

N.E.L.P.G. NEWS



NO. 152 DEC. 1992

EDITORIAL

A glance at the Group's annual accounts over the last few years would remind members of the excellent financial husbandry that is the hallmark of our Treasurer, Peter Robinson. Whilst it is the locomotives and their exploits that may capture the imagination of members and stimulate their continuing interest in the NELPG, the successes of the last two decades have been testimony to the healthy financial foundation of the Group. However, now it seems we are the victims of our own success, since our activities have come under the close scrutiny of the Inland Revenue. Elsewhere in this issue Peter explains our predicament and the pressing need to form a trading company entitled 'NELPG Enterprises Limited'. It sounds grandiose but is essentially a tax efficiency remedy to our problems. It is also yet another reminder of the Group's progress over the last 26 years and emphasises the magnitude of the Group's activities. Whilst the new company should have no obvious effect on the day to day running of the locomotives, it is yet another administrative headache, and the prime reason why Peter has decided to relinquish the post of Membership Secretary. He has undoubtedly fulfilled this essential, but unglamorous, role with distinction and I am sure I speak for the membership in expressing the deepest gratitude to Peter for his efforts in this capacity for nigh on 20 years. Fortunately he will be able to continue, unfettered, in his even more vital role as Treasurer, and we welcome Colin Smith who kindly takes over the membership reins.

It has been another successful year for the NELPG insofar as the operation of our locomotives is concerned. The A2 and K1 between them have operated on BR metals on no less than 65 occasions, and totalled 6,200 mostly trouble free miles. The P3 and J72 completed satisfactory sabbaticals at Llangollen and Swanage respectively, and the Q7 put its awesome power to good use on the NYMR, knocking up over 3,000 uneventful miles in the process. Once more it has been a tremendous team effort on more than one front, and sincere thanks are due to all members who have helped to ensure that our locomotives were able to perform as they did. The main success was undoubtedly main line running; reservations were expressed early in the year on the ability of the Group to resource two locomotives on the main line at the same time. In the event those fears proved unfounded, though the unplanned deputising for 5407 in Scotland illustrated how close we were to our volunteer limitations. Much of the work goes unseen - liaising with BR and private railways, organising inspections, low loaders and support crews, and so on - but is absolutely essential to any operation. One thing is certain: without such support we could not achieve what we do, year in year out, and as 1992 draws to a close, it is hoped that in 1993 members will continue to give their unstinting support.

On that optimistic note, the committee wishes all members a happy Christmas and, hopefully, a prosperous New Year.

P3 NO.2392

Following the entry of the P3 into No. 5 depot after its appearance at the Thornaby open day, the firebox and smokebox were thoroughly cleaned out before the loco was moved outside on 6th October for the boiler to be washed out.

After returning indoors, work commenced on winter maintenance with the front bufferbeam being removed on 19th October. This had to be done in order to remove both pistons so that the piston rods can be ground true and effect a cure for the excessive steam leakage from around the glands.

With the pistons removed, the cylinder bores were examined but were found to be in a very much worse condition than was envisaged. These unexpected repairs will require more time than was originally planned. Furthermore the boiler tubes will be in year nine of their ten year life, and these factors have caused the Committee to question whether the P3 should be available for hire in 1993.

With the above facts in mind, and considering the likely future workload that will be required on the Group's other locos, the Committee has decided to 'bite the bullet' by withdrawing the P3 during 1993 and commencing on a heavy general overhaul, one year early, subject to members' approval at a special EGM in February 1993 (see separate item). Further details on the scope of work required will appear in the next issue of the NEWS.

T2 NO.2238

Whilst still on display in Deviation shed, a number of members have decided to take 2238 under their wing, and have started on the task of refurbishing and refitting the missing small parts from the loco that were used to complete work on the Q7. For example, when completing 901 the whistle rod could not be found. The rod was taken from the T2 but was a different length and was modified to fit. What was recently discovered in the box van? Yes, the Q7 whistle rod, but it does not fit the T2 and will have to be modified! '

At Wilton, work is now progressing on the tender which is jacked up with all the springs removed to enable work to begin on the refurbishment of the axlebox bearings. The brake hangers have been cleaned down and repainted, and work continues on cleaning and painting the rest of the brakegear, prior to reassembly.

K1 NO.2005

On Tuesday 27th October the K1 worked its 47th and final

train between Fort William and Mallaig, bringing its total mileage for the season to 4,400. Only two trains were 'lost', due to a broken engine spring, and a steam test failure. Overall the performance of the support crews was excellent, particularly when faced with the need to deputise for 5407; thanks are therefore due to everyone who helped to make the K1 operation such a success.

