

MAUNSELL 'IRONCLAD' CORRIDOR THIRD S 728 S

S 728 is the oldest bogie coach on the Railway as well as the only carriage of London & South Western Railway (L&SWR) design. It was built in 1923 by Southern Railway's Eastleigh Carriage Works to design diagram 24 in Lot No. 3709. It entered service numbered 74 and, as built, was an eight compartment Corridor Third coach.

The 1921 design had originated under the auspices of L&SWR's Carriage & Wagon Superintendent Surrey Warner. It was 57 ft long and 9ft wide built with oak and teak frames. Bodywork was formed of galvanised steel panels which gave rise to their nickname "Ironclad". Being one from a later batch, 728 was fitted with SR 'Ashford' bogies.

It formed part of five car Bournemouth set No. 438 comprising Maunsell coaches: Brake Compartment Third 3195; Corridor Third 727; Corridor First 7189; Corridor Third 728; and Brake Compartment Third 3196. 728 ran for many years in this set, or similar set 435, until withdrawal during 1959.

In 1960 it was converted to Breakdown Train Unit (BTU) Staff & Tool Coach numbered DS 70011. Extensive modifications were necessary including the loss of most interior fittings. Both end corridor connections were plated over and a pair of double doors installed into the body sides. It was repainted into BTU red livery and, latterly, all over yellow.

During August 1982 it was noted at Brighton and for many years thereafter. By 1987 it had been transferred for use with Southern Region's 'drain train'. Subsequently, it was withdrawn and stored at Hoo Junction.

It was purchased privately in 1988 but remained at Hoo Junction during which time almost every window was smashed: <http://www.departmentals.com/photo/70011> . Around 1992 it was moved for storage at London Underground's Ruislip Depot for about a year before being moved to Swanage. At some later stage it was donated to The Swanage Railway Trust.

In early 1995, West Dorset District Council (WDDC) awarded a contract to the Railway to lay four panels of track beside the platform at Bridport West Bay station. This work started on 27th February 1995 with a stop block and a GWR tubular post starting signal added. Two Swanage coaches were leased to WDDC (S 728 S and BR Mark I TSO No 4070 seen here: http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/bridport_west_bay/index30.shtml) which arrived on site in March 1995. In Easter 1996 the station became the Visitor Centre for the West Bay Coastal Defence and Harbour Improvement Scheme. Both coaches were refurbished by the project's design team.

During the summer of 1998 the station was used by Valentine Productions when filming ITV drama series "Harbour Lights". In August 2001 both coaches were moved back to the Railway. After storage at Norden sidings, for some years, S 728 S was moved to undercover storage away from the Railway.

Current plans envisage restoration of S 728 S, at some date in the future, to its latter condition as a Staff & Tool coach. This would allow it to be used with the Railway's Ransome & Rapier 45 ton steam crane No. 1561S. This option avoids the serious costs of a full restoration while still conserving it. Conversion back to a pre-1959 passenger carrying condition would require an expensive complete re-build over a long period.

Peter Sykes 10/3/2017