

LONDON & SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

DRUMMOND CLASS M7 0-4-4T No. 53

Dugald Drummond was born in Ardrossan, Ayrshire on Wednesday 1st January 1840. He was apprenticed to general engineers and millwrights Forrest & Barr Ltd. based at Port Dundas Engine Works in Glasgow. Subsequently, Drummond gained his first railway engineering experience on the Caledonian and Dumbartonshire Junction Railway. In 1864 he moved to the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway's Cowlares Locomotive, Carriage and Wagon Works in Springburn - north-east of Glasgow - as wheel shop chargehand.

He was then foreman erector at the Highland Railway's Lochgorm Works in Inverness, serving under their Locomotive and Carriage Superintendent William Stroudley, eventually rising to the position of Works Manager. In 1870, he followed Stroudley to England becoming his assistant at the London Brighton and South Coast Railway's Brighton Works.

In 1875, Drummond was appointed Locomotive Superintendent of the North British Railway. Here over 200 locomotives were built to his designs including an 0-4-2T based on Stoudley's D1 design for the LB&SCR. This proved unsuccessful and was rebuilt into an 0-4-4T. These were transformed into reliable and easy to maintain locos which influenced his later designs including the Class M7. In 1880, Drummond was involved as an expert witness in the Tay Bridge disaster inquiry, being called to give evidence about the state of the track after the disaster. His evidence helped disprove Thomas Bouch's theory that the train had been blown off the rails by the storm that night.

In 1882 he moved to the Caledonian Railway and then, in 1890, he was appointed as 'Managing Director' of the Australasian Locomotive Engine Works (ALEW) in Sydney, Australia. Drummond later resigned and returned to Britain whilst, over time, ALEW evolved into the very successful Clyde Engineering – an important builder of rolling stock for Australia's railways.

After the retirement of William Adams, Drummond accepted the invitation to become locomotive engineer of the London and South Western Railway, in 1885, at a salary considerably less than he had received whilst employed by the Caledonian Railway. The title of his post was changed subsequently to Chief Mechanical Engineer, in January 1905, although his duties hardly changed. He remained the LSWR's CME until his death in 1912.

The Class M7 tank locomotive was the first design created by Drummond during his time at LSWR. He had, by then, amassed a large amount of railway and engineering knowledge as can be seen above. All this 'expertise' was applied to the M7's and their eventual length of service shows that it was applied successfully.

Over a thirteen year period some 105 Class M7's were built but some with detail changes over this time. Number 53 was built (at a cost ranging from £1,550 up to £1, 830 depending which reports are read) under Nine Elms Works order number B13. 53 was the third loco of this batch although, as LSWR numbering was not sequential, it was the eighty-eighth M7 produced.

53 was outshopped, and entered revenue earning service, during December 1905. It was allocated to the adjacent Nine Elms shed, for a number of years, with it's initial livery

being lined 'Royal Green' with the letters "LSWR" widely spaced on the side tanks and the number "53" on the bunker sides. In March 1906 it was noted stabled outside Eastleigh Works so a problem, serious enough to require works attention, must have occurred.

Early 20th century records of loco allocations, etc. are incomplete but it is known that 53's early workings were principally in the London area – mostly on suburban services. At some stage it moved from Nine Elms and was allocated to Strawberry Hill shed which, on electrification in 1916, became Strawberry Hill Depot for the (then) new electric multiple units.

Back in 1909, 53 was repainted at a cost of £17 19s 7d (£17.98p) as part of the normal interval between re-paintings of every two to three years. In 1910, it was reported that M7's worked between Waterloo and Guildford via Woking as well as stopping services to Portsmouth with at least one water stop en-route. Typically, 35 minutes were scheduled for the non-stop journey of 24½ miles on the 08:11 Woking to Waterloo (average 42 mph) compared with the late 1940's Portsmouth electric units being allowed 32 minutes.

