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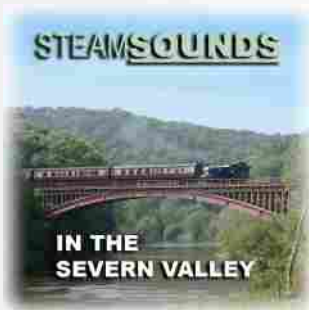
IN THE SEVERN VALLEY

The Severn Valley Railway runs for 16 miles between the towns of Kidderminster in Worcestershire and Bridgnorth in Shropshire, the southern section of a line which once continued through Ironbridge to form a through route to Shrewsbury.

The line opened in 1862 and was eventually closed beyond Bewdley by British Railways as uneconomic in 1963 and passenger services to Bewdley ceased in 1970.

In 1965 the Severn Valley Railway Society was formed with the intention of purchasing the line between Bridgnorth and Alveley. With the closure of Alveley Colliery in 1969 the remainder of the line to the outskirts of Kidderminster was purchased and the first trains ran in 1970 between Bridgnorth and Hampton Loade.

1. Although the line connected with the national network at Kidderminster, for many years the southern terminus of the line was at Bewdley, the connection at Kidderminster only being used for occasional through charter trains and it wasn't until 1984 that a new station was constructed for Severn Valley trains alongside the existing BR station. Heard in this recording, departing from Bewdley for Kidderminster is the ex LMS Ivatt Class 2MT 2-6-0 46521. Soon after leaving Bewdley the train passes the site of the junction of the line to Hartlebury, the original route of the Severn Valley Railway when it first opened. Beyond the site of the junction the line continues to climb, the steepest gradient being 1 in 100, through Bewdley Tunnel where this recording ends.
2. Bewdley station with three platforms still has the feel of a busy country station and is a great place to spend a little time soaking up the atmosphere before taking a ride but we need to head north. This recording was made from the front coach of a train hauled by the GWR 2-6-0 7325 which makes a fine sound heading north with 6 coaches behind the tender.
3. The first stop after Bewdley is usually Arley but there is also a halt at Northwood about a mile and a half away. Northwood Halt is a request stop and is not often required but a train double headed by a pair of Ivatt designed Class 2MT engines, 2-6-2T 41312, visiting from the Mid-Hants Railway, and 2-6-0 46521 has made a brief stop at the Halt. In this recording we hear the pair making a spirited departure for Arley.
4. The station at Arley is often a very busy place, perhaps some of its popularity being due to a number of television appearances including the TV sitcom, 'Oh, Doctor Beeching!'. North and southbound trains often cross in the passing loop here and, as this recording begins, we hear the GWR 2-6-0 7325 arriving in the station with a train from Bridgnorth. Soon after, the train from Kidderminster arrives hauled by the ex-LMS Black 5 4-6-0 45110. On a single track railway such as this one, to ensure that only one train occupies each section at any one time, a driver must have in his possession a single line token and the driver of the Kidderminster bound train has handed the token for the section to Hampton Loade to the Arley signalman who will have it ready to exchange with the one for the section to Bewdley which the driver of 45110 must give up. The northbound train only pauses briefly before departing for Bridgnorth and once it is clear of the loop the signalman resets the points before handing over the token so that 7325 can depart with its train for Kidderminster.
5. In the past freight traffic would have been of equal importance to passengers on the line and, no doubt, it was the loss of this traffic to road transport in more recent times that was partly responsible for the closure of the line. Now the railway is a passenger line but on special occasions demonstration freight trains are run. In this recording we hear the GWR 0-6-0 3205 departing from Arley with a freight train for Bewdley. Nice to hear the clanking of goods wagons again!
6. Aside for demonstration freight trains, on special event days the railway often runs a shuttle service between Arley and Bewdley. This is usually a short train with one of the smaller locos on the line and replicates the sort of



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train that would have been regularly seen on the line in the past.

On a number of occasions the railway has been able to run an auto-train on this service and in this recording we hear the GWR 0-4-2T 1420 departing from Arley for Bewdley with its single auto coach.

7. Time to move on now so let's join a northbound train hauled by the GWR 2-6-2T 5164 as it departs from Arley with a train for Bridgnorth.

8. The journey to Highley, the next station, involves a change of county as we cross the boundary between Worcestershire and Shropshire on the way.

Highley is an excellent spot to spend some time watching trains or even making sound recordings of them, something I've done more than once!

This recording was made south of the station on what has now become the site of The Engine House, the SVR's new visitor centre.

