



steamsounds Riding behind steam Stanier's 8F

The first of William Stanier's 8F 2-8-0s appeared from Crewe Works in 1935 becoming one of a total of 852.

At the start of World War Two the 8F became the War Department's standard freight locomotive design and as well as being built by the LMS, others were constructed at the Vulcan Foundry, by the North British Locomotive Co. and at railway works owned by the Southern, Great Western and London & North Eastern Railways, the latter, as well as building locos for the War Department also built 68 locos for their own use. These locos continued to be built until 1946 when the cheaper to build WD Austerity 2-8-0s appeared.

Many served overseas, some returning to the UK after the war while others remained in service abroad, mainly in the Middle East.

Although we have 12 8Fs in the UK only two examples have seen use on the main line. The first was 48151...

1. In the early 80s, a well known BR person with more than a little responsibility for main line steam running had been heard to remark that we would never get an LMS 8F 2-8-0 on the main line. The reasoning behind his opinion was based on the fact that, with small driving wheels, the loco would be restricted to a maximum of 50 mph and, for that reason would be almost impossible to time among other much faster services. He was wrong.

At that time, there were two 8Fs which were eventually destined, if possible, for main line use; 48773 on the SVR and David Smith's 48151.

On 24th October 1987 BR East Midlands had arranged another steam hauled railtour, this time with the spa town of Buxton as its destination taking a very interesting route via the Hope Valley and the now freight only lines from Chinley over Peak Forest, once part of the main Midland route from Manchester to London St. Pancras.

The locomotive originally rostered for this train was the Jubilee 5593 *Kohlapur* but this wasn't going to be available. Alternatives were everybody's favourite, *Flying Scotsman*, and 48151 having its first revenue earning main line run since preservation but it was only when we arrived at Derby and glimpsed a black, rather than green loco that we could be certain of the motive power.



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This was certainly a most fitting choice as these 2-8-0s had been regular performers over most of the route that we were about to traverse, albeit on heavy freight workings rather than passenger trains.

With the locomotive restricted to 50 mph we had expected the running on the main line north of Derby to be rather sedate but the 8F slightly exceeded its theoretical maximum at times, particularly so on the descent towards Clay Cross and by the time we rolled into Chesterfield where we stopped to pick up more passengers, our opinion of the locomotive was already quite high.

In this recording 48151 is heard departing and accelerating well on the favourable gradients through Tapton Jc. towards Sheepbridge where the 1 in 100 climb through Dronfield to Bradway Tunnel begins.

On the gradient, the 8F with over 450 tons behind the tender is able to maintain speed above 30 mph. A fine performance and some very fine sounds!

2. Returning from Buxton later the same day 48151 is heard approaching Tunstead on the 1 in 90 climb towards Peak Forest.

Not far from the summit the 8F is eased and pauses briefly at Great Rocks Jc. before restarting and making a fine sound accelerating on the final part of the climb over the summit at Peak Forest.

3. On 20th May 1989 48151 was out again, this time working a train from Manchester to Carlisle via the Settle to Carlisle line before returning to Hellifield.

Although we had a most satisfactory northbound run to Carlisle with Carlisle driver Ken Stubbs it was the return journey that we were looking forward to.

Skipton driver Edwin Altham has been mentioned before more than once in notes to my CDs and he, as well as being a fine engineman and a driver who could always be counted upon to do his best to give us an entertaining run, was also a really nice man and a railwayman through and through. This run over the Settle - Carlisle line was to be his last before he retired from the railway. Indeed, it was his last day at work.

So, shortly after half past five on this sunny Saturday afternoon 48151 pulled out of Carlisle station with Edwin at the regulator for the last time.

At Appleby the train was shunted into the North Eastern sidings while a following service train overtook. With this out of the way, the train returned to the platform and 48151 took water before performing a couple of runs past then, with everyone back on board we were off for the main event, the climb to Ais Gill.

Sadly, having been under threat of closure for so long, a number of temporary speed restrictions had appeared on the climb and the record runs of days gone by



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were no longer possible. Nevertheless we could be sure that, as in the past, Edwin would do his best for us.

From the start at Appleby on the falling gradients we reached 54 mph at Ormside before the first part of the climb begins.

Speed only fell to 33 mph at the top of this section of 1 in 100 before rising again to 42 mph before being eased for the 20 mph temporary speed restriction after Crosby Garrett.

Beyond Crosby Garrett the 1 in 100 gradient resumes but just as speed is beginning to rise the Kirkby Stephen's distant signal was seen to be on. The preceding service train which had overtaken us at Appleby still hadn't cleared the next section. At this time Garsdale box wasn't open so the next section was all the way to Blea Moor.

