MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT ENQUIRY

ACCIDENT AT HARROW AND WEALDSTONE STATION, 6TH OCTOBER 1952, INVOLVING THE 5.15PM, CLASS "A" EXPRESS PASSENGER TRAIN, NORTH TO EUSTON, THE 7.31AM, CLASS "B" PASSENGER TRAIN, TRIM TO EUSTON, AND THE 8.00AM, CLASS "A" EXPRESS PASSENGER TRAIN, EUSTON TO LIVERPOOL.

HELD BY

COLONEL C.R.S. WILSON

OF

EUSTON

ON

THURSDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 1952.

The Railway Executive was represented by:

Mr. S.G. Reef
Operating Superintendent, EUSTON.

Mr. W.J. Shelton
Divisional Operating Superintendent, CREWE.

Mr. L.W. Cox
District Operating Superintendent, EUSTON.

Mr. F.W. Abraham
Motive Power Superintendent, EUSTON.

Mr. C.R. Campbell
Divisional Motive Power Supt., CREWE.

Mr. J. Taylor-Thompson
Civil Engineer, EUSTON.

Mr. S. Williams
Signal & Telecommunications Engineer, EUSTON.

Mr. J.S.S. Davis
Divisional Signal & Tele. Engineer, DERRY.

Mr. J.H. Knight
Outward Assistant to C.&W. Engineer, ST. PANCras.

Mr. J. Smith
For Mechanical & Electrical Engineer, DERRY.

Trade Union representatives:

Mr. S.P. Greene
National Union of Railwaymen.

Mr. J.C. Baty
Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.

Mr. H. Parry
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association.

Mr. C.W. Holloway
Union of Railway Signalmen.
In re-opening this Enquiry I am not going to make any statement beyond just making the point clear, to prevent any misunderstanding, that this Enquiry is held, primarily from the technical aspect of the case, in order that the Minister of Transport may be advised of the cause of the accident and of any measures which should be adopted in the interests of public safety to prevent a recurrence. I want to stress that it is in no way a Court for the determination of legal responsibility either of the Railway Executive or the British Transport Commission as a whole or of any individual persons in their employ.

As you know I made a considered statement at the close of the proceedings on the 16th October. I mention that because I have just referred to measures which should be adopted in the interests of public safety to prevent a recurrence.

I think it would be a good opportunity now, Mr. Hearn, for you to let me know the number of injured still remaining in hospital.

Mr. Hearn: The position this morning is that 60 people are still detained in hospital; none of them is on the danger list.

Col. Wilson: What is the total of fatalities?

Mr. Hearn: That still remains 112.

After hearing the evidence appended hereto, Colonel Wilson closed the Enquiry with the following remarks:

That concludes the hearing of the witnesses at this Enquiry and my report after submission to the Minister and presentation to Parliament, will be published in due course and placed on sale in the ordinary way by H.M. Stationery Office.
Col. Wilson: Before I ask you how you are feeling I must give you my congratulations on your escape. How are you getting on?

A. Pretty well now sir, but my hand is very sore.

Q. You had your thumb badly torn I think?

A. Yes.

Q. How are you feeling generally?

A. Pretty fair, sir, under the circumstances.

Q. Have you had a lot of pain?

A. Just the soreness, but apart from that I am not doing so badly.

Q. Are you still in hospital?

A. I am on leave for a fortnight, but I have to return for further treatment.

Q. Did you work a train up to London on the day before the accident?

A. Yes, the 2. Opm from Lime Street.

Q. Then you lodged in London?

A. That's right sir.

Q. I know there is not much you can tell me about this accident, but did you see anything in front of you as you ran through Harrow?

A. Nothing whatever. The engine was taken completely out of my hands.

Q. Were you looking out?

A. Yes, on the left hand side.

Q. You did not see anything ahead of you even for a second?

A. No, in fact everything was going very smoothly, I thought we were in for a nice trip.

Q. At what pace were you going?

A. About 50 miles per hour, I should think.

Q. Might it have been a little more?

A. It might have been at that point.

Q. You had a big train with two engines?

A. We would not have been overloaded by ourselves.
Col. Wilson  Yes, I understand; the other engine was "assisting, not required".

A.    That's right, sir.

Q.    So you had plenty of power in front of that train?

A.    Yes sir.

Q.    And you had a little bit of a late start owing to some vacuum trouble?

A.    Yes.

Mr. Knight  The hosepipe at the rear of the train was not properly seated on the plug, and it had to be held down whilst vacuum was created.

Col. Wilson  I suppose you were trying to recover a bit of time?

A.    I made it 4 minutes late start. I opened the regulator and said to my mate "8.45 am." It was 8.13 am when we passed Willesden, we had picked up a minute, and we picked up another minute by the time we passed Sudbury. We could not help picking up time with the power we had.

Q.    What was the visibility like that morning?

A.    When we left the shed and were on our way to Euston station we were stopped by signals for 5 minutes approaching the station, and then I got the main signal. I judged the visibility at the time to be 500 or 600 yards. I could see right down that Engine Line and I did not think it was too bad.

Q.    What was it like near Harrow?

A.    The sun was coming through and I remarked to my fireman it was going to be a nice day, but I did not see much of it unfortunately.

Q.    The fog did not cause you any trouble in seeing the signals?

A.    None whatever.

Q.    By all accounts it was clearing at Willesden. There was a patch of fog or mist round Hatch End and Harrow. You never saw anything in front of you, running into Harrow?

A.    Nothing whatever.

Q.    Were you knocked unconscious?

A.    No sir.

Q.    How long were you there before they got you out?

A.    Not many minutes, I got myself out, then a policeman took charge of me. The first thing I said was "Is anybody protecting the opposite running line?" There was a chap there, I think he was a Booking Clerk and he said everything was all right, and told me to come with him. I did not know where the other driver was although I asked after him.

