

steamsounds

from the lineside

On the Settle to Carlisle Line

Volume One - Northbound

The northbound run from Settle Jn. to Blea Moor Tunnel, at one time referred to by footplate crews, particularly firemen, as the Long Drag has always been a test both of locomotives and of enginemanship so we'll start this disk not far from the start at Settle station...

1. Through the summer of 2009 a regular programme of trains over the route saw regular appearances of the LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 5690 'Leander' on the Settle to Carlisle line but this recording is of an autumn run on 17th October 2009 when it worked a charter for Vintage Trains from Hellifield to Carlisle before returning south via Shap and as I was passing through Settle that day I thought trying for a recording might be worthwhile.

To increase the amount of traffic that the line can accommodate, new intermediate block signals had been installed at various locations to shorten previously lengthy sections and the signals at Horton-in-Ribblesdale meant that trains were now able to follow each other with much shorter headways than in the past. While this is excellent for increasing traffic on the line it doesn't make it easy when you arrive at Settle on a service train if the steam hauled charter is just 10 minutes behind and you need 15 to get to a recording spot. It's even worse if the service train is running late as it was on this occasion so I had no option but to try for a recording on the station; not something that I would normally contemplate but there was no alternative.

As the recording begins a Leeds bound service train is just arriving on the opposite platform causing some panic among the many photographers who didn't want a DMU spoiling their master shot. Panic increased as steam appeared over the trees in the distance but, fortunately for the photographers, the DMU departed before 'Leander' appeared coming up the gradient and passes going well at the head on 9 coaches.

It was a shame that I couldn't go elsewhere for a recording as conditions were excellent with only a very light breeze but I wasn't too unhappy with the recording I got on the station.

2. Saturday 29th October 1988 was a glorious Autumn day with plenty of sunshine and only a light breeze so, as ex LMS 8F 2-8-0 48151 was working a train over the Settle to Carlisle line, I decided to go to Settle and combine a bit of lineside recording with a walk round Langcliffe and Attermire and this recording was made high on the hillside east of the line to the north of Settle.

Autumn on the line can be a difficult time of year as in quite a few places, fallen leaves can cause very difficult rail conditions and just the previous week another steam hauled charter had slipped to a stand so it is hardly surprising that a slip is audible in the recording. However, after the sound of the train had faded away it was some considerable time later before I saw the train disappear from view beyond Helwith Bridge.

3. The summer of 2012 saw a regular programme of trains running from York to Carlisle and back and the last of these ran on Sunday 9th September 2012 with ex LMS Black Five 4-6-0 45305 as motive power.

The day was quite windy so for our recording of the northbound run we went to Helwith Bridge where a handy dry stone wall would provide some shelter.

The train was quite late, by almost an hour, when we first heard it 45305 coming up the 1 in 100 gradient having passed through Stainforth Tunnel.

My favourite Black Five sounds to be going well at the head of its 11 coach train and accelerates nicely on the short level section here before heading off towards Horton-in-Ribblesdale now back on the 1 in 100 gradient.

4. We'll stay at Helwith Bridge for the next recording which features a class of loco that in 'real' steam days would never have been seen on the line.

Locos of the Great Western Railway and lines in the North of England in the past haven't mixed all that well and, generally speaking, have been a great disappointment to their supporters, even the fanatical ones.

Now, it's a well known fact that I don't have a particularly high regard for the products of Swindon and my opinion remains that, while the GWR did have some of the best locomotive designs in the world in the 1920s and 30s, it's a shame that development didn't continue. It was almost as though they were saying; 'Now we have the best, we don't have to improve anymore.'. Fortunately, other railways did continue that development and I have always been very glad that William Stanier managed to escape in time...

Back in 1985 during GW 150, amongst all the disasters, there was one GW loco that always seemed to do well on the trains

that it worked and that was 'Clun Castle' which proved far more capable than other locos of the same class thanks to improvements made by BR on the basic 1920s design and although Clun is not currently a runner, the appearance of another 'improved' castle, 5043 'Earl of Mount Edgcumbe', on the main line gave hope for some better performances than other members of the same class had produced in the north.

