

45147 Remembered

45147 was involved in an accident on 4th December 1984, resulting in the worst damage to ever be inflicted on a peak (not counting the deliberate destruction of 46009 in the staged collision with a nuclear flask!). This resulted in the premature withdrawal of the loco, which became the first 45/1 to be scrapped, and this article aims to chronicle the loco's history and details of its untimely demise.

45147 began life as D41, delivered new from Derby Works to Derby Depot on 29th July 1961 in all over lined green livery and fitted with centrally mounted split headcode boxes. Initially it was loaned to the Western Region for haulage trials, where on 20th September 1961 it hauled 12 coaches unassisted up the Lickey incline from a standing start at Bromsgrove with complete success.



D41 at Bristol on 8th October 1965

It then returned to Derby where it immediately began work on the midland mainline expresses from St Pancras to Derby, Nottingham, Manchester and Glasgow, and on other mixed traffic. For the first thirteen years of service D41 could turn up on just about any type of train on midland metals, proving the versatility for which the peaks became well known.

In 1973 BR decided to undertake the conversion of 50 class 45s to enable them to haul electrically heated air conditioned coaches on the revamped St Pancras to Sheffield service, their steam heating boiler being replaced by a Brush alternator. D41, by now in BR blue livery, became the 47th member of the class to be selected for conversion and emerged from Derby Works in January 1975 bearing its new TOPS number of 45147.

Now a dedicated passenger locomotive allocated to Toton, 45147 once again pounded the metals out of St Pancras, its next significant change not coming until its call to works in May 1982. In 1981/82, 45147 became more distinctive in that it was among the last four 45/1s to retain its headcode panels, the others being 45128/134/144. In 1982 classified overhauls of class 45s had been transferred from Derby to Crewe and in May of that year 45147 became

the third loco to enter Crewe Works for its Heavy General Overhaul (joining 45124/146). During this overhaul it lost its headcode boxes but retained its original centrally mounted lamp brackets above the obligatory sealed beam headlights. This feature made 147 unique and therefore easily identifiable from the front end. It also emerged with the usual Crewe trademark of only having two BR logos applied (under each drivers side window) instead of the usual four.

45147 successfully hauled the Crewe Works test train to Church Stretton and back on January 14th 1983 and was therefore released to traffic. However, on January 25th 1983, whilst working the 12.05 Liverpool-Scarborough, 45147 failed at Eccles (ironically, the very place it was to meet its end the following year) and had to be rescued by Manchester Victoria pilot 25221. 147 therefore returned to Crewe for rectification, re-emerging later in February 1983.

However, faults were obviously still occurring, as it again returned to Crewe in April 1983, not being released until November of that year (an incredible seven months under repair for an ex-works loco!).

45147 then settled down to regular Trans-Pennine workings in 1984 plus a variety of other traffic, including the 13.07 Paddington-Birmingham (via Banbury) on 20th April, the 20.15 St Pancras-Derby parcels on 13th June and a Derby-St Pancras passenger turn on 17th June. It was also noted at Saltley Depot on 25th August.



45147 pauses at Redruth with a Cross Country service on 13th October 1984

The week ending 1st December 1984 saw 45147 back on Trans-Pennine duties. On Wednesday 28th November it had new brake blocks fitted at Gateshead and was released to traffic on Friday 30th November. However, on Monday 3rd December it was stopped at Newton Heath for replacement of an air cock on its auxiliary air brake reservoir cylinder.

The following day, Tuesday 4th December 1984, 45147 was almost certainly rostered to work the 07.20 Manchester Victoria-Liverpool from where it was to work the 10.05 Liverpool-Scarborough, 13.55 return to Liverpool and 19.05 Liverpool-Manchester.

However, things were not running smoothly on the Liverpool to Manchester route that morning. Firstly, the rostered driver for the 10.05 Scarborough train was delayed on another duty, so the Liverpool train crew supervisor had to ask another driver on a 'spare' ECS duty to take the train as far as Manchester. Meanwhile, at Eccles signal box (4 miles west of Manchester Victoria) the signalman found that due to a track maintenance gang adjusting rail gaps, a track circuit had failed meaning he could not clear his up section signal. Therefore all trains heading for Manchester would have to be stopped at this signal and the driver told to pass it at danger.

Despite these problems, 45147 departed on time with the 10.05 Liverpool-Scarborough after successfully completing a brake test. St. Helens Junction was also reached on time and the guard carried out his usual loading of mail.

Meanwhile, the signalman at Eccles was awaiting the arrival of the 09.00 Stanlow to Leeds oil train loaded with gas oil. This duly passed his box, slowly drawing to a stop at his up section signal behind 47310. The signalman then sent 'train out of section' to the previous box and correctly accepted the 10.05 Liverpool-Scarborough behind it. He then (over the telephone) gave the driver of 47310 instructions to pass the section signal at danger, at the same time expecting 45147 to stop at his home signal, which was at danger, behind the oil train (therefore theoretically protecting it). Instead he was shocked to see 45147 run straight past the danger signal and pass his box at an estimated 60mph and out of sight towards the oil train.

The driver of 47310 had climbed back into his cab and had just begun to pass the Eccles section signal at about 10mph when 45147 collided violently with the rear of his train.



The front end (no.2 end) of 45147 was completely destroyed and the cab bulkhead driven almost horizontal into the engine compartment, although both

bogies remained largely intact. The roof of no.1 end cab was also crushed by a derailed tank wagon and almost the entire loco, the rearmost three tank wagons, and the first passenger coach were engulfed in a ferocious fire. This was probably caused by escaping gas oil being ignited by 45147's hot exhaust.



Debris was strewn across a wide area, including the adjacent M602 motorway. It was on the motorway that the driver's air brake control from 45147's leading cab was found. Subsequent tests showed that the controls were working correctly and that the lever was in the full emergency brake position. It could not be proved, however, that the lever had not been moved to this position after the collision when it was ejected from the cab and struck the motorway. Tests on the coach brakes also showed that these had all been working correctly and evidence from the Scarborough train's guard that the train juddered severely before impact, indicated the emergency brakes were working well.

Oil was found on the track behind the passenger train, probably spilt from a gear case on 45147 and indicated the start of heavy braking. This, together with skid marks on the rails suggested that 45147 was just 120m from the rear of the oil train when the emergency brakes were applied and was travelling at approximately 45mph at the point of impact..

The Eccles signman, signalling equipment and train brakes were all found blameless for the accident and it was concluded that the driver simply missed the signals protecting the oil train (there was no AWS fitted to the signal at that time). Nobody will ever know why as unfortunately he was killed in the collision.

45147 was the last damaged vehicle to be removed from the crash site, being rerailed on Wednesday 5th December. The fact that the bogies were badly damaged and the bodysides out of gauge meant that it was not fit to travel far by rail, so it was towed just one mile to a siding near Patricroft to await its fate. It was officially withdrawn on 4th January 1985 and remained at Patricroft until the first week of March 1985 when it was cut up on site by Vic Berrys Ltd.