

# steamsounds from the lineside 2002-2003

## 1. Blame Foot and Mouth Disease.

It was Foot and Mouth and the necessary restrictions imposed on walking around in the countryside that was responsible for the fact that, after the last main line lineside recording I made in February 2001, it was almost a year before I had my recorder out again!

The occasion of my return to the lineside was BR Standard Class 4 2-6-0 76079 working a train called The Pennine Way on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2002. This train took in a circular itinerary from Preston including Copy Pit and Standedge.

This recording was made about half way between the site of Cliviger signal box and Holme Tunnel not far from the site of Holme station. The loco is heard approaching having recovered some speed on the 1 in 185 gradient through Towneley Tunnel and going very well at the head of 8 coaches.

Now on a gradient of 1 in 68 speed begins to fall as the train passes and continues to fall on the continuing gradient towards Copy Pit summit. Well, worth waiting almost a year for.

## 2. Although the LMS Coronation Pacific 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland* had been out and about on the main line for quite some time, my first opportunity to see and hear the loco came on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2002 when it worked a train northbound over the Settle to Carlisle line.

Memories of *Duchess of Hamilton* providing stirring performances on this route gave hope for a dramatic recording but it seems that rumours that the loco was always worked as easily as the schedule and load permitted proved to be accurate.

With 12 coaches behind the tender, travelling at around 40 mph the loco was probably being worked in the first regulator valve and was just 'chuffing' passing Selside on the climb to Blea Moor.

## 3. *Duchess of Sutherland* returned south a few weeks later 6233 is heard passing Ais Gill summit on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2002.

Once again on 12 coaches, it sounds like first valve is sufficient. But I have to say it is a long time since I last saw denser smoke!

## 4. The name 'Scarborough Spa Express' made a most welcome return for the summer of 2002 with the West Coast Railway company running trains from that resort to York on three days each week. With stock and locomotives stabled at Scarborough this Scarborough Spa Express ran twice each day from Scarborough to York and back.

The locos for these trains were ex LMS 8F 2-8-0 48151 and GWR Hall 4-6-0 5972 *Olton Hall* still in its red Hogwarts Express livery, hopefully cashing in on the popularity of 'Harry Potter'!

The programme of trains weren't entirely without problems and passengers were pretty thin on the ground at times but, with the WCRC providing stock, locos and crew it should have been a relatively cheap operation to run.

My first outing was in late July with the expectation of a noisy run to Scarborough and back with the Hall. Sadly, the Hall was broken so, instead the 8F was in charge. 48151 didn't appear to be in particularly good order either with bad blows from both cylinders and I would really love to know what was being held together by the length of string which extended from the fireman's side cab window and disappeared into the frames half way along the boiler. I hope that it wasn't holding a wheel on!

On a later visit on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2002 I succeeded in getting the Hall and after a very noisy run to Scarborough and back I was able to get a recording of 5972 departing from York on its final run of the day back to the coast.

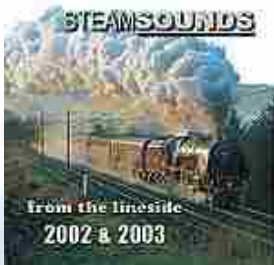
Heard from the end of what used to be Platform 14 (sorry, I still can't get used to the new numbers!) *Olton Hall* raises the echoes departing.

## 5. Having heard some stirring tales of LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* since the loco's recent return to the main line I was very pleased to have the opportunity to see and hear it on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

Poor weather and shortage of time meant that I had to settle (if you'll pardon the pun) for a recording of the loco passing through Settle station. I have to say that, despite the extraneous noises of the many spectators on the station I'm glad that I did. What an excellent sound!

## 6. Ever since steam returned to the West Coast Main Line north of Preston I have wanted to see a steam hauled train climb Shap from the line side. In recent years various opportunities have presented themselves but things never quite worked out. At one point it looked like my first chance would be to see 6024 but, perhaps fortunately, that train was cancelled!

Things finally worked out on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2002 when ex LMS 8F 2-8-0 48151 worked a private charter (for the



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Morecambe & Heysham Soroptimists) from Carnforth to Carlisle and back.

The weather on this particular day left a lot to be desired being quite windy and dull with plenty of rain about but, at the appropriate time the rain stopped and I was able to get this recording of the 8F with 8 coaches full of Soroptimists behind the tender about a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the top of the bank not far from Shap Wells.

As the loco is heard approaching, having just passed Scout Green, a Voyager unit rattles down the bank and later, after the 8F has reached the summit, yet another is heard travelling south.

7. Hertfordshire Railtours appear to have got their marketing just right with their regular programme of trains to Scarborough. Usual motive power for these trains between York and Scarborough is the V2 *Green Arrow* but, for the train on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003 the usual dual braked coaches were unavailable having been involved in a SPAD incident (Signal Passed At Danger) a couple of weeks before and the train was formed of an air brake set. As the V2 has only vacuum brakes another loco had to be found.

