

ATR 7016

TRAINS IN TROUBLE

Steam engines in difficulties with goods and passenger trains at: Bargany, Beattock, Grantham, Malton, Usan, Watlington, Wissington, in Austria and Yugoslavia and on the Somerset and Dorset line.

SIDE ONE

Band One

'V2' at Usan with a southbound freight train.

Beside an overbridge on the Montrose–Arbroath line, some way south of Usan Signal Box, in the twilight of a May evening in 1959.

In the distance a southbound freight train, headed by an engine which is obviously troubled by a serious steam leak, emerges from a cutting through which the line curves out from Montrose on a rising gradient of 1 in 88.

The rhythmically explosive sounds of escaping steam, carried on a strong wind, practically drown other sounds, even those of the engine's exhaust, as 'V2' class 2-6-2, No. 60892, belching steam from the front end but nevertheless making surprisingly good progress, heads past Usan Signal Box, approaches on a continuing climb of 1 in 111 and heads the train past under the bridge and away with the wind towards Arbroath.

Band Two

'B16' at Malton and 'V2' at Grantham.

On a Saturday afternoon in August 1959 a 'B16' class 4-6-0, No. 61432, has sighed to a stop in Malton Station, considerably behind time, with a train from Leeds. No. 61432 acknowledges the 'right away' with a somewhat strangled whistle and, wheezing despairingly, moves the train out from the station, pauses at signals while the nearby level-crossing gates are opened, then makes another brave but wildly off-beat start and, shrouded in leaking steam, takes the train away on, probably fortunately, the last lap of the journey to Scarborough.

On another Saturday afternoon, in August 1957, a 'V2' class 2-6-2 has considerable trouble in getting a grip on drizzle-dampened rails while starting an up express from the south end of Grantham Station. No. 60963 makes an astonishingly slippery start and then, with driving wheels still wildly slipping, heads the train past and away on the 5-mile, 1 in 200 climb towards Stoke Summit.

Band Three

Caledonian 0-6-0 at Beattock.

At the south end of Beattock Station early on a July morning in 1957.

For some time now some extraordinary sounds have been heard in the distance from an engine which is obviously in the gravest trouble but managing nevertheless to keep moving towards Beattock on the main line from the south. Eventually an ex-Caledonian '812' class 0-6-0 appears, approaching at an erratic walking pace on the 1 in 174, 1 in 260 rising gradients with a northbound goods train. The crippled engine, No. 57583, staggers past the signal box and finally comes to a hissing, shuddering stop in the yard, surrounded by a fascinated audience which includes the loco shed foreman. The foreman asks the driver if he wants a "shove up", but the driver not

unreasonably asks for “another engine”. Further, more forceful, conversation is drowned by the sounds of a banking engine which runs past light, returning from Beattock Summit.

Band Four

Stanier ‘Black Five’ at Bargany.

On the Ayr–Stranraer line at Bargany on a typically damp afternoon in September 1964. A Stanier ‘Black Five’ 4-6-0, No. 45206, is attempting to move a train of trucks, loaded with some 250 tons of coal, out of the colliery siding on slipping rails on a rising gradient. The fireman has been busy with a shovel sanding the rails for some distance ahead of the engine, which, having so far failed to start the train, has paused before making another attempt.

Slipping furiously again and again, No. 45206 gradually moves the train forward. A thickening pall of smoke rises above the woods beside the line as the engine struggles past, heading the trucks away towards the colliery buildings at the far end of the siding. Eventually the driver loses patience and allows the driving wheels to spin more or less helplessly for a while before the train is finally dragged clear of the points.

The points are changed and No. 45206, still slipping at times, vigorously propels the trucks past, up the gradient from the siding to the main line, pauses briefly and then, apparently none the worse for the extraordinary exertions of the past half-hour, heads the train energetically past and climbs away into the distance towards Ayr.

Note: the original recording has been extensively edited. The engine took more than 25 minutes, in fact, to move the train up the siding.

Band Five

Austrian 2-10-0 at Rosenbach Tunnel.

In Austria, near the mouth of a tunnel on the Klagenfurt–Rosenbach line, early on a September morning in 1978, an OBB 2-10-0, No. 501171, has been waiting, for some hours, at the head of a six-coach train to rehearse a scene for the film *The Lady Vanishes*.

Any train involved in filming is practically bound to be in trouble because of unusual or impossible demands from people who are unacquainted with the problems of railway operation. On this occasion No. 501171 is required to start the train on a sharp curve, on a steeply rising gradient, and to accelerate on a continuous steep climb across a high viaduct and into the tunnel.

