

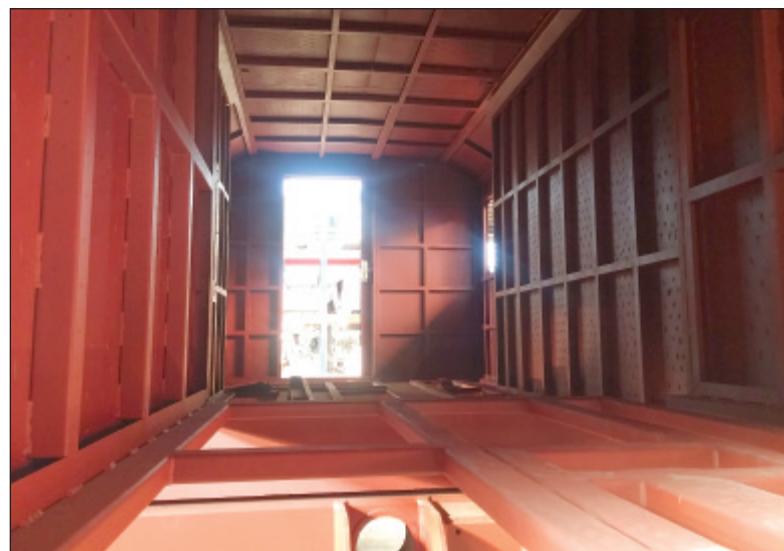
Network Rail's new high output ballast cleaning system for the UK - update

Plasser UK's Mark Simmons reports on the latest progress with the system's different elements and machines.

 2016 has begun. The year in which HOBCS5 will be completely delivered! Another year, another visit to Linz, Austria, to review progress on the project - and another phone call from *Rail Infrastructure* just before I left to remind me that the most important reason for visiting the production halls was to update the magazine's readers on the progress!

In Issue No: 108, I promised photographs of bare metal inner structures of tampers and power wagons. It is not always easy to find an angle and location from which to obtain a reasonable photograph, and so it proved with the RM 900. It is so large and there is so much final assembly taking place that it is simply not practical to photograph it in any meaningful way. Of course, my camera is filled with photographs from every angle, but they are of very specific individual areas or items. So, instead, I thought its painted state might provide a good background contrast to the bare metal and primer tones of the power wagon pictured below and at the bottom of this page.

Also in metal and primer (right and below right) you can see the first 09 tamper - the 09-3X dynamic - in the assembly hall 





Photograph: Helmut Öttl.

of Works 1 in Linz. The main frame, the satellite frame and the trailer frame were all next to each other and the cabins had been installed.

Shortly after taking the photographs, we had a very successful joint meeting with the assembly team, the chief designer, the safety expert and Plasser UK's own staff. This started the assembly process on the right track with a clear joint approach and team spirit.

MFS deliveries start

Of course, progress continues with the assembly of the MFS wagons and in fact, shortly before preparing this article, I received the news that the first 12 MFSs, pictured above and right leaving Linz, had reached Calais and were waiting their turn to travel through the Channel Tunnel. They then head to Carlisle to await the remaining machines of the system which arrive later this year. The full system will finally be brought together at Network Rail's RIDC Tuxford facility for UK commissioning.



Photograph: Helmut Öttl.