The nearest available air brake loco was ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 45407 and is heard in this recording departing from York for Scarborough.

8. LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* didn't have a lot of luck at the start of 2003 when it hit a bridge in Salford causing considerable damage to the locos chimney. Following this it was off the main line for a few months, returning to the main line working a northbound Cumbrian Mountain Express on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

'Lizzie' is heard in this recording passing Selside at the head of 12 well filled coaches.

9. Over the Easter Weekend Riley & Sons (Railways) ran their first steam hauled charter trains. Titled 'The Cotton Spinner', these ran on Easter Sunday & Monday from Manchester Victoria around the Oldham Loop 5 times each day using ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 45407 & BR Standard Class 4 2-6-0 76079.

In the preceding weeks the weather had been very dry and, although there had not been any problems so far, the risk of line side fires was thought to be quite high and, to minimise the risk, the train was restricted to just 4 coaches.

With the second train on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2003 Black 5 45407 running tender first is heard beginning the steep climb up to Oldham Werneth not far from Hollinwood.

10. All but one train ran around the loop in the anti-clockwise direction.

The odd one out is heard in this recording passing Rochdale East Junction behind 76079 heading for Oldham and starting on the short 1 in 55 climb away from the Calder Valley line.

11. Finding suitable locations for line side recordings on this route proved to be fraught with difficulties. In such a heavily built up area road noise is almost impossible to avoid and much of the route is quite simply inaccessible. The steepest sections on the route are the climb from Manchester Victoria to Miles Platting and the climb to Oldham Werneth.

This recording was made about half way up Platting Bank almost above the entrance to Cheetham Hill Tunnel on the Metrolink route to Bury and, as the recording starts, a tram is heard entering the tunnel.

With the tram out of the way 45407 can be heard accelerating on the climb. The train passes under Rochdale Road and can then be heard continuing all the way to the top of the climb while a DMU follows up the bank.

12. The next train was hauled by 76079 and we decided to make another attempt at a recording on the steep climb up to Oldham Werneth.

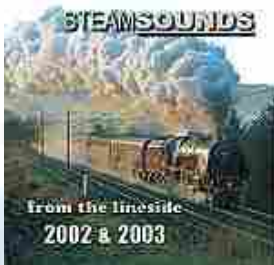
The first spot we looked at seemed likely to result in our being mugged and we decided that surviving the experience was more important than getting a good recording so we returned the public park in Coalshaw Green near Hollinwood where the first recording of the day had been made. Our first recording was made at the bottom end of the park where the 1 in 52 gradient is just beginning so we decided to try the top end this time.

In the morning the weather had been quite dull but by this time it was sunny and warm and, of course there were far more people about most of whom appeared quite curious as to what we were doing. We suffered the attentions of children who wanted to know if we were train spotters and dogs who wanted to eat our microphones. We also had a visit from a local lady who, as you will hear, just wanted to reminisce!

Still, we were lucky that none of these distractions managed to spoil this recording of 76079 beginning to climb the gradient.

13. On the following day we returned for more recordings but first we had a ride round the circuit behind 76079 which, following some heavy rain early in the day, had 5 rather than 4 coaches behind the tender.

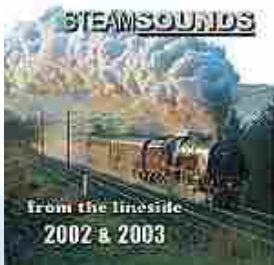
After returning, 76079 took the next train round the loop from Manchester Victoria and is heard in this recording made about half way up Platting Bank.



