

steamsounds from the lineside 2011

1. On 26th February 2011 ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 44871 & LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 5690 *Leander* worked a train from Lancaster to Buxton and back, out via Manchester and Stockport, returning via Peak Forest, Sheffield and the Calder Valley. I was very pleased to get the chance to go out for some lineside recordings and even happier that the very poor weather forecast proved not to be quite correct as, although it became quite windy, the forecast rain stayed away.

After a satisfactory recording of the pair making easy work of the climb from Manchester Victoria, our next recording of 44871 & 5690 was on their return from Buxton and we had chosen Peak Forest as our best chance of getting a good recording on the climb from Millers Dale.

Arriving there in good time we discovered that it appeared that everyone else had the same idea; the area was thronged with linesiders. I haven't seen so many in the same place since the early days of steam over the S&C when Ribbleshead used to attract hundreds!

As well as trying to find an undisturbed recording spot we also had the problem of finding shelter from the now very strong wind and the best we could do was get a little protection behind the remains of a dry stone wall but the spot we chose had the added annoyance of a Class 66 diesel ticking over on a waiting northbound freight train at the other side of the line.

At about the expected time a little steam appeared away down the line as the pair came up from Millers Dale heading for a booked, brief stop at Great Rocks Jc. about half a mile away. What happened next was almost unbelievable.

As the train reached Great Rocks Jc., the freight train across the line set off out onto the main line and stopped at the DBS signing on point just beyond Peak Forest signal box. What on earth were they thinking of? Surely it would have been sensible to give the charter a run through and let the freight, which I gather left almost 15 minutes later than its booked time, follow it.

Of course a signal stop for the charter was inevitable and the Black 5 & Jubilee eventually came to a stand almost opposite my recording spot.

The signal remained at danger for almost 10 minutes and by the time it cleared the Black 5's safety valves had lifted.

Still, the pair sound well climbing away past Peak Forest heading for Dove Holes Tunnel.

Not a bad recording I suppose but it would have been so much better without the signal stop.

2. An opportunity to get recordings on Shap and over the S&C presented itself when, on 26th March 2011 Vintage trains ran a tour from Tyseley to Carlisle and back, out via the West Coast Main Line and returning via Settle hauled by the LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 *Princess Elizabeth*.

The date for this train was particularly fortuitous as I had an Australian friend visiting at the time who was understandably keen to see steam on Shap for the first time and I'm pleased to say that he wasn't disappointed with 6201's performance with its 11 coach train.

For the return, my Australian friend would have liked to have made a recording at Ais Gill but two factors made that location unsuitable. Firstly, it was exposed to the easterly wind but more importantly we spotted a short temporary speed restriction on the approach to the summit. Perhaps next time.

Instead of Ais Gill we chose the tried and tested spot at Greengate Bridge about a mile south of Kirkby Stephen station.

Again, the wind was a bit of a problem but at least, even if the view wasn't as good as at the summit, there was some shelter here.

Once again, *Lizzie* appeared just about on time and was going very well indeed on what is often the slowest part of the climb to Ais Gill.

One side effect of the wind was that it carried sound back from the other side of Birkett Tunnel not far away so we were also able to hear 6201 accelerate once it reached the easing of the gradient at Mallerstang.

I think my Australian friend was quite pleased with his first S&C lineside recording!

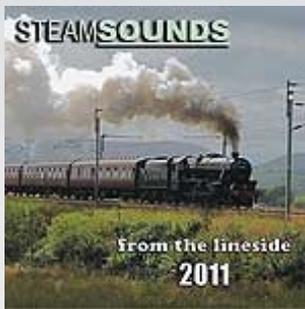
After that we headed down the motorway to try for a final recording on Whalley Bank and made it there with plenty of time to spare. Our fast run down the M6 proved fruitless as, long after the train should have passed, the information reached us that there had been difficulties with watering at Hellifield and in view of this we decided not to wait. As things eventually turned out we would have spent another hour waiting in the cold and dark so I think we made the correct decision!

3. On 16th March 2011 Vintage Trains had yet another tour featuring their GWR Castle 4-6-0 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* intended to demonstrate once again that GW locos can climb hills!

The route of this tour included the steep climbs out of Manchester Victoria and of Copy Pit.

After recording the train climbing Platting Bank our next recording was on the climb to Copy Pit and we decided to try the spot we had used before high on the opposite hillside overlooking Lydgate Viaduct.