This took me back to a previous run with Edwin when exactly the same thing happened. That was in April 1983 with *Duchess of Hamilton* and, after being brought down to 2 mph before the home signal cleared Edwin treated us to a climb to remember and we passed Ais Gill at no less than 54½ mph.

On this occasion we were down to 25 mph before the home signal next to Kirkby Stephen signal box was sighted in the off position.

This recording begins as we depart from Appleby and ends as the adverse signals approaching Kirkby Stephen are sighted.

4. With a 25 mph speed restriction at Mallerstang no heroics were possible but Edwin was still doing his best so, having negotiated the Mallerstang speed restriction, where this recording begins, Edwin was able to work the loco up to 34 mph passing the summit just over 32 minutes after leaving Appleby. Under the circumstances a most creditable performance.

Beyond the summit the regulator stayed open and we reached a maximum of 54 mph on the falling gradient before stopping in the platform at Garsdale in a little over 37 minutes from Appleby.

5. Being based at Carnforth, 48151 has often been used on trains along the Cumbrian Coast and on 6th June 1992 the first of a series of shuttle trains hauled by the 8F ran to Barrow-in-Furness.

Three round trips from Carnforth were run each day calling at Grange-over-Sands and Ulverston in each direction.

Stopping at Ulverston made the ascent of Lindal Bank a little more difficult giving no opportunity of a run at the gradient and in this recording, made on board the



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first train of the day, 48151 is heard departing from Ulverston and climbing to the summit at Lindal.

6. The other 8F to work on the main line was 48773.

This was a wartime loco and was intended for service in France but, the fall of that country in 1940 saw the loco, then numbered 8233, working on the LM&SR for 12 months before being requisitioned by the War Department and sent for service in Persia during which service there is a story that the loco was derailed following a collision with a camel! After the war the loco saw service in Suez and Egypt before returning to the UK in 1952 to join other locos on the Longmoor Military Railway.

In 1957 the loco was returned to BR service and given the number 48773. It was withdrawn from service in 1962 but escaped scrapping, was returned to service a year later and lasted right to the end of BR steam in 1968 before being purchased for use on the Severn Valley Railway.

The loco's custodians, the Stanier 8F Locomotive Society, must at times have regretted their decision to try to run their loco on the main line. The loco had its first main line run in September 1991 on the Welsh Marches route. This was supposed to have been followed by a programme of trains including runs over the S&C. For various reasons, the programme came to nothing.

The loco's next outing on the main line had to wait until 1992. This was from Shrewsbury to Blackburn via Chester and Manchester Victoria on 1st February 1992 and we were surprised and rather disappointed to see the tour being advertised as the loco's final main line run, the Society having perhaps decided that running on the main line was more trouble than it was worth.

Fortunately, the loco has seen further use on the main line since but, at the time, this appeared to be a very unfortunate outcome for what proved to be a fine addition to the list of main line approved locos.

After a fairly quiet run from Shrewsbury, things became a bit more lively after a water stop and a change of crew at Chester. This is how 48773 sounded departing.

7. After a further water stop at Manchester Victoria we reached Bolton beyond which was the section of the journey that we were most looking forward to; the steep climb to Sough. For most of the climb the gradient is 1 in 72 and with 12 coaches weighing over 450 tons behind the tender 48773 was confidently expected to make plenty of noise for us.

This recording begins as we pass slowly through Bolton station and once clear of the speed restrictions there, the 6 mile climb begins.

On the first part of the climb, aside from a couple of slips, all is going well and



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48773 sounds well able to keep the heavy train on the move at a little less than 20 mph before speed has to be reduced passing through Bromley Cross station where the line becomes single.

Speed recovers a little beyond this point but, approaching Turton, where there is a severe speed restriction over a crossing (you can hear the crossing warning bell in the recording), the 8F begins to slip badly.

With speed down to walking pace we thought that we were doomed to stall on the gradient but we had reckoned without the skill of driver Ken Royal who had taken over at Manchester. Thanks to some excellent enginmanship we got past the worst part of the climb and are soon back to a speed of around 20 mph which, despite a few more slips, is maintained to the summit of the climb beyond Entwhistle.

An excellent performance with a heavy train.

STEAMSOUNDS

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1. 48151 departing from Chesterfield to Bradway Tunnel. 24th October 1987
2. 48151 near Tunstead to passing Peak Forest.
3. 48151 departing from Appleby to Kirkby Stephen. 20th May 1989
4. 48151 from Mallerstang to Ais Gill Summit.
5. 48151 departing from Ulverston to the summit at Lindal. 6th June 1992
6. 48773 departing from Chester. 1st February 1992
7. 48773 from passing Bolton to Sough Tunnel.