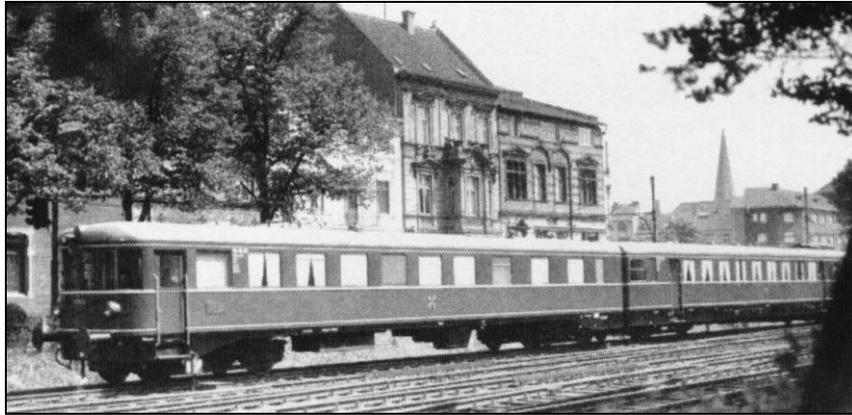


# COLD WAR RAILCAR

## PRESERVATION OF THE C-in-C BAOR'S TRAIN



- From 1953 to 1976 the Commander-in-Chief of BAOR and of the Northern Army Group in Germany had a train to tour his Command, often with visiting dignitaries such as the Duke of Edinburgh. This took the form of a two coach railcar unit shown above in Bonn when new.<sup>1</sup>
- Trains for the use of army commanders have been a feature of most wars in which the British have fought since the Sudan War. This is the only one which has survived.
- Since it became available, BORHT has campaigned for its preservation. Continental groups have looked at it, but have dropped out accepting that it should be preserved by a British organisation. The owners have reserved it for the proposed Military Railway Museum in Britain.
- Our immediate aim is to raise money to move it into temporary covered accommodation at Bicester, with the long term aim of the Military Railway Museum restoring it to running order.



Maldegem, 1 March 2010 (Photos: JJR & PEW)

<sup>1</sup> Photo: Carl Bellingrodt, The McNaughton Report.

## **THE COMMAND TRAIN OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BAOR**

**by Dr Paul E Waters**

From the time of Lord Kitchener's reoccupation of the Sudan, a feature of most British campaigns has been the Command Train. That for Field Marshal Haig in World War 1 is described in the previous article. With the exception of the "Kitchener Coach", which is unlikely to have seen service as part of a command train<sup>2</sup>, only the last of these trains survives. Its withdrawal in 1976 marked the end of an era in army transportation.

The Commander-in-Chief of the British Army of the Rhine/Commander Northern Army Group had from 1953 to 1976 a two-coach diesel-hydraulic railcar unit in which to tour his Command.

This unit consists of two bogie coaches, one a power car and the other a driving trailer. Both coaches contain living accommodation. The body shells appear to be all steel with auxiliary wooden framing where needed to fasten equipment and interior panelling. Both vehicles have non-retention toilets. Both are fitted for 220/240 volt from an external supply.

Both cars were painted in Royal Engineers blue with the BAOR crossed swords symbol painted half way along each car. The lower body sides were black to disguise the non matching construction of the two cars. Latterly the RCT badge was painted on the sides at the driving cab ends.

The power car has a full width driving cab at the end containing the power bogie and a half cab at the other end next to a corridor connection. So this vehicle could be operated independently of its driving trailer. It has a 68 litre vertical 6 cylinder MAN diesel engine driving through a Voith hydraulic transmission, all mounted on a 4-wheeled bogie. The accommodation in this car includes a kitchen and dining room. The weight of this car is variously given as 48.6 or 52.6 tons and it had a 110 volt power system from an engine driven generator.

The driving trailer contains living accommodation of a somewhat higher standard than the power car including a full bathroom and a, what is for a rail vehicle, large single bedroom for the C-in-C. It has a full width driving cab at one end and a corridor connection to the power car at the other end. There is a large saloon compartment behind the driving cab. This vehicle has a MaK rebuilding plate, No 19 of 1953. It weighs 28 tons and has a 24 volt electrical system from an axle powered generator and batteries.