Q.    Did the coal come down on top of you?

A.    Yes, we had a good load of coal on, and that was what injured my hand when I put it up over my head.
Col. Wilson  What made you do that?
A.  It was the bump, it was just like running into something in front.
Q.  You know now what happened; do you think the leading engine struck the engine of the Perth train?
A.  I do. It was certainly something heavy. I do not think it would be coaches.
Q.  Your engine, I suppose, did not actually strike very much?
A.  No sir.
Q.  Were the two engines coupled together when they were recovered Mr. Abraham?
Mr. Abraham  We are not sure, but it is almost certain they were uncoupled.

Col. Wilson  Are you in the usual express link from Liverpool to London?
A.  No, I am a grade driver.
Q.  How often do you work to London?
A.  I have had pretty good experience for the last eight or nine years.
Q.  With fast trains?
A.  Yes.
Q.  If you are driving an up train running down from Watford through Harrow and Willesden, what sort of regulator opening do you generally keep?
A.  I nearly always work on the first regulator if possible.
Q.  And your gorge?
A.  According to speed.
Q.  Do you often check time after taking water at Bushley?
A.  If we are running to time and doing all right, that I can let the engine run itself. If we are behind time we endeavour to keep a bit of speed up.

Mr. Hearne  Do you remember seeing the signals for your train as you approached Wembley?
A.  Yes sir, we had all green colourlights to Wembley, and after passing Wembley I saw the green distant for Harrow, and I just got the semaphore, then I looked at the steam gauge to see horse was easing. I was trying to gauge how she was working. I did not think we should have been doing too well without the engine in front. The next thing we entered the station and the engine was taken completely off me.
Q.  You do not remember seeing the signals go back to danger?
A.  No.

Contd.
Col. Wilson  How were you working the engine?

A.  Between 20% and 25% on the cut off, at that particular point.

Q.  And the regulator?

A.  First regulator.

Q.  So you were not working the engine very hard?

A.  No sir, there was no need because of the other engine in front.

Q.  Was your fire burnt through?

A.  It was burnt through, but we should have had a heavier fire if we had been by ourselves.

Mr. Holloway  You said while you were travelling down towards Harrow you saw nothing in front, but did you perchance see the train standing in the platform like you would approaching any other station?

A.  It was impossible for me to see anything in the platform because of the curvature, and I would be on the other side. I suggest the men in front saw it and applied the brake at the moment of impact. He did not apply it anywhere else because I should have seen my spindle jump out.

Col. Wilson  Thank you, Barton; I hope you never have another experience like that in your driving career.
Col. Wilson I must congratulate you on your fortunate escape. How are you feeling?

A. I feel all right now sir.

Q. It was mainly shock you had?

A. I had a cut on the head and above the eye.

Q. Can you remember what you were doing at the time of the accident?

A. I had been looking out, but I was not looking out at the moment.

Q. What was the first you knew about it?

A. When I came to.

Q. Where were you lying when you came to?

A. On the name-plate of the Princess Anne.

Q. Outside the cab?

A. Yes, the engine was on its side.

Q. I wonder how you got there?

Mr. Abraham The Princess Anne was the train engine, of course, and Cowper was the fireman of the leading engine.

Col. Wilson So you were thrown clear in some way?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember seeing anything in front of you before the accident?

A. No sir, nothing at all.

Q. Do you remember hitting anything with a bang?

A. No sir.

Q. Tell us about your journey, can you remember what sort of journey you had from Euston during those few minutes?

A. It was a bit misty in places and clear in other places.

Q. Was your engine doing well?

A. Yes.

Q. What sort of speed do you think you were going at Harrow?

A. I am not very good at speeds, but we were not travelling as fast as an express at full speed.

Q. But you were working up to it, were you?

Contd.
A. Yes sir.

Col. Wilson You and Dowler are both Bingley Hill men?
A. Yes sir.

Q. The cut on your eye was the worst thing you had besides the shock?
A. Yes.

Q. Where are you now?
A. I am staying at a Convalescent Home at Dawlish.

Mr. Hearn Do you remember seeing the signals off when you approached Harrow station?
A. Yes.

Q. Did you see them go back to danger?
A. No sir, I saw the distant off for Harrow, I did not see any of the other signals.

Q. Did you notice any signals for the opposite direction, the up fast line?
A. No sir.

Col. Wilson What were you doing at the time?
A. I was sitting down.

Q. Were you looking forward?
A. Yes.

Q. From the right hand side?
A. Yes.

Q. And you did not see any wreckage of the other collision come down in front of you?
A. No sir.

Col. Wilson I hope you will make a very quick recovery and will never have to repeat an experience like that.
EVIDENCE OF :-

A. SMITH - PASSENGER GUARD

EUSTON.

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Given at resumed Ministry of Transport Enquiry.

Col. Wilson  How are you getting on Smith?
A.  I am progressing slowly.
Q.  What happened to you?
A.  I got hit in the back, and in the groin and the back of the shoulder, and a bump on the back of the head.
Q.  No bones broken?
A.  No sir.
Q.  Which van were you in?
A.  I was in the rear van of the Manchester coaches, a corridor third brake.
(Identified as No. 34024).
Q.  What were your impressions?
A.  The late start was bad but could not be avoided owing to the engine coming late, and the vacuum pipe not being on properly. We started at 5.5am, and the next thing I knew was when we were into it.
Q.  Was the shock in your van very violent?
A.  Yes. I was sitting towards the back of the van on a tin box at the time looking out of the window. I saw the North Wembley box as I came by.
Q.  You were looking sideways out of the window?
A.  Yes.
Q.  Could you see any of the signals?
A.  I would not see any signals from where I was sitting. I had a clear conscience, because I felt we had a clear road.
Q.  You were looking out on the right hand side and saw North Wembley box?
A.  Yes.
Q.  What sort of speed were you going do you think?
A.  We had two engines, and I should say we were going over 50 miles per hour and picking up.
Q.  Is it a fact that the engine was late on the train? This is the first I have heard of that.
Mr. Shelton: Driver Darton said he was brought to a stand for a few minutes coming into Euston and that may have been a hold-up caused by the Engineering work being carried out there. It does not necessarily mean that the engine was late off the shed.

