

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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The Final Year

When The Fires Went Out

Farewell to Steam

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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The contents of the *Marlow Donkey* represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: 8F 48773 at its home shed Rose Grove 30 July 1968. Photo: Tim Edmonds (Article page 14).

Bottom: Black 5 44709 approaching Kendal station 1 August 1968. Photo: Tim Edmonds (Article page 14).

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Red Cross Centre, Victoria Road, Marlow, at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

- Thursday 18 September **MORE CLASSIC BRITISH TRANSPORT FILMS** Alan Wilmott
By popular demand, Alan makes a return visit to show some more of the evocative publicity films produced by BTF.
- Thursday 16 October **THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY** Dave Baker
A talk about one of the country's premier preserved railways and how it has been recovering from the devastating effects of flood damage.
- Thursday 20 November **BRITISH MAIN LINE STEAM - THE FINAL TEN YEARS** Peter Groom
Peter's photos will be well-known to many through their publication in magazines and books. Here he presents a selection of pictures from the 1950s and 1960s.
- Thursday 18 December **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**
Our popular seasonal event for members and their families. This will be by prior booking only - details will be announced in the autumn.
- Thursday 16 January **A FINAL EVENING WITH COLOUR RAIL** Ron White
Our all-time favourite speaker, Ron White returns for what he says will be his final trawl through the Co;our Rail collection. An evening not to be missed!

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Saturday 20 September **THE STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY** by car
The Society's allocation of places for this visit have all be taken up but a couple of members have asked to be put on a standby list. So if you are booked to go but can not make it for any reason please contact Tim Speechley as soon as possible.

Please note: The above programme is correct at press time but subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please check the Society's website www.mdrs.org.uk for the latest details.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Since I last wrote in the June edition we have lost our good friend Keith Brown at the tender age of 71. Always a keen participant in society activities and contributor to the Donkey, he will be sadly missed. I'm glad several other members were also able to attend his funeral service at Amersham crematorium and afterwards at the "Hit and Miss". There was an even larger contingent from the RCTS, in recognition of the extensive work he did for their library and society magazine. Our condolences go to Margaret and the rest of his family.

As you will see further on, I have found time to write a short article in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the end of steam on BR and, as I've said before, we all wondered what we would do with steam gone on the national system. Back then who could possibly have contemplated the wealth of heritage railways we would have to enjoy today. As I write, a group of us have just had a trip to the Severn Valley Railway, where the steam experience is probably as good as it gets in preservation. Of course, last year they suffered catastrophic flood damage and our visit was largely to see the repairs and contribute a little towards their income, though given this year's appalling weather I'm surprised they haven't experienced yet more damage. Out working we saw two 'Manors', a 45xx Prairie, 46443 and that survivor from the very end of steam, 45110, and I doubt if anybody back in '68 would have thought this possible.

Other recent momentous preservation developments have included three A4's working on the East Coast main line, and joining Mallard at York for quite an unprecedented photo line up and, just like buses - nothing for ages, then two turn up together - we have the 'Royal Scot' twins, both back testing on the main line after an absence of 25 years or more. How weird is that?

Then the other morning on the "Today" programme on Radio 4, as well as prime-time TV, came news of *Tornado* moving under its own power for the first time. How proud all those people who have contributed money and effort into this project must feel. I'm looking forward so much to seeing this loco work, initially on the Great Central, and then on the main line. But who back then could have imagined anything on this scale? Not that this is the only new build project on the go at present, as we have different groups working away to recreate a Saint, a County, a Railmotor, a Brighton Atlantic, an unrebuilt Patriot (oh yes please!) and a Clan. Just the other week, on our Friday evening society visit to "somewhere near Windsor" we also heard about another project, this time to create not one, but two B17 'Sandringhams'. Absolutely incredible.

To almost quote Harold Macmillan, "we've never had it so good", so get out there and enjoy it whilst you can.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome a further two new members to the Society: John Holroyd from Beaconsfield and Dave Saunders from Wooburn Green.

Unfortunately, Keith Brown passed away at the end of June. His long-time friend Gordon Rippington pays tribute on the next page.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND VISITS

The subject of the June meeting, the first in our new venue of the Red Cross Centre, was Italian Railways. Jeremy Harrison took us on a tour of the country's rail system with its mix of ancient and modern equipment.

Martin Connop Price returned for a third visit (he's been to a different venue each time!) in July when he took us on a tour of the GWR branch lines in the far south west Wales.

On Friday 18th July a group were guests of David Buck at his private railway near Windsor. Unfortunately due to technical problems neither of his steam locos were operational.

A party of ten members had an enjoyable day out on the Severn Valley Railway on Sunday 10th August. We went by train from High Wycombe via Birmingham and all went to plan.

Reports on both these next time.

YOUR DONKEY

The editor makes no apology for devoting the whole feature section of this issue to remembering the end of BR steam. Thanks to Mike, Brian and the two Tims for their excellent contributions.

The December issue is shaping up to be another special looking back at the Society's activities this year. Looking further ahead, there are some excellent articles to look forward to. Alan Morris has written his memoirs covering his first quarter-century of train watching, from the depths of World War II to the end of steam which we will be serializing through the year, Ron North promises to take us on a five-star journey down America's west coast from Seattle to San Diego and Stan Verrinder reveals the career of one of his ancestors who rose to high office on the LSWR.

Despite this, I'm still looking for more submissions - no editor likes to fill his publication with his own material!

HELP WANTED FOR BREWING

After an enthusiastic start, it seems members are becoming reluctant to take their turn preparing the tea and coffee at meetings. Please help and let Mike Hyde know when you are available. The alternative is to have "dry" meeting which none of us want.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

Each week the *Marlow Free Press* carries a profile of a Marlow based club or society and on Friday 15th August it was the Society's turn. The feature, which was illustrated by the group shot at Bletchley TMD showed the Society in a good light and will hopefully bring us to the attention of those who still don't know of us.

BACK ISSUE DONKEYS AVAILABLE

There are a few back numbers of the Donkey surplus to the core collection, and these will be available for distribution on a side table at the October meeting.

Any member who wishes to complete his collection and would particularly wish to have a copy reserved, should e-mail or phone Malcolm Margetts as supplies of some issues are down to one remaining.

The editions available are:- 83, 92, 94, 98, 99, 101, 106, 107, 108, 109 and 117 to 121.

AFTER THE AGM

The formal business of the AGM in February will be followed by a members film show where you can show your favourite shots. For those who take prints, Julian Heard has offered to scan them so they can be projected digitally. If you would like to take advantage of this please contact Julian as soon as possible.

The digital projector will also be available for those who now shoot digitally whilst the slide projector will be there for those who still use film or want to delve into their archives.

AN UNUSUAL INCIDENT

There was an unusual incident on the Marlow branch on the evening of Monday 7th July when a BMW car heading towards the Crown Plaza hotel left the road, crashed through the fence and ended up on the parallel rail line. The driver was shaken but unhurt. The 20.42 Maidenhead to Marlow was stopped before reaching the site and services between Bourne End and Marlow were replaced by buses for the rest of the evening whilst the car was recovered.

FGW GETS BETTER

FGW's performance continues to improve under the leadership of Mark Hopwood. August saw another 90+% PPM with a rolling average since April of 90% - better than Virgin or NX East Coast. However, these are averages so whilst some routes are doing very well, others are still struggling. As Mark says, there's still lots and lots to do. But they are getting there.