The vehicles from which these two cars have been built probably date from 1935. There are a number of conflicting accounts of the use to which they were put during World War 2. Much of the confusion has probably arisen because writers are not usually aware that the train has had two different power cars. As these accounts have not been verified they are not discussed in this article<sup>3</sup>.

The rather complicated history of this train in BAOR

service is summarised in the table.

In 1952, a trailer car was extensively remodelled by MaK (rebuild number 19) for use by BAOR, entering service in 1953, with DB VT36 513 as its power car and numbered VS 3626. It is said that this was ex-Lithuanian car no 201 (MAN 1935), but a photograph of this car in 1953, fig. 11 of Löttgers (1990), shows a body of similar layout but of apparently different construction to that of a Lithuanian car shown in his fig. 7. Shortly after this the trailer was again rebuilt with changes to the interior and the fitting of a corridor connection to the power car.

In 1956 VT36 513 was returned to DB and BAOR's VT40 3628 (ex-Lithuanian A24, MAN of 1935) substituted in a further major rebuild of the unit, this time by Talbot<sup>4</sup> to become DB nos. VT36 3628 and VS 3626. VT40 3628 had been remodelled at the MaK works in 1953. It was given MaK rebuild number 20 and allocated to BAOR<sup>5</sup>. Its body was used by Talbot to build, in effect, a new car. Its two 210 hp motor bogies with mechanical transmission were removed and replaced by a single motor bogie with a 360 hp MAN W6V engine<sup>6</sup> and Voith hydraulic transmission<sup>7</sup> dating from 1937 and 1939 respectively. This necessitated lengthening the body near one end by some 2 m to accommodate the longer power bogie. Removal of the second power unit enabled the engine compartment/cab at the other end to be replaced with a rear vestibule with a standard UIC corridor connection, a smaller driving cab and a toilet. However, the reduced power reduced the top speed from 110 to 100 km/h. Although there is a Northag diagram for this unit dated 25 Oct 1955<sup>8</sup>, most accounts give 1958 for the completion of this rebuild.

When this unit first entered service with BAOR, it was operated by the Royal Engineers and then by 79 Railway Squadron of the Royal Corps of Transport after the RCT was formed in 1965. It seems to have been based at Rheydt throughout its life with BAOR. It was, certainly latterly, maintained by DB<sup>9</sup> and driven by a DB driver. On at least one occasion, when the C-in-C visited the Oberammagau Festival, DB provided it with a third vehicle with retention toilets.

During its time with BAOR, it carried many VIP's including H.R.H. Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. It was due to Prince Philip that the unit was finally withdrawn from service. When on a tour of BAOR he was due to transfer from the railcar to a helicopter which was grounded by bad weather and so he suggested continuing his tour by rail. This entailed taking the railcar out unscheduled and at short notice onto a mainline where its top speed of 100 km/h was an embarrassment.

So it was withdrawn from service in September 1976 and

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<sup>4</sup> Talbot did a lot of work for BAOR about this time refitting coaches etc.

<sup>5</sup> It is probably the adjacent rebuild numbers that have led to the belief that the two cars were together from 1953.

<sup>6</sup> The 68 litre engine presently fitted is by MAN of Augsburg, model W6V22/30, 360 hp at 870 revs/m, No 27683-27668, of 1937. See RG Diesel Railway Traction 1937 for details of this type of engine.

<sup>7</sup> The transmission is a twin torque converter unit by Voith, no 361 of 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Possibly dating from the proposal stage.

<sup>9</sup> Unusually for an Army owned vehicle, which would normally have been maintained by the RE or later by REME as, for example, were the dining cars for the Berliner.

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<sup>2</sup> This is at present being investigated by JJR and PEW and the justification for this statement will be published soon.

