

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

RAILWAY ACCIDENT

Report on the Collision and
Consequent Derailment that
occurred on 12th June 1976
between Laurencekirk and Carmont

IN THE
SCOTTISH REGION
BRITISH RAILWAYS

LONDON: HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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REPORT

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RAILWAY INSPECTORATE,
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT,
2 MARSHAM STREET,
LONDON, SW1
8th December 1977.

SIR,

I have the honour to report for the information of the Secretary of State, in accordance with the Order dated 22nd June 1976, the result of my Inquiry into a collision and the consequent derailment of the locomotive hauling an express passenger train that occurred at about 22.46 on Saturday 12th June 1976, between Laurencekirk and Carmont in the Scottish Region of British Railways.

During an engineering possession of the Up line, a diesel locomotive running light collided with a train loaded with prefabricated track panels being propelled in the opposite direction by another locomotive. As a result a number of track panels were displaced and one became foul of the Down line on which was approaching the 14.00 King's Cross to Aberdeen express passenger train. Despite making an emergency brake application, its driver was unable to bring his train to a stand clear of the obstruction. The locomotive struck the panel at a speed of about 10 mile/h, was pierced in 3 places by the rails, and one wheel was derailed.

The emergency services were alerted by a nearby farmer and responded quickly. The only injuries were to two railway employees, travelling in the rear cab of the light locomotive, who were conveyed by ambulance to hospital where one was detained for 3 days. The coaches of the passenger train were hauled back to Montrose and the passengers were conveyed forward by bus. The Down line was returned to traffic for single line working at caution at 04.45 the following day and both lines were returned to normal traffic at 20.45 on 13th June 1976. At the time of the accident it was a fine clear night and almost dark.

DESCRIPTION

The Site and Signalling

1. The accidents occurred close to the 211½ mile post about 12½ miles north of Montrose, and 1 mile to the north of Laurencekirk Signal Box on the Aberdeen to London East Coast Main Line. Here the railway runs towards the south-west in the Up direction which is towards Edinburgh. Laurencekirk Signal Box is at the 210¾ mile post and Carmont Signal Box close to the 219½ mile post. The maximum permitted line speed is 75 mile/h, the double line between the signal boxes is worked on the Absolute Block System, and it is not equipped with AWS.

The Trains

2. The 14.00 King's Cross to Aberdeen express passenger train (1S35) consisted of locomotive No. 47 418 with ten coaches weighing a total of 454 tonnes, permitted to travel at maximum line speed, and with a total brake force of 392 tonnes. The locomotive travelling light to Laurencekirk was No. 40 053, which had hauled 12 hoppers of ballast stone from Aberdeen as 9Z11 and left them in the section; it weighed 134 tonnes with a brake force of 51 tonnes. The locomotive propelling 12 'Sturgeon' bogie flat wagons fitted with hand-brakes only, loaded with track panels, and with a brakevan at either end (9Z12) was No. 40 066; the total weight of this train and locomotive was 750 tonnes.

The Course of the Collisions and Damage Caused

3. Details of the engineering work were published in the weekly printed notice of permanent way operations No. EN 24, covering the period of Saturday 12th June to Friday 18th June, as follows:

<i>At or between</i>	<i>Lines affected</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 June Item 90	Up BLOCKED	22.30 Saturday to 18.00 Sunday
Carmont and Laurencekirk	Down between Trains	Relaying and Unloading Rails. On track mechanical maintenance. Single line working over Down line 10.00 to 18.00 Crane working.

4. The detailed arrangements for the engineering work on 12/13th June were made, in accordance with the Rule Book, at a pre-planning meeting held at Perth on Tuesday 8th June. This was attended by representatives of the Civil Engineering and Operating Departments. At this meeting Divisional Chief Permanent Way Inspector W. Mackie nominated Sub-Inspector W. Ogg to be Person in charge of the Possession for the night shift and Inspector T. Chisholm for the day shift. Both men were from the Area Engineers staff and the track between Laurencekirk and Carmont lay within their areas of responsibility. Inspector F. L. Hurst was to be in charge of the relaying work assisted by Sub-Inspector J. Taylor, both men belonging to the

renewals staff and directly under the control of Chief Inspector Mackie. The Operating Department Supervisor, an appointment also mentioned in the Rule Book, was named as Traffic Assistant (Inspector) A. G. Wilson. The meeting also arranged for the storage of engineers' trains at Laurencekirk and for three locomotives to travel from Aberdeen to Laurencekirk where one would move the track relaying machine along the Down line and the others would take the prefabricated track train on the Up line.

5. During the remainder of the week Chief Inspector Mackie's instructions were conveyed to those concerned in the Engineering Department and, in ways which are not entirely clear, two changes were made in the arrangements; neither of which was, during local discussion between Chisholm, Taylor, and Ogg, notified to the Operating Department or to Chief Inspector Mackie. Because it was apparently the custom in the Aberdeen Area to have a Person in charge of the Possession for each line, and possibly for convenience, Sub-Inspector Ogg agreed to become the Person in charge of the Possession for the Down Line and Sub-Inspector Taylor that for the Up line. The other change was that because some of the ballast required for the relaying was still at Aberdeen on the Friday, two of the locomotives were to be sent to Laurencekirk coupled together and running light while the third was to haul the train of ballast which it was to leave in the section between Carmont and Laurencekirk short of the work site.

