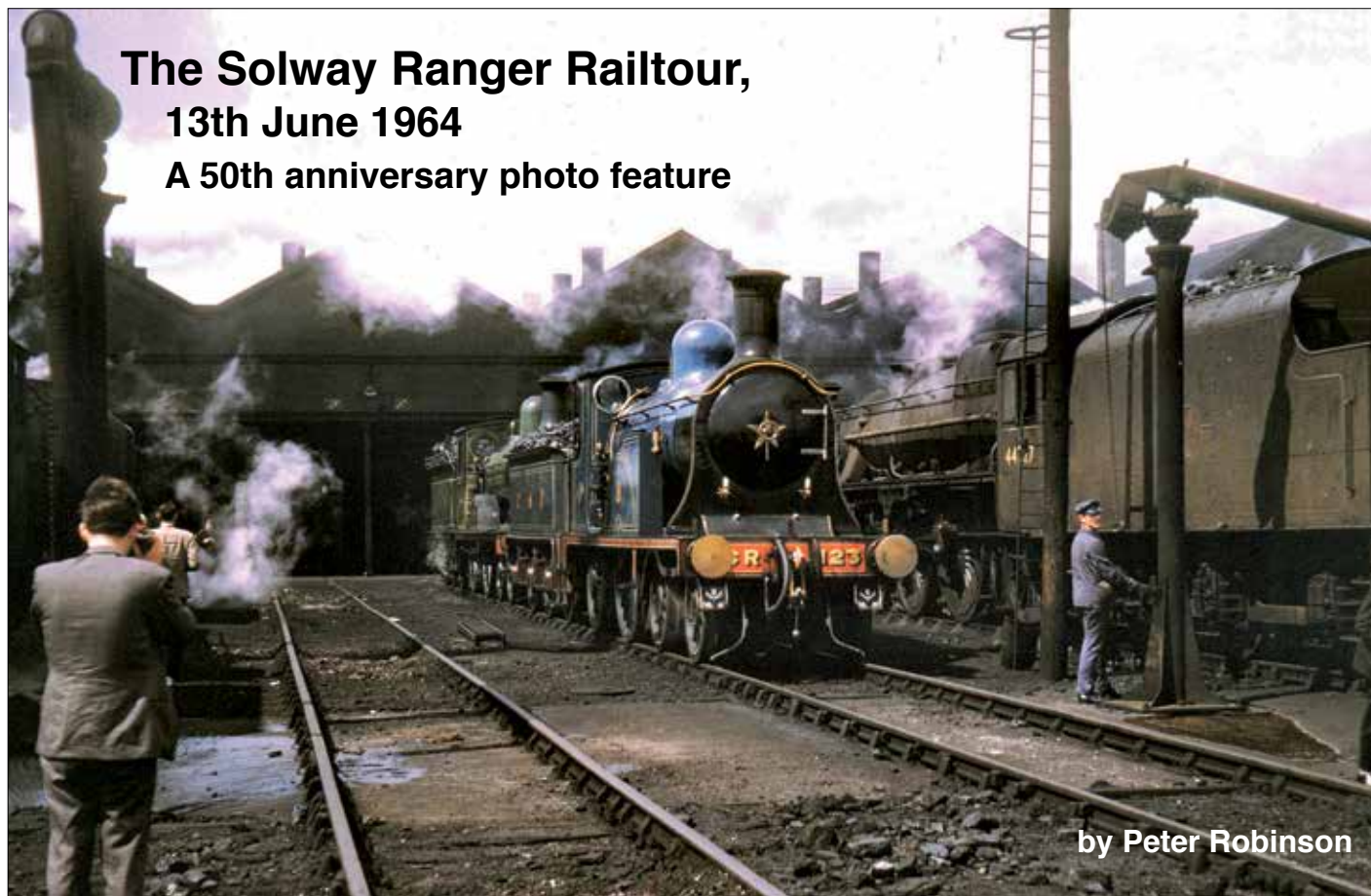


The Solway Ranger Railtour, 13th June 1964 A 50th anniversary photo feature



by Peter Robinson

PERHAPS ONE of the best and most varied of rail tours which covered the West Cumberland lines was the Solway Ranger tour, organised by the West Riding Branch of the RCTS. With a work colleague this was the first major rail tour I was to travel on – and what an introduction! This feature also draws on some of my own photos, supplemented by those of Ron Herbert who chased certain sections with his father, and the fine work of some other photographers, now safely preserved in the collections of the Cumbrian Railways Association.

Starting in Leeds, the mainline power for the train was to be rebuilt Southern Railway Merchant Navy Class No 35012 *United States Lines*. This was the first

known trip north of one of this distinguished class of locomotives since the 1948 Locomotive Exchanges. 35012 was in the charge of legendary Nine Elms driver, Bert Hooker, who was obviously very determined to show what his loco could do on the northern banks. Bert had in fact fired Bulleid light Pacific No 34004 *Yeovil* over Shap during the exchanges some 16 years earlier.