<sup>3</sup> A fuller report giving a best guess history of the cars before 1951, together with a more detailed description of their present condition is available from BORHT's Registered Office.

sold by BAOR to Mr De Lille of Maldegem in Belgium on 16th November 1978. The unit was delivered by rail to Maldegem, at a time when there was still a rail connection to the yard of Mr De Lille's crane business, Sobemai. At sometime Mr De Lille bought a spare engine which is in Sobemai's shed at Maldegem.

Mr De Lille died some four years ago and his collection of old machinery, which includes steam locomotives, stationary and portable engines, cranes, fire engines and road vehicles and much more, is at present owned and administered by his five children, with Mr Kilian De Lille taking main responsibility for the collection.

The De Lille family's intention is to lease the items from their father's collection to museums or other similar organisations, on a long term or indefinite lease for a nominal administrative fee, in exchange for the restoration, conservation and display of the item. The De Lilles will retain the right to relocate an item should the leasing organisation become unable to fulfil the conditions of the lease.

Inspection of these two vehicles on 1 March 2010 showed that although they are in poor condition, they are largely complete and not yet beyond saving, although a full

restoration is now likely to be expensive. It is technically feasible to restore the unit to running order.

Information was supplied by Major John Poyntz and Roger Aston, both ex-RCT, David G Carpenter of the World War 2 Railway Study Group, Brian Garvin of LCGB and Ingo Hütter. My thanks go to Edwin Lambert & Rabbi Dr Walter Rothschild for translating German articles; in particular to Rabbi Rothschild for the article by Löttgers (1990).

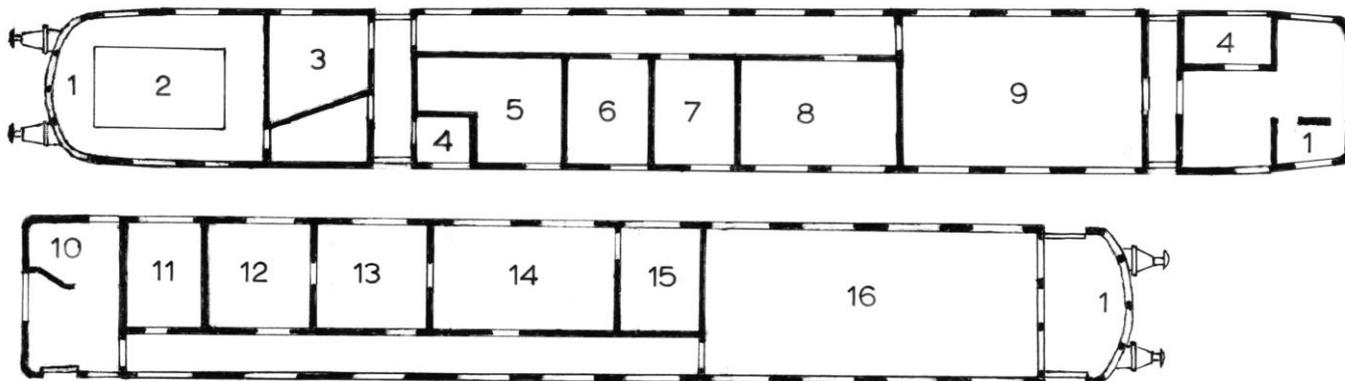
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**C-IN-C BAOR'S COMMAND TRAIN HISTORY**

Date	Power Car VT40/36 3628	Trailer VS 3626	Power Car VT36 513
?/02/51			Entered service with BAOR after rebuild by MAK
23/07/53	Entered service with BAOR after rebuild by MAK as VT40 3628 with original two 210 hp DM power bogies		
?/53		Entered service with BAOR after rebuild by MAK paired with VT36 513	Re-entered service with BAOR after 2nd rebuild by MAK, paired with VS 3626
07/02/56			Returned to DB
?/58 *	Re-entered service with BAOR after rebuild by Talbot, the lengthened power car becoming VT36 3628 with one 360 hp DH power bogie		
15/07/1965	<i>Change-over from RE to RCT</i>		
?/09/76	Withdrawn		
16/11/78	Sold to Mr De Lille		

\* The exact date of this rebuild is uncertain, some sources give 1955 and there is a TN Branch, HQ Northag diagram dated 25 Oct 1955, which may then have been at the proposal stage only as the diagram is not accurate. The date of 1958 is from what seem to be the most reliable sources.