6. On the evening of the accident three locomotives were provided and two of them ran coupled to Laurencekirk. The third, hauling 9Z11, stopped at Carmont Signal Box where Sub-Inspector Taylor took possession of the Up line and the train went forward into the possession, stopping to detach the wagons, the locomotive proceeding forward on the Up line at about 40 mile/h towards Laurencekirk. Meanwhile the driver of 9Z12 was irregularly authorised by Inspector Wilson to propel his train into the possession on the Up line from Laurencekirk towards Carmont. At about 22.44, the locomotive which was running light came into violent collision at about 20 mile/h with 9Z12 moving slowly in the opposite direction. The locomotive suffered considerable damage, the leading bogie being forced back about 8 feet. A large part of the body work of the leading brakevan of 9Z12 was virtually destroyed, it was forced up onto the first wagon of track which in turn mounted the next wagon loaded with four panels of prefabricated track. The load of these two wagons became dislodged, tangled together, and one panel of track fell from a wagon and fouled the Down line.

7. The driver of 9Z12 knew that 1S35 was due and when the collision occurred he ran back to protect the Down line with a red lamp. The driver of 1S35, which had passed Laurencekirk under clear signals at about 70 mile/h at 22.45, saw the Danger signal and made an emergency brake application reducing speed so that his locomotive struck the wreckage at between 10 and 15 mile/h. The left leading bogie wheel of the locomotive was derailed, one rail pierced the front panel above the draw hook and passed under the driving seat, one rail entered the engine room about 3 feet behind the door of the leading cab, and one rail was driven into the underframe piercing the fuel tank. Because of the escape of oil from the ruptured fuel tank the Fire Brigade attended during re-railing operations. The brakevan and the leading two wagons of the train of track panels were so badly damaged that they had to be condemned.

8. Applicable extracts from the British Railways Rule Book governing the taking of engineering possessions have been re-printed in an Annexure at the back of the report together with a plan of the accident site and the layout at Laurencekirk Station.

EVIDENCE

As to the Preparation for the Possession

9. Chief Inspector W. Mackie told me that he was stationed at Perth and that at the pre-planning meeting he made the necessary nominations and arrangements. He knew that the name of the Person in charge of the Possession was required so that the signal boxes could be informed and did not know of any occasion when they had not been told. He was sure that his statement was understood. He expected Sub-Inspector Ogg to take possession of the Up line at Carmont at about 22.00 and of the Down line at Laurencekirk at about 23.30 using a car and then to travel with the track relaying machine. After the meeting he asked Inspector Hurst to see Sub-Inspector Taylor at Aberdeen and tell him how the work was to be done. On the Thursday morning Chief Inspector Mackie told Inspector Chisholm, who was at Aberdeen, on the telephone that Sub-Inspector Ogg was to be the Person in charge of the Possession for the night shift and that Chisholm was to be the Person in charge of the Possession on the Sunday. He was sure that these instructions and those about the disposition of the trains were clear. He said that it had been his habit for some years to have one Person in charge of the Possession and that he had not realised until after the accident that the Rule Book allowed a different man to be Person in charge of the Possession for each line. He pointed out that since he had only nominated one Person in charge of the Possession for each shift of the whole job his intention was perfectly clear.

10. Inspector F. L. Hurst confirmed what had been said by Chief Inspector Mackie at the conference and said that on Wednesday 9th June he met Sub-Inspector Taylor and discussed the coming weekend's work. He said he did not mention who was to be in charge of the Possession, only saying that Sub-Inspector Ogg would be with them. Because Inspector Hurst was coming from Perth on the evening of 12th June he asked Sub-Inspector Taylor to pick up the track relaying machine operators from Stonehaven using the three locomotives going to Laurencekirk and told him to set up the trains at Laurencekirk so that they were ready to come in once the possession had been taken. On the Thursday morning Inspector Hurst confirmed to Chief Inspector Mackie that he had spoken to Sub-Inspector Taylor and that everything seemed clear.

11. *Inspector T. Chisholm* and *Sub-Inspector J. Taylor* agreed with what had been said by Chief Inspector Mackie and Inspector Hurst; however from their evidence and that of *Sub-Inspector W. Ogg* who was based at Laurencekirk covering the line between Kinnaber Junction and Drumlithie, it was clear that, in the course of day-to-day work preparing for the relaying job and possibly following the precedent of previous weekends, they had agreed that Ogg was to be the Person in charge of the Possession of the Down line, Taylor of the Up line and that Chisholm would relieve Taylor while Ogg would stay until the relaying was finished. Chisholm also arranged for Taylor to bring down a train of a ballast with him from Aberdeen using one or two of the locomotives, and to leave the wagons at Mondynes Level Crossing short of the works site. Ogg knew of this arrangement. Exactly when these arrangements were made is not clear nor is it clear who originated the changes. Chisholm however agreed that when he was telephoned by Chief Inspector Mackie he already knew of the alterations made to the names of the Persons in charge of the Possessions but did not mention this fact during the telephone call and the change was not notified to the Operating Department.