The K1 returned from Fort William to Glasgow, as planned, on Saturday 7th November, and then spent a day running on the Bo' ness and Kinneil Railway, before an overnight run via Glasgow and Kilmarnock to Carlisle. Here the support coach was detached and the K1 resumed its journey via Blaydon to Thornaby, arriving at midday on Monday 9th November (see separate report).

That evening a working party removed all the rods ready for the loco to go onto the ground lathe for the tyres to be turned. This work was carried out over the next two days, with all the wheels being reprofiled. A second working part was held on the Thursday evening with all the rods being refitted. The brakes and springs then required adjustment as the wheels are now slightly smaller. The driving wheels were last turned in 1988, whilst the tender tyres, which are taking the brunt of the wear, were last turned in 1990. With three years running on the Mallaig line, and one year on the NYMR, the driving wheel tyres (which still have two more turnings left) are not wearing as much as those of 'Black Fives' on the West Highland, which is welcome news.

On Sunday 22nd November the opportunity of using the Thornaby inspection pits to adjust all the driving axlebox wedges was not missed; the front four boxes had only 0.010" wear, whilst the rear boxes had 0.020".

The loco was moved in steam from Thornaby to Grosmont on 24th November, to enable winter maintenance to take place. The little end brasses, and the smokebox door seal, are to be renewed, together with a number of minor refurbishing tasks. The only major repair, which will be planned to suit the loco's operational requirements on the NYMR or BR, is the renewal of the piston valve liners, valve heads and rings. This will be done by a specialist contractor.

Q7 NO.901

The Q7's final runs of the season were completed during the NYMR Wartime Weekend on 31st October and 1st November. The loco worked trains on the Saturday, but was rostered only as 'standby' on the Sunday. However, the failure of 6619 with brake problems meant that 901 was used in traffic on both days.

Sunday 15th November saw a good start made on the winter maintenance programme, as efforts had been made to ensure a good volunteer attendance at Grosmont. The resulting numbers exceeded expectations with nine NELPG members all working on 901. Also present in Deviation shed were five volunteers

working on Ian Storey's 44767, Peter Robinson had four working on 3814 and Bert Hitchin had another two working on 75014 - in total the largest number seen in the shed for a very long time!

Work completed that day included shunting the shed to get the Q7 onto the pit and drain the boiler then, after its return to the shed, the removal of all rods from both sides for remedial work to the bushes.

Good attendances will be required this winter in order to complete the planned work on the Q7 and K1. Working parties take place every Sunday and extra hands are always welcome! In order to improve conditions in the shed a plan is being hatched to install a pot bellied stove to provide some heat when the temperature falls.

J72 NO.69023

After attending the BR open day at Thornaby the J72 was returned to ICI Wilton, where work continues on the upgrading of the braking and lubrication systems. This work is now 80% complete and the visual layout of the cab is now much altered.

The NER crest transfers are expected shortly which will allow the full repainting to be finished. Completion of the J72's overhaul is planned for the end of January 1993. All that will then be required is a railway on which to run the loco! Watch this space!

A2 NO.60532 BLUE PETER

The A2 has proved a big draw on the Great Central Railway and was the star attraction at the recent 'Night Steam' event on 7th November (see separate article). Maintenance has been carried out by Mike Gamble but few problems have arisen. During November, on contract to NELPG, Barry replaced eight rivets with copper lacings in the firebox combustion chamber.

The A2's last workings are expected to be on 28th, 29th and 30th December, possibly in the company of 'Flying Scotsman'. After the final working it was originally proposed to move the A2 to the KWVR so that it could work its two trips over the Settle and Carlisle in January, but due to engineering works in conjunction with the electrification of the line from Leeds to Skipton, the BR connection will be isolated during January and February 1993. It is likely, therefore, subject to agreement, that the A2 will go to the National Railway Museum at York at the beginning of January.

From 1st January 1993 all steam locomotives working on BR lines will require to be fitted with a headlamp beam very similar to that used by diesel and electric locomotives. This is a mandatory requirement so on its runs on 16th and 30th January the A2 is expected to carry a Bardic type lamp on the centre lamp bracket. The K1 will also have to carry a lamp

when it ventures out onto the main line.

A4 NO.2509 SILVER LINK

On display at the Stephenson Museum, North Tyneside.

--oo0oo--

FUTURE LOCOMOTIVE POLICY

The Group's general policy is to keep all its locomotives in working order. However factors such as volunteer availability, workshop space, finance and the anticipated use of each locomotive all come into the equation.