On 16th October 2010 5043 was to work a train over the Settle to Carlisle line, the route that other Swindon locos had come to grief on and I felt that the title of the train, 'The Pride of Swindon' was asking for trouble; well, we all know what pride comes before...

In this instance, pride did not precede a fall and the loco performed very well with its train of 10 coaches with the addition of a Class 47 diesel attached at the rear no doubt added for insurance, just in case, and of course to fuel speculation about did it or didn't it push. Reliable, as well as unreliable, sources say it did push northbound but not southbound.

Having had a look at the loco looking very shiny at Hellifield we went to Helwith Bridge for our first recording and, when we got there with plenty of time to spare, conditions seemed excellent with only a light breeze from the north east. Of course, by the time we set up our equipment on the hillside which backs on to the quarry the breeze had strengthened somewhat; isn't it always the way?

The Castle was due off Hellifield at 10:45, following behind the 09:47 service train from Leeds so we knew that a DMU would pass first but we never saw it and, while we were still expecting the service train, to our surprise, steam appeared down towards Stainforth.

From our spot it was impossible to tell if the diesel was providing any assistance but 5043 seemed to be doing very well coming up the 1 in 100 gradient before accelerating on the short level section below our microphones. Having passed, the wind carried sound back well and we must have still been hearing the Castle well above Horton - in - Ribblesdale until a service train appears on the scene heading downhill towards Settle.

Not a bad recording and 5043 was just as noisy as expected.

5. In 2004 we had a series of trains running over the line which started at Oxenhope on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway though, if memory serves, this train on 22nd August started from the K&WVR's platform at Keighley.

Ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 45407 was motive power and is heard in this recording going very well passing Horton-in-Ribblesdale.

6. 11th August is a date that somehow sticks in the memory.

Fortunately British Rail's intention that, that day in 1968 was to be the last time that a steam hauled passenger train would to run on a British main line hasn't been realised (and, with a bit of luck, never will). So, what better way to mark the 40th Anniversary of that date (well, we can forgive being just one day out) than with a steam hauled train running over the same route.

Even better, 10th August 2008 saw the first main line run of the BR Standard Britannia Pacific 70013 'Oliver Cromwell' for 40 years; its previous main line passenger run having been at the head of the aforementioned train in 1968.

Back in 1968 I was fortunate in that a friend's father took us in his car first to Blea Moor then to Mallerstang for the return and I had hoped to go to those two places 40 years on and see the re-run. 40 years before we had a fine, warm summer's day, warm enough to melt my chocolate biscuits but Sunday 10th August 2008 was anything but fine. From a sound recording point of view the worst feature of the weather was the wind, of which, there was plenty.

This meant that getting recordings at the same two locations wasn't a possibility and for the northbound run we ended up at our usual recording spot, behind the handy dry stone wall at Selside.

That dry stone wall proved not just handy but essential. As well as giving shelter from the wind which you can hear battering against the wall as this recording begins, it also protected us from the frequent heavy showers; my intended recording spot at Blea Moor would have been horrendous.

About 10 minutes later than expected we sighted smoke rising over the hills down towards Horton-in-Ribblesdale and as the train came into sight I was able to hear something that I haven't heard at the lineside for 40 years; the sound of a Brit's whistle which still sends shivers down my spine.

With 11 coaches behind the tender, Peter Walker at the regulator and Craig Stinchcombe on the shovel 70013 was being driven hard and making a fine sound as it passed. Well worth hanging about in the wind and rain for.

While I would have liked to have been at Blea Moor for this, even had the weather been kinder, I doubt that I'd have got a recording as good as this one.

7. The opportunity to record two steam hauled charters on the Settle to Carlisle line the same day was not to be missed on 14th February 1998.

