

# ONLINE

WINTER Edition 2019  
ISSUE 34.

**Freight & Logistics Achievement of the Year**

## Jet Fuel to Heathrow

### A winning rail freight collaboration

VTG Rail joins its team of project partners on stage at the National Rail Awards to collect 'Freight and Logistics Achievement of the Year'.

Article on page 3.



VTG Rail would like to wish all of its customers, suppliers and friends a Happy New Year. We hope you had a very Merry Christmas and enjoyed the festive season.

Each year the team at VTG selects a number of charities to support, rather than sending out paper Christmas cards. This year the team chose to donate to: The Midlands Air Ambulance, British Heart Foundation, Children with Cancer and Muscular Dystrophy UK.

Our best wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2020.

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The Rubery Redstars fly into action with our sponsorship.

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# Welcome

Rob Brook, Managing Director, VTG Rail.

Welcome to the Winter 2019/20 edition of ONLINE.

Inside this issue we are delighted to announce the winning of not one but two top industry awards and also to welcome Colin Denman who will be taking over as Managing Director of VTG Rail UK in April 2020.

I know Colin is going to be an outstanding fit with the company and he brings with him a huge amount of experience to further strengthen our customer service.

I am delighted to also announce three new starters to our team and would like to welcome: Matthew Harris, Louise Alcock and George Gerrish to their roles. As a company, we continue to invest in new talent. They have come onboard at an exciting time for the company and I would like to wish them the very best of luck as they begin their new careers with us.

Overall it's been a challenging but exciting year for us, as we

continue with the NACCO integration and in bringing new rolling stock on line to meet the growing needs of our customers. The construction and intermodal sectors in particular continue to do well and we are working hard to make sure all customers have the rolling stock they need to fulfil demand. Looking forward to 2020, we are confident these sectors will continue to be strong and the growing use of re-purposed wagons remains a popular and cost-efficient option.

In October I was delighted to attend the first joint event held between the Private Wagon Federation and the Rail Freight Group in Derby. It is great to see so much energy and enthusiasm for the independent rolling stock sector and I would like to thank Steve Taylor, PWF Secretary General, and Maggie Simpson, RFG Director General, for their continuous and diligent work in supporting it.

I would like to wish all our customers and suppliers a very prosperous 2020.

## Hot coil carrier conversions

VTG Rail is in the process of completing another 46 converted coil carriers on behalf of Tata Steel. This is the second run at the Arlington Fleet workshop near Southampton.

Tata needed units that could carry hot coil, which comes off the mill as sheet steel. It is then rolled into a coil and while still extremely hot (about 700 degrees C) is put straight onto a modified wagon.

There were key challenges to solve around extensive testing to make sure the heat did not damage safety-critical components and VTG staff had to work closely with the customer to design the wagon to meet the demands.

It is unusual to see the wagons without their sliding cover but for this grade of steel it is unnecessary to protect the coils from the elements. For obvious reasons the wooden coil well was also replaced with steel.



## New MD to start in April

VTG Rail UK has strengthened its leadership team, appointing Colin Denman as its new UK MD, with current boss Rob Brook set to remain in charge until April 2020 and then continue as Head of Rail.

Colin brings with him a wealth of experience to the role with a varied career as Managing Director in additive manufacturing, healthcare, automotive, and

engineering companies. He has a thorough knowledge of business both large and small having worked with companies generating tens of millions of pounds in turnover.

## CILT 2020 office planners available

VTG is a committed member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and was delighted to help

support its 2020 Wall Planner, which goes out to all its members. If you want a copy to brighten up your desk or office, please let us know and we'll be happy to mail one out to you.

Please email Caitlin Lippitt at [caitlin.lippitt@vtg.com](mailto:caitlin.lippitt@vtg.com)





## VTG scoops top rail industry awards

VTG Rail is delighted to have claimed not one but two rail freight awards this year. In September the team joined project partners Railfreight Consulting, British Airways, BP, Network Rail and Freightliner, in winning the 'Freight and Logistics Achievement of the Year' at the National Rail Awards.

The award recognises major new contributions to the rail freight or logistics sector where the outcome measurably enhances the role of rail in the supply chain. Now in its 20th year, the National Rail Awards continues to celebrate excellence in the industry, recognising a host of successes from train drivers who saved lives to a railwayman with 58 years of service who helps passengers at London's Waterloo station. VTG Rail also won the award back in 2017 for its re-purposing of redundant coal wagons into revenue-generating aggregate hoppers.

On winning for the second time, Ian Shaw, VTG Rail's Sales & Marketing Director, said: "We are delighted to have won this prestigious award again. This was a very successful project that involved a great deal of collaboration and was a testament to

what can be achieved when all parties work closely together."

