

ONLINE

VTG RAIL UK NEWSLETTER No.41



The new hopper wagons are being built for VTG at Greenbrier's wagon facility in Poland and will be delivered to Mendip Rail during 2024.

VTG Rail UK orders 203 new HOA hopper wagons to serve Mendip Rail fleet

VTG Rail UK has been the rolling stock partner of choice for Mendip Rail for more than 20 years. In March 2023 this successful working relationship was cemented even further as VTG placed an order for more than 200 new hopper wagons for the MRL fleet.

The order forms part of a large investment with the new HOA hopper wagons being built to replace the LTF and

O&K hopper fleets which have operated for Mendip Rail since they were built around 35 years ago.

Each new wagon will carry 77 tonnes of aggregates with each typical freight train removing up to 129 lorry journeys from the country's already congested road network. It is part of an agreement made ten years ago when VTG Rail UK bought Mendip Rail's owned fleets with plans to

replace these at the end of a 10-year agreement.

Mendip Rail, a joint venture between Hanson UK and Aggregate Industries, moves more than nine million tonnes of aggregate each year from quarries in the Mendip Hills. Much of the tonnage is destined for terminals in London and the South-East, for use in various construction and infrastructure projects. As well as

(Continued on page 3)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

UK News

Exclusive

Maggie Simpson MBE, Director General, RFG writes about the important role wagons play in UK rail freight.



Group News

Fair Play

Experts from across the group attended this year's Transport Logistics Fair held in Munich in May.



People

Wagon Man

We celebrate Paul Lugg's 46 years of dedicated service to the rail freight industry.



Welcome

Colin Denman, Managing Director, VTG Rail UK.

Welcome to our summer 2023 update in which we are delighted to welcome a guest columnist to our latest issue of Online magazine. Many of you will know Maggie Simpson MBE, Director General of the Rail Freight Group and she has written an excellent piece where she explores the important role that wagons play across rail freight.

As Maggie rightly points out, 'the wagon of the future, building on today's foundations will help decarbonise rail freight, improve productivity, be safer and more reliable and communicate with its customers in real time. We are already on that trajectory and the potential is truly exciting. The humble wagon's time has come.'

I couldn't agree more with Maggie's words and thank her for taking the time to write the article which you will find on pages 4 and 5.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome two new members to our team. Earlier in the summer Marc Hurn joined us as Sales and Marketing Director. Marc has a wealth of industry experience and has hit the ground running, already spearheading a number of new and exciting projects and opportunities.

Lewis Bryan joined our team in early August as Marketing and Sales Coordinator to support the sales team and help to drive our marketing strategy. He's already proving to be a great member of the team and will be a great asset to VTG Rail UK.

We hosted our annual golf day at The Warwickshire Golf & Country Club in July and despite some rather mixed weather, all six teams enjoyed the event which was won by Team 2 captained by VTG's Paul Davies. Thank you to everyone who took part and helped us raise £200 for Acorns Children's Hospice.

Acorns is once again our nominated charity of the year and we were delighted to present them with a cheque for a further £2,000 this summer thanks to a generous donation from MCL Group. The money was raised from the proceeds of the sale of a number of items of office furniture that we were unable to bring with us to our new HQ. Again our thanks to Mark and the team at MCL for their help and support.

We are excited to be hosting a customer visit to France this Autumn as we showcase a range of environmentally friendly wagons and modular solutions for transporting steel. This is part of a dedicated roadshow tour which will see a steel train hauling VTG modular and standard wagons designed for carrying cargo such as coil, steel and scrap on a dedicated rail tour across five countries starting and finishing in Germany.



The steel industry currently accounts for around 10% of global CO₂ emissions. The transformation of steel production is therefore of great importance for Europe's export-oriented value chains, while this transformation is also a comparatively low-hanging fruit - in no other industry can comparably high CO₂ volumes be reduced so quickly and great leaps made toward climate-neutral production. You can find out more on page 6.

We also throw the spotlight on our longest serving member of staff Paul Lugg, who having dedicated an incredible 46 years of service to the rail freight industry, was rewarded for his hard work and loyalty with the Outstanding Individual Contribution award at this year's RFG Awards. A brilliant achievement Paul - congratulations from everyone at VTG!

Finally, we will be making an important and exciting announcement in October about a project which has the potential to revolutionise the rail freight industry. I cannot go into further detail at this point, but keep an eye on our social media, our website and the media!

I wish you all the very best for what is left of summer and look forward to seeing you soon.

Colin

Contact the VTG Rail UK team...

If you would like to discuss anything in this newsletter, the work of VTG Rail UK or to speak with a member of our team, please contact us at: salesuk@vtg.com | uk.vtg.com | 0121 421 9180

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Published in 2023 by VTG Rail UK • Editorial content, design and layout by Gravity PR

VTG supporting the drive towards long-term sustainability with Mendip Rail wagon order

(Continued from page 1)

housing and road improvements, there is a significant commitment to the building of the high-speed rail project, HS2.