The T2 2238 has now been out of service for 10 years. On the withdrawal of the P3 perhaps the most natural step would be to restore the T2. However life is not that simple - the T2 is a powerful locomotive capable of hauling 8 coaches on any railway. The inescapable fact is that with one 0-8-0 (901) in full working order on the NYMR, and insufficient work there for our other locos, we are opting to hire our locos out to other railways, provided our commitments to the NYMR are fulfilled.

Unfortunately the T2 is just too big for many other lines which rarely run with more than 6 coaches, and its hire potential is therefore relatively low. The P3, on the other hand, is suitable for almost any line, be it a short branch or a larger railway.

Against this background it is hoped that the P3 can be fully overhauled in 1993/4, with the T2 then being completed to effectively replace the Q7 when its current boiler ticket expires.

--oo0oo--

WORKING PARTIES

Grosmont - this winter sees a lot of activity at Deviation shed doing essential maintenance on the Q7 and K1. Please

contact Trevor Mussett on 0642 783271 or Paul Hutchinson on 0642 674844, if you can assist.

ICI Wilton - winter work on Monday and Thursday evenings will involve completing the repairs to the J72 and commencing the proposed overhaul of the P3: there is lots to do! Any new volunteers should contact Maurice Burns on 0642 780794 in the first instance.

--oo0oo--

COACH REPORT

Gordon Wells

Further to the report in the last issue of the NEWS, yet another communication has been received from BR. From 31st December 1992 all private owner vehicles must have the 'old' BR number removed i.e. E34557 from the bodysides; the only number allowed is the private owner number displayed on a yellow plate on the solebar i.e. 99760. A dispensation may be granted for an historic vehicle with a pre BR number.

This action is to solve problems caused in the TOPS system by BR staff entering the old bodyside number only to find that the vehicle either does not exist or is condemned! To have an entry in the TOPS computer which informed that: "E34557 is privately owned; see 99760" would probably be too simple! BR are currently working on a standard data plate which can be displayed on the ends of all private owner vehicles, information upon which is due before April next year.

BSK 99760 (E34557)

The coach moved south from Fort William over the weekend of 7th and 8th November (see K1 railtour report) and is now stabled at Carlisle Upperby depot.

The yearly registration of the coach expires in February 1993 and the three yearly inspection, involving a full brake overhaul and ultrasonic test, falls due in March. The work required to recertify the vehicle is expected to be contracted to Inter City's Carlisle depot at Currock, to be completed by the end of January. The A2 will then collect the coach for its southbound run over the Settle and Carlisle line on 30th January.

ADB 975455

In store at Wilton.

--oo0oo--

THE K1 COMES HOME

The K1's fourth season at Fort William came to an end on Saturday 7th November when it worked a SRPS special over the West Highland main line to Glasgow. The three previous return trips all proved eventful in their own way, and this was to be no exception!

A full support crew assembled at Fort William to carry out the most thorough of preparation of not just the K1 but also the support coach, not least to ensure that there was no repetition of the ill fated bearing saga of 1988!

The Saturday dawned fair, with some sunshine, and with the incoming special reported on time, all seemed set for a good trip, particularly as the BR crew was to comprise Callum McCrauld, John Hynd and Inspector Gordon Alcock. The support coach set off behind a class 37 diesel for the run down to Cowlairs, with just Alan Toomer on board - his own special train! Thirty minutes later, at 13.50, the K1 followed with its seven maroon coaches (at least they were all maroon on the sunny side!) and a full complement of passengers. A steady run to Roy Bridge, where water was taken in the booked fifteen minute stop, was followed by a bout of slipping in the notoriously damp Monessie Gorge. However, from Tulloch the seven miles of mostly 1 in 67 were once again surmounted with ease, and a seasoned timer on board reckoned it was the best effort of its three public runs up to Corroul; no less than 12 minutes were knocked off the schedule between Tulloch and Rannoch.

At Crianlarich water was taken as darkness fell, but half an hour was lost awaiting a guard, before departure at 17.30, 42 minutes late. A few minutes were made up to Arrochar and Tarbet but alas to no avail, since the gruelling four mile, tree lined, 1 in 57 climb to Glen Douglas claimed yet another victim as the K1 slithered to a stand as it used up the last of its sand. After two attempts Glen Douglas was eventually reached and a spritely run to Helensburgh ensued, but by now a delay of over one and a half hours had been incurred, though fortunately no service trains were delayed.

At Cowlairs East Junction the K1 was removed to the desolate remnants of the now closed Eastfield depot, where it was reunited with the support coach, and a somewhat bemused Alan Toomer! "Where have you been - the dinner's been ready for ages?". It tasted excellent nevertheless, thanks to Chris Davison's secret ingredients and unusual cooking utensil! It looked like an oversize hand grenade, so immediately got nicknamed the 'foot grenade'!