As to the Taking of the Possession

12. Sub-Inspector Taylor told me that on the Saturday evening he spoke to the crews of the three locomotives at Aberdeen, telling them that two of the locomotives coupled together were to travel light to Laurencekirk and that he would be travelling with the train of ballast, stopping at Carmont to take possession of the Up line, and then continuing to Laurencekirk. He was satisfied that all the men knew that he was going to Laurencekirk and would meet them there. The ballast train stopped at Stonehaven to pick up the two track-relaying-machine operators and a hand-signalman and again at Carmont where he and the hand-signalman alighted. He went to the signal box after instructing the hand-signalman how and where to put down the protection after the train had gone through. He told the signalman at Carmont that he was taking possession of the Up line and the signalman made an entry in the train register book (TRB) which read "22.23 possession of Up line taken by J. P. Taylor" this entry he signed. As he left the signal box the signalman was using the telephone to Laurencekirk and saying that possession of the Up line had been taken at 22.23.

13. Taylor told me that Inspector Chisholm provided the hand-signalmen at both ends of the possession and that usually, as soon as the far end was telephoned and told possession had been taken, the hand-signalman there went out and arranged the protection. He admitted that he had not reminded the signalman at Carmont to put reminder appliances on the levers nor had he made certain that protection was applied at both ends of the possession before he signed in the TRB. Taylor then told the driver of 9Z11 that he could pass the section signal at Danger, that possession had been taken, and he then rejoined the train. It proceeded to Mondynes Level Crossing where the guard applied the brakes and uncoupled the locomotive. With the guard and the track-relaying-machine operators, Taylor climbed into the rear cab of the locomotive and waved the driver forward slowly so that he could tell the track chorman, who was on the level crossing, that he had taken possession and that a start could be made on removing fishplate bolts. Taylor was in the rear cab of the locomotive talking to the other three men when the collision occurred.

14. On duty from 22.00 on the night of the accident at Carmont was *Rest Day Relief Signalman T. Lochhead* who told me that he had seen the engineering notice on the preceding Friday at Montrose and knew that there were to be engineering operations while he was at Carmont. Neither his own copy of the notice nor that in the signal box were endorsed with the name of the Person in charge of the Possession which he had always found before written on the signal box copy of the notice or on a note, although occasionally the person arriving to take the possession had not been the person named. On the night of the accident, when he arrived in the signal box, the signalman whom he was relieving was being asked by someone on the telephone from Laurencekirk if the man had arrived on the ballast train from Aberdeen to take possession. When the ballast train arrived at Carmont Sub-Inspector Taylor entered the signal box and said "I am taking possession". Lochhead made an entry in the TRB in accordance with Section TIII of the Rule Book which Taylor signed and he counter-signed. Lochhead told Taylor that it was all right for the train to enter the section but admitted that he did not instruct the driver to pass the signal at Danger. He then spoke on the telephone to the signalman at Laurencekirk and told him that possession had been taken at 22.23. They agreed to cancel the entries relating to the ballast train and Lochhead asked for the Up line block instrument to be placed to 'Train on Line'. He put a reminder appliance on the section signal lever after the train had departed and, so far as he knew, that was the only train that was to enter the possession at Carmont and he was surprised that it was going in so early; he did not know that Taylor intended to stop in section, detach wagons, and then proceed with the locomotive to Laurencekirk.

15. *Signalman G. Scorgie* told me that he had seen the Engineering Notice in Laurencekirk Signal Box earlier in the week and realised that it was not endorsed, as usual, with the name of the Person in charge of the Possession of either the Up or Down line. He did not query this omission although there had always previously been some indication in the signal box of the person's name. When he signed on duty at Laurencekirk Signal Box at 21.52 on 12th June, two locomotives coupled together were approaching from Carmont and arrived shortly afterwards. He signalled them into the sidings, sent the 'Train out of Section' bell signal, and accepted a ballast train. Inspector Wilson, who was also in the signal box, said that he wished to do some shunting with the locomotives that had arrived but Scorgie told him that this was not possible because the ballast train had been accepted. Inspector Wilson then used the telephone to Carmont and Scorgie, who had not heard what was said, was afterwards told to delete the entry in the TRB for the ballast train as possession of the Up line between Carmont and Laurencekirk had already been taken and the ballast train was staying at the site of work. Wilson then went to carry out the shunting movements and two or three minutes later the signalman at Carmont telephoned Scorgie and told him that the possession had been taken and that the ballast train had entered the section. Scorgie made no attempt to find out by whom the possession had been

taken but cancelled the 'Line Clear' on his Up line block instrument and set it to 'Train on Line', he also made an entry in his TRB. He did not tell the handsignalman, who was in the signal box, to protect the Up line once the possession had been taken even though he knew that it was the man's job to do so. After the shunting had been completed Inspector Wilson came up into the signal box and used the telephone again but Scorgie had no idea to whom he spoke. He told me that he knew that later on there was to be a possession of the Down line and he had assumed that Sub-Inspector Ogg, who was in the signal box when he took duty, would be the Person in charge of that Possession.

