

## steamsounds in the Worth Valley

The Keighley & Worth Valley Railway Company opened their line from Keighley to Oxenhope in 1867. Ownership passed to the Midland Railway, later the London Midland and Scottish Railway and in 1948 the line became part of British Railways. In 1962 Doctor Beeching's axe finally fell and the line was closed.

Fortunately there was sufficient local interest, a preservation society formed and the line was re-opened in 1968, the same year that British Rail finished with steam locomotives.

1. The Keighley & Worth Valley Railway is one of those fortunate preserved railways that has a connection with the National Network. This has the two-fold advantage of making it easy for both visitors and visiting locos or occasional charter trains to reach the line. This connection is at Keighley, well served with trains on the, now electrified Airedale line.

Most of my trips to the railway have started at Keighley so let's start our visit there.

The initial start out of Keighley is a difficult one. Not only is the gradient steep, 1 in 66 off the platform end then soon becoming even steeper at 1 in 58, but the line also curves sharply through 90°. When the rails are greasy and the train is a heavy one getting out of Keighley requires great skill from the driver.

However, some locos make light of such difficulties as you can hear in this recording of ex London Midland & Scottish Railway Class 8F 2-8-0 48431 which fairly romps out of Keighley station with a five coach load.

2. Departures are not always so easy.

Other locos are less sure-footed than the 8F heard in the last recording and one such is the ex Southern Railway, Unrebuilt West Country Pacific 34092 *City of Wells*.

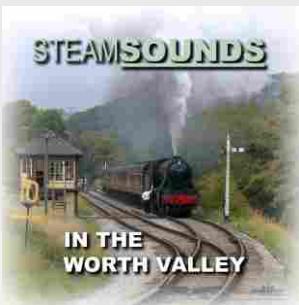
On a damp, autumn day *City of Wells* has a six coach train to work to Oxenhope. The driver, very wisely, decides to take the start out of Keighley station very gently; this is not a day for heroics!

Despite working the loco very easily and having the sanders on 34092 slips on the greasy rails a couple of times before the train rounds the curve and begins to accelerate on the easier gradients beyond.

3. Once away from the steep gradient out of Keighley station and round Globe Curve trains reach G. N. Straight. This is where the Great Northern Railway's line to Halifax and Bradford via Queensbury diverged. Here the gradient eases to 1 in 114 and trains can gain a little speed.

In this recording the British Railways Standard Class 4 4-6-0 75078 can be heard rounding Globe Curve before passing, accelerating well on the easier gradients.

Later, I heard from the driver that he thought that the brakes were dragging, not that it sounded as though he intended to let that stop him getting there!



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4. Time to move on, so let's return to Keighley station and have a ride to the next station; Ingrow.

Our train is a double header hauled by 34092 *City of Wells* with the ex Midland Railway Class 4F 0-6-0 43924 as pilot and the load is 6 coaches. But we aren't going to be travelling in the train; we're having a footplate ride on the 4F!

There is a trainee on the footplate with us who is firing the loco and being given instruction by the fireman. Soon after we get under way he is told to spread a few shovels of coal down the front of the firebox. A little later the trainee becomes concerned at the sight of the water level descending almost as rapidly as the pressure gauge but the fireman reassures him that the driver will ease the loco when we get onto G. N. Straight. The fireman adds that he will be able to add more water when we stop at Ingrow.

In the early stages *City of Wells* behind us is almost inaudible, being worked gently to avoid a slip but once round the curve out of the station the driver on the Bullied Pacific opens it up. Quite an impressive sight seen at such close quarters over the 4F's low tender.

The Ingrow stop isn't far away and soon the blower goes on, the regulator is closed and to the sound of the vacuum brake being applied we come to a stop.

5. Ingrow station on the Worth Valley branch is actually Ingrow West as until 1955 there was another station, Ingrow East, just yards away on the Great Northern Railway's line to Queensbury.

When the railway first opened and for some years following, Ingrow station was just a request stop as, not to put too fine a point on it, there was nothing there. Even the original station building had been badly vandalized and was demolished soon after the preservation society took over.

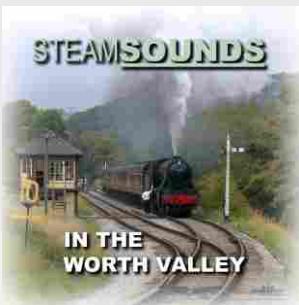
Over the years, Ingrow has developed into an attraction in its own right with a new station building, transported and rebuilt from Foulridge in Lancashire. It also now has the Vintage Carriages Trust's fine Museum of Rail Travel and the former goods shed is the home of the Bahamas Locomotive Society who also have a museum.