The first of these trains was an out and back for Mel Chamberlain's Days Out which had started at Hull with ex LMS Black Five 4-6-0 44767.

We saw the train first just to the north of Bell Busk where the Black 5 was going well and just about on time before rushing off to Selside via a diversion due to road works and didn't think that we would have much time before the train arrived. As it turned out we had plenty of time before the smoke appeared above Horton-in-Ribblesdale.

The day was very still with sound carrying well and 44767 was audible almost as soon as it came into view - indeed it was to be almost 12 minutes before I turned off my recorder.

We had noticed that the Black Five had a Class 47 coupled inside to provide heating (and assistance if required) when it passed us at Bell Busk and, under these circumstances we could have expected the 47 to provide some assistance. Fortunately, from a recording point of view, it didn't and just added to the weight of the train which has the Black 5 really digging in on the 1 in 100 gradient at about 15 mph as it passes the recorder.

Eventually, the train reaches the easier gradients at Ribbleshead and can be heard accelerating slightly before going out of earshot.

8. On 18th December 1999 Twenty First Century Trains and the West Coast Railway Co. ran another in a series of special trains from Hellifield to Carlisle and back and, on this occasion, motive power was provided by GWR Hall 4-6-0 5972 'Olton Hall'.

This is how the loco sounded passing Selside with a sensible 9 coach load behind the tender.

This train had originally been due back into Hellifield in the early evening but due to pathing and other problems ended up returning via Shap and Carnforth so it was after midnight rather than early evening when the train got back to Hellifield. Not the sort of thing to encourage Joe Public to travel again.

9. I have already commented that GW locos and our Northern hills don't always get on and in 1998 the loco which was confidently expected to show us northerners how it should be done was GWR King 4-6-0 6024 'King Edward I'.

This recording was made at Ribbleshead on 28th March 1998, the loco's second attempt on the line and a few weeks previously I had had a ride on the line behind the loco. During that run, although it wasn't fast, we did get to our destination without any out of course stops though I recall saying, only slightly tongue in cheek, to one ardent GW fan's disgust that I thought the loco had done almost as well as a Black Five!

To see how the King would do on its second run on the line we got to our usual spot at Selside in plenty of time and having set up our recorders we stood in the adjacent field talking and keeping an eye open for signs of smoke in the direction of Horton-in-Ribblesdale.

After some considerable time a cloud of black smoke appeared over the hill beyond Horton and we went back to our recorders to get ready. The smoke didn't seem to be moving very fast and, we eventually realised that it was stationary so we returned to the field to await events.

Of some concern was the fact that along with the train a helicopter had appeared and was circling the smoke. Fortunately the King took so long to regain boiler pressure that the occupants of the helicopter gave up and went away.

Eventually the train got under way again though when it passed us at Selside things were obviously not going well.

After the train had passed we strolled back to the car which was pointing towards Ribbleshead and in view of this we decided to follow the train, thinking that we might just get to Ribbleshead in time to see it going over the Viaduct.

Approaching Ribbleshead we could see more clouds of black smoke and found that, that once again, the King had stopped short of steam about a mile short of the station. So it was out of the car and into another field in time for this recording of the 4-6-0 restarting.

As 6024 gets the train under way you can clearly hear the air brake pump working. Without air braking I think that the King would have had many more stops. With air brakes the King was able to keep on the move with very little pressure in the boiler which would have been insufficient to keep vacuum brakes off.

10. In the notes to a previous track you have already read that in 1968 I saw what was supposed to be the final steam hauled train at Blea Moor so it was good to be able to be there on 12th September 2009 to record the BR Standard Britannia Pacific 70013 'Oliver Cromwell' hauling The Hadrian, steam hauled from Hellifield to Carlisle then via Hexham, Low Fell and the ECML back to York.

Conditions were very much better and, although it was breezy, it was dry and sunny.