I joined the train at Skipton at 09:30 for the run through to Carnforth where the train ran straight through from East Junction to Furness & Midland Junction and onto the former metals of the Furness Railway. Black Five 4-6-0 No 45394 was quickly coupled onto the rear to draw the whole train back into the Up & Down Goods Loop before it

Glamour returns to Kingmoor – the two Scottish pre-grouping locos are seen here prior to performing on the Silloth section of the Solway Ranger Railtour. No 123 looks as though it could do with a quick polish to remove a thin film of rust from its buffers!
Photo: Arthur P Herbert, courtesy of Ron Herbert

set off again behind 35012 for the climbs to Grayrigg and Shap. A speed of 82 mph through the Lune gorge, and 77½ at Tebay promised a potentially recording breaking climb to Shap summit. However, some bad regulation had permitted a slow moving goods out ahead bringing us to a stand not only once at Shap Wells, but then a second time at the summit.

The tour train is drawn back through Carnforth station by LMS Class 5MT 4-6-0 No 45394. The Station Junction signal box, subject of another article in this journal, is seen in the distance beyond the open-sided goods shed.

Photo: Peter Robinson Ref. 026a27



With Merchant Navy 4-6-2 Class 35012 *United States Line* at its head, the Solway Ranger arrives at Penrith passing No 1 signalbox (was Mr Harper on duty on this day?) with one of the LMS Class 2MT 2-6-0s which will take the train on via Keswick on the right.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association Photo Library Edwin Cowper collection Ref. COWP139C



Running alongside the River Derwent on the approach to Workington Bridge, the two Ivatt Class 2 2-6-0s 46426 and 46458 are seen looking ahead from the end of the train.

Photo: Peter Robinson Ref. 026c03



The dms on arrival at Rowrah Junction from where most participants alighted to explore the old tracks down as far as Rowrah station and yard.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association Photo Library Ref. M00737





On arrival at Sellafield from Moor Row there was again time to explore around the station. The view looking south from the station footbridge is very different today.

Photo: Peter Robinson Ref. 026e13

On reaching Penrith, Mickey Mouse Class 2MT 2-6-0s Nos 46426 and 46458 were waiting in tandem to set back onto the rear of the train and take us over the CK&P line, through Keswick and on to Workington.

At Main station most of the participants alighted from the main train to join one of three Derby lightweight dmu twinsets for a tour of West Cumberland local lines. Some, however, remained on the main train which then returned over the CK&P and through Penrith to Carlisle where 35012 was already on Kingmoor shed recuperating from its exertions.

The next section in the diesel units took us south from Workington, through Bransty and Corkickle, then up the 1 in 50 bank to Moor Row, proceeding more gingerly as far as Rowrah Junction where we paused with just about enough time to leave the train and walk down the bank to Rowrah itself

and back. Reversing again at Moor Row the train proceeded down through Egremont to Sellafield, from where it set back northwards along the coastal route right through to Carlisle, arriving just before 5-00 pm.

However, the day's exploration of local lines was still far from done. The main train was waiting in Platform 1 at Citadel station, and setting back to head us out northwards were Caledonian Railway 4-2-2 No 123 and Great North of Scotland Railway 4-4-0 No 49 *Gordon Highlander*, in their glorious pre-grouping colours. Leaving a little behind the scheduled 5-30 pm, the trip down to Silloth was completed in about 45 minutes where the engines were turned, perhaps putting the turntable to use for the very last time, and returned to Carlisle where the Scottish veterans were relieved by 35012. Starting from Carlisle, now 20 minutes down on its scheduled 19-25 departure, 35012 made a

very fine run homewards over the Settle & Carlisle line into the evening sun. Ais Gill was passed in 59 minutes 43 seconds from Carlisle, with the 17.5 miles from passing Appleby to the summit being completed at an average speed of fractionally under 60 mph. As happy participants we were finally able to leave the train only slightly late at Skipton.

Full scheduled times for this railtour can be found on the Six Bells Junction website. The railtour is reported in full in the *Railway Observer*, August 1964, pages 238-39.

The six-car dmu train at Sellafield as it awaits tour passengers to rejoin for the run up the coast and over the M&C line to Carlisle.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association
Photo Library Ref. M00739





Two fine portraits of the Scottish locos, Caledonian 4-2-2 No 123 and Great North of Scotland 4-4-0 No 49 *Gordon Highlander* at Kingmoor before taking up their duties for the day.

Photos: Ron Herbert Ref. HER-R277 and HER-R278





The Solway Ranger heads north from Carlisle Citadel station for the trip to Silloth. Tracks in the former Caledonian Railway's Viaduct Yard on the right had only recently been lifted.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association Photo Library Edwin Cowper collection Ref. COWP142C



Out on the levels of the Solway Plain, the Scottish pair head through Kirkbride on their way to Silloth.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association Photo Library Rae Montgomery collection Ref. MON001C



The scene at Silloth with passengers and locals watching the Caley single set back onto *Gordon Highlander* to pilot the train back to Carlisle. Carr's Flour Mill dominates the horizon on the left.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association Photo Library Ref. M01200



A final glimpse of Merchant Navy Class No 35012 *United States Line* at the south end of Citadel station ready to couple up for the final run homewards over the Settle & Carlisle Line to Leeds.

Photo: Cumbrian Railways Association Photo Library Edwin Cowper collection Ref. COWP145C