

D94 (45114) – serious collision at Stanton Gate on 6th December 1963

At 01:32hrs on 6th December 1963, D94 (later to become 45114) was involved in a serious collision at Stanton Gate (near Toton), which unfortunately claimed the lives of the driver and secondman. The loco, then only 2 years old (having been released to traffic from Crewe Works in October 1961), was hauling the 22:40 Leeds – Leicester Class 4 fitted freight train, consisting of 29 four wheel vehicles and a brake van, when it ran into the 01:00 Toton to Woodhouse Mill Class 8 freight, which consisted of 58 wagons plus brake van.

At the time, the Class 8 freight, hauled by ex WD 'Austerity' 2-8-0 steam locomotive No.90313, was crossing from the 2nd Down Goods Line to the Down Goods at Stanton Gate South, where the signalling was still mechanical and worked by the Absolute Block system. Because the movement was crossing the Up Main, on which D94 was running, when the signalman at Stanton Gate South was offered the 22:40 Leeds – Leicester on the block bell from Stanton Gate North, he 'refused' the train and maintained his block instrument at 'normal'. This locked the semaphore signals at the North box at danger to protect the crossover movement.

However, D94 passed all the protecting signals at danger and passed Stanton Gate North box at an estimated 45mph and into collision with the other train. The first vehicle of the down train to show any signs of the collision was a loaded 20 ton cement hopper wagon marshalled 32nd in the train. It received a glancing blow on its left side but did not derail. The next wagon was another cement hopper which received a heavy impact on the left hand leading corner which was sufficient to part its couplings, turn it end to end and throw it across on to the goods lines. The 34th wagon, an empty 22 ton plate wagon, received the full force of the oncoming Peak. It and the three following wagons were demolished and thrown aside as the locomotive ploughed on, collecting and pushing before it in a tangled mass another plate wagon (marshalled 38th) and a group of 16 ton mineral wagons loaded with coke. The loco travelled about 70 yards before coming to a stand, derailed towards the Down Main line but still upright. In all, 23 wagons of the down train were derailed or damaged.

The damage to D94 was severe. Its nose and leading No.2 end cab were almost totally destroyed. The underside and trailing No.1 end received lesser damage. A small fire broke out on the leading battery box on the right-hand side in the direction of travel, but this was quickly extinguished by the Derbyshire Fire Service who had been called to the scene. The first six wagons of the train were derailed and damaged to a varying extent, but the remainder of the train remained on the track.



D94 had been in Derby works for a casual repair from 14th November to 3rd December. Before release to traffic it had received a 'No.1' examination, after which it had run only 760 miles before the accident. There was no reason to suppose otherwise that it was in good running order.

A careful examination was made as soon as possible after the collision to establish, as far as the damage would allow, the position of the controls when the collision occurred. In the leading cab the master control was found in the "off" position with the reversing handle in the

forward position. The vacuum brake handle was found in the "full brake" position, but it is quite possible that, in the course of the destruction of the cab (during which the whole control desk was torn away from its surroundings), the handle could have been knocked out of the emergency position. As far as could be established, the brakes were in good working order and on both locomotive and train the brake blocks were found fully applied to the wheels.

The deadman's device isolating valve was found in the "on" position, therefore the deadman's pedal would have been operative when the collision occurred. The investigation report commented on the design of pedal, which is 3 inches wide and 11 inches long, pivoted at the rear and so positioned that it is operated by the driver's left foot. There is a gap between the pedal and the side of the knee-hole space which is 2 inches wide at the front and 3 inches wide at the back and the natural position for the foot to adopt is one in which it lies across this space resting only on the left edge of the pedal. In



this position the driver can sit relaxed in his seat, with no conscious effort being required to keep the pedal depressed. The inspector had stated in a previous accident report that this simple pedal type of deadman's device was unsatisfactory and that it should be designed so that in order to keep the control in the "on" position, it requires some degree of positive action by the driver, either continuously or at close intervals. He was assured that this

question, and the question of maintaining cabs at a comfortable temperature without causing drowsiness, had been receiving close attention from the British Railways Board.

All the switches controlling the heaters in No. 2 cab, six in number, were found in the "off" position, and one of the two roof ventilators, which act as extractors, was found to be open. It was not possible to establish whether the side windows had been open or closed.

The report also noted that on D94 there was no means for the controlled admission of fresh air to the cab, so if the windows were closed there was the possibility that the air in the cab could have become 'vitiated'. Also, if the seal on the door at the rear of the cab was not fully effective, the cab could have been contaminated by fumes drawn in from the engine compartment. In this instance the door had been distorted by the collision and it was not possible to determine the efficiency of the sealing strip around it.

The report concluded that D94 was still under power and running at about 45 mph when it passed Stanton Gate North signal box, but owing to the unfortunate death of the train crew, it could only be speculated on what the conditions were in the cab and what led both men to become completely unaware that they were running into danger. From the position in which the controls were found it was apparent that the driver had, at the last moment, shut off power and made what was probably an emergency brake application.

Earlier in their shift, the driver and fireman had relieved the crew of 'Jubilee' steam locomotive No. 45562 'Alberta' at Nottingham and worked the 8:55pm Nottingham to Carlisle freight as far as Rotherham (Masborough), arriving 71 minutes late at 12.08am. Here they were relieved and the 10.40 pm. Leeds-Leicester, which they were to work back with D94, was already waiting for them in Masborough Sorting Sidings North. They changed over without delay and the train left Masborough at 12.21am. Therefore they were only at Rotherham for 13 minutes, but should have had a total of 54 minutes, including 20 minutes rest time. The driver had only been passed to drive mainline diesel locomotives a few weeks before, so it was very possible that the sudden change from steam to diesel, with the contrast between the abundance of fresh air on the steam footplate and the possible lack of it in the diesel cab made it all too easy for him to become drowsy.

The line on which the collision occurred had not yet been provided with the Automatic Warning System (AWS) equipment, which would almost certainly have averted the collision, since if the driver had failed to react to a warning horn on approaching to the first distant signal at Caution, an automatic brake application would have followed. The report therefore recommended that it be fitted without delay!

D94 was recovered from the crash site and moved to Derby Works. During rebuilding, the original split box head codes were replaced with one piece centre head code boxes and the lower body side triangular access panels replaced with grilles. It was released back into traffic in late 1964.

The loco was released from ETH conversion at Derby in October 1973, renumbered 45114 and in September 1979 its BR blue livery was enhanced by the addition of a white roof and red bufferbeams.



Why it received these is not known, but it only lasted a few months before the loco entered Derby for a Heavy General Overhaul in 1980. The headcode boxes were also removed in favour of the standard flush front end with sealed beam headlights.

45114 received a final, light overhaul, at Derby in late 1985, being released back to traffic on 07/03/86. Its career ended on 11/02/87 when it suffered a main generator flashover near Hinckley whilst working 1F11, 16:48 Derby – Nuneaton. Despite being less than 12 months from overhaul, repairs were not authorised and the loco was withdrawn on 17/02/87. After several weeks of storage at Tinsley yielding valuable spare parts, it was towed to March where it languished until 1994. Scrapping finally took place on 07/02/94 at MC Metals in Glasgow.

**Steve Dexter
December 2015**

(Photos were all taken by Mr Neville Berry and are reproduced by kind permission of his grandson, Andrew)