

# The Chairman's Notes

My theme this month is mud. Driving a steamroller with the assistance of a tractor tow may not seem much fun. But when the roller in question is behaving like a water skier and sliding about sideways it can be exciting and when it decides to grip the surface and charges the tractor it becomes very exciting. Then I fell over the roller's hosepipe injured my wrists badly and left the excitement of steam on the open road to the Corcoran's for a while.

Of this you may read elsewhere.

A team of people attended the Colney Heath village Jubilee celebrations on behalf of our Society. We gave rides on Jim Mac's track, Ron Todd gave rides with his 4" Burrell and the 12" roller, ably driven by Dick Hesketh who is an H0 man and assisted by Peter Macdonald and Ian Reddish who allowed lots of children to blow the big whistle. Such members as Sam Skuse, Dick Payne, Mike Chrisp, Jim Mac drove up and down the track all afternoon. Adrian and Kate supplied tea and comfort to the beleaguered drivers and John Morgan of marine fame erected a magnificent stand advertising our club.

In all we took £89, which at 20p a ride means 445 passengers rides in about three hours. We donated all the money to the local charities being supported by this event and we all enjoyed it.

I would like to draw your attention to the visit to our track on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> of July by the children from Child's Hill School. These autistic kids are particularly enthusiastic about our railway.

Also I would remind members that we have invited the employees of the Three Valleys Water Company along to our track on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July. They are such kind landlords to us, so please put that date in your diary and bring a loco or bring yourselves to help us entertain our welcome visitors.

On the subject of General Meetings, they are on the first Friday of every month. We sometimes don't advertise meetings because they are a regular event, but to those of you who don't like surprises the next meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July will be a discussion on "The Ideal Workshop". Such open discussions amongst the members are often entertaining and can be most informative. So if you have some ideas about what a workshop should be like or you want some advice, come to the meeting.

The General Meeting on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August will be held at Colney Heath. The Barbecue will be available for you to cook your supper and the club engines are there for those of you who wish to have a go.

Lets hope that the rest of summer will be a little less wet.

*John Squire*

# **Marine Mutterings**

From Bernard Lambert

Don't forget our first Marine Open Day on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July. Gates will open at 9.00am. There are events for all types of craft from 10.00am to 1.00pm and from 2.00pm to 5.00pm. We hope to have visitors from local clubs and lots of North London boats on the Lake. The Lake has some well-buoyed courses thanks to John Morgan. All we need is more of your boats navigating around them at all marine events.

As usual we can still use some assistance on Sunday mornings with grass cutting and general tidying up around the Lake.

We are beginning to think about the next winter work program – what improvements would you like to see for next year? Removing the 'mound' and leveling the areas around the Lake to make mowing easier has been mooted and the question of whether we should provide lighting is still on the books. What do you all want in the Lake area? More importantly are any of you prepared to join the winter working party?

Enjoy the boating.

# **Treasurer Twittering**

Most, but not all, of your subscriptions have now been collected and we have acquired a second electric locomotive to provide back up for birthday parties and Sunday public running. This was purchased with money from the Cyril Rylett bequest fund.

Otherwise there is nothing significant to report on our finances this month.

*Bernard Lambert*

# **From the Membership Secretary**

## **New Members**

This month we welcome one new member approved at the June Council Meeting:

**Allan Hudnott**

*Bernard Lambert*

# Marine Section Competition News

## From John Morgan

There have now been two “First Sundays” for me to try and plan a steering course, both times have proved less than ideal. Trying to produce a course suitable for both small and large models while leaving some clear water for free sailing has, so far, defeated me.

The May attempt was set out too close to the edge of the lake and the attempt to have two courses in one for June, while looking okay on paper, was decidedly confusing when looking at the actual course.

So, its third time lucky. Firstly I have found the time to colour coordinate (paint) the buoys, using just three colours and I believe there is a way of having alternative routes round them to cater for the different characteristics of our models without causing utter confusion - July will tell!

In the long term there definitely will be a solution. I am working, albeit too slowly, on a 34” electric boat that will have lakeside replaceable batteries, giving an all day endurance capability that can be used by anyone who does not think their boat is suitable for the course. For the Open Day, 28th July, I hope to borrow the Welwyn Garden City club boat for this purpose.

Having said all that, if any member has a boat that they think might fit the bill, is willing for others to use it and it is capable of running all day, then please contact me or Bernard. Spare batteries will be provided.

Remember all this is just an attempt to bring boaters together once a month and to establish a Club “atmosphere”. Remember also that it’s just for fun – nothing to be apprehensive about!

Please don’t forget our Open Days, 28th July and 15th September Bring at least one boat! If you know of any clubs who may be interested, please tell me or Bernard just in case we have not mailed them.

See you on 7th July... AND then the 28th.

*John Morgan*

# Tythenhanger Gazette

By Roger Bell

The June Loco meeting was a 'Work in Progress' and John Squire decided to invite the builders of the largest loco to speak first, namely Ian Reddish and Peter Macdonald. Whilst many of us make models accurate to scale and of super finish this loco was far from it and prompted John to jokingly remark that this proves that the Society has failed in its objective. But joking aside it was a fantastic machine. It was built in two weeks for use on the ground level track to haul heavy loads and is a 7 ¼ inch gauge 0-4-0, powered by a lawnmower engine through a centrifugal clutch and by chain-drive to both axles.

One sits on a 'steering wheel' and the brake is operated by a handle from a lathe tailstock which presses down on a pivoted bar with a brake block on it that contacts the top of the wheel – quite novel. Suspension is fitted to the front wheels where the engine is, whilst the rear wheels, below the driver, have solid suspension. Reverse gear is not offered in the design; it would have to be turned round on a turntable, although a cranking handle is fitted for manoeuvring backwards. It has a wide platform made from tongued and grooved wood and its appearance is completed with a large klaxon horn fitted to the side, which may get a bit close to station platforms.

Whilst it is still under development, it has pulled some heavy loads. A train of nine concrete blocks and four concrete slabs were hauled uphill from the bottom of the site, which has proved the design a success. Ian and Peter are among the younger members of the Society and they were congratulated on the design and building of this loco as it was a really marvellous achievement, which has never been done before.