70013 with its 12 coach train turned up about 5 minutes early and after being eased approaching Ribbleshead Viaduct the Brit sounds fine passing and can be heard all the way to Blea Moor Tunnel.

Even if it was over a year late, it was really nice to finally get that recording of 70013 at Blea Moor.

11. On 2nd August 2003 saw ex LNER A4 Pacific 60009 'Union of South Africa' working a train from Blackpool to Carlisle and 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.

12. With the successful completion of much of the track refurbishment which culminated in a 4 week possession of the line in November 2000 Railtrack decided to mark the event and generate some rare positive publicity for themselves by operating a steam hauled ballast train from Hellifield to Carlisle using David Smith's ex LMS 8F2-8-0 48151.

I have to admit that when I first heard about this I was sure that it had to be a wind-up since Railtrack had never been particularly pro-steam. However, on 19th December 2000 the train, reporting number 7P50, made up of 20 Dogfish wagons with a brake van at each end was booked to leave Hellifield at 8.55 am taking the empty wagons up to Ribbleshead for loading with stockpiled ballast still remaining at the temporary depot which had been set up there.

The weather on this day could have been worse, but not much, at least it stayed reasonably dry but it was very dull and there was a moderate south easterly wind which made recording a little difficult at times.

On arrival at Ribbleshead 48151 and train set back into the siding at the west side of the station and loading of the wagons commenced.

As the train wasn't due to leave until 12.57 we had plenty of time (or so we thought) to go for a cup of tea.

Returning to Ribbleshead at about 12.00 we thought that we would have plenty of time to find a suitable spot somewhere near Blea Moor signal box. However, as we walked up towards the box we were somewhat dismayed to hear the unmistakable sounds of an 8F preparing to depart while we tried to reassure each other that they were probably only shunting.

It soon became obvious that this was not the case so, it was out with the recorder, find a bit of shelter, hope for the best - and only just in time.

Since I was, for various (mainly financial) reasons unable to get any recordings of freight trains in 'real' steam days it was nice to get this one.

48151 is audible right from the start at Ribbleshead and all the way into Blea Moor Tunnel.

We had already made a recording of the train at Selside but now with loaded wagons behind the tender the 8F sounds to be having to work far harder than it did earlier and sounds fine once off the easier gradients over Ribbleshead Viaduct on to the 1 in 100 gradient past Blea Moor Signal Box.

It would be nice to think that this sort of thing might happen again. If it does, whatever the weather, I'll be there!

13. Once through Blea Moor Tunnel most of the difficulties for a north bound train are over but there is still a short climb from just after Garsdale to the summit of the line at Ais Gill passing through Moorcock and Shotlock Hill Tunnels on the way. This recording was made at Lunds between the two tunnels.

On 30th July 2011 ex LMS Royal Scot 4-6-0 46115 'Scots Guardsman' was hauling one of a regular series of trains running from York to Carlisle and back. With 12 coaches behind the tender the Scot sounds to be motoring along nicely when it passed us on the final climb to Ais Gill.

14. On 22nd March 2005 His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales had a ride over the Settle - Carlisle line in the Royal Train which for only the second time since the 1960's was to be steam hauled.

The loco chosen was the LMS Coronation Pacific 6233 'Duchess of Sutherland', the same loco that had hauled the Royal Train conveying HM The Queen & The Duke of Edinburgh along the North Wales Coast in 2002.

6233 was waiting to haul the train from Hellifield after it had arrived from Carnforth diesel hauled having dropped the Prince off at Clapham where he visited the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and met local residents before travelling by road to Settle where he rejoined the Royal Train for the steam hauled run to Carlisle.

After having already made a recording at Selside we headed for the Royal Train's next stop at Kirkby Stephen where Prince Charles unveiled a plaque to commemorate his visit to the recently renovated station.

From Kirkby Stephen the Prince travelled on the footplate for the 15 minute run to Appleby.