Just beyond Ingrow station is the 150 yard Ingrow Tunnel, the other end of which is hemmed in by mill buildings which, as I write this, have either been demolished or are being converted into residential accommodation and the scene here now is quite different to the way it was when this recording was made with all the mill buildings still standing.

The locomotive is the British Railways Standard Class 4 2-6-4T 80002 which has for many years been a stalwart performer on the line.

80002 is heard departing from Ingrow station and immediately enters the tunnel. Once through the locomotive's exhaust echoes from the surrounding buildings as it climbs away on the 1 in 56 gradient, the steepest on the line.

6. The 1 in 56 gradient from Ingrow continues to the next station, Damems and on this section we can always hear locomotives working hard.



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In this recording we have the USATC S160 2-8-0 5820 usually referred to as 'Big Jim' which is heard from a point half way between Ingrow and Damems stations with its American style whistle echoing in the valley.

This locomotive was built by Lima in the USA during WWII for the United States Army Transportation Corps. Some examples of this type did work trains in the UK but most, including this one was used in Europe ending up in Poland before being purchased and brought back to the UK for restoration.

Although not popular with some enthusiasts due to it's decidedly non-British appearance it is an ideal engine for a preserved railways being big enough to cope with most traffic but not too big to be uneconomic in use.

### 7. Time to return to Ingrow station for a ride up to Damems.

This time we'll travel in the front coach of a 5 coach train hauled by 80002, the loco we heard earlier from the lineside.

Damems station is tiny and the railway claims that it is the smallest station in Britain. Whilst it probably is the smallest standard gauge station, I know of at least one narrow gauge station in North Wales that is far smaller.

Partly due to its small length, Damems is a request stop and if one wants to get off there it is essential to tell the guard, something that we obviously forgot to do as 80002 passes Damems without stopping.

### 8. The next train that we shall hear did stop at Damems and is double headed by the Taff Vale Railway 0-6-2T No. 85 and the ex London Midland & Scottish Railway 0-6-0T 47279.

The pair are heard climbing the steep gradient from Ingrow before stopping in the tiny station.

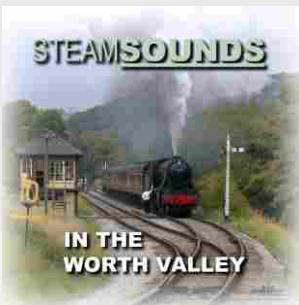
The train soon gets the right away and continues into Damems Loop not far away.

### 9. At busy times the railway is able to operate a two train service thanks to the passing loop at Damems completed in 1971. The signal box here originally came from Frizinghall near Bradford.

As this recording begins, the signalman can be heard operating the block instruments before setting the points and signals ready for the arrival of the ex London Midland & Scottish Railway Class 2 2-6-2T 41241 which is heard coming into the loop from Damems station.

Once the Oxenhope bound train is stopped in the loop the signalman resets the signals and points to allow the Keighley bound train, which has been waiting at the signal controlling entry to the loop to proceed and with the road clear 85 rolls through the loop dropping the token for the section to Oxenhope and collecting the one onwards to Keighley without stopping.

Once again the signalman resets the points and pulls off his signals before delivering the Oxenhope token to the crew on 41241 getting a weather report as he does so.



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With the token on board the 2-6-2T gets its train under way towards the next stop at Oakworth. The signalman resets the points and signals one more time then he can settle down for 45 minutes peace and quiet before the two trains return and the whole process is repeated.

10. Having the Vintage Carriages Trust on the premises, as it were, the railway occasionally takes advantage by running vintage trains and in this track we have a train of three superbly restored Metropolitan Railway carriages hauled by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway 0-6-0 957. The carriages date from between 1910 and 1923 but the loco is much older having been built in 1887 by Beyer Peacock in Manchester. These locos were known as Ironclads after the battleships that were being built when the class was first introduced in 1876.

In this recording 957 is heard leaving Damems Loop and climbing the 1 in 60 gradient to the next station, Oakworth.

11. Damems Loop is just that, a passing loop without any facilities for passengers so to continue our journey will shall have to cheat a little and join a train there hauled by the Ivatt tank 41241 which is heard in this recording made from the front coach restarting, climbing the 1 in 60 gradient and arriving at Oakworth.