After water had been taken, the K1 ran via the site of St. Rollox shed and Cumbernauld to Larbert, where it ran round the support coach, before going tender first to Bo'ness Junction on the main Glasgow to Edinburgh line. The SRPS

railtour stock had just arrived ECS from Edinburgh, so the K1 took the whole train down to Bo'nness. The K1 was eventually disposed of at 03.00 Sunday morning, at the end of yet another long and eventful day!

Sunday saw the K1 participating in a gala day on the B&K which featured no less than seven locos in steam including the K1, 44871 and, star of the show, 673 Maude, the North British Railway 0-6-0, fresh from major overhaul. During the day 2005 worked a passenger train and a freight train up to Kinneil, then as darkness descended, double headed with 44871 on the last train of the day. However, this was not before a routine check by eagle eyed Trevor Mussett discovered a broken tender spring. With a spare on the top of the tender, a piece of rope, our two jacks and some packing, the errant spring was replaced in just twenty minutes, probably much to the surprise of the onlookers!

Sunday evening saw the K1 and support coach travelling to Carlisle via Glasgow and Kilmarnock, where water was taken, with arrival at Upperby depot just before midnight. Leaving the support coach behind, the K1 departed Upperby at 07.40 on the Monday morning via the Tyne valley and Blaydon, where water was taken, thence via Gateshead and down the coast to Thornaby, reached at 11.00.

All in all it was a successful return for the K1 and thanks are due to all those who helped to make it possible, not least the SRPS for their assistance and hospitality, at Bo'nness, and our own support crew of Alan Toomer, Dave Whitfield, Trevor Mussett, Dave Pearson, Chris Davison, Dave Donegan, Richard Pearson and Maurice Burns - who also took it in turns to drive the support car home as well!

--oo0oo--

BLUE PETER RAILTOUR

Details are being finalised for a railtour on Saturday 6th March 1993, picking up and setting down at Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, Northallerton, York and Leeds, and featuring 60532 both ways over the Settle and Carlisle line. Departure from Newcastle will be at about 07.25 with arrival back at about 21.00. Arrival at Carlisle will be at approximately 13.15, with departure at about 15.00. The fare for the tour is expected to be £35. Details can be obtained by sending a S.A.E. to N.E.L.P.G. RAILTOURS, 57 Millview Drive, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 2QD.

--oo0oo--

NELPG AND THE INLAND REVENUE

Peter Robinson
and Maurice Burns

A growing number of charitable organisations are falling under the watchful eye of the Inland Revenue and, unfortunately, the NELPG has not escaped. For over 12 months the Treasurer has been in correspondence with the Inland Revenue Claims Branch for Trusts and Charities. During this period we have been very fortunate in receiving help from David Morgan, Legal Advisor to the ARPS, and one of our members, Ian Gibson, who is a solicitor practising in London. Ian's contribution, enthusiasm and support has been considerable in our 'hours of need'!

The Inland Revenue's first concern was our claim for repayment of income tax deducted in respect of subscriptions paid under Deed of Covenant, which is under challenge because of the benefits our members receive in financial terms. The principal benefit is the reduced fare travel on the NYMR. The NYMHRT, faced with similar difficulties with the IR, were able to reach a settlement following changes in IR legislation in the 1989 Finance Act under Section 59(3)(a). Our negotiations with the IR are continuing.

The second IR concern is that of locomotive hire, which they regard as "trading". Although we have explained that loco maintenance is a 7 year cycle and that we have separate funds for each locomotive which should rise to cover the next major overhaul that may cost up to £100,000, they do not accept the deferred maintenance fund principle. The IR consider that if a loco earns more income than the corresponding expenditure in any one year, then this is regarded as "profit" and subject to Corporation Tax.

These two problems are not new to the steam preservation movement and we are indebted to Graham Perry, Chairman of the Great Western Society at Didcot for helpful assistance. They, in similar difficulties with the IR two years ago, established a separate trading company that covenanted all profits to the charity. The mechanics of the relationship between the trading company and the charity are quite complex and when established the Group's Treasurer would have considerable additional paperwork, and just to stay as we are now financially.

At the Group's main committee meeting on 11th November it was agreed, following the advice of our solicitor Ian Gibson, to set up a subsidiary trading company, wholly owned and controlled by the Group, to take care of the loco hire and other trading activities and to covenant all its profits to the Group. Such a move, we believe, would be acceptable to the Inland Revenue.



