



The 50' Main Line cars built 1909-1922 to BP4271.

John Agnew shares the history of the first "Mainline Cars".

The opening of the NIMT in 1908 saw a new longer / wider, more luxurious type of car, now classified AA, and built to BP4440 etc. introduced for North Island services. These will be described in a later edition. Some of the improvements made on these cars were thus introduced on a series of 158 "Main Line" cars to BP4271 built for both islands between 1909 and 1921. These cars were now 50' long, and with wider windows like the AA cars, but retained the then normal 7' 10" width. All had centre lavatories and open end platforms. Three of the cars, A142C, & A524C built at Addington, and A331A built at Newmarket, all in 1909, had unique curved elliptical mouldings (Ellipses) fitted over the windows – see the following photos for more detail of this feature.

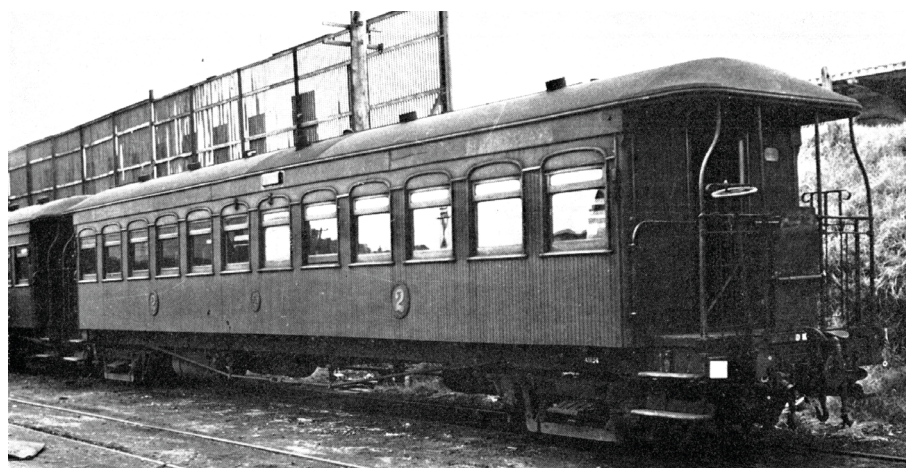
The first class cars had chair seats, while second class cars initially had longitudinal bench seating, later replaced by low backed "Addington" chairs, and from 1931 on with "Scarrett" standard seating. These were developed from chairs with both moveable seats and "Throw-Over" backs. Arm and footrests gave the second class passengers additional comfort for longer journeys. All had centre toilets. First class cars seated 31 or 33 passengers, Seconds seated 37, and Composites seated 14 or 15 in first and 20 in second class. End seats in each compartment had fixed backs, while the rest were reversible, with double seats on one side of the aisle and single seats on the other.

Standard bogies BP4274 and gas lighting initially gave an unladen weight of 18-19

tons. Later changes to electric lighting and seating increased this to 20-21 tons. Many cars survived for 50 years or longer, with cars in suburban services often having their lavatories removed, leaving a single long compartment with Scarrett or Multiple Unit type seating. By 1974 a few only remained in service, and today some of the more notable ones can be found on the restored "Kingston Flyer" and Glenbrook Vintage Railway.

Acknowledgements

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Top: BP4271 car A142 or A524 was seen in Timaru yard alongside Us281 on the north express circa 1909. Note the ellipses mouldings and the 'Fairlie Flyer' in dock
South Canterbury Historical Society

Left: A331 was seen at Auckland sometime in the 1950's. Built to BP4271 at Newmarket in April 1909 it still retains its ellipse mouldings over forty years later.
J D Mahoney