The new hopper wagons are being built for VTG at Greenbrier's wagon manufacturing facility in Poland and will be delivered to Mendip Rail during 2024. They will be used to transport limestone from quarries in the Mendip Hills to London.

The order for 203 new HOA hopper wagons will replace the existing hopper wagons in the fleet:

- 98 "O&K" JHA hopper wagons
- 105 "LTF" JHA hopper wagons

Mendip Rail operates aggregate trains from Aggregate Industries quarry at Torr and Hanson's quarry at Whatley. The benefits of being able to move a large tonnage of aggregates by rail safely and efficiently are clear. But another success story of the service is the environmental benefits that it brings.

The limestone Mendip Hills with the lakes of the Chew Valley is a stunning landscape with spectacular gorges and rocky outcrops. It is for this reason and more that it has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Being able to move the limestone that is

quarried from the hills by rail takes hundreds of truck movements from this rural area's roads every week.

Much of the limestone transported from the quarries is moved by Mendip Rail's 'jumbo trains'. These mammoth trains typically consist of a mixture of between 40-50 hopper and box wagons, which equates to up to 154 HGV road journeys. When the train reaches London, it is split for onward journeys to different locations across the South-East, creating massive environmental savings compared to road and easing congestion on London's busy road network.

Improved air quality should also be considered - rail produces up to 10 times less small particulate matter than road haulage and as much as 15 times less nitrogen oxide for the equivalent mass hauled. Along with the environmental benefits the trains also allow for large quantities to be moved quickly and efficiently by rail, at a time when there is a shortage of lorry drivers.

As the UK's largest lessor of rail freight wagons, VTG recognises the key role it plays in enabling its customers to move large quantities of product by rail rather than road, supporting the drive towards

long-term sustainability.

Our relationship with Mendip Rail goes back a very long way and providing them with the best possible services and top-class wagons, thereby enabling their business to operate at its maximum capabilities, is crucial to us.

In addition to the new order for 203 hopper wagons, VTG Rail UK has worked closely with Mendip Rail over the years to ensure a high standard of wagons in its fleet. This forms part of a large investment by VTG and remodelling of the fleet over the last eight years. The Mendip Rail fleet has grown with new VTG hopper and box wagons added including:

- 65 box wagons and 65 hopper wagons added to MR fleet in 2016
- 30 re-purposed HHA/HYA coal hopper wagons with optimised capacity (converted by WH Davis in 2020/2022)
- 155 new JNA-T box wagons were introduced to replace and/or supplement old fleets in 2022:
 - 57 O&K box wagons
 - 26 KEA box wagons
 - 72 new JNA-T box wagons



The 203 new hopper wagons are being built for VTG at Greenbrier's wagon facility in Poland and will be delivered to Mendip Rail during 2024. They will be used to transport limestone from quarries in the Mendip Hills to London.

Developing rail freight productivity

Maggie Simpson MBE, Director General, Rail Freight Group writes exclusively for VTG Online and looks at the important role of wagons in providing economic performance in delivering sustainable railway services.



Ask anyone about the history of UK railways and they will probably tell you about Stephenson's Rocket, or maybe Mallard and its speed record. Other might rue the Beeching report, or reminisce about the end of steam. Yet not a single person will ever talk about the humble wagon and its place in history. But they should.

For it was wagons that moved the coal and ore that the first railways were built for, and it was wagons that fuelled the industrial revolution, generating the income needed to expand the rail

network. 200 years later and the wagon is just as important, and arguably just as overlooked. So, it is time to change that, and sing the praises of wagons, their role in UK rail freight and the huge opportunity that exists today for innovation and modernisation.

Today there are around 15,000 active wagons in the UK fleet, from hopper wagons to container wagons to specialist wagons for particular flows. Over the last 2-3 decades there has been significant private sector investment in renewing and expanding this fleet, and in developing new and improved designs to drive up productivity. This has been supported by companies such as VTG, who both facilitate and innovate in new products, and provide finance options allowing wagons to be leased not only by freight train operators but also by end customers themselves, as they push for modal shift to rail.

More and more businesses are looking to move their goods by rail as they strive to reduce carbon emissions in their supply chains. This is leading to unprecedented demand for new rail services even despite the current economic pressures. New terminals are opening up, and new services starting in both the bulk and retail sectors. New sectors such as high-speed logistics and refrigerated goods are

starting to come to rail, and in the longer-term products such as liquid hydrogen could also be carried by rail supporting industrial decarbonisation. In consequence Network Rail is forecasting 7.5% growth over the next five years, whilst Government is promising to set a long-term growth target later this year. To meet this growth there needs to be continued investment from the sector, in new terminals, locomotives, systems and of course wagons. And this gives the opportunity to innovate and modernise, bringing new technology onto the rolling stock and helping to drive productivity and sustainability.

