

D123 sets record on the Great Central Railway

How a heritage line and classic locomotive was put to a good use for testing a modern wagon. Report and pictures by STEVE MORRIS

D123 prepares to propel the laden 'SL45' container flat back towards Swithland where the run up to 75 mph would commence.



As part of the approval process for a new wagon, it is sometimes necessary to carry out a brake performance test. The level of testing required depends on what other tests have been carried out previously with wagons that have similar brake components and performance characteristics. In the past, these tests have been conducted on the 'mainline' railway, in recent years this has included the Down slow line between Crewe and Winsford. While this site is more than satisfactory, a

number of factors including the time needed to obtain the necessary possession of the line, limited time available for testing and the costs involved in testing at this location have led to efforts to seek an alternative site.

As far ago as 2001 a number of brake tests were conducted on the Great Central Railway, the straight and relatively level down line on the approach to Quorn station being ideal for this purpose. The wagons concerned had a maximum speed of 60 mph, this was the

maximum running speed of the GCR, another reason for choosing this location. Class 45 No.D123 was used for the purpose and these tests were a complete success. However, for vehicles with a maximum speed of 75 mph such as container flats, the original Crewe-Winsford option remained the only choice. This situation remained until earlier this year. Following approval by the HMRI and some work carried out by the GCR, the section of track approaching Quorn station was passed for 75 mph running under tightly controlled test conditions. So it was during the evening of Wednesday, July 1, that D123 set a new record by running at 75 mph on this stretch during pre-test running to confirm that the required speed could actually be achieved with the test wagon in tow!

The testing itself started on Thursday, July 2, and several 75 mph stops were achieved during the day. The wagon under test was the new 'SL45' low deck container wagon built by WH Davis fitted with SCT small wheeled bogies. The test itself involved 'slipping' the test wagon from the rear of D123 at a number of speeds. This resulted in the wagon brakes applying automatically and coming to a stand, the distance between initiating the slip and where it came to rest being the stopping distance. A brake curve is then produced using this information and compared to the stopping distance specification. D123 performed faultlessly during the series of tests and the site proved completely suitable for running at up to 75 mph, the highest speed achieved by any locomotive off the 'mainline'!



On the straight section of Down line towards Quorn station. The view from the rear cab of D123 shows the wagon having been slipped and slowing down to stop. During the tests there is a complete possession of the line in the test area.