



ESTABLISHED ON THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS RAILWAY

LNER-designed Fish Van No. E 75169

1949

The fish conveyance trade was once big business to the LNER and early years of British Railways. By the end of the 1940s and early 1950s, about one million tons of fish were landed at British ports every year and about three-quarters of this was moved by rail. The LNER had a sizeable fleet of fish van to serve the numerous east coast ports and besides being moved as mixed consists, i.e. tagged onto passenger trains, there were numerous complete fish van trains from such ports as Aberdeen, Hull and Grimsby. Around 2,000 tons of fish were moved daily.

In 1954, British Railways brought out a later version of the fish van (BR Diagram 800) and in 1960, three more Lot numbers were built, these having roller bearings. These were adorned with a large blue circle and promptly dubbed 'Blue Spot'.



Pictured just about to leave Wansford station on the Nene Valley Railway, destination Pickering where the LNER Coach Association is currently restoring this unique van.



Bit of a job on here! Like all LNERCA projects, we inevitably go back to basics as shown here. The underframe sits on its isolated track awaiting the rebuilding of the bodywork.

E 75169 (BR Diagram 214) was built at Faverdale Works, Darlington, in 1949. Thus it was built in BR days, but to a LNER design. It was part of the batch E 75000 – 75599 (total 600). Faverdale Works closed in 1963.

But fish van days were numbered in the early 1960s. The advent of the refrigerated lorry, motorways, diesel engines in lorries and greater payloads, plus freezing of fish at plants near the ports, rapidly spelt the end for the long-lived fish van and this was not helped by dwindling stocks of fish, particularly herring.

Although we have no definitive proof, it is believed E 75169 was one of the last LNER-designed fish vans to be condemned and has almost certainly worked the fish traffic from Whitby. Photographs taken in 1964 show a B1 locomotive on the Whitby-York service and a LNER fish van can be seen in the picture.

The van which defied breaking up

The condemned E 75169 found itself at Doncaster Works where it was destined to be used in departmental service, working loco stores between the Works, March and Cambridge. For this it received the prefix DE (Departmental Eastern). After a few years such use, the Works decided to keep it as a static storage facility. For this purpose it was given a number in the Eastern Region Internal User series, 041255. This meant it would not leave the Works and run on the national system again but be confined to the Works.

And now a mystery! The records show that DE 75169/041255 was condemned once again on May 26, 1972 and . . . broken up in the Works on June 7, 1972. Oh, no, it wasn't! In fact, the van managed to survive in the Works yard for another 15 years. Finally, it September 1987, it was sold to a preservationist on the Nene Valley Railway. At Wansford, it was kitted out as a volunteer accommodation with a partition and sleeping facilities! A change of ownership saw it sold to fellow NVR enthusiast, Jamie Everitt for use with storing components for his diesel shunter.

The LNERCA got wind of this LNER survivor and asked Jamie if ever he wanted to sell the van, the LNERCA would be interested. This came to pass in late 2008 and E 75169 arrived at Pickering by road on January 29, 2009.

Let rebuild commence

It was fairly obvious it was in somewhat poor condition not having been properly restored since purchase by the private sector. It was now time for a thorough rebuild. Stripping started and much of the woodwork framing was beyond redemption, but many parts were kept as patterns.

The metal framing had several serious defects, so the decision was taken to strip the van down to its underframe, with the roof totally removed.

The underframe on its wheels was taken to DC Engineering, Shildon, where it was shotblasted, the frame welded where required and painted. On arrival back at Pickering, it was lifted onto an isolated piece of track outside the LNERCA's workshop at High Mill where restoration can continue. This involves putting back the framing, roof and external bodywork.

The intention is to use the fish van as a store for major components, thus releasing space in the workshop. However, it is also intended to use the van on occasional passenger train services to re-create the past. The demonstration freight train will also benefit from its inclusion.

It will be immediately visible, as it will be painted white – this was done originally, of course, to reflect the sun's heat. It will carry the self explanatory lettering 'INSULFISH' as well as the elite letters 'XP' which denote it was allowed to work with passenger trains at express passenger speed.

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 to the 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