Mike Chrisp brought along a gauge-1 spirit-fired Bassett Lowke loco in black BR finish, a 2-6-0 with tender. This was one of the first batch made by Corgi. It has a short length of track to stand on. Mike has been working on a battery electric loco for his grandson. He has just finished a nice face on the front of it. The eyebrows, cheeks, mouth and nose were all moulded from *Milliput*, which is like araldite, a resin putty with hardener. It can be worked with a special cutlery-type set. It is cleaner to use with gloves on and a smooth finish can be achieved with wet hands. It can also be used as a filler in MDF. It is available in a range of colours at £3.50 per box from *Hobbycraft*, a shop near Bushy Arches specialising in every form of craft imaginable. They sell frog's eyes and teddy bear's eyes, the latter finished the face after a coat of chrome paint. *Milliput*, when hard can be cut, drilled and milled and it will set twice as hard if mixed with araldite.

A useful clip was passed round, an R-clip. It has the same use as a split pin but does not have to be bent. One leg goes through the hole of a pin. The other leg springs out and holds onto the outside of the pin – ideal for securing the loco ashpan pin. They are available from *GT Towing*.

Many of us have enjoyed making models from Meccano as a child and we heard that the firm is still in business. The Meccano magazine is still printed with four editions a

year. It is a good quality magazine with large detailed pictures of models to make. Membership is about £25 a year. The St Albans Model Engineering Exhibition towards the end of September will have a stand for them. It has quite a following.

Jonathan Avery was the next to speak. He had brought along his 7 ¼ inch gauge 0-4-0 *Midge*, a dock tank loco that has had many owners. The last one was Frank Dell who started the restoration by taking it to pieces. He said the more he took it apart the worse it got so Jonathan with seven boxes of parts rose to the challenge. It is now down to three boxes plus a set of drawings and has been rebuilt up to the rolling chassis stage.

One cylinder was scored and seized which has an undersized bore. This was re bored at the model engineering classes at Oaklands (Welwyn) College on Thursday evenings. PTFE 'o'-rings have been fitted in the cylinders. The coupling rods were bent and of different lengths. Each rod had been made in three pieces with the ends being brazed onto the centrepiece so new rods were made to replace these. It had taken six weeks to strip all of the old paint off, as it was so thick. It was as though it had been dunked in a bucket of paint.

New axle boxes were made from steel with brass bushes. The old boiler was riveted and soft soldered. A new one will have to be bought. It is a heavy loco. The frames at 3/16" are thicker than the drawing shows but this extra weight should enable it to pull a heavy load. Jonathan hoped to have it running on compressed air the following weekend.

## **The Trials and Tribulations of Building a 5" gauge GWR 1400 Class Winson Kit Locomotive**

**By Michael Franklin**

Ever since I was a schoolboy I always wanted to possess a real working steam locomotive. Because I had no engineering experience I considered it was way beyond my capabilities to build an engine. However in 1998 Winson Engineering were advertising their kit locos and I thought it was possible I could try to build one. I visited Winson's factory in Daventry with a friend who was an experienced loco builder. My friend was suitably impressed and I decided to go ahead. I was required to pay a deposit and then a monthly payment over one year to cover the 12 boxes of parts. Total cost was £4,000.

I thought construction would be like putting together a Meccano set and the only tools I possessed were screwdrivers and adjustable spanners. Winson implied novices would only need basic tools and equipment so as I didn't have a workshop I decided to use the spare bedroom. Initially I had no idea of what 'fitting meant and I had never heard of 'BA'. I soon realised I would need more tools!

Winson financed a magazine called *Fastrack* in which many articles appeared written by other builders. I was therefore able to acquire some useful tips and information particularly on the types of tools I would need.

I was able to cope reasonably well with the first few kits. I spent a lot of time filing and rubbing down with emery paper to get the parts to fit together properly. The *Fastrack* magazine also gave lists of the names and 'phone numbers of other builders. I contacted another builder who lived in Kensworth who said he was so disappointed with the poor quality of Winson's work that he took the parts back to Daventry and received a full refund. Another builder I contacted lived in Luton and thankfully he was more optimistic. I visited him and showed him my loco, which by then consisted of frames, cylinders, coupling rods and valve gear.

By this stage I realised there was no way I would ever be able to understand Winson's method of timing the valve settings. Fortunately for me, the Luton builder kindly agreed to help me. It took him four hours by trial and error to set the valves and since he had a compressor he was able to run my engine on air.

I joined the NLSME in 1998 and learned that other members in the Society were building Winson kits. I was very impressed with the work of David Jones and I realised my efforts were ordinary by comparison. Work on the loco slowed down during the summer months because of other interests and I decided to build the engine during the winter months. In many ways it was sensible for someone like me to be slow because I could benefit from other people's experiences, as mentioned in *Fastrack*. Winson had made many design errors and when modifications were received from them I did not have to undertake too much work to rectify the problems.

By the time I got to kits 8 and 9 I reluctantly decided I was not confident enough to complete the model on my own. Although I had spent a lot of time studying the instructions I did not think I would be able to finish the work properly.

An engineer by the name of Dave James advertised in *Fastrack* that he would complete, repair or overhaul any locomotive. I spoke to him and he said he would complete my loco at a cost of £100 a kit. By that time I had four kits outstanding. *Fastrack* had featured the work of Dave James on several occasions. He was the first builder to successfully construct and operate a 5" gauge Winson Britannia.

In December 1999 I took all my parts to Dave James in Swansea. At that time he was working on about ten engines of different gauges and I realised he would need time to work on mine. He said he was well acquainted with the 1400 Class and had helped Winson overcome some of their problems with the engine. I told him that because the water tanks on the engine were small, I wanted to install a water tank on my riding trolley. He agreed to complete the necessary extra pipework.

During 2001 I spoke to Dave on several occasions to check on progress. By last autumn he said most of the pipework was complete and that having steamed my engine on his local track it was working well. However, he did not like Winson's lubricator. In addition he found it necessary to re-bore the cylinders and fit better pistons and O-rings. By last December the engine was ready for collection. I drove to

Swansea and was impressed by the finished job. The final cost was £600 and at this stage I think that for a beginner like me, it was money well spent. I am now painting the engine. I realise the boiler will have to be tested at Colney Heath. Provided it passes the tests I hope that I will be able to get some help from other members of the Club in trying to drive it.