16. The Operating Department Supervisor, *Traffic Assistant A. G. Wilson*, told me that he was based at Montrose and received a hand-written brief on 10th June telling him to attend the site of the engineering work, giving details of the engineering operations, and nominating Sub-Inspector Ogg to be the Person in charge of the Possession. Wilson arrived at Laurencekirk Signal Box at approximately 21.30 on the evening of the accident, signed the TRB, but did not check to see that the notice had been endorsed with the name of the Person in charge of the Possession. Shortly after his arrival he was telephoned by Sub-Inspector Ogg to say that he and the flagman would be shortly coming down to the signal box. After the arrival of Scorgie, Wilson, who had noticed that two locomotives were coming from Carmont, remarked that he was expecting three; the signalman replied that he thought there was a ballast train coming from Aberdeen. When Sub-Inspector Ogg arrived, Wilson went with him and the guards of the two locomotives to carry out the shunting movements. During the shunting Wilson went back to the signal box and confirmed with the signalman, from track level, that possession had been taken at 22.23. He did not ask who had actually taken possession. Inspector Wilson claimed that having left the signal box at about 22.00, after deciding how the shunting would be carried out, he did not re-enter it until approximately 22.40. Wilson agreed that he had seen Sub-Inspector Ogg's name on the brief which he had received before the work and I asked him why he was not concerned that Ogg was at Laurencekirk if he was to be the Person to take Possession of the Up line and why he did not question the situation. He replied that he thought that, as on a previous occasion, the pre-planning arrangements were being flouted and it was his intention to allow matters to proceed and then to report the matter in full to his Area Manager.

As to the Movements of the Engineer's Trains

17. Inspector Wilson said that during the shunting he told Sub-Inspector Ogg that possession of the Up line had been taken at 22.23 and that the latter took one of the locomotives over to the track relaying machine. After completing the shunting and having told the guard of the track panel train that possession had been taken and that the train was to propel to Mondynes where it would be met by engineering staff, he signalled the driver of the train, which had a brakevan at each end, to propel it in the wrong direction on the Up line until the locomotive reached him. He then instructed the driver of the track panel train to propel to Mondynes and the driver asked if the ballast train was not coming to Laurencekirk; at this Inspector Wilson said he turned to Sub-Inspector Ogg who, he claimed, was coming back towards him and said "The driver of the prefab train thinks that the ballast is coming through to Laurencekirk" to which he said Ogg replied "No, no Mr. Wilson, it is staying at Mondynes". Wilson then said to the driver of the train "The engineers have possession of the Up line, you can now propel to Mondynes" and said that he reminded the driver that 1S35 was to come, because he thought it right that the driver should be warned that he would be overtaken on a propelling movement. He agreed that he had not attempted to obtain the permission of the Person in charge of the Possession before sending the train into the possession. He said that he knew the requirements of Section TIII of the Rule Book and usually the detonators and the banner, or the red lamp did not go down until after the train had entered the possession. He claimed that Sub-Inspector Ogg had told him that the train of ballast coming from Aberdeen would stay to the north of Mondynes Level Crossing and he gave the driver of the train of track panels no specific stopping point because he understood that a hand-signalman would be in attendance to stop trains at the level crossing. When the train departed he walked back to the signal box to see that the other possession was correctly taken, claiming that Ogg was with him and he noticed that protection was being applied to the Up line immediately after the train had departed. Shortly afterwards 1S35 passed under clear signals running normally and a minute or two later he noticed a red light, which he thought at first was the handsignalman, but on going to investigate he then discovered that an accident had occurred.

18. *Driver J. Coull* was the driver of the locomotive propelling the track panel train. He told me that he worked engineer's trains only now and again, mostly on Sundays, but that he was conversant with Section TIII of the Rule Book. He said that an inspector usually took them into a possession. Before leaving Aberdeen he and another driver were told by Sub-Inspector Taylor to proceed to Laurencekirk with the two locomotives and that he would see them there. He did not notice the driver of the locomotive which was to haul the wagons of ballast on which Sub-Inspector Taylor said he would be travelling to Laurencekirk. On arrival at Laurencekirk Coull carried out the shunting and then propelled the train of track panels in the wrong direction along the Up line, stopping with the rearmost brakevan and locomotive nearly opposite the signal box. The train stood there for 2 or 3 minutes and then Inspector Wilson came to the cab and said that they were ready to go into the section. He went across to where Inspector Wilson was standing, opened the door and asked him what he was saying. Wilson replied "Everything is alright, proceed to the job of work". Coull asked if anyone was coming with them and Inspector Wilson, without having to seek confirmation, said "No, you are alright for going and taking possession of the line" which he accepted. The driver said that he was not concerned that there was no-one from the Engineer's Department with them in view of Inspector Wilson's answer nor about the non arrival of Sub-Inspector Taylor at Laurencekirk because he thought arrangements had been made for Inspector Wilson to take charge. He knew that Inspector Wilson could not be the Person in charge of the Possession, but assumed that his instructions could be

accepted. He set off into the section using the locomotive horn and travelling very slowly at about 10 mile/h; he did not see a banner or a red light, or explode detonators on the way into the section and he had no warning of the impending collision.

