



LNER Moquette (2003 July)

Within the LNERCA, there has for some time been a need to identify suitable upholstery material for Open Third saloons and both First and Third Class corridor compartments of the 1930s and 1920s.

Open Third

The design of the Art Deco moquette used in Open Thirds is well known from photographs. However, it should be noted that most interior photographs depict the plywood panelled stock used in the green and cream Tourist or Excursion trains. Although the design remained the same, the moquette was produced in brown, green and blue for different interior colour schemes. We also had some actual samples of brown from certain high-back seats in BTO 43567.

In researching the drawings of the correct pattern of bucket seat to reproduce for TTO 56856 (there were three designs) work was carried out in the Birmingham Library archive of Metropolitan Cammell drawings. This was extensive as there are some ten to fifteen thousand 35mm aperture cards of which about five per cent refer to LNER vehicles.

LNER drawings do not usually make reference to exact specifications of finishes. These seem to have formed part of the internal order or external contract documents. However, Metro Cammell occasionally conflated drawing and order data in their tracing of LNER drawings and the pattern number of the desired moquette was discovered on Drg No 71587 3rd Class Open Cars, General Arrangement (Birmingham Library Reference 146/12) "Upholstery material Holdsworth's Brown 721/8548 for seats".

As this referred to the Order No under which TTO 56856 was built at Saltley, it was therefore possible to order exact reproduction moquette from the original manufacturer, John Holdsworth of Halifax. It is reasonable to assume that Open Thirds built elsewhere had a similar finish.

Compartment First

This has only in recent years become an area of interest to the LNERCA in relation to BFK 4163. For some years East Coast stock used blue cloth in Non-smoking Firsts and green leather in Smoking Firsts. At present our understanding is that a blue velour type material was used and that the Bluebell Railway has obtained something suitable.

Compartment Second

One LNER drawing which does specify a moquette pattern is 13282.D, the GA of a 1928 Quadart Van Second. This specifies "To be upholstered in Holdsworth's No 6795 gold & blue combination pile".

Compartment Third

This is a requirement for TK 23896, TK 3291, TK 3857 and SLT 1299. Michael Harris refers to, and drawings confirm, the (early) use of both fawn rep and (later), red and black moquette.

Metro Cammell Drg Nos 49713 Section of 3rd Class Compartment (Birmingham Library Ref 849/13) and 49748 3rd Class Seat Sections (849/28) quote Fawn Rep with brown leathercloth armrests and piping for the lot of Diagram 115 Corridor Thirds built at Saltley to Metro Cammell Order No 9037. No samples of fawn rep have become available.

Various red and black pieces have been recovered, for example from grounded bodies in Aberdeenshire. Unfortunately, Holdsworths say that red-and-black designs were very common in post-war years and it is suspected that these samples are of BR patterns. They propose to add a red-and-black to their heritage range.

Two photographs of Third Class upholstery to have come to light so far. The first is in LNER Reflections, edited by Nigel Harris, Silver Link, 1985 (the pages of which are not numbered!). However, this shows two enginemen "riding the cushions" of the Flying Scotsman in 1928 after using a corridor tender. We know that the East Coast stock was internally finished to a higher than normal standard so this pattern, although probably red-and-black, may well not be appropriate. The other is Plate 39 on page 33 of Railway Design since 1830 Volume 2 1914-1969, Brian Haresnape, Ian Allan 1969. This shows the same design in what appears to be a Diagram 27A Open Third of the 1929 Cromer Sets. Again, the Cromer Sets were probably finished to a higher standard than normal stock. It also remains to be seen whether Holdsworths can identify the pattern number from such a photograph.

The Metro Cammell drawings of the later Diagram 155 Corridor Thirds show an unspecified moquette in use on seats, headrests and armrests and to line the quarters (the bodyside and corridor screen) adjacent to the seats. There is leather piping. The moquette is probably red and black but just could be the same as in the contemporary Open Thirds. The source is Metro Cammell Drg No 71273A Third Class Corridor Cars, Compartment (Ref 1124/35).3rd Class Compartment (1191/48).

One of our volunteers has a clear memory of the design in use in ex-North Eastern third class stock in the 1940s and has identified it in a sample obtained from inside a seat. This is blue and gold and is well represented in the NRM's ECJS No 12. This will probably prove to be Holdsworth's No 6795 referred to above.

Holdsworth's data

Holdsworth's staff have been very co-operative but are unable to help. They have numerous Jacquard cards from the era in question but do not have records showing what material each produced. (Apparently there are photo-copies of some). One needs the pattern number to key the appropriate card. An offer to spend time researching their records elicited the information that they no longer have records of pre-war orders, which might have shown which patterns the LNER was ordering at a given period.

There is perhaps scope here for an HLF-funded project to make samples from each of the Jacquard cards as a master reference for posterity.

Public Record Office

Michael Harris' books are the result of his work in the Public Record Office. The PRO web-site gives little indication of any relevant minutes or contract documents. It appears that an on-site research project will be necessary. If this turns up the moquette pattern numbers, there is little doubt that Holdsworths can reproduce the designs (at a minimum order quantity).