One area where there has already been significant innovation is the payload and productivity of wagons. For rail freight to be cost effective for customers, each train has to be as well loaded as it can be, carrying the most amount of goods in each wagon, and being as long as the network, and the locomotive, will allow. Well loaded trains are also the most carbon efficient per tonne moved, so increasing wagon payload has been good for the environment too. Products like the VTG Ecofret have been designed to fill that need, enabling more containers to be moved on every train, whilst new hoppers and box wagons have also been designed to increase volumes.



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Guest Columnist



Well loaded trains are the most carbon efficient per tonne moved and increasing wagon payload is good for the environment.

This is excellent, but for rail to meet the needs of the next generation of customers we need to keep innovating and modernising the fleet, to keep trains moving safely and reliably, whilst also meeting customer needs for visibility and product quality. This means that wagons need to move from 'inert' to data enabled, opening up a range of new systems and products. This could range from remote condition monitoring to drive maintenance productivity, derailment and load detectors to improve safety, train length sensors to work with digital signalling systems and powered bogies to reduce fuel use and improve acceleration. I have been really encouraged by the innovation in this area already, and the research and development that is underway across the industry presently.

Of course, new systems and equipment comes with its challenges. I am frequently told that customers aren't prepared to pay more for digital systems for example, and there are definitely some cases where the costs and benefits are misaligned between parties. But these difficulties can and must be addressed, because if we do not adopt these systems voluntarily there is a real risk that they will be mandated by others,

and not necessarily in a way or to a timescale that will be best for the industry overall.

To overcome these challenges, we need to collaborate and work together to find common solutions, and we need to continue supporting innovation in rail freight. RFG has recently launched a new Digital and Innovation forum for its members, creating a space to discuss common challenges and opportunities, learn about best practice and link members together to work on shared issues. In our first meeting we discussed culture change, cyber security and where some of the most urgent areas are for rail freight digitisation. It is no surprise that wagons were one of the common themes, along with improving productivity and modernising paper based systems.

The opportunity here is not to be missed. The wagon of the future, building on today's foundations will help decarbonise rail freight, improve productivity, be safer and more reliable and communicate with its customers in real time. We are already on that trajectory and the potential is truly exciting. The humble wagon's time has come.

A green solution for rail freight...

Members of the VTG Rail UK team were invited to the unveiling of the first of the new Class 93 tri-mode locomotives (93001) to arrive at Rail Operations Group HNRC facility at Worksop in August.



VTG's Marc Hurn, Archie Lucas and Lewis Bryan at the unveiling of the new Class 93.

The Class 93 tri-mode locomotive (Electric, Diesel/Traction Battery) is based on a Class 88 design. Whereas the 88s are bi-mode units that can be powered from either electricity drawn from a 25kV overhead line supply or a 950hp Caterpillar diesel engine, the Class 93s are fitted with lithium batteries that can offer a third power source.

David Burley, Chief Executive Officer, ROG, said: "The Class 93 fleet with its array of green credentials, will allow us to lead the way in supporting the rail industry in delivery of its decarbonisation targets. Further, with its impressive state-of-the-art specification, the Class 93s also allow us to diversify and develop new markets whilst modernising many aspects of UK train operations."



VTG Sales & Account Manager Archie Lucas at the controls of the Class 93.

Introducing our new Sales & Marketing Director...

VTG Rail UK is delighted to welcome Marc Hurn as our new Sales and Marketing Director.

Marc has over 20 years' operational, frontline, sales and marketing experience gained across national and global organisations within Glass, Elastomer and Material Handling industries, serving markets such as Life Sciences, Pharma, NHS, Industrial and Logistic Warehousing.

Marc said: "I am delighted to have joined VTG Rail UK at a very exciting time for the company. As the largest wagon lessor in the UK, as well as being part of the wider VTG Group across Europe, we have an excellent pedigree in providing a high-quality service to our customers. The next 10-15 years will focus on further growth, continuous improvement and ground-

breaking innovations.

"During my first couple of months with VTG I have had the pleasure of seeing the great people culture that it embraces and the commitment of the team to get the job done to the highest standards."

Colin Denman, Managing Director of VTG Rail UK, said: "It's a pleasure to welcome Marc to VTG Rail UK. He brings a wealth of experience to compliment our great team and operational set up. It has always been important to me that, as a rail company, we continue to learn best practice from other sectors. I am confident that Marc's sales, marketing and operational experience across a number of other industries will bring fresh ideas and continue to drive us forward as the UK's leading wagon provider of choice."



Steel train showcases wagon solutions for UK market

VTG Rail UK will be showcasing an array of flexible environmentally friendly and modular wagon solutions for transporting steel products by rail when we host a customer visit to France in September.