By 1912, two extra coal rails were added to the bunker increasing coal-carrying capacity and, subsequently, steel sheeting was added inside to stop losing small coals. Three years later the electrification of LSWR's suburban services was well underway displacing many M7's although 53 remained in London. From May 1917, 53 was reported on trains between Waterloo and Guildford via Claygate.

At the time of the Grouping, on 1st January 1923, the Southern Railway (SR) assumed ownership of 53 at it's original base of Nine Elms shed having then covered around 512,644 miles. 53 became E53, in November 1923, to show that it's engineering maintenance would be undertaken at Eastleigh Works. It emerged from there re-painted in the new 'Maunsell Green' lined livery with the word "SOUTHERN" on the tank sides and was one of the first thus treated.

In March 1930, the SR installed a boiler with working pressure increased from 150 to 175 psi. In July that year, 53 was in the first batch of eight M7's to receive the LB&SCR pattern of push-pull equipment operated by air pressure supplied by a steam powered pump from Westinghouse. The long front overhang was used to house the compressed air reservoir underneath with the pump fixed to the fireman's side of the smokebox and the operating cylinder attached to the side tank.

E53 was one of twelve M7's allocated to Guildford for use on Bentley – Bordon, Petersfield – Midhurst, Aldershot – Ascot and Guildford – Farnham services. SR rationalised their numbering scheme in June 1932 with E53 losing the 'E' prefix resuming plain 53 until Nationalisation.

After another overhaul at Eastleigh, 53 was re-allocated to Bournemouth Central shed. It's duties were mainly restricted to Bournemouth – Brockenhurst via Ringwood and the Swanage branch. It had a brief sojourn at Fratton (Portsmouth) during June and July 1938 before returning to Bournemouth the following month. Various secondary passenger trips to/from Eastleigh and Salisbury were also undertaken. Around this time 53 was still covering about 40,000 miles a year which was not bad for a small engine.

By October 1939, 53 had been repainted in unlined Maunsell Green with plain lettering and, in mid-1940, 53 was transferred to Eastleigh shed where it remained until 1950. During this decade it continued hauling secondary passenger services including over the

route which is now the Mid-Hants Railway. Back in 1941 the style of lettering was changed to the Bulleid style of shaded characters with a further livery change, to plain Black with shaded yellow lettering, in June 1942.

British Railways (BR) took over from nationalisation on 1st January 1948 and, in November 1949, 53 became 30053 when BR allocated the Southern loco fleet into the 30xxx series and it was repainted into lined Black livery. From December 1950, 30053 was re-allocated back to Fratton for use on the Meon Valley line (Fareham to Alton).

On the evening of the 31st January 1953, a serious storm surge (reaching up to 20 ft) caused major flooding on parts of the North Kent coast causing major problems for BR over some of its routes in the area. In the aftermath, 30053 was one of several steam locos moved from their Western Section depots to help out. On 27th March 1953 it travelled to Faversham shed with two other M7's to work services to/from Herne Bay. Two months later repairs had been made and services returned to normal.

This allowed 'visiting' locos to move away with 30053 being transferred to Brighton shed from 20th July 1953. Whilst there it was noted as being used very frequently to shunt Pullman cars at the Preston Park Works. In fact, one of the Pullman employees (who was a railway enthusiast it seems) commented "You used to get sick of the sight of her". This comment was quoted in "*Pullman Craftsmen by Don Carter, Joe Kent and Geoff Hart*" edited by Nick Willings – QueenSpark Books 1992.

When not moving Pullman cars, 30053 worked local services between Brighton and Horsham, replacing elderly LB&SCR locos which were then withdrawn. Another line worked with push-pull coaches was the Midhurst – Pulborough line which struggled on until closure of passenger services on 5th February 1955.

In 1957, 30053 went in to Brighton Works, for general repairs, which was the only time Eastleigh did not do so. In June 1959 it was scheduled to be re-allocated back to Eastleigh shed but a photograph of an unclean 30053 at Brighton shed in July might indicate it did not travel westward immediately. Alternatively, the photographer may have put the wrong date on their records. Either way, it did not last long at Eastleigh.