Conditions in Manchester had been nice and calm but here there was quite a stiff breeze which made it difficult to find shelter while still minimising the noise from the road down in the valley.



steamsounds from the lineside 2011

Because of the strong breeze we didn't expect to hear much as 5043 approached and so it proved but once through the short tunnel below the Castle sounds to be going well with its 9 coach load.

We had hoped that, thanks to the breeze, the sound would carry back to us as 5043 continued on the climb but the arrival of a light aircraft scuppered that!

4. Little did I think that on 20th July 1986 when I left Scarborough behind 5305 on board a Scarborough Spa Express, running that year just between York & Scarborough and only on Sundays, that it would be almost 25 years before I would see the loco back in Scarborough.

So, on 2nd July 2011, I made a point of being there to see my favourite ex LMS Black 5, now carrying the number 45305, depart with a 10 coach charter returning to Liverpool.

Ok, this may not be one of my best recordings, not even one of my best Scarborough departures but I couldn't leave it out now could I?

5. On Tuesday 26th July 2011, with a good weather forecast I decided that it would be a good idea to get out for a couple of lineside recordings of the Scarborough Spa Express while 45407 was still in use and naturally my first post of call was Wakefield where I walked up to the park at Wrenthorpe.

Now recording in a public park on a fine day is fraught with difficulty as there may well be lots of other people about who, quite understandably, will be curious as to what that man is doing with that hairy thing on a tripod. Still, as other than recording at Outwood, something I'd planned for the evening, I don't know of anywhere else in the area so set up my equipment in what I hoped would prove to be a less frequented spot where I was lucky in that the few passers by either didn't notice me or thought it best not to approach the strange man.

Running just about on time I could just hear 45407 departing from Westgate as an East Coast service propelled by a Class 91 headed down the gradient into the station and once the London bound train has passed the Black 5 sounds to be going very well with its 11 coach load on the 1 in 100 gradient.

Once past, 45407 is clearly audible all the way to Outwood, where you can hear the loco begin to accelerate, and beyond almost to the top of the climb at Ardsley as the wind was in just the right direction to carry the sound back despite interruptions from an aircraft and another southbound train.

All in all, an excellent recording; I'll risk that spot again.

6. Another linesiding opportunity came my way on Saturday 30th July 2011 when there were two steam hauled charter trains running in the North West.

The first of these was hauled by the LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* running from Crewe to Carlisle over Shap before returning via the S&C and, as we'd recorded the loco on Shap a few times we decided it was time for a change so instead of the usual spot at Shap Wells we investigated a few locations on the climb to Grayrigg before choosing a spot near the top of the climb about half way between the long vanished signal boxes at Lambrigg and Moresdale Hall Crossings.

Conditions were not far short of perfect with a very light breeze coming from just the right direction to carry the sound to us and best of all, unlike Shap, no motorway!

At about the expected time, smoke appeared in the far distance and we were able to hear 6201 long before we could see it. 6201 was going very well with 12 coaches behind the tender and we thought that the recording we got was excellent, dare I say better than Shap? We'll be trying that spot again.

7. For 6201's train returning from Carlisle and still wanting to try somewhere new, we headed for the top of Birkett Tunnel, another spot we had considered before but somewhere that is only possible in the calmest conditions which we had that day.

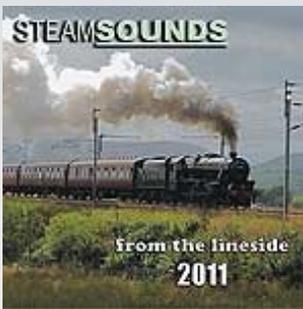
Although wind wasn't a problem, flying ants were; there were hordes of the things which made standing around not the most pleasant experience. Still, the recording made it all worthwhile as we heard 6201 all the way from Kirkby Stephen then, after passing through the tunnel below, continuing on to the easier gradient at Mallerstang and accelerating well on the way to Ais Gill.

8. Our last recording was of the other charter out that day running from York to Carlisle and back hauled by ex LMS Royal Scot 4-6-0 46115 *Scots Guardsman* returning from Carlisle and as we'd never recorded this loco at Ais Gill, we went there and found yet more flying ants though not quite the swarms of the things that had been so troublesome at Birkett.

While the Scot was going well enough with its 12 coach train when it arrived I had expected something a little better from this loco but, no real complaints and I was quite happy with this recording to round off what had been a most successful day at the lineside.