The award was swiftly followed by further recognition, this time coming runner-up in the 'Rail Freight Project of the Year' category at the popular Rail Freight Group Awards. Judges praised VTG's close collaboration with its project partners and how it included developing new physical, legal, commercial and technical systems and agreements to make it happen. The revitalising of old terminals and track being brought back into use was also applauded.



## VTG Connect helps customer investigate graffiti incident

*When approached by a customer who needed help tracking a graffiti incident on its new petroleum tank cars, VTG Connect was able to step in using the latest track and trace technology. Sam Hunt, Project Manager, picks up the story.*

When the customer contacted us we quickly set about utilising the onboard VTG Connect system to review the real-time operating data from the trains.

They were unsure where the incident had occurred but using Connect we were able to select specific date ranges to track down and isolate the incident.

We were able to visualise the whole wagon journey and quickly find exactly where the wagon had stopped. From the time stamp, we discovered a 45-minute pause in the journey, which turned out to

be the only place where the stop was more than a few minutes. We were then able to quickly and accurately convey that information to the client and isolate the exact location.

Every wagon is assigned a unique number to identify it. When we're mounting and pairing numbers, we pair them using a smart phone and relay that data to a central database to link the wagon and device - giving them a unique identification code.

VTG Connect has been in the UK for about two years and our plan is to roll it out to around 95% of our wagons in the near future.

**Speak to our team today and find out how VTG Connect can help your business. Call 0121 421 9180.**

# Please welcome our latest new starters:



## Louise Alcock

### Financial Reporting Accountant

**I am the newest recruit to the finance department having started at VTG in January. Reporting into Paul Davies, I will be taking on some financial reporting responsibilities and bring with me nearly 20 years' experience in a variety of finance roles, mainly in the automotive sector.**

I am a CIMA qualified accountant and began my training at a Ford dealership before continuing at LDV, the van manufacturer, where I was promoted a number of times over the six years I was there. From there, I moved into SAS Automotive based at the Land Rover Solihull site, where we manufactured the cockpit and centre consoles for the Range Rover Sport model. I worked as the senior accountant, overseeing the finance department in a small but very busy office. In early 2010 I started a new role as Financial Accounts Manager at ATS Euromaster. Again, another automotive company focused on supplying tyres and other services.

I am married to Dave and we have a daughter Amy who is now seven. We moved into a new house in December 2018 so this year has been full of changes.

My passion is watching motorcycle racing, especially the Moto GP. I have been a spectator of the sport since I was a young child and I enjoy going to watch it, although the British GP is usually a soggy affair if I attend. I did make it out to watch the Australian GP in 2004, which was a real highlight. I also love music and go to as many concerts as I can, mainly rock music, and I spent my birthday this year at Download Festival at Castle Donington, which again was quite a rainy weekend.

I also have a keen interest in travelling, which was ignited by a semester out in Upstate New York while at university and after graduation I worked in Canada for four months before taking a year to go to South East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and the US. Since then, my travels have been far shorter but I have always made a big dent in my annual budget with holidays although since having Amy, many of them have been Disney themed.

I am enjoying my time at VTG and have been made to feel very welcome by the team here. I look forward to the new challenges ahead.



## George Gerrish

### Project Assistant

**I'm currently on my Year in Industry at VTG, while I study Mechanical Engineering at Coventry University and have aspirations to complete my Masters and gain Chartership.**

I have completed two years of my degree so far and the world of engineering has so many challenges and opportunities to pursue. This is what initially hooked me into the subject and continues to drive my passion for engineering today.

I'm very excited to be working in the rail sector as there is huge potential for design and innovation across the sector. It can be a challenge but it's what makes working in rail such a unique experience.

I'm currently working on the roll out of VTG Connect. Working on a large project like this has been a great challenge and has helped me step into the shoes of what it is like to be an engineer right from the start. Being part of the digitisation of the railway is a proud moment for me as I feel I am helping take an entire industry forward.

My favourite experience so far has been going on site and learning more about wagons. As I have been out to more sites I've been learning more about each type - especially the FBA or Ecofret. I find them really interesting from a design perspective as making a platform that efficient and the design techniques that are therefore involved really inspire me as an engineer.



## Matthew Harris

### Fleet Controller

**I have spent the past two years of my career working on the Grand Union Canal at Foxton Locks, working with around 60 volunteers of varied backgrounds and careers. I managed the volunteer rotas and was an on site fitter for the locks. The flight of 10 locks is the longest staircase flight in Europe and has 22 gates, 22 paddles, 18 bridges, eight ponds, and on a busy day will attract up to 4,000 visitors.**

In my holidays I visit North Wales. While there I volunteer on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways. I began volunteering with the railway in October 2015 as a steward but felt after a year I needed to do more to give back to the railway. I became an engine cleaner and shed hand in October 2016 and after a year cleaning was progressed to Trainee Fireman in October 2017. In March 2019 I passed as a Fireman and this year have clocked up more than 2,000 miles firing on our 13.5 mile line.

