



## THE GREAT WESTERN RAILCARS

ABOVE: Seen in the up bay platform at Newbury is No.W12W, showing the rather dashing streamlined styling of the pre-war railcars. Built in 1936, it is one of three intended for longer-distance work, having a lavatory and consequently fewer seats — 63 — rather than the 70 in the cars for local services which were not provided with lavatories. The GWR painted them chocolate and cream but they still cut a dash in the carmine and cream of British Railways. (C. Banks Collection/Colour-Rail DE943)

BELOW: No.W22W at Leamington Spa after arrival from Stratford-upon-Avon on 25th April 1955. Entering service in 1940, this was one of the later build with the capacity to haul a trailing load, as in this case. These cars were fitted with conventional drawgear, seating capacity was 48 and the luggage area contained a boiler to generate steam heating for the trailing coach. The angular lines contrast with the earlier streamliners! This vehicle, happily, survives in the care of the Great Western Society at Didcot. (T. J. Edgington)

*Although internal combustion railcars had been tried in various forms and with varying degrees of success, it was on the generally conservative Great Western Railway that the concept of the diesel railcar flowered and developed in the 1930s. A prototype car from Hardy Motors Ltd. in association with AEC Ltd. was constructed in 1933 and after evaluation the GWR ordered a production series to an improved design which appeared in 1934 with a rather stylish streamlined outline. The first three were, with a small buffet, for express service between Birmingham and Cardiff. The next two batches were of higher seating capacity, the last (No.17) being a dedicated parcels vehicle. Another experimental vehicle, No.18, in 1937 was built with a more substantial underframe with a view to it being able to haul a trailing coach and became the basis for the last batch in 1940/1, though these were of a more 'angular' appearance, with one of them again being a parcels van.*





TOP: Most of the final batch of non-streamlined railcars were for use on branch lines and local services and after their introduction they operated most of the timetable on the Gloucester-Ledbury branch. No.W19W sees a few passengers coming and going at Newent in July 1959 during the last couple of weeks of the branch which expired on the 13th of that month. A bus in matching colours waits outside the station: integrated public transport 50 years ago! (W. Potter/Colour-Rail DE650)

MIDDLE: On the same branch No.W19W calls hopefully at little Barbers Bridge station on a working from Gloucester in May 1959. (T. B. Owen/Colour-Rail DE649)

BOTTOM: The parcels railcars were intended to convey traffic in the London area and out to Reading, so reducing the stopping time for passenger trains on which parcels were previously carried. Here is No.W17W, the streamlined version from 1937. Seen at Tyseley depot in June 1960 nudging up to one of the passenger cars, it shows that all-over crimson was the BR colour for the parcels vehicles. (P. J. Hughes/Colour-Rail DE1634)







ABOVE: While a streamlined finish for a non-passenger utility vehicle was perhaps a little extravagant, even in the late 1930s, it was clearly a success in its purpose since a second such car came out in 1941. Here is the non-streamlined version No.W34W demonstrating the pulling power of the species by having two vans in tow near White Waltham, between Twyford and Maidenhead, in August 1959. (T. B. Owen/Colour-Rail DE859)

BELOW: No.W22W at Kidderminster in May 1959. By then the first generation diesel multiple units were entering service and some of the GWR railcars were given the same livery as the new BR stock – dark green complete with ‘speed whiskers’ at the front. (P. W. Gray/Colour-Rail DE487)







Back to Newent on the Gloucester–Ledbury branch and what seems to have been the regular railcar, No.W19W. In this July 1959 photograph there are mailbags and a barrow of parcels for loading, even though closure is only days away. A retreating dog expresses its view... (J. M. Wiltshire/Colour-Rail DE2500)

Local services around the West Midlands were ideal for the GWR railcars. Streamliner No.W8W calls at the improbably named Swan Village with the 3.00pm Dudley–Birmingham Snow Hill on 1st June 1957. The railcars, including the pioneer example and the two parcels vans, totalled 34 and the last was not withdrawn until late 1962. (T. J. Edgington)



BELOW: The logical next step was to produce a twin-car unit and the Great Western introduced two such pairs in 1941/2, Nos.35/36 and 37/38. These featured a buffet counter and were intended to replace single cars on the Birmingham–Cardiff run but in fact were so successful in attracting passengers that conventional steam trains of greater capacity had to take over the service! They were capable of running with

an intermediate standard carriage. Railcar No.W33W was rebuilt as a single driving unit with vestibuled end in 1951 to replace fire-damaged No.37 and is seen here with No.W38W and intermediate carriage passing over Aldermaston troughs as the 12.37pm Newbury–Reading in August 1959, the whole ensemble in BR multiple unit green. (G. H. Hunt/Colour-Rail DE1669)