OVERCROWDING ON THE DONKEY

According to figures released by the DfT in response to a Freedom of Information request from the *Sunday Times*, the 07.28 Bourne End to Paddington train is among the 20 most crowded trains on the network coming in at number 8. On the occasion that a passenger count was made during 2007, by the time it got to London the train, which has a normal seating capacity of 440, arrived with a total of 646 on board or 47% overloaded!

VIRGINS ON THE JOINT LINE

Whilst work continues to disrupt the West Coast Main Line around Rugby, Virgin are operating what they call a "Blockade Buster" service between Birmingham International and London Euston via the Joint Line and High Wycombe with some extending beyond Birmingham International to New Street,

The Marlow Donkey



photo: Mike Walker

Wolverhampton, Preston and even Glasgow.

The trains, which started running on 28th June, will continue through to December on Saturdays and some Sundays and run basically hourly passing through High Wycombe just before and after the hour.

Class 221 Super Voyagers are used in pairs but the service is proving so popular they are struggling to cope. In a surprise move, on Sunday 17th August a set of Mk3s was used for one round trip with 57313 working the down train and 57301 on the return. This was repeated two weeks later with 57313 and 57309 topping and tailing.

The above photo shows 221143 and 221103 passing High Wycombe on the afternoon of 28th June with the 14.56 Birmingham - Euston.

TVSC TAKES SHAPE



photo: Brian Daniels

Construction of the new Thames Valley Signalling Centre (TVSC) is now nearing completion at Didcot. Of modular construction similar to the new East Midlands Centre at Derby, it is located in the triangle north of the EWS fuelling point.

Early next year it is due to take over the responsibilities of Reading PSB which has to be demolished before work can begin on the new station there. It will then progressively replace both the existing Slough PSB and IECC (see RM September 2008), Swindon A and B Panels, Oxford and possibly also Westbury. An area which will stretch from Paddington to Thingley Junction (west of Chippenham), Heyford on the Birmingham line and either Lavington (the Chocolate Poodle!) or Somerton on the West of England line.

KEITH BROWN

1937-2008

Keith Brown passed away on 28th June after a thankfully reasonably short fight against cancer, combining his two greatest pleasures, sitting in his favourite armchair watching Wimbledon on the television and reading the *Railway Magazine*.

Keith and his family became our neighbours in Hazlemere some 33 years ago; during initial introductions it became clear that we shared a common interest in railways. Employed by Wilkinson Sword in Wycombe he travelled to various parts of the country by rail fuelling his interest further. His office at the top of Sword House gave him a grandstand view of the line, in those days freight to both Chinnor and Thame passed by; I would then get a report over the garden fence of the day's sightings. Keith had an overriding passion for the rail timetable spending many hours looking for interesting workings, with this knowledge he would plan a week's holiday using a Rover ticket. Summer Saturdays would often be spent at his favourite location Reading, viewing the holiday traffic to and from the Dorset resorts.

Always wandering down to Wycombe station he noted a Chiltern Trains excursion to Carlisle in November of 1992. During the journey we were in conversation with

two members of the MDRS namely Tony Caton and Phil Searle who suggested we pay a visit, this we duly did and became members soon after. During our friendship I convinced Keith to visit Germany and Poland in search of steam, upon retiring he travelled further afield on rail centred holidays. With the demise of loco hauled passenger trains our forays declined except for brief visits to London stations. Since moving to Dorset I only spoke to Keith at society meetings on the few that we both attended, totally unaware of his illness until the recent trip to Paris which he had to cancel due to his declining health.



Keith was also an enthusiastic member of the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society and for some time had served as Deputy Managing Editor for their monthly *Railway Observer* magazine.

We had some memorable times together, Auf Wiedersehen old friend, the memories linger on.

Gordon Rippington

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An afternoon by the Lickey Incline, 1964

By Mike Page



8402 banking a nine coach train headed by D39 up the Lickey Incline out of Bromsgrove.

All photos: Mike Page

What used to be a wonderful way of spending a hot summer Saturday was to lay sunning oneself in a field, a mile or so below Blackwell, near Birmingham, and wait for the distant sound of yet another 'summer extra' climbing up from Bromsgrove.

I'm talking about the Lickey Incline on the Birmingham-Gloucester main line in 1964. That year was probably the last year to watch any reasonable amount of steam-hauled passenger train activity on that route. Most of the regularly scheduled expresses - including the 'Devonian' and the re-routed 'Pines Express' and "Cornishman" - were in the hands of Derby Sulzer 'Type 4s', better known today as 'Peaks' or 45s and 46s. Most of everything else was pulled by Sir William Stanier's 'Black Fives', but, in 1964, there could still be a few surprises.

Freight was reasonably busy, as coal trains were still running in profusion. North Sea Gas had not yet replaced South West England's gas works, while industry around Worcester, Gloucester and Bristol made use of coal and coke. Coal was trained in from South Wales and the Nottingham and Derbyshire coalfields. Coal and coke also came from the mines and coke ovens in South Yorkshire. When did anyone last see a piece of coke?

It came as quite a shock, a couple of years ago, when I went to photograph 'King Edward I' climbing Lickey, to see how the line side had become so overgrown. Most of the photographic locations I knew in 1964 were now impossible. Also, just north of Bromsgrove station, the

'palisade fence disease' had taken hold past the churchyard. Back in 1964, there were no palisade fences nor were there too many trees anywhere along the line side.

Nearer to my home, then in Moxley, Darlaston, we still had 'heavy rail' where the 'Metro' trams run today. 'Western' diesel-hydraulics or Brush 4s (47) diesel-electrics hauled Paddington-Birkenhead expresses while ex-GWR and BR Standard steam locos worked the frequent freights on the old Great Western main line between Wolverhampton (Low Level) and Birmingham (Snow Hill). In the summer, steam haulage, including a handful of 'Castles', normally pottering around on empty stock, parcels or 'standby' duties, returned to express passenger workings to pull holiday trains heading for the south coast or the southwest. Although the ex GW area had recently become London Midland Region, ex-LMS locos were still relatively uncommon on the ex GW lines - unlike in 1965 and 1966.

The plan on Saturday 27th June 1964, was to take a train to Snow Hill station, Birmingham, get across to New Street and move on to Cheltenham (Lansdown), then stop off at Bromsgrove for the afternoon on the way back. This idea was based around that any summer timetable 'extras' would be returning up the Lickey Incline during the afternoon.

A long way from home, Thompson B1 4-6-0 61327 blasts up the Lickey with eleven in tow assisted by 9F 932230.

The summer season timetabled through trains from the Midlands to the south coast had already begun. At Bilston Central, I joined Oxley's 4089 *Donnington Castle* heading a train for Ramsgate and Margate. 9F 92150 off Saltley was also in the station on a down parcels. It was one of those jobs that included 'Enparts' (engine parts) labelled vans - one could guess the train had come from Swindon.

I noted one freight as we stopped at West Bromwich. It was headed by Gloucester's 4985 *Allesley Hall*. The ex-GWR locos still carried their name and number plates, soon to be removed as the year progressed. 4089 got me to Snow Hill in time to book a day return ticket at New Street to Cheltenham and join the 8.44 to Pembroke Dock. The train had originated in Nottingham Midland, and Nottingham's 45346 was still on the front.