19. In charge of 9Z12 was *Guard S. Wright* who saw Inspector Taylor at Aberdeen talking to the drivers and asked one of the other guards who he was; he had met Sub-Inspector Ogg and Inspector Wilson before. He told me that he worked engineer's trains fairly often but had never been advised of the name of the Person in charge of the Possession. On arrival at Laurencekirk he was met by Inspector Wilson and, with Sub-Inspector Ogg they carried out the shunting. When this was completed Ogg left them and went over to the yard while he and Inspector Wilson travelled in the brakevan as the locomotive propelled the train back towards the signal box. They were met by the signalman and he heard Inspector Wilson ask if he had taken possession to which the signalman replied that he had and that there was a train coming. Inspector Wilson went with the signalman to the signal box and he over-heard Inspector Wilson say that there was a mix-up. While Wright prepared the sidelights for his train he noticed movement in the signal box and assumed that they were telephoning in order to get permission for the train to enter the possession. After about 10 minutes the Inspector called to him that it was alright for them to proceed to the site of work at Mondynes Level Crossing and he replied that he was ready to go. He saw Inspector Wilson go back to the driver and then the train moved away. He said that there was no banner or red light, nor detonators and he had taken it for granted that these would be put up after they had gone into the section. As they went along he kept a lookout and noticed that one of his lamps was not burning; just as he started to trim it he saw the light locomotive approaching on the same line and ran out of the brakevan taking the tail lamp, jumped off and climbed the embankment to get away from the collision. Afterwards Inspector Taylor came out of the rear cab of the locomotive and the two of them ran towards Laurencekirk in an attempt to protect the line.

20. The driver of the locomotive of 9Z11 was *Driver D. Smith* who told me that he frequently worked engineer's trains including those operated under Section TIII of the Rule Book. With the other two drivers he was instructed by Sub-Inspector Taylor at Aberdeen before they departed in what was to be done and he considered the instructions to be quite clear. He stopped at Stonehaven and collected three workmen and then again at Carmont where Sub-Inspector Taylor went to the signal box and, when he returned, told Smith that he had signed for possession of the Up line, that he was to proceed to a point just north of Mondynes Level Crossing where the wagons would be detached, and that the locomotive was then to proceed light to Laurencekirk. Smith was also told by Taylor to pass the Starting Signal at Danger and was quite satisfied that the line would be clear because he had the Person in charge of the Possession actually with him. On leaving Carmont there was no banner or red light, nor detonators on the track. He could not remember an occasion when he had been told by the signalman to proceed to the banner and then told there by a member of the Engineering Department that he could enter the possession.

21. He drove at about 40 mile/h after detaching the wagons because there was about 5 miles to go and he clearly understood his instructions; the locomotive was in good working order and the brake was quite adequate. About a mile before Laurencekirk, travelling round a left hand curve, his driver's assistant shouted that there was a red light coming towards them; he applied the brake and his driver's assistant lay on the floor. He thought he had reduced speed to about 20 mile/h when the collision occurred and said that his assistant protected the Down line. He said that he had not always been aware who was the Person in charge of a Possession but he knew Sub-Inspector Taylor who said that he was the Person in charge of the Possession and he took his instructions from him. The guard of the ballast train, *Guard R. Riddoch*, confirmed the evidence of his driver and the instructions given by Sub-Inspector Taylor about the working of the train. It was just light when they left Carmont and after uncoupling the locomotive at the level crossing he said to the driver "All clear for Laurencekirk" because the Person in charge of the Possession was travelling on the locomotive with them and those were his instructions. He travelled in the rear cab of the locomotive until the collision in which he was somewhat shaken, but he left the locomotive and ran up the bank waving a red lamp towards the oncoming passenger train.

22. Sub-Inspector Ogg told me that he was not surprised when two locomotives arrived at Laurencekirk despite having been told that one would come down initially; he realised that one locomotive still had to come although he expected Sub-Inspector Taylor to travel by road with the relaying machine operators. He helped with the shunting of 9Z12 and then Inspector Wilson told him to take the other locomotive into the yard and couple it to the track-relaying machine. He collected his equipment from the signal box and as he entered the brakevan attached to the track-relaying machine, he saw 9Z12 moving back towards the signal box. The hand-signalman with Sub-Inspector Ogg when he arrived at the signal box had been given instructions to block both the Up and Down lines when the possessions were taken. This man worked on his own initiative and left the signal box while the shunting was in progress.

23. When Sub-Inspector Ogg came out of the brakevan, 9Z12 had departed and he had assumed that the train had left because the possession of the Up line had been taken; he did not enquire who had authorised the train to go into the possession and he did not authorise it himself. He claimed that at no time was he asked about the need for the panel train to go into the section; all that he discussed with Inspector Wilson was the marshalling of 9Z12. He expected Sub-Inspector Taylor, as a result of the arrangements made during that week, to take the train into the possession but said that the fact that 9Z12 had entered the possession did not worry him even though he had not seen Sub-Inspector Taylor. As 1S35 passed, Ogg went to the signal box and asked the signalman if everything was ready for him to take possession of the Down line. They realised that the express was taking a long time to reach Carmont and then saw the red light out on the track which Inspector Wilson went to investigate.

Additional Evidence as to the Taking of Possessions

24. Sub-Inspector Ogg said that he had worked in the area for 6 years and in every case, where both lines had been required for engineering operations, one man had always been the Person in charge of the Possession for the Up line and another for the Down line. He described the arrangements made on the previous weekend when he was to take possession of the Down line and Sub-Inspector Taylor was to take possession of the Up line. Ogg's name was endorsed on the copy of the notice that was held in Laurencekirk Signal Box and he had seen it when he went in and had no difficulty in taking possession. He could not say what had happened at the signal box at the other end of the section or on other occasions when both lines were to be blocked; but he did remember an occasion when he had gone to a signal box and asked to take possession and his name had not been written on the notice and he was refused permission.