In undertaking this project I have learned a lot about steam engines. Although I have found it a difficult task, I now realise how skill-full people are who can build their own engines.

Provided my aspirations to operate a steam engine can be achieved, I hope to be able to enjoy operating my loco for many years. Because my wife has been understanding and supportive I am to name my engine *Sheila*.

For the time being I reserve my decision as to whether or not it was a sensible idea for a novice like me to undertake this type of venture. Undoubtedly the quality of Winson's parts left a lot to be desired. However, many people involved with these kit engines consider that the cost of the engines would be much higher if more precision was incorporated in the manufacturing process.

I have just turned 70 and hopefully my lifelong ambition to drive my own loco, will this year be realised.

## **The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Limited 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001.**

**By Ian Murray**

*(The following article was written last autumn but unfortunately shortage of space has prevented its publication until now. Apologies to Ian for the delay but I'm sure members will agree it still is a great 'read' – just right for the lazy days of summer. Ed).*

“Where can they be?” I wondered as I trudged around the concourse of Birmingham International railway station. Instinctively my feet headed in the direction of the bar, even though it was only just after 7.00am. Sure enough, I saw Grahame Ainge waving to me and sitting with him were Mike Collingwood and Bernard Lambert, albeit only drinking coffee. We all looked and felt more asleep than awake, but beginning to discuss the prospects for the two days ahead soon brightened us up. Steam hauled and banked up Shap and Beattock, an overnight stay in Edinburgh and a double-headed steam hauled return on the Sunday - what bliss!

The trip, organised by Past Time Rail, was to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “return to steam” run by 6000 King George V which, in October 1971, broke the three year steam ban imposed by BR after steam's demise in 1968, and paved the way for the renaissance in steam hauled trains which has happened in the intervening years.

Motive power was to be Ian Riley's class 5 number 45407 (masquerading as 45157-Glasgow Highlander) and his BR class 4 number 76079, the intention being to run the train forward from Preston behind 45157 up the West Coast main line to Oxenholme where 76079 would be attached to the rear of the train to bank this up Grayrigg. The banker would remain attached for the run through the Lune Gorge to Tebay and then bank the train up Shap - the first for 33 years. This was intended to be repeated up Beattock with the two engines coming together at the front of the train at Carstairs for the run to Edinburgh. So much for the theory but would these ambitious plans come fully to fruition?

The BN91 coaching set from Bounds Green depot rolled in only slightly late and to our delight we found that our seats were at the front of the second coach so, even with the addition of a support coach, we should be able to hear the locos easily. The run to Preston was uneventful except for the fact that Grahame suddenly remembered that I hail from the North West and began asking me to identify each and every landmark, no matter how obscure and snorting with disapproval each time I failed. In the end I was making the answers up!

“ What's that chimney, Ian?”

“ That'll be the Eli Bickerstaffe fluff mill”

“Oh”

“ What's that building, Ian?”

“ That'll be the Co-operative tripe stretching shed”

“ Oh”

Bernard nodded mischievously whilst Mike smiled quietly to himself!

At Preston, as we stood watching the electric loco depart, 45157 could be heard under the glazed overall roof, on the far side of the coaching stock to where we were standing. The roar of steam from cylinder drain cocks heralded movement and she slowly emerged from behind the front coach and drew forward out of the station before reversing in and giving the waiting stock several hefty thumps in an effort to engage the buckeyes. There was something very different about the loco however, and not just her number change. She is fitted for air braking, the air pump being hidden between the loco frames, but the exhaust must have been led to the blastpipe in some way as, whilst stationary, she emitted a steady “ chonk, chonk, chonk”

Departure time drew close and we headed back to our seats. Northern departures from Preston face a rising gradient and a sharp left hand bend, not an ideal combination, so I looked forward to what promised to be an interesting start to the day's steam haulage. With several blasts from a rather watery and indistinct whistle, 45157 moved slowly forward, the steam from the roaring safety valves threatening to cut through the underside of the roadbridge, which spans the tracks at the platform ends. Pointwork induced a brief slip and as the loco gradually swung to the left I could see that the steam sanders were hard on. More slipping, quickly controlled, as the loco dragged a seemingly unwilling rake of coaches onto the bend. Progress was painfully slow and by looking through the windows on the opposite side of the carriage I could see that 45157 was laying a veritable fog of dark smoke over Preston town centre. We continued to make slow progress until nearly all of our eleven coaches had been

pulled up the rise and had reached the straighter track near to the site of Preston MPD, at which point 45157 began to move with more purpose and accelerated her train to the accompaniment of a quickening exhaust. Grahame's eyes opened wide at the noise level and Bernard remarked sagely "she's chopping them off nicely!" Grahame admitted that he knew little about the LMS class five and was indeed surprised at the noise level, being brought up on, apparently, less raucous LNER types.

We headed north over the Lancashire plain, the sun shining from amongst well broken cloud and sat back to savour the staccato music from the loco, the sounds and a good deal of grit wafting in through the wide open window vent above our table. Cars were pacing us on the M6, sheep (yes I was surprised to see some) scurrying away as ever and Grahame then produced two books—one giving gradient profiles and the other a road atlas from the mid 1960's so we could follow where we were at any given time. Mike announced that it was 9.00am and as far as he was concerned the sun was well and truly over the yardarm - and out came the John Smiths! That sent us all into our various bags for food and other sustenance and it was at that point that I realised that the good Mrs Murray had packed enough food and drink for yours truly to have enabled Napoleon to have sustained his entire army on the retreat from Moscow!

Lancaster Castle station swept by as we ran through the centre roads and on towards the hills. We thundered past the remains of Hest Bank station and over the site of the troughs which once provided a welcome drink for locos before the climbing began. The wide expanse of Morecambe Bay was now laid out before us on the left and, for once, the sun was glinting off water, which covered the extensive mud flats. Speed was now increasing and as we approached Carnforth we passed our banking loco in the loop. There was a brief exchange of whistles, a glimpse of a Deltic standing in Carnforth shed yard, resplendent in its original BR colours, before we rushed through the rather dilapidated remains of Carnforth station where both main platforms have been cut back. Was that Trevor Howard glimpsed through the swirling steam? The loco was now being worked rather harder and Grahame's face was a picture as the noise level increased to the point where the four of us were having to shout across the table to make ourselves heard. Once over the Yealand hump steam was shut off for the falling grade and black smoke billowed past (and in through) the window bringing that familiar sulphurous smell that our small engines just don't quite capture.

