

LSWR 5 COMPARTMENT THIRD CLASS CARRIAGE BODY LSWR NO. 297 – SR NO. 02

Starting around 1886, the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) commenced construction of a number of 6-wheel coaches to meet the needs of its growing passenger traffic. They were built at their Carriage & Wagon Works based at Nine Elms near Battersea in South West London.

Bodies were 30 feet long containing five compartments and intended for third class passengers. Construction of coaches to this design continued in batches until 1890 and those in the final batch cost £378 17s 1d each [£378.85p] which is equivalent to around £50,000 in the early 2020's.

Most of these coaches were still an active part of the LSWR passenger stock when it became part of the Southern Railway (SR) in 1923. Soon after this grouping, a programme of large-scale withdrawals commenced as SR worked to rationalize designs of vehicles acquired from the three 'pre-grouping' companies. On withdrawal during 1926, carriage bodies were separated from their underframes and sold to private buyers to be used as homes, beach chalets or, occasionally, chicken coops.

The story of this coach body is slightly unusual in that the owner purchased two at sometime during 1926/7 and placed them in parallel, several feet apart. One was to form the front of the house, converted to two bedrooms, whilst the other had kitchen and bathroom areas to form the rear of the house. The space between them became the main living area. An overall pitched roof and end walls were constructed to form a bungalow.

Coach body "02" became available when planning permission was granted to build a new house on the site. The current owner then carefully removed the roof and walls that had preserved both coach bodies for almost 100 years. Both were in very good condition although contained some modifications as one might expect.

Initially coach body 02 was placed for sale on eBay but the Swanage Railway Trust reached agreement with the owner to acquire it. The second body (SR number 396) was retained by the owner.

After arrangements were settled to acquire the carriage body, the initial survey failed to reveal the original number of this coach although the known dates allowed it to be narrowed to a few candidates especially as the SR number has been found on the second coach (LSWR number 396 which was renumbered to SR 018 on 2nd May 1924 and placed in set 027).

LSWR coach 396 was withdrawn on 31st July 1926, along with the rest of set 027, which included an identical coach (SR number 019). SR Coach number 02 was also withdrawn on the same day and was thus believed to be this body's number.

After arrival at its current resting place, at Corfe Castle, further investigation of this carriage body's identity revealed the number "02" under several layers of paint which equates to LSWR No. 297. This carriage was outshopped from Nine Elms C&W Works in December 1897.

02's body was transported from Swanmore in Hampshire's Meon Valley by Phill Bascombe Transport Ltd of Horton Heath, Wimborne. It arrived at Norden on Wednesday 30th June 2021. From there it was transported by 'Dolphin' flat wagon DE 274569 to Corfe Castle where the Railway's crane 'FBC I' unloaded it onto it's current position.

It will undergo some restoration work, to ensure it's watertight, before being used initially to provide additional working space for the heritage coach restoration team.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

<https://www.swanagerailwaytrust.org/post/new-130-year-old-coach-body-arrives-at-the-swanage-railway>

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