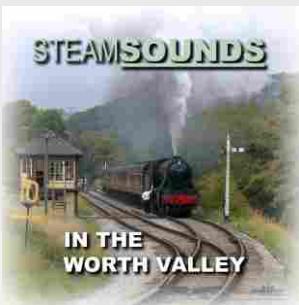
12. Oakworth station will be familiar to lots of people, even many who have never been there thanks to it having been used in the film 'The Railway Children'. Also a star from the same film is the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway 'Ironclad' which we last heard departing from Damems Loop with a train of vintage carriages and as this recording begins the 0-6-0, at the time running in British Railways livery and carrying the number 52044, can be heard approaching Oakworth on the gradient from Damems loop while the level crossing gates at the west end of the station are closed to road traffic.

52044 with just two carriages behind the tender stops briefly in the station while a few passengers alight or board then with station duties completed the guard gives the 'right away' and 50244 departs for the next stop at Haworth while the gates are re-opened to the road.

13. The L. & Y. Ironclad isn't the oldest locomotive normally based on the railway. The oldest is the Haydock Foundry 0-6-0WT *Bellerophon*. This loco was built in 1874 for use on the railways serving the Haydock Collieries and Foundry and is unique in being the only Haydock Foundry locomotive preserved, they only built 6, and having Stephenson/Gooch valve gear. Sent for scrapping in 1965, the locomotive was saved at the last minute and arrived in the Worth Valley. As there was no need for such a small loco at the time, *Bellerophon* was stored until purchased from the railway, for just £1, by the Vintage Carriages Trust who undertook its restoration to working order. It returned to service in 1985.

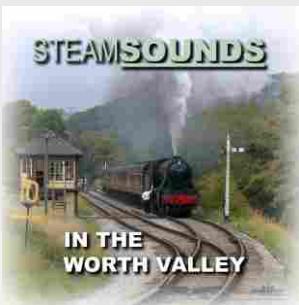
In deference to the locomotive's size and age *Bellerophon* is only used occasionally, usually on Vintage trains.

Like the L. & Y. Ironclad in the last recording *Bellerophon* is heard arriving at and departing from Oakworth with a train of two vintage carriages.



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14. Between Oakworth and Haworth is the 75 yard Mytholmes Tunnel, also something of a film star not only having appeared in 'The Railway Children' but, along with Keighley station, it also featured in the film of Pink Floyd's 'The Wall'!
- In this recording, made from the top of hill above the tunnel, the USATC S160 2-8-0 5820 is heard distantly, departing from Oakworth.
- Climbing the 1 in 90 gradient the locomotive slips occasionally before passing through the tunnel and continuing the climb to the next stop at Haworth.
15. Let's return to Oakworth station to continue our journey and join a train hauled by the British Railways Standard Class 2 2-6-0 78022 which belies its power classification and positively hammers up the gradient through Mytholmes Tunnel before arriving at Haworth.
16. Haworth is usually the busiest station on the line with many visitors arriving see the village, the surrounding countryside and, of course, the Bronte Parsonage.
- At Haworth is also the railway's headquarters and loco shed to say nothing of a very well stocked shop.
- In this recording, made from just beyond Haworth shed yard, we hear the British Railways Standard Class 4 2-6-4T 80002 departing on the last stage of the journey to Oxenhope.
- As the sound of the 80002 fades away the railway's Diesel Multiple Unit, which had been receiving maintenance in the shed yard, sets off for a short test run down the loop.
17. The gradient on the final section of the branch to Oxenhope is 1 in 68 and heard passing on the climb is the ex Midland Railway Class 4F 0-6-0 43924 with a five coach train.
18. Back in 1986 the ex Southern Railway West Country Pacific 34092 City of Wells had been fitted with a Giesel Oblong Ejector replacing the original multiple jet blastpipe the intention being to try to improve the locomotive's efficiency and reducing spark throwing particularly when it was out and about on the main line. This experiment had proved successful and the original blast pipe hadn't been refitted.
- With this modification the sound of the loco had changed although not dramatically. If anything the blast sounded a little sharper than before.
- Earlier, we heard City of Wells being worked fairly gently on the initial start out of Keighley. Well, here is another recording the same locomotive travelling somewhat faster heard about mid-way between Haworth and Oxenhope.
19. One of the latest locomotives to enter service on the railway is the War Department 2-8-0 90733 though, as you will read, it isn't really new to the railway.
- More than 900 locomotives of this type were built between 1942 and 1945 and over 700 saw service in the UK, the rest remaining in Europe after the end of the war.
- This particular example was built by the Vulcan Foundry Ltd., at Newton-le-Willows in 1945 and first saw wartime service in the Netherlands remaining there until 1953 when it was sold to the Swedish State Railway. It only saw a couple of years service in Sweden before being withdrawn. The loco then remained in store until 1972 when it was purchased, repatriated and arrived at Haworth early in 1973.



