

## **BR “DOGFISH” 24T BALLAST HOPPER DB 983030**

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.

Charles Roberts built a batch of 310 'Dogfish' 24 ton Ballast Hopper wagons (B983000 – B983309) under Lot no. 2939 to design diagram 1/587. They started releasing them to traffic from April and finished the batch in December 1957. It is believed that B 983030 was outshopped at the end of April or beginning of May.

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. 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.

Initially, B 983030 was allocated to Scottish Region (Glasgow North). After that it would have been used quite widely on re-ballasting jobs. Around the year 2000, some of the surviving 'Dogfish' wagons were fitted with air-brakes but, despite this modernisation, the last examples were withdrawn as early as 2006.

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 PWV jobs. On the Southern Region, some 'Dogfish' were worked with 14 ton 'Mermaid' side-tipper ballast wagons, and lettered 'MER-DOG'.

A variation, that does not appear to have been distinguished by different coding, is the fitting of extended hopper chutes to various 'Dogfish' allocated to the Southern Region as well as some areas of LM region. These extensions allowed ballast to be discharged beyond the third rail.

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 which, after Privatisation, was followed by Loadhaul and Departmental grey, then EWS maroon before eventual withdrawal.

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 983030 was amended

to DB 983030 nor when it was withdrawn from service.

The April 1994 edition of Engineers Series Wagon Fleet (970000 – 999900) published by SCT Publishing lists DB 983030 so it is presumed it was still then active with the Civil Engineers Department on Permanent Way duties.

As mentioned above, the date it ceased activities on BR is unknown but DB983030 was pictured, as an Internal User wagon, at Whatley Quarry in Somerset on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2015. Currently it is owned by the Mendip Traction and Rolling Stock Group.

After it's arrival on loan at Swanage, around 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016, DB 983030 has been used regularly in ballasting duties.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and updated 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022