During March 1960, 30053 returned to Brighton to work push-pull services on the Steyning line but steam services ceased in March 1961. It then moved to Three Bridges shed where it worked to/from East Grinstead.

In May 1962, the loco received a heavy repair and repaint at Eastleigh Works and was the last M7 to undergo this treatment. It stayed at Eastleigh shed from June, until the following January, when it was re-allocated to Tunbridge Wells West shed to work push-pull services to/from Oxted. These services ceased on 6th September 1963 but 30053 remained there in store until 'resurrected' later in the year to work between Three Bridges and East Grinstead again - covering for a lack of diesel electric multiple units. During the peak Christmas period, 30053 worked as station pilot at Tunbridge Wells West and, for this work, it was allocated to Three Bridges shed but 30053 had become fairly run-down.

The final move under BR ownership saw 30053 transferred back to Bournemouth shed for a few months in 1964 where, with three other M7's, it took part in the last push-pull services on Southern Region. These operated on the Lymington and Swanage branches as well as on the 'Old Road' via Ringwood to/from Brockenhurst.

30053 was pictured on Wednesday 8th April 1964 at various locations on the Swanage

branch. It was coupled to Maunsell 2-coach push-pull set No. 606. The set was made up of Brake Composite 6678 and Open Second 1328. The last day of steam operations on the 'Old Road' was on Saturday 2nd May 1964 and 30053 was rostered on some of the services. All four remaining M7's were withdrawn officially on 25th May 1964.

As 30053 was in the 'best' condition of those left it was steamed from Bournemouth shed up to London Nine Elms shed on 28th June 1964. It was then used to haul, in conjunction with BR Standard Class 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78038, the Locomotive Club of Great Britain's "The Surrey Wanderer Rail Tour" on 5th July. 30053 pulled the initial section from Waterloo to Shepperton and then took over again for the Caterham and Tattenham Corner lines before returning the six-coach special via Kensington Olympia to Victoria. It returned to Nine Elms shed to drop it's fire for the last time in BR ownership.

The loco remained at Nine Elms for several months, tucked away in a remote siding amongst the weeds before being towed to Eastleigh (in December 1964) to await it's fate. 30053 had achieved 1,786,577 miles in it's 59 year working life and, whilst stabled on the scrap line, had all it's non-ferrous metal fittings removed from the cab. At that time a gang of three men undertook scrapping each loco in turn and, apparently, the gas torches had just started on 30053's cab and bunker when someone from the office rushed over to ask the men to stop as the loco had been sold.

Nelson F Blount was purchasing engines for his international collection being assembled in America. His plans were sufficiently advanced that 30053 entered Eastleigh Works in April 1966 for 'refurbishment'. No record of work undertaken has been found but restoration, after arrival back in the UK, revealed that it left a lot to be desired. What was ascertained was various parts had been replaced using similar items from other M7's, which is not unusual, and that all the push-pull equipment had been removed.

On Tuesday 28th February 1967, BR Standard Class 4MT 2-6-0 No. 76011 hauled 30053 and 30926 *Repton* from Eastleigh to temporary storage in the Pullman Car sheds at Preston Park in Brighton. Two weeks later on 13th April Sulzer Type 3 D6547 (Currently Class 33 No. 33029 owned by West Coast Railway Company) was seen at Coulsdon North Station towing 30053, in the company of 30926 *Repton* and GWR Collett Brake Corridor Composite 6705 with a Southern 'Pillbox' goods brake van at the rear, towards it's destination of Liverpool Docks. D6547 uncoupled from these vehicles at Willesden yard but it has not been discovered which loco(s) were used onwards to Liverpool.