9. I had been very much less than impressed at not being able to be present on Shap to see my favourite Black 5, 45305 on its first two runs on the route but luckily my friend and his car were available on 20th August 2011 for what was expected to be the third and last run, for the present at least, for the loco over Shap. Third time lucky perhaps?

On its previous two runs 45305 with a 10 coach train had, as I would have expected, acquitted itself well on the route and we had hopes that the same would apply on this run but, arriving at Shap Wells, we weren't expecting the kind of performance we



steamsounds from the lineside 2011

were about to witness.

Conditions were not at all bad; there was a little more breeze than we would have liked but at least it wasn't carrying the sound of the motorway towards us and there was a chance that it would carry the sound of 45305 from further down the bank.

At around the expected time a little smoke appeared down towards Tebay and we were pleased to be able to faintly hear the Black 5 before we could see it as it came out of the cutting above Greenholme Bridge.

As I stood watching and listening to the approaching train it seemed to me that it was going far too fast for a Black 5 on 10! Was there an assisting diesel? No there wasn't, this was simply a Black 5 in top form going well. Indeed, going amazingly well and it passed us making a truly superb sound.

Although speed had fallen on the 1 in 75 gradient it hadn't fallen as much as I'd have expected and I'm told that it was still doing 34 mph passing the summit, surely some kind of a record for a Black 5 on 10.

Third time lucky? I'll say we were!

10. Once again there were two trains out that day both returning from Carlisle via Settle and after getting a recording of 45305, two hours later it was 44932's turn to pass Greengate Bridge at Wharton south of Kirkby Stephen and it made an interesting comparison with 45305.

Our recording spot behind the dry stone wall wasn't quite so comfortable as it had been two hours earlier as, although the wind that had troubled us had dropped so we didn't need as much shelter, it had started raining and worse, the still conditions proved ideal for lots of midges to attack us. They were the biting kind too!

As often happens here the train arrived a little earlier than expected, no doubt due to needing less time than booked for water at Appleby and it was a little unfortunate that this seemed to coincide with some noisy motorbikes on the road about a mile away down in the valley but once again, sound carried back from beyond Birkett Tunnel very well. 44932 wasn't going as fast as 45305 had been (it did have 12 rather than 10 coaches behind the tender) and I have to say it didn't sound quite so spot on. No complaints though, it was certainly going well enough.

11. Two days later there was another to record 45305 this time working a train from Liverpool to Carlisle and, as the weather seemed fine and calm, I decided to try Blea Moor.

Waiting at Settle for the train up to Ribbleshead there was hardly a breath of wind but, as you might expect, up at Blea Moor there was a strong breeze so I wasn't able to set up my equipment in as good a spot as I might have wished but did find enough shelter eventually.

Once again, 45305 with 11 coaches behind the tender was just about on time. Once over Ribbleshead Viaduct and clear of a short 20 mph temporary speed restriction 45305 again sounds absolutely spot on taking this heavy train on the gradient into Blea Moor Tunnel.

12. On 28th September 2011 our long wait for a steam hauled train on the line south from Scarborough towards Bridlington ended. Why this line doesn't see more charter trains is something of a mystery as it can make an excellent round trip from York.

Motive power for this train was the ex LMS 8F 2-8-0 48151, a loco that I haven't had the chance to record from the lineside for some time and our first recording of the loco on its way from York was made at Malton at a spot we have used before by the river bank to the east of the station.

We've had mixed results when recording here but this was one of the good days and 48151 was going very well indeed when it passed heading for Scarborough.

13. Of course the recording we really wanted was later in the day on the steep climb away from Hunmanby and we went to a spot about a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away from the station where we found some difficulty in finding shelter from the wind which, although it was stronger than we would have liked, was at least coming from the right direction to carry the sound back to us.

The line from Hunmanby to Bridlington was singled many years ago and 48151 was booked to cross a service train on the double track section between there and Filey but the service train was late and can be heard coming down the gradient as this recording begins. I've left it in as it's not all that common to hear main line trains running on jointed track these days with so much have been replaced with the continuous welded variety.