As I said earlier, there was still a lot of steam about on the old Midland main line from Derby to Bristol. The late-running 8.20 local to Worcester, with Saltley's 44805, left before us, and checked us before it diverged off to Worcester after Bromsgrove.

Spotters watch as 3725 heads a local towards Gloucester out of Cheltenham St. James. The former MR Lansdowne station is off to the left whilst Malvern Road station is just beyond the bridge. Today, this is an empty cutting and the Gloucester-Warwickshire line is a couple of miles further on.



Once we had climbed up through the smoky, winding tunnels under Five Ways, 45346 began to get up speed. We passed Royston's 45207 shunting vans in Selly Oak sidings, while Kings Norton's busy yard had Croes Newydd's Standard 4 4-6-0, 75024 and Saltley's 2-6-0, 76087, at work.

After the careful 30-40mph descent of the Lickey Incline, we passed through Bromsgrove station on the centre road. In the shed yard stood Gorton's 'WD' 90392 and Hasland's 4F, 44381. Both engines were in steam. I don't think I'd ever seen a Gorton engine around the Birmingham area before. Then, in Bromsgrove's engine siding on the west side stood 9F 92230 on duty as the 'big push', with panniers 8400, 8402 and 9493 for support.

Our 'Black Five' was now galloping along in the seventies. We passed Saltley's 92125 at Ashchurch, waiting to follow with a southbound fitted freight. With the brakes on, we approached Cheltenham (Lansdown) just as Newton Abbot's D42 came towards us with the northbound 'Cornishman'. That train used to be Wolverhampton-Penzance, running via the Stratford-Cheltenham line through Toddington (today's G and WR preserved line). Now, I believe, it ran York-Penzance via Leeds and Sheffield.

Shortly after 45346 had departed, Newton Abbot's D38 arrived on a train to Plymouth, departing at 11.15. Five minutes later, 92125 breezed through with its southbound fitted freight. On the GW line from Cheltenham St. James, Worcester's pannier 3725 then dashed by with a local to Gloucester.

To get back to Bromsgrove, I had to take a diesel multiple unit (DMU) to Worcester, and wait there for a local to Birmingham. A novelty seen on shed there was Worcester's pannier 1661 with a spark arrester, which used to be used on the Clebury Mortimer & Ditton Priors branch. Also on shed was sparkling 'Castle', 7005 'Sir Edward Elgar'. Castles were still in charge of Worcester-Paddington trains via Oxford. The 'Hymek' diesel-hydraulics would begin move in at the end of the year.

So, I moved on to Bromsgrove, in another DMU, passing a 'Big Prairie' tank engine, Worcester's 8104, shunting at Droitwich Spa. At Bromsgrove, ailing DMUs sometimes needed a banker to get up Lickey, but not today. As the DMU pulled out of the station, all appeared to be quiet. There were no signals 'pegged' on the gantry at the south end, all bankers were simmering quietly and no train was in the yards waiting to ascend.

It was an easy walk to get to the line side, out past the churchyard and then onto a path, which paralleled the incline, rising at that point on a high embankment. I stopped as a 'Peak' had begun the climb. D39 (I think) throatily roared past, with, unusually, a banker, 8402. I quickly counted nine coaches, so perhaps all was not well with D39?

I eventually ensconced myself in a field, about halfway up the bank on the eastern side, past a 'B road' under bridge, and headed for a line of trees at the top of the field for some sunshade. The view down to Bromsgrove, lit by the warm sun, had the line on an embankment, the field gently falling to the road. One could see almost all



LMS 4F 0-6-0 44381 gets a rare passenger turn heading a 12 coach relief train headed for Newcastle. Not surprisingly, GW Panniers 8400 and 9493 were providing most of the muscle to climb the Lickey.

the way down to the road bridge just north of Bromsgrove station. 8402 drifted past, returning downhill, apparently in no hurry to get back.

Then at 2.40 pm, a column of smoke could be seen bursting under the bridge and soon, a second column could be seen at the end of the train. Coming up very surely and at a fair pace was a B1. The B1 was certainly barking, but her sound was already being drowned out by 92230, which gave the impression that she was pushing the whole train and the B1 up the 1 in 37! I often thought the loudest sound you could hear on BR was a double chimney 9F going 'flat out'. Canklow's 61327 had 'eleven-on' and all too soon, the train was into Blackwell cutting and on over the top.

Almost immediately, another Newton Abbot 'Peak', D37, appeared with the southbound 'Devonian'. Then, after 3 pm, came three extras. First up was Saltley's 45280 on a northbound extra with 9493 helping. Five minutes later, at 3.15 pm, my 'old friend' 45346 came up confidently with the Pembroke Dock - Nottingham. Engines had changed at Bristol, I guess, but it must have been a fairly tight turn around for the crew of 45346. She had 8402 as banker.

Next up was a 12-coach extra for Bradford, with Holbeck's 44852 letting 92230 do most of the work. 8402 and 9493 returned together, followed not long afterwards

by Saltley's 92137, which came down carefully with a fully fitted freight. 92230 followed a few minutes behind.

There was then a lull of about ten minutes. I had decided to walk down the field to the bridge to seek a different photographic 'angle', as the sun had gone in. Suddenly I heard the unmistakable sound of a labouring 4F 'Duck Six' 0-6-0 sounding already very tired. Up she came on a passenger train! That was a real surprise, as 4Fs were becoming scarce. She had a relief, heading for Newcastle with '12-on'. Two vertical columns of smoke revealed who was doing all the work. 8400 and 9493 were making as much noise as any Hawksworth pannier could do to keep the breathless Hasland 44381 and her train on the move. Surely that poor old 'Duck Six' had not come south with the morning's working? But then I remembered I had seen it that morning on Bromsgrove shed, so something must have become amiss.

I walked back slowly towards Bromsgrove as far as the high embankment to photograph Leicester's 45289 heading up with a northbound relief, helped by 92230. Then Saltley's 92151 drifted down with squealing, unfitted coal wagons, followed by the 8400 and 9493.

It was after Derby's D56 had headed by with 1N56 Bristol to Newcastle, with '10-on' and no banker that my first uphill freight appeared. It was about 30 wagons of mixed freight headed easily by Wellingborough's 8F, 48132, and banked by 8402. Not long after, I reached the station to see Saltley's 44832 accelerating through with another relief, 12 coaches, banked by 8400 and 9493.

I then looked over the wall of the southbound platform into the engine shed yard, to see Canklow's forlorn looking 61372 with 1V32 chalked on the smokebox and a 'not to be moved' metal flag on the cab. So that was why 44381 had been pressed into passenger service! I guess the 4F must have been low on boiler pressure when called into action at, presumably, fairly short notice. I imagined too, that the crew had preferred the 'Duck Six' to a clanking and banging Gorton 'WD'. I remember some time in 1956 seeing Banbury's 90466 slamming north through Leamington Spa General at night, doing some 40mph, with the crew hanging on for dear life!

Time had come to return home. Saltley's 44805 appeared with a Worcester - Birmingham local, due out at 5.09 pm, to be met by Gloucester's 73031 on an opposite working. 73031 was one of two 'Standard Fives' (the other was 73030) that had once carried Westinghouse air brake equipment in the early 1950s. 44805 got a push up the Lickey from 9493, but with only three coaches on, neither engine had to work hard.