Mr. Hearn: The train would have left to time had it not been for the vacuum trouble.

Col. Wilson to witness: What did you do after the accident?

A: I did everything possible I could to assist and I carried on until I could carry on no longer. I saw Mr. Hearn and Mr. Cox and the Police were there to protect the traffic in my van; then they got an ambulance and took me home.

Q: Did you go to hospital?

A: I have not been in hospital, I have been at home all the time.

Mr. Hearn: Was anyone else in your van at the time?

A: Yes, my Ticket Collector.

Q: Where was he sitting?

A: He was standing.

Q: Did you notice any movement of the vacuum brake gauge before the impact?

A: Nothing whatever, it all happened at once. Glass flew in all directions, I put up my hands and it was all over.

Q: I gather you did not see any signals?

A: None whatever.

Mr. Holloway (U.R.S): You were looking out of the window. How far could you see?

A: I was sitting with my back to the engine and looking over my left shoulder. I thought the visibility was very good; it was not all that misty, it was quite good to my way of looking at it.

Col. Wilson: Thank you, Smith. I hope you will be all right again soon.
Col. Wilson You are a Foreman Fitter at Camden?
A. Yes sir.

Q. That means you have charge of all the engine repairs at Camden shed?
A. Yes.

Q. You attend during the day at your office and round the works but not at night?
A. During the day only.

Q. And you have been Foreman Fitter for six years.
A. Yes sir.

Q. How many engines have you in your charge?
A. 54.

Q. Nearly all big engines?
A. Yes, with the exception of 12.

Q. Engines for express passenger trains?
A. Yes.

Q. This engine of the Forth train was a Camden engine, is that right?
A. Yes sir.

Q. When did it last leave Camden?
A. On the 7.20pm from Euston on the night before the accident, it worked to Crewe.

Q. And then it had its attention at Crewe shed, and came back again on this train from Forth early on the morning of the 5th?
A. Yes sir.

Q. What would have been its next turn after that?
A. No particular turn. It would probably have been put on a Carlisle job but the exact time I do not know.

Q. I understand you examined this engine personally after the accident, and I have a statement here from Mr. Pinty that you and Foreman Deane had examined Engine 1622 at Harrow and found nothing which would have distracted the attention of the driver. What did you look for on that engine?
Evidence of Foreman Fitter C. A. Marshall (Contd).

A. I looked on the footplate for the boiler water gauge frames, I found both glasses intact, and the gauge glass protectors still secure. I had a look for anything else that may have been broken other than through the mishap, but could not see anything else.

Col. Wilson So far as steam fittings were concerned, what was the damage done?

A. The driver's brake valve was broken, both spindle, and the handle bent. The large and small ejector valves and fittings were broken and ripped away from the boiler, both side whistle handles were badly bent, the left bottom gauge test tap was broken completely off and the reversing handle was badly bent.

Q. You refer to the large and small ejector steam valves being badly damaged, were they torn away from the boiler?

A. Yes.

Q. The other thing broken off was the drain pipe of the left hand water gauge. It was broken off above the cock?

A. Above the trial cock.

Q. Would that have caused a rush of steam or would it not?

A. Yes, steam and water.

Q. A violent rush?

A. No, not violent sir.

Q. But would there have been a full opening from the boiler after that?

A. Yes.

Q. We have discussed it already Mr. Abraham. I am not quite clear in my own mind what the effect of the breakage of the drain pipe would be.

Mr. Abraham Similar to testing your gauge glass, in that you would get a continuous blow through the exhaust because the handle controlling that has been broken off. (Illustrated by reference to photograph).

Col. Wilson to witness What else did you look at besides the cab fittings?

A. I went all round the engine and the back of the cab, the tender, where the brake handles, dip handle, and dip casting were broken and the tank was burst.
Col. Wilson: What about the main steam pipes in the smokebox?

A.: They were broken by the collision.

Q.: So you cannot really say whether the main steam pipes were in perfect order before the collision?

A.: No sir.

Q.: Have you ever known a burst main steam pipe on an engine of that class?

A.: I have known small fractures but not a main steam pipe burst.

Q.: Enough to cause a blow-back?

A.: No sir.

Q.: Because there were two or three cases last year, not necessarily on the London Midland Region, but in the country, of broken main steam pipes causing a severe blow-back, so it is nothing new. Have you had any experience of a broken main steam pipe on that class of engine causing a blow-back, Mr. Abraham?

Mr. Abraham: I cannot recall one on that class of engine.

Col. Wilson: What are the main steam pipes made of?

Marshall: Steel, 3/16".

Q.: They were actually broken by the collision in the smokebox?

A.: Yes sir.

Q.: When you looked at the reversing gear which was damaged, do you remember whether the hand catch was in one of the notches or was it out?

A.: I cannot say sir.

Q.: What about the motion gear?

A.: When I examined it it was very badly damaged through the impact and a lot of the motion had been cut away.

Q.: I see you have mentioned the right hand top slide bar nuts were found secure. That was because they were struck against the engine?

A.: Yes, at Crewe.

Q.: I just want to go through the history of this engine a bit. Its last shop repair was the 21st June, since when it has done 27,300 miles. What sort of stage as regards condition would you call that?

A.: A very good stage sir.

Q.: You would not expect anything to be getting run down?

A.: Definitely not sir.

Q.: The engine was last washed out on the 21st September, i.e. approximately three weeks before the accident. What would be done at that wash-out?
Evidence of Foreman Fitter C.A. Marshall (Contd).

A. The engine would be thoroughly examined and all repairs found carried out.

Col. Wilson I see the last "X" repair was the following week.

A. In between wash-outs the engine has what we call a "Boiler full" examination. The engine is in the shed and examined with the boiler full of water and you carry out an "X" examination at the same time.

