

STEAM THROUGH ALL SEASONS

Steam locomotives at work, at various locations on British Railways between 1959 and 1964 and on railways in Germany, Italy and Romania, in the spring, summer, autumn and winter.

SIDE ONE

Band One

Spring morning on the Carlisle–Edinburgh line, the one-time ‘Waverley’ route, in 1961.

At 5.50 on an April morning, birds call from the surrounding trees and moors and a slight breeze hums through the telegraph wires, beside the line near Steele Road Station. In the distance, out of sight beyond the station, the London, St Pancras–Edinburgh, Waverley sleeping car express is approaching on the continuous 1 in 75 climb from Newcastleton, 4½ miles away.

No. 60159 *Bonnie Dundee*, an ‘A1’ class ‘Pacific’, heads through the deserted little station and into the open, bringing the train past and away out of sight round a curve behind a hill on the continuing 1 in 75 climb towards Riccarton Junction and Whitrope Summit, which is 5½ miles away to the north and more than 1,000ft above sea level.

Just after sunrise on a May morning in the woods surrounding Stobs Station, through which the line climbs on gradients of 1 in 80 and 1 in 65 from Hawick towards Whitrope Summit.

The woods high above the line are filled with spring birdsong through which the sounds of a train approaching but not yet in sight are fitfully heard. Soon the unmistakable exhaust beat of a ‘V2’ class 2-6-2 becomes rapidly louder as the engine swings round a curve over a bridge and into the woods through which No. 60937 blasts past Stobs Station far below, then heads the rumbling train into a deep cutting. The sounds of the train echo faintly back from the trees as it climbs away round a curve towards Whitrope Tunnel, which is 5½ miles away to the south.

Band Two

Summer at Bromsgrove and Princes Risborough.

On summer Saturdays at the peak of the holiday season, engines which were designed for freight traffic, such as the ‘9F’ class 2-10-0s, were sometimes used on passenger trains.

On a Saturday afternoon in August 1959, a ‘9F’ class 2-10-0, No. 92053, waits at the head of a Bristol–Newcastle passenger train in the South Yard at Bromsgrove, at the foot of the Lickey Incline.

Two ‘9400’ class 0-6-0 Pannier Tank engines, ready to give banking assistance on the climb ahead, whistle from the rear of the train and another engine of the same class, No. 8402 returning from Blackwell after banking duties, runs past towards the yard.

Signals clear nearby and No. 92053 whistles and heads the train out from the yard, past the walls of Bromsgrove Works and away through Bromsgrove Station, while No. 8406 and No. 8405 give sturdy assistance at the rear of the train. Bells in the signal box can be faintly heard nearby as the train climbs away, under a road bridge and into the distance, on the 1 in 37¾ gradient towards Blackwell.

On a Saturday in July 1959 on the GW & GC Joint line, to the north of Princes Risborough Station.

A ‘WD’ class 2-8-0, No. 90486, moves past with some wagons and takes them away towards the station. Then a ‘B1’ class 4-6-0, No. 61380, approaches on the 1 in 200 rising gradient from

Haddenham, heads past and whistles away through the station with a Saturday-only through train to the south coast.

A 2-6-2 Tank engine, No. 41270, approaches from the station and runs past to the sidings. Then No. 92092, an 'F' class 2-10-0, brings another Saturday-only holiday express up the gradient from Haddenham, past and away through the station. No. 41270 moves past again, back towards the station, as the '9F' climbs away into the distance, beyond the station and a road bridge, on the 1 in 167 gradient towards Saunderton Tunnel.

Band Three

Autumn night on the Hereford–Abergavenny line.

In the autumn of 1960 on a misty November night near Llanvihangel Station, which is at the summit of a 3-mile, 1 in 100 climb from Pandy for trains from Hereford and a 1 in 82, 1 in 95 climb in the opposite direction, from Abergavenny.

In the loop line at the station, a '4300' class 2-6-0, No. 5322, gently hissing steam, stands waiting with a southbound loose-coupled freight train while, in the distance, a southbound fitted freight train approaches on the long climb from Pandy.

No. 6834 *Dummer Grange*, a 'Grange' class 4-6-0, whistles under a road bridge, heads through the station where a signal arm changes position and, now over the summit, takes the fitted freight train away down the gradient towards Abergavenny.

When the southbound line is clear No. 5322 moves out from the loop line, whistles under the road bridge and stops to allow some loose-coupled wagon brakes to be pinned down in preparation for the downhill journey to Abergavenny.

Band Four

Winter on the 'Schiefe Ebene' in West Germany.

In the winter of 1973, on a freezing afternoon in January, snow lies in a forest clearing beside the line, roughly halfway up the 'Schiefe Ebene', the 8km, 1 in 40 climb from Neuenmarkt Wirsberg to Marktschorgast in West Germany.

