

A "D1" Valedictory

By M. L. J. HARRIS

THE past two years will be remembered by railway enthusiasts as the turning point in the modernisation, when steam really began to disappear from many lines. Diesel and electric mileage on passenger trains is now slightly greater than that worked by steam. A changeover has occurred on the former South Eastern Railway main line of the Southern Region, for the principal expresses were almost wholly dieselised from June, 1960. The winter timetables have seen all expresses diesel-hauled, apart from two in each direction. The type "3" diesel locomotives of the D6500 series, used singly in the summer, have been double-headed with type "2s," so that steam heating could be provided.

Three other down trains remain steam-hauled. They are not expresses, but one of them, the 7.24 a.m. from London Bridge to Ramsgate, is a semi-fast. It also has a special claim to attention, for it is the last main-line train on that route hauled by an inside-cylinder 4-4-0. It continues to be worked by a class "D1" or "E1," because it starts as empty stock from Holborn Viaduct at 6.56 a.m., and these locomotives are the heaviest allowed on that line. When one of the 4-4-0s is not available, a "C" class 0-6-0 may be substituted.

The 7.24 a.m. is part of Bricklayers Arms duty No. 100, rostered for a "D1" or an "E1," and the engine runs light

from that depot to pick up its coaches at Holborn Viaduct. The return train leaves Ramsgate at 7.24 p.m., and runs to Holborn Viaduct *via* Maidstone East, Swanley and Bromley South. The scheduled load going down is a three-coach set, an additional coach, and two vans. The up train is formed of the three-coach set and one van. There are no other rosters at present for these 4-4-0s.

I recently decided to renew my acquaintance with the down train, and found at platform No. 3 at London Bridge four standard British Railways coaches and two four-wheel vans, headed by class "D1" No. 31749. There is a shortage of cleaners at Bricklayers Arms, and the engine was not very clean outwardly, although otherwise it appeared to be in fairly good fettle. I installed myself in the first coach, and we pulled out a few seconds after 7.24 a.m., with a reasonably well-filled train. No. 31749 made a smooth and steady start, and we set out along the viaduct at roof-top level quite smartly.

We were slightly checked by a "double yellow" signal, but this soon cleared and we passed New Cross (3 miles) in 5 min. 11 sec. with a clear road in front of us. Hither Green (5.3 miles) was passed in 8 min. 10 sec.—20 sec. to the good. I noted some class "C" 0-6-0s, class "W" 2-6-4 tanks, and several type "3" diesels at Hither Green shed. We passed two examples of modernisation here:

the new signalbox and the large depot for continental goods traffic, with low voltage overhead wires for electric locomotives. At the electric carriage sheds at Grove Park, I noted some of the new trains, mounted on Commonwealth bogies, which will ultimately be used on this line.

Despite the rising gradients of 1 in 140 and 120 to Elmstead Woods, No. 31749 managed to keep up an average speed of 38 m.p.h. to the accompaniment of a fine "Maunsell bark." After Chislehurst, the gradients ease gradually, and Orpington (11.9 miles from London Bridge) was reached in 19 min. 27 sec., 2½ min. inside schedule. That time in hand certainly was needed, for besides picking up a

whistle sounding. The average speed from Knockholt to Polhill Signalbox was 51.4 m.p.h., and on to Dunton Green it was 65 m.p.h. It had been quite a good climb and descent for a 58-year-old (albeit rebuilt) 4-4-0 with a load of 180 tons gross. We felt some rolling from No. 31749 on the descent, although, in any case, British Railways standard stock does not run too well at high speed. As we approached Sevenoaks, we passed the 5.24 a.m. from Ramsgate restarting towards London with a Bulleid Pacific.

Down trains have an awkward start from Sevenoaks, up a gradient of 1 in 160 to the mouth of the tunnel, and we took almost two minutes for this half-mile.



Photo]

[Derek Cross

The 7.24 a.m. London Bridge to Ramsgate train leaving Ashford in May, 1959, headed by "D1" class 4-4-0 locomotive No. 31509

number of passengers, there were several packing cases to be unloaded. The driver seemed anxious to get away, and told the guard and the porters to hurry up. We had to set back before we could restart, but eventually moved off without a trace of slipping.

The start out of Orpington Station is on a short piece of level track, but the ascent is soon renewed at 1 in 120 past Chelsfield, and continues at 1 in 170 through Knockholt. On an earlier trip with this train, also behind No. 31749, the engine put up a rather inferior performance, but the times on this run were better than those on my three previous trips.