Once on the dock side, cranes lifted all three vehicles onto Canadian Pacific vessel Roonagh Head and set sail for Montreal on 16th April. On arrival they were moved to Steamtown, Bellows Falls, Vermont, USA where 30053 was repainted in a pseudo-LSWR livery before later being repainted in a very dark plain Green livery with "LSWR" on the tank sides and "53" on the right hand side of the bunker only. It was placed on static display amongst a collection of world-wide railway stock and was never steamed during the period in America.

In 1982 the Southern Repatriation Group was formed by like-minded enthusiasts to raise funds and co-ordinate efforts to bid for both 30053 and 30926. An SRG engineer was despatched and reported that corrosion was no worse, and in some areas much less, than that on locos recovered from Woodham Brothers yard in Barry. Although, the sale prices quoted by Steamtown were unrealistically high a share purchase scheme for 30053 was started and a potential purchaser for *Repton* was found.

By early 1986 the Steamtown collection had been re-located to Scranton, Pennsylvania under new management. New negotiations were opened and, to cut a long-ish story short, by July 1986 a purchase contract had been signed. An 80 ton bogie flat wagon was loaned free-of-charge (by Trailer-Train) and, on Tuesday 17th March 1987, 30053 was secured upon it and hauled to Port Elizabeth Docks, New York where it was transferred to Nedlloyd vessel *Rosario* for the voyage to Felixstowe where it docked on 6th April. It was craned onto a low loader for the journey to Dorset and, by late afternoon on 9th April, 30053 had rolled down the ramp onto Swanage Railway metals.

At a meeting in the station house at Swanage, on Saturday 11th April 1987, the Drummond Locomotive Society was formed to take over ownership and manage the restoration to working order. Fund raising continued whilst 30053 was on display in the head shunt of the run-round loop at Swanage station. This well travelled engine was not going to rust (rest) quietly in a siding at Swanage.

On Tuesday 24th May 1988, 30053 was loaded onto another low loader (after attention to paintwork) to attend the 150th anniversary of the railway reaching Woking. Over the weekend of 29th/30th May, "Woking 150" saw various loco exhibits in the sidings and 30053 had steps to both sides of the cab to enable visitors to see the footplate. Other locos displayed included ex-LSWR Class T9 No. 120 (National Railway Museum owned but now currently based at Swanage at the time of writing) and the only other Class M7 No. 245 (based at NRM, York). At the time it was thought that this might have been the only time all preserved Drummond-designed engines had been together in one location.

On Wednesday 1st June 1988, 30053 was moved by road from Woking, to the Weighbridge building at the former GWR Swindon Works site, to join the restoration efforts on 34072 257 *Squadron* by the team lead by Willie Bath. Fortnightly working parties commenced on Sunday 19th June but, in due course, reports were received that the building was to be demolished and all further progress would have to be accomplished in No. 19 Shop. On 13th October the boiler and smokebox were separated from the frames. All the bits and pieces, both cleaned and painted and those still needing attention, were ferried to No. 19 Shop using a pick-up truck. The frames, side tanks and cab remained outside the Weighbridge.

It had been decided that restoration work would be to the (then) BR standard MT276 as Swanage Railway had the intention of re-instatement of the main line 'link' at Worgret Junction. This required the visit of a BR inspector at various crucial stages as work progressed. The boiler had been found to be in surprisingly good condition with the outer firebox having received new half sides probably at it's last general overhaul. Wheels need re-profiling but the axle journals were rather worn although just passable.

Wheels were re-profiled by Swindon Heritage Centre staff and a specialist contractor was brought in to remove blue asbestos boiler insulation. Around this time Frank Mead, of Salisbury, joined the team as a part-time paid fitter. Frank was to play a major role in ensuring continuity and steady progress as well as ending up as Engineering Manager of the DLS.

During 1990, the NRM required the use of buildings at Swindon to store exhibits as the roof in York needed major attention. On 18th and 19th December everything was transported to the East Anglian Railway Museum's workshop at Chappel & Wakes Colne in Essex. These successive moves had taken their toll in terms of increasing costs and

extending restoration schedules with no extra progress to the loco's restoration. Once at Chappel things began to speed up again as better workshop machinery was available.