Q. Have you a record of the repairs carried out?

A. Not with me.

Q. That is available I suppose, Mr. Abraham?

Mr. Abraham Yes.

Col. Wilson The last wheel and tyre examination was at the same time as the wash-out?

Marshall Yes.

Q. Was any attention required to wheels and tyres?

A. No sir.

Q. The last No. 2 examination was a month before that on 24th August I see at 11,160 miles. Does that mean that was carried out 11,160 miles after the engine came out of shops?

A x Yes.

Q. That No. 2 examination would be the first motion examination after coming out of shops?

A x Yes.

x - It is evident the witness has not properly understood these two questions. The mileage of 11,160 was that run since the previous similar motion examination, and it was not the first motion examination after coming out of shops.

Q. And what was the result of that examination, do you know?

A. Not off hand sir.

Q. Then the last three/five weeks examination, gauge frames, brakes, cylinder cock gear, C.S. gear, safety valves etc., that was on the 29th September at the same time as the "X" repair was carried out?

A. Yes sir.

Q. I think you had better let me have the information as to what repairs had to be carried out at that time, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Abraham Just at the "Boiler full" examination?

Col. Wilson Yes. Would any boiler repairs be done at that "X" repair?

Marshall Yes, it is examined with the boiler full of water; if any repairs were necessary the boiler would be emptied and the repairs carried out.

Q. Were any repairs necessary?

A. I cannot say off hand.
Mr. Abraham  We will get that.

Col. Wilson  Do the Boilersmiths work under you?

Marshall  Yes.

Q.  I have a statement of trips worked and reports on repair cards since the last "X" day. On 30th September "Brick arch examining", on 2nd October "L.R. gauge glass renewing", on 3rd October "L.O. piston gland blowing" and "L.R. injector steam valve repacking". None of these are anything very serious, were they all attended to?

A.  As far as Camden is concerned, they would be attended to. Whether any were booked away from home I am not certain, but wherever they were booked they would be attended to.

Q.  There was nothing on the 4th and 5th, but on the 6th October on the 7.30pm London - Crewe there was a O.V.A. valve blowing and engine priming. What is O.V.A.?

A.  Carriage Warming apparatus.

Q.  and the engine was priming?

A.  Yes, according to that report.

Q.  And on the 7th there was another booking "Engine not steaming inside slide bar bolt loose." You have told me the bolt was tightened, and I think the steaming has been accounted for by inexperienced firing.

Mr. Abraham  That is so.

Col. Wilson  Were any brick arch repairs done as a result of that report?

Marshall  That was reported at Carlisle. The engine worked the 9.10pm London - Carlisle, and it was reported on arrival.

Q.  There should be a record of what was done to that, Mr. Abraham?

Mr. Abraham  It was examined, and nothing was done. Ambrose will tell you it was short of one row of bricks, but it was not considered to be detrimental.

Mr. Campbell to witness  Did you see any signs on the footplate of the engine that there had been any blowback?

A.  It was very difficult, but I could not see any.

Q.  No signs of smoke or soot?

A.  No sir.

Mr. Betty (A.S.L.E.F)  It would not be possible in the circumstances to tell too readily whether in fact there had been a blow back or not?

A.  It would not.

Q.  How often are the engine tubes cleaned out?

A.  Every trip.

Q.  And all the repair cards had been attended to at Camden and elsewhere?

A.  I cannot answer for elsewhere.
Evidence of Foreman Fitter C.A. Marshall (Contd).

Mr. Saty (A.S.I.E.A.) There was a report that the engine was steaming badly; on what basis was it concluded that it was due to the fault of the fireman?

Col. Wilson That is not a question Mr. Marshall will be able to answer; I have information about that on the report of the driver concerned. I think we should have a record, Mr. Abraham, of these repairs you have given us as to whether they were done or not.

Mr. Abraham I will arrange that.
EVIDENCE OF :-

E.J. AMROSE - FOREMAN
BOILERSMITH
WILLESDEN.
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Given at resumed Ministry of Transport
Enquiry.

Col. Wilson  You are not located in a particular shed or depot, but you take Willeston, Camden, Watford, Bletchley, and Devon Road?

A. Yes.

Q. You examined this engine, No. 6242, after the accident?

A. Yes sir.

Q. And what was the extent of your examination?

A. I examined the firebox, and the condition was absolutely wonderful considering what had happened.

Q. Were the lead plugs intact?

A. Yes, both.

Q. And the brick arch, what was that like?

A. One row of bricks was missing from the back end.

Q. Had any bricks come down into the fire?

A. No, I should say the bricks had been missing for two or three trips before.

Q. Were any bricks or broken bricks found in the fire?

A. No sir.

Q. Brick arches have been known to collapse when an engine is running?

A. Yes, on rare occasions.

Q. Did you find any evidence of a collapse of this brick arch before the accident happened?

A. No sir, the arch was in good condition and serviceable.

Q. Except that a back row of bricks was missing?

A. Yes sir.

Q. I should like that statement related to that booking on the 9.10pm London - Carlisle on 30th September "Brick arch examining". I suppose the driver or fireman had looked at his brick arch and found it short. Does that tie up?

Mr. Abraham I should say that ties up, but we shall verify it.

Col. Wilson I should like to dispose of the possibility of any brick arch collapse during this trip. Was the boiler in a condition to hold pressure?

A. It would lose pressure very rapidly, the right front corner handhold cover was damaged.
Col. Wilson  Has it had a hydraulic test?
A.  No sir.

Mr. Abraham  One of the hand-holds was broken off in the collision and in view of that it would lose steam very quickly.

Col. Wilson  There has been no pressure test made?
Mr. Abraham  No sir, the engine is still at Harrow.

Col. Wilson  If the tubes or flues had been leaking to any degree, would you have been able to tell that from the examination you made?

Ambrose  Most definitely.