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- As the recording starts an eastbound DMU passes before 76079 running tender first can be heard accelerating its five coach load up the 1 in 59 gradient. The loco passes under Rochdale Road and can be heard continuing the climb, which steepens to 1 in 47 towards the top. As the train reaches Miles Platting and begins to accelerate on the easier gradients another DMU passes heading down the gradient towards Manchester Victoria.
14. After a further attempt at a recording near Failsworth on the climb to Werneth which proved unsuccessful we returned to Platting Bank for this recording of 45407 running tender first on the next train.  
As the Black 5 begins its ascent a DMU squeals to a stop at a nearby signal and a Manchester bound Metrolink tram emerges from Cheetham Hill Tunnel. 45407 passes and, now with a clear road, the DMU continues down the gradient.
15. On 26<sup>th</sup> April 2003 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* worked south from Carlisle over the S&C and is heard in this recording near Langho during the steep ascent of Whalley Bank.  
As the train approaches, so does a heavy shower of rain but 6201 sounds well none the less climbing the 1 in 82 gradient with 12 coaches behind the tender. The Pacific sounds to have everything under control until, rounding the curve towards Wilpshire Tunnel, the loco loses its feet and suffers a very bad slip which takes almost 20 seconds to correct.
16. Ex LNER V2 2-6-2 60800 *Green Arrow* worked another Hertfordshire Railtours Scarborough Flyer on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2003 and sounded like this departing from York.
17. Copy Pit saw a steam hauled train once again on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2003 when 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland* worked the VSOE Northern Belle from Preston to Crewe. These trains often have a Class 47 diesel on the rear to provide assistance if required but on this occasion no diesel was in evidence and the Pacific is coping well with its 12 coach load passing Holme on the 1 in 68 gradient to Copy Pit summit.  
The train was running about 20 minutes late and as 6233 passes through Holme Tunnel a Class 158 DMU with a service train from Blackpool to Scarborough can be heard approaching and is about to be stopped by a red signal.  
Just before the unit is forced to stop 6233 clears the section ahead and the signal clears.
18. The weather forecast on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2003 promised plenty of sun and a light breeze so I decided to take my self off to Blea Moor for a chance of recording 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* working a northbound Cumbrian Mountain Express.  
The part about sun was right, there was plenty of that but the 'light breeze' was more like gale force!  
Still, I was able to find a fairly sheltered spot and was delighted with the recording that I got of this fine loco recovering from the speed restriction over Ribbleshead Viaduct at the head of 13 coaches.
19. 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2003 saw me back at Blea Moor, this time for a recording of the ex LNER A4 Pacific 60009 Union of South Africa working a train from Blackpool to Carlisle. This journey was Carlisle Loco Inspector Gordon Hodgson's last run with steam before retirement.  
Sadly the run up the Long Drag was beset with signal checks including a dead stand at Blea Moor to be warned of trespassers on the line ahead.  
In this recording the A4 is heard restarting from the check.
20. Based as it is on the Mid Hants Railway I have wanted for a long time to see and hear the BR Standard Class 5 4-6-0 73096.  
My opportunity came on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2003 when I was able to get to Worcester where the locomotive was taking a train which had started in the south and was to be worked back south by 60009 while the Standard 5 paid a brief visit to the Severn Valley Railway.  
This recording was made near Norton Junction and 73096 can be heard accelerating having left the main line at Abbotswood Junction and passing, heading for Worcester.  
After the train has passed the adjacent semaphore signal clatters back to danger.  
A much better recording than I expected to get at this spot!
21. On the following day, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2003 after visiting the SVR in the hope that the Standard 5 would be working trains (it wasn't!) I was able to get a recording of GWR Hall 4-6-0 4965 *Road Ashton Hall* as it returned from Stratford-upon-Avon with a Shakespeare Express.  
The usual route for these trains is via Henley-in-Arden but, due to a weak bridge, the return journey to Birmingham is via Solihull.  
In this recording, despite the noise from the M42 motorway not far away, the Hall makes a fine sound passing through Widney Manor station with 8 coaches behind the tender.



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Another better than expected recording!

22. After technical problems with induced hum from the overhead wires that I experienced on a previous visit, I was pleased to have another opportunity on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2003 to get a recording of 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland* on Shap and I'm pleased to be able to report that I had no technical problems this time and that the recording was not particularly satisfactory was not my fault!

We expected this train to be quite early in the day on Shap as it was running through steam hauled from Carnforth to Glasgow and back in the same day. What we didn't anticipate was just how early it was going to be. The booked time passing Tebay proved to be 07.24!

So after a very early start we were ready at Shap Wells in plenty of time.

Just a few minutes after the booked time 6233 appeared in the distance not far above Greenholme.

In the still air the sound carried well and the loco is just audible on the recording as far away as Scout Green. Unfortunately the sound of traffic carries from the M6 motorway too!

All appeared to be going well until above Scout Green, the driver closes the regulator briefly although there was no indication of a slip.

A little later the regulator is closed once again and, as the loco passes it has been eased considerably and, of course, the safety valves have lifted.

Continuing towards the summit speed continues to fall and, eventually the train is brought to a stand.

We later discovered that they had been having injector problems all the way from Carnforth and, from the fact that the regulator had to be closed and the cylinder cocks opened, that they had also had trouble with priming which wouldn't have helped the water level.

In view of this, driver Bill Andrews was wise to stop before going over the summit to allow the boiler to be refilled. Better than dropping a plug.

However, it wasn't all bad news. I have to say that the sight was superb with steam hanging in the still air illuminated by the newly risen sun!

23. In view of the disappointing sound recording on Shap we decided that instead of returning for a late breakfast we would continue north and try for a recording on Beattock.

I had never been to the lineside there before but was aware that for most of the way the line is paralleled by the busy A74(M) so finding a good spot was not going to be easy.

After driving almost to the summit we eventually decided to have a look at a spot just below Harthope. This spot seemed to be the best that we could expect to find and, thinking we still had plenty of time, began to have a look around for the best place to set up the microphones.

We were still looking when, in the distance we heard the unmistakable sound of a Semi working hard and some quick work was required to get set up!

The recording was much better, if shorter than the one obtained on Shap but it would have been nice to have had more time!

The train had been booked a pathing stop at Quintinshill and this had been omitted hence the early arrival. I really wish that they wouldn't do that!