On Friday 22nd November 1991, 30053's boiler (which had stood idle for 28 years) was hydraulically tested up to 250 psi in the presence of a BR inspector. A steam test was arranged for Thursday 19th December after which the insurance company's boiler inspector provided the necessary certificate. 30053 moved under it's own steam on Wednesday 29th April 1992 and was used by EARM on it's own passenger trips on Sunday 24th May.

To gain a main line certificate, 30053 was transported to Swanage arriving on Thursday 4th June resplendent in lined BR Black livery. Special permission was granted by BR to operate a special test trains on Swanage Railway metals rather than on the usual main line circuit. Special trains were run on 17th and 18th June when 30053 hauled eight coaches up the 1 in 110 gradient out of Swanage station followed by 1½ miles of 1 in 76/78 gradient up to Harmans Cross station. This was accomplished sufficiently for the main line certificate to be granted and allocated TOPS registration number 98253. 98 relates to steam locos, 2 indicates power classification and the last two numbers relates to ! It's maximum main line speed was 35 mph in either direction – but still 25 mph on the Swanage Railway.

It was transported to Eastleigh where it was based for two weekends acting as station pilot at Salisbury with one of them being re-numbered temporarily as former Salisbury engine 30673. As well as performing shunting duties for two rail tours it also hauled brake van rides for spectators around the triangle of lines just outside Salisbury Station. It's Station Manager, Gerry Daniels, had led arrangements for the “Atlantic Coast Express” on Sunday 21st June 1992 with 34027 *Taw Valley* hauling it from Salisbury to Exeter Central and 777 *Sir Lamiel* hauling the return. On Sunday 28th June the “Devon Belle”, organised jointly by NSE, FSS and SLOA, was steam hauled from Eastleigh to Exeter Central by 777, 75069 took over from Exeter Central back to Salisbury and 34072 was on the front from Salisbury to Waterloo via Eastleigh.

In January 1993, 30053 visited the Mid-Hants Railway and, on one occasion whilst double heading with 76017, it hauled both 76017 and six coaches from Alresford up to Ropley. At the end of 1993 it paid a visit to the Avon Valley Railway based at Bitton between Bath and Bristol. From the AVR it went straight to the Bluebell Railway but, during attention to the wheel sets it was found that the rear Driving Wheels' axle boxes was found not to be of M7 design so new ones had to be cast and machined. It then returned to Swanage for the end of the peak Summer season.

In October 1994, 30053 was transported to Yeovil Junction where Engineers informed the Railtrack Access Manager that the M7 would not fit Platform 1 / 2 at Yeovil Pen Mill. A copy of the 1963 route availability chart caused him to relent and a physical test showed 30053 was OK although the Class 47 hauling it was 6 ins wider in the relevant places. On Sunday 8th October, 30053 assumed the alias of Yeovil based M7 No. 30129. It hauled shuttles between Junction and Pen Mill with one extended to Maiden Newton. The packed train was hauled up the 1 in 50 gradient being topped at around 10 mph. The boiler steamed against an injector and the Driver barely used second valve. Both platforms were thronged with visitors not having seen a steam locomotive there in over 30 years. The local fire brigade were able to refill the side tanks before the return journey.

Winter duties at Swanage followed but 30053 was transported to the Mid-Hants again in March 1995 normally allocated three coach trains. Whilst there it was also used by Woking train crew, of South West Trains, as refreshers on working steam locomotives. Towards the end of March it was coupled to electro-diesel E6003 *Sir Herbert Walker* to be towed (in steam) from Alton to Woking.

