



Meldon Buffet

The Dartmoor Railway's Meldon buffet is 69310, originally part of BR Southern Region 4BIG electric multiple unit 7040, built in York in 1965/6. The 4BIG/4CIG design was based on BR Mk1 locomotive hauled stock and dates from 1963. 2 batches were built: phase 1 for Brighton services in the mid 1960s, and phase 2 for Portsmouth services in 1970.

The class 420 4BIGs were variants on the more numerous class 421 4CIGs with a buffet instead of another trailer. The '4' indicates the number of cars and the 'B' indicates buffet, but 'IG' is interpreted either as Intermediate Guard, or the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway telegraph code for Brighton, still in use 40 years after the LBSCR ceased to exist.

The 4 cars of a 4BIG unit comprised a DTCsoL (Driving Trailer Composite semi open Lavatory) driving trailer, an MBSO (Motor Brake Standard Open), a TRSB (Trailer Restaurant Standard Buffet) and another DTCsoL at the other end. The MBSO had 4 250hp EE507 traction motors powered by 750v dc electricity collected from the third rail. Maximum speed was 90mph and seating capacity for the unit was about 200.

69310 spent most of its working life between London and Brighton, but we haven't been able to discover its detailed operational history. We know that unit 7040 was subsequently renumbered 2105 after a facelift, and then 2255. It may also have been 1290. We think the final operator was South West Trains, from whom it was withdrawn in 1999. If anyone can fill any of the gaps in our knowledge, please get in touch with the DRSA.

In 1992 it was semi-permanently coupled with 4CIG unit 1801 to become 8DIG unit 2003, one of 4 such units which ran until 1996 as the Capital-Coast Express between London Victoria and Brighton. The 8DIGs' TOPS classification was 422/0.



8DIG unit 2003 leaving East Croydon on 18th April 1996. A 4CIG has been attached to the front (i.e. right) to form a 12 car train. 69310 is the third carriage from the left. Photo by John Lewis.

Other ex 4BIG/4CIG vehicles in the Dartmoor Railway fleet are 69332 (TRSB from unit 7051), 76747 (DTCsoL from unit 7397) and 62385 (MBSO from unit 7397)