

BR MKI KITCHEN CAR No. 1937

Unclassified Restaurant (RU) car 1937 was built by the Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. to BR Design Diagram 23. It formed part of Lot 30513, a batch of 19 similar vehicles, which was ordered in June 1958. As built it was equipped with 33 'loose' padded chairs, and fixed tables, at one end. The other end consisted of a somewhat cramped kitchen with an adjacent staff toilet area and clothing/uniform closet.

1937 ran on a pair of vacuum braked BR I heavy duty bogies, due to the weight of equipment, with steam heating for passenger comfort and underfloor LPG containers for kitchen equipment. In working order the coach weighed approximately 37 Tons.

Probably 1937 was outshopped by BRCW around November or December 1959. It was allocated initially to Eastern Region but would have travelled over a wide range of the BR system. At some stage these BR I heavy duty bogies were replaced with those of LNER Gresley design.

After withdrawal it was purchased for use at Manchester's Liverpool Road Station Museum. In 1992 it was purchased for use at Swanage and moved to sidings in Horsham for storage until 1996 when it was transported to Dorset. In July 1999 it was sent to Cranmore Train Care and Maintenance Services, based on the East Somerset Railway, for professional overhaul to a specification of the Swanage Railway's Catering Department into a full open plan kitchen.

Delays in fund-raising led this overhaul taking longer than planned. However, the fully refurbished vehicle arrived at the Norden road and rail interchange, on a low-loader from the East Somerset Railway, late on the afternoon of Monday 30th April 2001. Rebuilt Merchant Navy Bulleid Pacific No. 35027 *Port Line* travelled to Norden, after the last service train of the day, to pick up 1937 and take it to Swanage.

Incidentally, 1937's arrival allowed existing Restaurant Car S1908 to be withdrawn from service. After many years use, S1908 itself needed major work, but was found to contain asbestos. Specialist's removal costs made refurbishment impracticable, so the reluctant decision was made to scrap 1908 and it was transported to Immingham in December 2003 for safe disposal.

The new £50,000 kitchen car went into traffic on the evening of Saturday 5th May 2001, at the start of that season's Wessex Belle luxury dining trains. Conversion of the new kitchen car had taken CTCMS just six weeks despite there being nothing inside it at all - not even walls or ceilings.

Conforming with the latest health and safety specifications, the kitchen car has easily cleanable ceilings, walls and floors, new catering equipment, work surfaces and extractor fans, as well as new electricity, gas and water supplies. The whole idea of the design is to maintain total flexibility so if future changes in the layout need to be made it can be done comparatively easily.

S1937 has two large commercial gas cookers with enough preparation and cooking capacity to cater for up to 150 people. A dishwasher plus several sinks for cleaning have been installed plus plenty of vegetable preparation areas, a deep freeze, a refrigerator and numerous wall mounted power sockets along the carriage so it can be easily updated with other pieces of equipment.

Like other vehicles in the Wessex Belle rake, S1937 was repainted during 2011/12 into the early 1950s carmine/cream (“blood & custard”) scheme to distinguish it from the green liveried general passenger stock.

During 2023, S1937 suffered a small amount of damage from vandals breaking two windows. Currently it can still be used as a base for the railway's reduced catering operations such as cream teas, etc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Swanage Railway Stock Books

Preserved Coaching Stock of British Railways – Part One BR Design Stock
by Peter Hall and Peter Fox (Platform 5 Publishing – 1994)

The Railway Heritage Register Carriage Survey Project:
<http://www.cs.rhrp.org.uk/se/CarriageInfo.asp?Ref=2709>

Information collated by Peter Sykes 17th March 2024