

THE SHAP TIME TRIALS

Dear 4498 Members.

Well the Shap steam event has come and gone and I think everyone, no matter what engine one supported, enjoyed the trials. As for myself little did I dream that 28 years ago I would be the first over Shap with steam at the controls of Sir Nigel Gresley when I fired for Bert Stewart on the last run over Shap. When I knew I was going to be one of the drivers, I asked for 4498. September 30th took a long time to come after the steam ban so we all booked on for duty on a lovely Saturday morning and made our way to Crewe Heritage Centre to meet the star for the day, looking superb in her new colour - a real credit to the support crew, without them there would be no show. It's just like a Derby winner, the jockey gets the glory but it takes all the back up team to get him past the post, that the way I feel when I drive any steam loco and I take my hat off to them all, young and old for they deserve more credit than they get.

Another nice surprise for me was my old driver of 28 years ago, Bert Stewart, on the platform at Crewe. So we had a good chat about old times before he joined the train a bit reluctantly and his usual jokes about drivers with gloves on I got two nice photos of him at Blackburn a few days later whilst waiting to relieve 71000, the Duke. We left Crewe late on the down slow at a cracking pace and held high hopes of putting up a good show, I had two good fireman, Massey and Williams, and a good engine, but we were up against two very impressive locomotives so as you see we were the under dogs and the least powerful tractive effort and a loco that has done thousands of hard, fast miles years before the other two were built. We made good progress to Preston even holding her back to orders for the trial, when the first jinx struck. The whistle stuck open at Leyland station and as we had no way of stopping it blowing from the footplate, we screamed through Preston to the Barton water stop, at least we got green signals through the station, first time for ages, and plenty of publicity which is better than winning.

The water stop took longer than booked but it was a blessing in disguise as it gave us a chance to repair the whistle valve near the name plate on the drivers side so kept the support crew below the overhead wires. The second gremlin appeared whilst getting water I noticed water running out of the ash pan it turned out that the tubes in the firebox were starting to leak, which got worse as the day wore on. We eventually left Barton only to be turned platform line at Lancaster at 15 mph instead of 75mph through the down main, due to a track defect, even so we were credited with a speed of 72mph at Hest Bank there was no shortage of steam and we were ready for the first hard slog up the bank from Milnthorpe to Grayrigg we charged through Oxenholme just like it was 28 years ago with my two fireman and a helping hand from a young looking traction inspector Kev Treeby (must be getting older) shovelling coal like a conveyor belt but this time I held the whip with no sweat running into my eyes.

Then another problem arose, the water in the gauge glass was slowly dropping, working at 40 to 45% cut off the exhaust injector decided not to work so we were down to one injector only working but we were fighting a losing battle - just a few more minutes and we would be ok and over the top. But it was not to be, the water was down to one inch in the glass and 300 yds short of the summit I had to pull the wheel back to 7% cut off to keep the train rolling and for the boiler to recover. Things would have been awkward if we had yellow or red signals round the curve towards Tebay the water would have rushed towards the front of the boiler and could have uncovered the fusible plug at the rear of the firebox. The exhaust injector then decided to help us out and started to work while the engine was being worked lightly so we drifted down

to Tebay losing speed and hoping to refill the boiler for the next hard flog at 1 in 75 to Shap summit we managed to get 3/4 of a glass of water near the old Dillacar water trough where I lowered the scoop in 1967. The steam pressure was 210psi, so my two fireman had done well to keep the pressure up against two injectors, it was now or never our short respite was over, we had to go for it now I would have liked a little more time, I dropped the wheel down to 25% from 7% cut off having left the regulator open all the time.

We stormed through Tebay at 60mph as required, not 75mph of 28 years ago. and under the M6 past the old Tebay North Ibs signal, dropping the cut off half a turn every 300 yards or so, smoke going 60 feet into the air (incidentally, I had a complimentary video sent from PSOV, it looks very impressive) and stormed past Scout Green with the wheel well down and the exhaust injector deciding not to work again. The last few hundred yards to the summit, I dropped the wheel down to 65% cut off, with water dropping in the glass due to being worked hard, leaking tubes and one injector unable to keep the boiler level up we made it to the summit with 1/4 glass of water and 210psi in the boiler. We were in better shape in 1967, me and Neil Cadman kept her within 10psi of 250psi and two injectors on most of the time from Oxenholme to Shap summit, no problems that day. On arrival at Carlisle we got relieved by Carlisle men and we travelled home passenger via the long drag in the train. The weather broke with rain all the way back and the a4 getting worse.

Hope we repeat it before I retire with a lizzie or a brit, ireally enjoyed the day but it does the engine no good flogging it like that someone has to put it right again and pay the bills

Merry exhaust to all Sir Nigel friends

Les Jackson - Driver Crewe North.