



# steamsounds

from the lineside

On the Settle to Carlisle Line

Volume Two - Southbound

While the northbound climb on the Settle to Carlisle line from Settle Jn. to Blea Moor has always been considered the more difficult it would be wrong to think that the southbound climb to Ais Gill is easy. That would be far from the truth as, although it isn't continuous, it is longer as southbound trains are climbing most of the way from Carlisle...

1. On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008 there were two steam hauled trains running over the Settle to Carlisle line and the second train working over the line was hauled by the LMS Coronation Pacific 6233 'Duchess of Sutherland'. This had worked north to Carlisle via the East Coast Main Line and across through Hexham. We decided to try for a recording somewhere on the initial climb out of Carlisle near Cumwhinton and eventually ended up at the site of Howe & Co's Siding. This proved to be a bad choice. For one thing, over the fields a farmer had finally had the chance to get a second cut from one of his fields and was busy bailing hay - can't blame him for that, who knew when the next spell of dry weather would be. There is one advantage here however; the presence of the signal box, the home signal giving some warning of any approaching trains so when shortly after the booked departure time the signal came off we assumed that 6233 was on its way. We discovered that we were wrong when a late running service train ambled past. The speed of the DMU should have given us a clue that we were in the wrong place for a good recording but we stayed where we were and, about 20 minutes later, when 6233 turned up with its train of 11 coaches with the added weight of a diesel on the back, we heard not a sound from the loco until it was almost level with our recording spot. We were right in the middle of a permanent way speed restriction. Fortunately 6233 did make a little more noise as it headed away but this is not the recording we were hoping for.
2. Among my collection, although I have plenty of recordings made on the Settle to Carlisle line, few of them have been made north of Appleby. The reason is that, unless a train is timed to spend some time at Appleby, it's very difficult to get a further recording on the main part of the climb to Ais Gill. With the train running on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2004 we knew we'd have plenty of time and even had time to see the train in Appleby station before heading for Ais Gill after making this recording at Long Marton. The train was double headed by Standard Class 4 2-6-0 76079 and Unrebuilt Bullied Battle of Britain Pacific 34067 'Tangmere' and we hoped that the locos would still be accelerating after the speed restriction at Kirkby Thore. As you can hear in this recording when 76079, which was sporting a Pines Express headboard and masquerading as 76029 to produce an authentic Somerset & Dorset pairing with 34067 arrived, neither loco working particularly hard.
3. The summer of 2014 was a dry one and fire risk became a problem resulting in some regions of Network Rail instituting a steam ban. The worst of these was in the North East so all we had around York were diesels. Other regions had a different view and elsewhere, most trains ran though some had diesel assistance to minimise the risk.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July a Cumbrian Mountain Express ran as booked with ex LNER A4 Pacific 60009 'Union of South Africa' as motive power running north over Shap to Carlisle before returning south over the Settle to Carlisle line and this train didn't even have a diesel on the back.

For the return from Carlisle, as we had recorded this engine many times on the climb to Ais Gill we decided to do something different and went to Appleby to record the restart after the water stop; at least that was the plan.

By the time we heard a distant chime whistle from our spot opposite the site of the dairy south of the station, the train was a good 15 or 20 minutes late and, to our surprise, didn't stop. So instead of the noisy restart we'd hoped to record we got 60009 passing at speed. Not what we'd wanted at all.

4. On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2012 ex LMS Royal Scot 4-6-0 46115 'Scots Guardsman' worked a train from York to Carlisle and back.

For the return from Carlisle, we had determined to try to find somewhere new to record and after looking at a few places between Griseburn and Kirkby Stephen we eventually decided to record at Stockber about a mile south of Griseburn where the initial 1 in 100 gradient ends. The drawback with this location was that, to get shelter from the wind we had to set up alongside a track leading to a farm and I recall saying to my friend that if we tried here, 'You know what will happen?' and, sure enough, as 46115 approached, a van arrived and drove down to the farm. While it was nice to have an 'I told you so!' moment I could have done without that.