Q.  How?
A.  By the evidence in the firebox, apart from the boiler being empty, you cannot disguise that at all.

Q.  If they had been leaking in the tube-plate?
A.  Yes.

Q.  If there had been a split in a tube, could you tell then?
A.  It depends where it was; when I examined it, it was empty and I would not find a split in a tube. You can rest assured sir, there was no sign of any leak in the tubes.

Q.  Was there any sign of any leaky stays?
A.  No sir, perfect.

Q.  and the load plugs were intact?
A.  Yes.

Q.  What about the front end?
A.  We could not gather much from the smokebox, the damage was pretty extensive.

Q.  Mr. Abraham, what will be done with that engine now?

Mr. Abraham  We are trying to get it to Crewe, but we have some difficulty with the wheels, and although at first we hoped she would run on her own wheels if we attached a tender and adjusted the bogies, at the moment Mr. Campbell reports there is certain distortion of the wheels.

Col. Wilson  I am thinking of the boiler. (To Ambrose) You could not do much more than get into the firebox?

Ambrose  Yes, my examination practically consisted of examining the firebox.

Q.  The main steam pipes were broken?
A.  Yes.

Col. Wilson stated that he wanted to be quite sure there were no broken super-heater elements and no burst tubes, and asked Mr. Abraham to arrange for these parts to be tested if possible under hydraulic pressure when the engine was moved to Crewe.
Given at resumed Ministry of Transport Enquiry.

Col. Wilson I understand Driver Jones was a personal friend of yours, is that so?

A. Yes sir.

Q. I want you to try and help me. I know it is difficult for you but you may well be doing a public service by doing so. Have you grown up with him in the shed?

A. Yes, ever since we started.

Q. That was in 1927?

A. Yes.

Q. He became a driver in 1946 at the same time as you became a Passed Fireman, and then you were appointed driver in 1948?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you working on London turns, are you in the same block turns as Jones was?

A. Yes.

Q. And you know the London road to Euston?

A. Yes.

Q. With fast passenger trains?

A. Yes.

Q. Had you seen Jones or been to his house fairly soon before the accident?

A. I went home with him one morning when we finished at the same time and we had a conversation.

Q. How long before the accident did you last see him?

A. About a week. I saw him on the morning of the accident.

Q. At the shed?

A. No, in the station.

Q. What were you doing?

A. I was conducting some Monument Lane men round the station.

Q. On the footplate?

A. Yes.

Q. Was Jones in his ordinary health at that time?

A. He was just his normal self.
Col. Wilson: Was he on his engine then?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it on the train?

A. No sir.

Q. I gather it was a pretty bad night for getting on the train?

A. It was foggy, crane is a peculiar place for fog, it clears and then drops again.

Q. What sort of conversation did you have?

A. We were pulling the fireman's leg because he was newly married.

Q. Did Jones seem quite his usual self?

A. Yes.

Q. He was not nervous at all?

A. No, he just passed a remark about the fog. He said it might be clear when he got towards Stafford.

Q. He was not concerned about it?

A. No.

Q. Was he a man that got easily upset or disturbed?

A. No, I have never seen him upset or disturbed.

Q. Was he even tempered?

A. Yes, very even.

Q. Did he ever talk to you about any difficulties he had on the footplate, seeing signals or anything of that kind?

A. No, he never mentioned it.

Q. Did he discuss the road with you?

A. Yes, when we were learning the road together we often would talk about it.

Q. Was he quicker than you, or you quicker than he in picking up the road?

A. We both picked them up about the same.

Q. How many times have you got to go over a road before you are prepared to sign your card?

A. It depends of course on the road, but perhaps a fortnight going over it every day.

Q. About a dozen times?

A. Yes.

Q. But it depends on the distance?

A. Yes.

Contd.
Col. Wilson: What side of the locomotive work do you think Jones was most interested in, the machinery side or the running side on the road?

A. He was interested all round. When we were passing out together he was very interested in the Improvement Classes.

Q. Has he been to them lately?

A. I cannot say.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to volunteer to me?

A. I have always found him very straight-forward, and very interested in the job. He was very interested in his home, he was buying the house he was living in.

Q. You have seen a lot of Jones because you both have a daughter the same age?

A. Yes.

Q. That is how you got to know them?

A. We stayed at the same boarding-house together for our holidays one year.

Q. I expect your family are just helping them with the children now?

A. Yes.

Q. I am very sorry you have lost your friend, it is very sad for you, and I want to thank you for coming to have this talk with me.

I am very interested to get to know how drivers handle their engines coming down from Watford. You have quite often driven fast trains into London from Watford. This First train was stopped at Watford North End. There was a speed restriction through Watford Tunnel on the up fast line of 15 miles per hour. It was a bit misty, not too bad by all accounts at Watford but it got a bit thicker at Bushy and Hatch End, and then by all accounts cleared through Willesden. The sun was coming out, so it was a patchy mist on a fine September morning. Jones' train and the Glasgow train before him, had been steadily losing time all the way because of the fog, which was rather worse in the Midlands than around London.

How would you handle an engine with a train coming down like that. You are already 1½ hours late, and the fog is a bit patchy down there. Would you be running with the regulator open or nearly shut, or coasting?

A. In the normal way, the fireman lets the fire down after going through Tring and we take things pretty steadily after passing through Watford.

Q. Do you ever coast?

A. It depends on the time. If we are right time we practically coast from Hatch End to Willesden, and give a bit of steam through Willesden, and then shut off again. If we are behind we should have the regulator open.
Col. Wilson Supposing you are going down with light steam, a little regulator, and your gear right up, 15%, would you keep your blower on?

A. Yes, slightly eased on.

Q. Why?

A. You may come across a signal unexpectedly, and have to shut off suddenly.

Q. The controls on this engine after the accident were found with the brake on, the regulator shut, and the blower valve was open one complete turn, and the gear was down to 60%. I believe that in the drifting position?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Would that suggest to you that the engine might have been drifting for quite a little bit of time?

