

LAST DAYS OF STEAM ON THE MIDLAND REGION

Roger Malone

"August 4 was a perfect sunny day and, apart from the fact we knew different, it still seemed steam could go on for ever. But late in the afternoon the last surviving Britannia Class Pacific, 'Oliver Cromwell', arrived on shed at Lostock Hall after completing its part in an enthusiasts' special. The polished lines of this simmering giant glistened magnificently in the sun. This was my last image on the last day of steam. It was over."

So writes the author in his introduction to this book. To some, steam's demise in 1968 was merely a belated step towards progress, but to the steam enthusiast, nurtured on the sulphurous breath of these iron steeds, this last goodbye was a time for reflection and regret. Throughout the mid-sixties, the steam cull was relentless. The Western Region carried it out with almost indecent haste, while the Southern Region held on until 1967, along with the North East.

The Midland Region was the last to go. It had suffered serious steam casualties as depot after depot closed, yet incredibly a pocket of three Lancashire sheds survived to the last. The trio, Carnforth, Lostock Hall (near Preston) and Rose Grove (near Burnley) achieved almost celebrity status in 1968 as the only steam motive power depots still operating in the whole country.

Last Days of Steam on the Midland includes the author's remarkable photographs taken during the period when, as he poignantly puts it, 'Time ticked towards an almost surreal extinction of steam, with a countdown as cold as the steel of a locomotive whose fire had been dropped for the last time.'

Over 150 photographs appear in the book including photographs taken at the famous Barry scrapyards where so many locomotives ended their days.

Anyone with an interest in railway history will be fascinated by this unique pictorial memoir.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roger Malone is a Devon-based journalist during the week and, when the opportunity arises, a steam railway photographer during the weekend. When not taking pictures he plagues his family by playing guitar badly; a cunning ploy that ensures his wife and three daughters actively encourage him to leave the house – thus allowing him to 'bunk off' domestic duties and chase trains without a guilty conscience! Without too much provocation he will burst into a eulogy over the steamy wonder of locomotive sheds – and threaten anyone in earshot with a slide show. His first book for Halsgrove was *Railway Moods - Devon* followed by *Last Days of Steam on the Southern Region*.

Also by Roger Malone:
Devon Railway Moods
Last Days of Steam on the Southern Region

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DDI 01823 653770 suet@halsgrove.com

Halsgrove Publishing
Halsgrove House,
Ryelands Industrial Estate,
Bagley Road, Wellington,
Somerset TA21 9PZ
Tel: 01823 653777
Fax: 01823 216796
www.halsgrove.com
e-mail: sales@halsgrove.com

HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



Format: Hardback, 144 pages, 214x230mm, profusely illustrated in colour throughout.
Price: £14.99
ISBN: 978 1 84114 992 9
Imprint: Halsgrove
Published: March 2010



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Above: Having filled its pannier tanks with water, No 9, 'Prince of Wales', is about to collect its train which it will haul bunker-first back down the 11 dramatically-scenic miles to Aberystwyth. (September 1978)



Above right: In a bay platform a grimy ex-LMS 'Black Five' keeps company with a diesel multiple unit at Shrewsbury. (4 March 1967)



Right: 'Black Five' super power as No 45073 pilots No 45156 'Ayshire Yeomanry' towards Rose Grove with an enthusiasts' special. 'Ayshire Yeomanry', along with 'Lanarkshire Yeomanry', were the only two locomotives from this numerous class to carry names. (28 July 1968)



Thomas was recorded at Midland class, after a long wait and several dead attempts. BR Standard Class 7 4-6-0 No 75055 hauled on a side of water. A general impression must, with the help of its colour, be made of the surrounding buildings. A sign of the time was a hand-painted number-plate on the front of the locomotive. Note the 75011 shed plate, which implied the locomotive had been at the time was Portcullis, and also the different type of building. (4 August 1966)



An ex-LMS Black Five, seen at the side of the Midland Main Line, is the subject of an advertisement of the time. The shed plate is a dark green locomotive. They were all Black Fives, with the exception of the famous 'Queen Mary' No 75055. These were built under the shed. (4 August 1966)

Example of a double-page spread.



Minus its smokebox number plate, BR Standard Class 4 No 75055 heads the up Cambrian Coast Express into Barmouth. The impressive Cadair Idris rises majestically in the background. (29 July 1966)



Making a fine smokey entrance to Devon, having just crossed the Tamar on Brunel's Royal Albert Bridge, is ex-SR Pacific No 34067 'Tangmere' piloting BR Pacific No 70013 'Oliver Cromwell'.