Still, with a bit of careful editing, I was able to get rid of the van and I have to say I was quite pleased with the recording as I didn't think the Scot would be sounding quite so good.

5. On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2012 LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 'Princess Elizabeth' worked a tour for Vintage Trains to Carlisle out via Shap and back over the Settle to Carlisle line.

As the day seemed reasonably calm we decided that the shelter from dry stone walls at our usual spots weren't required so set off to look for an alternative, preferably somewhere we hadn't tried before and ended up at Gallansay which is mid-way between Griseburn and Crosby Garret not far from another spot we had some success at; Stockber.

The first field we tried was full of sheep; not usually a problem but these seemed particularly friendly and every single one came over to us baa-ing lustily; I think they thought they were about to be fed, so that was no good. The field at the opposite side of the road although not quite so suitable in other ways was devoid of livestock so that's where we set up.

Thanks to the internet we had been tracking the train's progress and knew that it had reached the water stop Appleby on time but as usually happens, it departed early and, as this recording begins 6201 can just be heard beginning to accelerate as it reaches easier gradients at Griseburn about a mile away then, still accelerating, passes making a fine sound with 11 coaches behind the tender.

6. On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009 46115 'Scots Guardsman' worked a train both ways over the Settle to Carlisle line and for the return we went to a spot we have used many times for recordings near Greengate Bridge at Wharton not far south of Kirkby Stephen station.

Ais Gill would have been first choice for our first recordings of this loco on the line but because there was a strong wind blowing the lack of shelter there made that seem a bad idea.

While my friend went to our usual spot at the top of the cutting north of the bridge, I went along the track heading the other way where I found a suitable dry stone wall for shelter.

46115 was due off Appleby at 15:43 but, knowing that times are not always adhered to and that there was always a possibility that as soon as enough water had been taken the train would leave, I had my recorder turned on shortly before ten to four and not a minute too soon as no sooner had I got the recorder running than a faint but distinct roar could be heard coming from the north.

Now, I've heard similar sounds before and thought it was a train only to discover that it was actually coming from an aircraft but this time there was no mistake for the sound continued to grow becoming clearer and clearer on the gradient to Kirkby Stephen.

While the wind might have been a problem for choice of location, at least it was also carrying the sound well and I suspect that we could hear the Scot as far away as Smardale.

In due course Scots Guardsman burst under the Greengate Bridge and passed going very well indeed.

The gradient leading up to Birkett Tunnel is often the slowest part of the climb to Ais Gill but no one watching would have thought so on this day. An excellent performance with 470 tons behind the tender and what a superb sound.

