

BR MK I TOURIST SECOND OPEN No. 4981

Built for British Railways at their Carriage & Wagon works in Wolverton on the northern boundary of modern-day Milton Keynes. 4981 was constructed as part of Lot No. 30690 which comprised 108 carriages built in three consecutive tranches. They were ordered by BR on 29th June 1960 and the last vehicle was completed on 21st April 1962. It is believed 4981 would have been outshopped around the end of 1960.

The BR TSO carriage had, by this time, evolved into a slightly different standard design (Diagram 89) which lasted for several more years during which many hundreds more TSOs were built. It seems passengers had become to prefer the open, rather than compartment, stock.

They were still all fitted with 64 seats arranged in open saloons of 16 'bays' of 4 seats and steam heated radiators underneath them. Two toilets were fitted at one end either side of the coach end vestibule/corridor connection but tungsten filament lamps gave way to fluorescent tube lighting. The coach was, by now, carried on two bogies of a Commonwealth design which were vacuum braked. These were more robust, and heavier, for higher main line speeds.

TSOs were used widely across BR network and formed part of the nationwide Inter City services network. It was believed to have been withdrawn, due to more modern stock being introduced, in late 1980 – a working life of around 20 years.

BR withdrew 4981 and placed it on the condemned list from where it was purchased around 1991 by the Humberside Locomotive Preservation Group based at Hull Dairycoates depot. It was purchased from them during the following year, by The Railway Age Museum [now Crewe Heritage Centre], and moved to storage at Crewe Carriage Shed until 1995. It was sold and moved to Thingley Junction near Chippenham for a further period of storage. It remained there until being moved to the Swanage Railway during 1998.

Since then it was restored to operational condition with the removal of both toilet compartments thus creating a family area for the storage of prams, pushchairs, bikes, etc. during journeys. It entered heritage railway service with the Swanage Railway during 2002.

Information collated by Peter Sykes 17th September 2021

and Peter Short 4th October 2021