



steamsounds from the lineside 1978 to 1995

I can recall the moment when I first decided that railway sound recording was going to be an interest for me. I'd already been introduced to the joys of train spotting by a friend and, during a break from the cold platforms one day we had taken refuge in the record department at Boots and it was here that I first discovered Peter Handford's recordings. Here was the opportunity to hear, if not see, steam locos in far away places like Scotland and Cornwall, which at that time, it seemed unlikely that I would ever visit. The sounds and the notes that went with them painted most of the picture and imagination provided the rest so it was inevitable that, eventually, I would want to try my hand at making my own recordings. Pocket money didn't run to buying portable tape recorders and by the time I started earning, steam was gone. Of course steam did eventually return to the main line and in the late 70s I spotted a small mono cassette recorder which I thought would be ideal ...

1. In the 1970s once steam was back on the main line I had developed an interest in film making and, although the cassette recorder went in the bag, getting recordings wasn't a priority.

One of the first fairly successful recordings I made with it was on 11th November 1978 when I spent a day at York. This was one of only two trains that the LMS Rebuilt Scot 4-6-0 6115 *Scots Guardsman* actually worked a train on the main line.

The day was very foggy and my filming had produced nothing more than brief shot of the arriving Scot looming out of the fog before disappearing again.

Back on the station for the Scot's departure back to Manchester there was no chance of any filming so it was out with the recorder

Heard from the end of York's Platform 15 late in the afternoon *Scots Guardsman* departs into the fog heading west.

Although it is a brief recording and only mono, I was pleased to have this as for a long time it seemed as though there might never be another chance to record a Scot on the main line!

2. When steam first returned to the main line in the 70s I didn't often travel on the specials. This changed in the 80s!

By 1982 and for many years after, hardly a weekend went past without my having been a passenger so most of my recordings from these years, now using a much better recorder than that first mono machine, are on-train and the only opportunities for main line lineside recordings were during the photographic runs past which were a regular and most entertaining feature of main line steam railtours in those early years.

One of my favourite places for a run past was at Abergavenny on the Welsh Marches route especially with a Great Western loco which guaranteed plenty of noise.

While working a Welsh Marches Pullman back from Newport to Hereford, recorded from near the signal box just south of Abergavenny station GWR Hall 4-6-0 4930 *Hagley Hall* is heard performing a run past then setting back before performing another on 19th February 1983

3. Cumbrian Mountain Expresses run over the Settle to Carlisle line also gave scope for runs past, usually at Appleby.

On 26th March 1983 the ex LMS Coronation Pacific 46229 *Duchess of Hamilton* had worked our train from Leeds and, in the hands of Driver Jim Melia, had given us a remarkably entertaining non-stop run from Hellifield to Appleby which included passing Ais Gill summit at 70 mph! We had further entertainment at Appleby in the shape of runs past.

We thought that we were only going to get two runs past but after the second, Bernard Staitte can be heard informing the assembled throng that there will be one more!

During the third 46229 produces one those dramatic slips.

4. The National Railway Museum's Midland Railway Compound 4-4-0 1000 was a very rare engine on the main line.

What was even rarer was to get the Compound by itself and, as far as I know, once steam had re-appeared on the main line, it only ever worked a couple of main line outings single handed. Both were private charters and one of these, from York to Rochdale and back via the Calder Valley, ran on 28th September 1983. If it had been a public



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train it could have been filled 10 times over!

I went out to try to get a lineside recording of the engine at Neville Hill on the climb out of Leeds as it passed on its way back to York in the evening.

I wasn't sure what to expect in the way of noise since I had always been told that, once compounding, these locos were very quiet - still, it was probably going to be a once in a lifetime chance.

We were a little unsure of the actual times of the train so, getting this recording meant hanging around on the site of the old carriage shed on the south side of the line east of the loco shed watching the wildlife (mainly rabbits), other trains passing and listening to the kids playing in the surrounding council estates until, after about an hour, the Compound put in an appearance.

I can only guess that, with York driver Harry Wilson in charge, the loco was still being worked simple when it passed and not compounding. The noise from the chimney would have been audible all the way to Cross Gates had a Hull bound DMU and an aircraft not intervened!

I am certainly glad I took the trouble - I don't expect I will ever get the chance again.