On the way, Edge Hill's 48026 was in Blackwell station with more southbound coal. I guessed that loco had earlier worked into Saltley from Liverpool and the shed

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Black 5 45289 was one of the more 'routine' locomotives to climb the Lickey that June afternoon. Once again 92230 was assisting in the rear.

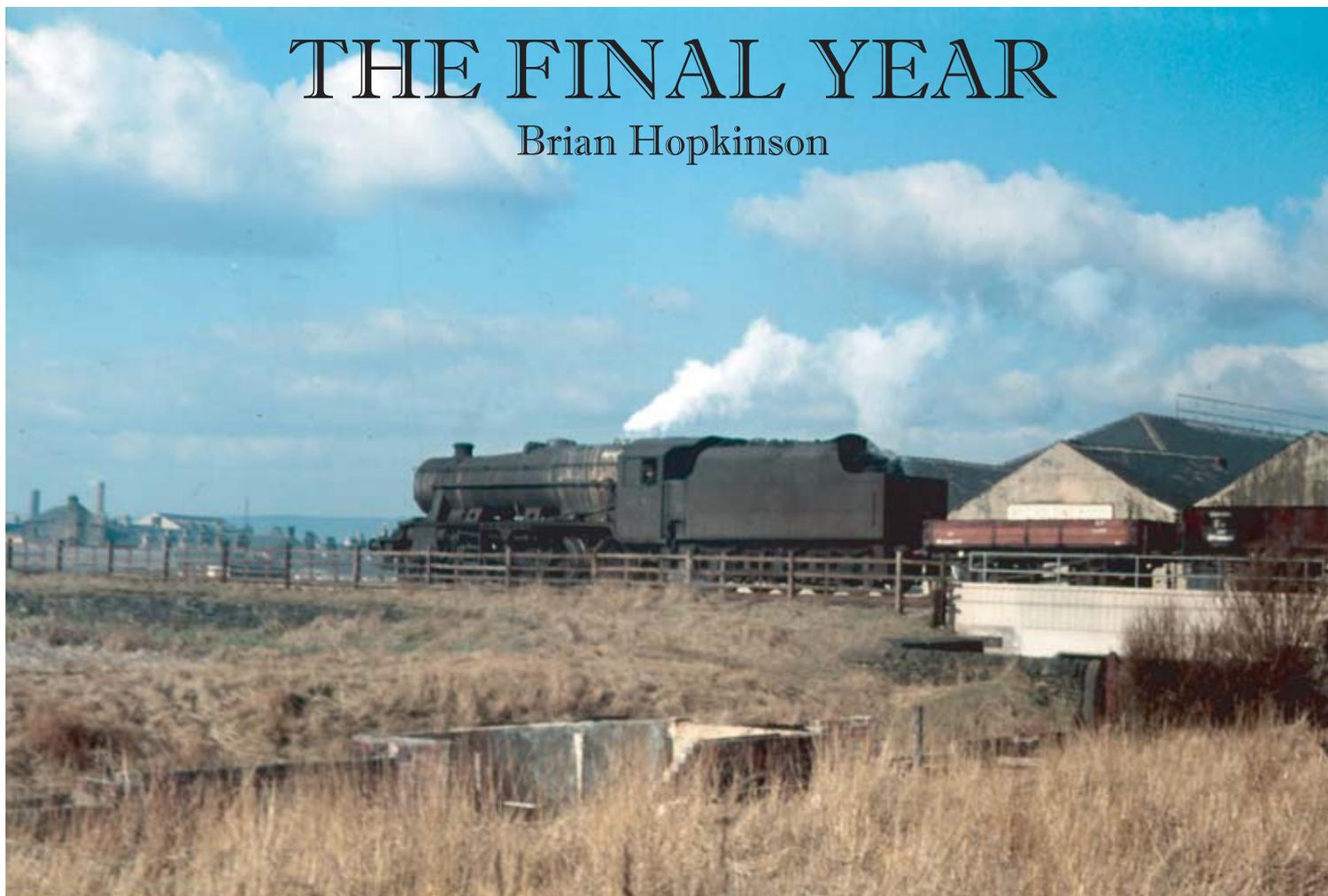
foreman had commandeered it for more work. On arrival at Birmingham New Street there could not have been much happening there, apart from DMUs and diesels, as had not noted any steam.

My journey back to Bilston Central from Snow Hill was with Oxley's 6851 *Hurst Grange* running punctually with a Portsmouth-Wolverhampton train. Clean 5014 *Goodrich Castle* of Old Oak Common was standing pilot at Birmingham Snow Hill and the last steam-hauled train noted was 6829 *Burmington Grange* (Bristol) on an up freight at Handsworth and Smethwick.

Well, looking back, the trains around Lickey presented engines from a variety of sheds: Canklow, Derby, Gloucester, Hasland, Leicester, Leeds Holbeck, Nottingham, Saltley and Wellingborough - let alone Edge Hill and Gorton! I think if you go to that field below Blackwell now, you won't be able to see the line for trees and bushes. Mind you, steam does still occasionally have a go on the Lickey. The challenge today is finding a gap in the trees to photograph them!

THE FINAL YEAR

Brian Hopkinson



After three years away from home at college in Durham, and then three months working in London, I returned to live with my parents in Oswaldtwistle in December 1967. Oswaldtwistle? Yes, as in Church & Oswaldtwistle, a station on the line between Accrington and Blackburn in East Lancashire.

Whilst the local shed, Accrington, had become a diesel multiple unit depot some years earlier, both Rose Grove, a few miles one way, and Lostock Hall, a few miles the other, were to remain steam sheds right until the end of steam on BR. I had a camera, not a very good one, and money was in short supply, so whilst I got out and about during those last few months, alas I didn't take very many photos, and those that I did take - mainly colour slides - were mostly on the cheapest film available.

There wasn't much variety - mainly Black Fives and 8Fs, with a few Ivatts and Standards including, of course, *Oliver Cromwell*, but as the end drew ever nearer any steam engine was welcome, no matter in what condition it was.

During the early months of the year I managed to photograph some of the regular freight workings around Accrington, and in May took photos at Rose Grove and Lostock Hall sheds - one slide from Lostock Hall is listed as: Goodbye Ivatts 43019 and 43027.

In July I had a week's "Runabout" ticket, which enabled me to see the remaining steam operations between Rose Grove, Lostock Hall, Preston, Lancaster and Carnforth. One slide is listed as: 70013 light through Preston for a repaint at Crewe. Another is of 44878 heating two

In a scene typical of the final months of BR steam and the decline of the industrial north-west in general, a filthy Stanier 8F 2-8-0 no. 48423 heads an eastbound mixed freight through Church & Oswaldtwistle during the winter of 1967-68.

all photos: Brian Hopkinson

sleeping cars at Preston station. The coaling towers at Rose Grove and Carnforth were still in operation, and provided a good backdrop, even if the locos beneath them weren't too clear.

The local train took me to Rose Grove for its final day of operations, August 3rd, when 8F 48278 was the last Copy Pit banker, and locos on shed included 48773, now preserved at the Severn Valley Railway.

The following day I was at Blackburn to see no fewer than five steam specials, most of which changed locos at Blackburn and most of which were double-headed either on arrival or departure. With locos also taking on water it was a hive of activity, though not one of the most photogenic of locations.