While at home I tend to get involved in canal events. So far I've organised two events and am in the process of organising a third. These events are centred around the historical side of the canal and encourage the local community to take part in what they have on their doorstep. I have now become the Chairman and founder of a local canal organisation. Our purpose is to preserve and maintain our local canal arm (branch), going that extra mile above and beyond what the waterway authority can do.

When I'm not out getting caked in grime at the railway or mud on the canal I'll be crafting something at home or spending time behind a lens. I've been taking photos for years and so far have had two exhibitions, and three published pieces as well as winning competitions. If all that fails you'll probably find me at a Volkswagen event or polishing my car to go to a meet or show.

VTG is a total change of culture for me, I've never been sat down at a desk, I've not been in an indoor job for years. I'm really happy to have joined the team here and having such a small number of staff means everyone knows each other in a really close environment. There's so many different characters here in the office, it has such a great vibe to it.

## Mendip Rail enhances its fleet with 35 wagons

**Mendip Rail has recently taken 35 new wagons from VTG Rail, made up of 25 new stainless steel and 10 refurbished hoppers.**

Mendip Rail is a joint venture for the rail division of Aggregate Industries and Hanson Aggregates. It has worked with VTG for around 30 years and is a key player in the hauling of construction material including limestone and PSV, the skid resistant stone component needed to surface roads.

The new hoppers have coated axles, which is an important factor in preventing rusting when carrying marine dredged material, which can traditionally cause problems with rusting. This was one of the key reasons to employ 3CR12 grade stainless steel material for the bodies. These provide more flexibility to run them out of the Somerset quarries, with sand from Dagenham, or even gravel from the Isle of Grain.

One of the key ways VTG is really adding value is through converting coal wagons to be shorter. When running trains into London, for instance, where land space is constrained, Mendip is able to run with 24 rather than 20 wagons, meaning more material can be carried and efficiency is increased.



## Keep an eye out for VTG Rail in the media

**VTG Rail is increasing its exposure in the UK rail freight trade press, appearing in more magazines and media sources. Recent interviews include Ian Shaw and Nigel Day in Bulk Distributor Magazine and**

**Rail Professional respectively.**

Keep up to date with VTG in the press, and read the latest interviews at:

[bulk-distributor.com](http://bulk-distributor.com) and [railpro.co.uk](http://railpro.co.uk).



Spot the Difference?  
BEFORE...

## New conversions roll out the shop

**VTG Rail has completed the first of a new design of repurposed coal hoppers in partnership with wagon builder WH Davis, enabling the wagons to efficiently carry aggregates for the construction industry. It is a sector currently enjoying strong growth and rail customers have benefitted from these kind of cost-efficient alternatives to new build rolling stock, which can be subject to long lead times .**

According to figures from the Mineral Products Association, the amount of aggregates, cement and other mineral products carried by rail overall has risen 21% over the past five years and is now the largest user of rail freight by tonnage.

VTG Rail has been championing the cause of wagon repurposing since the sector-wide shift away from ESI coal.

Ian Shaw, Sales & Marketing Director, VTG Rail, said: "Following the decline in traditional coal haulage serving most of the nation's power stations, VTG Rail took the initiative to begin a strategic move toward investing in converting

former coal wagons into aggregate hoppers. They are extremely cost effective and inject new life into relatively young rolling stock while meeting the needs of the customer. We operate in a changing sector where construction is booming right now, so we expect the "repurposing" trend is going to continue and gain in popularity.

Having previously completed the award winning conversion of the HYA coal wagon, VTG turned its attention to its HHA wagon fleet, acquired as part of its recent purchase of the Nacco wagon leasing business. Whilst also of stainless steel construction and fitted with track friendly bogies – both highly desirable features – the detailed features of this wagon, particularly having four (rather than three) discharge doors, provided some additional challenges which needed to be addressed in order to create an optimised wagon for aggregates."

He went on to say: "We are very pleased with the end product and also happy to be extending our relationship with WH Davis. We appreciate their hard work and expertise in continuing to support us in helping fulfil the needs of our customers."

*Thanks to Les Bryant, Group Business Development Director at Davis Wagon Services for the great photos.*



...and AFTER.



## Sector event notes multi-use wagons may be the future

**The first joint meeting of Private Wagons Federation (PWF) and RFG in Derby in October covered a wide range of subjects related to rail freight wagons.**

Steve Taylor, PWF Secretary General, noted that while the R2 vehicle register suggested there were about 26,000 wagons in the UK, the PWF thought 15,000-17,000 was a more realistic figure for active wagons and that this number would doubtless decrease as the remaining coal traffic virtually disappears in the next two years.

