



# steamsounds Around 2015

1. 2015 proved to be another year when I found myself waiting a long time before I could make my first recordings and, as in previous years, that proved to be at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's Winter steam gala.

Last year my visit was not quite as planned due to having to visit my dentist to have an infected tooth dealt with. This year the NHS got in on the act again by providing an appointment on the Friday of the gala but at least this time I was able to switch my hotel booking and still have two days at the railway.

I was rather annoyed to find that the best day of the three was the Friday when I wasn't there and that my two days coincided with much poorer weather; rain on the Saturday and a very strong wind on the Sunday - typical!

I reached Keighley on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February just in time to catch a train up to Oakworth where I had plenty of time to walk down to Damems Loop and find a suitably sheltered spot. I would have been quite happy to have spent the rest of the afternoon there too but the weather had other ideas as, after recording one train, rain began to fall and while I had shelter from the wind, I didn't fancy getting a soaking so I headed back up to Oakworth where I had spotted something in the goods yard that I thought might come in handy if it started raining.

That 'something' was a brake van and although the van area was padlocked, the veranda provided me with shelter from the rain though the spot wasn't exactly ideal for recording.

After getting a couple of recordings there, the last train I'd planned to record came next and as the loco was the recently returned to traffic BR Standard Class 4 4-6-0 75078, I was keen to get a good recording so was pleased that, as the rain had stopped, I was able to walk back down towards the loop and set up for my recording in a much better location.

Of the recordings I made that afternoon this was the one that I hoped would be a good one and I'm happy to say that it was so with that one in the bag, I called it a day and headed back to Keighley for some much needed sustenance - fish and chips, of course!
2. With a marked shortage of main line steam to go out and record so far this year, a situation not helped by the suspension by Network Rail of the West Coast Railway Co.'s operating license, it was good to have the opportunity to get out for some recordings in April at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway's Spring Steam Gala.

The gala was held over two weekends and during the evening of Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April there were two late trains running, one was the usual dining train and the other a Pie & Peas special run to raise funds for the eventual restoration of 'Dame Vera Lynn'.

We arrived at the railway in time to get to Beck Hole, where once again it was windy, to record the last ordinary train off Grosmont which was shown on the loco roster as being hauled by the ex LNER K1 2-6-0 62005 all by itself and to our surprise, that's what turned up.

It was nice to be able to get a recording of this once regular 'Moors' engine that now seems to spend most of the year elsewhere.
3. We moved to Darnholme after that and after recording the Pie & Peas special which should have been hauled by 45428 but wasn't, stayed there for the diner which was booked for 44871 and unless I hear to the contrary, I have to assume that's what we actually recorded as it was impossible to tell which Black 5 was passing in the dark.

This proved to be an excellent recording but it was also quite an experience, standing there in the dark with only the sound of the nearby stream to disturb the quiet listening to the Black 5 coming up from Grosmont.

Some might think that standing around in the dark and cold, even with a little drizzle in the air, is no way to spend a Friday evening but, if I can get a recording like this, I'm more than happy to do it.
4. As far as steam on the main line is concerned, 2015 got off to a very slow start and by the time I'd arranged to get out for what I expected to be my first main line recording of the year, the hiatus concerning the suspension of WCRC's operating license put paid to that.

So it was that my first opportunity didn't arrive until the end of May with a train bringing ex LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 45690 'Leander' handily close to home.

The train was the East Yorkshireman running from Preston to Scarborough and back with the outward journey taking in the line through Bridlington providing another opportunity for a recording on the 1 in 92 climb from there to the summit near Speeton and having been successful there the last time a steam hauled train ran on this line we went to a spot not far from Bempton station.

Having run on-time or early for most of the journey, the train must have been about 10 minutes late when it passed our spot going steadily on the gradient. With a load of 11 coaches plus a Class 47 diesel attached at the rear which, if it was assisting, clearly wasn't doing much, I felt that 'Leander' was doing very well and sounding fine.

Sound carried back well and we must have heard it almost all the way to the summit.

