

# Helensburgh Central's Steam Locomotives

Right from its opening in 1858 the Glasgow, Dumbarton and Helensburgh Railway Company had no locomotives of its own, and it was worked by the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company, of which it became a subsidiary only four years later. The Edinburgh & Glasgow Railway Company was itself taken over by the North British Railway Company in 1865. Over the years some steam locomotives were specifically designed for the Helensburgh route, while others became very much associated with it. The North British did not have a system for classifying their engines in the same way as the London & North Eastern Railway and British Rail, and so some locomotives which the LNER would have considered as two separate classes were given the same "class" letter by the North British Railway.

It is known that other classes of steam locomotive visited Helensburgh Central from time to time, particularly during and after the Second World War, and also on excursions connecting with the steamers at Craigendoran. However here we deal with the principal classes. No attempt is made to include the locomotives which passed through Helensburgh Upper on the West Highland Railway trains after its opening in 1894, although there was inevitably some overlap, as will be seen below.

Please let me know if you feel that I have left out anything of significance – Stewart Noble (January 2015)

## **1858**

Three different locomotives were ordered from John Jones and Son of Liverpool, Nos 306-308 were all Crewe-type.

No. 306 was a 2-4-0 for mixed traffic duties; it was withdrawn in 1882. The illustration of Forth



and Clyde Railway No. 835 (below) shows a locomotive that may have been fairly similar.

No. 307 was a 2-2-2 which was withdrawn in 1872 – the picture below shows a similar locomotive.



No. 308 was a 0-4-2 for goods traffic which was withdrawn in 1874.

### **1877 - NBR Class P (later LNER Class G8)**



A class of six 0-4-2 tank engines was designed by Dugald Drummond for the North British Railway Company and built at the Railway Company's own workshops at Cowlares in Glasgow. They bore the numbers 88, 89, 157, 167, 314 and 480. In common with standard North British Railway Company practice they were given local names, being Helensburgh, Gareloch, Dumbarton, Cardross, Craigendoran and Roseneath (sic) respectively. Within two years they were all transferred to Fife where they were employed on stopping trains

between Burntisland and Dundee, and they were all given new names appropriate to Fife and Dundee. When the first Tay Bridge opened in 1878, No. 314 hauled the special train for the official opening. By the early 1890s all six engines were back working between Glasgow and Helensburgh.

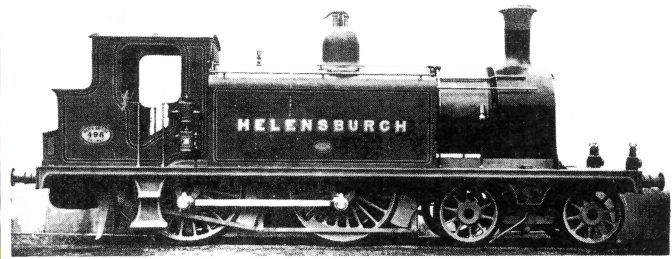
The engines gave trouble because of the excessive weight on the trailing wheels and in 1881-82 these were converted to a bogie, thus making them 0-4-4 tank engines, the first with this type of wheel arrangement in Britain. In this guise they became very successful and were the forerunners of many similar locomotives. They were all withdrawn in 1924 - 25. A technical drawing of Number 157 is known to exist, showing this class of engine in its original 0-4-2T guise. William Stroudley



(under whom Dugald Drummond had worked) had designed his very similar Class D for the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway 4 years earlier, but these locomotives were never converted to 0-4-4T – the picture above of a Class D locomotive gives a good idea of how the North British engines looked before they were converted.

### **1879 – NBR Class P (later LNER Class D50)**





Drummond express tank engine *Helensburgh*

[F. Moore]

These were three 4-4-0 tank engines numbered 494-496 and named Craigendoran, Roseneath (sic) and Helensburgh respectively. This class was also designed by Dugald Drummond, but the locomotives were built by Neilson and Company in Glasgow. The names were removed about 1883, and the locomotives were scrapped between 1924-26.

### 1888 - NBR Class C (later LNER Class J36)



Matthew Holmes designed this class of 0-6-0 engines principally for goods traffic but they did pull passenger trains as well. There were 168 of them - the most numerous class on the North British Railway - and most were built at the Railway Company's own workshops at Cowlairs in Glasgow. One in particular that was based at Helensburgh from 1946 worked the goods service down to Faslane where it picked up the scrap metal from ships that were being broken up there. Locomotives of this class remained in service right up to the end of mainline steam in 1967 – having completed 79 years of service! An example which has been preserved by the Scottish Railway Preservation Society at Bo'ness is named "Maude" after First World War Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude - see photo on the right above.

### 1911 - NBR Class M (later LNER Class C15)



In 1911 W P Reid designed his M class of thirty 4-4-2 tank engines. Unusually they were built by the Yorkshire Engine Company and so were nicknamed "Yorkies". The C15s were very familiar locally until about 1960 because they hauled the "Wee Arrochar" which was a push-and-pull service from Craigendoran to Arrochar and Tarbet. The picture on the right shows the "Wee Arrochar" northbound at Craigendoran junction, while that on the left shows the same train in Glen Douglas.

## 1914 - NBR class B (later LNER Class J37)



Like the J36s, this class of a hundred and four 0-6-0 engines was designed principally for goods traffic, but also did some passenger work as well. They were built in Glasgow, some by the North British Locomotive Company, others by the Railway Company at Cowlairs. Designed by W P Reid, they too remained in service until the mid 1960s. A J37 is shown in the photo on the left in Helensburgh Central

yard

## 1915 - NBR Class L (later LNER Class C16)

The Class L was a development by W P Reid of his Class M. The two classes of locomotive looked virtually identical, and because of this no photograph of one is shown. However because the C16s were superheated, they were more powerful. They were built in Glasgow by the North British Locomotive Company. After the arrival of the V1s and V3s they were seen less frequently, but they still continued to haul Helensburgh trains as late as the 1950s. The last members of the class were scrapped in 1961.

## 1930 - LNER Class V1

These 2-6-2 tank engines were designed by Nigel Gresley. There were sixty of them, and they and their near twins the V3s almost exclusively handled the passenger trains until electrification in 1960, although they did occasionally pull goods trains as well. The photo on the right shows a V1 immaculately cleaned by fireman Bobby Brodie waiting to leave Helensburgh Central on a morning express to Glasgow.



## 1939 - LNER Class V3

Like the V1s these thirty-one 2-6-2 tank engines were designed by Sir Nigel Gresley (who had been knighted by this time). Externally they appeared identical to the V1s, but they ran at a higher boiler pressure and were hence more powerful. When the electric trains were withdrawn a few months after their introduction in 1960 because of transformer explosions, the V1s and V3s took over again until the electric trains were reintroduced in 1961. No separate picture of a V3 is shown because of their similarity to the V1s.