25. Inspector Chisholm told me that it was normal in the Aberdeen Area to have one Person in charge of the Possession for each line and that during the weekend previous to that of the accident, when they had been ballast cleaning in the same section, there had been a Person in charge of the Possession for each line. He also mentioned an occasion when the name of the man who arrived to take possession was different to that in the signal box and the possession was refused. Sub-Inspector Taylor told me that he had always worked in the Aberdeen Area and that he was not always told the name of the Person in charge of the Possession. On occasions he had had to assume that he had been nominated. The weekend before the accident, because his name was not in the signal box, possession had been refused.

26. Inspector Wilson told me that he had been on duty during the day for an engineer's possession the previous weekend arranged in the same manner as that for the weekend of the accident, Sub-Inspector Ogg's name being endorsed on the notices on this occasion. Wilson could not remember whether possession was taken of both lines at the same time on that Sunday but he did know that Ogg did not take possession and that, presumably because the Engineer's staff had altered the arrangements, Sub-Inspector Taylor took the possession. He had reported the fact that the preplanning arrangements had been violated to his superior officer. Wilson said that he did not find out who was the Person in charge of the Possession on the weekend of the accident until early on the Sunday morning when Sub-Inspector Taylor arrived at Laurencekirk Signal Box. Until then he had had to assume that Taylor had taken the possession and was remaining with the ballast train at Mondynes; I questioned him as to whether his annoyance or feeling of being upset at this repetition of the previous week's alterations to the established arrangements might have affected his judgement but he said that although he was annoyed, he did not feel aggressive and considered he was there to co-operate and to get the job going.

27. Wilson claimed that he only sent 9Z12 into the possession because he had been told in the signal box how the locomotive of 9Z11 was to be utilised for the rear end of the track panel train, because Sub-Inspector Ogg had said when the train was ready that the engineers were waiting for it, and because, after the driver of 9Z12 had queried his instructions, he confirmed with Ogg that the train of stone ballast was staying at Mondynes. He agreed that he had never previously sent a train into a possession without the authority of the Person in charge of the Possession. He said that he had decided to work from Laurencekirk because the signalman there was comparatively new to the job. Because he left the signal box at about 22.00 and did not re-enter it until approximately 22.40 he had not seen the signalman at Laurencekirk set the block indicator for the Up line to 'Train on Line' but on his return the block indicator was correct. He agreed that he could have made certain who was the Person in charge of the Possession of the Up line by telephoning Carmont and that even the presence of Ogg in Laurencekirk Signal Box did not prompt him to do so. He expected to be notified if there was any change in the name of the Person in charge of the Possession but did not check whose name had been given to the signalman at Carmont although he intended to go there later to check the TRB in order to submit his full report. He said that he could see no reason why Sub-Inspector Taylor should not have taken possession if he had been nominated.

CONCLUSION

28. I conclude that Traffic Assistant Wilson authorised the movement of the train of track panels into and along the line under Engineer's possession without the authority of the Person in charge of the Possession in contravention of the Rule Book Section T Part III Clause 10.2.2 and 10.2.3. This led to a collision, for which he was responsible, between the engineers train and the light locomotive which resulted in a track panel being displaced, coming foul of the adjacent line, and being run into by the locomotive hauling 1S35. I consider that Sub-Inspector Taylor must bear some of the blame for failing to ensure that protection was complete at both ends of the possession before authorising a movement onto it. I think that Driver Smith must also be partly to blame since he made the result of the collision worse by travelling at what I consider was an excessive speed under the circumstances.

29. In addition to his flagrant action in sending the train of track panels into the possession without authority I consider that Inspector Wilson failed to carry out some duties which he should have undertaken as Operating Department Supervisor. He did not attempt to check on arrival that the two signalmen had been correctly advised who was to be the Person in charge of the Possession. He then, when it must have been obvious from the presence of Sub-Inspector Ogg at Laurencekirk that changes had been made to the planned arrangements, failed to establish what those changes were despite his experience of the previous weekend.

30. I cannot be sure that the accident would have been avoided if there had been no administrative failures preceding the taking of the possession but certainly if there had not been the errors and omissions

mentioned below, much more care would have been taken on the evening of the work. The two signalmen were not told who was to be the Person in Charge of the Possession and failed to query the omission. Nothing appears to have been done about Inspector Wilson's report of the possession the previous weekend, and neither Chief Permanent Way Inspector Mackie nor Inspector Hurst were aware, as I think they should have been, that in the Aberdeen area the pre-planning arrangements had been changed on a number of occasions to provide a Person in charge of the Possession for each line. This latter fact indicates that they failed to enquire, when visiting a site, about the safety arrangements. Finally Inspector Chisholm, even though aware that the arrangements made by Chief Inspector Mackie had been changed in two respects, failed to notify anyone about the changes.

