

NOTES

THE NEW ROYAL TRAIN. In a recent note in the *Records of Bucks* I drew attention to the coaches, built at Wolverton Carriage Works in 1869 and 1903.¹ In 1941 two railway coaches were built for George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The bodies of these coaches were built of wood and were the last wooden bodied coaches to run on British railways. Because of the material used in their construction a speed limit of 70 mph was imposed. They did not have any modern air-conditioning such as enjoyed by passengers on Inter-City Services for some years. There was not any method of providing power in itself during overnight stabling, other than the provision of main line locomotive with steam heating facilities. In the late 1960's the need to modernize the Royal Saloons was recognized and at the request of British Rail, work began in late 1974. The new Royal Train was 'handed over' to the Queen at Euston Station on Monday 16th May 1977; Her Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, then boarded it and travelled to Scotland, and thus started a Silver Jubilee tour.

A brief informal ceremony was held to mark the completion of the train; Mr. Peter Parker, Chairman of British Rail, presented the Queen with a key to open her own saloon and with a commemorative book of photographs containing pictures of the new train and reproductions of old prints of early Royal Train journeys in the nineteenth century. Among the specially invited spectators were men from the Wolverton works of British Rail Engineering Ltd., where the Royal Train was built.

The latest royal saloons, together with the programme of work to modernize some of the existing royal vehicles to make them compatible with the railway of today means that the Monarch and Members of the Royal Family will be able to travel at speeds of up to 100 mph, in air-conditioned comfort and enjoy the smooth and quiet riding which has been a feature of British Rail Inter-city trains for many years.

There is no 'Royal Train' locomotive as such. The engines used to haul the royal vehicles are drawn as required from the standard diesel or electric locomotive fleets as appropriate to the journey involved. With the change in recent years from steam to electric heating and the adoption of air-operated braking systems replacing the vacuum type, the provision of suitable motive power has become increasingly more difficult to arrange. The modernization programme has eliminated this problem.

Although the two Royal Saloons have been specially fitted out to meet the requirements of interior layout needed for the personal use of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, the vehicle bodies themselves are not new. They were both built in 1972 as prototypes of the latest standard Inter-City passenger vehicles, the Mark IIIs, which have been designed for use as both locomotive hauled coaches and in the High Speed Trains currently operating the world's most intensive 125 mph passenger train services. In 1973, the prototype High Speed Train set a world record for diesel trains at 143 mph.

1. "A Note on Two Famous Railway Coaches built at Wolverton and preserved in the Museum of Modern Transport, Clapham, London SW4." *Records XVIII*, Part 5, 1970, p. 444 (These coaches are now at the York Railway Museum).

The Mark III coach was designed at British Rail's Railway Technical Centre, Derby, and built at the Litchurch Lane Coach Works of British Rail Engineering Limited, also in Derby. The special fitting out required for the Royal Vehicles was entrusted to the Wolverton Works of British Rail Engineering in Buckinghamshire. The remaining part of this note will be concerned with a description of the interior of these coaches.

The Interior: The interior furniture furnishings and fittings were personally selected by HM the Queen and the Duke, who were advised by Sir Hugh Casson. He worked in close collaboration with the Board's Director of Industrial Design and his Industrial Design Department in implementing the detailed design proposals.

The materials and finishes employed in the coaches were not specially manufactured, but carefully chosen to provide a vehicle which is functional, comfortable and of modern attractive appearance.

HM The Queen's Saloon:

The vehicle is basically divided into four areas with further subdivisions: A formal entrance vestibule with double doors. Lounge, bedroom and bathroom facilities for the Queen. Bedroom and bathroom for the Queen's dresser. Second vestibule area.

Entrance to the saloon is through a main vestibule with double doors to the platform. The walls of the vestibule are Ivory coloured glass reinforced plastic and melamine. A plaque inside the vestibule records that, "This coach entered service in May 1977 – the Silver Jubilee Year of the Reign of Her Majesty the Queen."

The ceiling panels through the coach are antique white melamine, and the principal wall finishing is a cream 'Royal Silk' pattern PVC wall panel with Poly Vinyl Flouride coating.

The fitted carpet throughout the saloon is slate blue.

In the lounge and bedroom subdued lighting is provided by wall light fittings in a 'natural' colour pleated silk with spotlight type reading lights above the desk and settee. In other areas, ceiling mounted fluorescent lights are provided.

The lounge has a fully upholstered settee and easy chair in pale blue with a similar chair in jasmine yellow upholstery. The tops of desk and wall cabinet, together with the continuous side rails running down either side of the carriage at sill level are painted in cream to tone with the wall finish. The sides and door and drawer fronts to the cabinets are covered in the Royal Silk natural PVC/PVF wall lining. The wall cabinet is fitted with a radio.

Curtains to the lounge and corridor are screen-printed in a 'raindrops' pattern, blue on white. When drawn, these provide a continuous band of curtain on either side of the lounge between the sill rail and pelmet.

Bedroom and bathroom furnishings include a 3 ft. wide pocketed spring divan bed, with room for luggage to be stored underneath. The bed is curtained in a small recess with bedside table, telephone and overhead light. A dressing table has side drawer cabinets covered with Royal Silk plastic material identical with the wall finish. Two drawer units are fitted with a centre bronze glass shelf with recessed tray for cosmetics. A triple mirror with top light is fitted at the back of the table. The bedroom has fitted wardrobe with full length mirror on the centre door. Curtains are in white silk with a blue silk edge border.