Grayrigg bank begins at the crossing of the Beela river, half a mile south of Milnthorpe station where the gradient becomes 1 in 173 and in the next 13 miles the line rises 485 feet at an average inclination of 1 in 142. Our loco was well into her stride by this time, the crew recognising that although they would have the advantage of a banker from Oxenholme, that station is about half way up Grayrigg, so with the reverser dropped well down we charged the lower half of the bank. Conversation subsided as we all sat back and savoured the sound of one of Stanier's creations demonstrating its mastery of home turf. Soon the loco was shut off and the brakes came on for the loop at Oxenholme and we rolled to a stand not far from where the shed full of bankers used to stand. A water tanker was waiting for us and as water was taken the Standard Four, which had followed us from Carnforth came into the loop, buffered up and coupled on. She was to remain with us to Penrith, so coupling up to the train was essential. With watering finally complete, and black smoke pouring from the chimney of the banker we listened to the first of the "crows" between the engines. Mike and Grahame were evidently not too sure what was going on and I

thought they were kidding until it was explained to me that there was no history of banking on the East Coast main line. I, in turn, explained that normal practice had been for the banker, once buffered up to whistle to the train engine that he was ready and once an answering whistle came from the train engine the banker would begin to push and the train engine open up as well—a sort of steam age Inter-City 125!

We moved slowly out of the loop onto the main line and continued slowly through Oxenholme station itself until, once all the train was clear of the loop, both engines were opened up for real. Acceleration was impressive and on the left curve Grahame put his head out of the window to look back and grinned at the volume of smoke rolling down the fellside in the direction of Kendal where, no doubt, the good burghers would be less than impressed. The line follows the side of the hill to the east of the river Kent, passing through a rock cutting before launching out onto a long curving embankment near Hay Fell on a gradient of 1 in 133. The two locos worked the train up to a speed probably around 45 to 50 mph (no doubt accurate figures will appear in the railway press soon enough), which they seemed to hold over the last five miles of the climb even though the gradient stiffens to 1 in 106. Once over the top acceleration was rapid and I was pleasantly surprised at our pace given the small driving wheels on the banker. I commented on this and was promptly reminded of the speed propensity of 9Fs, which had even smaller wheels. The hills of the Lune Gorge rose on either side of the train looking splendid in the afternoon sunlight and as we bucketed over the site of Dillicar troughs I reflected that the Gods of the hill country were being kind and giving us a dry rail and well nigh perfect conditions for the photographers who I expected would be out on Shap in force.

It had been agreed with the powers that be that our train would come to a stand before the ascent of Shap bank so that the crews (which were in radio contact with each other) could agree when to start. The brakes came on and we ground to a halt on the 1 in 146 where the twin tracks of the mainline now pass over an open and weed infested area. I looked out on this, but for me I could still see the platforms of Tebay station and the shed full of bankers behind – in layout not dissimilar to that which pertained at Grantham but on a much smaller scale. I remembered an *Argo Transacord* record which I still have somewhere of a Britannia on a down express rumbling over the bridge over the infant Lune on the approach to Tebay and whistling frantically for a banker. We were treated to an exchange of whistle “crows” from banker and train engine then we were under way.

The late morning sunshine bathed the lower slopes of Shap Fell in a rather watery light as broken cloud scudded across an impressive blue background and I could imagine the photographers awaiting our arrival praying that the sun would not chose to dart mischievously behind cloud. Our acceleration from rest was quick, both loco crews clearly being ready for the climb and again our ears were assaulted by the sounds of the “five” getting to grips with the gradient. The M6 overbridge rolled past and as we emerged from the rock cutting beyond and approached Greenholme the longest gallery of photographers I have seen in my life came into view. They were on the west side of the line with the sun behind them and the westerly wind blowing the engine’s smoke away from them so they had obviously chosen their site well. The gallery ran from on top of the overbridge across our tracks, down the roadway for at least one quarter of a mile with the police in attendance also. Given that our train was less than full I’m sure that the organisers would have liked £5.00 per head from all the

photographers, which would have been good value. No doubt we will see a plethora of photos and videos featuring this train in the railway press over the next few months and perhaps this point will be made as well.

The locos were by now well into their stride and as we rounded the gentle reverse curves north of Greenholme I commented that the next big gallery would probably be at Shap Wells. Through the windows on the other side of the carriage we could see line after line of parked cars belonging, no doubt, to photographers taking shots from the east side of the line and perhaps trying to find a new perspective. Speed was now probably in the mid 40's and as we forged up the straight embankment on the approach to Shap Wells I was surprised to see an almost complete absence of photographers. Perhaps they all felt that the best shots were to be had on the lower part of the bank when the locos were still accelerating the train.

The "five's" exhaust echoed off the sides of the cutting just short of the summit and as the train leaned to the right hand curve at the summit, the refuge sidings came into view together with the single house like property by the trackside, the purpose of which I have never known. Acceleration was now rapid and it appeared that no alteration was initially made either to regulator or cut off position, as the intensity of 45157's exhaust did not lessen as the beat increased. Again I was impressed with the speed achieved by the two locos in such a short space of time but soon the regulators were closed and with that wondrous smell wafting back we drifted swiftly past the site of Shap station itself, a mile or so to the north of the actual summit and began our descent of the north side of Shap, a more gradual but longer gradient. I have read that loco crews leaving Carlisle for the south with a fresh loco, a heavy train and a "green" fire regarded the long pull against the collar to Shap summit as a harder proposition than the steeper but shorter ascent from the south so beloved of enthusiasts.

