

BR “DOGFISH” 24T BALLAST HOPPER DB 993126

Origins of this type of ballast hopper wagon can be traced back to the London Midland & Scottish/London & North Eastern Railways 'Trout' design, and the even earlier hoppers built by Leeds Forge for, amongst others, the South Eastern & Chatham Railway in 1911.

British Railways (BR) was undergoing major work to its permanent way, during the 1950's, still recovering from a lack of work due to the Second World War. It ordered large quantities of ballast hopper wagons and contracted railway wagon builders Charles Roberts Ltd based at Horbury Junction near Wakefield and Metropolitan-Cammell Carriage and Wagon Company Ltd of Birmingham.

B 993126 was included in the third batch of 90 wagons (B993059 – B993148) under Lot number 2821 to design diagram 1/587. Charles Roberts started releasing them to traffic in December 1956 and finished the batch during January 1957. It is believed that B 993126 was outshopped at the beginning of January being allocated, initially, to the Civil Engineers depot at Hunslet on the North Eastern Region.

This batch was one of ten and, in total, 1,249 'Dogfish' wagons were produced over a period of 5 years. In fact, 'Dogfish' wagons formed the largest single fleet of BR's small ballast hoppers becoming the most numerous of ballast hopper designs in the engineers' fleet.

They were fitted with vacuum brakes from new and many lasted into the 1990s. Their 4 wheel chassis had a 14 ft wheelbase and measured 22ft 6in over headstocks. The 'Dogfish' had three unloading chutes, giving the ability to discharge new ballast between the rails or to either side. As a result of this, the end control platform featured three hand wheels and, at the other end of the underframe, a hand wheel controlled the parking brake.

Around the year 2000 some of the surviving 'Dogfish' wagons were fitted with air-brakes. Despite this modernisation, the remaining examples were withdrawn as early as 2006. A variation that does not appear to have been distinguished by different coding is the fitting of extended outer hopper chutes to the Southern Region's allocation of 'Dogfish'. These allowed ballast to be discharged beyond the third rail.

During their working careers, 'Dogfish' were worked quite often with other types of hopper wagons. A train of about 8 'Dogfish' and 4 'Sealion' bogie ballast hopper wagons was a common sight for a lot of PW jobs. On the Southern Region, some 'Dogfish' were worked with 14 ton 'Mermaid' side-tipper ballast wagons, and lettered 'MER-DOG'.

Changes of livery were quite varied. Originally they were all over Black, then 'Gulf Red' from 1960 to 1962. Olive green was used from about 1966 although some in red were still running in 1970. In 1983 a colour scheme of grey was chosen. By 1999 there were still 762 listed on TOPS but, by 2001 the numbers in stock had dropped to 444 although over 300 were non-operational. Ballasting work would have taken it across much of the BR network but it is uncertain when B 993126 was amended to DB 993126 nor when it was withdrawn from service.

At some stage it was loaned by the Gwili Railway to the Severn Valley Railway and used by them for some years being seen loaded ready for duty in 2011 and 2012. In March 2017,

the SVR purchased six “Seacow” bogie ballast wagons and DB993126 was no longer needed.

After it's arrival at Swanage, DB993126 has been used regularly in ballasting the line.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 25th October 2021 and updated 7th July 2022