As the recording begins the GWR 2-8-0 2857 is approaching from Arley and passes before stopping briefly in the station. Beyond Highley the line rises as a gradient of 1 in 100 and 2857 makes a fine sound as it heads for Bridgnorth.

9. Although Highley doesn't have facilities to cross passenger trains it can still be a very interesting place, especially during enthusiast events when demonstration freight trains are running.

As this recording begins the GWR Collett 0-6-0 is heard arriving with a short freight train from Arley.

The goods train runs straight into the sidings and, once safely inside, the GWR 2-6-2T 5164 which has been waiting in the station with the Severn Valley Limited lunchtime dining train can depart for Kidderminster.

10. About an hour later the goods train has been remarshalled and is ready to return south behind 3205 once the next Bridgnorth bound train has cleared the single line from Arley.

As this recording begins, the northbound passenger train is arriving behind the LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 5690 *Leander* which is heard coming up the short gradient into Highley station.

The Jubilee only pauses briefly and is soon making a fine sound on the 1 in 100 gradient as it heads for Bridgnorth.

With the line clear to the south 3205 can leave for Arley with the goods train.

11. Recording close to Highley station during an enthusiast event can be very difficult due to the large number of people around all trying in vain to recapture the atmosphere of a quiet branch line station!

Of course the best time to visit Highley to really appreciate the place is on a day when an off-peak timetable is in operation and there are fewer people about.

On just such a day the ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 45110 is heard approaching and climbing the short gradient into the station.

Only a brief stop is needed before the train gets the right away and departs for Bridgnorth.

The gradient away from the station is 1 in 100 and 45110 sounds to be making heavy weather of the of the climb.

12. Time to move on now on board a train hauled by the GWR 0-6-0PT 7714 heard in this recording slipping on the climb as it gets away from Highley.

13. Seeing the area around Highley now it is understandable that most visitors would think that the main activity would have been agriculture and it would come as a surprise to many to learn that this is not the case. At one time, Highley was at the centre of an important coal mining area.

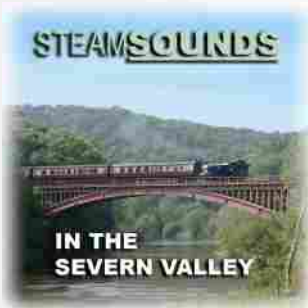
The last of these mines to close was at Alveley just north of Highley and the area has since been reclaimed and is now a country park with a request stop built on the site of sidings serving Alveley Colliery washery where, until 1969, coal was despatched.

In this on-train recording the LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 5593 *Kohlapur* is heard making a fine sound passing the halt heading south.

14. The next station on the line is Hampton Loade. The village of the same name is actually on the other side of the River Severn but can be reached by a passenger ferry.

Hampton Loade is usually a quiet place but, like Arley, it has a passing loop and as this recording begins the GWR 0-6-0PT 1501 is heard approaching from Bridgnorth and arrives in the up platform to await a down train from Kidderminster.

Once the up train is safely in the loop the signalman resets the road ready for the down train which soon arrives



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behind another Pannier tank, 7714.

As the driver of up train had handed over the token for the section to Bridgnorth when the train arrived the signalman has been able to exchange tokens with the crew on the down train as it rolled into the platform so 7714 soon gets the right away and it raises the echoes from the station buildings as it departs for Bridgnorth.

As the sound of 7714 fades away 1501 can just be heard departing heading south.

15. This next recording was made from the front coach of a southbound train hauled by the Ivatt ex LMS Class 2 2-6-0 46521 which has had to wait in the platform at Hampton Loade while a double headed train arrived from Kidderminster.

The northbound train has arrived hauled by the LMS Black 5 4-6-0 5000 which has the GWR Castle 4-6-0 5051 *Dryslwyn Castle* on the front as pilot and the pair can be heard departing as this recording begins before our train can leave for Kidderminster.

16. Double heading on the Severn Valley Railway can make operating trains a little more difficult than normal. Due to weight restrictions on the Victoria Bridge over the River Severn just south of Arley any double headed working with locos over a certain axle loading have to be split to pass over the bridge with the pilot engine proceeding over by itself.

However, double heading north of this point is not a problem and, during enthusiast events it used to be normal practice for the loco which had worked the freight train to wait at Highley for the last northbound passenger train of the day and pilot it from there to Bridgnorth. This often produced some extremely entertaining performances.

On this occasion the last passenger train of the day from Bewdley had been hauled by the LMS Black 5 4-6-0 5000 as far as Highley where the GWR 0-6-0 3205 was waiting after working the demonstration freight train during the day.

In this recording the pair are heard departing from Hampton Loade and it sounds as though the drivers on the two locos are trying to outdo each other for noise!