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The locomotive had been considerably modified for use in Sweden but the intention from the start was to return the loco to its original condition. However, as only a small amount of work was needed to get the loco back into use, it ran for a few years retaining its Swedish modifications and number, 1931, until 1976 when it had to be withdrawn from service.

Then began the long process of fund raising and restoration which culminated in the locomotive returning to service in the summer of 2007. It now carries the number 90733 which was the next number that, had it been repatriated at the end of the war, it would have received.

As I remember them from the 1960s in everyday service Dub Dees, as they were usually referred to, generally were in a pretty run down state, always filthy, usually with plenty of steam leaks and almost invariably their progress was accompanied by a loud clanking from the motion. 90733 isn't like that at all. Although you can't tell how clean it is from this sound recording, it certainly doesn't clank or hiss.

This recording was made between Haworth and Oxenope and, as it begins you can just hear the WD departing from Haworth station with a 6 coach train. There was a speed restriction in force over points not far from the loco shed and the driver only really opens up once the train is clear. With the regulator well open the WD makes a fine sound and accelerates well on the climb.

20. For our next lineside recording on the climb between Haworth and Oxenope we have the 'Jinty'.

The 'Jinty', otherwise known as ex London Midland & Scottish Railway 0-6-0T 47279 was built in 1924, one of over 400 similar locomotives. Its intended use was for shunting and on local goods and passenger trains and is right at home on the railway.

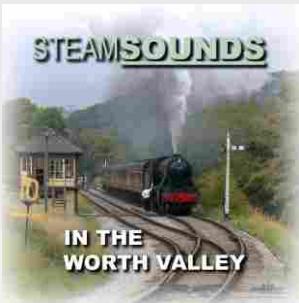
In this recording it is heard on the 1 in 68 gradient and sounds to be going along quite nicely with its four coach load. However, it seems that the driver wants a bit more out of the engine as he opens the regulator much wider as it continues up the valley.

21. Our visit to the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway is nearly over but we still have time for a full journey up the line so let's get a train back down to Keighley.

In this recording the Bahamas Locomotive Society's flagship engine, ex London Midland & Scottish Railway 'Jubilee' 4-6-0 45596 Bahamas is heard leaving the branch terminus, Oxenope for the downhill run back to Keighley.

22. For our ride back up to Oxenope from Keighley our train of five coaches will be hauled by the ex Midland Railway 4F 0-6-0 43924 but not for us a comfortable seat in the train, we are having another footplate ride!

As the recording begins we have just been given the 'Right Away' by the guard and our driver begins to get the train under way making a fairly gentle start out of Keighley station before gradually working the engine harder once the train is off the sharp curve. Once around Globe Curve and onto G. N. Straight he opens the regulator wider before reducing the cut-off and the 4F begins to accelerate on the easier gradients.



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At the time this recording was made Ingrow station was still a request stop and as we approach, the driver eases the regulator in case there are any passengers waiting. He has already been informed by the guard that no-one wishes to alight here or at Damems.

The station at Ingrow proves to be empty of prospective passengers so we can pass through without stopping and with the whistle sounding a warning we enter the tunnel at the platform end. Here the gradient steepens to 1 in 56.

Speed falls rapidly on the climb but the driver doesn't work the engine hard as the 4F hasn't been steaming well and, since leaving Keighley, both boiler pressure and water level have fallen.

Damems station also proves devoid of passengers so we pass through without stopping. No stop in Damems Loop is required either as our train is the only one on the line today.

The fireman's ministrations have proved successful and, as we clear Damems Loop, the driver is able to open the loco up again for the 1 in 60 gradient to Oakworth. Indeed, as we approach the stop at Oakworth, from comments on the footplate, it seems that the safety valves are in danger of lifting so the injector goes on to top up the boiler. You can just hear the fireman comment that the injector seems a little slow and, later he comments that using the second regulator valve uses a lot of water.

The stop at Oakworth is brief and we are soon under way again and over the level crossing. The gradient here eases to 1 in 90 and the 4F can be worked fairly easily until having passed through Mytholmes Tunnel the driver, noticing that both boiler pressure and water are now at an adequate level, he decides to use a little more steam and water and gets the regulator onto that second valve.

Haworth station isn't far away and we soon come to a stand in the platform. Once again, the stop is brief and we are quickly climbing again, this time at 1 in 68.

Once past the loco shed the regulator is opened a little wider and the 4F accelerates on the gradient which continues all the way, almost to the end of the line.

All too soon the regulator is closed and to the sound of the vacuum brake being applied we come to a stand in the platform at Oxenhope, our footplate journey's end. I hope that you enjoyed it!

