

LNER 40T RAIL/SLEEPER WAGON 'DOLPHIN' DE 274569

The London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) appears to have been the first railway company to introduce a multi-purpose engineers wagon capable of carrying 60ft. rails, ballast and sleepers. They were 65 ft 7 in over headstocks with 5 ft 6 in wheelbase diamond framed bogies at 46 ft centres having LNER design open front axle boxes.

Headstocks were mounted above floor height and were topped with reinforced steel ends providing an interior length of 63 ft 5 in. All Dolphins were built without vacuum brakes and there is no evidence of any being retrofitted with continuous brakes or through pipes.

Originally the three-planked sides were in three hinged sections. There were 15 'door bangers' fixed to the frame to ensure the wooden sections did not damage axle boxes and the like when they were lowered (dropped !). Livery was nominally Grey but it soon was rubbed off leaving weathered wood and white lettering.

DE 274569 was built by the wagon firm of Head Wrightson Ltd., Thornaby-on-Tees, North Yorkshire to LNER design diagram 99. British railways (BR) had ordered 90 wagons in Lot No. 2817 and it is believed DE 274569 was outshopped during 1945. The 40 Tons carrying capacity, combined with small wheeled bogies and low floors, made these vehicles very useful at worksites. The internal load-carrying length of 63 ft 5 ins allowed it to carry up to five 60 ft wooden sleepered bullhead track panels.

The under framing had several styles and BR's Civil Engineers Department decided to convert vehicles with ends partly or completely cut down, all wooden sides removed etc. In this stripped state they gave many decades of use, mainly carrying track panels, and some lasted until around the late-1980's.

Pre-Nationalisation Railway Companies had developed a system of codes for use when sending details of engineering train consists from originating location to the destination. A range of fish names were used, as a means of simplifying early telegraph messages, and this basic nomenclature was perpetuated by BR even though more modern messaging systems were used. 'Dolphin' was the name chosen for low-sided bogie Rail/Sleeper wagons

After withdrawal, DE 274569 was purchased by the Southern Steam Trust (now Swanage Railway Trust) and had arrived on the railway by 1986. Unfortunately no actual arrival date can be traced at the time of writing. It was used heavily during the track laying push to Harmans Cross. DE 274569 continued it's track carrying use for many years although, more recently, it has lain unused in sidings as the relaying of track panels has reduced. However, it remains available for the PW Department's use as necessary.

More recently it was moved to Norden for a non-PW Dept. working. On Wednesday 30th June 2021, DE 274569 was used to carry a recently purchased LSWR coach body [No. 02], from the delivery lorry, to it's current site at Corfe Castle.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 21st June 2022

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