Freight trains proved to be a feature of the day as, when we found a suitable recording spot just north of the station we also found a southbound Gypsum train held at Kirkby Stephen's home signal.

Again we were lucky as once the Royal party had returned to the down platform the freight train was allowed to proceed and as this recording begins it can just be heard climbing away through the station as 6233 departs and accelerates rapidly on the 1 in 100 falling gradients.

It would be interesting to know who was driving...

15. It's worth remembering that in the 1980s the Settle to Carlisle line was under threat of closure and by the beginning of 1989 a closure date in May had been announced. In view of this much of the steam programme for the first part of the year was centred on the line. In addition fares for these trains had been increased from £25 to £38 with the 'final' trains in May selling at what was then a massive £50 a seat. Of course we now know that the line didn't close but at the time it seemed a serious possibility.

In view of the high fares, on 7th January 1989 I decided to do a bit of lineside recording and after getting a recording at Horton-in-Ribblesdale of ex SR Merchant Navy Pacific 35028 'Clan Line' heading north, thanks to the train having a long stop at Appleby, I was able to catch the following service train and get another recording of 35028 departing for Carlisle.

The diesel noises you can hear as the train departs aren't coming from a diesel loco assisting, they are coming from ETHEL there just to provide train heating. These ETHEL units were a bit of a nightmare for sound recordists. They were Class 25 diesels with their traction motors removed and were introduced to provide power for the electric heating once steam heating was banned; a noisier diesel could hardly have been found. ETHEL is short for Electric Train Heating Ex Locomotive.

For the last recording on this disk I'm going to return to one of my favourite recording spot on the line for a recording of one of my favourite locomotives and you are going to need your headphones on to get the best out of it...

16. There are some days when it really doesn't seem like it will be worth getting out of bed in the morning and one such was Saturday 4th February 2012 and almost the only reason that day was the prospect of my favourite Black 5, 45305, working a train over the Settle to Carlisle line though in view of the weather forecaster's prophesies of doom, actually going out seemed like a very foolish venture. However, over here where I live in the east, as the day dawned it was fine and calm if very cold so I had no excuse for not joining my friend for our first recording trip of the year.

We had already decided that, as we weren't going to stay out for the return over Shap, we thought it would be worthwhile to try to get a recording before Hellifield and went to a spot near Nappa where my friend assured me that he had made a very good recording a few years ago. Well, all I can say is he must have been lucky as when 45305 passed us the regulator appeared to be firmly closed; we were probably a bit too near the stop at Hellifield.

By this time the forecast snow was falling steadily and the wind increasing but just the same, off we went to our usual spot at Selside hoping that our first attempt wasn't going to set a trend.

Arriving at Selside on the snow covered roads we set off through the falling snow hoping to find a little shelter from the wind behind a handy dry stone wall which, although the wind was coming from the south, almost straight up the track, we did manage to get some shelter but not from the snow which can be heard pattering round the microphone as the recording begins. Huddled behind the wall trying to keep the circulation going and the snow off my recorder I'll admit that I was starting to wish I'd stayed in bed when, at about the expected time, I started to hear the sound of the approaching train.

One of the good things about this spot is that it gives a good view of the approaching train. That is on a good day which this

wasn't and without being able to see, I assumed that 45305 had already reached Horton-in-Ribblesdale since that is where the first sounds usually come from but then the sound stopped suddenly. Was there a slip? It was hard to tell but after a few seconds the sound resumed and after a while I began to think that perhaps I was hearing the loco from much farther away. A little later this was confirmed by the obvious sound of the loco accelerating on the level section at Helwith Bridge; the gap in the sound before was the loco passing through Stainforth Tunnel which, I might add is over 6 miles from our recording spot.

