



B1 NEWS

Newsletter of the Thompson B1 Locomotive Trust

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61264 returns to the main line



After an absence of many years, 61264 made a welcome return to the main line when on 10th January 2014 it completed a successful loaded test run around the "Carnforth Loop". The train, consisting of 9 coaches and a class 47 diesel, is seen passing Wennington on the outward leg of the run. Photo courtesy of Ken Woolley.

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Operations report

Dave Horton

December and January turned out to be rather busy, as the photos in this edition of B1 News will testify.

Preparations for our mainline loaded proving run began almost as soon as formal approval was granted by the committee on 2nd November.

On the engineering front, Steve Andrews, Steve Robb, Mark O'Brien and Dave Fowler, ably assisted by the staff at Grosmont MPD, had to pull out all the stops in order to complete the loco's winter maintenance in rather shorter a time than was desirable. The main jobs were a piston and valve exam, a pad exam, a boiler washout, a cold and hot inspection, and several sundry jobs. All these had to be completed in order to satisfy the loco's Vehicle Acceptance man, Wayne Jones, that we were fit to venture out on to the main line. Not to mention getting the support coach ready.

On the support crew front, the logistics of travel, accommodation and catering had to be established. It's not so bad when you're starting and finishing in the same place, but on this occasion we would be leaving Grosmont and ending up at Bury, going via Carnforth, in what was essentially a three-day epic adventure.

Come the time of the test run, the support crew mustered at York station around 11.30 on Wednesday 8th January, having travelled from various parts of the UK by train. With thanks to Dave Wellington, who provided and drove the minibus, we were then carried forward to Grosmont, arriving mid-afternoon. This was the first lesson learned – need to turn up earlier in future, because with the light fading and the rain setting in, there wasn't a lot of time to prepare.

Whilst Dave went off to do the food shopping, the rest of us cleaned and prepared the loco and support coach, gathered together various tools and equipment and did the Fitness to Run (FTR) exam. Around 18.45 the loco, having been oiled up, was coaled, attached to the support coach, booked off-shed and taken down to the station. The reason for doing this the night before was to avoid the risk of delay in the morning, if for any reason the signalman was held up somewhere. Getting delayed on the National Network is no problem as long as it's not our fault!

At the station we came across our first unexpected challenge. All the carriage filling hoses, with which we had planned to keep the tender topped up overnight, had been locked away for the winter. We eventually found a hose behind one of the sheds, but, Sod's Law, the diameter was too small to fit our tender filling 'stepped cone'. So Mark and I went off to the shed to knock up a couple of adaptor lengths with larger hose and jubilee clips.

After a damp night (the rain never stopped), we woke up to the news that a Network Rail Engineering possession had overrun on the Battersby – Grosmont section. All we could do was to wait. We were due to leave at 07.50. In the event the phone call from Network Rail came and we finally got the nod about 09.30, but with the caveat, “could we pick up some passengers?” In agreeing to this the penny initially failed to drop. ‘Passengers’ was just assumed to mean a couple of Network Rail employees, but it soon became clear that passengers meant passengers, fare-paying passengers!

And so with no small amount of excitement we cleared two compartments ready for Joe Public to use and set off from Grosmont towards Battersby and Middlesborough, looking out for stranded victims at each lonely station along the way. Of course we had to change the headlamps to indicate our new found status as a ‘Class 1 passenger train’.

To our disappointment though, it wasn’t until Nunthorpe, the place where we crossed with the Northern Rail sprinter, that anybody got on. Five people, in fact, of which three hadn’t actually planned to go to Middlesborough in the first place. Still, it may not have affected many people, and it certainly wasn’t the first time such a thing has happened, but it made for a good story on our first trip out, “Steam train rescues Northern Rail passengers” etc. It even got Steam Railway magazine talking about whether a British ‘Plandamp’ could take place on a line such as the Esk Valley.



*With the headlamps changed to now denote an ordinary passenger train, 61264 stands at Nunthorpe with the 9.07 am Grosmont to Middlesborough service on 9th January.
Photo courtesy of Mark O'Brien.*



*Some of the passengers seen enjoying the free upgrade to steam-hauled first class accommodation and the refreshments provided by our "on board catering services". Perhaps a little different from the normal Northern Rail DMU.
Photo courtesy of Mark O'Brien.*

The light engine + coach move continued without further incident. Stopping at York NRM for water, we eventually arrived at Carnforth around 20.00, parked up, cleaned up, had dinner and after a brief rendezvous in the lounge of the Royal Station Hotel, it was off to bed. Don't be fooled in the name by the way – it's hardly Royal, although you do pay royally for it.