The rails are slippery and, starting cold after such a long wait, condensation is obviously a problem. The engine struggles to gain adhesion, the cylinder cocks have to be opened frequently and the characteristically woolly exhaust sounds of the 2-10-0 are even more woolly than usual as the engine approaches across the valley on the high viaduct, whistles into the tunnel and stops there – a manoeuvre which will be repeated many times before the end of the day.

SIDE TWO

Band One

0-60-0 Saddle Tank at Wissington.

At Wissington sugar beet factory in Norfolk the Hudswell Clark 0-6-0 Saddle Tank, No. 1700 *Wissington*, built in 1938, made a rare appearance on a November morning in 1971, hauling a long train of empty wagons out from the factory.

Wissington approaches round a curve from the factory and, slipping frequently despite hand sanding, struggles past on the sharp climb which leads to a bridge over the River Wissey and then, gathering speed on level track, whistles away across the fen, heading the train towards the BR Stoke Ferry branch line.

Band Two

On board a Somerset and Dorset line train.

On the Somerset and Dorset line on board a five-coach Templecombe–Bath train on an October afternoon in 1961.

Soon after leaving Evercreech New on the 2½ mile, 1 in 50 climb towards Shepton Mallet, it is obvious that the engine, a Class 4 Standard 4-6-0 No. 75073, is in trouble. Speed has fallen to above 13½ mph at mile post 22¾ and there is an ominous clatter as the fireman lifts some long fire irons from the side of the tender in a heroic attempt to coax the engine to life.

One mile of the uphill journey has taken nearly five minutes and now approaching the summit, near eerily named Cannard's Grave, the train's progress is even slower, although the engine's exhaust beat briefly becomes slightly stronger as the driver makes an almost desperate effort to prevent the brakes from finally leaking on. No. 75073 just manages to drag the train over the summit and drifts down to a grateful stop in Shepton Mallet Station where the fire irons are immediately put to use again.

Unfortunately, despite a 20-minute wait at Shepton Mallet and the endless efforts of the engine crew, the onward journey over Masbury Summit was almost equally funereal and the train's eventual arrival at Bath, Green Park was inevitably somewhat behind schedule.

Note: the original recording of the complete journey has been extensively edited.

Band Three

2-10-0 with a freight train in Yugoslavia.

In Yugoslavia more than 1,700ft up in the Julian Alps at Bohinjka Bistrica beside the single line from Jesenice to Nova Gorica.

On a frosty afternoon in November 1970 the last light of the setting sun sparkles on the snow-capped mountain peaks which rise to some 6,000ft around a wide valley, on all sides of which mountain streams, swollen by recent heavy rains, rush noisily down. In the distance a train approaches up the valley from Nomenj, swings round a curve into view and suddenly fills the valley with echoing sounds as the engine loses adhesion on the steep gradient.

Three-cylinder 2-10-0 No. 36-048 struggles up the valley with an 800-tonnes train of loaded car transporter wagons, which is well up to the maximum unassisted load for this line, passes behind some lineside buildings, whistles a preliminary warning for the station ahead, whistles again and, accelerating slightly on a somewhat easier gradient, heads the train past and slows to a stop in the loop line at the station.

Note: engine No. 36-048 was built in 1917 by KPEV in Prussia.

Band Four

The last train from Watlington.

One of the troubles of the Watlington Branch Line was that it ended in a field some distance from the town. Traffic dwindled, closure notices were posted and, on the evening of 29 June 1957, the last scheduled passenger train ran from Princes Risborough to Watlington and then made an unscheduled return journey.

At Watlington Station the last passenger train from Princes Risborough is greeted by numerous onlookers and the passengers join the crowd on the platform where a collection is taken for the train crew. No. 4650 then runs round the train, exploding detonators on the way, and draws up at the water column. The engine takes water, the crew and supporters take bottles of beer and more people climb onto the already crowded footplate, where the driver comments on the effect which detonator explosions were having on his ears.

Eventually No. 4650, using both whistles, starts out in the distance from Watlington Station and approaches with the sounds of shrieking whistles adding to the fusillade of closely laid detonators. The brakes go hard on just after the train passes by but they are soon released and No. 4650 whistles away towards Chinnor and Princes Risborough while astonished cows bellow in protest at the extraordinary disturbance, threatening trouble with the next morning's milk supply.