7. We'll stay at the same spot which has become a favourite of mine over the years for a couple more recordings such as this one made on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2012 of the BR Standard Pacific 70013 'Oliver Cromwell'. Once again we had to take advantage of the dry stone walls to provide shelter from the strong wind.
- I've made many recordings here over the years and have often heard the loco before it reaches Kirkby Stephen but while waiting this time it took me a while to realise that the faint roar I could hear was actually 70013 approaching and it took even longer to realise that the sound I was hearing was coming from much further away than usual.
- The sound only became clear once the train emerged from the cuttings north of Kirkby Stephen but passing our recording spot, as you can hear, the Brit was going really well on the gradient and soon reaches Birkett Tunnel.
- Another very good performance.
8. The next recording concerns another Vintage Trains charter running from Tyseley to Carlisle and back, outward via Shap returning over the Settle to Carlisle line and this one was planned to be double headed.
- Now, I don't really like double headers at the best of times as two locos often mean shorter recordings with less noise; this one, for example, being loaded to 11 coaches meant that each would have less than 6 to haul. However, I can appreciate that double headers with appropriate pairings can make reasonable recordings but in this case the pairing was anything but appropriate.
- The two locos involved were LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 'Princess Elizabeth' and GWR Castle 4-6-0 5043 'Earl of Mount Edgumbe'. While these are both fine locos in their own right I can see no possible attraction in running them as a double header especially when either would be quite capable of taking the train over the route single handed - and just as well.
- We didn't see the train go over Shap but while waiting at Greengate Bridge we received a message that 6201 had been failed at Carlisle with a hot axle box and the Castle would be taking train back south single handed.
- Now, as everyone knows by now, I am no great fan of Great Western engines but I have to say that I was mightily impressed with the way 5043 came up from Kirkby Stephen with its 11 coach train. However, I also have to say, as I've said before that we must remember that this is a BR modified Castle and if GW fans want me to be really and truly impressed with the products of Swindon then they'll have to produce a similar performance with an original, as built Castle.
- I'll not be holding my breath then...
9. Just a little further south from Greengate Bridge is Birkett Tunnel and as Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2011 was an extremely calm day we decided to attempt a recording from the top of the hill through which the tunnel passes. This was somewhere we'd considered in the past but it had always been too windy and while wind wasn't a problem, this turned out to be flying ant day.
- Apparently there's one day each summer when the ants take wing and this was it. Fortunately they weren't biting which is just as well as there were hordes of the things.
- The train we were there to record was hauled by the LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 'Princess Elizabeth' which had reached Carlisle over Shap before returning via the S&C.
- Putting up with flying insects proved 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.
10. This next recording was also made at Birkett Tunnel and features 6201 again though, as the weather conditions on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007 were decidedly different with a strong wind and frequent showers, we made our recordings near the south portal of Birkett Tunnel where there was some shelter.
- 6201 emerged from the tunnel just about on time with a train of 13 coaches going fairly steadily on the gradient.
- I have just one minor complaint about this recording: these days, do drivers not use the whistle when passing through tunnels? That was the only thing missing.
11. Ais Gill is always a popular spot since it gives photographers a long view of trains climbing from Mallerstang to the summit of the line but it can be a difficult place for sound recording as there is little shelter.
- In the days preceding the weekend of 24/25<sup>th</sup> July 2004 the weather forecasters had been promising fine weather and, as there were steam hauled trains over the Settle to Carlisle line on Saturday and Sunday, a couple of days making lineside recordings seemed like a good idea.
- As the weekend drew nearer the forecasts became less and less good and it came as no surprise to us as we

waited on the 24<sup>th</sup> at Ais Gill for ex LNER A4 Pacific 60009 'Union of South Africa' to find our recording being troubled by a little rain and a very strong wind.

As this recording begins a farmer further down in the valley can be heard making another circuit of his field cutting grass for silage as 60009 appears climbing the 1 in 100 gradient towards the summit.

Judging by the clag coming from the A4's chimney all was not quite as it should be with the fire and the loco sounds to be making heavy weather of the 13 coach load on the climb as it passes.

12. Over the years the LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 'Princess Elizabeth' has been a regular performer over the line and it was out on the line again on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009.

As it had been a while since we had last recorded at Ais Gill that's where we went and it was interesting to see the new Intermediate Block Signal in use there but less good to see was the disappearance of the wooden accommodation bridge which was usually referred to as Hangman's Bridge for the obvious reason. All that marked the site being some new dry stone walls and a large pile of firewood. That bridge has been a prominent feature for years.

We were also not best pleased when, having arrived, found a suitable spot and got our equipment set up, that a farmer across the valley had chosen that particular time to come out and start cutting a field for silage.

Still despite the noisy tractor across valley 6201 sounds well in command of its 12 coach train as it comes up the 1 in 100 gradient towards the summit.

13. In an earlier track you have heard a train double headed by 76079 and 34067 heading for Appleby and as this train had a long stop there we had plenty of time to get to Ais Gill for another recording.

Arriving at Ais Gill we found a suitable spot high up on the hillside and managed to find a little shelter from the strong and bitterly cold north easterly breeze.