Penrith was reached without further drama and we were turned into the sidings for water to be taken and for the banker to be detached after which we set off behind just the train engine for a speedy descent to Carlisle Citadel station where Grahame, a veteran of every recent steam run over Shap, had promised to show Mike, Bernard and myself the sights and introduce us to some decent fish, chips and beer. This he duly did after we had watched the loco and support coach being detached, the loco to be serviced at Upperby depot whilst we recharged the inner man courtesy of the local sights and Wetherspoons. Our modest repast was eaten in the sunshine in front of the fortified sandstone Citadel which, luckily, was built close to the railway station so that warning of an invasion by the unruly Scots could quickly be sent to the King in London via the LNWR Premier Line! If we have to rely on Virgin Trains and Railtrack for this, the Scots will have got farther south than Bonnie Prince Charlie by the time London is made aware!

Whilst we were whiling away our time on beer, women and chips (the poor man's equivalent of wine, women and song!) 76079 was leap frogging our train to await our arrival at Beattock. Having wrung the residual chip fat from my beard we set off back to the station and watched 45157 hook on. We took up our seats and awaited departure. I reflected that this would probably be the first time that I had ascended Beattock behind steam since 1959 when I went over on a night train from Manchester behind 72000 Clan Buchanan. The Stanier hooter sounded and off we went, under the roadbridge at the northern platform end, past the site of Carlisle no 4 box and onto the

raised track below the level of which, on the west side, used to be a variety of yards. The history of Carlisle as a focal point for seven railways (Caledonian, GSWR, North British, Maryport and Carlisle, LNWR, MR and NER) is worth reading about and I have always felt that it's position as something of a "frontier town" between Scotland and England adds an extra something. The loco got quickly into it's stride and soon we were passing the site of Dentholme yard and I looked for, and found, the point on our left where the truncated remains of the Waverly route detached themselves from our tracks. We rumbled over Etterby bridge and I looked to the right to where I knew Kingmoor shed used to be situated, but beyond the wire fencing all that was to be seen was an acre or two of young woodland, probably self sown, including many silver birch. I looked to the left again, feeling strangely sad and hollow to where the wind blown remains of an empty Kingmoor new yard gave silent but eloquent testimony to the enormous changes which have been wrought on our railway system since this was built in the 1960's.

The flat land north of Carlisle I have always found to be singularly depressing, whether crossing this by train or car. In fact this whole area, a land of salt marsh and bog, around the Eden estuary used to be known as the "debatable land" it having changed hands so many times over the years between the Scots and the English. The presence of the Solway Firth (wherever have I heard that before?) over to the west could be felt rather than seen but the hill Criffel (569 metres) in Dumfriesshire was showing dark against a lowering sky as the weather steadily closed in. We were not about to get away with climbing all three major west coast route hills on a dry rail. Speed increased on the level or falling grades past Rockcliffe and Floriston and the steady purr from the chimney top increased in volume as we began the eight mile climb at 1 in 193/200 to the summit some two miles before Kirtlebridge. A little like the climb to Stoke I mused but sandwiched between the formidable obstacles of Lakeland and the southern uplands of Scotland. We swept past Gretna junction where the old GSWR line to Dumfries peels off to the left and as we were now in Scotland yours truly produced a flask of malt whisky which was passed round the table to the accompaniment of that old Scottish toast "here's tae us, wha's like us, damn few an' the're a' deid" (here's to us, who's like us, damn few and they're all dead!)

A further four miles followed at 1 in 200 to Castlemilk before the engine was eased for the run downgrade through Lockerbie that small Scottish town now known around the world as a result of the Pan Am tragedy. Once past Whampray a further four miles of climbing at an average of 1 in 200 brought us to Beattock sidings and our banker. Thus our loco, in a run of about forty miles, had spent sixteen on an adverse gradient of 1 in 200 and this as a taster for Beattock bank proper- ten miles of unbroken climb at an average of 1 in 77 to the summit at 1016ft. My admiration for Sir William's creations and their crews grew by the minute, particularly the big pacifics on through workings. Imagine being in the Crewe roster, which included the 9.25am Crewe – Perth, possibly in terms of duration of hard climbing, one of the most difficult turns in the UK. A journey taking the traveller from the industrial north west through the grandeur of the fell country of England and Scotland to the industrial belt of the Glasgow – Edinburgh corridor and beyond to the foothills of the Highlands proper. One to stir the blood if ever there was one but probably best seen and felt from the cab of a steam engine, although it would be unlikely that the fireman would see much other than the firehole and the shovelling plate!

76079 was standing on the up fast as we rolled into Beattock sidings and as we came to a stand she crossed over and followed us in and hooked on. The weather had closed in and the rain was falling. Darker clouds could be seen moving in from the west driven by a strengthening wind. Whistles were exchanged again between the engine crews and off we went, snaking over the point work to regain the mainline whereupon both engines began to dig in. Within half a mile the gradient steepens to 1 in 88 becoming steadily more adverse as the climb progresses, the steepest part being a half mile at 1 in 69 at Greskine, just over half way up - cunningly positioned you might think to tax even more a hard working engine and crew. How many pacific drivers I wonder have lengthened cut off on that half mile only to have the engine lose her feet on rain or early morning dew and then, with impetus lost and the train in the grip of the gradient, have had to hang on grimly, working the sanders, leaving the engine to take the last four and a half miles at her own pace whilst bitterly regretting not whistling up a banker at Beattock.

This was the point at which it was time for me to leave my seat and join the ranks of the droplight brigade. I walked forward to the gangway between our coach and the one in front (second coach) and tapped the shoulder of the well wrapped up and protected individual leaning out of the right hand window. He turned and drew his head and shoulders into the vestibule, goggles and balaclava dripping with rain. I indicated that I wanted to look out and he was pleased to let me but warned that it was very wet. I stuck my head out and the wind instantly directed the contents of the gutter of the coach in front all over my head, and as it was bucketing down with rain this was no small amount of water! I suggested to my newfound friend that if he leant out toward the top of the window, I would stand behind him and look out at the bottom of the window. This we did, and as he braved the worst of the water flow I revelled in the sight of the "five" doing battle with the grade. The noise was terrific, heat, grit and steam swirling back as the loco, making probably 40mph, followed the curvature of the track. The rain continued to lash down as we climbed higher up the valley of the river Annan, the A74(M) and the railway getting closer together as the light faded under the dark clouds.