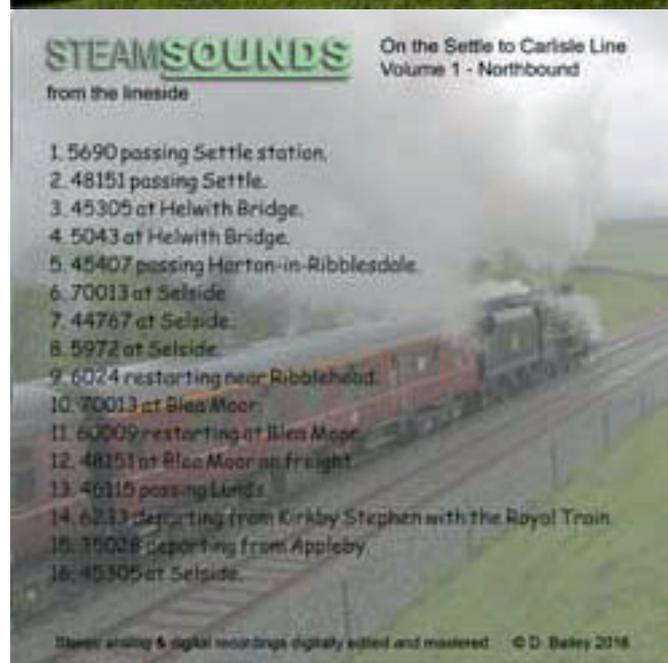
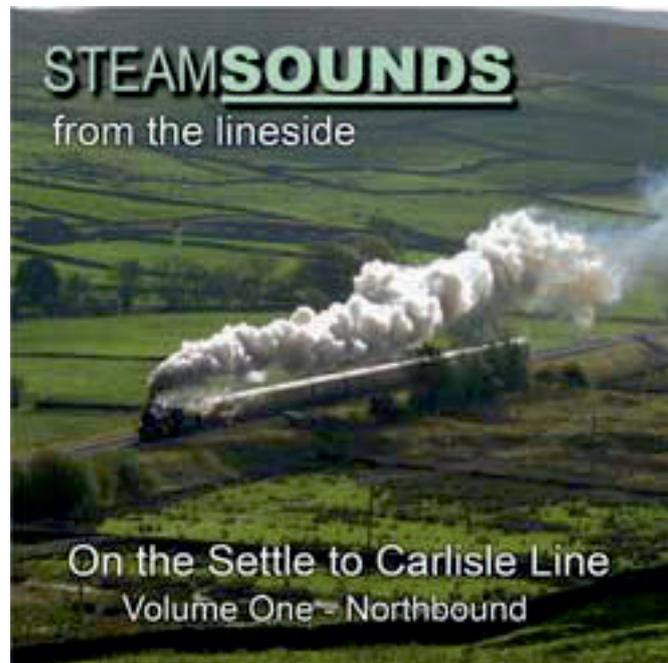
Continuing on the 1 in 100 gradient after Helwith Bridge the sound from the loco continued to grow particularly once it reached the more open parts above Horton although we still couldn't see it through the falling snow. As it approaches, as usual, 45305 sounds to be on top form and well in command of its 11 coach train.

Before it passes a southbound service train hurries down the gradient towards Settle.

Due to the strength of the wind we didn't expect to hear very much as the train headed for Ribbleshead and, once it had passed under the bridge at Selside Shaw we heard no more.

Well, what an excellent recording to start off the year.

So you see, sometimes, even when it seems complete madness, it really is worthwhile getting out of bed.



1. 5690 passing Settle station.
2. 48151 passing Settle.
3. 45305 at Helwith Bridge.
4. 5043 at Helwith Bridge.
5. 45407 passing Horton-in-Ribblesdale.
6. 70013 at Selside.
7. 44767 at Selside.
8. 5972 at Selside.
9. 6024 restarting near Ribbleshead.
10. 70013 at Blea Moor.
11. 60009 restarting at Blea Moor.
12. 48151 at Blea Moor as freight.
13. 46115 passing Lunds.
14. 6213 departing from Kirkby Stephen with the Royal Train.
15. 75028 departing from Appleby.
16. 45305 at Selside.

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