LNER COACH ASSOCIATION

GNR-designed Invalid Saloon No. 43087

1909

This beautiful carriage is one of the oldest in our fleet, dating from 1909 when it emerged from the Great Northern Railway's Doncaster Works. Costing £1,891, it was built (to GNR Diagram 10) as an Invalid carriage and was available to be hired by anyone for the conveyance of infirm passengers. It also was used as a family parlour car. Such carriages were a common feature in the Victorian and Edwardian eras and several railway companies operated such carriages. Indeed, the GNR had built an Invalid carriage at Doncaster Works as early as 1854.

A rare image of the saloon as shown in the condition in which it was withdrawn in July 1973. It was kindly supplied by David Ford whose father took the picture in 1974 and who looked after the ironstone railway which had become the embryonic railway preservation centre, based at Market Overton, Rutland. Sadly, this delightful rural industrial railway was not destined to survive and all the stock, including DE 320042, was moved to Carnforth. The picture was taken at Sewstern and the LNERCA, years later, has a small co-incidental connection with this village. In April 2012 the LNERCA imported two Tsunami-damaged teak trees and had them sawn up at the Sewstern sawmill whose stockyard occupies the trackbed at virtually the same location as this photograph. DE 320042 has the claim to be the oldest carriage (1909) to receive the corporate blue & grey colours. Photograph, courtesy of David W Ford.

No. 3087 as it was numbered when brand new, was furnished with an invalid bed, fitted with a bed-rest which could be removed when not in use; a couch, three easy chairs, one portable table and two flap-tables.

When it was 14 years old, with the formation of the London & North Eastern Railway (incorporating the GNR) on January 1, 1923, the carriage became No. 43087.

Another side-on portrait of the GNR saloon, taken in Pickering yard. Restored back to teak livery by owner Jim Kay, at this time, the historic carriage, whilst in teak livery, ran for several years as an anonymous carriage, with no number, although it was referred to by its Great Northern Railway number of 3087. In 2016 all was put right - it received its later LNER identity with number 43087, company letters, and lining out - and looked resplendent! Photo. Malcolm Brown.

Considering its specialist use, little of its history is know until it was withdrawn. This was almost certainly due to the lack of use as an Invalid saloon as the very users would be those who were able to purchase a motor car.

What is known is that early in the British Railways era, circa 1950, it ceased being an Invalid carriage and was extensively converted to be used as an Engineer's Inspection Saloon. Both gangway connections were removed and an observation end created at each end. Much of the interior was altered for its new role, the new layout forming an observation end, meeting room/dining, guard section, kitchen and small seating area at the other end – which had the gangway through to the next carriage.

For its new role, it placed in the Departmental fleet and given the number DE 320042, this meaning it was officially a Chief Civil Engineer's vehicle, but almost certainly was used by senior officers from other departments. It also lost its teak livery and was painted maroon. For the final five or so years of its BR life, it carried the corporate blue & grey colours.

It was used in this Departmental role as an inspection saloon for approximately 20 years until finally withdrawn at Norwich on July 28, 1973. This means it was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, carriages running on BR carrying the corporate blue & grey livery.

It was offered for sale by tender and the fortunate purchaser was eminent railway enthusiast Sir William McAlpine. He moved it to Market Overton in Lincolnshire, the embryonic headquarters of a new preservation centre, based on the former ironstone industrial railway. Regrettably, this project failed to reach fruition because of the exhorbitant cost of keeping a BR connection – at the southern end with a connection using a stub of the Midland & Great Northern Railway (M&GNR) to Saxby and also at the northern end where the Highdyke branch met the East Coast Main Line at Stoke Tunnel. In January, 1974, all the stock, including the GNR saloon, and locomotives, including such luminaries as Pendennis Castle and Flying Scotsman left this scenic industrial railway in Lincolnshire and moved to Steamtown Carnforth museum.

Bill McAlpine then sold DE 320042 in 1976 to Steamtown volunteer, Jim Kay, who started a thorough rebuild. This work included re-instating a corridor connection at the small saloon area end only, leaving the other still an observation end. The kitchen was brought up to modern standards.

3087 moved to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, another of Jim Kay's volunteer projects, in July 2004 for the interior varnishing to be completed and it entered service in August the following year. After a revarnish in 2016, its number and lettering was changed to LNER 43087. The carriage regularly can be found at the south end of the teak train and is highly popular for party bookings.

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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