The visit will take place at Ateliers de Joigny, a subsidiary of VTG which repairs and overhauls wagons and has been a major player in the maintenance sector of the railway industry for more than 50 years.

A steel train, hauling both VTG modular and standard wagons designed for carrying different cargos such as coil, slab and scrap, will arrive at the facility as part of a dedicated rail tour that will start and finish in Germany. Travelling through five countries the train will be stopping off for 6 customer events for VTG customers throughout August and September 2023.



The Sggrs 2 x 40' + VTG Modupallet with its volume optimised construction allows more product to be loaded on to each wagon. The ModuPallet Steel is a perfect match and VTG's modular solution for the transport of steel products such as slabs, blooms, tubes and rails.

UK attendees will be able to view both existing and new to market wagon and modular solutions currently available to customers in mainland Europe, including VTG's ModuPallet Coil & Steel superstructure solutions for transporting steel coils and girders.

VTG Rail UK Sales Manager, Raj Sharma said: "The purpose of the visit is to showcase the variety of European wagon solutions currently available for transporting steel, and the value our innovative modular solutions can add for rail freight to our customers in the UK.

"In order for these wagon and modular solutions to run on the UK rail network, some adaptations and modifications may be required, and this visit will be a good opportunity for us to gather feedback and potential interest in these solutions."



The VTG type F44.120E flat wagon offers optimal solution for the transport of hot steel slabs of different lengths and widths which can be loaded by a crane with grabs or magnets. Special load securing bolster beams on the wagons secure the load against sliding in lateral and longitudinal direction.

People

Annual Golf Day proves a tee-rific success

Six teams took part in the annual VTG Rail UK Golf Day held at The Warwickshire Golf & Country Club in July.

Despite some mixed weather, in what is now a firm favourite in our sporting calendar, the teams made extremely light work of the fabulous 18 hole championship course with Chris Swan from Tarmac taking the first prize for the individual performance and Team 2 captained by VTG's Paul Davies winning the Yellow Ball competition. Thank you to everyone who took part and helped us raise £200 for our charity Acorns Children's Hospice!

1st Place:
Chris Swan (Tarmac)

2nd Place:
Stephen Richardson
(Haltermann Carless)

3rd Place:
Carl Kent (GBRf)

Yellow Ball Competition:
Team 2

Longest Drive:
Stephen Richardson
(Haltermann Carless)

Nearest the Pin:
John Dean (GBRf)



Team 5: Mike Higgins, Les Bryant, Tim Handy & Nigel Day



Team 1:
Dave Kelly, Kevin York & Ian Shaw



Yellow Ball Winners: Mark Lickley and John Dean receive their prize from Colin Denman.



Team 6: Mick Wyles, Ben Andrew, Casper Van Hoojie & Stephen Richardson.



1st Place: Colin Denman presents Chris Swan with his prize for topping the leader board.



Team 3: Carl Kent, Colin Denman, Matthew Waters & Graeme Murray

UK News

New office open for business...

Our fabulous new UK HQ at the Topaz Business Park in Bromsgrove is just a few miles down the road from our old base in Rubery.

As you can see from the photos below, our new premises complement modern working practices, with collaboration and private working areas including sit and stand desks and a booking system where

our colleagues can reserve a desk on a daily or weekly basis.

At VTG Rail UK, working collaboratively and closely as a team has always been a key to our success and our new working environment will enhance this through a contemporary and flexible working environment that enriches teamwork and creativity.



VTG strengthens customer focus with new CRM system for UK

Following a recent review of our business processes, we are delighted to have completed the roll out of our new CRM system for our UK operations.

Improving sales team efficiency and boosting our customer centricity is important to supporting our ambitious growth plans. A full evaluation of our old system involved key stakeholders in the selection process and a well-documented training plan with ongoing support for all levels of user put in place to ensure our sales and marketing team are up to speed.

The new CRM system will track individual requests, enquiries by customers and other interactions to make sure they are dealt with and give our sales team more extensive performance management information with which to monitor customer satisfaction.

VTG Sales and Accounts Manager, Archie Lucas said: "We are excited to have launched the latest version of our CRM system for VTG Rail UK. The new system met our requirements thanks to its project tracking and pipeline management capability, as well as ease of integration with our existing Microsoft Office environment. The system will help to improve customer interaction and communications and will both support and improve our customer experience for years to come."



Office move furnishes charity donation

VTG would like to thank UK rail transportation solutions company MCL Group for their generous donation to our charity of the year, Acorns Children's Hospice.

The money was raised from the sale of items of furniture from our offices at Rubery including chairs, tables, filing cabinets and even our old board room table, prior to the move to Bromsgrove earlier in the year.