It was nice to see and hear this loco, which I hadn't recorded since 2011, back on the main line.
5. After arriving at Scarborough the diesel on the rear of the train went off on its own to await the train's arrival at Milford; the train was to be diesel hauled back to Preston and Manchester from there and, even though the diesel didn't seem to be doing much in our first recording, we thought it would be a good idea to go for a second one without the diesel so headed off to York to get it beyond there and having tried a spot at Copmanthorpe last year we thought we'd give it a try again.

Our choice of location proved a good one although, at first it seemed as though we might not get much.

One bonus of this spot on the four track main line south of York is that there are the signals in view which give a little warning that something is about to pass and at about the time we expected 45690 the signal on the up line furthest from us was showing a single yellow and the 'feather' indicating that whatever was coming was being cautioned ready to use the crossover at Colton North Jn.; naturally we



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assumed that the approaching train was the charter and all we would get was the sound of it drifting past. However, as you can hear at the start of this recording, it was an East Coast service and as it passed, we could see 'Leander' approaching the red signal on the line nearest to us.

The East Coast service soon cleared the section ahead so 45690 didn't quite come to a stand and made a fine sound recovering from the check before accelerating towards Colton Jn.

Given the opportunity, I think we'll be using this spot again.

6. In early June I made my annual visit, annual pilgrimage you could say, to the Harz mountains in Germany for my usual noisy steam fix. This time I had a friend from the UK with me who had never been there before.

The 11<sup>th</sup> June saw us on the first train to the Brocken but when we reached the summit, instead of returning on the same train to do some lineside recording at Schierke, we set off to walk back down and this wasn't simply because we fancied a walk.

Some years ago, long before I made my first visit to the Harz, I heard some HSB recordings made by a German friend at a place called Eckerloch which is about 5 or 6 Kilometres from Schierke but I had never been there myself for various reasons. However, while perusing maps of the area I realised that this spot wasn't that far from the summit of the Brocken and, what's more, that part of the walk would be downhill.

So, heading down from the summit, once off the Brockenstraße the path became rather steep and rocky but it wasn't too bad and it only took us about 45 minutes to get to Eckerloch; we even got there before the train we had left at the summit passed on its way back to Drei Annen Hohne. Of course we would still have to either walk back to the summit (far too steep!) or make the longer but more level walk on the Bahnparrallelweg to Schierke station; at least that route would give us the opportunity for a few recordings on the way.

The walk was well worthwhile as this is an excellent spot for recordings being far away from roads, the only sounds, aside from passing trains being bird song and the sound of the stream in the valley bottom.

Thanks to a light breeze, sound was carrying well and we must have first heard trains not far from Schierke before the sound of the hard working loco gradually grew as it approaches and passes on the other side of the valley before taking the sharp curve over the stream at Eckerloch then passes once again directly below our recording spot.

The loco in this recording was 2-10-2 99 7232 hauling the usual 7 coach train.

What an excellent recording and well worth negotiating a rocky path and the long walk back to Schierke to get. I hope I get the chance to record there again.

7. While I'd like to think it's not the case but having now visited the HSB four times and failed to get a ride behind one of the railway's Mallets I have to wonder if they do it on purpose?

This year, of the three available Mallets, one was away at Meiningen for overhaul, another was at Gernrode but had not been used with any regularity for some weeks and the one still at Wernigerode was 'defekt' so while there was a small chance that a visit to the Selketalbahn might just provide me with a ride at last, I wasn't at all hopeful.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June I didn't think it was worth the bus ride to Stiege to pick up the train that would normally be Mallet hauled so we started our visit at Quedlinburg and were pleased to see that the 2-6-2 99 6001 was in use; at least it made a change from a 2-10-2 and we had a ride to Alexisbad and back to Gernrode spotting the Mallet in the shed there, obviously not in use, and a 2-10-2 on the other diagram.

Once back in Gernrode, after some much needed refreshment, we went off to try to get a recording of the 2-6-2 on the climb before the Osterteich halt.

It was quite windy but we managed to find shelter and although 99 6001 only had a short train of three coaches plus a van and the bike wagon, I didn't think it sounded too bad on the climb.