Sheets of spray were being thrown up by the articulated lorries, their lights reflecting off the water running across the carriageways and as the valley narrowed it seemed as if the brooding hills were trying to squeeze both road and railway into submission. I twisted my head around to look back as we took the long right hand curve at Greskine and could see the pine covered fellside rising above the train; so familiar from the photographs of Eric Treacy and Derek Cross. I have heard that Ian Riley refers to 76079 as the "pocket rocket" but we seemed to have a mobile Vesuvius clamped to our rear end. The railway crosses the dual carriageway near Harthope and what a sight we must have been, seen through rain and spray, forging across with both train engine and banker giving of their best. That half-mile at 1 in 69 probably marks the watershed between the southward flowing streams feeding the headwaters of the Annan and the northward flowing streams feeding the headwaters of the Clyde and the Tweed. With such great rivers to feed no wonder the rain was coming down in quantity. I admitted defeat, dried myself as much as my hanky would allow and returned to my seat.

The last two miles to the summit were stormed in great style then, as the gradient eased, we went into the summit loops to drop the banker. What a great climb it had

been and again, no doubt, the railway press will give details of speeds, power outputs etc. in due time. For me, the sight and sound of the “five” steadily climbing through the wind and rain, riding the curves and forging onward in spite of the weather was exhilarating whilst the presence of the banker increased the sense of, almost, unreal normality. A steam engine at front and rear felt normal, but the sight of the 40 tonners on the road made it seem as if I was looking from the past into the future through curtains of rain.

Leaving 76079 behind we set off down the valley of the infant Clyde, riding the long sweeping reverse curves through Elvanfoot, Crawford and Abington before swinging left at Symington, leaving the Clyde to find it's own way to Glasgow, and heading for Carstairs some seven miles distant where we came to a stand. The rain had stopped by now but dusk was falling and we all went up the platform to watch the loco detach and reverse past the train. Carstairs junction includes a triangle, although once again the site of the engine sheds is occupied by a tangle of trees and undergrowth. Steam from a safety valve behind the undergrowth indicated that the class four had arrived and was watering and the class five went to join her co-conspirator. In due course the pair reversed into the station, having used the triangle to turn, and coupled onto what had been the rear of the train to take us on to Edinburgh. By now it was quite dark and as the line to Edinburgh is mostly downhill from Carstairs the remainder of the run was uneventful. Taxis took weary travellers to the pre-booked hotel where, after a welcome hot meal and a dram or two, bed called.

The following morning the four of us decided to walk down to Waverley station and as the morning was bright and crisp this was a good choice and set us up for the day. Grahame, Mike and Bernard wanted to take a service train to Inverkeithing to travel over and look at the Forth Bridge but as I have seen it several times before I decided to take the morning steam tour of the Edinburgh circle. Both locos were on the front and impatient to leave as I boarded the train and I was delighted to realise that as the train had reversed the previous night at Carstairs, I was once again at the front of the third carriage. At 10.30 prompt we set off in a westerly direction through the tunnels and bridges, which take the railway through Princes Street Gardens.

This was to be a new experience for me and so it proved. For much of the early part of the journey we ran through masses of dripping wet foliage, much of which brushed the sides of the train and through deserted and abandoned stations overrun with vegetation of all kinds. Overbridges and tunnel mouths were festooned with ivy and sandstone walls were green with mould or lichen, the whole effect being to make me feel that we were passing through part of the lost world of the Incas. Where there were gaps typical Scottish sandstone housing could be seen and a number of people stopped in their tracks as we passed. One bewhiskered down and out sitting on a bench on a long abandoned platform watched our passing open mouthed, then glared accusingly at his can of Tennants.

Gradually the vegetation cleared and there was more to see until ahead I could see the Mound and we slipped downhill and through the Mound tunnel and into Edinburgh Waverley from the east and came to rest on the same platform and facing the same way as when we had set off. I went forward to watch the locos water and to take a close look at each, this being my first real opportunity to take in both together and as there was some forty minutes before the off, I was able to take my time.

Both locos are in BR lined black, a livery deliberately chosen by Robert Riddles in his capacity as a member of the Railway Executive in 1948, as a mark of respect or affection for his first employer, the LNWR. Incidentally, I believe I have read somewhere that his first pacific was named “Britannia” after the lady on the LNWR coat of arms. Be that as it may, it is my view that the BR/LNWR lined black livery is, when clean, one of the most attractive colour and lining schemes and coupled with the “ferret and dartboard” early BR tender insignia gives a very pleasing overall effect. There was much activity on the platform from a variety of luminously clad individuals, but the overall feel was leisurely and very good-humoured.

I was especially pleased to see the loco crews looking for youngsters on the platform (who clearly would not have been on the trip) and inviting them up onto the footplate. Neither loco had been over polished and there was therefore very much a workaday feel to them, which I enjoyed. Personally I am not enamoured with locos, which look as if they have just been removed from a glass case for the run and highly polished motion and quartered buffers leave me cold. There is only one loco which in my view can carry off this level of preparation and that is a BR green A4 as there are ample photos to show the consistent high standards achieved by Top Shed and Haymarket.

I stood on the platform alongside the “Glasgow Highlander” nameplate carried by the class five and looked at the badge. My Scots grandfather was in the Highland Light Infantry during the Boer War and I am aware that the names Glasgow Highlander and Highland Light Infantry are interchangeable and it was interesting for me to see that the regimental scrolls on the loco badge incorporate both names. That my grandfather is buried in the regimental plot in Edinburgh only made the moment more poignant.

Grahame, Mike and Bernard soon put in an appearance, having had a successful trip to Inverkeithing and back and together we stood admiring our steeds. The air pump on the “five” was making a whole variety of noises. Tinkerty—tinkerty—tinkerty (pause) Tink—Tink(pause)—CHONK, CHONK, CHONK (from the chimney) all very audible above the roar of the blower. I asked myself whether these new noises detracted from the loco but decided that they added a new excitement and, frankly, she could play the Blue Danube from her drain cocks just so long as she was on the main line!

