

## **SR 15T BALLAST/SLEEPER WAGON 'LING' S 63002**

This wagon was ordered by the Southern Railway (SR) on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May 1935 to be built by Ashford Carriage & Wagon Works to design diagram 1773. Lot A872 formed a batch of fifty wagons (numbered 63001 to 63050) constructed between February and April 1937 so S 63002 would have been outshopped as the 2<sup>nd</sup> wagon during February.

This 15 Ton four-plank dropside wagon was one of the first batches ordered by SR to use steel disc wheels instead of the former spoked wheels. The two axle chassis had a wheelbase of 12 ft with an overall length of 24 ft 6 ins. It weighed 8 Tons 11 cwt empty and was designed to carry loads up to 15 Tons.

The general arrangement of brake gear was normally associated with wagons fitted with vacuum brakes. It can only be presumed that either it was intended to fit vacuum brakes at a later date or it was left off for some reason – perhaps just cost saving. The SR 'Ling' is considered by many to be something of a retrograde design having only four plank sides but, perhaps more importantly, lacking vacuum brakes – although some had vacuum through pipes added later in their 'careers'.

S 63002's main duties were originally to carry ballast and other Permanent Way Department materials and supplies. After withdrawal from PW duties it was transferred to service stock of the Mechanical and Electrical Engineers Department being renumbered ADS 63002.

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. 'Ling' was the name chosen for four-wheel Ballast/Sleeper Wagons.

ADS 63002 was seen at Hoo Junction on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1984 marked "COND" (meaning condemned) along with many others. Also noted on the side planking was the stencil coding ZCP. No evidence of vacuum pipework could be seen which, if true, should have meant a stencil coding of ZCO.

After withdrawal by BR, 63002 was purchased for display at the putative Brighton Railway Museum. It was stored during the 1980's and 1990's at the former Pullman Shed near Preston Park in Brighton but, unfortunately, the shed roof became damaged. Stock deteriorated with continued vandalism leading ultimately to some of the buildings being damaged by fire in 2003.

At the beginning of September 2008 it was decided to demolish the building. An intricate plan was quickly inaugurated to remove the varied items of stock from within. The Pullman Works had been used for many years as a store for some remarkably historic rolling stock from the end of the steam era. Certain items had been stored there pending eventual transfer to the National Railway Museum (NRM) in York.

Jerry Swift was Network Rail's head of Corporate Responsibility at this time. Fortunately he was based in York and spent a considerable amount of time and effort liaising with the NRM and sifting through archives in order to try and ascertain ownership of stock. Some

items had been recognised as being of important historical significance.

The nearest loading departure point was Lovers Walk Traction and Rolling Stock Maintenance Depot as there was no road access at Preston Park. This meant anything coming out of the Pullman Works, on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September during a 10 hour possession, had to be shunted into Brighton Station before crossing the Eastern side main lines, to gain access to the depot.

Another problem was the stability of tracks in the Pullman Running Shed itself after 40 years of neglect. They would almost certainly not be able to support the weight of the class 73 electro-diesel [GBRf's 73 206] used to move the items of stock about. You Tube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWB292WI0Ck> (copyright ValentaLamenter ) shows some of the shunting movements involved.

The same level of neglect also meant that several items of stock had to have work carried out on their axle journals before safe movement. Thanks to this removal exercise, costing some £110,000, eleven items of historic rolling stock were rehoused at Swanage, Colne Valley and Bluebell Railways rather than being scrapped.

S 63002 was purchased by the Southern Catering Project Group and was the only vehicle to come to the Swanage Railway from the Pullman Car shed. At the time of writing it was understood to have been stored somewhere before arriving at Norden in early 2010 but this information needs further investigation.

S 63002 had to await some time in the restoration queue but was refurbished around 2015. It now forms part of the Swanage Railway Steam Gala demonstration goods train.

Information compiled by Peter Sykes 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021  
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