31. In what was a simple possession with no complicating factors and apparently adequate numbers of Supervisors, there were a number of failures to carry out the procedure in the Rule Book. Sub-Inspector Taylor did not ensure, and the signalmen did not insist, that protection for the Up line possession was complete with detonators and banner or lamp at both ends before he signed the TRB and neither signalman gave the driver of the train going towards the possession from his signal box the permission to proceed to the detonators called for by the Rule Book. Neither of the guards or drivers was expecting to proceed to the detonators and there to be instructed to proceed into the possession and their evidence implied that this was usually the way things were done. Whilst the failure to perform this procedure correctly cannot be said with certainty to have caused the accident, its correct observance, particularly by Sub-Inspector Taylor might well have prevented it. At the least a somewhat casual attitude is indicated resulting possibly from habit or from a lack of careful supervision. The adoption of all the procedures laid down in the Rule Book when normal operating methods are suspended is essential for the safe working of the railway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

32. There have been three other recent accidents resulting from an unauthorised person instructing train crews to carry out movements within a possession. On 14th December 1975 near Woodley in the London Midland Region, on 4th April 1976 in Strood Tunnel in the Southern Region, and on 8th August 1976 near Lavington in the Western Region. They resulted in one railway employee being killed and six being injured. All were characterised, as was the one into which I inquired, by a failure to carry out the procedures laid down in the Rule Book and by a somewhat casual attitude. Accordingly I recommend that much closer attention must be given by all staff who are concerned, to the correct operation of Section T Part III of the Rule Book. I am told by the Officers of British Railways that the necessary action to educate and train staff who may be involved, especially those likely to have to act as a Person in charge of a Possession, is in hand. I also recommend that the Person in charge of a Possession shall wear an identifying garment, much as a pilotman wears an armband, and that the Rule Book shall be so amended. I am told that this proposal has been accepted. In addition, Section TIII of the Rule Book has recently been thoroughly examined to ascertain if the procedures laid down meet present day requirements and the conclusion has been reached that, with a few exceptions, they do so. I am in agreement with this conclusion.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A. G. B. KING

Major

The Permanent Secretary,
Department of Transport.

ANNEXURE

EXTRACTS FROM THE BRITISH RAILWAYS RULE BOOK GOVERNING THE PROTECTION OF ENGINEERING WORKS WHEN ABSOLUTE POSSESSION IS TAKEN

Section T, Part III. Protection of Engineering Works when the Engineer takes "Absolute Possession" of the Line

9. Method

9.1. Agreement to be reached between Operating and Engineering Departments

When it is necessary for an Engineering Department to have "absolute possession" of any running line, necessitating a complete stoppage of trains on that line, agreement must be reached between the Operating and Engineering Departments as to the extent of the work and the times during which it will be performed.

9.2. Publication of details of work

Except in emergency, or to cover exceptional circumstances and then only by agreement with the appropriate Operating Officer, details of such work must be published in the printed weekly Notice of Engineering Works.

9.3. Appointment of a person to be in charge of the possession

A member of the Engineering Department staff concerned must be appointed to be in charge of the possession. Except in emergency, who this man shall be must be agreed at a pre-planning meeting. The man so appointed is referred to herein as the PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE POSSESSION. The name of the Person in charge must be notified to the Operating Department in sufficient time to enable the Signaller involved to be advised prior to the date of the work.

9.4. More than one job in a possession

Where more than one job is to be carried out under one possession, an Engineering Supervisor must be appointed in charge of each job and he must report to the Person in charge of the Possession.

9.5. Operating Department Supervisor to be appointed if necessary

If considered necessary at the pre-planning meeting, an Operating Department Supervisor will be appointed and he will be responsible, in conjunction with the Person in charge of the Possession, for co-ordinating all traffic requirements.

10. Duties of the Person in Charge of the Possession

10.1. Arranging for the possession

10.1.1. The Person in charge of the Possession must arrange with the Signaller controlling the signal(s) leading to the line which is to be blocked, the actual time at which the possession can be granted and, at the agreed time, must arrange for the line to be protected as follows:

- (a) Three detonators, 20 yards apart, must be placed on the line concerned $\frac{1}{4}$ mile ahead of the next convenient stop signal in rear of the work, which can be maintained at Danger; where there are facing or trailing points, or another line crossing ahead of that signal, the detonators must be placed $\frac{1}{4}$ mile ahead of the points or crossing nearer the portion of line in the Engineer's possession.
- (b) Three detonators, 20 yards apart, must be placed on the line concerned ahead of the work, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on the approach side of the next convenient stop signal, but where this distance cannot be obtained, the detonators must be placed as far from the stop signal as circumstances permit.
- (d) A red banner flag by day, and after sunset or during fog or falling snow, a red light which must show along the line in both directions, must also be placed between the rails on the blocked line, at each set of detonators.

10.1.4. When the line has been protected, the Person in charge of the Possession must obtain an assurance from the Signaller that all signals controlling movements on to and across the blocked line will be kept at Danger and that reminder appliances have been used as appropriate.

10.1.5. The Signaller will then make and sign the prescribed entry in the Train Register, which the Person in charge of the Possession must countersign.

Where, however, owing to the distance involved it is impracticable for the Person in charge of the Possession to go to the signal box, the Train Register entry need not be countersigned but the Person in charge of the Possession must reach a clear understanding with the Signaller by telephone or other speaking equipment and give his name and department, the place from where he is speaking and the time.

