

## THE RAILWAY TO RIC CARTON

Ex-LNER steam locomotives at work on the 'Waverley' route; between Steele Road and Riccarton Junction; at Stobs and at Hawick; in the spring of 1961.

On the section of the 'Waverley' route between Newcastleton and Hawick trains travelling northwards towards Edinburgh or southwards towards Carlisle are faced with a continuous climb of some ten miles to a summit at Whitrope, more than 1,000ft above sea level. For northbound trains there is an unbroken climb on a gradient of 1/75 for eight miles from one mile north of Newcastleton Station, past Steele Road Station, to about one mile north of Riccarton Junction.

For southbound trains the climb begins on a gradient of 1/75 from the platform end of Hawick, steepens briefly to 1/72, then continues on varying gradients, past Stobs and Shankend, to the southern end of Whitrope Tunnel.

At the southern end of Hawick Station there is a high viaduct over the River Teviot and from this the line climbs away towards Stobs on a high, curving embankment.

From Stobs Station, situated in a wooded valley four miles south of Hawick, the line climbs through a deep, curving cutting, then comes out into the open, backed by woods to the east of the line, for about ¼ mile before entering another cutting, which curves away towards Shankend.

Steele Road, a lonely cluster of tiny cottages lining the road below the station buildings, is situated some three miles inside the Scottish border and 4½ miles from Newcastleton, roughly midway on the continuous 1/75 climb towards Riccarton, 3½ miles to the north.

Riccarton Junction Station, once the junction for the branch line to Hexham, stands completely isolated, 850ft above sea level and accessible only by the railway, or by footpaths from the nearest roads, some two miles away across the open moorlands.

### SIDE ONE

#### Band One

The 'Waverley Express' leaving Hawick.

The 'Waverley' express from Edinburgh stands in Hawick Station on a blustery April morning, waiting to leave for Carlisle and London. An 'A3' class 'Pacific', No. 60043 *Brown Jack*, heads the train and a 'J36' class 0-6-0 No. 65330 is at the rear, ready to give banking assistance for the difficult start out of the station.

The engines whistle and start the train out from the platform. Although the 'A3' slips at times, the train soon gathers speed and, as it clears the viaduct, the banking engine drops back from the rear of the train and stops. While the 'A3' takes the express away up the 1/75, 1/72 gradient towards Stobs, the 'J36' moves back, running light through the station, towards the yard.

#### Band Two

An 'A3', a 'J36' and a 'V2' near Stobs.

On a May afternoon, between the two cuttings to the south of Stobs Station, sheep and lambs graze the moorland grass beside the line and birds call from the woods in the background as, out of sight beyond the cutting, an 'A3 Pacific' starts out from Stobs Station with an Edinburgh-Carlisle passenger train. Accelerating rapidly on the 1/65, 1/80 rising gradient, the 'A3', No. 60093 *Coronach*,

brings the train past, heading away under a footbridge and on into the cutting, which curves away towards Shankend.

A 'J36' class 0-6-0, running light, comes quietly up the gradient from Stobs Station, chugging past and away under the footbridge and into the cutting.

As a 'V2' class 2-6-0, No. 60827, brings a southbound freight train up the gradient from Stobs Station, the blast of the engine's exhaust is at first muffled in the deep cutting near the station, then raises echoes from the woods to the east of the line as the 'V2' climbs past, taking the train rumbling away through the cutting towards Shankend and Whitrope Tunnel, 5½ miles away.

#### Band Three

A 'V2' with a freight train at Steele Road.

On a May morning at Steele Road, a strong east wind blows across the line as a 'V2' class 2-6-2, No. 60842, heads out from behind the station buildings with a northbound freight train. The 'V2', powerfully attacking the 1/75 climb, takes the train clattering past, over the road bridge and away towards Riccarton Junction.

#### Band Four

A 'B1' with a freight train at Steele Road.

On a calm April evening at Steele Road a northbound freight train, away in the distance to the south, toils up the gradient from Newcastleton.

The train, as yet unseen, comes slowly but steadily on through the deserted little station and out over the road bridge. An aircraft flies somewhere over Kielder Forest, away in the background, as No. 61341, a 'B1' class 4-6-0, heads the train past to climb away, curving through cuttings at the foot of the 1,464ft high Arnton Fell and on over the high moorlands towards Riccarton Junction and Whitrope Tunnel.

### SIDE TWO

#### Band One

A 'V2' and a banking engine at Stobs Station.

At the edge of the woods, high above Stobs Station, rooks are flapping raucously overhead, shortly after dawn on a May morning. Down the line at Acreknow, just out of sight round a curve, a freight train has been stopped by signals on the climb from Hawick.

Whistling as the signals clear, the train engine and banking engine start the heavy train on the 1/80 rising gradient. 'V2' class 2-6-2 No. 60840 heads the train up the valley towards Stobs Station, sending a column of smoke and steam high in the air from behind the station buildings and above the cutting beyond as the banker, a 'Standard' class '2' 2-6-0, No. 78047, comes past at the rear of the train and in turn disappears behind the station, climbing away through the deep cutting on the curving 1/65, 1/80 gradients towards Shankend and Whitrope.

#### Band Two

A 'K3' with a freight train at Steele Road.

A strong, cold wind blows down from Whitrope, setting the telegraph wires humming beside the line at Steele Road, as a 'K3' class 2-6-0, No. 61952, climbs up from Newcastleton with a northbound

freight train from Carlisle. The 'K3' heads the train through the station and the wind carries back the sounds of the train as it climbs away, disappearing through the cuttings and round the curves on the 1/75 climb towards Riccarton Junction.

#### Band Three

An 'A3' leaves Steele Road with a passenger train.

On a May afternoon at Steele Road, a 'V2' heads a southbound freight train down the gradient towards Newcastleton as 'A3', No. 60068 *Sir Visto*, approaching against the wind, stops at the station with an evening passenger train from Carlisle. After a solitary passenger has left the train, *Sir Visto* starts steadily out from the station and climbs away, into the wind, towards Riccarton Junction.

#### Band Four

A 'V2' with a passenger train passing Steele Road.

At Steele Road, at the end of a showery April day, a 'V2' class 2-6-2, No. 60887, heads up the gradient from Newcastleton with the last Carlisle–Edinburgh passenger train of the day. Having no booked stop at Steele Road, the 'V2' clanks rhythmically through the deserted station and climbs away across the moors towards Riccarton Junction as, in the fading light of a cold, clear evening, the owls prepare to take over from the songbirds.

#### Band Five

A 'J37' with a night freight train at Steele Road.

At Steele Road on a calm moonlit night in April, shortly after midnight, the station buildings and the signal box, in darkness as it is manned only 'as required', are outlined against the mist which is rolling up from the valley.

From the south a freight train climbs steadily up the 1/75 gradient from Newcastleton as, from the north, the Edinburgh–London (St Pancras) sleeping car express approaches down the 1/75 gradient from Riccarton Junction.

The express, headed by an 'A1' class 'Pacific', No. 60161 *North British*, rumbles away down the valley as the freight train climbs towards Steele Road. 'J37' class 0-6-0, No. 64608, heads the freight train through the station, out over the road bridge and climbs away across the moors towards Riccarton Junction as owls hoot eerily from the edge of a nearby forest plantation.

Note: the 'A3' class 'Pacifics' heard on this record were all fitted with double chimneys when the recordings were made.