5. As I was spending most of my time (and money) travelling behind steam on the main line I didn't have many opportunities for lineside recording so I have nothing from 1984, and 1985 provided but a single opportunity when, during the weekend of 8th & 9th June 1985, the Birmingham Railway Museum ran a series of 4 trains each day between Tyseley & Stratford-upon-Avon as part of the GW 150 celebrations. These trains were supposed to be hauled by GWR Castle 4-6-0 7029 *Clun Castle* and, newly returned after major overhaul, LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 5593 *Kohlapur* making its main line debut. Unfortunately the Jubilee had failed on the first train on the Saturday and wasn't available so the Castle worked all trains.

Before we hear the Castle, also visiting Stratford-upon-Avon on the Sunday afternoon was the Bullied Merchant Navy Pacific 35028 *Clan Line*, which was working one of the highly successful BR sponsored Sunday Lunch trains from Marylebone.

The Merchant Navy is heard on this windy afternoon on the steep climb to Wilmcote passing Bishopton not far up the 1 in 75 gradient soon after leaving Stratford.

6. A little later 7029 *Clun Castle* is heard passing the same spot at Bishopton with the 9 coach Shakespeare Express heading for Tyseley.
7. On, 1st June 1986, having spent the night in London after a steam trip the previous day I went by Underground out to West Hampstead to try for a recording of the Shakespeare Limited dining train passing on its way to Stratford.

As an Amersham bound Metropolitan Line train passes, LNER A4 4-6-2 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley* can be heard approaching on the rising gradient out of Marylebone.

As the A4 passes another Metropolitan Line train rushes past heading into Baker Street.

8. I had only a week to wait before the next opportunity for main line lineside recordings came my way when, during the weekend of 7/8th June 1986 the Birmingham Railway Museum ran another series of trains between Tyseley and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Motive power for these trains was provided by 7029 *Clun Castle* and 5593 *Kohlapur* which, this time, didn't fail.

After having a ride behind each of the locos we had time for some lineside recording and, in this track, 5593 is heard at Bishopton not long after the start at Stratford and climbing the 1 in 75 gradient to Wilmcote during the afternoon of 8th June 1986

9. Returning from Tyseley *Kohlapur* is heard between Wythall and Earlswood accelerating after a speed restriction.
10. With the final train of the day 7029 *Clun Castle* is heard not far from Wood End Tunnel making a very fine sound climbing the gradient towards the summit at Earlswood.
11. Saturday 29th October 1988 was a glorious Autumn day with plenty of sunshine and only a light breeze so, as ex LMS 8F 2-8-0 48151 was working a train over the Settle to Carlisle line, I decided to go to Settle and combine a bit of lineside recording with a walk round Langcliffe and Attermire.



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This recording was made high on the hillside to the north of Settle.

In the previous weeks both steam hauled trains as well as ordinary service trains had suffered from that seemingly perennial problem that affects trains on this route in the Autumn; that of fallen leaves and lack of adhesion, so it is hardly surprising that a slip is audible in the recording. However, after the sound of the train had faded away the lack of adhesion became worse it was over half an hour later that I saw the 8F disappear from view beyond Helwith Bridge!

