

D56 (45137) 'The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment (T.A.).

D56 was built at Crewe Works in 1962 as one of the final batch of Class 45s ordered. It was delivered new to Cricklewood depot and selected to receive the name 'The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment (T.A.)'. The naming ceremony took place at Bedford Midland station on 8th December 1962, with Brigadier G.W.H Peters, the Honorary Colonel of the regiment, unveiling the nameplate.



The following extract is from the regimental journal, 'The Wasp and the Eagle' Vol. 2 No.1, June 1963, which describes the naming of the locomotive. I particularly like the quote that the locomotive was 'up-to-date, versatile and speedy...!'

On December 8, 1962, British Railways, London Midland Region, named one of their newest and most powerful diesel locomotives "The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment (T.A.)" at Bedford Station—unfortunately on another very wet day. The engine, No. D 56, in green livery, was built at Crewe and was handed over by Mr. W. O. Reynolds, the Divisional Manager, in the presence of the Vice-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, the Mayor of Bedford and a Guard of Honour mounted by the Battalion. The Honorary Colonel, Brigadier G. W. H. Peters, received the locomotive on behalf of The Regiment and carried out the unveiling ceremony of the Regimental Nameplate and Badge. Replying to Mr. Reynold's address, the Honorary Colonel said that the locomotive was "up-to-date, versatile and speedy; qualities needed in the new Regiment and the modern Army of today." A blessing was given by the Regimental Chaplain, the Rev. J. E. Bowers, Vicar of St. Peter's, Loughborough. Watching the ceremony were many Old Comrades and, in particular, Mr. P. W. Pegg, of Kempston, a former member of The Regiment who had for many years driven the old steam locomotive named after The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment (16th Foot) in 1938. Before the ceremony, officers were entertained to luncheon at The Bridge Hotel, and after the ceremony all ranks on parade were entertained to tea. The locomotive now hauls main lines expresses from St. Pancras to the North of England and averages 500 miles daily.



These two photos show the naming ceremony, with Brigadier Peters unveiling the nameplate. Also in the photos are The Mayor of Bedford, Mr W.O. Reynolds (British Railways), the Rev. J. E. Bowers and the Vice-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Lt.-Col. The Hon. Morgan Grenville.



The loco was converted to provide Electric Train Heating (ETH) in 1973 to become Class 45/1 No.45137 and managed to retain both nameplates and crests right up until March 1986, when they were removed by Toton depot for 'safekeeping'. 45137 worked two notable 'last' services – the final locomotive hauled 'Master Cutler' from Sheffield to St Pancras, complete with headboard, on 1st October 1982 and the last 'official' Class 45 hauled train out of St Pancras – the 16:20 St Pancras – Derby on Sunday 10th May 1987. The loco was withdrawn from service on 15th June 1987 due to a cracked engine block and was then stored at March Depot until being sold for scrap to MC Metals. It made the final journey to Glasgow in February 1994 and was scrapped by the first week in March.

It is not clear what happened to the nameplates after removal from the loco. All that is known is that The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment museum purchased a nameplate (minus crest) at auction on 20/09/90 and for many years this was on display at the Wardown Park Museum in Luton. However, the museum closed in early 2016 for refurbishment and on making enquiries about the plate the author was told they were 'unable to locate it!' Hopefully it re-surfaced when the museum re-opened its doors in Spring 2017.

