



Wellington & Manawatu Railway Trust

Awakening a New Zealand Legend

Wellington & Manawatu Railway Company Research Notes

Research Note C8 - *Kingpin Covers*

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Introduction & Background

Kingpin covers, in New Zealand railway practice, are cast metal plates (usually brass or similar) that sit on the floor of a carriage above each bogie centre. The bogie is secured to the carriage by a long pin (“Kingpin”) which passes through the carriage bogie transom and down through the bogie bolster. When the bogie is to be removed for maintenance, the Kingpin cover is removed and the Kingpin is pushed up through the floor to allow the bogie to be removed without excessively lifting the carriage.

This research started in 2003 as an exercise to determine the shape of reproduction Kingpin covers for the restoration of Wellington & Manawatu Railway Company (WMR) carriage #48 at the New Zealand Railway & Locomotive Society (NZRLS) North End shed, Silverstream.

This research note is an attempt to record our findings for posterity

Problem

Neither carriage WMR #48 nor WMR #52 had Kingpin covers still fitted when received at the NZRLS North End shed. Both WMR #42 (at the Bush Tramway Club) and WMR #35 (Museum of Transport & Technology) are also bereft of Kingpin covers

Fortunately, Graeme McClare has an original WMR Kingpin cover obtained and modified by E.J. (Jack) McClare. The cover, as modified, measures $5 \frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter, and is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. It features the WMR logo of the letters W, M and R intertwined, although in a different style to the classic WMR logo (as shown on front of these notes), and with the letters "Co" underneath. It has been chromed since modification, so it is not easy to establish what material it is cast in without damaging the finish.

The standard New Zealand Railways (NZR) Kingpin cover is $6 \frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. It is held in place by four equally spaced screws at $5 \frac{3}{8}$ " PCD (pitch circle diameter).

Initially, it was felt that the WMR Kingpin cover differed significantly, with a lesser diameter of $5 \frac{1}{2}$ ", and may have been held in place solely by a locating spigot on the rear. However, an almost unmodified WMR Kingpin cover from the late R.J. Meyer collection has been located at the NZRLS archive at Ava.

Description

The cover is very similar in size to the NZR equivalent, being 6 ½” diameter, but with its four screw holes at 5 ¾” PCD. The casting, at ¼” thick, is thicker than the standard NZR cover. On the rear face is a 3 ¼” diameter spigot, protruding $\frac{9}{32}$ ”.

The upper face has two raised circles (the NZR cover has three). In the centre are the letters ‘W’ and ‘M’ intertwined with a smaller ‘R’ above and ‘Co’ below (*Figure 8.1*). The letters and circles are raised $\frac{1}{16}$ ” above the background (i.e. the cover, excluding lettering and spigot, is $\frac{3}{16}$ ” thick).

The material would appear to be cast brass, bronze or gunmetal.



Figure 8.1 - WMR Kingpin cover held in the R.J. Meyer collection at the NZRLS archives, Ava, Lower Hutt.

Conjecture

Almost certainly the twelve carriages built by the WMR at their Thorndon workshop would have been fitted with WMR Kingpin covers.

It is believed that the first 16 carriages supplied by Gilbert in 1885 were supplied complete and might possibly have been fitted with Gilbert Kingpin covers. Carriages #17 and #18 would most likely have been fitted with Addington or NZR Kingpin covers. From there to the first WMR built carriages there is more room for speculation. WMR are known to have ordered many carriages to be delivered in knocked down condition, with final fit out being carried out by WMR. This often included the flooring, seating, draw gear and bogies. With both flooring and bogies supplied or fitted by WMR it is certainly possible that these carriages were fitted with WMR supplied Kingpin covers. The seven carriages ordered from Jackson and Sharp in 1902 and 1903 were supplied with the WMR logo 'ground' into door glass, so it is possible that even cars delivered complete bore the WMR logo on the Kingpin covers too. So the origin of the WMR logo on the Kingpin cover may well predate the first WMR built carriage (#42 of 1904).

Summary

The twelve carriages built by the WMR outlived their imported counterparts by a considerable time. It is probable then, that the two surviving WMR Kingpin covers are from these carriages.

It would be appropriate to assume that Kingpin covers of this pattern are correct for the restoration of WMR built carriages #42, #48 and #52.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank G.J. McClare and NZRLS archivist D.M. Cole for making the original Kingpin covers in their care available for inspection

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Footnote

As a fundraising venture, a number of replica Kingpin covers were cast and sold. These were 5 ½" in diameter and were produced without the 3 ¼" diameter spigot on the back.