



steamsounds

from the lineside

Over Shap

When steam returned to the main line in the 1970s, the prospect of ever getting a steam hauled train on the West Coast Main Line over Shap seemed remote but, as the saying goes, everything comes to him who waits and eventually, steam hauled trains were seen once again on the climb to Shap Summit.

To start this CD we'll begin a little further south on the Grayrigg...

1. The prospect of two steam hauled trains running over Shap, one of which would continue over Beattock, was sufficient encouragement to get us out to the lineside on 26th May 2012 in the expectation of some good recordings; sadly the reality proved a little different.

The weather for the day was, in most respects, excellent as we appeared to be having an early summer with wall to wall sunshine and high temperatures. Less welcome was the 'breeze' which was easterly, rather strong and on Shap would carry the sound of the M6 motorway towards us. In view of this we decided to start with a recording on Grayrigg rather than Shap.

The first of the two trains was being hauled by the ex LMS Coronation Pacific 46233 'Duchess of Sutherland' currently repainted in brunswick green and carrying its BR number and we first headed to a spot we had used before near Moresdale Hall but it proved too exposed to the wind so we ended up further down the bank nearer Oxenholme close to the site of Hay Fell signal box; not an ideal spot as it overlooked a road bridge with, as you can hear, a few spectators but at least it gave some shelter from the wind.

46233 turned up reasonably close to time, going easily with 12 coaches behind the tender and with a stuck cylinder cock. Once past, sound carried back a little until a southbound service train arrived to drown out the fading sounds of loco.

Could have been worse I suppose.

2. Another linesiding opportunity came our 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.

3. Ever since steam returned to the West Coast Main Line north of Preston I had 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 30th November 2002 when 8F 48151 worked a private charter for the Morecambe & Heysham Soroptimists running 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 summit near 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.

4. On 4th September 2004 LMS Coronation Pacific 6233 'Duchess of Sutherland' worked a train from Crewe to Carlisle and back so, once again, we went to Shap Wells to attempt to get a good recording of the loco climbing the 1 in 75 gradient.

Despite the noise from the nearby M6 motorway and someone starting to use what sounds like some kind of mechanical digger among the trees on the opposite side of the line after the train has passed and is nearing the summit I was quite happy with this recording.

With 12 coaches behind the tender West Coast Railway Co. driver Bill Andrew was working 6233 a little harder than on past occasions and the loco sounded much better.

As 6233 reached the summit a Virgin Pendolino passes going down the.

5. Five years later on Saturday 10th October 2009 saw the LMS Coronation Pacific 6233 'Duchess of Sutherland' making what might prove to be its last run over Shap before the it comes out for overhaul.

As I've seen in the past, Shap is a difficult place to make lineside recordings. The biggest problem is the proximity of the M6 motorway and, so far, we have only found one spot that is far enough away to make the road noise bearable. The other problem is weather but on this occasion we had excellent conditions with nothing more than a light breeze and no rain.

Calm conditions are normally good but at Shap there is one drawback. While a strong westerly will carry the sound of the road

away, calm conditions make the motorway noise far worse and it did seem particularly bad on this day.

Still, there was nothing to be done about that so we set up our microphones at Shap Wells and hoped for the best.

At about the right time, steam appeared down towards Tebay but due to the light breeze being from the north west we didn't really hear 6233 until it was up near Scout Green but once the loco did come within earshot we were more than happy with the noise. 6233 had 13 coaches behind the tender with the additional weight of a diesel attached at the rear, there to provide electric heating; this massive train must have been well over 600 tons.

Once it had passed we heard the loco pass the summit and sound carried back very well so that we could still hear the sound as it accelerated on the falling gradients beyond. Certainly my best recording of this loco on Shap.

This run saw Frank Santrian having what will almost certainly be his final firing turn on 6233 over Shap. Frank's name has appeared in my notes more than once and one of the most memorable runs with him as driver was in 1995 when he was still at Crewe and had 46229 over the same route. The noise on that run was nothing short of magnificent.

After retiring from EWS Frank had been working as a driver for WCRC for some years but due to minor eyesight problems, which prevented him from driving, he switched to the other side of the footplate and still fired regularly. Perhaps I should add that he was in his 70s.

Frank's driver on this occasion was Bill Andrew, also of a similar age who is also close to retirement so he may well not get the chance again with 6233.

6. On some days lineside sound recording is memorable for perfect conditions. Those days with a light breeze from the right direction, no distractions and a steam engine working hard are unbeatable.

Other days are memorable for quite different reasons.

3rd April 2004 was a day in the later category when the LMS Princess Royal Pacific 6201 'Princess Elizabeth' worked a train from Preston over Shap to Carlisle.