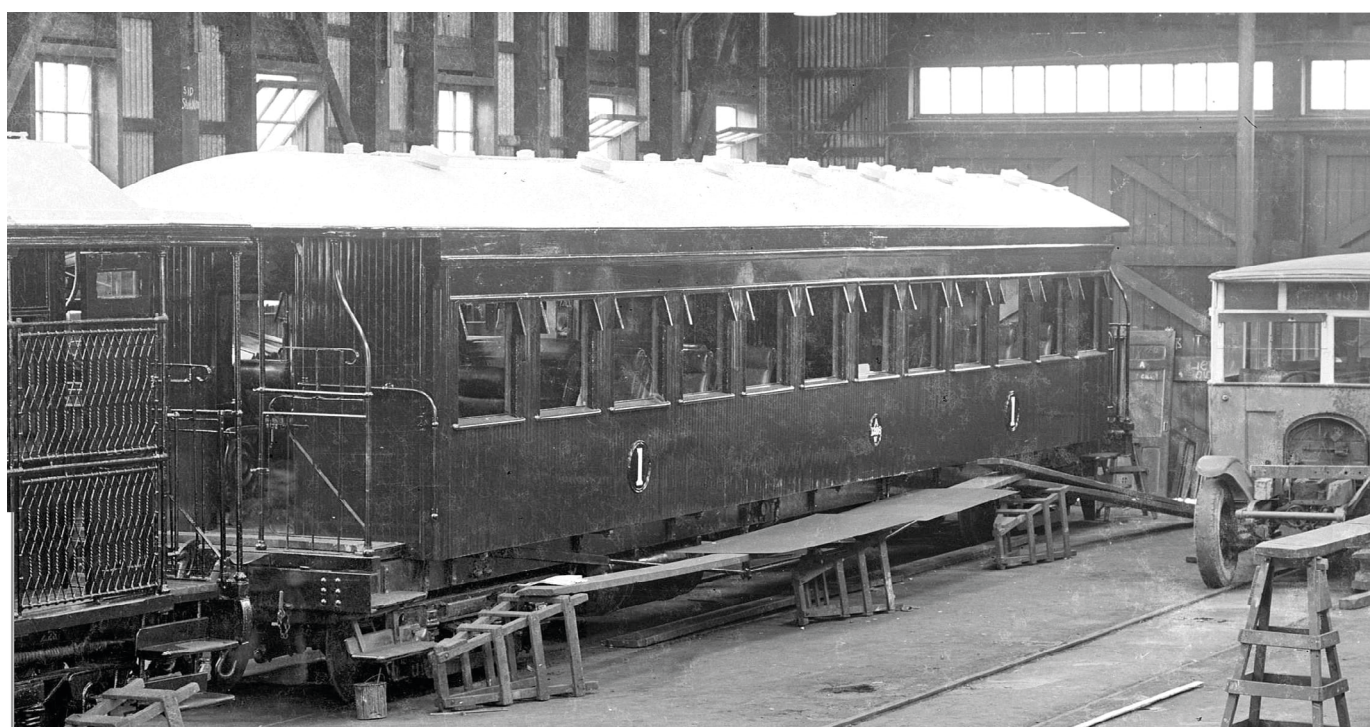


Top: A 331 is seen directly behind Ww 639 near Kingsland 1922 doing exactly what it was designed for, local passenger services. Built as a second class composite car, and one of three built with the distinctive ellipses.
W.W. Stewart

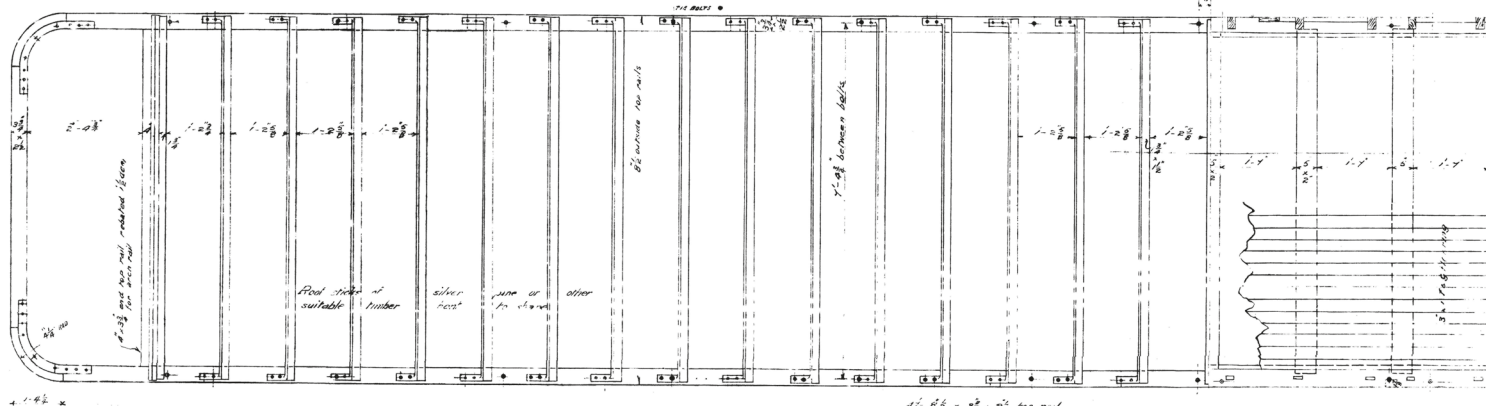
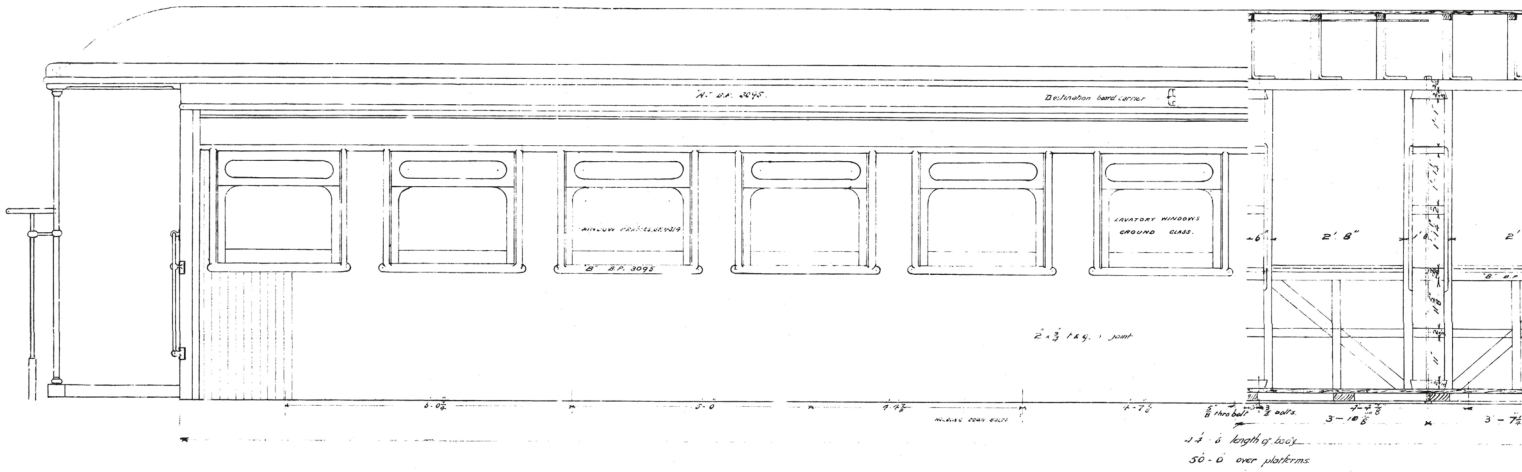
Right: Impressions of the ellipse mouldings were still visible on A 142, a car in private hands at Waipiata, August 2011.
B. Pearson



