

The History of DMU vehicle M56492

M56492 in BR Service

Class 108 vehicle M56492 was ordered from British Railways, Litchurch Lane Works, Derby on 20th March 1959. It was part of lot number 30602 which comprised of vehicles M56484 to M56504.

The vehicle is a trailer car of type DTCL (Driving Trailer Composite Lavatory), indicating it has a driving compartment, is unpowered, contains both first- and second-class seating and a toilet compartment.

On completion, M56492 was initially coupled to DMBS (Driving Motor Brake Second) vehicle M51909, and allocated to Toton (18A) on 30th April 1960.

Subsequently it was reallocated to Fleetwood (24F) in December 1960, Allerton (8H, later 8J) December 1960, Longsight, Manchester (9A) October 1965 and Allerton (8J, later AN) April 1966.

M56492 was originally delivered in BR Green livery with cream lining and 'whiskers', subsequently being repainted BR Blue (date unknown). The vehicle was refurbished in November 1979 being painted Blue and Grey with an all yellow front end. BR records show it had a C3 repair at Swindon works in 1982 and in April 1983 it was renumbered to M54492.

Further reallocations followed, to Chester (CH) March 1987, Tyseley (TS) May 1987 and finally to Bath Road, Bristol (BR) 8th November 1987.

M54492 was withdrawn from service on 29th July 1991 and stored with E50619 at Gloucester Horton Road, where they had latterly been used in an Emergency Services exercise.

In March 1992, 54492, along with vehicle 53619, were sold to the Dean Forest Railway (DMU Group), arriving at Lydney by rail on 20th April 1992.

M56492 in DFR Service

On entering preservation, the vehicle reverted back to its original number M56492. It was not long after its arrival at the DFR that it worked a members' special with E50619 in June 1992.

The vehicle had some seats removed as part of the internal restoration and a buffet constructed in their place. It was painted BR Light Green with a small front-end yellow panel and in October 1993, M56492 was launched into passenger service on the Dean Forest Railway.

The cab dome had been painted white by 1994 and the summer of 1996 saw the vehicle repainted again in BR dark green with cream lining and 'whiskers'.

During 1995, M56492 was temporarily equipped with some high-tech equipment for trials of a laser CCTV transmission system for a Hong Kong mass transit railway. Whilst in 1996 the vehicle was used for testing a leaky feeder CCTV transmission system for the London Underground Jubilee line.

M56492 was used in filming of scenes for the movie 'Darklands' with E50619 in April 1996 and in June 1996 the vehicle starred in the first "DMU Day", which evolved to become the Annual Railcar Convention, organised by The Railcar Association.

In May 1997, M56492 attended the Aberthaw power station charity open days when it was used for rides around the site with motive power provided by GWR built 0-4-2T locomotive 1450.

In February 2001 a new cab front was fitted and in October 2003, by this time paired with M51914, M56492 played a key part in the Tufts Shuttle being extended to Whitecroft.

In March 2004, the buffet was refurbished and updated, then in 2005 the bogies were changed and the roof water tanks removed.

In December 2005, M56492 & M51914 played a key part in the first services to Parkend.

The main roof was painted light grey in July 2007, whilst in November 2007 the vehicle, along with M51914, had a "bit" part in the TV series 'Casualty'. The buffet was also updated again during this time.

2008 saw the vehicle repainted green, the preparation for which was done in such a way that the vehicle needed not to be withdrawn from traffic.

In 2009, the vehicle had an interesting role as a driver training vehicle for Arriva Trains Wales.

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

During 2015 M56492 ran as a 2-car set with 50619 and in December it was taken into the railway's "paint tent" where the cab end was repainted and whiskers/lining reapplied. The opportunity was also taken to repaint the roof.

M56492 has been stored serviceable over the past few years but re-entered service in 2020, with newly overhauled M51914.