It was one of those days that Shap sometimes produces with a very strong south westerly wind accompanied by almost horizontal rain.

As this recording begins the strong wind roars in the overhead wires and batters against the dry stone wall behind which I and my microphone were sheltering from the rain passing horizontally overhead.

Carried on the wind the sound of a Stanier hooter can just be heard and, in due course, above the noise of the wind, 6201 working hard coming up the gradient from Scout Green.

Despite the conditions the sight and sound of 6201 passing with 13 coaches behind the tender was superb and well worth getting wet to experience.

As 6201 approaches the cutting leading to Shap Summit the sound fades away to be replaced by that of a Pendolino descending the bank, a reminder that this is 2004 not 1954.

Although all sounds well in this recording later in the journey to Carlisle things went wrong and the locomotive suffered serious damage when a core plug in the left hand middle cylinder came loose. This caused substantial damage to the piston head, cylinder lining and rear cover plate. The crosshead, connecting rod and crank axle bearing also suffered.

This happened south of Penrith and caused much delay to services trains.

Over 12 months later the loco was still under repair.

7. 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.

8. Another day with two trains running was 26th May 2012 and the one running northbound over the WCML was the first day of a three day trip to Scotland hauled by Tyseley's Castle 5043 'Earl of Mount Edgcombe' and, as we hadn't recorded it on the WCML before we decided that it would have to be Shap.

Getting shelter from the wind while reducing the motorway noise as far as possible proved problematic but we eventually settled behind a handy dry stone wall at Salterwath.

While waiting, we had heard the news that Network Rail had insisted that the train be assisted by a diesel on the climb to Beattock and that diesel would be attached at Carnforth; apparently there had been a problem with lineside fires a few days before. This was not welcome news but, perhaps on Shap the diesel wouldn't assist?

Well, as you can hear in this recording, it did.

Despite the diesel assistance, 5043 sounds to be working hard as it passes but the fears about lineside fires proved correct as, after the train had passed we could see smoke rising from both Greenholme and Shap Wells. Not good.

9. The summer of 2014 proved problematic for steam as thanks to some in Network Rail believing that there was a very high risk of lineside fire though, while Network Rail LNE instituted a complete ban, other regions seemed to have a different view of fire risk conditions so elsewhere, many trains ran as booked.

One such was a Cumbrian Mountain Express with ex LNER A4 Pacific 60009 'Union of South Africa' as motive power and this train didn't even have a diesel on the back.

Having never recorded an A4 on Shap we headed for Shap Wells though not to our usual spot but ended up on the hillside between Salterwath and Shap Wells.

With 11 coaches behind the tender the A4 sounds to be going well on the gradient.

10. On 30th October 2004 ex LMS Black Five 4-6-0 45407 provided the rare sight and sound of a train hauled by a single Black Five working a train both ways over Shap.

Weather conditions at our usual recording spot at Shap Wells were excellent with only a light breeze and plenty of sun. One slight problem was that the light breeze was coming from the south east, just the right direction to carry the sound of traffic from the busy M6 motorway not far away.

A few minutes later than expected after a Pendolino had passed heading down the bank, the breeze also carried the sound of 45407 up from near Scout Green. The Black 5 was carrying the number 44996 and not in the cleanest state I have ever seen it.

The train must have been down to around 20 mph as it passed on the 1 in 75 gradient and the sound carried back all the way to the summit.

We were pleased to see that the diesel that had been on the back earlier had been detached during the water stop at Carnforth but was still following along behind as insurance and passed just one section behind as the 45407 cleared the summit.

11. However you describe Saturday 2nd September 2006, weatherwise, 'fine' it was not. In other respects 'fine' it certainly was!

It was a shame really as I had been looking forward to recording this locomotive in this location for some time. Not just for over a year from when this train was first proposed, but since February 1967.

I was slightly unfortunate in that I was born a little too late to have a chance to see much 'real' (pre-1968 steam) although I'd like to think that I've made up for it since so I only ever had one run with steam over Shap. That was in February 1967 on the Border Countryman railtour which ran from Leeds via Manchester, over Shap to Carlisle then to Beattock and back before returning to Leeds via Newcastle and the East Coast Main Line.

The loco that hauled the train from Leeds to Carlisle and back was one of the last Jubilees, Holbeck's 45562 'Alberta'. This loco was requested for the tour for the simple reason that it was cleaner than the other Holbeck Jubilee, 45593 'Kolhapur' despite the fact that those of us in the know knew that 'Kolhapur' was, at the time, a far better loco.