Acorns Children's Hospice provides specialist palliative care for life limited and life threatened babies, children and young people and support for their families. This support is offered from their three hospices based in Worcester, Birmingham and Walsall, as well as in the family home and community

VTG Rail UK HR and Office Manager, Debbie Field said: "The transfer over to digital systems and introduction of hybrid working arrangements means we no longer need as much storage or office space. Unfortunately,

the old office furniture was not suitable for our new smaller open plan offices, but from a sustainability point of view we didn't want to see it end up in the skip!

"We were obviously keen to see the furniture go to a good home and MCL Group was one of several companies who were able to re-use some of these items including our large board room table. In return for these items, MCL Group Managing Director, Mark Lickley kindly offered to donate an incredible £2,000 to our charity Acorns Children's Hospice.

"We would like to say a massive thank you to Mark for his help and generosity. The charity relies heavily on donations from the community to fund the majority of the care services they provide both in the hospices and in the community. By partnering with them, VTG Rail UK is able to contribute towards these vital funds and towards making a meaningful difference to local life limited and life threatened children and their families."

Group News

A successful week at Transport Logistics Fair

Members of the VTG Rail UK sales team joined colleagues from across the group to collaborate with other stakeholders at this year's Transport Logistics Fair held in Munich in May.

The world's leading trade fair for logistics, mobility, IT and supply chain management is held every two years and showcases the latest trends and topics in the logistics industry across all modes of transport. With exhibitors present from all around the globe displaying their latest products and solutions, this year's event attracted 75,000 visitors from 120 countries.

VTG Rail UK Sales Manager, Raj Sharma said: "With the weather conditions good and temperatures warming up, thankfully the VTG stand was positioned in the open

air section of the exhibition! After a great start to the fair on the Tuesday, we had the pleasure of welcoming a lot of customers to our stand party the following day to spend a relaxing evening discussing our new portfolio of integrated and sustainable services.

"Since sustainability is an integral part of our corporate strategy, we have set ourselves ambitious sustainability targets. Rail is by far the most sustainable mode of freight transport and with our diverse fleet of wagons and increase in modular solutions, we offer CO₂ saving transport of all kinds of goods and we are continuously working to develop solutions that can make the modal shift to rail simpler and even more attractive."

In addition to exhibits which included the VTG ModuPallet Pipe, Retrack Locomotive, an ammonia tank container, and the SWS PowerBox®, visitors to the VTG stand had the chance to watch a test disassembly of a DAC (digital automated coupling) coupler head directly on an m² modular freight wagon on the 100m test track positioned adjacent to our stand.

Experts from VTG were also thrilled to participate in exciting specialist presentations and panel discussions over the course of the week, which enabled us to position rail freight transport and our innovative solutions – particularly related to sustainability and the energy transition - to a large global audience.



VTG wagon order supporting tunnel spoil removal for HS2

VTG Rail UK has completed an order for supplying 146 new JNA T open box wagons to Skanska, Costain and STRABAG (SCS), the joint venture responsible for delivering 26 miles of new high speed rail tunnels for HS2.

The new box wagons will support the transportation of circa 13 million tonnes of excavated material from tunnelling activities to various disposal points across the UK via rail. This is a great example of how rail freight can work in collaboration with large construction projects, reducing our carbon footprint and driving efficiency in the movement of materials.

It takes a vast 1.7 mile-long conveyor network operating across West London and serving 3 major construction sites at Old Oak Common Station, Victoria Road Crossover Box in Ealing, and the nearby Atlas Road site, to transport the millions of tonnes of spoil excavated by giant Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) and from new platform construction to the 30 acre logistics hub adjacent to the West Coast Main Line.

From here the excavated spoil is transferred by rail to three strategic disposal sites across the UK - Barrington in Cambridgeshire, Cliffe in Kent, and Rugby in Warwickshire. At peak, up to seven trains per day depart the hub and each

train is capable of carrying more than 1,500 tonnes of material – the equivalent of 80 lorry loads - safely, efficiently and sustainably.

VTG Fleet Controller Matthew Harris said: “Each box wagon can carry 65 tonnes of material and is equipped with track-friendly bogies and improved body strength for higher operational and wagon durability. The high impact body floor is made from increased thickness, wear resistant steel and the side and front walls incorporate high strength stanchions and increased material thickness to reduce loading damage.

“Using rail instead of road to transport the spoil for HS2 can reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 76 percent and the excavated material will be put to beneficial re-use as a basis for redevelopment projects – for instance at Rugby the spoil is filling in a former Cemex quarry which will eventually become a nature reserve for birds.”

In July, the team at the HS2 logistics hub celebrated moving a million tonnes of material by rail - the use of the conveyor will eventually remove the need for one million lorry movements from roads in West London, reducing traffic congestion and emissions in the local area. VTG Rail UK is proud to be supporting this project.

Team building at VTG HQ

VTG Rail UK Sales Manager Raj Sharma and Sales & Account Manager, Archie Lucas visited VTG headquarters in Hamburg in August to gain a valuable insight and understanding of some of the products and services currently offered by VTG Rail Europe.



