

BR 50T RAIL CARRIER “SALMON” DB 996437

BR ordered a batch of 98 wagons from G R Turner Ltd of Langley Mill in Nottinghamshire. Lot No. 2926 were numbered DB 996421 to DB 996518, to design diagram 1/646, which were built between 1956 and 1957.

With the growing use of concrete sleepers flat bottomed rail being used in track renewals it was decided that Bogie rail carriers should be constructed to an upgraded design to accept 50 Ton loads. Design diagram 1/646 had a flat timber deck without side curb rails but with a hinged single plank extension that could rest on top of the end plank or be moved over the buffers.

The underframe was 62 ft long over headstocks and ran on 8 ft wheelbase plate pattern bogies which could trace their history back to LMS times. Bogies were mounted at 45 ft centres and fitted with wheels of 2 ft 8½ ins diameter.

The bodywork measured 66 ft 1 in over headstocks with an internal load-carrying length of 64 ft. This allowed for the safe transportation of 60 ft length rails or made-up track panels. As outshopped they were not equipped with vacuum brakes but DB 996437 was modernised at Doncaster Works including being equipped with air brakes and re-coded YMA.

Incidentally, 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. The Civil Engineers Department 'Fishkind' coding for these bogie rail-carrying wagons was “SALMON”.

In 1956, DB 996437 was first allocated to the North Wales district of London Midland Region (LMR). It's subsequent usage over the next 37 years has not been ascertained but is likely to have been used quite widely across the LMR and, possibly, on other regions too.

It was withdrawn from the revenue earning service list before entering Internal User service during 1993. It was then allocated number IU 083659 before being moved to Tattenham Corner Up Sidings. It was one of a number of vehicles stabled for use as part of BR's (Railtrack's from 1st April 1994) Permanent Way equipment usage training facility.

Many different types of vehicle were used to provide a wide range of training opportunities for PW staff. However, the instruction train became disused after a relatively short period and started suffering from vandalism.

IU 083659 [DB 996437] was purchased from BRB (Residuary) Ltd. and moved to Norden in July 1999. It has been used for many Permanent Way works on the Swanage Railway since then.

Somewhat unusually, during March 2013, it became a mobile base for the erection of scaffolding needed whilst the canopy at Swanage Station was being restored. It was secured immovable whilst work was in progress of course!

More recently, DB 996437 was used again by the railway's PW Dept., in various track works, to keep the railway operating safely. The resulting lengths of recovered used rail were stacked on the 'Salmon' 5 rows high to await a decision on their future. This had the added environmental benefit of keeping the lineside looking tidier - which is in contrast to many areas on the main railway network after rails have been renewed!

Rather than just be cut into shorter lengths and sold for scrap, it seems the North Dorset Railway (NDR) preservation scheme, based at Shillingstone station, wished to purchase them. On Monday 19th February 2024, DB 996437 was scheduled to be moved from Eldon's sidings to the Arne Road Road/Rail Interface siding, near Norden, so that NDR could collect the rails.

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