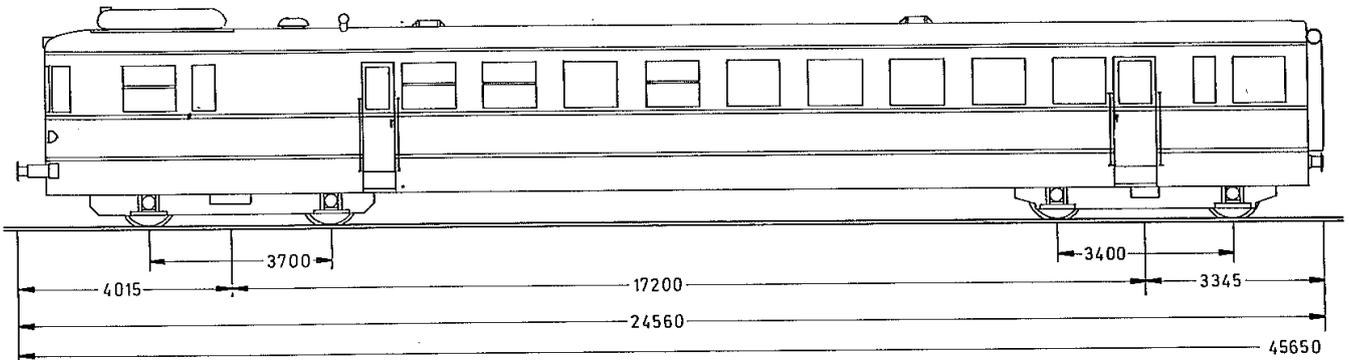


1	Driving Cab	7	Double Berth	13	Bathroom & W.C.
2	Engine	8	Four Berth	14	C-in-C Single Berth
3	Double Berth (Driver)	9	Dining Room	15	Strong Room
4	W.C.	10	Heater	16	Lounge
5	Kitchen	11	Double Berth		
6	Double Berth (Staff)	12	Single Berth		

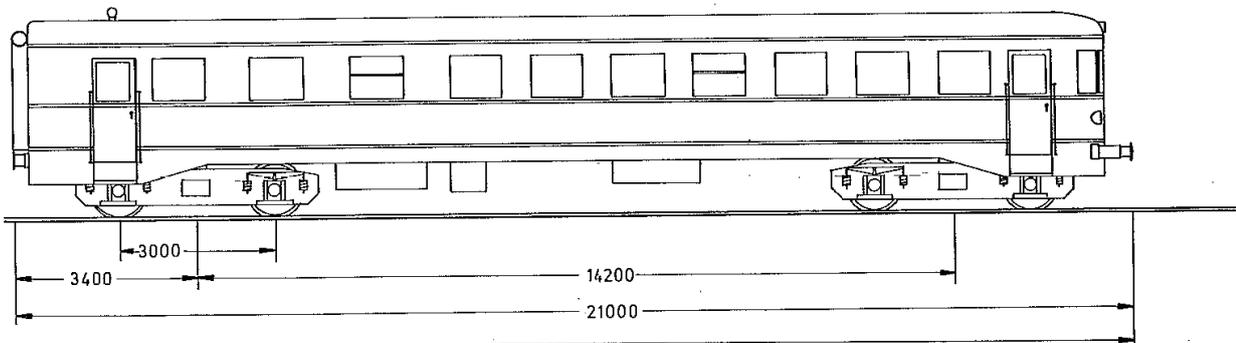
**Diagram of the Interior Layout, based on TN Branch, HQ Northag diagram dated 25 Oct 1955 with as-built corrections. (Not to scale)**



Maldegem, 1 March 2010 (Photos: PEW)



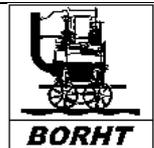
VT 36 3628



The weights and dimensions vary in different sources. This table shows the maximum values quoted.		Power Car	Trailer
	Height overall	3760	3475
	Width overall	3008	3000
	Weight	52.6 tonnes	28 tonnes

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