On August 11th I was up at Ais Gill to see "Oliver Cromwell", and then at Ribbleshead viaduct to see 44781 and 44871 double-headed working southbound.

And for me that was it - until a friend dragged me along to the celebrations at Shildon, after which I made a visit to the Severn Valley Railway, the first of many visits to heritage lines up and down the country, and then I discovered the joys of travel behind steam on the main line.



Stanier 'Black Five' 4-6-0 no. 45073 awaits its next turn of duty at Rose Grove shed near Burnley on 10th July 1968. Built at Crewe in June 1935, this loco was not one of the lucky ones and was withdrawn for scrap within the month.

More fortunate sister no. 44871 along with 44735 sit below the ash disposal plant at Carnforth in July 1968. 44871 went on to haul the 'Fifteen Guinea Special' on 11th August.

It is surprising that among the last surviving BR Standard 9F's were several of those fitted with Crosti boilers one of which, 92021, heads a freight through Leyland in 1967. It was one of the very last 9F's to succumb in November of that year - none of these magnificent 2-10-0's lasted in service into 1968.





Stanier 8F 2-8-0 48773 stands alongside the water column at Rose Grove on 10th July 1968. The diagonal yellow stripe indicated the loco was barred from working "under the wires" south of Crewe.

Built by North British as LMS 8233 in June 1940 it was soon requisitioned by the WD in 1941 as 307 and later became Iran State Railways 41-109 before returning to the UK in 1952 as WD 70307. It later went to Longmoor as WD 500 and then at Bicester. In 1957 it was purchased by BR and briefly numbered 90733 in error before becoming 48773. It is now preserved at the Severn Valley.

A BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 banks a freight up Shap in the summer of 1966.

Brian didn't record the number of the loco but magnification reveals that it is possibly 75009 - the loco is so dirty that it's hard to be certain, a problem not unknown to spotters of the day!



Another Standard 4-6-0, this time one of the 5MT's, 73060, heads an excursion train near Morecambe, date unknown.

Built at Derby in August 1954, it was withdrawn in May 1967 and scrapped in October the same year.

Stanier 8F 48257 heads west with a loaded coal train past Church & Oswaldtwistle amid the snows of the winter of 1967-68 [right].

Stanier 8F 48727 dead by the water column at Rose Grove [below] on 3rd August 1968, the last day of steam operations from the shed and the complete network



Stanier 8F 48165 [bottom left] heads a rake of coal empties along the West Coast Main Line near Leyland in the summer of 1966.

Having worked off shed, another Stanier 8F 48493 starts a freight away from the yards at Rose Grove [bottom right] in July 1968.



When the fires went out

Story and pictures by Tim Edmonds



It was not difficult to decide on either the place or the time for my summer holiday in 1968 - it had to be Lancashire for the last week of regular main line steam in Britain. At the time I lived near Cambridge and was in the sixth form at school. For news of steam's decline I relied on the trusty *Railway Magazine* and the enthusiast 'grapevine' - in particular the Chesterton Junction Railway Society, effectively my school's unofficial railway society, and the Railway Society of another Cambridge school where my friend Chris was a pupil. The closure dates of the last steam sheds trickled through, and as soon as it was announced that the last three - Carnforth, Lostock Hall, and Rose Grove - would meet their demise on 4th August, Chris and I started to plan the trip. We would do it on our bicycles, using Youth Hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation which we booked in advance. As we were to discover, this approach had its limitations because we could not change our planned overnight stops in the light of later events, but at least it ensured we had somewhere to stay each night.

We left on Friday 26th July and headed for the north-west via overnight Youth Hostel stops at Loddington (Leicestershire) and Buxton, the route enabling us to see working industrial steam at Cranford Ironstone Quarry on the way. On Sunday we

Lostock Hall shed between Preston and Leyland on Tuesday 30th July 1968. A very much alive Ivatt 4MT 2-6-0 43106 is flanked by Stanier 8F 2-8-0 48476 and an unidentified Stanier Black 5.

All photographs in this article were taken on a Zeiss Super Ikonta folding camera using 120 film.

made our way from Buxton across Manchester, stopping to see lines of steam locos dumped at the closed Newton Heath, Patricroft and Bolton sheds. We reached Lostock Hall at 19.40 for a glimpse of live steam and, importantly, to get an idea of what steam workings to expect in the area on the next day. We eventually arrived at Sibberts Private Hotel in Preston for a two-night stay, but still had the energy for a short evening walk to see Black 5 44806 at work on station pilot duties. I had seen Sibberts advertised in the small ads section in *Railway Magazine* so clearly the proprietor had seen a potential market for the summer of '68; consequently there were several other enthusiasts at the hotel with whom we could exchange information. The hot news was that 'arrangements' had been made for the 08.15 Preston - Windermere passenger and 11.00 return to be worked by a Black 5 on Monday, and possibly all week, the official reason being that the rostered diesel had 'failed'.

After cycling 210 miles in three days we planned a less-demanding Monday, taking in some steam freights on the Wyre line after watching the returning Windermere train north of Preston. This produced the unusual spectacle of 45110 at speed with a four-coach passenger train on the West Coast Main Line, carrying an express passenger headlamp code on its tender! The reason for tender-first running was that the turntable at Windermere had been taken out of commission. Alas, this put paid to any repeat performances so this was to be the last 'real' main line passenger steam train that I saw on BR. 45110 is now preserved on the Severn Valley Railway, and a quick pedal to Salwick saw another

Carrying class 1 headlamps on its tender, 45110 hurries along the West Coast Main Line north of Preston deputising for a 'failed' diesel on the 11.00 Windermere to Preston train on Monday 29th July 1968.



current SVR resident, 8F 48773, heading west with a Burnley - Wyre Dock coal train. Salwick station was still open to passengers and a chat at the booking office led to the discovery that there were some first class LMS ticket blanks in stock. I invested three shillings and bought the cheapest possible - a return to Kirkham - but it stayed unused as we reached Kirkham that day by bicycle in time to see another 8F, 48340, with a Rose Grove - Wyre Dock coal train. We timed our return journey so that we were at the lineside to see both 8Fs on their return workings, and the day ended with another evening vigil at Preston station.

After watching steam activities in the various yards around Preston station on Tuesday morning, another visit to Lostock Hall shed was rewarded by finding 4MT 2-6-0 43106 in steam (yes, that's yet another of today's SVR residents). Then Chris and I pointed our wheels east and headed via Blackburn to Rose Grove shed, where we stayed for an hour and a half absorbing the atmosphere. It is worth pointing out that enthusiasts were allowed virtually unrestricted access to sheds in the last week of steam - hard to believe when remembered from today's health and safety obsessed, security-conscious world.

Our overnight stop was in a private house B&B at Skipton, a decision we made a couple of months earlier when there were still steam workings on the Grassington branch. Alas, these

8F 48340 rumbles through Kirkham with a coal train from Rose Grove to Wyre Dock on 29th July 1968.



The same train as in the previous view, heads away from Kirkham. Those who know the station today will hardly believe this is the same place!

had finished and our extra miles were wasted. We were similarly disappointed when, after a long wait at Giggleswick the next afternoon, the expected steam trip working arrived behind a diesel. This low-spot was followed by three nights in the most luxurious (and expensive) accommodation of the tour - the Royal Station Hotel at Carnforth. We did so because my first choice of B&B, a railwayman's house at which I had stayed twice the previous year, was fully booked. This little town had become, briefly, a tourist hot-spot!

