

Diesel Electric Engine No.51-"Sir Alexander"

Made in Australia and imported into Hong Kong in 1955, locomotives Nos. 51 and 52 were the first two diesel electric engines ever to run on Hong Kong's rails. They also became the first locomotives in Hong Kong to be named after people when, on 5 September 1955 at the grand naming ceremony held at the Tsim Sha Tsui railway station, they were officially christened "Sir Alexander" and "Lady Maurine" after the then governor and his wife, Sir Grantham and Lady Maurine.



Diesel electric engine No. 51. This photo was taken in 1950s.

1993.57.217

Locomotive No. 51 went on to pull passenger trains for the next 28 years, serving gallantly until 1983 when the passenger service of the Kowloon-Canton Railway switched to full electrification. It then began shunting maintenance coaches and hauling freight trains between China and Hong Kong until 1997 when it was completely phased out of service. After being restored, No. 51 was donated to the Hong Kong Railway Museum by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation in 2004 for its permanent collection and exhibition.

During its 40 years of steadfast service, a number of accessories were added to No. 51, including body railings, signalling system and space for a diesel generator to power the air -conditioning system, which have been kept to illustrate how the locomotive adapted to continue working for Hong Kong amid all the changes that the railways underwent.



Diesel electric engine No. 51 running on the tracks. These photos were taken in 1950s.

1998.109.6 (left) / 1993.57.216 (right)

The Era of the Electric Railway Begins

Unlike that of a steam locomotive, the engine of a diesel electric locomotive could be left at idle speed when the train was not in motion. This meant a great deal of fuel could be saved. For a return trip from Tsim Sha Tsui to Lo Wu, a steam locomotive would use 180 to 230 gallons of fuel oil or one and a half tonnes of coal, but for the same journey a diesel electric locomotive needed just 44 gallons of diesel and only had to be refuelled twice a week. Diesel electric locomotives were therefore popular on railways because of the fuel savings and the reduction in operating costs they provided.

In addition, two diesel electric locomotives could be coupled together to generate more power and haul a larger number of coaches or heavier goods. Diesel electric locomotives were so powerful that even after full electrification of the railway they continued to be used to haul freight trains and maintenance coaches.

Diesel electric locomotives were introduced by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation in 1955, and by 1976 the number in operation had increased to 12.

How a diesel electric locomotive is operated

A diesel electric locomotive is operated by a driver and an assistant driver. The duty of the driver is to operate the locomotive, while the assistant driver is responsible for helping the driver conduct a full inspection of the train. Together, they check that the loco has enough diesel, engine oil and water, that underneath the train is free of any obstacles such as pieces of sharp wood, that the toolbox is fully equipped, and so on. When everything is ready, the train driver will start the engine by pressing the necessary buttons inside the driving cab. While the train is in motion, one driver will sit on the left side of the cab and the other on the right, so that together they have a

clear view of the track and the signals ahead.



Major parts inside the driving cab

