

BR GOODS BRAKE VAN B 955132

B955132 was built in August 1963 by Ashford Carriage & Wagon Works as part of the last batch of Goods Brake Vans [Lot No. 3394] built by BR to Design Diagram 1/507. These 250 vans were numbered B 954998 to B 955247. They were the only ones of this style of brake van not built at Darlington.

Diagram 1/507 was the last of eight designs of brake vans built for BR which had adopted the LNER designed express goods brake van, as it's standard design, after Nationalisation. This dated from 1929 having a 16ft wheelbase and weighed 20 Tons but Diagram 1/507 vans had been updated with roller bearings in the four axle boxes.

In 1968, the requirement for fully fitted freight trains to end with a guard's van was lifted, and the guard was allowed to ride in the rearmost locomotive cab, giving a good view of the whole train. By this time, the 'Beeching Axe' had reduced by two-thirds the amount of track across the UK. Therefore, there was no operational need for so many brake vans, and many types were withdrawn.

BR Southern Region's goods trains had gone "fully fitted" from the 1970's so any brake vans that ventured into the region had to be auto brake fitted or, at least, through piped vehicles. In 1985, rail unions agreed to the single-manning operation of some freight trains, the first time a guard had not been on board for over 150 years. Brake vans were still required on trains carrying dangerous chemicals until the late 1990s.

B955132 was coded ZTR under BR's TOPS computerisation system. The Z stood for a 2 axle freight service vehicle, letter T stood for a sub-division of the main type and the R related to the vehicle being only hand brake fitted but with through piping for air and vacuum brakes. At some stage the vacuum brake pipework and valves were removed making it air piped only.

A picture of B 955132 at Workington, on Saturday 18th April 1981, is shown stencilled "To run in Fiddlers Ferry circuit". This power station went on line in 1971 and it's coal was supplied mainly from local mines such as Bickershaw and Parkside (under 10 rail miles away) as well as from South Yorkshire. Wherever the origin, up to twenty 1,500 ton 'Merry Go Round' trains a day fed the power station each one having a brake van at the rear in the early years. Fiddlers ferry also maintained a stockpile of hundreds of thousands of tons to cover for potential delivery issues!

The date of B 955132's withdrawal has not been discovered but was noted as still available for use at the end of 1993.

After many years of disuse, B 955132 is in need of total refurbishment and a decision on financing this work is awaited.

Built by	BR
Where built	Ashford in 1963
General type	4w Brake Van
Specific type	Toadfit
First Number	B 955132
Present Number	B 955132
TOPS code	CAR
Diagram number	1/507
Lot number	3394
Status	Awaiting decision
Capacity (tons)	20