60532 accelerates away from Petterill Bridge Junction, Carlisle and passes the site of Durran Hill MPD on the left, on 20th June 1992 (John Hunt).



901 heads a rake of coal hoppers past Moorgates in an almost timeless scene but actually taken on 4th October 1992 (David Warren).



2005 crosses the Caledonian Canal at Banavie on 16th August 1992 (John Hunt).



673 Maude makes a dramatic exit from Bo'ness with a pick up freight train for Kinneil on 8th November 1992 (John Hunt).

The principal decisions made by the committee were:-

1. The subsidiary trading company would be called "NELPG Enterprises Limited".
2. The board of directors of this subsidiary company would comprise the same individuals who are members of the committee of the Group which, by rotation, is elected by the membership at the Group's AGM. THE MEMBERSHIP IS THEREFORE ASSURED OF RETAINING ABSOLUTE POWER OF CONTROL. This system is established and works well for other railway charitable companies.
3. The new company must be in operation by 31st December 1992, the end of our financial year and the main committee has formed a sub-committee of Maurice Burns, Peter J. Robinson, Paul Hutchinson and Bill Dobson to finalise all matters with our solicitor Ian Gibson, prior to main committee approval.
4. A meeting was to be established with the Inland Revenue in London, to clarify all matters on 8th December 1992.

We are advised that existing powers of the NELPG committee allow it to proceed with these proposals without an EGM of the membership and since NELPG Enterprises Ltd will not be a registered charity, the Memorandum and Articles of Association do not need approval of the Charity Commissioners. With the help of Ian Gibson, who is generously providing his services free of charge, we will hopefully have in place by 31st December 1992:-

1. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of NELPG Enterprises Ltd.
2. A licence agreement between NELPG and NELPG Enterprises Ltd.
3. A Deed of Covenant between NELPG Enterprises Ltd. and NELPG.

The above brief explanation clearly shows that time is of the essence. Members can rest assured that the committee, with the help of our solicitor Ian Gibson, will be doing everything within its powers to find an amicable settlement with the Inland Revenue that will ultimately benefit our locomotives.

--oo0oo--

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING - 12TH FEBRUARY 1993

Notice is hereby given that a special general meeting will be held at The Ladle Hotel, Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough at 19.15 on Friday 12th February 1993 for the following purposes:-

- (i) Apologies for absence
- (ii) That members authorise the overhaul of the Group's P3 0-6-0 No.2392 at an estimated cost of £60,000.

As reported in this issue of the NEWS the P3 is due for a major overhaul, costing in the region of £60,000, which could be commenced in the spring of 1993 and take between 12 and 18 months to complete, thus maintaining the Group's presence at ICI Wilton during 1993/4.

A member entitled to attend and vote may appoint a proxy to vote in his or her stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Group. Any member wishing to appoint a proxy must sign a form worded in accordance with paragraph 33 of the Articles of Association (proxy forms are available from the Secretary, Paul Hutchinson, at 14 Coniston Road, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland, TS18 4PX if required), which should reach the Group's registered office c/o Mitchells, 117 Jesmond Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 1NW not less than 48 hours before the special meeting. Members attending the meeting will be required to show a VALID membership card.

--oo0oo--

1993 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 1993 NELPG annual general meeting will be held at The Ladle Hotel, Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough at 19.30 on Friday 14th May 1993.

The Articles of Association provide for the rotation of the committee membership by the compulsory retirement of each committee member at the end of the third year following their election onto the committee. Any retiring member may apply for immediate re-election if he so wishes; the members retiring at the 1993 AGM are P.G. Hutchinson, P.J. Robinson and D. Whitfield.

In accordance with the Articles of Association any corporate member i.e. not a junior member, of the Group may apply for committee membership. Any nomination for election should reach the secretary on or before 19th March 1993. Each nomination should be signed by the nominee and a proposer, both of whom must be fully paid up members of the NELPG. The following details of the nominee should also be provided: full name and address, date of birth, any existing directorships, and vocation or profession.

--oo0oo--

SALES REPORT

Colin Hatton

Sales of the Blue Peter video have gone extremely well and exceeded expectations, to the extent that we have ordered a further batch from the suppliers.

It must be said that people who have taken the trouble to write back to me have been thoroughly delighted with the video, and phrases like "the best yet" sum up the reaction. After all it is not every video that can boast the thrill of the sights and sounds of a high speed footplate ride.

Whilst I would like to thank the many members who have responded so positively to our pink order form, I do urge those who have not, to do so quickly to avoid disappointment. I would also take this opportunity to confirm the availability of the 'Stirling Departure' prints and 'North Eastern Renaissance', so please get your order forms filled in and returned to me as soon as possible!