12. In the late 80s the Settle to Carlisle line was under threat of closure and, by the beginning of 1989 a closure date in May had been announced. In view of this much of the steam programme for the first part of the year was centred on the line. In addition fares for these trains had been increased to £38 with the 'final' trains in May selling at what was then a massive £50 a seat, double the cost of trains in the previous year!
In view of the high fares, on 7th January 1989, I decided to do a bit of lineside recording for a change and went to Horton-in-Ribblesdale for ex SR Merchant Navy Pacific 35028 *Clan Line* heading north.
Despite having 12 coaches plus an ETHEL train heating unit behind the tender 35028 sounds to be making easy work of the load on the 1 in 100 gradient.
13. Thanks to the train having a long stop at Appleby I was able to catch the following service train and get another recording of 35028 departing for Carlisle.
This time the ETHEL is clearly audible. The ETHEL train heating units were a bit of a nightmare for sound recordists, especially when recording on-train. These units were Class 25 diesels with their traction motors removed. They were introduced to provide power for the electric heating once steam heating was banned and a noisier diesel could hardly have been found. ETHEL is short for Electric Train Heating Ex Locomotive!
14. In the late 80s and early 90s I was still finding plenty of trains to travel on and lineside opportunities were few and far between so the next main line lineside recording is more than three years after the previous one.
On 15th May 1993 ex LMS Princess Royal Pacific 46203 *Princess Margaret Rose* worked a northbound Cumbrian Mountain Express and the weather gods provided us with a breezy day with the added bonus of frequent showers of rain, far from ideal for sound recording but despite the wind, 46203 makes a fine sound climbing the 1 in 100 gradient at Selside.
As the sound of the loco fades away towards Ribblesdale the next shower of rain begins.
15. On 28th August 1993 46203 *Princess Margaret Rose* was out on the Settle to Carlisle line once again, this time working a southbound Cumbrian Mountain Express and is heard in this lineside recording going particularly well climbing the gradient from Mallerstang and passing Ais Gill.
16. A little later, after stopping to take water, 46203 is heard departing from Garsdale.
17. One of the most hyped events in 1994 was the visit of the GWR Castle 4-6-0 5029 *Nunney Castle* to the north culminating in two runs north & southbound over the S&C. Great Western fans were certain that the Castle would show us all how good it was and that our northern hills would be flattened by this fine machine. Others were not so sure!
The northbound run took place on 12th February 1994 and this is how the Castle sounded making a steady ascent passing Selside. The rumbling audible as the rear of the train passes is a Class 47 diesel attached there but only there to provide power for the electrical train heating.
18. A water stop at Garsdale allowed us to get ahead of the train and we were able to get to Ais Gill where 5029 sounds to be going somewhat better than it had been on the climb to Blea Moor. So far so good!
I have no lineside recordings of the southbound run as that was the one I chose to travel on. This proved a bad choice as the Castle expired at Kirkby Stephen on the climb to Ais Gill and the train had to be rescued by a diesel.
19. 20th August 1994 was a good day for steam hauled trains on the Settle - Carlisle line with two trains out that day. The first of these was a charter train from Bradford to Carlisle and back with ex LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 45596 *Bahamas*.
I should add that this train comprised the coaches known to one and all as the Pilkington set. The repainting of



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these coaches had been sponsored by the aforementioned company and as well as having a prominent company logo they were painted in the company colours. A more garish train can never have graced, if that is the right word, the rails in this country!

Fortunately in this recording the colour of the coaches does not detract from the sound of the Jubilee heard on this breezy day passing Selside during the outward journey.

20. The other train out that day was a southbound Cumbrian Mountain Express with 46203 *Princess Margaret Rose* in charge.

In this recording this excellent loco is heard in full cry reaching Ais Gill summit in fine style!

21. A little while later 45596 'Bahamas' returning from Carlisle is heard emerging from Birkett Tunnel and beginning to accelerate on the easier gradients at Mallerstang on the climb to Ais Gill.
22. A water stop at Garsdale and fast run in a friend's car allowed me to get this recording of *Bahamas* hurrying past Dent Head and into Blea Moor Tunnel.
23. At the end of August 1994 I was fortunate to visit Fort William with a friend. I had visited Fort William quite a few times before and had travelled behind steam to Mallaig many times but, due to the lack of a car (not to mention my inability to drive one!), had never made any lineside recordings. During this visit, thanks to my friend and his car, I was able to correct this omission.

Heard on 28th August 1994, is ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 44767 passing Corpach.

Once the Black 5 has negotiated the level crossing adjacent to the station the loco makes a fine sound accelerating westward alongside Loch Eil.

24. The steepest climb on the journey to Mallaig begins once the train has passed over Loch nan Uamh Viaduct. From there the gradient is 1 in 48 and the climb is made even more difficult by sharp curves and damp tunnels.

Later during the same journey as the previous recording, 44767 is heard passing between the top two tunnels during the steep climb and making a fine sound on the gradient.

25. On the following day, after a short stop at Glenfinnan 44767 is heard departing for Mallaig. As the recording begins the, Black 5 with 6 coaches behind the tender can just be heard departing. Although the climb to the summit after Glenfinnan is not quite as difficult as Beasdale Bank 44767 sounds fine on the gradient.

26. It is just as well that Monday 2nd January 1995 was sunny and calm as it was also extremely cold. Had there been any windchill and without the sun to take a little of the chill off, I doubt that we would have waited at Selside for 46203 *Princess Margaret Rose* as it was running almost 2 hours late with the northbound Cumbrian Mountain Express.

The wait proved well worthwhile as you can hear in this recording and, anyway, Pen-y-ghent was looking very nice!

27. The BR Standard Class 8P Pacific 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* worked a northbound Cumbrian Mountain Express on 23rd December 1995 and is heard from the lineside going very well passing Selside at the head of this 13 coach train.

A fine recording to end 1995 and this disk!