We made our way back to our seats as departure time approached, pleased once again to be at the front of the train. An exchange of whistles between the locos and we were off making a smoky departure with safety valves lifting. Between the bridges and tunnels of Princes Street gardens could be seen many people who had come to watch and I’m sure the sights and sounds did not disappoint.

We rolled west through the Edinburgh suburbs listening to the differing sounds being made by our two locos. The “five” has six foot driving wheels whereas the BR 2-6-0 only has driving wheels of five foot three inches, therefore there was a noticeable disparity in exhaust beats, although for much of the early part of the journey it appeared that only the 2-6-0 was being worked, the “five” simply blowing off. Once clear of the built up areas both engines began to work and as we headed west the line of the Pentland Hills to the south began to rise, whilst at the same time what had been a fine and bright morning suddenly took a turn for the worse.

The line, after Oakbank, swings southwest and follows, initially, the valley of Linhouse Water, the gradient being now a constant 1 in 100. From the Linhouse Water valley the line switches to follow the course of the River Almond on the long pull up to Cobbinshaw Loch. The weather had really closed in by now, with much reduced visibility and heavy, driving rain. "Just the time to put my head out" I thought and went and renewed my acquaintance with yesterday's droplight hanger, wondering idly whether he had remained at his post overnight. Both locos were being worked hard, but there was not a great deal to see, as the line at this point is straight for several miles. Nonetheless the sounds of the two exhausts were terrific and there was the added benefit of twice the smoke and steam and twice the grit!

Steam beat back, the hot breath from the locos fogging my glasses and I watched as the fireman on the "five" leant out and worked the injector water valve. I hoped his injectors would give him less trouble than the ones on my "Brit"! The combination of driving rain and a rain of driving grit forced me back inside to clear my eyes, but the sheer exhilaration of having my head out in the rushing air and feeling a part of the hard work which was being done "up front" was overwhelming and back out went my head again. Eventually even I had to give up and mopping up with my rather limp and grey hanky again I went back to my seat.

I had expected that the train would reverse at Carstairs and was fully reconciled to the fact that from that point on we would be at the back of the train. To my delight, however, we took the southern leg of the triangle, avoiding the station and not reversing the train. That meant that we would be close to the front for the double-headed assaults on the northern slopes of both Beattock and Shap. Oh deep joy—as Professor Stanley Unwin used to say.

Both engines, having now gained the west coast mainline at Strawfrank junction, started to accelerate and the weather began clearing, the rain having already ceased. Thankerton, Symington and Lamington (what wonderful rhyming names) passed in short order and we were then on to the continual rising grade which, in five miles or so would bring us to our first water stop at Abington. The sun was now shining through broken cloud and the gentle hills of the upper Clyde valley were bathed in warm autumn light, the shadows moving quickly across them driven by a strengthening wind.

We were aware that weather conditions in the south of England were poor, with gales and heavy rain so it seemed likely that this would be the best of the day. I decided to put my head out again, but this time I walked down the train until I found a vacant droplight. I slid the glass down and leant with my arm on the top of the window and my face where the glass had been, able to hear and see but just out of the airflow. I watched the lineside as the land rose and fell and trees and bushes swept past. The smell of the hills was in the air and I stuck my head out to look forward. Both locos were working hard and on the long, gentle, and rising left hand curve past Wandel the sounds wafted back, the freshening wind playing tricks as first the brisk exhaust of the 2-6-0 would be heard only to be superseded by the more measured and deeper "five".

The fields bordering the lineside had received a fair amount of recent rain as there were numerous patches of standing water. At one, a heron hung in the freshening wind, scanning the wavelets - more in hope than expectation I would have thought-

whilst the long horned Highland cattle lying on the dry, higher ground looked with singular disinterest at our passing.

Facing my vantage point was the rounded mass of Rome Hill (564 metres) with the dark bracken showing on its flanks in huge swathes, whilst to its right, and further south, grouped some six hills of similar height including the wonderfully named Black Dod (548 metres). It is through these hills that the railway winds, keeping close to the Clyde until Elvanfoot after which it is driven across the watershed at Beattock summit. Before that, however, we needed water and the brakes were now on for Abington where we were turned into the loop.

Watering took considerably longer than anticipated as control elected to hold us in the loop to allow a number of late running Virgin trains to pass us. This was no doubt due to Railtrack not wishing to face financial penalties if we were to hold them up further, but in the event, the announcements from the Government later that same day regarding Railtrack made the caution unnecessary. However, the decision was also taken not to turn us into the loop at Beattock summit, so the chance existed to pull back time.

The rain was falling again as we left the loop on a rising grade of 1 in 392 which would gradually steepen on the reverse curves past Crawford and Elvanfoot, beyond which the last two miles to the summit are at 1 in 99. Acceleration was rapid, despite the grade, both locos and crews seeming to be pleased to have finally been released from the confines of the loop. Again wonderful music was being made at the front end and from my position toward the rear of the train I was able to see both locos clearly as they forged round the curves, their strong exhausts being blown quickly down by the strong wind. Grahame joined me and we took turns to enjoy the spectacle, each of us agreeing that there was no substitute for hanging out through a droplight. How antiseptic modern trains seem with their emphasis on sensory deprivation (not to mention safety!).

We passed the loops at the summit and immediately accelerated as the locos pointed their noses towards the valley of the river Annan. The brakes soon came on to restrain our rollicking progress and as we squeezed past the shoulder of Nether Howcleugh (465 metres) the rain began falling with greater intensity. We launched ourselves across the A74(M) where once again, in the deteriorating conditions, the traffic was throwing up great sheets of spray. The touches on the brakes became more frequent as we ran round the Greskine curves whilst the dark grey smoke from the locos blanketed the full length of the train.

Speed was now probably up around 70mph (although the 2-6-0 is supposed to be restricted to 60mph) and as the motion of the 2-6-0 flew round it looked for all the world as if the "five" was determined to hustle the smaller loco at an altogether indecent speed. Sidings and the forlorn remains of the Moffat branch announced the approach of Beattock station and I looked for this eagerly as I had missed this on the way up, but all that remains is a sad mound of earth where the up platform stood. I made my way back to my seat as the train continued down Annandale and headed for the border and the "debatable land" once more. The once extensive yards heralded the imminent approach of Carlisle, by which time the rain had been left well behind in the fells.

