

## A Duchess Experience The final run.

It's a cold frosty day 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 1996 we are standing in Crewe platform 12 waiting to depart with 6229 Duchess of Hamilton on the north bound Royal Scot we have a load of 11 coaches plus a dead class 47 next to the engine to provide train heat the HS won't allow us to put steam throw in case a pipe burst in the train. It is my final day at work started on steam finished on steam the crowds are gathered around the locomotive as it also is going into retirement the boiler certificate expires the next day when it gets to York but first we have Shap, Carlisle, Beatock bank and Glasgow I will drive her as far as Carlisle the train was Days out limited by Mel Chamberlin.

The signal has now cleared to green, 6229 has a full head of steam, a green flag from the guard I put the reverser into full head gear, sound the whistle open the regulator. A short wheel spin, and if to say let's get at the task ahead, no use being nostalgic it all as to end some time, so with a heavy heart we were on the move, no more will I leave Crewe and every turn of the wheel towards Carlisle I don't want it to end. Then I thought let's enjoy it and go out in style.

We are now passing Crewe Coal Yard Signal Box I have pulled the rev to 25pc and put the regulator into second valve we are going like a rocket such a good engine she is making light work of it we speed passed Warrington in the 80 and soon Arrived at Preston on time book stop 2 minutes, next stop was Barton loop for water we left Barton some 22 minutes late I thought this won't do on my last day she is going to go from here I will be on time at Carlisle luckily I had a friend on the train Mike Nottly who was timing the train, and gave me a good log of the run.

We are running along side the M6 motor way and there are not many cars passing us the noise from the front end is deafening cut of at 30pc the regulator up in the roof we speed passed Lancaster in a blur and onto Carnforth at over 80. we are now passing mile post 13 near Milnthorpe station this is where the real work begins 15 miles or so of hard climbing to Grayrig loop near the M6 motor way bridge I have two firemen on one volunteered to stay on from Barton loop both shovelling like a conveyer belt Oxenholme Station was like a blur around the 70 mark and cut of at 35pc, black smoke approx 50ft into the cold sky spectators by the scaw, on the platform, in the fields, line side, all the way to Shap summit 6229 must have made a lovely sight.

Cut of now increased to 40pc near Lamb Rigg crossing but even with two firemen steam was down to 190psi and we had both injectors on the water was half a glass one injector could not keep the boiler topped up we reached Grayrig at just over the 50 mark, I was forced to close the regulator and coast down toward Tebay otherwise we would have no steam or water for Shap.

At Tebay near the old mpd I put the regulator into second valve, cut of at 25pc my two firemen had worked wonders they had got 6229 steam pressure up to 240psi and nearly a full glass of water and with black smoke filling the cold, snowey mountain top we hit the bank at 37mph increasing to about 50mph at the white house, on looking back along the train the exhaust was still hanging half a mile behind the train the air being that cold there was spectators by the hundreds each side of the line from Scout

Green cheering us on I felt quite proud I thought it's not too bad after all. At Scout Green I altered the cut of to 45pc dropping the wheel down slowly from Tebay North IB otherwise she might slip at Shap Wells I dropped the cut of to 55pc speed was about 42 and the noise was deafening steam was at 220psi but water was the trouble had to put the live steam injector on as we were down to half a glass, not far from the summit now and just like my old driver Len Basford of years ago on the Royal Highlander I had a premonition she would slip, I put the steam sanders on and placed my hand on the regulator and as we went into the rock cutting some five hundred yards from the summit of which was snow and ice I thought it, now or never and at the white house on the left she gave a good slip I shut off and opened up right away again, she held her feet and went over the top at 34mph, on looking at my watch I had twenty minutes to cover the thirty miles to Carlisle to be on time I said to my firemen hang on we are going from here

Cut of now back to 25pc as we speed around the tight curves at 85 near Penrith once passed Penrith cut of was increased to 35 pc and the speed rose quickly according to the speedometer she touched 100mph twice the last thrill of a lifetime ends too soon we are now running into Carlisle, according to the time log 4 seconds early and regained 22 minutes late start from Barton loop Mike also did say the fastest train of the day in BR days was the north bound Caledonian booked 69 minutes from passing Lancaster with 245 tons we did it in 64 minutes with a combined weight of over 600 tons, if the engine had not been eased at Grayrig to recover steam and water it would have been under the hour.

I got relieved at Carlisle and when I stepped down onto the platform I got a good reception and all so met Jill Duchess of Hamilton I was full with emotion to think that I will never drive a steam locomotive on the main line again as I walked away and looked back at such a lovely machine I said thanks for a good trip it did ease the pain a little and for many a happy time good and the not so good the next I hope to see 6229 will be at York with the streamline on.

Les Jackson (DVR Retired Crewe North)