The next day, Friday 10th January, we were up early again to clean and FTR the loco and the loaded test run was completed successfully on the 'Carnforth circuit'. With nine coaches and a diesel 'on', 61264's mettle was tested on the banks east of Carnforth and around Langho. She was finally able to stretch her legs going through Lancaster on the West Coast Mainline, reaching a speed of 73.4mph, just shy of the maximum permitted 75mph but good enough. Despite the weather plenty of photographers turned up for the occasion and we must thank all of those who recorded it for posterity, even more so, those who were willing to send us copies of their photos.

Upon arrival back at Carnforth that evening a few adjustments were made on the advice of John Graham and Wayne Jones, such as tightening up the driver's spectacle plate (window) which had kept coming open, then after turning, cleaning the fire, watering and some shunting, we were off down to Bury light engine and coach again. The run down the West Coast Mainline in the dark at speed was magical. Creeping through the centre of Manchester, we could look down from our elevated position at the nightlife below. Most people were oblivious to our presence.



The test train is seen powering through Keer Holme on the outward leg of the proving run on 10th January 2014. Photo courtesy of Gerald Nicholl.



Having taken on water, 61264 sets off from Hellifield on the outbound leg of the proving run, 10th January 2014. Photo courtesy of John Whiteley.

By the time we had arrived at the East Lancs Railways (ELR), finished with the loco and signed off shed, the majority of us heading for the nearest Travelodge, it was gone midnight. You need to be tolerant of long days if you're going to be on the support crew!

On the morning of Saturday 11th January, we made our way leisurely back to the ELR after a good night's sleep. Here we were met with the unprecedented sight of a dozen or more cleaners all working on the loco at once. Clearly they were keen to get stuck in but the approach is quite a contrast from that at Grosmont. Starting from 11.00 we showed the footplate crews and cleaners round the loco. Thanks again to Steve Andrews, Steve Robb and Mark for giving up their time to do this.



Capturing the impression of speed 61264 is seen on the East Lancs Railway on 19th January 2014. Photo courtesy of John Marriot.

Sunday 12th was the loco's first day of revenue-earning service on the ELR and since then she has worked 8 days including 2 days at the Winter Gala, 2 days of Footplate Experience and 1 day on a Photo Charter. The ELR have looked after the engine exceptionally well and the loco has repaid them with 100% reliability. The many compliments we received from staff and volunteers at the ELR, as well as the warmth and professionalism of their welcome, made the visit well worthwhile. Enormous thanks must go to Mark, again, for having been present as 'Owners Rep' on every single day that the loco was in steam. It's no mean feat considering that he lives in North Yorkshire.

The final and perhaps most notable event of the last 6 weeks was being asked by the Railway Touring Company to deputise for one of Ian Riley's Black 5s on the double-headed 'Winter Cumbrian Mountain Express' from Manchester to Carlisle and back. This took place on Saturday 25th January with 61264 leading 45407 at the head of the 13-coach train. We certainly didn't expect to be taking on Shap and the Settle and Carlisle in the same day on our first proper main line outing, but take them on we did, and as the photos will testify, the outcome was most pleasing. The only downside of having to step in at such short notice was that we didn't have time to issue a Newsflash for members, but I hope you'll understand.



*Double heading with 45407 the pair are seen at Grayrigg on 25th January 2014.
Photo courtesy of Peter Van Campenhout.*



The bleakness of the Cumberland Fells is seen to good effect as the pair climb towards Shap under leaden skies. Photo courtesy of Henry Elliott.

Looking ahead, the loco has now returned to the NYMR in preparation for operating their February half-term services, followed by the start of the main season at the beginning of April. There is now a bit of time to breathe again. But at the end of March, we have two railtours coming up:

- The **Esk Valley** – Saturday 22nd March: Top-and-tailed by 61264 and K4 class 2-6-0 No. 61994 “The Great Marquess”. Current plan is that the K4 takes it from York, B1 comes on at Tees Yard, and the formation is top-and-tailed via Middlesbrough and Battersby to Whitby and back. B1 will come off at Darlington and will then return to NYMR. Prices start from £79 adult standard fare.
- The **Wansbeck** – Saturday 29th March. Top-and-tailed by 61264 and K1 class 2-6-0 No. 62005. Picking up and setting down at Newcastle only, *“This unusual rail tour covers parts of Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland. It passes through rural and coastal scenic areas including Wansbeck, named after the river in Northumberland. It travels along routes with an interesting history, some of which are open for freight only.”* Prices start from £89 adult standard fare.

