as 1858, the firm, to meet the wants of railway companies, colliery owners and others, adopted the system of leasing wagons and had no fewer than 1300 wagons at work upon the various railways.

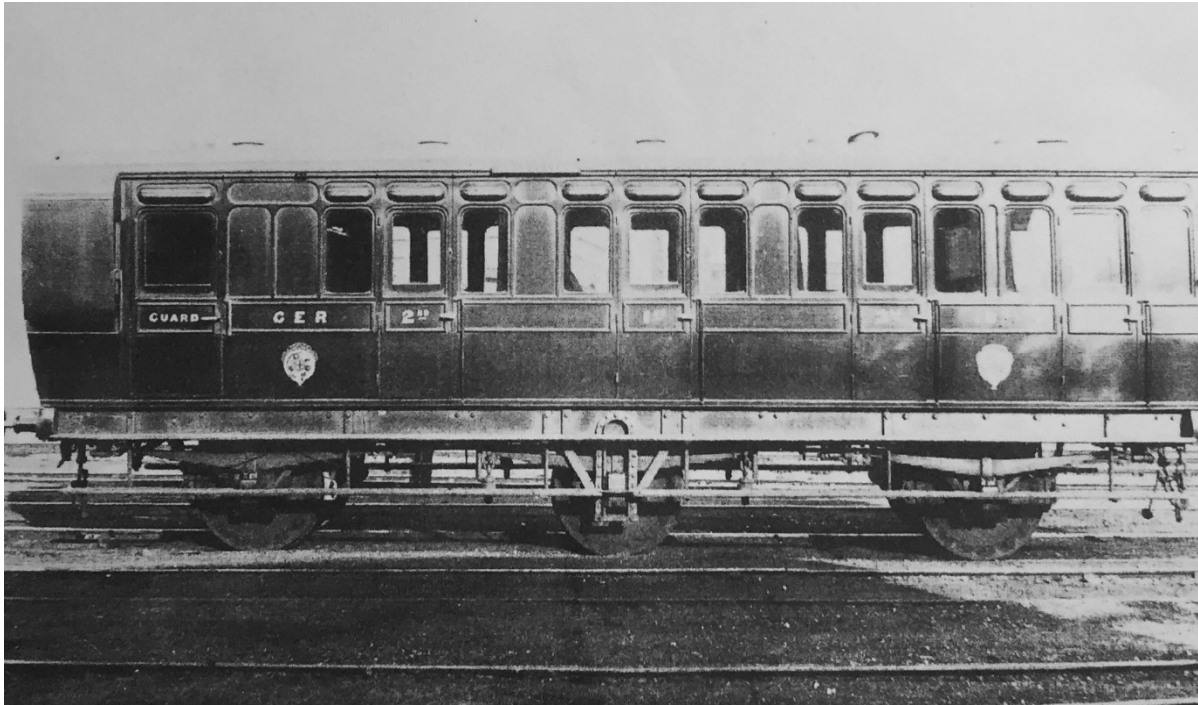


The Blueprint of a very similar carriage of four compartment construction. Note the quality of interior finish.

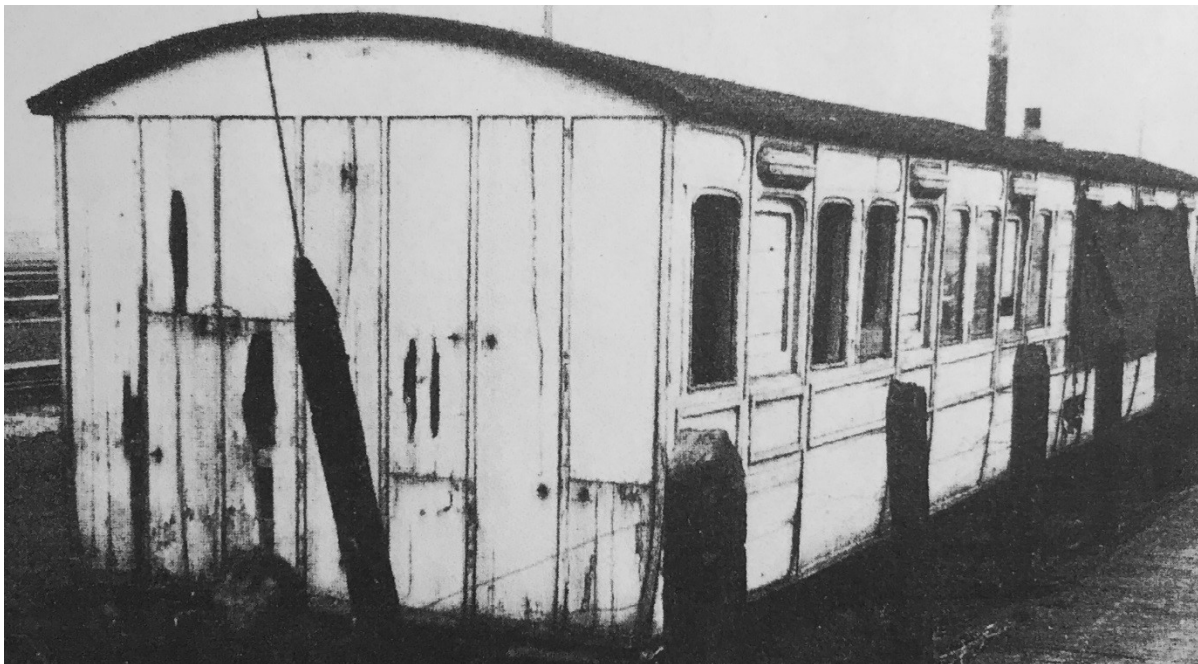
This Carriage is no. 228F (for First Class) for mainline use and was probably withdrawn from service around 1895. Perhaps it became obsolete because of its sturdy, but heavy construction.