VTG Rail UK Sales Manager Raj Sharma outside the VTG Headquarters in Hamburg.

With a key focus on collaborative working and team building, the four day trip provided an opportunity to interact with colleagues from other European entities to explore potential opportunities for inter-continental services.

The visit included training sessions and demonstrations by VTG’s in-house production teams who are responsible for CRM and digital services, including traigo, VTG’s innovative tracking, booking and analysis platform which is currently being rolled out across mainland Europe and will soon be available in the UK.

Raj said: “It was fascinating meeting with colleagues from other countries as well as VTG’s in house teams and hearing about their specialist knowledge on their respective roles from rail freight to IT and digital systems such as traigo.

“The training sessions concentrated on providing focussed customer support and account management to enable account and sales managers to manage processes first hand, minimising delays and chances of errors.”



VTG Rail UK has completed an order for supplying 146 new JNA T open box wagons to Skanska, Costain and STRABAG (SCS) JV to support the removal of circa 13 million tonnes of excavated material from the London rail logistics hub at Willesden for HS2.

The flexibility of VTG modular solutions

VTG uses a range of modular superstructures to open up commercially available modular freight wagons to a variety of cargos and applications across mainland Europe and the UK. For products such as steel coils and girders, this is the ideal solution.

The steel industry is heavily cyclical. Manufacturers and dealers alike are tied to volatile pricing structures, and the quantities produced sometimes have to be adjusted at very short notice. That inevitably and repeatedly leads to unforeseen production peaks and the ad-hoc transport solutions to go with them.

One of our European customers recently faced this situation when without much notice, an unscheduled volume of extra girders and coils had to be moved off their premises to make room for other resources.

Spot deliveries are normally carried by road. However, our customer insisted on rail as the more environmentally friendly solution. The problem was knowing whether a sufficient quantity of suitable wagons for this cargo would be available at such short notice. An enquiry to VTG quickly led to an answer - a modular solution to be precise. In no time at all, the team was able to put together a spot train

made up of wagon underframes fitted with modular pallet superstructures. Better still, using VTG's ModuPallet Coil and Steel superstructures enabled the transport of both coils and girders. The customer, needless to say, was more than satisfied.

This example is only one of many that vividly illustrate the value modular solutions can add for rail freight. This innovative concept makes transportation by rail far more flexible. Wagons now no longer have a single, predefined purpose. Instead, they can be adapted in line with whatever is currently needed. This capability is achieved by separating the superstructure from the underframe, allowing special superstructures to be deployed depending on the freight to be transported.

VTG has modular superstructures for all kinds of product groups, including timber products, bulk goods and steel products. Some superstructures, such as the ModuPallet Coil & Steel, are suitable for carrying a number of different cargos for which different wagons would have had to be leased in the past. Liquids and gaseous cargos can likewise experience modular transportation with a broad array of tank containers.



The VTG modular concept makes transportation by rail far more flexible and wagons now no longer have a single, predefined purpose. Instead, they can be adapted in line with whatever is currently needed.

VTG builds first carbon-neutral maintenance workshop

In the rural town of Grossräschen in the German state of Brandenburg, VTG is investing tens of millions of euros to build a sustainable workshop for the maintenance and repair of its fleet of freight wagons.

The 1,700m² workshop will have the capacity to handle around 2,000 freight wagons per year, making the company more independent of external repair shop services. At the same time, it is a core element in the realisation of VTG's sustainability strategy and the entire complex will operate on a carbon-neutral basis.

The facility is due to go into service in early 2024 and the project involves building a new workshop with adjacent office and warehouse space on the 65,000-m² site, which boasts around 10 kilometres of sidings. In the future, a modern, app-based shop floor management system will be introduced for the workshop's administrative processes. The aim of this system is to optimize the value chain by adopting more accurate, just-in-time delivery to the workshop, thereby boosting productivity in a smaller

space. Work in Grossräschen will focus on intermodal wagons, covering everything from the repair of typical damage to major revisions. The local team will also be able to inspect tank cars and provide mobile maintenance service.



The Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Planning for the State of Brandenburg, Guido Beermann, members of the German Bundestag and the Brandenburg Landtag (State Parliament) and the Chief Operating Officer Europe & Chief Safety Officer at VTG, Sven Wellbrock, held a ground-breaking ceremony.

People

Paul Lugg - a lifetime in wagons

We shine the light on a remarkable individual, who has been recognised for his long service to the rail freight industry with the prestigious Outstanding Individual Contribution award at this year's RFG Awards.



Paul Lugg is currently our Dry Lease Co-ordinator, having stood down from his long-term position as Tank Fleet Sales Manager in 2022, and has dedicated 46 years of service to the rail freight industry. His knowledge and expertise of the wagon leasing business across the UK and Europe is second to none and, at the age of 73, he continues to play an important role in our team.