Details of both railtours can be found on the Railway Touring Company’s website, under ‘UK Day Trips’ or by phoning them on 01553 661500.

We also have another Members’ Day coming up at the NYMR, on Saturday 12th April (see separate article in this Newsletter for details of how to apply). The exact times of our ‘special train’ are still to be confirmed, but the format of the day will be the same as last year, with freedom of the line for TBLT members, so put the date in your diary.

Naturally we expect that the loco will be spending most of the main season at the NYMR working hard to beat last year’s record of 12279 miles, but there may be one or two mainline runs in the summer and we’ll try to keep you posted as best we can.

Finally, I would just like to take this opportunity to thank every member of the support crew for the hard work they’ve put in over the last couple of months in preparing and then executing our return to the mainline. They are the ‘core team’ of engineers in Steve Andrews, Steve Robb, Mark O’Brien and Dave Fowler. Then there is Neil Snuggs, Paul Kaufman, Jeff Price, Alf Bousie and Steve Kirk – always willing to get stuck in with whatever they’re asked to do. Also to Dave Wellington and his wife Terri for their logistical support. And last but not least, the superb catering team: John and Jean Whitfield and Brenda Mitchell. Thanks to you all!

Obituary – John Tardif

We were saddened to receive the news that John died on 17th December 2013.

John joined the Trust in July 1980 and recently had made a donation of £100 to the Trust. He had suffered poor health for a number of years but always followed the comings and goings of 61264 with great interest.

Having been born in Nottingham in 1944, he will have been familiar with Colwick B1s at Nottingham Victoria.

Our condolences go to John’s family and friends for their loss.

The continuing story of 61264's chimney

Alf Bousie

Following the piece in the last newsletter about the donation to the Trust of the chimney off "Impala" we have been contacted by Roger Barnes who has been able to provide the missing information regarding the origins of the existing chimney on 61264. Roger recalls that...

*"The chimney (and safety valves) at present fitted to 61264 came from **61262**. This is the chimney and petticoat that the society recovered from Charlie Roads' yard near Royston in the late 1970's.*

Charlie was one of the original members of the B1 Society (61306). He had a road haulage business and owned a collection of old Foden lorries plus about twenty traction engines/rollers in various states of repair.

It was whilst he was on a visit to a scrapyard near Rotherham looking for traction engine parts that he found 61262 being cut up so he decided to bring back a few items that were still available. These included the chimney, safety valves, dome cover, some washout doors and a combination lever. The items were intended as spares for 61306 but the ownership of this loco changed and he subsequently offered them to us. I was one of the party that recovered these items from Charlie's yard".

Many thanks to Roger for providing this additional information.



At the end of its turn, 61264 stands outside the shed at the East Lancs Railway on 17th January 2014. Photo courtesy of John Crawshaw.



61264 has proved to be a very popular loco on the East Lancs Railway both with the operating staff and enthusiasts. She is seen crossing the Brooksbottom Viaduct on 19th January 2014 during the Winter Steam Gala. Photo courtesy of Ken Snowdon.



Framed by the overhanging branches of an oak tree 61264 takes part in a photo charter on 17th January 2014. Photo courtesy of John Crawshaw.

TBLT Members' Day

Dave Horton

As mentioned, this year's TBLT Members' Day will take place on Saturday 12th April at the NYMR. Exact times of 'our train' are still to be confirmed, but the format of the day will be the same as last year, with 61264 hauling one round trip where there will be a number of carriages reserved exclusively for our use, and freedom of the line for TBLT members.

As before, if you want to come, all you'll need is an invitation letter from the Trust.

To apply, please drop me a note to say:

- a) How many people you want to bring (there is practically no limit – invite your friends and family)
- b) To whom I should send the contact letter: specific postal address(es) or e-mail address(es) please.

You can communicate this information to me either by e-mail, preferred (operations@thompsonb1.org) or by post:

Dave Horton
TBLT Members' Day
8 Leighton Way
Belper
Derbyshire
DE56 1SX

Please make sure you get your requests to me no later than Monday 31st March.



*61264 and support coach pass through Bingley en route to Carnforth, 9th January 2014.
Photo courtesy of Ben Collier.*



*Early morning on the parcels train photo charter, East Lancs Railways, 4th February 2014.
Photo courtesy of John Crawshaw.*



*At rest: standing in the shed yard at Bury on 26th January, the day after the 'Winter
Cumbrian Mountain Express'. Photo courtesy of Mark O'Brien.*