A. Yes, very much so.

Q. Have you ever done that, coasted down there from Bushley to Hatch End?

A. From Hatch End you can generally shut down, and let her roll into Boston.

Q. Supposing you are up to time at Watford with present day timings, can you afford to shut off at Hatch End and roll?

A. Yes sir.

Q. And give a bit more steam at Willesden?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you shut off after going over the troughs or before?

A. After we got over the troughs.
Col. Wilson: You are District Motive Power Superintendent, Crewe, how much does that cover?

A. Crewe North and South, Stafford, Stoke, Alsager, Whitchurch, and Uttoxeter.

Q. How many men have you under you?

A. About 2,600. Of these about 1,750 are footplate staff.

Q. That would be 800 or 900 drivers?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you know Driver Jones personally?

A. I passed him out in 1916. I have not had occasion to interview him in connection with any irregularities at any time. I have seen him in the shed from time to time, and passed the time of day with him. He has always appeared a cheerful sort.

Q. Would you know him by name sufficient to say "Good morning Jones"?

A. I should have known him as Jones.

Q. You do not recall when you last saw him?

A. It would be some months ago, I cannot recollect the exact time.

Q. Am I right in saying that you get to know the personalities and abilities of the older and more senior men better than the younger men?

A. Yes, because they are in regular lines, and you come up against the timekeeping question with them more than with the men in the special lines.

Q. Would you say not have different degrees of reliability?

A. Yes, you get to know those not reliable more than the others.

Q. But you might pick on a certain man for a special job, the Royal Train for instance which is the most important, because he was a better man than the others.

A. We try to pick a thoroughly reliable man from those who qualify by their link position.

Q. You would not use so much of a man like Jones unless he applied for something, or gets into trouble. Is that so?

A. Yes.

Q. You have heard what Hamilton has said about his handling of locomotives?

A. Yes.
Col. Wilson  You have had pretty good experience of the road yourself?
A.  Yes.
Q.  In what way?
A.  More in connection with north of Crewe, with dynamometer car tests.
Q.  Would you confirm what Hampton told us about his handling of an engine?
A.  Yes.
Q.  You have never heard of any complaint of unreliability on the part of Jones, officially or unofficially?
A.  None at all.
Q.  I did get a letter from a member of the public suggesting that Driver Jones might have been temporarily affected by the paint he was using to paint his house, because I believe certain kinds of quick drying paint do affect people that way, so I did ask you to see what paint he had been using, and I understand it was Leyland Hard Gloss. What sort of paint is that?
A.  It was an enamel paint, and to me it smelt just like ordinary paint, nothing unusual about it.
Q.  Have you seen Mrs. Jones?
A.  Yes.
Q.  How is she getting on?
A.  She is just beginning to realise the consequences of what has happened. There is one point of interest, Mrs. Jones mentioned; Jones had a nap before he started painting, he was keen on his rest period.
Q.  He booked off the previous day at 2.40pm, how far does he live from the shed?
A.  He cycles and it would take him 10 minutes. He had a meal which was ready for him, then he had a nap which was his usual practice, then he started his painting. Mrs. Jones went out at about 7.30pm, and he would be to bed by about 7.45pm. Mrs. Jones came back between 10.00pm and 10.30pm and he was then fast asleep.
Col. Wilson  And he was knocked up by Lockwood about 1.45am, or thereabouts?
A.  Yes.
Q.  I have his statement here in which he says he called Jones about 1.45am, but it may have been 2 or 3 minutes later. I believe there was some row about the time he was called.
A.  It was not exactly a row, but it was mentioned. Lockwood called another man after calling Jones and was back in the shed at 2.00am, so he could not have been much behind.
Q.  Jones was off with Bronchitis in 1946 and has not been off since then?
A.  No.
Col. Wilson  Thank you Mr. Foster, I am glad to have had the benefit of your advice.
Col. Wilson: We had a discussion at Watford on Monday when I was looking at the signals. There is one thing I want to question you about and that is the handling of these fast trains from Watford onward. I think you told me then from your experience especially with a big engine, that after picking up water up at Bushy, men might very often shut off altogether and coast all the way to Willesden.

A. That is correct sir.

Q. I asked Driver Hampton that and I also asked Driver Harton. He said "It depends how we are running." Hampton said "If I was on time at Watford I might keep it open as far as Bushy troughs, then I would not waste any more steam until I got down to Willesden." Do you confirm that?

A. Yes, that is correct.

Q. I was talking this over with Mr. Moore in my office who is an old locomotive man. He said he did not think there was much significance in the fact that the blower was one turn open because he thought that men, even though they were running with the small regulator open with a bit of steam, they might well keep the blower open in case of an adverse signal?

A. Some men do work with the blower open a crack, but it is not a good thing to do. We do not make a practice of it. Before a driver closes his regulator he opens the blower. It is against instructions to keep the blower open.

Q. But it is sometimes done?

A. If a driver was not starting well he might use his blower to help him to get steam.
Col. Wilson: You have made a statement in connection with this accident which you gave to Inspector Short, you say "I booked on at about 7.40am or 7.45am and left Bushby signalbox at this time to go to my fog post at the up distant."

You are in No. 24 gang at Bushby, how long have you been there?

A. 22 years. I have been on that fog post 20 years.

Q. Did you realise it was foggy, or had you been called?

A. I had been called. The porter shouted to me when I got to work.

Q. You go on to say "when I got to the middle hut about ½ mile from the signalbox", is that the hut near the distant signal?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got a fogging machine at that post?

A. Yes, a lever operated machine.

Q. Your statement goes on: "When I was at the middle hut, the up slow train passed and when I got to my post the up fast train went by and a man on the footplate waved what looked like a cloth to me as he passed. I do not know if this was the Perth train, but it was the last train up fast. I am sure of this because I did not have to take my shot off."

You mean by that when you put your shot on again after the up fast train had gone by. You did not have to shoot him?

