

ATR 7033

RHYTHMS OF STEAM

Lineside recordings of steam locomotives at work on British Railways between 1958 and 1961 at Hitchin, Tyndrum, Templecombe, Tyne Dock, Usan and Barkston Junction. A journey on the 'East Midlander' special train, hauled by the, then newly restored, Midland Compound 4-4-0 No. 1000 between Leicester Central and Oxford in 1960.

SIDE ONE

Band One

The rapid rhythms of passing express trains and the contrastingly slow beat of a Westinghouse brake pump at Cambridge Junction, just north of Hitchin Station, in August 1959.

An 'A2' class 'Pacific' No. 60538, aptly called *Velocity*, whistles in the distance through Hitchin Station and tears past and away down the 1 in 200 gradient towards Three Counties with a northbound express.

A signal arm changes position nearby and a 'B2' class 4-6-0 No. 61644 *Earlham Hall* whistles, approaches with brake pump panting rhythmically and moves past, running light, towards the north end of the down yard.

A 'B1' class 4-6-0 No. 61143 heads an up express from Cleethorpes past on the 1 in 200 rising gradient towards the station and an 'A1' class 'Pacific' dashes by on the down line with an express for Newcastle.

The 'B2' *Earlham Hall* has collected some horse boxes and a van from the yard and now takes them away towards Cambridge. Then a 'K3' class 2-6-0 clanks slowly by, taking a p.w. train from the Cambridge line towards the up yard.

A signal arm changes position again and No. 60106 *Flying Fox*, an 'A3' 'Pacific' fitted with double chimney, heads past and away towards Hitchin Station and London with an express from Leeds, which, running ahead of time, has been checked by signals.

Band Two

The simple rhythms of two-cylinder locomotives on the West Highland and Oban lines at Tyndrum on a May evening in 1959 near a bridge which crosses the West Highland line not far from Tyndrum Summit.

In the distance a Stanier 'Black Five' 4-6-0 has just left Tyndrum Upper Station with a Glasgow-Fort William train and then, on the far side of the valley below, another 'Black Five' whistles and starts out from Tyndrum Lower Station on a rising gradient of 1 in 49 with a train for Oban. The distant sounds of the Oban train are soon drowned by the steady exhaust beat of No. 44787 which, now approaching, is vigorously attacking the 1 in 60 climb on the West Highland line. On an easier gradient of 1 in 83 No. 44787 climbs through a shallow cutting and passes by, heading the Fort William train under the bridge and away on the final 1 in 63 climb to Tyndrum Summit. The sounds of the Oban train, now climbing away towards Glen Lochy, are faintly heard again, finally fading into the distance as a car hums along the nearby main road.

Band Three

The leisurely rhythms of shunting in the large, and then busy, yard to the west of Templecombe Station on an August afternoon in 1960.

'S15' class 4-6-0 No. 30831 moves past, running light, whistling a cheery warning to shunters in the yard.

Truck buffers clang, wheel flanges squeal and a loose break handle rattles as a long rake of trucks is propelled slowly past down the yard by another 'S15' 4-6-0 No. 30844. A telephone bell on the nearby shunter's cabin rings as the engine groans to a stop.

No. 30831 now backs some empty coaches past towards the station and then 'S15' No. 30823 heads past in the opposite direction, taking a freight train down the yard. The sounds of the slow-moving trucks are temporarily drowned when a 'Merchant Navy' class 'Pacific' rushes past down the 1 in 100 gradient with an up express.

The telephone bell rings again and a 5700 class 0-6-0 Pannier Tank engine, No. 3720, whistles and moves past and away to the far end of the yard.

From the station an un-rebuilt 'Battle of Britain' class 'Pacific', No. 34109 *Sir Trafford Leigh Mallory*, whistles, starts out with a down freight train and heads it slowly past and away into the distance on the 1 in 100 rising gradient towards the west. Meanwhile a 2-6-2 tank engine No. 41248 leaves the Somerset and Dorset line platform, running light, and moves vigorously past and away down the yard.

Band Four

The broken rhythms of driving wheels slipping and the contrasting rhythms of a train engine and a banking engine taking a train of nine 56-ton hopper wagons, fully loaded with iron ore, up the 1 in 40 gradient of the line from Tyne Dock on a cold, windy morning in February 1958.