8F 48773 was a regular performer during the last week and is seen here at its home shed, Rose Grove on 30th July.



Black 5 44709 accelerates up the bank into Kendal station with the returning Windermere branch goods on 1st August.

Even at this late stage, Carnforth was quite a busy steam centre. A shed visit on Wednesday night gave an idea of what to expect but, in spite of this information, our journey to see steam crossing Arnside viaduct on Thursday morning proved fruitless. The afternoon was more successful, finding 44709 shunting Kendal yard with the returning Windermere branch good, which left in fine style.

We decided to spend the whole of Friday 2nd August watching activity in the Carnforth area. In addition to the inevitable Black 5s and 8Fs there were two active standard class 4MTs (75019 and 75048), one standard 5MT (73069) and, reserved for specials, Britannia 70013 *Oliver Cromwell*. This was the last weekday of regular steam and we saw trains working in from both directions on the West Coast Main Line as well as on the Furness line. For some locos, going on shed meant dropping the fire for the last time, their whistles mournfully dying as the last gasps of steam were exhausted. Another memory is watching the 20.28 Barrow - Preston parcels make its Carnforth stop behind 44781.

The scene at Carnforth on the morning of Saturday 3rd August was one of end-of-term activity, and the numbers of enthusiasts around the shed had increased noticeably. In the yard 70013, 73069 and 44894 were all coupled together and departed southwards to Lostock Hall in readiness for railtour duties the next day. We were on the lookout for some of the last regular steam workings and had noted 44735 departing south with tankers for Heysham, while later 45231 arrived on the Furness line with a ballast train. For the next two nights we were staying at Pendle Hill Youth Hostel near Nelson but, armed with the information that 75019 had also been seen heading for the Heysham line, we aimed first in that direction. Our timing

Standard 4MT 75048 near Warton, approaching Carnforth on the Furness line with a trip working from Ulverston on 2nd August.

73069, the last operational Standard 5MT, is turned at Carnforth shed on 2nd August.





The last day, 3rd August: Standard 4MT 75019 shunts tankers at Morecambe [Above], Black 5 44735 takes the former LNWR line away from Morecambe and heads for Carnforth [Centre] with tankers from Heysham and sister 45231 arrives at Carnforth [Bottom] with a ballast train off the Barrow line.

was fortuitous, for at Hest Bank we noticed 45134 with a crane and two brake vans before finding 75019 shunting near Morecambe - probably part of the last-ever class 4 duty. Finally we saw 44735 working tankers back towards Carnforth - the last regular steam freight that I was to see in Britain.

There was a different atmosphere on Sunday 4th August when three 'last day' special passenger workings took place, organised by the SLS, LCGB and RCTS. We had worked out that the best place to go would be Entwhistle, between Bolton and Blackburn, since all three trains passed that way during the afternoon, and there was time to call in to see Rose Grove shed in its death-throes on the way. At the Entwhistle lineside there was a party spirit, but this did little to mask what was a sad occasion as, one by one, the specials passed by. We made our way back to Pendle Hill in a more sombre mood.

Chris had to return home earlier than me and left by train from Burnley the next day, while I headed back via Youth Hostels at York (two nights, so I could visit the Railway Museum) and Lincoln. Looking back I find it hard to believe that I lived out of a saddle-bag for two weeks - camera, film, notebooks and numerous OS maps as well as clothes, towel and toiletries. I had cycled 747 miles in 14 days and it had been worth every turn of the wheel to be there and witness the end of an era.

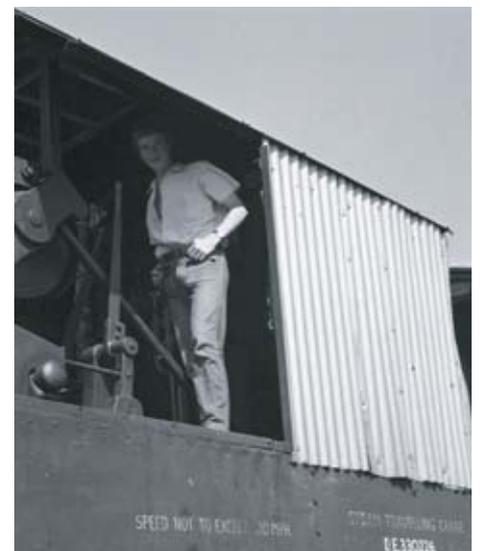


Postscript

Of course there was a steam train the following weekend - the infamous 'Fifteen Guinea' special - but there was no way that I could make another trip north to see it. Besides, I had said my goodbyes as the fires went out on the last true working days of steam. However, by an odd coincidence, later that month I was at the regulator of a working BR steam loco just a couple of miles from home, although in rather unusual circumstances.

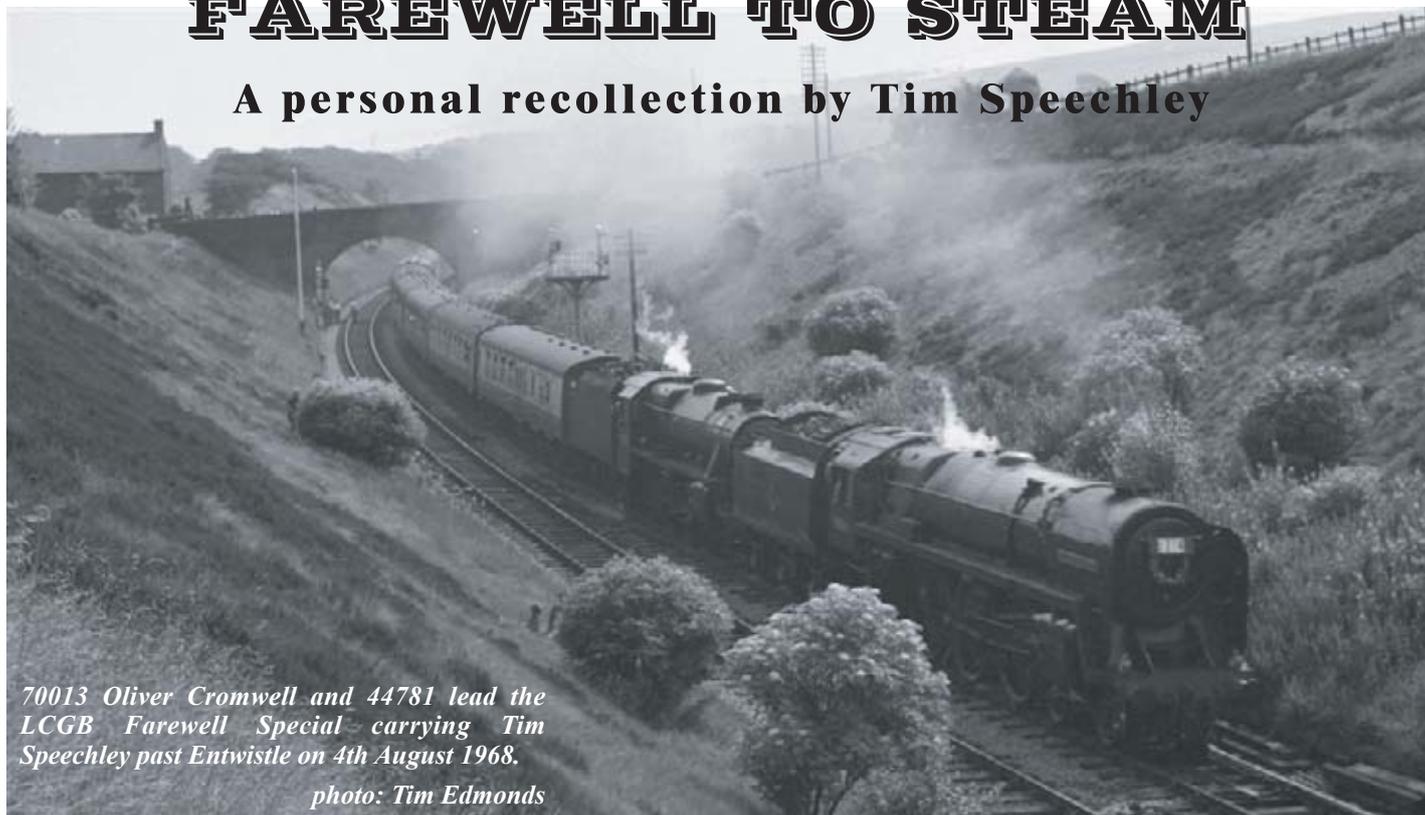
My local railway was the former LNWR line from Cambridge to Bedford, which had closed at the beginning of the year. Track-lifting