Known as a Worsdell Type 3B, it features the reintroduction of a recessed eaves panel. To the uninformed eye, this was a reversion to a design first introduced in 1867, but it was now applied in conjunction with an improved interior height. Thomas Worsdall, Superintendent of Works replaced Massey Bromley who had been discovered defrauding the Company with the collusion of the Stores Supervisor.

Automated Westinghouse braking and gas-lighting were by this time commonplace.

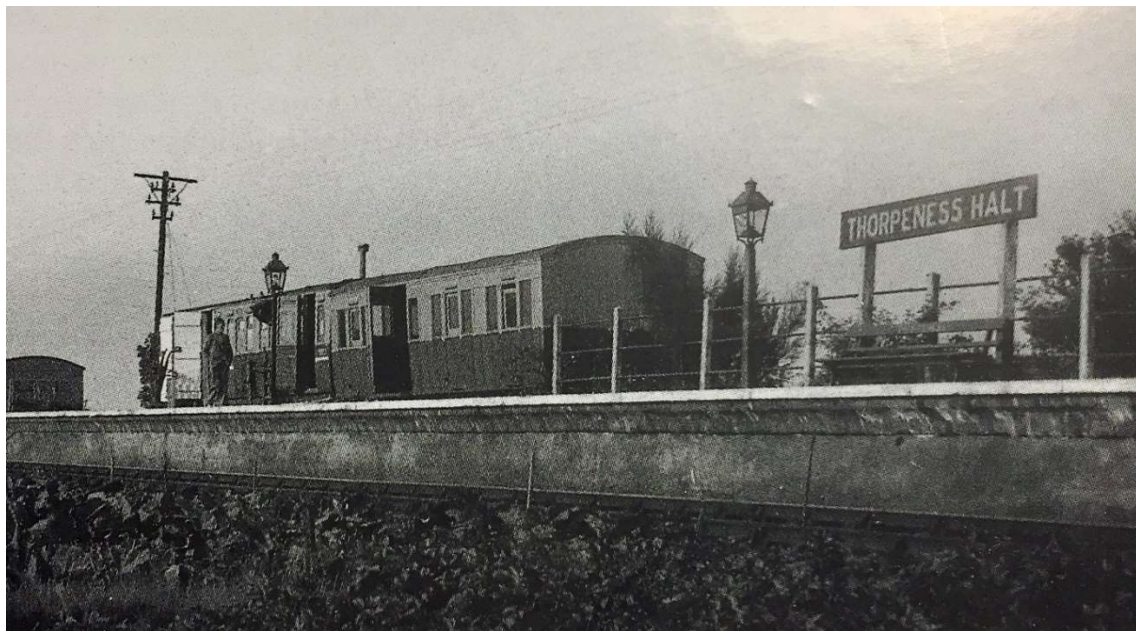


A slightly later longer-bodied Worsdell Type 4 (c.1886) featuring higher squarer door heads plus end turn-unders.



A dilapidated longer-bodied Worsdell Type 3B

Its not clear (yet) where the carriage ran on GER lines, but a similar carriage (apparently built to collect mail) acted as ticketing office and waiting room at Thorpeness Halt around the First World War. Thorpeness Halt opened on 29th July 1914 to serve the newly developed resort, but the distance between Station and Resort plus the War put paid to much traffic.



Thorpeness Halt and 'grounded' Worsdell Carriages (see detail of mail delivery equipment).



Thorpeness Halt and 'grounded' Worsdell Carriages and detail of mail delivery equipment.

Since our carriages relocation here sometime around or shortly after the beginning of C20, it has been used for a variety of domestic purposes including as a home for a returning First World War soldier.



The carriage just outside the edge of the quarry c. 1950's



Our carriage is now undergoing stabilising, and limited restoration and alteration reference relevant planning and building regulation approvals as a studio/ workshop and other residential related uses.

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References and huge thanks to:

Suffolks Railways, Dennis Cross
Great Eastern Journal
East Suffolk Railway, John Brodribb



Additional photographs by Roy Jones