Paul's career in rail freight began on 2nd June 1977, with wagon leasing company STS. Over the years VTG can trace its roots through the decades with a number of companies that Paul has worked for including STS, which became CAIB, which was later bought by Brambles and in

2002 by VTG so, in essence, he has always worked within the VTG family.

Paul entered the world of work with an undergraduate apprenticeship at Rolls-Royce, building engines for supersonic airliner Concorde. In 1972 he graduated from Bath University with an Honours degree in Engineering and French, and left Rolls Royce two years later, moving to a project engineering job with the Ministry of Defence at the Military Vehicle and Engineering Establishment (MVVE) at Chobham. Here he got involved with the development of the engines for what became the Challenger tank, the first conversion of the power plant in the Scorpion light tank from a Jaguar (E-Type) petrol engine to a Perkins Diesel, and trials of a Magirus Deutz air cooled Diesel engine in an Armoured Personnel Carrier.

"This was great fun and a fantastic introduction to project work dealing closely with the drawing office, the shop floor, the suppliers and the snail's pace of the MOD procurement procedures," Paul recalls with a smile. "The Shah of Persia (now Iran) was deposed in February 1979 and as much of the work at MVVE was under contract through him it rapidly dwindled away with little to replace it."

Seeking a new challenge, Paul was intrigued by an advertisement in The Telegraph which simply called for 'an Engineer who speaks French', offering an

excellent salary for the right candidate. As an engineer fluent in French, he applied for the job.



A proud moment... the first of 20 specialist tank wagons for conveying liquid ammonia is craned onto the Docks at Dublin in 1978.

Knowing nothing about rail freight, he was interviewed for the position in the UK and then in Paris where he was asked if he would prefer the interview to be conducted in English or French. Paul said: "I thought, I should say French!" He got the job!

Paul spent the first few years in his role regularly travelling to North-East and central France, initially working on a project to build tank wagons to carry carbon dioxide. Fast forward 46 years and coming full circle, Paul is currently in charge of the VTG Rail UK project that is exploring new and innovative solutions for the transportation and safe dispersion of liquid CO₂ by rail.

As his role in the industry progressed, Paul transferred his experience into sales where he managed a fleet of over 600 wagons using his knowledge gained from both technical and commercial positions. By the time VTG acquired Brambles European Rail Division in 2002, the number of leased wagons had risen massively to over 3,000.



Paul takes an early interest in freight wagons as a keen 8 year old model railway enthusiast!

People

The growth achieved over the last 20 years has been a real highlight in Paul's career. The company's turnover has grown five-fold over that period, and it has welcomed many new customers such as British Airways, GBRf, Cappagh and SCS to the likes of Tata and Tarmac and through the acquisition of AAE and NACCO.

The VTG Rail UK fleet has grown from around 2,000 wagons with under 85% utilisation to 4,500 wagons with over 95% utilisation.

Paul has played a vital role in the development of VTG successes in the last 20 years. When asked about the highlights so far, he said: "The thing I got the biggest kick out of was getting the order with British Airways for 42 new tank wagons in 2017. We were competing against all the other wagon hirers, and it was a great feeling of triumph and testament to the professionalism and expertise of our team when we won that contract. This resulted in us winning an award for Freight Logistics Achievement of the Year, jointly with British Airways, BP, Railway Consulting, Network Rail and Freightliner.



Paul (far right) with colleagues and customers enjoying a meal out in Paris in the late 1980s.

Always keen to support the wider rail freight industry, Paul is also a former chairman of the Association of Private Railway Wagon Owners (now the RWA) and has recently been rewarded with a certificate commemorating his 50 years of continuous membership of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. He is very proud of having been invited to sit on the top table at the IMech E annual luncheon for the 40th year since joining the railway industry.

"As protecting our planet becomes ever more important, rail freight maintains the advantage over road, but we must keep innovating to keep ahead as we look to protect our environment."

Paul is an exemplar of a professional who lives and breathes rail freight. His knowledge and expertise is built up over his dedicated 46 years serving the industry.



Railfreight delivers... Paul (far right) pictured with Tony Berkeley, former Chairman Rail Freight Group and Ian Shaw, former VTG Rail UK Sales & Marketing Director, in front of one of 50 new high capacity tank wagons destined for UK petroleum distributor Phillips 66, in 2012.

"The first wagons arrived at Wembley just seven days after their departure from Greenbrier in Swidnica, South Western Poland, a journey that can often take six to eight weeks, and sometimes longer. As far as we are concerned, in our experience, this was the shortest transit time for new build wagons from Eastern Europe to the UK."

Paul concludes: "The industry has changed considerably over the last 46 years. Rail freight has always played an important role in ensuring the timely and safe delivery of goods. I am privileged to be a part of a team developing new, innovative and eco-friendly wagon solutions to drive our industry forward.

