

BR MKI UNCLASSIFIED RESTAURANT No. 1947

Unclassified Restaurant (RU) car 1947 was built by BR Swindon Carriage & Wagon Works on underframes supplied by Ashford Carriage & Wagon Works to BR Design Diagram 23. It formed part of Lot 30575, a batch of 15 similar vehicles, which was ordered on 19th January 1959.

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. 1947 ran on vacuum braked BR 1 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 W1947 was outshopped by BR Swindon in early 1960 and allocated initially to Western Region but, no doubt, would have travelled widely over the BR system. At some stage the BR 1 heavy duty bogies were replaced with one B4 bogie under the passenger section and a B5 bogie [higher-rated B4's] under the kitchen end to cope with it's heavier weight. As part of this refurbishment it was converted to a Restaurant Buffet (Standard) [RB(S)], under design diagram 27. Air braking equipment was added to make it dual braked, a bar/servery created and passenger capacity reduced to 23 seats.

After withdrawal it was purchased in 1996 and moved to storage in sidings at Horsham. Eventually, it came to Swanage to be refurbished for static use. It became known as the "Birds Nest" buffet due to a large bird's nest found inside W1947 on purchase – due to several broken windows. It's B5 bogie had, by this time, been replaced by a B4 bogie.

For 1947's static use at Swanage, it was thoroughly refurbished with a separate servery created in the passenger area adjacent to the kitchen. It was totally refurbished again at Rampart Engineering in Derby during 2010/11. The servery counter and fittings were moved to the opposite end of the coach from the kitchen. At the same time the kitchen equipment was upgraded, new finishes applied throughout and new loose tables and chairs installed.

It now has mains electric lighting and heating from 'shore' supplies along with electric cooking, freezing and refrigeration equipment. Access to mains water and sewerage were also provided. In 2013, coach 1947 was relocated from Platform 1 (Bay) to the run-round loop siding [known on the Railway as the 'Squint' or platform 2½!].

It is mounted on two B4 bogies now but great care has to be taken when (rare) shunting takes place. Due to it's normally static existence, a set of working brakes has not been refitted. Also, the two large roof-mounted extractor fans, above the kitchen's cooking area, means the coach is well outside the normal BR loading gauge to fit under the Swanage Railway's bridges, etc.

Both roof mounted extractor fans were dismantled so that, on Thursday 24th March 2022, 'Bird's Nest' coach 1947 could be removed from it's site of nine years at

Swanage. Careful progress was made so that it could reopen alongside the former Cattle Dock at Corfe Castle Station.

A while later, converted RU S1947 “Corfe Buffet” opened to provide hot and cold drinks plus light refreshments in its new location. However, staffing by volunteers has been a long-term problem in the Catering Department, and so a decision was taken early in 2024 to invite outside contractors to consider operating it under a franchise system.

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=2711>

Information collated by Peter Sykes 17th March 2024