

## A4 LOCOMOTIVE EXPERIENCE

My first encounter with the A4 locomotive was at Sterling station one afternoon in late November 1963. I was a fireman then in No2 link at Crewe North. I had worked up from Crewe to Perth in the early hours of the morning with a Euston to Inverness, The Royal Highlander with a Duchess Pacific 46221 Queen Elizabeth loaded to over 600 tons - 16 coaches including 12 wheeler sleeper coaches. After I had rested a few hours in the railway hostel at Friaton, near the mpd shed Perth I had a trip out to Sterling to look around the town and the castle etc.

On my return to the station to catch the train back to Perth the Saint Mungo Express arrived with A4 locomotive, 60011 Empire of India en route from Glasgow Queen St to Aberdeen.

After asking the driver if I could have a ride to Perth, I climbed aboard for the first time, and said to the fireman I would like to fire her. The driver had noticed I had a red BR badge in my hat and enquired where I was from on the LMS when I told him I had just done 300 miles and shovelled aprox 11 tons of coal and here I was shovelling some more before I go back to Crewe, he thought I was mad. I found 60011 nice to fire and riding well and going like the wind, although with a light load for her of 8 coaches. After that first run, the LNER locomotives got into my blood, so I made a point when I could of getting on them, some that I can remember like Salmon Trout, William Whitelaw, Papyrus and Captain Cuttle. Of course the highlight of a good fast run run was some years later in 1967, October when I fired along with Neil Cadman to driver Bert Stewart on A4 locomotive Sir Nigel Gresley from Crewe to Carlisle and back over the long drag to Blackburn it was enjoyable day meeting all Sir Nigel's friends, our chairman, then Mr Riddick, and son Robert, Mr Pope and poor old Roger Pride to name but a few.

We left Crewe more or less to time out of old platform 3 right behind an electric – hauled express bound for Liverpool, I said to Bert jokingly keep hard on his tail lamp and the signalman might shunt him out of the way. We were going like a rocket, second valve and 45% cut off just about lifted Earles Street bridge off its base. We were going that hard the Liverpool Express was not leaving us, the signals were just changing to double yellows as we stormed underneath. It was very hectic on the footplate, both me and Neil firing at the same time and with one injector on all the time - sometimes two to keep  $\frac{3}{4}$  boiler level, such was the demand for steam of which we managed to keep near the red mark most of the day.

We were now approaching Hartford Jnc, the countryside flashing past in a blur, I looked up towards the speedometer and was surprised to see it on 100mph (later confirmed at 98mph but never mind). The roar of the exhaust was deafening, I believe airline pilot,s were reporting running into a heavy hail storm approaching Manchester, I could have told them it was some of our coal, unburned and covered with ice, not hail, Mr Riddick was also frozen to the hand rail.

Later on we had a good fast climb from Oxenholme to Tebay and Shap summit nearly as fast as one particular run I read about in pre war days of the down Royal Scot with 46244 King George VI with 14 coaches. On one part of the journey, Bert handed over the regulator, I was glad he was not driving all day, as we would have run out of coal and lost a few firebars up the chimney and a lot more sweat from Neil and my self, happy days. I did manage to get some record of the run in the form of 8mm film I took between breathers, I often think of that day when I speed north at over 100mph - a speed easier to achieve than we did with shovelling but not as exciting, long may she ride the rails and give pleasure to many, also may I add many thanks to my fellow A4 members who keep her in top link condition and make our runs possible.

Les Jackson Driver Crewe North.