Beyond the summit at Knockholt, we reached our first downhill stretch, and ran towards Polhill Tunnel with the

The riding in the tunnel was bad and we were prevented from achieving any high speeds on the descent at 1 in 144 and 1 in 122 by work on the track at Hildenborough. Once past this, however, the engine accelerated smartly. Tonbridge distant signal was at caution, but cleared as we approached it. This was fortunate, because we might have been stopped on the sharp curve outside the station, as we were on one of my previous journeys. We lost time on the 7.4-mile run from Sevenoaks to Tonbridge, but only to the extent of half a minute.

At Tonbridge, I noted a 2-6-4 tank on a train from Brighton consisting of "restriction 1" stock, which is becoming increasingly rare since much of it was withdrawn after the Kent Coast electrification of 1959. It is the widest stock

allowed to work between Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. At the shed, beyond the station, there was a type "3" diesel, as well as a number of class "C" and class "Q" 0-6-0s and "Schools" class 4-4-0s. I noticed fewer class "H" 0-4-4 tanks, and it appears that Tonbridge already is short of these engines.

We started nearly 2 min. late from Tonbridge and accelerated briskly, passing Paddock Wood (5.3 miles) in 7 min. 56 sec. I was looking forward eagerly to see how we would run over the 26 miles of the old South Eastern main line through the Vale of Kent to Ashford, which is one of the straightest and most easily graded stretches in the country. I realised, however, that the work of four-tracking at Ashford probably would spoil the finish of the journey. Near Paddock Wood, No. 31749 blew off for the first time since leaving London, and scared sheep grazing beside the line.

The average speed over the 4.6 miles from Paddock Wood to Marden, passed in 12 min. 18 sec. from Tonbridge, was 62.5 m.p.h. Staplehurst (12.4 miles from Tonbridge) was cleared in 14 min. 26 sec., with an average speed from Marden of 70.3 m.p.h. Then No. 31749 gave a long whistle, which made me think that we were encountering a check, but it seemed to be no more than a warning, probably to someone on the track.

We shot through Headcorn, formerly the junction for the Kent & East Sussex Railway, and now modernised with concrete additions to the platforms, after averaging 73.1 m.p.h. from Staplehurst, and maintained an average of 71.2 m.p.h. thence to Pluckley. I had obviously picked a good day for running and this was one of the best performances that could have been expected from this type of 4-4-0. However, I recalled that as late as 1956 speeds of over 80 m.p.h. were recorded on the London, Chatham & Dover main line behind "D1s" and "E1s."

Beyond Pluckley, I realised that the best of the run was over. We passed Chart Signalbox (24.4 miles from Tonbridge) in 24 min. 49 sec., and soon afterwards I noticed a distant signal at caution. Then we encountered the speed restriction for the track work. The distant cleared, but we were stopped at Ashford home signals for nearly a minute before pulling into the station,

on time, in 32 min. 4 sec. from Tonbridge.

The overall running time for the 54½ miles from London Bridge to Ashford, exclusive of station stops, had been 74 min. 48 sec. The time spent at stations amounted to 12 min. 55 sec. The gain on the schedule of 80 min. was therefore 5 min. 12 sec. Estimating the permanent way check and the signal checks near Hildenborough at 1½ min., and the speed restriction and signal stop at Ashford at 4 min. 20 sec., the net time works out at about 69 min. The average speed over the whole run was 43.5 m.p.h., a good effort, considering the three stops and the climb up to Knockholt.

So ended a memorable run behind a fine old engine. I did not continue the journey to Dover and Ramsgate, because I wished to record arrivals and departures of trains at Ashford, and I stood on the up platform and watched No. 31749 make another clean start on the next stage towards the coast. Later in the day, another "D1," No. 31739, also from Bricklayers Arms, appeared, and I saw it set off towards Tonbridge with a breakdown train.

I returned to London on the up "Man of Kent" (2.35 p.m. from Ashford), hauled by a type "3" and a Derby-built type "2" diesel. As we sped towards Charing Cross, I reflected that the type "2" and No. 31749 both had something in common. The diesel was designed and built at Derby, and the designer of No. 31749 was assisted by a Derby man—the late James Clayton—who used many of the features of Fowler's rebuild of Midland Railway 4-4-0 No. 483 in the "D1" and "E1" rebuilds. I would like the railway enthusiast organisations to consider the preservation of one of the S.E.C.R. "D1s" or "E1s." It would be a worthy reminder of excellent work with the boat trains and on the L.C.D.R. line coastal expresses up to 1959.