took place over the summer and by 22nd August had reached Old North Road station. Brush type 2 D5658 was on a demolition train on one line (it was double track) while track sections were being lifted onto the flat wagons using self-propelled Grafton steam crane DE330226 on the other line. When the crane driver offered me the regulator and the chance to move the crane along the line under its own steam power I could hardly say no. Oh yes, and it was my eighteenth birthday - not a bad present just days after the 'end of steam'...



FAREWELL TO STEAM

A personal recollection by Tim Speechley



70013 Oliver Cromwell and 44781 lead the LCGB Farewell Special carrying Tim Speechley past Entwistle on 4th August 1968.

photo: Tim Edmonds

To mark the end of regular steam working on British Railways, the enthusiast fraternity arranged a number of special trains to run on Sunday 4 August 1968. I was lucky enough to be on the one run by the Locomotive Club of Great Britain, accompanied by a big group of friends, all of whom were naturally very sad to see the passing of the very reason for our enthusiasm in the first place. We all wondered what we would do with main line steam gone, especially as so much time had been expended recording its demise over the previous few years.

I had become interested in railways only because of my childhood friend, Jim. We had grown up together in Chingford but as a result of his father's tragically early death, he had gone to live in North Wales. On visits back to us in London he had always wanted to go looking at trains and so I started, just to keep him company. My enthusiasm grew and we did a lot of our spotting together - Llandudno Junction, Chester, Crewe, Liverpool, Manchester and culminating in our 1967 Northern Railrover. It was very apt that Jim should be with me, as well as my "local" friends, on this farewell special.

Rather oddly, it seemed to me, our special, destined for the north-west, departed from London St. Pancras rather than Euston. Leaving a few minutes late at 08.35, we had Peak D63, which regained time by Bedford and then proceeded to lose it for the rest of the journey. We went straight up the main line - Wellingborough, Kettering, Leicester, Chesterfield, then left at Dore and Tootley West Junction. My rather scrappy notes from the day show that locos seen on this section of the journey were mostly Peaks, class 24 and 25 and quite a lot of 08 shunters with just a few 47's and 20's. We crossed the Pennines via the Hope Valley line and then at Marple came to a dead stand for five minutes before reversing onto the wrong line and proceeding forwards under single line working, though I'm not sure for how far. A handful of EM1 electrics were noted at Hyde Junction, Dewsnap sidings and Guide Bridge and then, after Stockport, we finally were descending Miles Platting bank for an arrival at Manchester Victoria at 13.52, 33 minutes behind schedule.

The joint stations at Manchester, Victoria and Exchange were heaving with people. Most of the enthusiasts from our train got off and went forwards to see what was happening in the way of

a loco change but I opted to go the other way as a very clean 45110 was sitting in an adjacent platform road and was ideally placed for a picture. Once that was secured it was time to head forward to join the crush of enthusiasts all trying to get pictures of 44781 and 70013 *Oliver Cromwell* as they moved about prior to backing onto our train. At much the same time, over in Exchange station, 48476 and 73069 were departing eastwards with one of the day's other specials and 45305 was also there somewhere. I'm sure most of you reading this will have seen the pictures in the recent railway press of the scene and it was only a fairly heavy presence of police at platform ends that prevented a mass trespass.

Our timetable had allowed a rather optimistic 11 minutes for the engine change at Victoria and in the event we finally departed again at 14.19, forty nine minutes down. In retrospect I find it difficult to believe we spent only 27 minutes in Manchester, it seemed much longer. We headed off, now with steam power, the Brit leading the Black 5, and with all that power there wasn't too much noise from the front end that I remember. It didn't help either that we were quite a long way back. We went briefly west and then generally north, past Clifton Junction and Kearsley, where some years later I visited the power station with its centre cab Bo-Bo electric locos (of which no mention in the 1968 notebook) and on to Bolton, where I did note 48319, 44947, 48652 and 45104, presumably on the old shed that had closed on 29 June 1968 (I had been there that day - my 17th birthday). Onward then, across Entwistle Viaduct and through Sough Tunnel to Darwen and beyond to Blackburn, where we arrived at 15.11, still exactly 49 minutes late. Here *Oliver Cromwell* came off, to be replaced by Black 8, 48773, complete with a laurel wreath on the smokebox door handles and a "Farewell to Rose Grove Steam" headboard. (See Brian Hopkinson's photo). We must have passed another of the day's specials here, as my notes mention 45017 and 44874. Again, the schedule was optimistic regarding the time to change locomotives and we finally pulled away at 15.36, sixty four minutes down.

With the 8F up front, we weren't going to perform at express train speeds and from what I remember we made fairly modest progress up to Wilshire Tunnel, through Langho, across



Oliver Cromwell came off at Blackburn [Left] to be replaced by a suitably decorated 8F 48773 [Right].

both: Brian Hopkinson



At Carnforth [Below] Black 5s 45390 and 45025 took over for the final section through Hellifield to Lostock Hall.

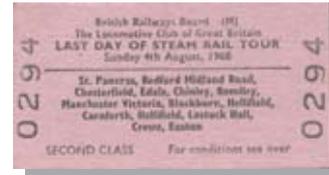
photo: Tim Speechley

Whalley Arches (today a favourite for main line photographers) and on to Clitheroe and then into some better scenery as we progressed towards Hellifield, reached 72 minutes late, and where I note a very new D406 on an up express. We were now in more famous territory and back on former Midland Railway track but today at Settle Junction we were not destined for the grandeur of the S & C and bore left, towards the other Clapham Junction, rather more remote than the southern one, and beyond to that 1968 steam mecca, Carnforth. Arrival was at 17.02, sixty six down. Originally it was intended we should have just 32 minutes here but in view of the lateness it appears this was cut even shorter, for I note the departure time was 17.22, only 20 minutes after we had arrived. This being the case, I find it quite astounding that Jim and I visited, if not the shed itself, some of the sidings containing withdrawn engines, for I have photos from that day of both of us in cabs. Amongst the locos in the "cemetery" were 92223, 44915, 48124, 92167, 45426, 92160, 92118, 45435, 92071, 45209, 45424, 45445 and 45095. I also took pictures of our next, and final, pair of steeds, 45390 and 45025, the latter, I believe, the oldest Black 5 at work in those final months and also of the unique tailboard saying, very succinctly, just "The End".

