

ATR 7030

## THE SOMERSET AND DORSET

Steam locomotives at work in 1956 between Bath and Templecombe on the Somerset and Dorset Joint Line, a then busy 71½ mile cross-country link between Bath and Bournemouth, which was closed completely ten years later.

### SIDE ONE

#### Band One

At the entrance to Winsor Hill Tunnel.

Passenger traffic over the Somerset and Dorset was at its heaviest on summer Saturdays when trains followed each other in quick succession outwards from Bournemouth to the Midlands and the North in the mornings and in the opposite direction during the afternoons.

Between Shepton Mallet and Masbury the line climbed continuously for 3½ miles, nearly all on a gradient of 1 in 50, passing through a short tunnel at Winsor Hill where, about 1¾ miles from Shepton Mallet, the up line to Bath was separated by some distance from the down line.

At the entrance to the single-bore Winsor Hill Tunnel on a Saturday morning in July 1956 a freshening wind blows across the tracks, bringing threatening thunder clouds billowing up from the west.

A Bournemouth–Bradford train approaches on the 1 in 50 climb from Shepton Mallet double headed by a 2P class 4-4-0, No. 40568, piloting a class 5 4-6-0, No. 73051. The 2P pilot whistles in the short, deep rock cutting which leads up to the tunnel mouth and the two engines take the train on into the tunnel.

Flies buzz around in the shelter of the cutting and a Bournemouth–Manchester train approaches from Shepton Mallet, headed by 2P No. 40509 piloting class 5 No. 73116. The exhausts of the two engines beat out of step as the train climbs towards the cutting and, with a somewhat breathless whistle from the pilot engine, enters the tunnel.

A wood pigeon coos softly nearby just before the train of the day, the 'Pines Express' attacks the climb, headed by a 'West Country' class Pacific No. 34040 *Crewkerne*, the urgently shuffling exhaust beat of which contrasts with and is at first masked by the heavier, slower beat of the pilot engine, 2P No. 40634. With a whistle from the 2P and a final vigorous burst of exhaust from the Pacific, the 'Pines Express' disappears into the tunnel.

A train from Bath whistles out from a cutting and heads away towards Shepton Mallet on the down line. Thunder rumbles in the distance, disturbing some rooks and then a Bournemouth–Leeds train tackles the climb, headed by class 5 No. 73047 with 2P No. 40700 as pilot. The deep-toned whistle of No. 73047 sounds a warning as the train climbs through the cutting and into the tunnel just before the thunder, closer now, again rolls around the hills.

#### Band Two

A journey on the 'Pines Express' double headed by a class 5 4-6-0 and 2P class 4-4-0 between Bath Green Park and Evercreech Junction.

On a damp afternoon in November 1956 the 'Pines Express' stands in Bath Green Park Station, waiting to leave on the last lap of the long journey from Manchester. The train of 11 coaches,

including a restaurant car, is double headed by a class 5 4-6-0, No. 73051, piloted by a 2P 4-4-0, No. 40568, for the steeply graded journey over the S & D line, across the Mendip Hills to Evercreech Junction.

Given the 'right away' the two engines start the train out of Green Park Station and, on level track, head it past the loco shed to Bath Junction, then rumbling over a bridge at the start of the single-line section which extends for the next 3¾ miles over the summit to Midford.

Soon after Bath Junction the line climbs at 1 in 50 for ¾ mile. The climb very briefly eases to level and 1 in 66, then continues at 1 in 50 for a further mile, which includes the notorious Devonshire Tunnel. The pilot and train engines pound their way through the closely confined tunnel, inside which conditions were always particularly unpleasant for the crew of the second engine.

Leaving Devonshire Tunnel and still climbing at 1 in 50, the engine's exhaust beats reach a crescendo at the approach to the summit at Coombe Down Tunnel, greeted by a long whistle from the pilot engine. Once inside the tunnel there is a brief respite for the engine crews as the gradient changes to level, then 1 in 100 down the tunnel mouth, with continuing falling gradients for the next mile to Midford.

From Radstock North, 6½ miles beyond Midford and now on double track, more hard work is needed on the 7-mile climb towards Masbury Summit. For 1¼ miles the line climbs at 1 in 50 past Midsomer Norton, then at 1 in 53 for a further mile to the short tunnel near Chilcompton. The line then winds on slightly easier gradients, past Chilcompton Station, to the start of another long stretch at 1 in 50 and 1 in 60 past Moorewood and on to Binagar, then a final climb of 1 mile at 1 in 63 and 1 in 73 leads up to the summit at Masbury.

Coasting down from Evercreech (New) the 'Pines Express', somewhat behind time through no fault of the S & D men on the scheduled 5¾ hour journey from Manchester, slows to a stop at Evercreech Junction where connections are made for the Highbridge branch and Templecombe.

