



Photo:

K1 2-6-0 62005 climbs out of Stanhope in Weardale with the S.L.S. Tees-side Centre "Three Dales Rail Tour," on 20th May, 1967.

M. S. Burns.

The Three Dales Rail Tour

by P. W. B. Semmens, M.A.

Organisers of rail tours are used to solving knotty problems but the Tees-side Centre was faced with a rather alarming headache exactly a week before the Three Dales Rail Tour was run on Saturday, 20th May, this year. The route included the short length of the Catterick Military Railway and the usual indemnification had been given to the Defence Land Agent well beforehand. However, with 7 days to go, the organisers were suddenly told that they must insure against third party risks to a minimum of £100,000. Some hectic telephoning enabled cover for £500,000 to be secured inside the short period available and the special dully made its 3¾-mile journey each way along the Military Railway on the Saturday afternoon.

The Tour started at Stockton at 10.17 and the six coach train arrived in fine style behind K1. No. 62005, running through the station before

setting back into the northbound platform for passengers to join. This locomotive is almost by way of being the North Eastern Region's "Royal Engine." Its previous duty prior to the Three Dales Rail Tour was to provide heating for the Royal Train at Durham on Maundy Thursday when the Queen attended the impressive service in the cathedral. It also apparently was the locomotive concerned in another similar working in May, 1960, when it drew the Royal Train on to the North Yorkshire and Cleveland line at Picton to spend the night. On that occasion, although her speed was extremely low, when the brakes were applied the train abruptly stopped and spilt some of the royal talcum powder. The locomotive had also been involved with previous rail tours, having partnered *The Great Marquess* on the SLS/MLS Whitby Moors Rail Tour in March, 1965, and was subsequently scheduled to work the same Societies' "Ashington Tour" from Newcastle onwards in June, 1967. She was immaculately polished up for the Three Dales Rail Tour, and John Bellwood, the Divisional Traction Engineer at Newcastle, a member of the Society, travelled on the locomotive throughout.

The intention had been to start the tour at Saint John's Crossing in Stockton, the original passenger terminus of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, but the absence of platforms prevented this and similarly the termination of the tour at Middlesbrough Goods Station. Originally it was only expected to fill three coaches, but eventually applications were such that the maximum of six was taken and all told there were 310 passengers aboard the train, including Press and BBC representatives.

From Stockton the Leeds Northern Line was followed to Northallerton and the K1 did not run too well on this section, dropping four minutes. Speed on the 1 in 170 bank up to Picton was only 36 m.p.h., and in the front coach, at any rate, a very marked GWR characteristic was noted in the form of some fore-and-aft motion.

At Northallerton came the first of the seven reversals that took place during the day and a BR/Sulzer Type 2 No. D5160 came on to what had become the rear of the train. The next section of line to be covered was the Wensleydale Branch, now only in existence as far as Redmire where the crossing loop was not long enough to accommodate six coaches. The use of a second engine was therefore necessary for the operation at the end of the line and it was therefore decided to make use of the extra tractive effort for the whole of the journey up Wensleydale. A maximum speed of 25 m.p.h. was applied to the special over the branch, which is now only used by limestone trains, some of which were passed at Leyburn in both directions. The weather, which for the week previous to the tour had been very miserable in the North East, had turned out fine, although there were some showers about at intervals during the day. For most of the time, however, the conditions were excellent for photographers, many of whom pursued the train during its trip. The spring greenery in the dales could be appreciated to the full, and the sunshine caused No. 62005 to sparkle in her excellent external condition, in marked contrast to the diesel box of tricks which was coupled behind her for the return journey down the Dale. Approaching the East Coast line once more, the Castle Hill curve was taken to enable the train to run straight to Darlington. The two locomotives did not produce anything sparkling in the way of performance on the main line, with a maximum of little over 40 m.p.h. so that the scheduled seven minutes from passing Eryholme to stopping at Darlington was not achieved by nearly two minutes.

At Darlington the diesel came off and the K1 ran round once more before the train set off southwards, retracing its route to Eryholme Junction where it diverged on to the Richmond Branch, 14 minutes late. The high-light of the tour—the Catterick Military Railway—was now approaching and the train stopped at Catterick Bridge station for the locomotive to run round and then propel the stock under the bridge carrying the A1, before running forward again on to the Military Railway. After a brief halt in the loop in the Goods yard, No. 62005 set off up the bank in great style. Immediately after crossing the Swale, the line climbs for 1½ miles at 1 in 50 and the K1 tackled this excellently, much to the delight of recording enthusiasts on the train as well as those in cars on the road alongside. Five minutes were saved on the schedule to Camp Centre station and another three minutes on one of the typically-smart running-round operations that occurred during the day. The section back to Catterick Bridge was also covered well under schedule and the frequent full application of the vacuum brake testified to the steepness of the line which in 1917 had caused a loaded train of seven coaches to run away with fatal results. After a short pause at Catterick Bridge, the train continued to Richmond, which, after the run-round, was left only three minutes late. Then came a very fast trip down the branch with a maximum of 51 m.p.h. and Eryholme Junction was passed on time.

At the time the tour was originally planned, it was thought there would not be water at Darlington or Bishop Auckland, and it was consequently intended to change to diesel power for the journey up Weardale. Fortunately, however, the Civil Engineer had not removed these facilities and about a fortnight before the tour it was learnt that we could continue with steam. The K1 duly filled its tender at the column south of Bank Top station, and we were away up the last of the Three Dales. Beyond Bishop Auckland, where only freight traffic now runs, we were again limited to a maximum of 25 m.p.h. and three great storms swept down from the west to swell the rushing muddy waters of the Wear which flowed alongside us for most of the journey. So bright was the sun, however, between the showers, that multiple rainbows could be seen from the train arching across the valley. Beyond Stanhope there was a stop to open the gates at Unthank Level Crossing and the train continued over the last stretch past the cement works at Eastgate to the present terminal station at Westgate. Here the start of a heavy shower coincided with the train's arrival, but the locomotive only took 8 minutes to run round compared with the 15 booked, and the special was away early on its way back down the dale. After taking water at Bishop Auckland, it was able to get in to the main line platform at Darlington 7 minutes before time, thus giving the refreshment staff more time to alight with their equipment, but even so we were then delayed on the journey to Eaglescliffe by the 1845 DMU for Saltburn.

An extra stop had been arranged at Eaglescliffe to set down passengers for the Northallerton connection, and at Stockton Cut the special diverged on to the goods lines to make its way along the north side of Tees Yards to Middlesbrough, crossing back to the passenger lines after passing the Newport Bridge at “472 Points,” as specified in the Special Advice. The slow running on this section made the final arrival 6 minutes late but even so gave a connection with the Newcastle DMU for those who wanted it. The railway authorities, however, kindly arranged for the special, which was due to work back to Newcastle as empty stock, to take those passengers who had ordinary tickets. Over 60 participants were thus able to make what

might be their last steam-hauled passenger journey all the way up the coast. The train was away 2 minutes late from Stockton, but 8 early into Newcastle, with stops at Hartlepool and Sunderland. The 41¾ miles thus only took the standard diesel time of 1 hour 16 minutes. The diesel schedule includes several more stops, but has a shorter approach to Newcastle Central across the High Level rather than the King Edward Bridge. Writing three weeks later, John Bellwood said that he still had the bruises to support the rough riding characteristics of a K1 at speed !

This conclusion to the tour was much appreciated, and was typical of the courteous and efficient way in which the railway authorities organised and carried out this special working.