With the train reversing at Carnforth, we assumed a position much closer to the engines and I remember them leaning into the right hand bend as we left, the distinctive red woolly hat of Dr Peter Beet on one of the footplates causing some anguish to the cine photographers amongst us. Retracing our steps, this time we halted at Clapham for a brief photographic stop. We had been blessed with a fine summer's day and now at six o'clock the light was perfect for some good exposures. We had 15 minutes there, leaving at 18.15, still 67 minutes behind schedule. Back through Settle Junction and Hellifield I think it began dawning on people that this really was it - the end. It was a lovely day, the evening sun was out, the smoke was drifting past us and all too soon it would be over, for ever. If any memory has stuck with me from that day it was travelling over that short piece of track from Hellifield to Blackburn and of all the hundreds of people, ordinary people, standing on their own doorsteps and in their front gardens waving as we went by, giving their own farewells to the steam locomotive. I think we were also following one of the RCTS specials on this part of the journey and perhaps because they were due to change locos at Lostock Hall, we had an unscheduled stop at Blackburn, where water was taken, even though our steam destination and oblivion for the locos was only nine miles away.

Exactly 100 minutes behind our original schedule, at 19.43, we got away from Blackburn, and just twenty minutes later were drawing up at Lostock Hall Junction where we gave up our steam power for a more or less brand new D416. My notes

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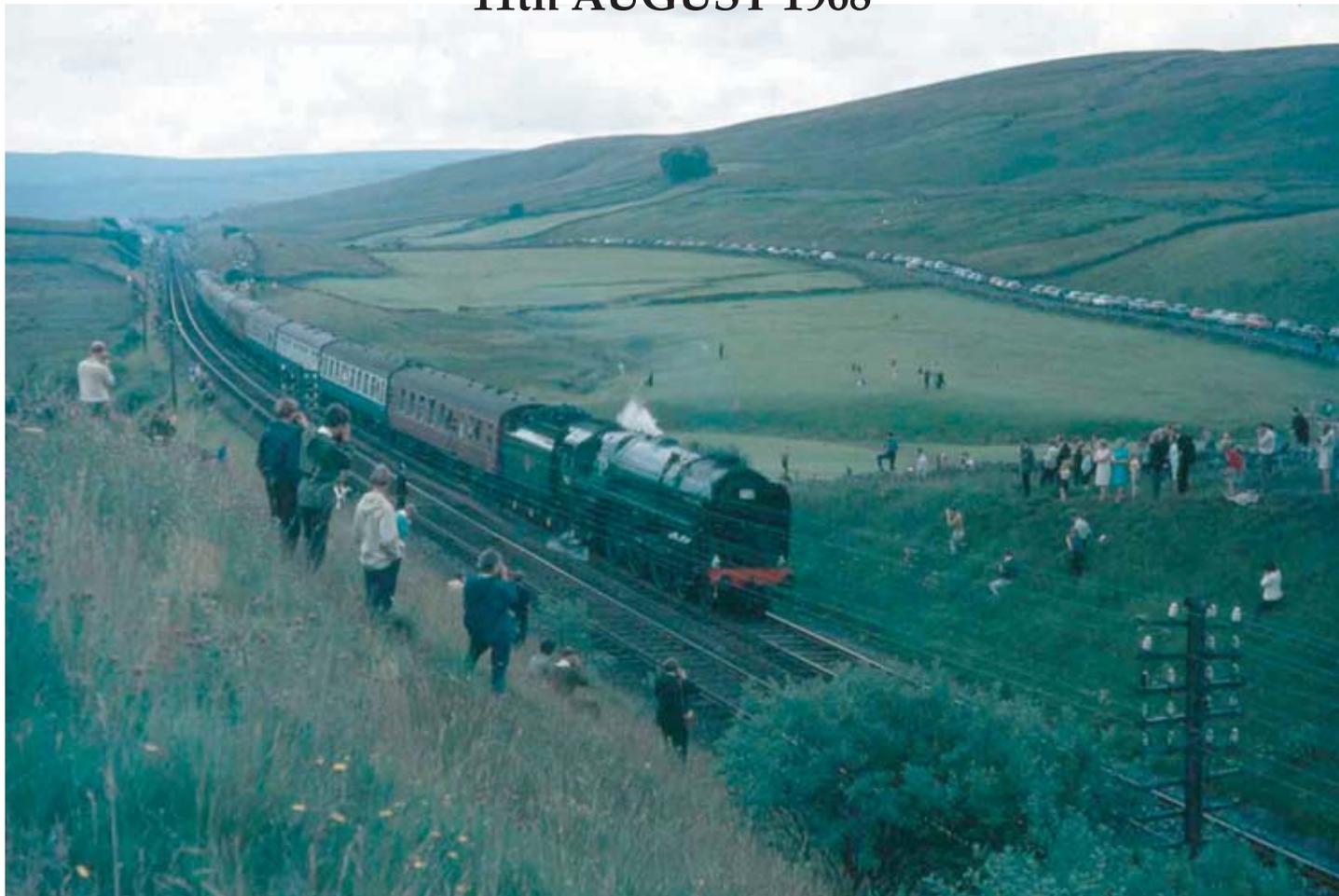
show that we saw 44871 and 44894 here, presumably having come off the preceding RCTS special that had departed behind 70013. They were supposed to continue off to the Liverpool area but were so late that this part of their itinerary was cancelled and the Brit just took them back to Manchester. I think they finally reached their destination (London?) about 4 hours late, in the small hours. As we sat having the locos changed, I remember a number of people, including one of our "London" group, standing on the lineside bank watching proceedings and about 35 years later discovered one of them was our own Malcolm Margetts, who was living in Preston at the time.

The diesel pulled a train load of sad enthusiasts away from Lostock Hall and onto the West Coast main line for our long journey south. D416 took us as far as Crewe and we left there over two hours late, a minute short of ten o'clock, behind E3064. Any hopes that our schedule included some scope for the recovery of time were soon dispelled and thoughts turned to how we would manage to get home with an arrival on a Sunday night, gone midnight. I don't remember much about that part of the trip. I think the participants were drowning their sorrows and the buffet ran out of almost everything. It was for this reason I tried a can of Guinness for the first time ever and admit it was not to my youthful taste at all. Final arrival at Euston was at 00.13, two hours and fourteen minutes late. Forty years on I can't for the life of me remember how Jim and I got back to Chingford, but we did. We were pleased to have taken part in these final rites and though "proper" steam on the main line was over, there were all sorts of prospective new avenues for our enthusiasm to pursue.



THE END

11th AUGUST 1968



The last BR steam train 1T57 the "Fifteen Guinea Special" passes Ais Gill on its northbound run along the Settle & Carlisle behind 70013 *Oliver Cromwell*. Just look at all those cars!

The southbound trip headed by Black 5s 44871 and 44781 crosses the Ribblehead Viaduct. Who could have imagined what the future would bring?

both: Brian Hopkinson