--oo0oo--

1993 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Peter Robinson

Memberships are due for renewal at the end of the year and a form for this purpose is enclosed with this issue of the NEWS. Please note, however, that the membership rates have increased.

As subscriptions have remained at the same level since 1988 they will be increased for 1993 as follows:-

Junior member/OAP - £4.00
Ordinary member - £10.00
Husband and wife - £12.00
Life membership - £150.00

It has always been our policy to cover the administrative expenses of the Group from the membership subscriptions, and it is interesting to note that in 1988 the amount raised by the subscriptions and the refunded tax under the covenants

scheme, totalled E5,077, and our expenses were E4,446. Last year subscriptions and tax relief amounted to £4,553, while our expenses totalled £8,238, which included an exceptional amount of £739 in respect of legal expenses in connection with the setting up of the limited company. This trend has continued into 1992 and we hope that members will understand the reason for the substantial rise. We are reluctant to raise the amount too regularly to avoid complications in respect of the covenanted subscriptions.

As already reported, we are still involved with the Inland Revenue as to whether or not membership subscriptions qualify for tax relief, but we hope for a ruling after the meeting on 8th December.

In the meanwhile we have not processed the claim for the 1992 subscriptions. However, donations to the Group are not affected and therefore any sums covenanted in excess of the subscription or by way of donation, will still produce a benefit to the Group in respect of the tax reclaimable. Unfortunately as this NEWS has been produced before the outcome of the 8th December meeting is known, we will advise members of the decision in the February 1993 NEWS. We are not sure how many members avail themselves of the preferential rate travel on the NYMR and it may well be that if this concession is not widely used, it would be sensible to allow it to lapse to enable us to reclaim tax on covenanted subscriptions without difficulty. It would be helpful, therefore, if any member who values and regularly uses the privilege fare scheme on the NYMR could let me know, as this will give some indication as to how regularly it is used and by how many members.

This will be the last note that I write in my capacity as Membership Secretary, since the time pressures resulting from the complication of the Group's finances due to the need to establish a separate trading company, mean that I feel I that will not be able to do justice to both the Group Treasurership and the responsibilities of Membership Secretary. In these circumstances I have been extremely pleased that Colin Smith of Houghton-le-Spring has kindly agreed to take over the Membership Secretary's role and he will in future, handle all membership matters including renewal of subscriptions for 1993 and changes of address. His address is :-

Mr. Colin Smith,
32 Woodlea,
Houghton-le-Spring,
Tyne and Wear,
DH5 8HT.

--oo0oo--

The weekend of 7th/8th November saw NELPG in action at locations over 400 miles apart. Whilst the K1 2005 was returning from a highly successful season in the Highlands of Scotland where it had worked virtually continuously since July, the A2 60523 'Blue Peter' was showing off on the Great Central Railway, Loughborough, at a gala weekend.

It would be difficult to think of two more differing operations. The tortuous West Highland line and its extension to Mallaig, reminiscent of the childhood train set when the shortage of straight sections of track meant joining together all the curved sections in alternate right and left hand sweeps just to reach the far corner of the sitting room carpet, has the gradients and rugged scenery. Whereas the Great Central might have been carved out of the rural scene by laser. And the steepest gradient is 1:300.

The two locomotives are very different of course, The K1 was probably stretched to its very limits giving its all (with copious doses of sand administered externally, we're told) for the professional crews of Fort William who know the loco well, whereas the A2 was like a team of frisky horses bursting to shake off the traces and show its vast reserves of power to a dozen volunteer enginemen unfamiliar with its few foibles.

Whilst everyone who is anyone seemed to be involved in the not inconsiderable task of preparing the K1 and our support coach for the journey home from the summer work-camp, three little fishes, Derek Shorten, Bob Battison and I were representing the NELPG on the GCR. We were well received and well looked after, indeed it is quite amusing to observe the respect that the NELPG seems to engender. When we first reported to the shed office and were asked -"Can I help you?" the tone of voice suggested that an invalid reply would be met by a -...Well push off out of here then-. But when we said we were from the NELPG, it was caps doffed, forelocks- touched and -There's a pot of tea on the go - the loco's about ready for you-.

Having arrived just before nine on the Saturday morning there wasn't time to do anything before the loco was off shed for the 10 o'clock start. So we introduced ourselves to the crew and sorted out who would ride first. Being on the third run at 2pm I offered my services to do some cleaning. I was put on the Jubilee 5593 'Kolhapur' with a young lass who seemed to resent any assistance. She never smiled once and after three attempts to strike up a friendly conversation I gave up, I think she thought I was trying to chat her up. Rest assured sweetie I've more in common with old boilers than some young firebox!