A. No.

Q. Was the distant off for him?

A. Yes, and when he went by I replaced my shot.

Q. Both distants were off when you got to the post?

A. Yes, the fast was off and he had just put the slow back.

Q. What was the visibility?

A. 100 to 150 yards, sometimes 200 yards, it depended on the drifting of the fog. It began to clear and then came on a bit again at 9. Once when the sun got up, it drifted across from the fields.

Q. You were at your post when the man on the footplate waved to you?

A. Yes.

Q. The two distants are at the side of the up slow line on two separate posts, where is your fog post?

A. About 12 - 13 yards back from the signals in the case of the up slow.
Col. Wilson: When that last train passed you on the up fast, you think somebody waved?

A. Somebody did wave, I raised my hand to him and he raised a cloth.

Q. That would be on the left hand side of the engine?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you shoot any trains that morning?

A. The only train I shot was the up slow that stops at Bushey which was the train behind the Tring train. I did not shoot any trains on the up fast.

Q. You did not shoot the Tring train?

A. I was not there then.

Q. You are an experienced railwayman of 22 years; what sort of pace was that train going by the up fast?

A. I should say about 60 miles per hour. I heard him go through Watford, heard him sound the whistle. He was coming very fast.

Q. Faster than the local?

A. It is difficult to judge. The local was travelling fast but the express was doing 60 I should say.

Q. Was it going pretty fast at ordinary express speed?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the Tring train was going as fast as that?

A. No, I do not think so.

Q. How far is the Bushey distant from Watford?

Mr. Williams: Just under a mile from the centre of Watford station.

Col. Wilson: And the line is on a falling gradient?

Mr. Williams: Slightly.

Mr. Keene: Can you remember how long it was after the local train went before the express came along?

A. I should say 4 to 5 minutes, because before I got to the middle but and collected my things I saw the local train. I would be about 20 yards from the hut when he passed me. It would be 5 minutes after that before I got to the post.
Given at resumed Ministry of Transport Inquiry.

Col. Wilson  How long have you been at Watford No. 2?
A.  32 years.
Q.  You are a regular signalman there?
A.  Yes.
Q.  What time did you come on duty on the morning of the accident?
A.  6.00 a.m.
Q.  Do you book in that box?
A.  Yes.
Q.  Do you book yourself, or have you a boy?
A.  I book myself.
Q.  What is the next box north of you?
A.  Watford North End.

Q.  There are three trains I am really concerned with, perhaps four. The 1.10a.m. from Holyhead, that was in front of the 10.20p.m.
from Glasgow, and then behind that was the 8.15p.m. from Perth
and they had all been losing time steadily on the way
down on account of the fog. The 8.15p.m. from Perth was stopped
at Watford North End presumably because you could not accept it.
Why was that?
A.  The previous train, which was the Glasgow, was not accepted
by No. 1 box till a minute after I received section from the
North End which put a check on it. It took 7 minutes to come
through.

Q.  What was checking him?
A.  I cannot tell you, it may have been a residential train being put
cut.
Q.  Do you recollect the Perth train going by your box on that day?
A.  Yes.
Q.  What sort of pace was he going?
A.  About 40 to 50 miles per hour I should say.
Q.  He had got going again after the shock through the tunnel?
A.  Yes.
Q.  Was the engine working hard getting going?
A.  I cannot remember.
Col. Wilson: Yes, that check through the tunnel had been on a long time. Was that about usual for an express train passing you after being checked through the tunnel, 40 to 50 miles per hour?

Mr. Hearn: Yes, I think so.

Q. What is the gradient down there?

Mr. Hearn: 1 in 393.

Col. Wilson: Would you confirm Mr. Abraham that they would get going after a 15 miles per hour restriction in Watford Tunnel, do you think they would get to between 40 to 50 miles per hour by Watford No. 2?

Mr. Abraham: I am doubtful whether they would get to 50, I think they would get to 40. It is between 1/2 mile and 3/4 mile from the south end of the tunnel to Watford No. 2.

Col. Wilson: Was the restriction right through the tunnel?

Mr. Taylor-Thompson: Yes, the line was being renewed right through.

Col. Wilson: Are you concerned with the train approaching signal?

A. Not for passenger trains on the up.

Q. As soon as you get asked "Line clear" by Watford North End do you offer it forward at ones to Watford No. 1?

A. Yes, I offer it straight on.

Q. Tell me how far the "Is line clear" goes forward Mr. Short?

Instrr. Short: The "Is line clear" signal is passed forward all the way from Kings Langley to Harrow.

Q. So you get acceptance right through from Kings Langley to Harrow if the line is clear?

Instrr. Short: Yes, it gives the signalman a chance to do their regulating. Kings Langley passes the "Is line clear" signal forward when the "Train entering section" signal is received from Boxmoor south Watford No. 2 and the boxes ahead receiving the "Is line clear" know that the train has left Boxmoor.

Q. That did not apply in this case?

Instrr. Short: No because trains were following closely behind each other with the slack in the tunnel.

Mr. Hearn to witness: Is it your impression that when you get the "Is line clear" given to you that the train concerned is travelling from Boxmoor to Kings Langley?

Batemann: Yes sir.

Col. Wilson: I should have said that passing on your "Is line clear" from Kings Langley to Harrow is a counsel of perfection you do not often attain.

Mr. Hearn: That is so, but we make the best use of it.
Evidence of Signalman H. Bateman (Cont'd).

Mr. Hearn    Had you had any consultation with any other signalman that morning with regard to the working of trains?

1. No sir.

2. You did it all with the bell beats?

3. Yes.

4. Were you working fog block at any time?

5. It was patchy but there was no necessity for fogmen being called out.

Mr. Shelton Do you happen to recall whether you saw the men on the footplate of the Perth train?