The sounds of shipping and the shipyards on the, then busy, River Tyne and the whistles of the train engine and banker are carried from the distance by the strong wind. The iron ore train starts out from Tyne Dock Bottom and approaches round a curve where the driving wheels of '9F' class 2-10-0 No. 92065, which heads the train, slip on the 1 in 40 rising gradient. The regulator is briefly eased, the '9F' regains adhesion and, with a shatteringly powerful exhaust beat, heads the train past assisted by the banking engine, a 'J94' class 0-6-0 Saddle Tank No. 68029 at the rear of the train. The two engines climb away past the loco sheds at Tyne Dock Top, taking the train towards the now abandoned Consett works.

SIDE TWO

Band One

The stately rhythms of Midland Compound 4-4-0 No. 1000 and the, once familiar, rhythms of train wheels over rail joints.

On a Sunday morning in September 1960 the Midland Compound, then newly restored, stands at the long island platform of Leicester Central Station, at the head of the 'East Midlander', a special train from Nottingham to Swindon which was organised by the RCTS East Midlands branch.

The safety valves lift briefly and No. 1000, whistling acknowledgement for the 'right away', starts the train out from the station, encouraged from the lineside by a shout of "come on old soldier".

Leaving Leicester on gradually rising gradients No. 1000 soon accelerates, preparing for a long 1 in 176 climb ahead, from Whetstone to a summit beyond Ashby Magna, on the superbly engineered and relatively modern Great Central main line, now long since destroyed.

When approaching Ashby Magna the train's progress is checked because of engineering work on the line ahead. The engine whistles in protest and the safety valves lift as the train slows, then runs cautiously on over the section affected by the speed restriction and clatters past Ashby Magna Station.

A freight train passes on the down line and the 'East Midlander' gradually accelerates on the continuing 1 in 176 climb. Then, when over the summit, it quickly gathers speed and the rhythms of the train wheels soon take over from those of the engine.

Now, having tackled a continuous 1 in 176 climb of some five miles from Braunston and Willoughby, No. 1000 whistles into Catesby Tunnel. On the continuing climb through the 1¾ mile tunnel, speed has fallen slightly by the time the engine whistles into the open and takes the train over the summit and on to level track, through Charwelton Station, just beyond which water was taken from the troughs.

Later on this outward journey, having taken the 'East Midlander' over the Banbury line from Culworth Junction and the Oxford line from Aynho Junction, No. 1000 whistles when nearing Oxford and then, with wheels and coupling rods clanging and ringing over points and crossings, approaches Oxford Station where the regulator is opened briefly to bring the train along the platform, where it squeals to a stop.

Enthusiasts on the platform join those from the train and gather round the crimson engine, which was then replaced by a WR 2-6-0, which took the train on to Swindon.

Band Two

The urgent rhythms of an express train on the Montrose–Arbroath line, which climbs out from Montrose on a section of single line over a viaduct and through a deep, curving cutting, on a gradient of 1 in 88, to Usan Signal Box where the line becomes double track.

In the dusk of a late evening in May 1959 beside the double-track line. A 'WD' class 2-8-0 approaches under a nearby road bridge, clanks past and whistles away with a down freight train, which slows to a squealing stop in the distance near Usan Signal Box where the up line signals have cleared for a train from Montrose.

Class 'A2' 'Pacific' No. 60532 *Blue Peter* bursts out from the cutting at the end of the single-line section, passes the signal box, approaches on the 1 in 111 rising gradient and roars past and away under the road bridge, heading the up 'Aberdonian' sleeping car express on into the night towards Lunan Bay and Arbroath.

Band Three

Lonely rhythms in the night of freight trains and a light engine on the East Coast main line at Barkston Junction between Grantham and Newark.

In June 1961, at 2.30am on Midsummer Night, an up freight train, headed by a 'V2' class 2-6-2, has been stopped at signals just north of Barkston Junction. While the up train silently waits, a down fitted freight train emerges from Peascliffe Tunnel headed by a '9F' class 2-10-0 which, demonstrating the legendary speeds that these engines were capable of, tears past and away, running on welded rails.

The up line signals clear and the thin whistle of the 'V2' echoes into the drizzling darkness. Then, as the northbound train speeds away across open country towards Newark into the distance, the V2 makes a cautious start, briefly loses adhesion and then steadily approaches, briefly silhouetted against the glow of yellow light from the windows of the signal box, near the remains of Barkstone Junction Station.

The 'V2' heads the train rumbling past and away into a shallow cutting, gradually accelerating on the 1 in 200 rising gradient. The characteristic Gresley exhaust beat of the 'V2' is at first reflected from lineside woods, then muffled under some bridges and finally silenced when the train enters Peascliffe Tunnel.

In the distance, from the opposite direction, clearly heard in the still darkness preceding the faint first light of a watery dawn, a solitary light engine ambles home along the Bottesford–Lincoln line, which passes under the main line at Barkston Junction.