

ATR 7017

RAILWAYS RECALLED

Steam locomotives at work, between 1959 and 1966, with passenger and freight trains on the: Central Wales line; West Highland line; Somerset & Dorset line; Lickey Incline; Settle–Carlisle line; East Coast main line; Carlisle–Edinburgh ‘Waverley’ route; and on the climb to Shap Summit.

SIDE ONE

Band One

On the Central Wales line, between Knucklas Halt and the beautiful 75ft high Knucklas Viaduct, on a May afternoon in 1964.

An engine, which is bringing a freight train rumbling down the winding valley on the single line from Llangunllo, whistles in the distance. Soon, the 8F class 2-8-0 No. 48438 approaches and crosses the stone-built, castellated viaduct, whistles past and heads the Swansea–Shrewsbury freight train away on a curving embankment towards Knucklas Halt and on down the gradient towards Knighton.

Sometime later a Standard Class 5 4-6-0 approaches from Knighton and stops at Knucklas Halt with the 3.47pm Shrewsbury–Swansea, Victoria passenger train. No. 73024 whistles, starts the train out from the tiny station and, on a rising gradient of 1 in 60, approaches on the curving embankment, heads the train past and climbs away, across the viaduct and into the distance, against the wind, on the continuing 1 in 60 gradient on which the line climbs up the valley towards Llangunllo Tunnel nearly 1,000ft above sea level.

All the through passenger and freight train services between Shrewsbury and Swansea, Victoria were withdrawn a few weeks later, in June 1964.

Band Two

Between Bridge of Orchy and Tyndrum Summit the single track of the West Highland line, hugging contours to gain height, makes a horseshoe curve round a wide valley which lies between Beinn Dorain (3,524ft), Beinn a Chaisteil (2,897ft) and Beinn Odhar (2,948ft). The line crosses a rushing river on a lattice girder bridge some way up the valley.

On an afternoon early in May 1959 the 2.56pm train from Fort William, with sleeping cars for London and a restaurant car, approaches in the distance, round a curve on the far side of the valley, on the climb from Bridge of Orchy. The train is double headed (by special arrangement for a BBC *Railway Roundabout* film) by two ex-NBR ‘Glen’ class 4-4-0 locomotives: No. 62496 *Glen Loy* piloting No. 62471 *Glen Falloch*.

The two engines, with their coupling rods intermittently ringing characteristically, take the train round another curve and on the first, far side of the horseshoe climb away towards the head of the valley and then swing round again, across the valley, on the second part of the horseshoe.

After crossing the bridge over the river the train briefly disappears in cuttings and snow shelters through which the line passes as it curves back towards the last part of the horseshoe curve, along the near side of the valley.

The train, now approaching but always some distance away, clings to the side of the valley, gaining height on the 1 in 55 climb which continues, unbroken, for 2½ miles to Tyndrum Summit. The valley is filled with the echoing sounds of the hard-working engines as they attack the climb on the near

side of the valley. Finally, the echoes die away as the train climbs out of the valley and into the distance, towards Tyndrum Summit.

Band Three

On the Somerset & Dorset line in May 1964, by which time traffic had been deliberately reduced and all the through services, which formerly ran between Bournemouth, Bath and the Midlands and the North, had been withdrawn.

On a May evening a westerly wind gusts across the line as a Templecombe–Bath, Green Park passenger train, the 5.1pm from Shepton Mallet, climbs the 1 in 50 gradient towards the tunnel, headed by a 4F class 0-6-0. The sounds of the approaching train are caught by a near gale-force wind and echo around the short, deep rock cutting which leads to the tunnel mouth. The 4F No. 44472 heads the train into the cutting, whistles and disappears into the single-line tunnel, beyond which the 1 in 50 climb continues for a further two miles to Masbury Summit.

Nearby, on the Bath–Bournemouth line, here separated from the Bournemouth–Bath line, an unseen engine, with safety valves lifting, coasts down the gradient with a Bath–Bournemouth train, due at Shepton Mallet at 5.8pm.

A Bournemouth–Bath passenger train, the 6.11pm from Shepton Mallet, fitfully heard at first as its sounds are caught on the gusting wind, approaches in the distance on the 1 in 50 climb. A 9F class 2-10-0 No. 92214 climbs towards the cutting, heads the train past and takes it away through the short tunnel.

The 6.11pm from Shepton Mallet was one of three daily trains which, in May 1964, still included Bournemouth–Bath through carriages, the last remnants of the once extensive through services which were withdrawn in September 1962. The Somerset & Dorset line finally closed completely in March 1966.

Band Four

On the Lickey Incline, the 1 in 37¾, two-mile climb from Bromsgrove to Blackwell on the Bristol–Birmingham line.

On a warm afternoon in June 1959, beside the line, about ¼ mile down from the summit at Blackwell Station, two young train spotters are perched on the gate of an occupation crossing nearby. In the distance two engines, one heading and the other banking a freight train, are raising a pall of smoke above the woods as they struggle up the Incline from Bromsgrove. Traffic on a sunken lane which passes under the railway, not far away, is occasionally heard in the background as the northbound freight train approaches at little more than walking pace.

A southbound freight train, headed by a Stannier 'Black Five' 4-6-0, approaches from Blackwell, clatters past and rumbles away down the Incline towards Bromsgrove.

