

45014 – Chinley Accident – by Steve Dexter

45014 was built as D137 at Crewe Works, being released to traffic in December 1961., initially allocated to Derby shed (17A). Then in green livery with small yellow ends and centre split headcode boxes, D137 was selected to receive the name 'The Cheshire Regiment' at a ceremony at Chester station on 17th June 1966.

The loco was an earlier recipient in 1968 of a repaint in all over BR blue with full yellow ends and renumbering into the TOPS scheme as 45014 followed in March 1974. By this time, allocation to Holbeck depot had seen the loco employed on a wide range of freight traffic, as well as regular passenger turns, the 10:20 Nottingham – Glasgow on 25th June 1976 being a typical example. 45014 moved to nearby Tinsley in 1977 and around the same time the disused headcode blinds were replaced by the black and white 'domino' display. This was carried until the loco received a general overhaul at Derby between August and October 1980, when the headcode boxes were removed and replaced by a flush front end and marker lights.

During the early 1980s, 45014 continued to be a useful passenger loco, maintaining an operable steam heating boiler. The loco was also still in demand for summer cross country services, such as the 08:27 Bradford – Paignton on 13th August 1983.

As part of the run down of the 45/0 fleet, 45014 ended its long association with Tinsley on 20th January 1985 when it was transferred to Toton, along with sister locos 45006/013/022/026/048 and 063. Shortly after this the loco lost its one remaining 'The Cheshire Regiment' nameplate and crest and in May 1985, isolation of the steam heating boiler rendered the loco mainly freight only. However this did not stop it enjoying some Trans Pennine passenger work during that summer. After being noted at Newton Heath depot on 28th May 1985, 45014 was called on to work 12:05 Liverpool – Scarborough on 1st June. However it failed shortly after departure and was assisted forward by 47218. Later that summer it was noted on 07:10 Newcastle – Liverpool on 16th August and 18:05 Liverpool – Newcastle on 29th September. However by 11th November it was back to routine freight work, hauling 6V85 Whitemoor – Severn Tunnel Jn.

No less than twenty 45/0s were withdrawn in 1985 and by the start of 1986, 45014 had been 'hit listed' due to being overdue for works overhaul. However the loco's reliability ensured its continued survival through the winter. Unfortunately this good fortune was to come to an abrupt end in early March.

On Sunday 9th March 1986, 45014 was employed on engineering work at Miles Platting. On completion of the work that evening, 45014 was required to couple to 47334 and run light engines to Buxton TMD in preparation for working ICI stone traffic the following day. The two locos set off with 45014 hauling the 47, which had its engine left ticking over. The journey was uneventful until reaching New Mills South Jn where the locos were signalled into the Up Goods Loop. Here the driver was advised by the signalman that there would be a delay due to signalling problems at the next signal box, Chinley.

At around 18:30 hours, there had been a mains power failure at Chinley, which caused all the track circuits at Chinley signal box to fail showing 'occupied'. When the standby generator started up to restore power to the signalling, everything except one track circuit at Chinley East Jn went back to normal. This track circuit remained failed, locking the junction points in the reverse position towards Peak Forest. Because the passage of the next train, 1M42 18:33 Sheffield – Manchester Piccadilly required the points to be in the normal position for the main line, the signalman left the signal box and drove his car to the East Junction, where he hand cranked the points to the correct position.

Meanwhile, 45014 and 47334 had been released from the loop at New Mills South and proceeded down to the red signal on the Up Main line protecting Chinley North Jn, where the driver got down to speak to the signalman on the signal post telephone. However, because the signalman had not yet returned to the signal box from cranking the points, there was no answer. So the driver returned to the cab of 45014 to wait with his Drivers Assistant.

Shortly after returning to the signal box, the Chinley signalman received a call from the driver of 1M42, which was now standing at the red signal on the Down Main line protecting the East Junction. The signalman explained that there was a track circuit failure and that he had set the points to the correct position. He then instructed the driver to pass the signal at danger, check the points at the East Junction and then 'he should be ok'.