Rob Brook, speaking as Chairman of PWF, said that supply and demand is quite tightly balanced in the UK and there were not many wagon builders here. Wagons cost an average of £100,000 – going up to £200,000 for some bespoke versions – and 30-40 years is typically accepted as the lifespan.

He suggested that investor risk would be reduced and utilisation improved by building multi-use wagons which, like Lego, could be modified for different uses “by moving a couple of blocks”. Also, multi-use trains would help improve productivity, as in Europe where you see single trains pulling cement, intermodal boxes and fuel wagons.

Consultant Julian Worth noted that the easiest system would be to have just box wagons and flat intermodal wagons, rather than having the cost and complexity of bespoke wagons for different industries and even individual customers.

John Brown of Greenbrier added that as order sizes get smaller and more specific (100 or even less compared with 1,000

wagons in the past) the costs of design, production and approval are much higher.

Stewart Kenworthy of Ricardo Rail looked at the regulatory environment and said it was relatively clear what a ‘no deal Brexit’ or ‘no Brexit’ would mean, but he had no idea what a ‘managed deal’ would bring at the end of the transition period.

Lineside maintenance, which has become more prevalent as it helps keep wagons in service, can often mean a harsh environment for employees. Les Bryant of Davies Wagon Services pointed out that Human Factor assessments are important to ensure a safe and appropriate workplace.

Simon Blake of Aggregate Industries said that customers understood that suppliers had wagons and data that were their USP but, on the other hand, the fact that there are different train preparations for each FOC can be complicated and has cost implications.

The move from corrective and preventative maintenance towards condition monitoring and predictive maintenance has been made possible by digitalisation.

Delegates discussed how collaboration is needed if, for instance, scanners using high-speed photography could be installed along the mainline tracks. They agreed that collaborative projects would also be more likely to attract government grants or funding, especially when related to decarbonisation.

Maggie Simpson, RFG Director General recognised that wagons are often the “unsung heroes” of the rail freight industry and said the meeting had been very useful to help start to identify the main challenges and issues facing the production and maintenance of wagons.

Everyone agreed that there needs to be more awareness among politicians and the general public about the existence/benefits of rail freight and that, in the end, we need to have a commercially viable operation to stay in business.



## Having a ball on Halloween 2019

Love it or loathe it, Halloween is more popular than ever and was brought into the Birmingham office in striking colour.

The bright orange meeting pod was dressed to thrill and raised a few eyebrows as well, fully decked out in creepy cobwebs and bats.

# Hamburg Towers and VTG start new season together



In September, young adults from VTG's RailTrain program and the Pirates, the youth basketball team from the Hamburg Towers, held a joint training session.

Andy Grote, Senator for the Interior and Sport of the City of Hamburg, attended and threw in the first ball. He said: "It is not only in sport that strong role models are needed. With their commitment to children and young people, VTG and the Hamburg Towers show how important social responsibility is for our urban society. A strong partnership that hopefully motivates many more to get involved as well."

VTG RailTrain offers underprivileged young people opportunities to undertake activities and academic qualifications. Dr. Heiko Fischer, Chairman of the Executive Board of VTG AG, said: "We accompany the young people individually and, in addition to techni-

cal components, also offer in-house remedial teaching in German and maths as well as socio-educational support. In Germany in particular, a qualification is indispensable for starting a career and establishing independence. Since its foundation, the Hamburg Towers has been involved in numerous social projects for children and young people through the association Sport Without Borders.

Through sport, young people are taught self-confidence, fairness, team spirit and the knowledge that commitment pays off. "Not everyone can become a top athlete, but we want to help children and young people find their place in society. The fact that faith in success and hard work can make a big difference is something we are experiencing right now with our start in the first German Basketball League, easyCredit BBL," added Marvin Willoughby, Managing Director of Hamburg Towers.

## UK NEWS

# Helping shape Birmingham's future stars

VTG Rail was delighted this year to start sponsoring a new local youth football team. The Rubery Red Star team are based at Crofton Park, Longbridge, and train at the local school.

The new team officially started playing on 8 September. The club is fully affiliated with the Birmingham County FA and has joined the Central Warwickshire Youth Football League.

On 13 July, two members of the team, Harvey and Ethan, even hiked up Snowdon in order to raise further funds and have raised more than £250.

Watch this space for team updates throughout the season.



## Send us your news

Do you have a news item you would like us to include in the next edition of ONLINE?

We always welcome input for the newsletter and would love to hear from you. Whether you are a member of VTG Rail staff, an existing customer or have worked with

us as a project partner, please feel free to get in touch anytime to share your news.

Please email James Falkner at [james@railfreightpr.com](mailto:james@railfreightpr.com) to let us know and we'll be only too happy to consider it for publication in the next issue.