3F class 0-6-0 No. 43468, at the head of the northbound train, struggles on up the Incline, out from the woods, approaches behind a clump of bushes, passes by on a low embankment and climbs slowly away, wheezily assisted by a single 8400 class 0-6-0 Pannier Tank engine No. 8404 at the rear of the train.

Another 0-6-0 Pannier Tank, No. 8402, runs past, light, down the Incline towards Bromsgrove, while the northbound train climbs slowly away in the cutting which leads up to Blackwell Station. Meanwhile a bumble bee buzzes lazily around nearby and, faintly heard in the distance, an engine in the yard at Bromsgrove whistles for assistance with another northbound train.

SIDE TWO

Band One

On the Settle–Carlisle line, near the Blea Moor end of Batty Moss Viaduct.

In the early darkness of a damp evening in November 1961 torches wave along a moorland track nearby as the men of a railway maintenance gang walk down towards Ribbleshead Station at the far end of the viaduct.

In the distance a northbound freight train is approaching on the 'Long Drag', the 1 in 100 climb from Settle. The sounds of the approaching train, briefly muffled as it climbs past the isolated buildings of Ribbleshead Station, soon echo around the surrounding hills as an unidentified 'Royal Scot' class 4-6-0 heads the train out into the open and across the viaduct on the continuing 1 in 100 climb. The train, still some distance away, passes by at the end of the viaduct and immediately disappears behind a high outcrop of rock, beyond which the line climbs towards Blea Moor Tunnel, about a mile away. The 2,629 yards long tunnel takes the line, now more than 1,100ft above sea level, under the 1,750ft high crag of Blea Moor.

Band Two

On the East Coast main line at Cambridge Junction, a little to the north of Hitchin Station, in August 1959.

An A1 class 'Pacific', No. 60122 *Curlew*, approaching Hitchin Station with a down express, whistles in the distance and tears past, over the points and crossings at Cambridge Junction and away, down the 1 in 200 gradient to the north.

Another A1 class 'Pacific', No. 60019 *Patrick Stirling*, approaches from the north, heads past with an express from Hull and climbs away through Hitchin Station on the continuing 1 in 200 gradient. Then a V2 class 2-6-2, No. 60917, approaches from the station and dashes past, heading north with a down express.

An A3 class 'Pacific', No. 60066 *Merry Hampton*, running at reduced speed because of signal checks, passes by and climbs away towards the station with an up express from Newcastle.

Points change position nearby and bells in Cambridge Junction Signal Box are faintly heard in the background. Then a B2 (rebuilt B17) class 4-6-0, No. 61644 *Earlham Hall*, with brake pump sighing rhythmically, runs past light towards the station and stops in the up yard.

A signal arm clatters as it changes position nearby and then a WD class 2-8-0, No. 90730, brings a down freight train into the yard and stops nearby. The engine is soon uncoupled and moves away down the yard, running light.

An A1 class 'Pacific', No. 60134 *Foxhunter*, rushes by with safety valves lifting and whistles away, down the gradient to the north, with the 'Queen of Scots' Pullman express.

An A4 class 'Pacific', No. 60026 *Miles Beavor*, climbs past with an up express and whistles away through Hitchin Station where a down express has been brought almost to a stop by adverse signals. When the signals clear V2 class 2-6-2 No. 60862 accelerates down the gradient, past and away to the north with a Scandinavian services boat train bound for Newcastle, Tyne Commission Quay.

A4 class 'Pacific', No. 60014 *Silver Link*, checked by signals on the approach from the north, ambles past with an express from Leeds and, whistling in protest at the delay, climbs away through Hitchin Station and on into the distance towards Kings Cross.

Note: all the 'Pacific' locomotives heard at Hitchin had been fitted with a double chimney when the recordings were made.

Band Three

In the woods above Stobs Station on the Edinburgh–Carlisle 'Waverley' route, now long since closed and abandoned in spite of strong opposition.

On a May night in 1961, not long after midnight, an unidentified V2 class 2-6-2, approaching against the wind on the unbroken four-mile climb from Hawick, swings round the curve with a Millerhill–Carlisle freight train and, shooting glowing cinders high into the air, vigorously attacks the 1 in 80, 1 in 65, 1 in 80 climb past Stobs Station, which lies in a cutting far below. The sounds of the train echo from the woods as it climbs away in a cutting beyond the station and then they are carried back on the wind as the V2 heads the train away across the open moorland into the distance on the continuous six-mile climb past Shankend to Whitrope Tunnel.

Band Four

Near Shap Wells, on the long climb from Tebay to Shap Summit, on a late September evening in 1966, when a motorway had not yet invaded the lonely fells across which the railway climbs.

The twilight silence is disturbed only by the rustle of dried grass and heather stirred by the evening breeze and by the distant twittering of flocks of birds, settling to roost in a clump of trees.

A northbound freight train, assisted by a banking engine at the rear, is approaching in the distance on the continuous 1 in 75 climb past Scout Green. The exhaust beats of the train engine and banker are out of step and distinctly separate. Then the sounds of the leading engine are briefly muffled in a cutting and the slower beats of the banking engine predominate as the train climbs past Salterwath. A hard-working 8F class 2-8-0 heads the train past and disappears into a deep rock cutting. Then the banking engine, 2-6-4 Tank engine No. 42251, blasts past at the rear of the train giving energetic assistance on the continuing 1 in 75 climb, away through the cutting towards Shap Summit, about one mile to the north and about 914ft above sea level.