1M42, formed of Class 31/4 No.31436 and four Mk2 coaches, set off over the points at the East Junction and proceeded towards the North Junction. In horror, the signalman suddenly realised that the crossover between the Down Main and Up Main lines at Chinley North Junction was incorrectly set in the reverse position and were now locked by the track circuit occupied by the approach of 1M42. As the crossover was immediately outside the signal box, the signalman ran to the window and displayed a red hand lamp signal through the darkness towards the approaching Class 31. However the driver failed to react to the hand signal and the train crossed from the Down Main to the Up Main and continued on the wrong line, round the curve and under two arched overbridges towards New Mills South Jn and the waiting light engines.

The driver of 45014, sitting at the controls, saw the marker lights of a Class 31 approaching and commented to his Assistant 'this is what we have been waiting for', meaning they were waiting for the passenger train to pass before they could cross to the line for Buxton. No sooner had he said this than he realised that the Class 31 was on their line and that a collision was inevitable. He ordered his Assistant to take cover by lying on the cab floor, he then bravely stayed at the loco controls, released the brakes, put 45014 into reverse and opened the power controller. The Sulzer engine roared into life and the wheels had just begun to turn when 31436 struck the Peak at approximately 30mph. The impact accelerated 45014 and 47334 down the falling gradient and the driver applied the brakes to bring the locos to a stand. The No.1 end nose of the Peak had been uplifted and pushed back in the collision, buckling the cab and jamming both doors and the engine room door. The cab was beginning to fill with smoke, so the driver and his Assistant, who were both shaken but relatively unhurt, climbed out through the broken drivers cab side window to protect the scene and summon help. The leading bogie of 45014 had been pushed back 0.6 metres in the collision and the trailing bogie pushed forwards 0.3 metres by the impact with 47334 behind. This caused severe damage to the battery compartment between the bogies and two small electrical fires were tackled by the Drivers Assistant, using extinguishers from both locos. The No.2 end nose of 45014 had also impacted with the leading cab of 47334, causing damage to both cabs. However all wheels of both locos remained on the track.



*45014 at Ashburys on 20/04/86, showing the damage to No.1 end caused by the impact with 31436.
Photo: Terry Eyres*



45014 at Ashburys on 20/04/86, showing the damage to No.2 end caused by the impact with 47334 that was coupled behind the peak when the collision occurred. Photo: Terry Eyres



Photo taken just after the collision, showing the No.2 end of 45014 locked onto 47334 after the buffers on the 47 sheared off and the nose of the peak impacted the cab of the loco it was coupled to.

31436 had fared much worse, with the No.2 cab crushed back to the engine room bulkhead and the floor and underframe rolled back underneath the loco. The leading bogie was badly



buckled and two axles derailed. The No.1 end cab was damaged from impact with the end of the leading coach. Regrettably the driver of 31436 was killed and 32 passengers were taken to hospital. The driver of 45014 was commended for his actions in reducing the impact of the collision by staying at the controls to release the brakes and put the locos into reverse.

Recovery operations continued through the night and the following day, with 45014 towed back to New Mills South Jn Up Goods Loop and 31436 to the Down Loop at Edale. 47334 was despatched straight to Crewe Works for repair.



Photo taken just after the collision, showing how the leading coach of 1M42 impacted on the trailing cab of 31436 at the time of the collision with 45014. Two photos above by Roger Kaye



Photo taken the day after the collision, showing 31436 being prepared for movement to Edale. Photo Roger Kaye

A forlorn looking 45014 was condemned the day after the collision, becoming the 49th 45/0 to be withdrawn, and was moved to nearby Ashburys to await its fate. Five months later it was sold to Vic Berrys Scrapyard and on 21st August 1986 it was cut on site into three sections for transportation by road back to Berry's yard in Leicester. The remains were quickly disposed of, finally consigning the once proud loco to history.

Of the other locos involved, 31436 was recovered from Edale on 4th April 1986 by 37027 and hauled to Doncaster Works for assessment. It was officially withdrawn on 15th October 1986 and was cut up by the following January. The ETH components were recovered and used to convert a replacement Class 31 into No.31469.



37027 recovering 31436 from Edale to Doncaster Works on 04/04/86

47334 was fitted with a new cab and released from Crewe Works in October 1986. Latterly it was operated by Freightliner, being retired in 2001 and scrapped at Booths in Rotherham in December 2004.



47334 being fitted with a new cab in Crewe Works in summer 1986. Photo: Johnnie Simmonds