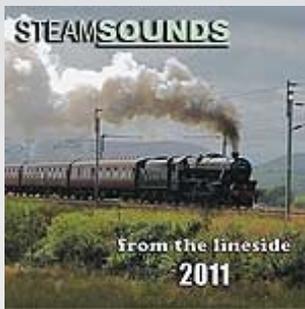
With the service train away, 48151 can proceed and after an initial slip on starting, makes a sure footed start on the climb accelerating this heavy, 13 coach train in fine style as it passes.

As we hoped, the wind did carry the sound back well and we were more than happy with our recording. Let's hope we don't have to wait too long for another chance to record on this excellent route.

14. As part of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway Autumn Steam Gala, on Sunday 2nd October, trains were running on the main line from Whitby to Battersby and for the last of these we went to a spot near Glaisdale.

Locos working these trains were 45428, which had worked the previous train and was already waiting as the train from Whitby, hauled by Black 5 4-6-0 44767, approaches on the climb from Grosmont then, with tokens exchanged, 44767 sounds very good departing.

Not far from our recording spot was a bridge over the River Esk and as the Black 5 approaches, the regulator is closed and the



steamsounds from the lineside 2011

safety valves lift briefly while the train negotiates the speed restriction over the bridge. Once clear 44767 sounds fine accelerating on the rising gradient and, thanks to the breeze, sound carried back very well as it heads for Danby and Battersby.

As the sound of 44767 fades away, just audible is 45428 departing from Glaisdale and heading off down the gradient to Grosmont.

15. A steam hauled train over Shap and Beattock on 12th November 2011 was sufficient incentive to get us out to the lineside with the added bonus of a reasonable weather forecast. The train we were out to record, hauled by the LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 *Princess Elizabeth*, was organised by Vintage Trains running from Crewe to Glasgow, returning the following day, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of that loco's record breaking non-stop run over the West Coast Main Line from Euston to Glasgow in November 1937.

For our recording on Shap, as we have recorded the loco at Shap Wells many times we decided to have a change and after looking at a couple of spots near the summit decided to try Salterwath which is about a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of our usual spot at Shap Wells. Our chosen spot on the east side of the line had the advantage of being more open but the disadvantages were that it was a little breezy, was nearer to the noisy motorway and didn't give us much of a view of the approaching train. Still, it was worth a try as an alternative and I am more than happy with the result.

'Lizzie' turned up just about on time and although we couldn't see it, we must have just been able to hear it before it reached Greenholme going pretty well on 9 coaches with the addition of a Class 47 diesel at the rear. As the train passed we could see that the diesel wasn't assisting as the buffers between it and the last coach didn't appear to be compressed. Sound carried back quite well and we could hear the train reach the summit about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away.

We'll be trying that spot again.

16. While the M6 and A74(M) are very useful in reaching recording spots on this route, they are something of an audible nuisance when recording, particularly so on Beattock where the road parallels the railway at close quarters for the entire climb; there is no escape from the noise! So far, the best spot we have found is at Greskine high on the hillside on the east side of the valley opposite the railway. Here the slope of the hillside below us hides the road below and does reduce the noise slightly but only slightly; there really is no escape.

The train had an almost 3 hour layover in Carlisle so that 6201 could be serviced which gave us plenty of time to get to Greskine but, by the time the train reached us it was almost dark.

Despite the road noise we could just hear 'Lizzie' approaching for some time and, as the train passed below us going very well on the steep gradient it looked superb leaving a trail of steam hanging in the still air; it was well worth coming out just to see that - and the sound wasn't bad either!

Mind you, I can't help thinking how much better recording at this spot would be if we could only get rid of that road...

17. As usual, in the weeks before Christmas this year, York saw more than its fair share of charter trains bringing visitors to the ever popular St. Nicholas Fayre which I sure is excellent if that's your thing but when I visited on 17th December 2011, Christmas shopping wasn't on the agenda.

On that date there were two charters visiting the city, both steam hauled. The first of these was from London Kings Cross and while it had been hauled to York by 70013, the return was to have the A4 60019 *Bittern*, running as 4492 *Dominion of New Zealand* as motive power.

As we have done in previous years we went to a spot opposite the site of Dringhouses Yard, just at the south end of Holgate Sidings and after we had made a reasonable recording of the A4 we were looking forward to something rather noisier from the loco hauling the other charter train. This was GWR Castle 4-6-0 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* returning its train to Tyseley.

Our expectation of more noise proved correct and we could hear the Castle all the way from the station and, after it had passed, for some time as it headed south with its 9 coach train.

Not a bad recording to round off the year.