'Alberta' steamed very badly all day and, even with a fairly light train, was down to walking pace at Shap Summit but the tour was considerable enlivened during the short run to Beattock and back from Carlisle when we had an absolutely filthy 43106 which produced speeds approaching 80 at times.

The run back from Carlisle was no better and I seem to remember that we very late back into Leeds at the end of the day and while it would have been nice to have had a better run, I was pleased to have at least 'done' Shap in steam days.

Since then I have been steam hauled over Shap on quite a few occasions and, in more recently, have been to the lineside quite a few times so, when in 2005 Vintage Trains advertised a train with Jubilee 5690 'Leander' I was quite keen to get out for a recording of what I hoped would be a far better climb of the gradient with a Jubilee than I had experienced with 'Alberta' in 1967.

The original date for the train proved impossible and it was almost a year later that the train actually ran.

The only fly in the ointment was the weather forecast which through the previous week hadn't sounded at all promising.

Weather forecasters are often wrong with their prognostications but unfortunately, for once they were spot on. The weather was absolutely atrocious with heavy, continuous rain and a strong wind almost all day.

Still, as we were determined to turn out for this train we went to Shap Wells as usual, donned the waterproofs, wrapped recorders in plastic bags and attempted to find a reasonably sheltered spot hoping all the while that the train would be on-time and we wouldn't be out there for hours.

The area is fortunate in having that boon to lineside sound recordists; dry stone walls. No finer wind break and rain shelter has ever been invented and we set up our microphones in the shelter of a handily situated one with plenty of time before the train was due and settled down to wait.

Had the weather been better we could have expected the area to have been thick with photographers and videographers but besides the two of us, only one other person joined us. No doubt everyone else had more sense and stayed with their cars.

Our wait in the rain proved most rewarding. 'Leander' turned up just about on time and as you can hear was going very well at the head of a 9 coach train.

In 1967 I'm sure that 'Alberta' didn't roar up Shap like this!

12. On some days, when I go out sound recording, getting a good recording is not as important as on other days. Oh, don't get me wrong, I'm always happier when conditions are right, the loco sounds good and I can go home with another masterpiece but, it's just that, on some days, it doesn't matter as much when things aren't quite right.

On these more important days, a good weather forecast is a bonus but all too often as was the case on 9th April 2009, we got just the opposite.

On the day, aside from a couple of showers, the forecast rain didn't really materialise but the strong wind did.

Arriving at Shap Wells in plenty of time for a recording of the ex LMS Royal Scot 4-6-0 46115 'Scots Guardsman' we hoped to find that the trees on the west side of the line would provide some shelter if we went to our usual spot on the other side of the line and, when we got there, for a while we did seem to be out of the wind. However, as time went on, the wind seemed to become gustier even blowing my friend's microphone over at one point so the dry stone wall to the south was required once more.

Although the wall provided some shelter from the wind, from there, there isn't much of a view and we knew we would get little advance warning of the train's approach however, a helpful lineside photographer with a much better view promised to give us a wave when steam appeared down towards Greenholme - problem solved apparently.

The train we were out to record was the Great Britain II which had started in London some days before, reached Preston the previous day via Penzance and was now heading off to do Scotland before returning to London with all but the very final part steam

hailed - not quite your normal main line steam tour and a bargain at only £1745!

Before 46115 was due we also expected to be able to record the two light engines, Black 5s 45231 & 45407, which were heading off to Scotland to work further sections of the train 'Scots Guardsman' was bringing up from Preston on following days. This pair duly turned up somewhat later than anticipated making very little noise - well, all they had to haul were two support coaches but we recorded them anyway.

Once the two Black 5s had gone we settled down to wait for the main event keeping a sharp eye on our camera toting friend further up the line.

As I've mentioned before, it is usually my habit to start recording well before I expect the train to arrive to ensure that I don't miss anything but, on this occasion, there seemed to be no need. With the strength of the wind we knew we wouldn't hear anything, probably until the train was up to Scout Green, long after we had our warning wave - always providing he remembered of course.

I'll bet you are ahead of me aren't you?

The first we knew was the faint sound of a loco working hard which gave us just time to get switched on without missing too much.

46115 had 11 coaches behind the tender and was going very well indeed with a load that, back in steam days, most drivers with a Class 7 engine would have wanted a banker from Tebay before tackling Shap. If you are in any doubt as to how hard the loco was being worked, we found ourselves being bombarded with cinders, not just small ashes, but quite sizeable lumps which had been ejected from the chimney and these were only landing as the fourth coach passed 100 yards or so from the line.

It's interesting to note that the driver on the Scot was Gordon Hodgson, the same man who gave us such an excellent recording of the same engine southbound on the S&C earlier in the year.

