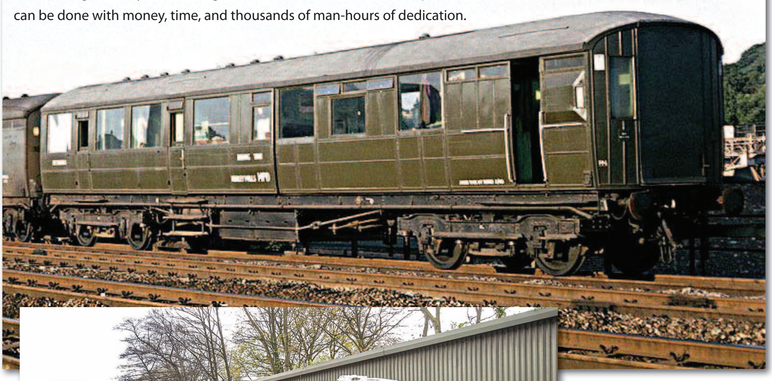
LNER COACH ASSOCIATION

Brake Third Corridor No. 3669

1930

Approaching its 90th 'birthday', this beautifully restored, unique carriage was, within living memory, a derelict, gutted wreck. It is the classic example of what can be done with money, time, and thousands of man-hours of dedication.



No. 3669 spent 18 years in Departmental service. It is pictured in the final phase of its use as a Riding Van with the Healey Mills breakdown train, seen at Chesterfield on August 22, 1976. Note the Thompson coach coupled to it. Photo: John Turner, 53A Models of Hull.

From dereliction to pristine: This is what restoration is all about – countless hours of painstaking work, resulting in perfection. Here is No. 3669 basking in the limelight – actually sunshine – at Pickering station. Photo. Rodney Towers

The carriage started life, courtesy of the Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon company in 1930. The carriage displays the distinctive vertical panelled match boarding, prevalent in carriages from this era. BRCW was one of several private companies which were given orders for carriage building by the LNER. Its LNER Diagram number was 114 and it comprised, besides the Brake compartment, four Third class compartments, each having a door to the outside.

The gargantuan task laying ahead for owner, Marcus Woodcock and his team is evident in this picture taken at Lowthorpe, near Bridlington, in 2002 shortly after the carriage was delivered from Embsay on the Yorkshire Dales Railway.

Attention to detail in the interior, both in the guard's van section and in the compartments, is commendable. The seating moquette was specially made to the original specification, as were all the fittings. On the right is co-owner Marcus Woodcock in conversation with Dave Simpson from the Scottish Railway Preservation Society who painted Thompson Third Corridor 1623 in scumble (teak).

After 16 years, it was time for a change in number, thanks to Edward Thompson's 1946 renumbering scheme. 3669 became 16335. Having been repainted into crimson & cream under British Railways ownership, it later received lined maroon as the former livery was phased out.

The end of its passenger-carrying life – at least for a staggering 53 years – came in 1962 when it was withdrawn. However, as can be guessed, departmental use was to follow. 16335 was earmarked to be a Staff Coach in the Breakdown Train Unit to be allocated to the Healey Mills Breakdown Train Unit. The Healey Mills marshalling yard opened in 1963 so one of its first occupants was the newly renumbered ADE 320984, and newly repainted red for this latest phase of its life.

ADE 320984 spent the next 18 years at Healey Mills, receiving all over yellow and, finally, olive green livery. With the wholescale replacement of pre-nationalisation breakdown train vehicles for the later Mk.1 variants, the end came for this by now 50-year old carriage on July 1 1980. It was offered for sale and the bid from two members of the Yorkshire Dales Railway, Embsay, was accepted where it was delivered by rail behind a Class 31 in February 1981.

To fully restore a carriage, the owner needs both finance, manpower and facilities and, hardly surprising for this embryonic railway, little was done towards its restoration.

After changing hands, it had spent nearly 20 years languishing at this Dales outpost. Bridlington-based enthusiast and YDR volunteer, Marcus Woodcock, inquired if he could buy it and take on the challenge. It was moved to a farm at Lowthorpe between Driffield and Bridlington in April 2002. A daunting task lay ahead for a complete rebuild. The ensuing 14 years saw the new owner and two colleagues, Roy Lingham and Stuart Hiscock, transform the derelict carriage into one of preservation's finest examples of a restored Gresley.

A mini tornado which demolished the polythene tent precipitated a request to the NYMR to bring the carriage there for completion. Somewhat incredibly, this was rejected, despite its obvious immaculate restoration but the owner was told to re-apply when it was nearer completion. This is the problem facing the LNERCA – all of its vehicles inevitably need a rebuild and whilst they are being rebuilt, they appear derelicts or tarpaulined eye-sores. When they are finished, it is a different matter.

Somewhat disillusioned, the owner – now joined by Nick Stringer - seriously considered an alternative home. It was decided to re-apply to the NYMR when 3669, now fully restored in varnished teak and original number, was all but finished and it was accepted. 3669 arrived on the NYMR in July 2013. To say it was immaculate was an understatement. Some interior finishing-off jobs and a mechanical overhaul were completed and 3669 entered service in May 2015.

Great attention has been paid to detail, with much use being made of the drawings held by H.M.R.S at Butterley, as well as photographs from the pre-war period. For example, the moquette used for the compartment upholstery was specially manufactured to a design seen in a photo of the Flying Scotsman relief crew waiting in the compartment . It is estimated that the restoration has taken 16,000 volunteer man-hours and cost some £80,000 in materials. All labour was volunteer, and all materials were procured by the owners, with no external funding being used. It is unique in being the only one of the six surviving Gresley BTKs to be restored, and to an as-built condition.
A wonderful recognition of the outstanding restoration was an invitation from the National Railway Museum in 2016 to appear with the Flying Scotsman exhibition when it was shown off in the Great Hall along with ECJS Third Corridor No. 12 and the 1948 Lounge Buffet Car No. 1706.

Murray Brown Founder and Vice Chairman, LNER Coach Association.

If you have enjoyed reading about this historical vehicle, you might like to find out more about the LNER Coach Association, formed in 1979 and affiliated tothe NYMR. We welcome new members and provide a regularly updated website and a quarterly newsletter. For more information please call me – Murray Brown on 01733 578000 or email murray@lnerca.org

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