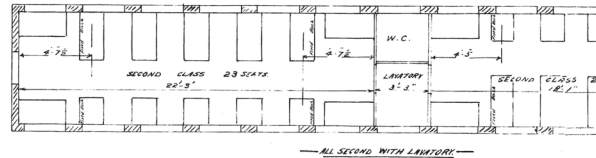
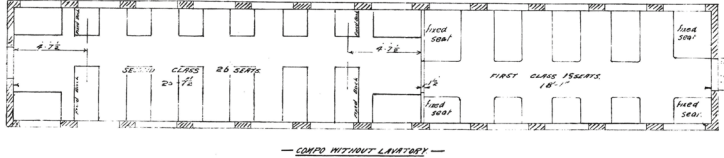
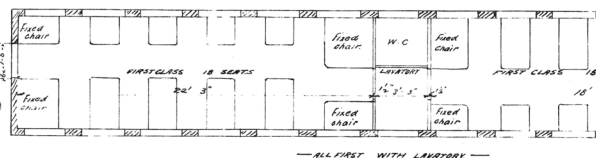
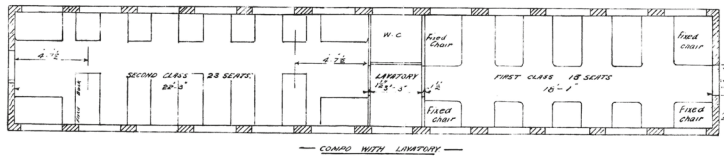
Below: A 1208 seen undergoing maintenance at Petone Workshops c1928, possibly when it was fitted with electric lighting. Note the brackets for the fold out toplights, a feature that was eventually discontinued.
A.P. Godber - Alexander Turnbull Library



NATURE OF ALTERATIONS DATE.
 ARRANGEMENT OF W.I. ROOF STAYS 18-10-09
 END FINISHING
 CURVED ROOF OVER WINDOWS OUTSIDE REMOVED 18-10-09
 SEATING PLAN SECOND CLASS CHAIRS 27. 8. 12
 SIDE WALL ROOF & FINISHING 30. 11. 12



PLAN OF ROOF FRAMING
 Corner and door posts of chairs, side end and top rails and platform framing to be of hard wood (Karrabi).



SECTION PLANS OF SEATING ACCOMMODATION
 ALL SHOWING RELATIVE POSITIONS OF W.C. AND BRASS SCREEN



Left: Details of the electrical equipment on A 1164 showing both the switch gear and a battery box.
 Photographer unknown

Right: A 1413 was seen at Auckland with a new black roof fresh from overhaul at Otahuhu June 1953.
 Les Downey