This time Woking Borough Council were celebrating it's Centenary. Saturday 25th March it was on static display alongside the Up Bay platform but on Sunday it worked three trains around the triangle Woking – Guildford – Aldershot – Woking or reverse. On Sunday evening it hauled those five coaches to Waterloo closely following 35028 *Clan Line* pulling the six coach “Woking Centenarian”. 30053 had to slow to allow 35028 to pass it just before Hersham – which it did at “*a touch over 75 mph*”! A diesel removed the five coaches freeing 30053, on Platform 14, to couple on to 35028 and it's coaches in Platform 15 before hauling them to Clapham Junction carriage sidings. The M7 was hauled back to Woking that night by another Class 47.

Two years later, on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th October 1997, 30053 was involved with S15 No. E828 Harry Frith on seven coach main line shuttles between Yeovil Junction and Castle Cary. These trains were organised as part of the Yeovil Railway Festival.

Drummond Locomotive Society had existed for some time as an Unincorporated Association. An Unincorporated Association is an organisation set up through an agreement between a group of people coming together for a reason other than to make a profit. Although this has many advantages it does have a major disadvantage. Individual members are personally responsible for any debts and contractual obligations. On 21st January 1998, Drummond Locomotives Limited was incorporated to overcome that point.

During late 2008 the loco's paintwork was looking very worn and, in early 2009, it was repainted into war-time Southern Railway plain Black livery and numbered 53.

Coming more up-to-date, 30053 visited the Great Central Railway in early 2012 followed by moving to Herston Works in October 2012 for overhaul. It returned to the Railway on 17th April 2013. After running-in and operations at Swanage during the summer, 30053 visited the Mid Norfolk Railway during July.

In the middle of October 2013 it was moved by lorry to the Siemens maintenance facility at Northam, Southampton. There it operated brake van rides, during an open day, allowing families to enjoy short steam train rides for charity as part of the day, which raised money for the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

30053 then left for the South Devon Railway for their Winter Gala weekends in February 2014 and the Severn Valley Railway in September 2014. In 2015, the M7 visited the Kent & East Sussex Railway for around a month.

On 9th July 2017 the Swanage Railway ran services commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of Southern steam in 1967. Trains were hauled by 30053, 34070 *Manston* and 80104 - running in the guise of 80146 which was the last steam loco to work over the line before it closed.

30053 had a valid boiler certificate which ran out in early 2017 but an extension was obtained as the boiler had been re-tubed in 2011. The locomotive was in service until the end of October 2017 when the extension to the boiler certificate expired. In December 2017 the boiler was lifted off the frames to enable the overhaul of the locomotive to start.

By 2020 the boiler was transferred for overhaul at the North Norfolk Railway's Weybourne works with the frames, trailing bogie, motion and other mechanical work being undertaken at Herston Works. Before the disruption caused by COVID-19 it had hoped to complete everything to get it back in steam by the end of March 2022.

According to the Swanage Railway 'Swanning About' newsletter Issue 70 – 27th January 2021 it was reported that the overhaul, less the boiler, was being carried out by the Swanage Railway engineering department under contract to Drummond Locomotives Limited. There were still a few jobs outstanding on the rolling chassis, but it was very near to a complete set of refurbished/new parts waiting to be reassembled.

At the front of the frames, the refurbished slide bars were ready to fit, but the cylinders themselves were awaiting attention and some new piston heads, castings for which were in progress. Noticeable amongst the parts waiting to be fitted to the M7 were the driving wheelsets, with tyres, bearing journals and valve eccentrics fully refurbished.

Currently, no revised steaming date has been announced although the boiler is very near to completion at the date of this write up.

FURTHER READING:

From Nine Elms to Waterloo The Story of M7 Class No 30053 Compiled by William T
File - Drummond Locomotive Society (1997) ISBN 13 : 9781900467032
Pullman Craftsmen by Don Carter, Joe Kent and Geoff Hart" edited by Nick Willings –
QueenSpark Books 1992 ISBN 13: 9780904733501

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Swanage Railway "Swanning Around" newsletter
Southern Railway Email Group: <https://sremg.org.uk/steam/m7class.shtml>

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