

## **The History of DMU vehicle M51914**

### **M51914 in BR Service**

Class 108 vehicle M51914 was ordered from British Railways, Litchurch Lane Works, Derby on 20th March 1959. It was part of lot number 30601 which comprised of vehicles M51901 to M51950.

The vehicle is a power car of type DMBS (Driving Motor Brake Second), indicating that it has a driving compartment, is powered, contains a compartment for the guard and luggage and has second class seating. BR information states two Leyland 6-cylinder horizontal type 150bhp engines were fitted to this vehicle, however, some publications state BUT (AEC).

On completion, M51914 was initially coupled to DTCL (Driving Trailer Composite Lavatory) vehicle M56497 and allocated to Toton depot (18A) on 7th May 1960. Its livery on delivery was BR Green with cream lining and 'whiskers'.

Subsequently it was reallocated to Gorton, Manchester (9G) in October 1960 and Allerton (8J, later AN) on 14th June 1965.

The vehicle was refurbished by May 1978, now carrying a livery of Blue and Grey with all yellow front end.

Further reallocations took M51914 to Longsight, Manchester (LO) in July 1983, Chester (CH) May 1985, Newton Heath, Manchester (NH) September 1985, Allerton (AN) 11th May 1986, Bletchley (BY) March 1987, Old Oak Common (OO) 21st January 1992 (but this move was later cancelled and the vehicle remained at Bletchley). Whilst based at Bletchley, the vehicle was repainted in the Network South East livery of Red, White and Blue in July 1988.

M51914 was put into store on 4th February 1992 and withdrawn on 27th April 1993. At Bletchley, the vehicle became a parts donor to keep others from the depot in service before being sold to the Dean Forest Railway (DMU Group).

Deemed unfit to move by rail in October 1993, the vehicle was transported from Bletchley to Norchard by low loader on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1994 and offloaded on the 2nd.

### **M51914 in DFR Service**

Having been purchased for spares, M51914 was in a rather sorry state when it arrived at the DFR. However, days after the arrival of the vehicle, a challenge was made to restore it to working order, and within 3 weeks parts were being sourced from railway scrap yards.

M51914 required some major mechanical and electrical repair and restoration work. Inside the guard's compartment the security cage was removed and the saloons fitted with tungsten type light fittings. Other work included restoration of

the front saloon panels, with original blinds and luggage racks being refitted, the ceiling repainted and aluminium cleaned. Removal of paint in the cab exposed the original Formica and hardwood surfaces and the interior of the cab was restored and a route indicator box fitted. The "hydraulicked" engine had the injectors undone and was barred over which appeared to clear the problem.

The vehicle was painted in pink undercoat c.1996 as part of a proposal to paint it in a 'Mr. Blobby' livery, based on the TV series. But in June 1998, the exterior was thoroughly prepared and given a high quality repaint in lined green with a yellow panel. M51914 entered DFR passenger service on 17th October 1999, a DFR Rally Day.

In Spring 2001, the guard's compartment was refurbished and wheelchair access to the passenger saloon was created with an additional opening door in the bulkhead. A seat was removed to give a suitable area in the saloon.

In August 2002, the roof was stripped down and repainted light grey.

In 2003, the Halon engine fire system was removed, and later replaced (in 2005) by a dry powder installation following approval.

In November 2007 the vehicle, along with M56492, had a "bit" part in the TV series 'Casualty'.

In Autumn 2009 "rain caps" were fitted to the tops of the engine exhaust pipes. Replacement exhausters and a new gearbox oil seal were also fitted.

In September 2010 the vehicle's tyres were turned at Bristol St. Phillips Marsh depot.

During 2015, 51914 mainly ran with 59387 & 51566 and accumulated over 1,200 miles in service. In September, 51914 was withdrawn from traffic and the cab and front saloon stripped out internally to allow the cab front to be replaced. After interior dismantling it was soon found that the partition between the cab and the passenger saloon needed replacement as this had rotted. However, the cab front itself and framework was found to be in better condition than the group's 2014 cab project (50619), mainly due to the fact that a lot of work had already been done to 51914 back in 1999.

The summer of 2016 revealed further problems in the passenger compartment behind the cab, which delayed the rebuilding work. A huge effort was made and the vehicle returned to service (minus some fittings), repainted again in lined green with yellow panel, in time to muster a full fleet of 5 cars for the Railcar Association Convention which was being held at the railway during September that year.

Following the event 51914 was brought back into works for the finishing touches to be made. These lasted longer than anticipated but in 2020 the vehicle re-entered service, partnered with M56492.



M51914 has the distinction of being part of the DMU working the first of the Tufts shuttle services on 18th August 2001, the first DMU shuttles to Whitecroft on 12th October 2003 and the first DFR public passenger services to Parkend on 27th December 2005.