With less wind and more warning we would probably have got a longer recording so let's hope they let the Scot have many more goes up Shap but, one thing is for certain, the next time I won't be waiting for any waves, I'll be switched on in plenty of time.

13. On 25th February 2012 70013 was out on what had originally been planned as the last of four Winter Cumbrian Mountain Expresses. So popular did these trains prove that more were added in the following months.

We started our day at Shap Wells where the weather seemed fine with just a light breeze blowing in the right direction to carry sound from the motorway away from us but, of course, by the time the train was due the wind had increased and it even managed to rain a little.

Perhaps it was the light rain causing the rails to become greasy that caused 70013 a little trouble with slipping just above Scout Green which you can hear as the recording begins. Whatever the cause, the slipping soon stops and 'Oliver Cromwell' sounds to be doing fine on the gradient as it passes with 12 well filled coaches behind the tender.

Due to the wind, we didn't hear the loco until it was well above Scout Green but that wind did carry the sound back to us and it was well over the summit before the sound faded away.

14. Having already recorded 6233 heading north to Carlisle on 10th October 2009, our next recording was to be of the loco returning south and we went to a spot not far south of that city at Harraby about 2 miles from the station.

There was a bit more breeze here but 6233 can just be heard on the initial steep climb out of the station and as it passes Upperby depot 60163 being serviced before taking another train south, can be heard whistling.

Driver Bill Andrew is nothing if not a good engineman and, as you can hear, isn't pressing 6233 hard on the rising gradient. After all, there's nothing worse than starting with a cold engine and thrashing it - that sort of thing isn't good for the engine and certainly won't make you popular with your fireman.

Even so, 6233 sounds fine as it passes and to our surprise, in spite of the breeze not being favourable, sound carried back for a long time, much longer than we expected.

15. On 30th June 2007 our last recording of the day was of 45407 on its way back from Carlisle to Manchester and we went to a spot near Harrison's Siding on the southbound approach to Shap Summit where, once again dry stone walls provided much appreciated shelter from the wind and increasingly heavy rain.

In view of the weather we didn't want to spend ages waiting in the rain for a late running train and for our previous recordings that day the train had turned up just about spot on, was this going to be third time unlucky?

Charter trains have a habit of running late, sometimes very late, but I am very pleased to say that our luck held out and 45407 turned up just about on time and, better still, during a brief respite from the rain.

Once again, the Black 5 was going well on the 1 in 125 gradient and the southerly wind carried the sound back nicely. Well worth getting a little wet.

16. On 20th September 2008 5690 'Leander' worked a train to Carlisle running north over the S&C and returning south over Shap.

We had recorded the train earlier in the day but the light breeze that we had enjoyed during the morning had increased somewhat when we got to our usual recording spot near Harrison's Siding. No problem though as there is a handy dry stone wall for shelter.

A little later than we anticipated smoke appeared in the distance before 'Leander' appeared under the road bridge and can just be heard slipping briefly despite the dry conditions. The slip was soon corrected and once again the loco didn't seem to be being worked particularly hard to maintain speed on the 1 in 125 gradient.

17. On 16th April 2016 the ex-LMS Royal Scot 4-6-0 46100 'Royal Scot' worked a train to Carlisle and back but unlike many previous trains, was unable to run north over the S&C due to the closure of the line north of Armthwaite due to engineering work to repair a landslip at Eden brow. Instead, the train ran north via the Cumbrian Coast line.

Having recorded the train at Wigan, on Lindal Bank and at Sellafield, after a very scenic drive across the Lake District we ended up at Harrison's Siding for our final recording of 46100 and were rather pleased with this recording of the Scot going very well on the gradient heading for Shap summit.

For the last two tracks on this CD I'm returning to the northbound climb to Shap Summit for two of my favourite locos including my favourite Black 5...

18. Another opportunity to get a recording on the northbound climb to Shap Summit presented itself when, on 26th March 2011

Vintage trains ran a tour from Tyseley to Carlisle and back 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 in 6201's performance with its 11 coach train.

Conditions at Shap Wells were far from ideal; there was an easterly wind blowing which was difficult to avoid and worse, it carried the sound of traffic on the motorway to us a little too well. Still, there was nothing to be done about that and, at least it was dry with a little sun at times.

6201 turned up at about the expected time but it was well above Scout Green before we began to hear it. We could tell it was being worked very hard before we heard it by the way the exhaust was lifting and when it passed sounding particularly sharp, I would guess that speed was around 30 mph.

Nothing wrong with that with 11 coaches, including the usual Pullman cars at the front, behind the tender.

19. In the summer of 2011 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 for the loco over Shap. Third time lucky?

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 when we arrived at Shap Wells, we weren't expecting the kind of performance we 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 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!