Further highlights of Paul's 46 years career in rail freight also include being involved in ground-breaking and innovative projects such as:

- The build of 20 specialist tank wagons to convey liquid ammonia for operations in the Republic of Ireland (which has a wider track gauge than in the UK) which were delivered in 1978
- The production of 30 two axle 50 tonne tank wagons which were sold to Carless Solvents from their refinery at Harwich on the East Coast of England in 1979. Carless subsequently sold these wagons to Nacco who leased them back to Carless for many years until VTG bought Nacco and so they came back into the VTG fleet
- The development in the late 90s/early 2000s of the current VTG "frameless" petroleum tank wagons with reduced tare weight and improved structural integrity; which now make up the majority of the VTG UK petroleum wagon fleet

People

Introducing Lewis...

We are delighted to welcome Lewis Bryan to VTG Rail UK.

Lewis joins the team at our Bromsgrove office as Marketing & Sales Coordinator and will help drive our UK marketing strategy, whilst also supporting the sales team. As a member of Generation Z, we are sure he will provide a fresh input and new perspective on gauging the market!



The Nottingham Trent Marketing graduate arrives with over two years of experience in the food manufacturing industry as a Sales & Marketing Assistant and is familiar with the importance of logistics and satisfying customer expectations.

Commenting on his appointment, Lewis said: "I am really excited by the challenge ahead. As well as looking to identify growth areas of VTG in the UK market, from a marketing perspective I want to ensure the messaging from VTG is consistent across all platforms. It is also imperative that I provide support to the team leaders to facilitate their relationships with current and prospective customers."

With strong experience in an admin role, we hope Lewis will be able to settle in swiftly and kick on to be a great asset to the company.



Ian Shaw, who retired in April receives a farewell gift from VTG Rail UK, Managing Director, Colin Denman.

In April we said a fond farewell to Ian Shaw, former VTG Rail UK Sales and Marketing Director, who retired after 22 years loyal service with VTG Rail UK.

Colin Denman, VTG Rail UK Managing Director said: "Ian has built a wealth of experience in rail freight during that time and he will be greatly missed by the team. We would like to thank him for the hard work and dedication that he has given to the rail freight industry and wish him a very happy and well deserved retirement."

Ian said: "I've thoroughly enjoyed my career at VTG Rail UK and been privileged to have worked alongside some incredibly knowledgeable and inspiring people. The growth we've achieved over the last 22 years has been a real highlight. We have welcomed many new customers, whether from scratch, such as BA, GBRf, Cappagh and SCS or via sale and leaseback with the likes of Tata and Tarmac or by the acquisition of AAE and Nacco. I'd like to wish all my colleagues the very best for the future."



A model donation - former VTG Rail UK, Managing Director, Rob Brook (above right) was on hand to present the Stratford & District Model Railway Club with 2 model NACCO Box Wagons earlier this year.

The 0-gauge scale models were originally displayed in our old office at Parklands, but became surplus to requirements following the move to our new premises at Topaz Business Park in March. We thought what better place to re-home it than with the local model railway club which is based at Cutlers Farm Business Centre near Bearley.

People

Full steam ahead for Will...

VTG Fleet Engineer Will Smith has been a volunteer at Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, a historic narrow gauge steam railway, since 2014.

Will (pictured below), joined VTG in January 2023, and is responsible for the engineering aspects of fleets in the Midlands and South East.

A lifelong railway enthusiast, his involvement in the Welsh narrow gauge stretches back over nine years and although living in Northampton, Will makes the trip to North Wales as often as time allows in his spare time. He said: "Being brought up around steam

railways, especially the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, had a strong influence in choosing my working career path and creating friendships that would last a lifetime.

"Without meeting the vast, but all brilliant individuals who work on and around the line, it is safe to say I wouldn't be where I am now in both my working career and volunteering position on the railway!"

Will is also often found at two other railways during his spare time. Along with the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways, he travels to Statfold Barn and Northampton & Lampport Railway.



Photo courtesy Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways.

Meet the Team...



Here's our Performance Reporting Analyst, Adam Mooney.

Adam is a data analyst expert whose responsibilities include producing the daily reports that assist with monitoring the performance of our customer contracts, running maintainers and maintenance supplier contracts.

As well as producing the monthly Customer Management Information reports to show the performance of each hire contract month by month, Adam collates, analyses, and reports all data for wagon damages and wagon trip inspections. He is also responsible for all data received by our running maintainers, maintenance suppliers and fleet controllers, ensuring it is held correctly within our systems.

Adam said: "What I love about being part of the VTG team is my friendly colleagues and the variety of work my role provides."

At VTG our team is what makes us tick. Thank you for everything you do Adam!

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 UK staff, an existing customer or have worked with us as a project partner, please feel free to get in touch to share your news. Email: Lewis.Bryan@VTG.com

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