6. No sir.
Col. Wilson: How long have you been a signalman at Bushey?

A. Four years sir.

Q. How long have you been a signalman altogether?

A. Roughly seven years.

Q. You are a regular signalman at Bushey?

A. Yes sir.

Q. You came on duty at 6.00 am on the day of the accident to work until 2.00 am?

A. Yes sir.

Q. What was the weather like?

A. It was misty when I came on.

Q. Did you want a fogman?

A. Not at that particular time.

Q. How do you tell when you want a fogman?

A. By my fog object, the down slow starting signal.

Q. That is more than 200 yards from the box?

A. About 250 yards.

Q. You could see that when you came on duty?

A. Yes.

Q. When did it begin to get thicker with you?

A. About 7.00 am.

Q. What did you do about a fogman?

A. It was not necessary then, but about 7.15 am it got still thicker.

Q. I have a statement from Lengdham Richards that he went to the distant signal about 7.45 am?

A. As near as I can say he came in my box about 7.35 am.

Q. As soon as he came on duty?

A. Yes.

Q. It is more than four weeks since the accident, but do you recall those three trains passing your box, the 10.20 pm from Glasgow, on the up fast, the 7.31 am from Tring on the up slow, and the Perth on the up fast again. Do you remember what sort of speed those trains passed on the up fast?
The Glasgow, in my estimation, would be going about 50 miles per hour.

And the Perth?

He was travelling much faster; quite 60 miles per hour.

Are you sure the Perth was going faster than the Glasgow?

Yes.

Inspec. Short

The Glasgow took 3 minutes from passing No. 1 to Bushay; he received section at 6.24 am and the Glasgow passed at 6.50 am. For the Perth he received section at 8.12 am, and it passed Bushay at 8.14 am. That is according to the bookings.

Col. Wilson

But the bookings, of course, are subject to half a minute variation either way even under the best conditions. What was the weight of the Glasgow train?

Mr. Hoare

He had a train of 14 coaches weighing 550 tons, worked by a Class C engine.

Col. Wilson

What time did the Glasgow pass Watford North End?

Inspec. Short

7.56 am.

Col. Wilson

And he passed Bushay at 8.50 am, that is 8 minutes, but the Perth was stopped at Watford North End so the times between those points are not comparable.

(To witness)

Have you talked this over with Signalman Armitage?

I have not spoken to him since the accident.

Do you know him?

Yes, I know him.

At what sort of speed was the Tring train going?

He was running very well too.

Do they get going well by the time they got to you even if they have stopped at Watford?

Yes.

What speed would he be doing, 40 to 50?

I should say more like 60.

Did you watch these trains as they went by?

Yes.

Did you see the enginemen of any of the trains?

No, I saw the guard on the Tring when I was looking for his tail lamp, he waved to me.

Did you see the driver of the Perth train?

No, I did not see any loco. man.

Cont'd,
Evidence of Signalman J. Ashcroft (Contd).

Col. Wilson: You have a train approaching signal that you send?

... No sir.

Q. You have a special "Train entering section" signal?

A. Yes, 2-2-2 for trains not stopping at Willasden.

Q. Would you send that for the 7.31am Tring?

A. Yes.

Q. That would be when he passed your box?

... Yes.

Q. How does he know he has to send that?

Mr. Hearn: He gets it from the box in rear.

Col. Wilson: So if it is signalled to you 2-2-2 you signal it forward to Hatch End in the same way?

A. Yes.

Q. And what does Hatch End do?

Insp. Short: When Bushley sends the special "Train entering section" signal Hatch End sends the special "Train approaching" signal 1-1-2 Harrow; Harrow acknowledges and sends the special "Is line clear" signal 4-4-4 forward.

Col. Wilson: The idea is to avoid an unnecessary check because the section is rather short?

Insp. Short: Yes, it gives the signalman a chance to get his distant in the "off" position before the driver can sight it.

Col. Wilson: So Harrow holds the "Is line clear" until he gets "Train approaching" from Hatch End, which means he has a couple of sections behind him still to get the "Is line clear" to North Wembley. Is that right?

Insp. Short: Yes.

Col. Wilson: What sort of clock have you?

... It is very reliable, it gains about a minute in four days.

Q. It has a gaining tendency, it does not lose?

... No, it does not lose.
Col. Wilson: You have been in the box at North Wembley for near five years?

A. Yes.

Q. Trains are sent forward to you on the up fast line signalled by the "In line clear" signal 4-2-4?

A. Yes, those which do not stop at Willesden.

Q. What about the others?

A. They would be signalled 4 or 5-1.

Q. 4-2-4 means right through to Boston?

A. Yes.

Q. And on the day of this accident you had a 4-4-4 which you accepted at 3.56am?

A. Yes.

Q. When you got that did you know what train it was?

A. No sir.

Q. Did you guess?

A. No sir.

Q. It was just a train to you?

A. Yes.

Q. It might have been a residential or an express or anything?

A. Yes.

Q. Could it have been a motor train, for instance?

A. No, not on that signal.

Q. Just a passenger train running through to Boston on the up fast?

A. Yes.

Q. And that went through at 3.13am in the ordinary way. That was the 10.20pm from Glasgow. You gave "Train out of section" at 8.13am and to the best of your recollection, did you get another train offered to you at the same time?

A. Yes.

Q. Also signalled 4-2-4?

A. Yes.
Evidence of Signalman D. Pullen (Cont’d).

Col. Wilson: And you accepted it at 6.13am, did you know what that was?

A: No sir.

Q: You are a signalman and have been working that traffic every day of the week for five years. Do you not get an idea in your own mind of the train that is probably coming towards you?

A: As far as I am concerned, the train either stops at Willesden or it does not. It is immaterial to me what it is.

Q: Looking back, I suppose you know what all those trains were?

A: Yes I do now.

Q: The 4.4-4, which you received at 3.6am was the 10.20pm from Glasgow and the next was the 7.31am from Tring, and you never accepted the 7.31am train at all?

A: That was all I accepted sir as far as I know.

Colonel Wilson then went through the bookings in the Train Register book with Pullen item by item.