Note: the recording of this journey has been edited to include the majority of the section between Bath Green Park and the descent from Coombe Down Tunnel towards Midford and then between Radstock North and Masbury Halt, just beyond Masbury Summit. The approach to Evercreech Junction from Evercreech (New) was recorded on a different occasion when the 'Pines Express' was headed by No. 73019 with No. 40569 as pilot engine.

## SIDE TWO

### Band One

On the 1 in 50 climb between Evercreech (New) and Shepton Mallet on an August morning in 1956.

2P class 4-4-0 No. 40697, with a local passenger train which has called at Evercreech (New), climbs past and away, against the wind, towards Shepton Mallet and Bath.

S & D 2-8-0 No. 53802 clanks past down the gradient towards Evercreech (New) and Evercreech Junction with a freight train from Bath and then another S & D 2-8-0, No. 53800, with a plume of steam rising from the safety valves, climbs past towards Bath, against the wind, with a freight train from Evercreech Junction.

### Band Two

At Templecombe Station and Templecombe Junction in July 1956.

Templecombe Station, on the SR Waterloo–Exeter Central line, was connected with the S & D by a short spur line which climbed round a sharp curve, on a gradient of 1 in 100, from the S & D line at Templecombe Junction to platform 3 and the goods yard at Templecombe Station.

4F class 0-6-0 No. 44557 starts from platform 3 with a Bath–Bournemouth train and heads it away down the spur. No. 73052, a class 5 4-6-0 which has headed the train from Bath, coasts past and away at the rear of the train, running tender first. When the train has rejoined the S & D line it will reverse direction. No. 73052 will then head it away to Bournemouth and the 4F will remain at Templecombe.

On the SR line a ‘Merchant Navy’ class Pacific, No. 35007 *Aberdeen Commonwealth*, whistles through the station towards Salisbury and London with an express from the West of England.

Down on the S & D line at the foot of the connecting spur, near the loco shed from where a gentle hiss of steam is heard in the background. In the distance, beyond the junction, a Bournemouth–Nottingham train stands waiting to reverse into Templecombe Station before continuing its journey to Bath. A class 5 4-6-0, No. 73047, has headed the train from Bournemouth and 4F class 0-6-0 No. 44557 has been coupled to what is now, temporarily, the front of the train. Signals clear, the 4F whistles, answered by the whistle of No. 73047 now at the rear of the train, and the two engines, both running tender first, bring the train past and climb away towards the station with wheels groaning round the sharp curve.

On the SR line, which crosses the S & D line on a nearby bridge, a class 5 4-6-0 No. 73117 roars past up the 1 in 80 gradient and away through Templecombe Station with an express for Exeter and the West.

### Band Three

At Evercreech Junction Station and in the goods yard to the north of the station in 1956.

At 11 o’clock on a showery morning passengers and staff wait on the station platform for the arrival of the ‘Pines Express’ from Bournemouth. The express, headed by a ‘Battle of Britain’ class Pacific, No. 34109 *Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory*, slows to a stop and the stationmaster tells the engine crew that they “don’t want to pull up” to bring the rear coaches up to the platform.

Heard from a different position, some way to the north of the station, 2P class 4-4-0 No. 40568, which has been waiting in a siding, moves up to the nearby crossover points, then backs away to the head of the waiting ‘Pines Express’ to take on pilot duty for the steeply graded journey to Bath.

Signals clear, the Pacific whistles, the 4-4-0 gives an answering whistle and the two engines start the heavy train out from the station on the 1 in 198 rising gradient. The deep, steady exhaust beat of No. 40568 contrasts with the sharp, rapid exhaust beat of Pacific No. 34109, which has some difficulty in maintaining adhesion on damp rails and slips quite severely at times as the train climbs past and away, round the curve past Evercreech North Signal Box, towards Evercreech (New) and the long climb to Masbury.

Buffers clang in the nearby goods yard. Then 3F class 0-6-0 No. 43201 starts out from the station and climbs away, past the yard, with a passenger train for the Highbridge branch line.

In the busy goods yard to the north of the station, S & D 2-8-0 No. 53802 moves past and then another engine of the same class, No. 53803, moves slowly forward with an up freight train, the fireman sounds the whistle in acknowledgement of the guard’s hand signal and the train moves on, out of the yard and away round the curve towards Bath.

No. 53802 moves back again, up the yard, wheezes past and brings a train of trucks to a clattering stop nearby.

3F class 0-6-0 No. 43204 takes some trucks past and away down the yard. Points and signal levers are changed in the signal box and another 3F No. 43216 climbs past the yard and away on the branch line with a Highbridge passenger train.

S & D 2-8-0 No. 53809, with a good head of steam, starts out from the yard with an up freight train and, accelerating for the climb ahead, whistles away round the curve towards Evercreech (New) and Bath.

Note: the Bulleid Pacific locomotives heard on this record had not been rebuilt when these recordings were made.