Whilst I was being given the bum's rush Bob and Derek had been riding the footplate. Maurice Burns was particularly keen for these two to get a ride because they had been unable to get SLOA cards and had thus missed out on the main line rewards for their services. Bob's face when he descended from the cab was an absolute picture - reward indeed.

Running on the Saturday was the first of the 'Windcutter' trains. Contributors to the Windcutter scheme have bought a number of 16ton mineral wagons to revive memories of the days when coal was carried on the GCR in vast quantities. A rake of about 30 had been assembled for the event, all in genuine filthy condition, and they looked the part. The only thing was that they were all vacuum fitted so the characteristic clanking and snatching was minimal. Bob managed a ride on the loco - to his delight.

My turn to ride the A2 was at the head of the private charter train for the Windcutter subscribers. We had some lively running from Loughborough

to Quorn Woodhouse (50 mph+) and stops for everyone to de-train and take photographs of the GWR 2-8-0 no 5224 hauling its train of empties back to some long closed colliery (not a dry eye around). There was also a buffet laid on in the directors' saloon which had been over catered for. So the footplate crew were invited to dig in. Smoked salmon vol-au-vents washed down with stewed tea from a brew can - different!

The evening train was a photographers special starting with poses. on shed, of Blue Peter, the Bulleid pacifics 35028 'Clan Line' and 34039 'Boscastle'. The latter had moved under its own power for the first time in 27 years that very afternoon. I then realised how rude and intolerant some photographers can become. Rather like collectors of birds eggs who don't give a damn if the species becomes extinct in the pursuit of their hobby.

We then moved on to the train in the station and waited again for 30 mins whilst floodlit photos were taken. I became a little more tolerant when I was asked to pose in place of the fireman because he was too busy! All this waiting, and the desire to avoid nuisance to the local residents by blowing off safety valves resulted in a rather full boiler over a healthy fire. We set off and the second we went under the road bridge along side the station buildings, the safety valve lifted (what seems a very much more noisy experience than with the Kl,) and then the loco primed. The cab filled with steam and hot black water ejected off the bridge underside and parapet, I became totally disorientated (and filthy). The cylinder drain cocks were opened immediately to prevent damage but this only added to the cacophony because by this time the loco was slipping as well (and everyone was shouting at everyone else). I wouldn't say I was frightened but I was glad I had packed a spare pair of underpants.

Once things settled down the rest of the evening was highly successful, except that is, for our attempts to sell the latest Blue Peter videos. Bob and Derek hawked them the full length of the train but couldn't sell one. Everyone was too busy taking their own pictures to want to buy someone else's. I managed, at the turn round, to jump the queue in the buffet car to get the crew a can of lemonade. All the photographers were most obliging. (Salt of the earth those chaps). The day ended at 11pm with just time to get sausage and chips from the chippy to take up to our hotel bedrooms, to accompany our efforts on the 'Teasmade'. The restaurants and pubs were all shut and our hotel didn't have a bar. The NELPG image was in serious jeopardy!

On the Sunday morning we arrived in time to give the green goddess a wash and polish but we had forgotten the detergent. NELPG prefers not to clean with oil and paraffin, so we used the only thing to hand, my macho shower gel. The A2 looked - and smelled - great. We again took turns to ride but when it came to my go, a gentleman turned up with a letter from Maurice Burns, backed up with a footplate pass for the midday run. I wasn't terribly thrilled at having to climb down and perhaps it showed. I thought he was just one of Maurice's cronies. When I got home Maurice explained that a Mr Stretch had had a bit of a raw deal with the group over his video and the footplate ride was by way of compensation. Sorry Mr Stretch, If I'd known I would have been more welcoming. Actually I think a footplate ride beats a video every time. I hope you had as good a day as we all did.

Bob had managed to get a blanket footplate pass for any two of the three of us to ride on Clan Line provided there were no more than four up there at any one time. This was spoiled a bit by one bloke who turned up, dressed in footplate bib and brace overalls etc, with a previously arranged pass for Clan Line. He struck up a conversation with us when he saw Derek's clean ICI boilersuit. -I did 29 years with them', he told us, so I gazumped him with my 39 years. He said he now worked in

the prison service and asked me if I had got my cap whilst I was in prison. (I was beginning to dislike him). He said that he had given up a ride on Princess Maggie Rose, at Butterley, to ride on Clan Line. And I wouldn't ride on that thing", (pointing to our beloved A2) because I fired them when I worked for BR". He was one of those people with a working life of 70 years, one felt.

