

RAILWAYS ROUND THE CLOCK

Steam locomotives at work by day and by night with goods and passenger trains on various regions of British Railways.

SIDE ONE

Band One

Afternoon at Gresford, on the Chester–Shrewsbury line, in May 1964.

The Chester–Shrewsbury line climbs on a continuous gradient of 1 in 82½ for 3½ miles from Rossett to Wheatsheaf Junction, Wrexham. Roughly midway between Rossett and Wheatsheaf Junction at Gresford a wooded hillside rises steeply above the line towards the village and on the opposite side of the line there is an equally steep drop down to the River Alun.

Boys on the way from school play near the line on the site of the now demolished Gresford Hall. In the distance and at first out of sight beyond a curve a heavy goods train, headed by an ex-GWR '2800' class 2-8-0, is approaching on the climb from Rossett.

No. 2896 whistles a warning, approaches round the curve, heads the train past at eye level and climbs away, around another curve, on the continuing 1 in 82½ gradient towards Gresford Colliery and Wheatsheaf Junction.

Band Two

Years later, on an afternoon in April 1975, steam power returned to Gresford after a long absence.

Photographers and spectators, out in force, wait by the lineside at Gresford on Saturday, 26 April to see the magnificently preserved locomotives *King George V* and *Clan Line* on their return journey from Chester with two special trains, the 'Return to Steam Railtour No. 3' and the 'Mayflower'.

Ex-GWR '600' class 4-6-0 No. 6000 *King George V* heads the first of the special trains. Heard from a point nearer to Gresford Colliery high above the line and the opposite side to the 1964 location, the 'King' whistles past the site of Gresford Hall, then whistling again heads the train past below and takes it away round a curve past Gresford Colliery and into the distance on the continuing climb towards Wrexham, Shrewsbury and Hereford.

A while later the second of the special train approaches, headed by the ex-SR 'Merchant Navy' class rebuilt 'Pacific' No. 35028, apparently with plenty of steam to spare. *Clan Line* heads the train past below and climbs into the distance, whistling away towards Wrexham.

Band Three

Late afternoon at Templecombe, which in August 1960 was still an important junction station on the SR West of England main line and the Somerset and Dorset Joint line.

A '2P' class 4-4-0, No. 40564, heads a train of empty coaches from the S & D line past and away down the yard.

An ex-SR 'Schools' class single-chimney 4-4-0, No. 30910 *Merchant Taylors*, starts out from the station, heads past and away up the 1 in 100 gradient with a late-afternoon passenger train for Exeter and the west.

In the distance an ex-GWR Pannier Tank engine is at work at the far end of the yard where the evening shunting operations have now begun. A lineside telephone bell rings nearby. The buffers of loose shunted trucks clash and clang and a 'Standard Class 5' 4-6-0, No. 73047, approaches with a train of trucks from the S & D, brings them slowly past and comes to a stop in the yard.

Band Four

Late evening on the Settle–Carlisle line at Ribbleshead in November 1961.

A strong wind saturated with chilling drizzle blows down from Blea Moor across the valley and gusts around the buildings of Ribbleshead Station where, on the up platform, two flickering oil lamps are still burning.

The last passenger train of the day, the Carlisle–Bradford stopping train, is now approaching the station, coasting down the 1 in 100 gradient over Batty Moss Viaduct, which spans the valley.

The train, headed by a Stanier 'Black Five' 4-6-0, slows to a stop at the up platform, waits briefly, then moves off down the 1 in 176, 1 in 100 gradient towards Settle. Bells ring in the signal box as the train goes away with the wind and, from the yard outside the now darkened station, a railwayman sets off for home on his motorcycle.

Sometime later a northbound goods train headed by another Stanier 'Black Five', approaching on the long climb from Settle, comes up towards Ribbleshead against the now near gale force wind.

The strong exhaust beat of the 4-6-0 quickens somewhat on the short stretch of slightly easier 1 in 176 gradient through the station.

Beyond the shelter of the station the train meets the full force of the wind and the sounds of the hard-working engine, echoing from the high fells, are carried back on the wind as the train climbs away on the 1 in 100 gradient across the viaduct into the distance.

