

BR 21T Ballast Wagon 'RUDD' DB 972750

This vehicle started life as B 427926 - a two axle, vacuum braked 21 Ton Coal Hopper [coded HTV] ordered by BR from wagon builders Charles Roberts Co Ltd as part of Lot No. 3037 to design diagram 1/146. The batch of 1,150 vehicles (numbered B 427400 to B 428549) was built in 1958. HTV B 427926 was used heavily in numerous Merry-Go-Round trains between coal mines and power stations throughout the 1960's, 70's and early 80's.

By the mid-1980s, however, BR's Civil Engineers ballast and spoil wagon fleet was in dire need of renewal. These comprised large numbers of elderly 'Grampus' opens and second-hand 16-ton minerals. The proposal to construct a whole fleet of new wagons was not economically viable.

Fortunately, around the same time, large numbers of two axle HTV coal hoppers were being withdrawn from use and replacement bogie hoppers, with greater load capacity, took over supplying power stations. With a re-bodying programme in mind, several thousand HTV's were put into storage at a variety of locations around the country.

'Rudd' wagon conversions involved removing hopper bodywork and operating equipment as well as the vacuum braking system. A new box body, with three externally-braced steel drop doors on each side, was attached to the chassis and air brakes were installed. The use of sprung loaded door controllers obviated the need for 'banger' plates on the underframe.

Eventually, B 427926 entered the wagon workshops of C C Crump Ltd at Connah's Quay, Clwyd, Deeside, in 1990, to have the conversion work undertaken. On completion, DB 972750 weighed 10 Tons tare (empty) which, combined with a load of up to 21 Tons, meant a Gross laden Weight of 31 Tons. C C Crump Ltd had been scrap merchants cutting up many steam locomotives in the 1960's but then changed business to concentrate on wagon repairs/conversions.

DB 972750 was allocated the PW Dept.'s 'Fishkind' code of "RUDD" and became ZDA on BR's TOPS database. 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. 'Rudd' was the name chosen for four-wheel Ballast/Sleeper Wagons rebuilt from HTV Coal Hoppers or Grampus as outlined earlier.

The HTV conversion programme started in 1984 and, although it was scaled back, over 2000 wagons were completed. DB 972750 was noted as still active, carrying spoil or new ballast, in the 1994 edition of Engineers Series Wagon Fleet published by SCT Publishing. RUDD wagons lasted quite a time with over 200 still in use at the start of 2008 – a career of around 16 years.

After withdrawal from Civil Engineers' service it was purchased from BR and moved to Norden. Over the years, DB 972750 has been used on many Swanage Railway PW Dept. trains. When coupled with other air braked vehicles it uses the 1990 air brake equipment. However, when coupled with vacuum braked vehicles it uses a vacuum through pipe fitted since arrival at Swanage. Although DB 972750 does not have working vacuum brakes the

vehicles either side of it could continue to be braked.

Incidentally, on Tuesday 11th December 2007, a further fifteen RUDD wagons arrived from Eastleigh hauled by EWS liveried 66 237. They were on loan from DB Cargo for use in transporting spoil and fresh ballast for major PW works on the branch during the 2007/8 winter shutdown period. The vehicles were listed as DB972354; 435; 448; 452; 473; 474; 476; 493; 607; 614; 745; 761; 762; 777 and 782. EWS liveried 66 213 collected and returned them to Eastleigh Yard on Tuesday 26th February 2008.

Information collated by Peter Sykes 6th May 2022

Reviewed by Jeremy Weller 29th May 2023