The bathroom has the same wall paint and plastic laminate finishes, curtains and carpet with standard white bath and basin.

The remainder of the saloon is occupied by the Queen's dresser, with a smaller combined bedroom and bathroom.

Some prints of the first Royal Train journeys by HM Queen Victoria have been selected for hanging in the Queen's Saloon. A pair of these early prints show HM Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Edward (later King Edward VII) and the Royal Princesses getting on to a train for Scotland by the Great Northern Railway at the temporary station in Maiden Lane before the opening of King's Cross station in 1852.

Another print shows a journey by HM Queen Victoria on 3 July, 1847 from Cambridge to London

on the Eastern Counties' Railway.

Vehicle No. 2903 started life as a 2nd Class open saloon prototype for the Mark II passenger fleet; it is 75 feet 5 ins. long and 9 feet wide.

HRH the Duke of Edinburgh's Saloon

This vehicle is also basically divided into four sections: Entrance vestibule, Lounge/dining room, bedroom and bathroom. Bedroom and bathroom for valet. Kitchen and staff vestibule.

The interior decor follows the same general pattern as the Queen's saloon although because a kitchen is included, each compartment is smaller.

Entrance to the Saloon is through the main vestibule to a combined lounge/dining room. A 2-seat settee and easy chair with coffee table are grouped at one end with a wall cabinet. A dining table/writing desk with an amber leather top and five upright cane and chrome tube chairs are at the other.

A brown patterned carpet is fitted throughout the saloon with wall light fittings in a plain rough textured silk, and curtains to the lounge and corridor are in plain green hopsack material with a yellow edge border.

Bedroom and bathroom furnishings include a 3 feet wide pocketed spring divan bed, with room for luggage to be stored beneath. A small fitted wardrobe with built-in dressing table is provided, and curtains in a natural material in a two-tone off-white stripe. The Duke's bathroom has a shower compartment in lieu of a bath. Electric pumps are fitted to ensure sufficient water pressure at the spray heads.

The kitchen is all electric and designed to provide full meals for up to ten people, usually when the Duke's saloon is being used on its own rather than part of a complete Royal train. Equipment includes a fan-assisted convection oven and four-plate boiling hob with a grill, water boiler and hot cupboard. A three compartment refrigerator provides normal pantry refrigeration, together with a wine cooler and frozen food storage.

This is vehicle number 2904 which was built in 1972 as a 1st Class Open Saloon prototype Mark III coach.

There is a number of other coaches which make up the fleet of Royal rail vehicles as follows: Vehicle No. 2905: A combined sleeping vehicle and power generation coach. The body was originally manufactured in 1969 as one of the Mk IIb series of coaches. It retains its original guard's compartment. Two of the passenger compartments have been converted to day/night accommodation with four sleeping berths in each. The upper berths fold away for day use. A third compartment provides two more bunks and a heated linen cupboard. The partition between the fourth compartment and the centre vestibule has been removed to provide a luggage carrying compartment.

Vehicle No. 2906: This was built in 1969, as a Mk IIb passenger coach with guard's compartment, this vehicle now provides additional day and night accommodation, together with some kitchen facilities.

Vehicle No. 2900 was originally built in 1955 to provide accommodation for the Royal children. The vehicle has been modernized for use by the Royal Family household. It has air brakes, 100 mph B4 bogies and new electrical systems.

Vehicle No. 2901 was built in 1957 to provide office and living accommodation for the Queen's private secretary and other members of the Royal Household; this vehicle has been modernized as above.

Vehicle No. 2902: This is a dining car which was built in 1956 and provides full dining facilities for the Royal party and has been modified as above.

Vehicle No. 45000 is a saloon. It was built in 1920 as the London and North Western Railway Chairman's Saloon; the body was taken from its original underframe in 1967 and fitted on a standard Mark 1 frame with B4 bogies.

Vehicle No. 2013 is a sleeping one; it is a standard 1st Class sleeping car built in 1958, fitted with electric heating, air braking and B5 bogies.

Vehicle No. 325 is a standard restaurant car built in 1962, providing seating and dining accommodation for the Royal Household. Fitted with air braking, electric heating and B5 bogies.

These coaches make up the basic fleet of Royal rail vehicles and can be drawn upon as required, to form a train of up to ten coaches compatible with modern railway operations and capable of 100 mph running.

The people of Wolverton in general and the staff of the Wolverton Carriage works in particular can be proud of these achievements which are surely unique?

Acknowledgements: Public Relations Department, British Railways Board, 222 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 6JJ.

PETER S. RICHARDS

ICKFORD. On 12 November 1977, a service was held at St. Nicholas, Ickford to commemorate the death of Gilbert Sheldon. The rector, Revd. R.H. Collier, gave a lecture outlining the career of his famous predecessor who held the cure 1636-60 when he was also Warden of All Souls College, Oxford. He was chaplain and Confessor to Charles I when the King was executed. At the Restoration he became Bishop of London and from 1663 to his death was Archbishop of Canterbury. The beautiful communion plate which he gave to the church was on display.

E.V.