It was then that I noticed that he had left his flies undone. Not just a discreet zip at the wrong end of its travel, the full 'egg-on-the-chin' with buttons standing out like sunflowers in a window-box. Would 'Fletch' have told Mr McKay? I thought not, so I let him waddle across the platform totally oblivious, with him thinking that the kids were pointing to his greasetop cap - but I knew differently. Justice!

We met plenty of other characters. When we first arrived we had difficulty locating the famous Barry 'eff-ing' Gambol. I approached several people who were using fairly colourful language, one even named Barry but I didn't meet up with him for some time. When we did meet there was no mistaking him. A very pleasant and friendly character who maintained that the A2 was the best machine ever to be on that shed (expletives deleted). Mind you he must have been off form because he was eclipsed by Mr Alan 'even more eff-ing' Grice, the resident engineer of considerable proportions. He was another genuine, down to earth, type who had a lot of good points to make but made them at such close range and high volume as to lose all the points of argument. I was warned not to encourage conversation at meal times, especially if he was eating fruit.

The NYMR managerial crisis of this summer is nothing to what Alan Grice reckons is simmering below the surface at Loughborough. He went on at great length about the station buffet being closed on the Saturday when the place was swarming with photographers. -All they want to do is photograph trains and swill beer ...and the ****ing bar's shut!"

We sampled the skills of about 6 different loco crews. Of the dozen men, only two, one driver and one fireman, had ridden the A2 before. The driver in question was the best of the lot. He knew what he had charge of. He eased the big beast into action without fuss or fireworks but gave us some sparkling running. I didn't manage a ride with the fireman but he commented that it made his shoulders ache shovelling into the back corners of the firebox. The best fireman I witnessed always seemed to have the water level at just over half a glass and only had the safety valves lift once, (and then it was because he was talking to me over a can of tea at the Leicester North turnround). But he couldn't get the hang of the flap firehole door. (I promised not to tell anyone). The remainder were a little frightened that they might run out of steam - or so it seemed to me. They seemed to be preparing for a 250 mile non-stop run, either that or they thought they were on a class 4 about to tackle 5 miles of 1 in 49. One guy, a Geordie would you believe, said it was just like the N2! and promptly set about emptying the tender into the firebox so safety valves lifted most of the time. -What a kettle, what a kettle-, was all he could say. Mind you, all the crews praised the loco and its condition, (NELPG is the creme de la creme!), and we three certainly enjoyed a splendid weekend as much as they obviously did.

Oh and why the title for this article? A representative from the National Railway Museum was visiting the railway and had brought a couple of train headboards for use on the Saturday night. The one chosen for Blue Peter to carry on the photo special had never been used since the end of BR steam and was the 'Night Scotsman'. It looked nice but it would have been no less appropriate, on the same evening, hammering up the side of Loch Long to finally breast the summit at Glen Douglas!

--0o0o0--

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday 11th December 1992: CHRISTMAS EXTRAGANZA. The usual auction of railwayana, slide auction and merriment!

Monday 28th, Tuesday 29th, Wednesday 30th December 1992: BLUE PETER in action on the Great Central Railway.

Friday 8th January 1993: A LOOK AROUND NORTH EASTERN RAILWAYS by John Midcalf, using slides from the Armstrong collection.

Saturday 16th January 1993: BLUE PETER northbound over the Settle and Carlisle line.

Saturday 30th January 1993: BLUE PETER southbound over the Settle and Carlisle line.

Friday 12th February 1993: THE DEVELOPMENT OF DARLINGTON NORTH ROAD RAILWAY MUSEUM AND EXHIBITS by Steven Dyke.

Saturday 6th March 1993: BLUE PETER RAILTOUR both ways over the Settle and Carlisle line (see text for details)

Friday 12th March 1993: PRESERVED STEAM IN AUSTRALIA by Bob Raine, featuring preservation societies and steam on the main line. (TO BE CONFIRMED).

Friday 16th April 1993: NORTH EAST RAILWAYS by Chris Hogg, Chief Photographer at the National Railway Museum, York.

Friday 14th May 1993: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by a slide show reviewing the highlights of the NELPG year.

Meetings held at 19.30 in the large upstairs room at The Ladle Hotel, Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough.

--oo0oo--

COVER PICTURES

Front: Bo'ness on Sunday 8th November 1992; 1. to r. are 673 Maude, 44871, 2005 and a Barclay 0-4-0ST.

Back (top): 60532 in the classic setting at Baron Wood, with the River Eden to the left and the Pennine hills beyond on 13th June 1992.

Back (bottom): 2005 crosses the River Spean between Spean Bridge and Roy Bridge on 7th November 1992 (all John Hunt).