8. Our last day in the Harz was Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June and you will not be surprised to learn that once again we were on the first train of the day to the Brocken and, on the way back down behind 99 7247 we took advantage of the stop in the siding adjacent to the Goetheweg for another recording.

We had been in the siding for quite a few minutes when we began to hear the ascending train approaching but, as you can hear, as the train approaches, the regulator is closed; obviously the train has stopped at the signal protecting the siding. After a couple of minutes pause, the train restarted and we got an excellent recording of 99 236 passing before 99 7247 propelled our train back out of the siding on to the main line.

Why the ascending train stopped remained a mystery; the signal should have been clear as we had been in the siding for a good five minutes but, whatever the reason, we got much better recordings so no complaints.

9. I'm pleased to say that the weather in the Harz during our visit was very good but, as they say, in to each life a little rain must fall and it fell on us on our last day.

Back at Schierke, despite the rain, we headed for the lineside to get a few more recordings and I was interested to see what would be in use as motive power for the regular Traditionszug which run from Wernigerode to the Brocken on most Wednesdays and Saturdays formed of original Deutsche Reichsbahn rolling stock and usually hauled by one or two of the railway's Mallet locomotives.

Instead of a Mallet, the railway was using the oldest 2-10-2, 99 222 which is the last remaining one of three locos originally built in 1931 as a standard narrow gauge loco for Deutsche Reichsbahn and became the basis for the later 2-10-2s and this was the loco we recorded passing on a 9 coach train including the open 'Aussichtswagen' which, in view of the weather was devoid of passengers.

Will I be back next year? Definitely, I still have to ride behind a Mallet!

10. After last year's debacle with the Scarborough Spa Express, it came as no surprise to find that there would be no summer SSEs this year though we did get three SSEs in October school's half term week so I did get my SSE ride eventually, unimpressive though it was.



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Instead, WCRC moved their regular summer trains to the Settle to Carlisle line with a programme of trains, starting in York running diesel hauled to Hellifield then being steam hauled to Carlisle and back. In the main part of the summer, these trains ran twice a week and, with other operators running on Wednesdays, Sundays and some Saturdays, the S&C certainly saw plenty of steam.

The Sunday trains were operated by the Railway Touring Company and were supposed to run every Sunday from mid-July but I can only assume that bookings weren't sufficient to make some of these trains viable as quite a few were cancelled.

One that did run was on 9<sup>th</sup> August and, thanks to a friend, I was able to get out for a couple of recordings.

As the weather wasn't all that good with a stiff breeze blowing we made our first recordings at Selside where there are dry stone walls to provide shelter.

The loco was 45690 'Leander' which, with an 11 coach train, sounds to be going pretty steadily as it passes on the climb to Blea Moor.

11. For 'Leander's return we decided to go to our regular spot at Greengate Bridge not far south of Kirkby Stephen for the return.

While 45690 had been going pretty steadily when we recorded it on the outward run, it sounds to be being worked much harder on the return.

12. You may have noticed that, so far in 2015, particularly with the lack of any Scarborough Spa Expresses for me to ride on, by the end of August I'd had no opportunity to have a ride behind steam on the main line; I had to travel to Germany for my first ride of the year.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September I rode from Hagen to Bochum-Dalhausen and back on one of the regular, first Sunday of the month, steam runs operated by the Bochum-Dalhausen Eisenbahn Museum.

These trains, made up of some of the museum's vintage coaches, are hauled by the Prussian P8 (DR BR 38) 4-6-0 38 2267 built in 1918.

To be fair, these trains are aimed at providing a family day out rather than something for the enthusiast and as the line, running alongside the Rhur for most of the journey, doesn't provide much in the way of gradients I didn't really expect much in the way of noise to record.

These trains stop at all stations on the 36km route and the intermediate station that sees most passengers is Zeche Nachtigall.

Zeche Nachtigall translates as Nightingale Mine and at one time this was the site of one of the many coal mines in the Rhur valley, now an industrial museum.

With a few more visitors from the industrial museum back on board this very full train 38 2267 is heard departing heading for Hagen.