10.1.6. The Person in charge of the Possession must not allow work to commence until the necessary protection has been provided and the Signaller has granted the possession, after which he may authorise each Engineering Supervisor to start work.

10.2. During the possession

10.2.2. Movements on to the blocked line

When it is necessary for an Engineer's train to proceed on to the blocked line from either end, the Signaller concerned, after obtaining the permission of the Person in charge of the Possession, will instruct the Driver to proceed cautiously to the detonators.

The Person in charge of the Possession must authorise any movement on to the blocked line beyond the detonators and arrange for these to be replaced as soon as the train has passed on to the blocked line.

10.2.3. Movements on the blocked line

The Person in charge of the Possession is responsible for authorising movements on the blocked line between the two sets of detonators.

10.3.2. The Signaller will make and sign the prescribed entry in the Train Register, which the Person in charge of the Possession must countersign.

Where, owing to the distance involved, it is impracticable for the Person in charge of the Possession to go to the signal box, the Train Register entry need not be countersigned, but the Person in charge of the Possession must reach a clear understanding with the Signaller by telephone or other speaking equipment and give his name and department, the place from where he is speaking and the time.

12. Duties of Signaller

12.1. Arranging for the possession

12.1.1. The Person in charge of the Possession will arrange with the Signaller controlling the signal(s) leading to the line which is to be blocked, the actual time at which the possession can be granted.

Before authorising the possession the Signaller must:

- (a) arrange for all signals controlling movements on to or across the blocked line to be placed at Danger, and must place reminder appliances on the appropriate levers/switches/push buttons, including those applicable to the release of any ground frame which gives access to the blocked line,
- (b) arrange for the signal in advance of the possession to be placed and maintained at Danger,
- (c) advise any other Signaller and/or Crossing Keepers concerned,
- (d) on lines worked under the Absolute Block System—when Single Line Working is not in operation, request the Signaller at the signal box in advance to place the block indicator for the line concerned to the Train on Line position.

12.1.2. When the Signaller is in a position to grant the possession he must make and sign an entry in the Train Register, as follows:

(Down) (Up) line from detonators placed at to detonators placed on approach side of signal has been taken possession of by (Person in charge of Possession) at hours.

This entry will be countersigned by the Person in charge of the Possession. Where, however, owing to the distance involved, it is impracticable for the Person in charge of the Possession to come to the signal box to countersign the entry, he will reach a clear understanding with the Signaller by telephone or other speaking equipment and give his name and department, the place from where he is speaking and the time. The Signaller must endorse the entry accordingly.

12.1.3. When the entry has been made in the Train Register, the Signaller must advise the Person in charge of the Possession that work may commence.

12.3. During the possession

12.3.1. Signals maintained at Danger

The Signallers concerned must maintain the signals leading to the blocked line at Danger until advice is received from the Person in charge of the Possession that the possession has been given up, that any ballast train(s) or "on track" equipment has been cleared from the line and that the line is again clear and safe for the passage of trains

12.3.3. Movements on to the blocked line

Before allowing an Engineer's train to proceed from either end towards the detonators protecting the blocked lines, the Signaller concerned must obtain the permission of the Person in charge of the Possession. The train must not be signalled on the block instruments but the Signaller must advise the Driver of the circumstances and, where necessary, instruct him to pass at Danger the signal leading to the blocked line, and proceed cautiously to the detonators. The Driver must also be reminded of any level crossings on the blocked line and instructed not to pass over them until he is satisfied it is safe to do so.

When the movement to the blocked line is being made in the wrong direction, the Signaller must ensure that the line over which it is to travel is clear, all points over which the movement will pass have been placed in the correct position and the necessary signals have been placed to Danger to protect the movement.

In addition, the Signaller must remind the Driver of any catch points, spring or unworked trailing points on the portion of line concerned.

13. Duties of Handsignalmen

13.1. The Handsignalman must station himself as directed by the Person in charge of the Possession, and must place three detonators, 20 yards apart, on the line and exhibit a hand Danger signal to any train approaching the detonators from either direction. A train must not be allowed to pass the detonators unless authority has been received from the Person in charge of the Possession.

When a train is allowed to proceed, the Handsignalman must reinstate the protection as soon as the train has passed.

13.2. The Handsignalman must remain at his appointed post and must not leave until he is relieved or recalled by the Person in charge of the Possession.

15. Duties of Trainmen

15.1. When instructed by the Signaller to proceed towards the line in the Engineer's possession, the Driver must travel cautiously to the detonators and there await further instructions.

15.2. Movements of Engineer's trains on the line in the Engineer's possession between the two sets of detonators must only be made on the authority of the Person in charge of the Possession or Supervisor in charge of work. When making such movements, the Driver must proceed cautiously prepared to stop short of any obstruction or handsignal, obtain authority before passing any fixed signal at Danger and must disregard the normal meaning of any fixed signal showing a proceed aspect. The Driver must not pass over any level crossing until he is satisfied it is safe to do so.

DOUBLE COLLISION AND DERAILMENT BETWEEN LAURENCEKIRK AND CARMONT
SCOTTISH REGION BRITISH RAILWAYS 12th JUNE 1976