The icy silence of the forest is broken by the voices of children plodding home from school through the snow and a distant whistle from a passenger train climbing through the forest from Neuenmarkt Wirsberg. A 2-10-0, No. 052-945, approaches round a curve, climbs steadily past, running smoothly over welded rails, and takes the train away, out of the forest, towards the summit at Marktschorgast while an intrusive aircraft drones away in the distance.

SIDE TWO

Band One

Spring evening on the Central Wales line.

A spring evening on the Central Wales line at Knucklas in May 1964, a few weeks before all the through passenger and freight services between Shrewsbury and Swansea, Victoria were withdrawn.

A freight train, approaching on the 1 in 60 gradient from Knighton, climbs past Knucklas Halt and round a curve, headed by an '8F' class 2-8-0, No. 48730, which takes the train past on the 75ft high Knucklas Viaduct and climbs away, against the wind, into the distance on the single line which, on a continuing 1 in 60 gradient, winds up the valley to Llangunllo Tunnel, nearly 1,000ft above sea level.

Band Two

In the summer of 1961, on the East Coast main line at Barkston Junction.

On a sultry afternoon in August a Leeds–London express, headed by an ‘A4’ class double-chimney ‘Pacific’, has been stopped by signals to the north of the junction. The signals change to ‘caution’ and No. 60028 *Walter K. Whigham* eases forward over the points, heads sedately past on the 1 in 200 rising gradient and, while wood pigeons softly call from nearby trees, climbs away through a cutting, under several bridges and whistles into Peascliffe Tunnel in the distance.

A ‘V2’ class 2-6-2, No. 60960, approaches through the cutting, rushes smoothly past over the welded rails of the down line and heads away, over the points, with the northbound ‘Scarborough Flyer’. Then, in the distance, a train on the Nottingham–Sleaford line passes under the main line, just as the first drops of rain fall from a long threatened thunderstorm.

Band Three

Autumn in the Italian Dolomites and in the Danube Valley in Romania.

Autumn in Northern Italy, 1,032 metres up in the Dolomites at Valdaora–Anterselva in October 1973.

Warning bells ring as level crossing barriers are lowered, none too soon, for the morning mail train which is climbing up the valley from Brunico.

No. 741-388, a curious-looking Crosti-boilered 2-8-0, brings the train to a stop in the station where, after a brief chat, the red-capped stationmaster strolls along the platform and raises his baton. The engine whistles, starts the train out from the station and vigorously accelerates to attack the long, curving climb away into the distance towards Dobbiaco.

Autumn in the Danube Valley in Romania on the Constanta–Tulcea line near the junction station of Medgidia on a frosty morning in November 1971.

Whistles and loudspeaker instructions are heard in the distance from the busy shunting yards on the main line. Then one of the few remaining Maffei ‘Pacific’ locomotives, making a cautious exit from the station, heads over the crossings and points to the Tulcea line with the morning ‘persoane’ passenger train from Constanta.

The ‘Pacific’, No. 231-086, accelerates past on an embankment above the surrounding marshes, climbs energetically away round a wide curve and whistles into the distance.

These trains were some of the last to be hauled by the famous Maffei ‘Pacifics’. The same engine and crew worked both the outward and return ‘persoane’ trains on the 4¾ hour journey to Tulcea where there was a 2½ hour wait before returning to Constanta. The trains called at most stations on the 179km single line, on which there are some severe gradients.

Band Four

Winter in the Chilterns, on the GW & GC Paddington–Birmingham line near Princes Risborough Station, on a snowy night in 1961.

On a cold, calm night in late December fresh snow has begun to fall, adding to that already lying after an earlier blizzard, and frozen points and signals are causing problems, in addition to those caused by poor visibility.

A down express from Paddington, approaching on the falling gradient from Saunderton, has almost come to a stop in the face of adverse signals. The 'King' class double-chimney 4-6-0 at the head of the train whistles, a signal changes and No. 6013 *King Henry VIII* whistles again and draws forward while, in the distance, an up express from Birmingham cautiously approaches Princes Risborough Station from the north. The AWS siren sounds in the engine's cab as No. 6013 moves slowly past the signals and, with all the sounds of wheels on rail muffled in the deep snow, heads the down express away under a road bridge towards the station.

The down express goes slowly away through the station on the platform line and pauses at the North Signal Box. Meanwhile the up express is cautiously approaching the station and other trains can be faintly heard, moving somewhere in the far distance.

Signal arms change position nearby, the signalman at the North Box verbally gives the down express a clear road and No. 6013 whistles and accelerates away into the distance, down the gradient towards Haddenham. Meanwhile the up express has also been given a clear road.

No. 6022 *King Edward III*, the double-chimney 'King' at the head of the up express, whistles in the distance, accelerates through the station, bursts out from under the road bridge and climbs past, through a cutting and away into the distance, on the 1 in 167 gradient towards Saunderton Tunnel. Then a power-assisted signal arm changes position nearby and, in the distance, a branch line train, which is moving towards the station through the gently falling snow, explodes a cautionary detonator.