

LSWR TRI-COMPOSITE No. 2296

LSWR Coach bodies

The Swanage Railway has three LSWR coach bodies dating from the later part of the 19th Century. These have been grounded for many years, with the long term objective of restoring them on new or adapted six-wheeled underframes to run as a vintage train.

Early London South Western Railway (LSWR) coaches like those on other railways drew heavily on stage coach design and were usually mounted on 4 wheel chassis. These continued to be built until the 1870s. From the mid 1870s, the six wheel chassis was employed in an attempt to increase capacity usually by use of an additional compartment. All were wooden bodied, timber panelled with raised mouldings to cover panel joints and fitted with timber boarded roofs covered in canvas. They were mounted on pitch pine underframes although these were later superseded by steel.

On the LSWR, 6 wheel coaches continued to be built until the early years of the 20th Century, albeit for secondary duties. The LSWR and Southern Railway 'cut and shut' many old 6 wheel coach bodies on to bogie underframes while others, like the three examples on the Railway, were sold to householders as holiday bungalows or outhouses.

2296

It was built by LSWR at their Nine Elms Works in 1891, to design diagram 55, in Lot no. 229. The 32ft long tri-composite coach accommodated three classes of passenger on London suburban services out of London Waterloo station.

Originally numbered 49, it had five compartments arranged in the order 3rd – 2nd – 1st – 1st – 3rd. These seated 10, 8, 6, 6, and 10 passengers respectively. One way of distinguishing the class of each compartment is by 'knee-room' - first class being widest (and more luxuriously appointed with cushioned seats) than the 2nd which, in turn, was wider than the cramped 3rd class. While all doors and windows had the same dimensions, different compartments could be discerned by examining panel widths between them.

At some point the second class compartment was down-rated to third, resulting in an increase in capacity of two passengers, and the coach given its present number 2296. In December 1922 it was withdrawn from revenue earning service. Subsequently, it was purchased for use as a summer chalet in a garden at Worth Matravers. It was joined there by another coach body - numbered 1512/4550 [see details elsewhere].

Both 2296 and 1512/4550 were rescued from Worth Matravers by the Swanage Railway and arrived during April 1983. Initially it was stored at Corfe Castle but, currently, 2296 is in use as a store at Harman's Cross where station staff have named it "Annabelle". By May 2007 it had been repainted again, into gloss Green, with a hand made name board affixed under the cant rail.