Somewhere around the station a telephone bell rings unheeded while, in the far distance, the engine, now beyond the end of the viaduct, suddenly slips, then regaining adhesion heads the train into a rock cutting towards Blea Moor Tunnel, which takes the line, now more than 1,100ft above sea level, under the 1,750ft high crag of Blea Moor.

SIDE TWO

Band One

Night on the East Coast main line at Barkston Junction in June 1961.

From the far distance the sound of a chime whistle comes out of the stillness of a fitfully moonlit midsummer night as, sometime after 1 o'clock, an overnight express from the north approaches from the direction of Newark. An unidentified 'A4' class 'Pacific' heads the train past and speeds away up the 1 in 200 gradient towards Peasecliffe Tunnel and Grantham.

In the distance a goods train rumbles along the Bottesford–Lincoln line and passes under the main line as a northbound fitted freight train, headed by an unidentified 'A1' class 'Pacific', approaches from Peasecliffe Tunnel, rushes past and away down the gradient towards Newark, running smoothly over the welded rails with which the down line is laid.

A double-chimney 'A3' class 'Pacific', No. 60088 *Book Law*, approaching on the 1 in 200 rising gradient from Newark with a southbound fitted freight train, roars past and away, under bridges and through a shallow cutting, towards Peasecliffe Tunnel.

When the up line is clear an unidentified 'K2' class 2-6-0 climbs up the gradient from the Lincoln line, joins the main line and heads past and away into the distance with a train of empty iron ore wagons bound for Grantham.

Band Two

Mono recording, electronically reprocessed to give stereo effect on stereo equipment.

In the early hours of the morning on the footplate of a 'Britannia' class 'Pacific' at the head of the overnight London–Stranraer express.

Sometime before sunrise, on a damp and windy June morning in 1966, the 'Paddy' boat train is ready to leave Ayr Station for the last lap of the journey. A pilot engine, Stanier 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 45463, has been attached, ahead of the 'Britannia', to give assistance with the 370-ton train on the steeply graded line to Stranraer.

On the footplate of the 'Britannia', No. 70016 *Ariel*, the fireman is busy with his shovel building up the fire for the demanding journey ahead.

Ariel 'whistles up' and the regulator is opened cautiously, but the engine slips a little as the train begins to move. The conversation of the inspector and driver is soon drowned by the increasing metallic racket on the footplate as the train climbs away from Ayr on the 1 in 170, 1 in 88, 1 in 70 gradients towards Dalrymple Junction. All conversation ends abruptly as the engine shudders, losing adhesion on the damp rails.

During the four-mile climb from Girvan, now on single track, *Ariel* slips again several times. Each time the regulator is quickly and briefly closed, then eased open again, while ahead the pilot engine plods on up the 1 in 54, 1 in 56 gradients, under bridges and through cuttings, towards Pinmore Summit.

At Pinmore Summit the 'Britannia' whistles, then dives into Pinmore Tunnel. Inside the smoke-filled tunnel the engine is eased on the now falling gradients. Both engines whistle as they burst out from the tunnel, then coast down towards Pinmore Station where the signalman will be waiting to exchange the single line token.

Finally, with gentle applications of the brakes, *Ariel*, now without the pilot engine, brings the train to a stop at Stranraer Harbour. Time now for the crew to have a well-earned cup of tea.

Band Three

Dawn on a May morning in 1960 on the moors at Scout Green, some two miles from Shap Summit.

Lapwings wheel and cry overhead and curlews call across the moors as a northbound goods train approaches on the 1 in 75 climb from Tebay.

The train, headed by an '8F' class 2-8-0 No. 48435 with a 2-6-4 Tank engine No. 42396 giving banking assistance at the rear, rumbles past and away into the distance on the continuing 1 in 75 climb towards Shap Summit.

Sometime later a banking engine, 2-6-4T No. 42403, running light from Shap Summit, coasts past down the gradient while a 'Coronation' class 'Pacific' climbs up from Tebay with a Glasgow-bound sleeping car express.

The rapid exhaust of the double-chimney 'Pacific' seems almost effortless, even after two miles at 1 in 75, as No. 46247 *City of Liverpool* heads the train past and away, making light work of the climb to Shap Summit, while the cows at a nearby farm give notice that it is time for their morning milking.