While it might not have been the nosiest main line steam ride I've ever had, it was interesting and I can recommend a ride as a pleasant way to visit the museum at Bochum-Dalhausen.

13. For their Autumn Steam Gala the North Yorkshire Moors Railway actually had a couple of interesting visitors for a change; the ex SR U Class 2-6-0 31806 and ex SR West Country 4-6-2 34092 'City of Wells' but, as usual, only made fairly minimal use of them with 'Wells' only being booked to work 1 round trips by itself and the U, 1½ round trips. However, that was according to the loco roster so there was every chance that things would change.

To maximise our chances we were at Thomason Foss ready for the first train of Grosmont on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September and to our surprise, not only did the booked loco appear but the train was on time; could this last?

The next train off Grosmont was booked for the other visitor, 31806, which was a new loco for me and one that I was keen to get a good recording of.

The booked time came and went and as more time passed it soon became apparent that all was not well so when the U put in an appearance it was about 45 minutes late and the train was being banked by 63395.

It had stalled on the gradient, made two unsuccessful attempts to restart and then had to wait for a banker to arrive.

Our prospects for a recording of it by itself didn't look good.

14. Time keeping didn't improve, worse still, the short workings from Grosmont to Goathland were cancelled in an effort to regain some of the lateness. The effort proved futile and trains remained consistently late for the rest of the day.

The loco roster proved to be largely a work of fiction too.

We stayed at Thomason Foss in the hope of getting a recording of 34092 working a train by itself; it was booked to work the diner and though we had been far from confident, it was 'Wells' that turned up.

34092 seemed to be making fairly easy work of this heavy train on the gradient.

15. After the diner, when the Q6 returned from Pickering on the back of a train with the U on the front which should have been single headed, I realised that if we wanted to try for another recording of Wells by itself we would have to leave straight away for Levisham as Wells would have to return on the diner there being nothing else at Pickering to work it; the diner should have been the Q6 coming back leaving Wells to double head the last train with the U.

The recording we got of 34092 at Levisham wasn't all that exciting and certainly wasn't enhanced by numerous low level fly pasts by the Red Barron in his bi-plane!

We had noticed this bi-plane on other occasions presumably doing pleasure flights from a grass strip somewhere close by but had never been 'buzzed' at low level by it before. I always thought there was a minimum altitude for these things...

We were quite surprised to see the U all by itself on the train that crossed 'Wells' at Levisham and, there being nothing at Pickering to double head, it looked like we were going to get a recording of it by itself; providing the Red Barron didn't return...

I'm pleased to say that the bi-plane stayed away but the recording wasn't quite as good as we'd hoped. 31806 wasn't worked particularly hard as it departed but it still started priming as it passed.

16. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October I had the rare opportunity for this year to get out for some main line steam with two trains running in the North West.

The first one was a charter for the Lune Rivers Trust running from Carnforth to York and, as this train picked up at Bentham, we were

there for our first recording well before 8AM.

Although it was foggy, recording conditions were almost perfect with only a very light breeze which we expected to carry the sound back to us.

At about the right time we heard something with three cylinders approaching which then sat in the station for a while; this proved to be 45699 'Galatea'.

The start sounded far too fast to me without the expected noise and no trace of a slip. The reason soon became apparent; a Class 47 on the back shoving hard.

A subsequent attempt at a recording at Hellifield with the diesel pushing hard once again was no better. Not what we wanted at all.

17. The other charter that day was running from Cleethorpes to Carlisle over the Settle - Carlisle line hauled by 45231 and we headed off through the fog to Selside where the fog cleared to mist and we even saw a little sun.

When 45231 appeared, from the sound, it didn't appear to be being assisted and we got a good, long recording. However, as the back of the train came into sight we were surprised to see not one but two diesels, one of which appeared not to be under power and the other doing very little to assist; perhaps just moving its own and its companion's weight.

Now that's the sort of diesel assistance we don't object to.

18. The Keighley & Worth Valley Railway didn't have a lot of luck with their arrangements for visiting locos for their Autumn Steam Gala this year.