17. The railway at Sterns, north of Hampton Loade, has caused problems for many years. At this point the line runs close to the river and a landslip there has caused a severe speed restriction to be imposed.

We are still on board the train hauled by 3205 and 5000 that we last heard departing from Hampton Loade and in this recording the pair have just cleared the speed restriction and are beginning to accelerate.

From Sterns the line rises for the next two miles at a gradient generally at 1 in 100 through the closed station at Eardington and our two drivers once again do their best to outdo each other for noise.

Being nearer to the microphone than the GWR loco it sounds as though the driver on the Black 5 is winning the competition but you'll note that the man on 3205 has the last word as the train passes Eardington Summit!

18. I've spent many happy hours sitting in the sun (and once or twice in the rain) making lineside recordings on Eardington Bank but, for now, here's just one of the BR Standard Class 4 2-6-4T 80079 on the gradient heading for Bridgnorth.

19. Trains leaving Bridgnorth, the northern terminus of the line, also face a stiff climb to Eardington Summit although it is not as continuously steep as the northbound climb.

This recording was made near the south end of Knowlesands Tunnel and as it begins the ex LMS Black 5 4-6-0 45110 can just be heard departing from Bridgnorth about a mile away.

Part way up the climb the gradient eases for a short distance and you can hear the exhaust beat accelerate before the loco passes through the tunnel and continues on the 1 in 100 gradient to the top of the climb not far away.

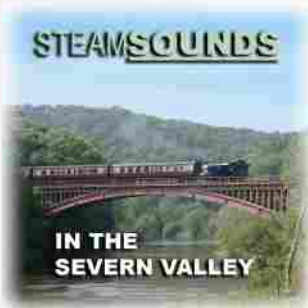
20. Made at the same location as the last recording the BR Standard Class 4 2-6-4T 80079 is heard emerging from the tunnel and continuing the climb to Eardington Summit.

21. I've already mentioned that I have spent lots of time making lineside recordings on Eardington Bank so here are a selection.

First we hear the GWR 2-8-0 2857. These locos were designed to haul heavy freight trains at relatively low speeds but the loco sound quite at home with this passenger train on the 1 in 100 gradient.

22. Like most preserved lines the Severn Valley Railway sees trains hauled by locos that would have never appeared on the line before it was preserved.

The ex LNER A4 Pacific 60009 *Union of South Africa* was resident on the line for a number of years and was always a



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popular performer particularly when coupled with the SVR's rake of Gresley and Thompson Teak LNER coaches as it was on this occasion when I recorded the loco climbing Eardington Bank.

23. Back to Great Western motive power for this recording of Manor 4-6-0 7819 Hinton Manor climbing the bank with 6 coaches.

24. The SVR also has another Manor available, 7802 Bradley Manor, and when I recorded the loco on Eardington Bank recording conditions were so good that, as this recording begins, you can hear the loco accelerating its train away from the speed restriction at Sterns and passing Eardington station before it passes making a fine sound on the gradient.

25. I've already mentioned that double heading is usually avoided on the line but sometimes it is necessary to work two locos on a single train.

In this recording you can hear the GWR King 4-6-0 6024 *King Edward I* which had arrived at Kidderminster after working a charter train on the main line.

Although a King is a very powerful engine 6024 sounds to be making extremely easy work of the ascent of Eardington Bank. But wait a minute, what is this bringing up the rear of the train? GWR Castle 4-6-0 5029 *Nunney Castle* was on the back as banker and sounds to be giving the King a hefty shove on the gradient.

26. While I've always enjoyed time spent recording trains on Eardington Bank I have to say that my favourite place on the Severn Valley Railway is Highley. There is more scope for atmospheric recordings with plenty of interest there. Try this recording as an example.

Heard from south of the station ex LMS Jinty 0-6-OT 47383 is approaching with a demonstration freight train. The Jinty with its short train rolls quietly past but makes a remarkably dramatic arrival in the sidings adjacent to the station.

Meanwhile, the ex LMS Ivatt 2-6-0 43106 is waiting to depart with the empty stock of a local train to Bewdley and, with the freight safely in the siding the Mogul departs south.

Once 43106 is clear of the station the Jinty begins to shunt its train ready to return to Arley.

27. Our last recording, still at Highley, was made to the north of the station and as it departs with a 6 coach train for Bridgnorth, the ex LMS Class 2 2-6-0 46443 slips slightly on the gradient while in the background you can hear the bells of Alveley church coming from across the river.

Well, that's the end of our visit to the Severn Valley Railway, I hope that you enjoyed it!