We had about 20 minutes to wait, although it seemed longer in the cold wind, before the pair appeared in the distance at Mallerstang.

Even with a load of 13 coaches 76079 & 34067 didn't have to work all that hard on the 1 in 100 gradient towards the summit.

14. On 16<sup>th</sup> October 2010 the GWR Castle 4-6-0 5043 'Earl of Mount Edgcumbe' made its first foray over the Settle to Carlisle line and, having been sufficiently impressed with how the loco sounded on its northbound run we went to Ais Gill to record it returning south.

Once again it was a little windy but the wind was in the right direction to carry the sound to us and this time we were able to hear 5043 for some time before it appeared round the curve from Mallerstang.

As with the northbound run, the Castle, although needing to be worked very hard, seemed to be doing well on the climb and despite the wind being from the wrong direction we could just hear 5043 for some time after it had passed the summit.

15. This last recording at Ais Gill was made on the same day that we recorded 6201 from the top of Birkett Tunnel and at the summit we found yet more flying ants though not quite the swarms of the things that had been so troublesome at Birkett.

The loco we were there to record was 46115 'Scots Guardsman' which sounded to be going well enough with its 12 coach train on the 1 in 100 gradient.

16. When I was a regular traveller on steam hauled trains over the Settle to Carlisle line back in the 80s and 90s we almost always had a stop at Garsdale for water, photographs and occasionally a run past or two. Now, with water conveniently available at Appleby there's little need so I'm going back to 28<sup>th</sup> August 1993 for this recording of Ex LMS Princess Royal Pacific 46203 'Princess Margaret Rose' departing from Garsdale while working a southbound Cumbrian Mountain Express.

17. Once over Ais Gill the hard work is over so there is little scope for recording but on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1994 after recording a charter train running from Bradford to Carlisle and back with ex LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 45596 'Bahamas' on the climb to Ais Gill, a fast run by car allowed me to get this recording of 'Bahamas' hurrying past Dent Head and into Blea Moor Tunnel.

18. I'm going to return to Greengate Bridge near Kirkby Stephen for the last two recordings on this disk as, like Selside on the northbound climb over the Settle to Carlisle line, over the years, this has become a favourite spot that rarely disappoints.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2013 ex LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 45699 'Galatea' worked a Vintage Trains charter over the line and, although we'd fancied trying Ais Gill, in view of the weather, our usual spot behind the dry stone wall at Greengate Bridge just south of Kirkby Stephen seemed like our best bet.

Running just about on time, it must have been somewhere near Griseburn when we first heard the faint sound

of 45699 approaching but this recording starts somewhat later as the sound becomes clearer as train is beyond Smardale at the end of the easier gradients past Crosby Garrett.

On the 1 in 100 gradient speed falls but the Jubilee, with 10 coaches including some heavy Pullman cars, sounds to be going well without being worked too hard and speed must have been in the mid-20s when it passed us; and there's nothing wrong with that.

19. It will probably come as no surprise to find that I am ending this disk with a recording of my favourite Black Five 4-6-0, 45305.

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 2011 45305 worked a train to Carlisle north over Shap before returning south over the Settle to Carlisle line.

Earlier in the day we had been mightily impressed with how it had sounded climbing Shap so for 45305's return from Carlisle we headed for the tried and tested spot we had used many times before near Greengate Bridge a little way south of Kirkby Stephen where a dry stone wall provided useful shelter from the strong breeze that was now blowing and the occasional showers.

As with our recording on Shap earlier, 45305 sounded absolutely spot on when it passed heading for Birkett Tunnel running just about on time.

We've recorded here many times in the past and occasionally have heard the loco after it has passed through the tunnel, once or twice as far as Mallerstang. This time we heard 45305 not only reach Mallerstang, accelerate on the easier gradient but also start on the continuing 1 in 100 gradient beyond and we must have been able to hear the sound, albeit too faintly to record, almost to the summit at Ais Gill.

You'll need headphones to get the best out of this one.