They originally had two interesting ex-Southern locos lined up but an ongoing problem with a weak bridge made getting locos in by road impossible, a problem that meant that 34092 would be absent too.

Instead they arranged to get one of the Tyseley Halls to visit and as that could arrive by rail there would be no problem getting it to the railway. Unfortunately, at almost the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, Network Rail decided that, as they weren't certain about clearances on the route, they veto'd the move.

Despite the lack of visitors I still went as I'd pre-booked a hotel stay and arrived at the railway at about mid-day on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October then headed off to Oakworth and my usual recording spot near Damems Loop.

After recording four trains at the loop I walked down to a little way beyond Damems station as I wanted to record the goods train which was only going as far as there.

The goods, made up of about 10 wagons was hauled by 90733 with 5820 on the rear to take the train back to Keighley.

It makes a change to record something other than a passenger train.

19. On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November the Railway Touring Company ran another train titled 'The Tin Bath', a name which must confuse anyone not familiar with the TV sitcom, Last of the Summer Wine.

The route as usual saw the train running through Manchester Victoria, the Hope Valley then back to Manchester via Penistone and Brighouse. Motive power was provided by Ian Riley's pair of Black 5s, 44871 & 45407 recently returned from a season working trains on the West Highland Extension.

Our first recording was of the pair, on 12 coaches, on the climb out of Manchester Victoria.

20. After that, a very scenic run via the Snake Pass and Ladybower got us to Hathersage where the train was booked to stop for a pick up; for one single passenger, I gather.

We found a suitable spot not far east of the station and got this recording of the pair departing.

21. Then it was off to Barnsley to get a recording of the two Black 5s climbing the 1 in 50 gradient towards Penistone and went to a spot not far from the site of the long vanished Summer Lane station that we had used before.

Thanks to the very light breeze we could just hear the pair all the way down at Barnsley station but the sound soon faded away as the train entered the cutting on the first part of the climb.

Once clear of the cutting, 44871 and 45407 sound fine on the climb and even seem to be accelerating slightly on the gradient as they pass.

22. We had one final recording opportunity after that.

The train stopped at Brighouse for water and once we had seen it arrive, we went to an overbridge a little way down the line where a friendly farmer allowed us access to one of his fields so we could get a little further away for our recording of the departure.

This might not be an earth shattering recording but I have to say that it was good to get out, be able to get 4 recordings of the same train and, after the various recent disappointments with diesels pushing and locos failing, to get four good recordings to boot.

I'd hope there will be more opportunities like this in 2016.

## STEAMSOUNDS AROUND 2015

1. 75078 departing from Damems Loop. 28<sup>th</sup> February
2. 62005 passing Beck Hole. 24<sup>th</sup> April
3. 44871 passing Darnholme.
4. 45690 passing Bempton. 30<sup>th</sup> May
5. 45690 passing Copmanthorpe.
6. 99 7232 at Eckerloch. 11<sup>th</sup> June
7. 99 6001 soon after departing from Gernrode. 12<sup>th</sup> June
8. 99 236 passing the Goetheweg Siding. 13<sup>th</sup> June
9. 99 222 near Schierke with the Traditionszug.
10. 45690 passing Selside. 9<sup>th</sup> August
11. 45690 at Greengate Bridge, Wharton near Kirkby Stephen. 9<sup>th</sup> August
12. 38 2267 departing from Zeche Nachtigall. 6<sup>th</sup> September
13. 31806 banked by 63395 passing Thomason Foss. 27<sup>th</sup> September
14. 34092 passing Thomason Foss.
15. 31806 departing from Levisham.
16. 45699 departing from Bentham. 3<sup>rd</sup> October
17. 45231 passing Selside.
18. 90733 with 5820 on the goods train at Damems. 9<sup>th</sup> October
19. 44871 & 45407 departing from Manchester Victoria. 1<sup>st</sup> November
20. 44871 & 45407 departing from Hathersage.
21. 44871 & 45407 passing Summer Lane.
22. 44871 & 45407 departing from Brighouse.