Having drawn to a stand under the station's truncated overall roof we made our way forward to look at our steeds once more. The delicious hot oil smell produced by sustained fast running was breathed in greedily by all concerned whilst the crews busied themselves detaching the two locos and the support coach for servicing once again at Upperby. The calling on signal lit up and both locos stamped briskly off whilst we turned with thoughts of food and beer. Wetherspoons did us proud once more and Grahame and I sampled a fish each from the chip shop - chips as well would have been just too much!

The locos and coach returned in due course and hooked on whilst we settled down for the last climb of the weekend; some thirty miles of virtually unbroken gradient which starts almost from the platform end. The first five miles to Wreay rise at 1 in 131 but after that the grade eases as the line follows the river Petterill to Penrith. We left Carlisle in the, by now, usual style and watched as the line to Newcastle and Settle dropped away to the left as soon as the station limits were cleared.

This was the joint NER and MR line, the Settle-Carlisle line proper starting a couple of miles away at Petterill Junction. Upperby depot came into view with one of the new Pendolino trains standing in the yard. Compared to our 10 coaches and battling locos it looked like a gaudy tram—but then I'm perhaps biased. I was tempted to go and hang out again, but dusk was falling and the pull of my seat regretfully won. I listened to the conflicting exhausts, the wind again alternately mixing and separating the different sounds and imagined being on the footplate of the "five", leaning out of the driver's window and seeing the light from the fire on the loco in front dancing on the underside of the exhaust each time the firehole door opened to allow the fireman to "bang them in".

By Penrith, beyond which the gradient increases to 1 in 125, I was succumbing to sleep and regrettably missed the climb past Thrimby Grange and on to the summit. I awoke on the lower slopes of the descent from Shap and, having traversed the site of Dillicar troughs once more, I looked back towards Tebay as the track swung to the left at Low Borrowbridge. The V in the fells where sits the isolated settlement Tebay could clearly be seen, the fells themselves standing like black sentinels as the last vestiges of daylight clung to their tops. The tail of our train was now on the long straight of the Lune gorge proper and the traffic on the M6, which was on the opposite side of the train to where I was sitting, had now come into view and two solid streams of headlights and tail lights could be seen through the raindrops on the carriage window, ruining for ever the quiet isolation of Tebay.

The wonderful desolation of the upper reaches of Shap are also, in my view, diminished by the constant drone of traffic against which the call of the curlew is forced to compete. Perhaps, however, much the same was said when the railway first arrived.

An announcement had earlier been made to the effect that our departure from Carlisle had been delayed as the relief crew which had been rostered to take over at Carlisle had themselves been delayed due to a broken down Virgin train (surprise, surprise). The Carlisle crew had, however, agreed to continue to Oxenholme where the relief crew should be waiting. One of the Carlisle drivers was celebrating his birthday that day and had telephoned home to tell his wife that he would be missing his own party!

Many thanks were expressed to the Carlisle crew and as we drew into Oxenholme station there followed a most bizarre series of on train announcements thus:-

“Prime Minister Blair has just been on TV to tell the nation that Afghanistan is being bombed tonight.

Oh look, there are the Carlisle crew on the platform—give them a wave.

The airport at Kabul has been flattened.

We are now drawing forward onto the loop to take water”

A clearer example of the gulf between East and West is hard to imagine. There we were playing trains and reliving our youth whilst our bombs and missiles were raining down on a foreign land. Sobering or what?

Water duly taken we set off into the dark and what had, by now, become something of a wild night. The wind whistled in the roof ventilators and the rain battered the carriage windows. Suddenly I was rather glad that I was not having to run hard on a bucking footplate in the teeth of a gale. We sped down the last part of Grayrigg, through Carnforth and along the undulating stretch towards Lancaster. The vast expanse of Morecambe bay lay unseen beyond the train and as we took the reverse curves through Lancaster Castle station the locos were opened up for the mile of 1 in 98 leading to Lancaster old junction.

We must have looked splendid from the station platforms as we came out of the darkness, shrugging off the wind and rain, to be briefly illuminated on the curving centre roads, all glistening black paintwork and whirling wheels. The roar of the twin exhausts chopped off briefly by the road-bridge at the southern end of the station, dimly lit maroon and cream coaches reflecting the platform lights and the diminishing sounds of the engines peppering upgrade as smoke and steam swirled around in our wake.

That short pull represented the last climb of the day and all that remained now was for the crews to pilot us across the Lancashire plain and downgrade through Oxheys into Preston station itself. Here everyone alighted and went forward to look at our engines for the last time. The locos stood beyond the platform end, still under the main roof of the station, which is supported by tall cast iron columns but open on the left hand side to the elements.

Again there was a brisk efficiency about the support crew as they unhooked their coach and the engines moved forward to await the signal, which would take them and the support crew on the last leg home to the East Lancs Railway. The 2-6-0 blew off, steam hitting the glass panels of the roof and being deflected down. Both locos looked, somehow, larger than they had done at Edinburgh. Probably it was the combination of darkness, blustery weather and the slope of the platform end. On the other hand it could have been sheer pride at what had been accomplished.

The signal aspect changed and with much whistling, accompanied by applause from the passengers and waves from the crews and support crew, they stamped off into the night. Shades of Tuplin's descriptions of loco changes at Crewe at night.

All that was left now was to endure the return to Birmingham International behind an electric and a drive home down a, thankfully, clear M1.

I mentioned at the start of this epistle that the trip was ambitious and the fact that it was carried out in what appeared to be such an exemplary manner (even to a more or less timely arrival back at Preston) can only have been as a result of, not simply detailed planning, but much hard work during the trip itself. I am sure that there were emergencies and alarums during the course of both days, which gave the organisers headaches, but from a passenger's perspective the trip was superb.

Before I booked I did wonder whether two "ordinary" locos would be as much fun as, say, a pacific. Discussing this very point at the end of the trip, Grahame and I both agreed that it was the very ordinariness of the two locos which had added so much to the feel of the re-living of a day to day rail journey - almost as if a failed pacific had suddenly been replaced by the "five" and the "four" which then rose to the occasion. Well done to all concerned.

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those of the Chairman or Council of the NLSME