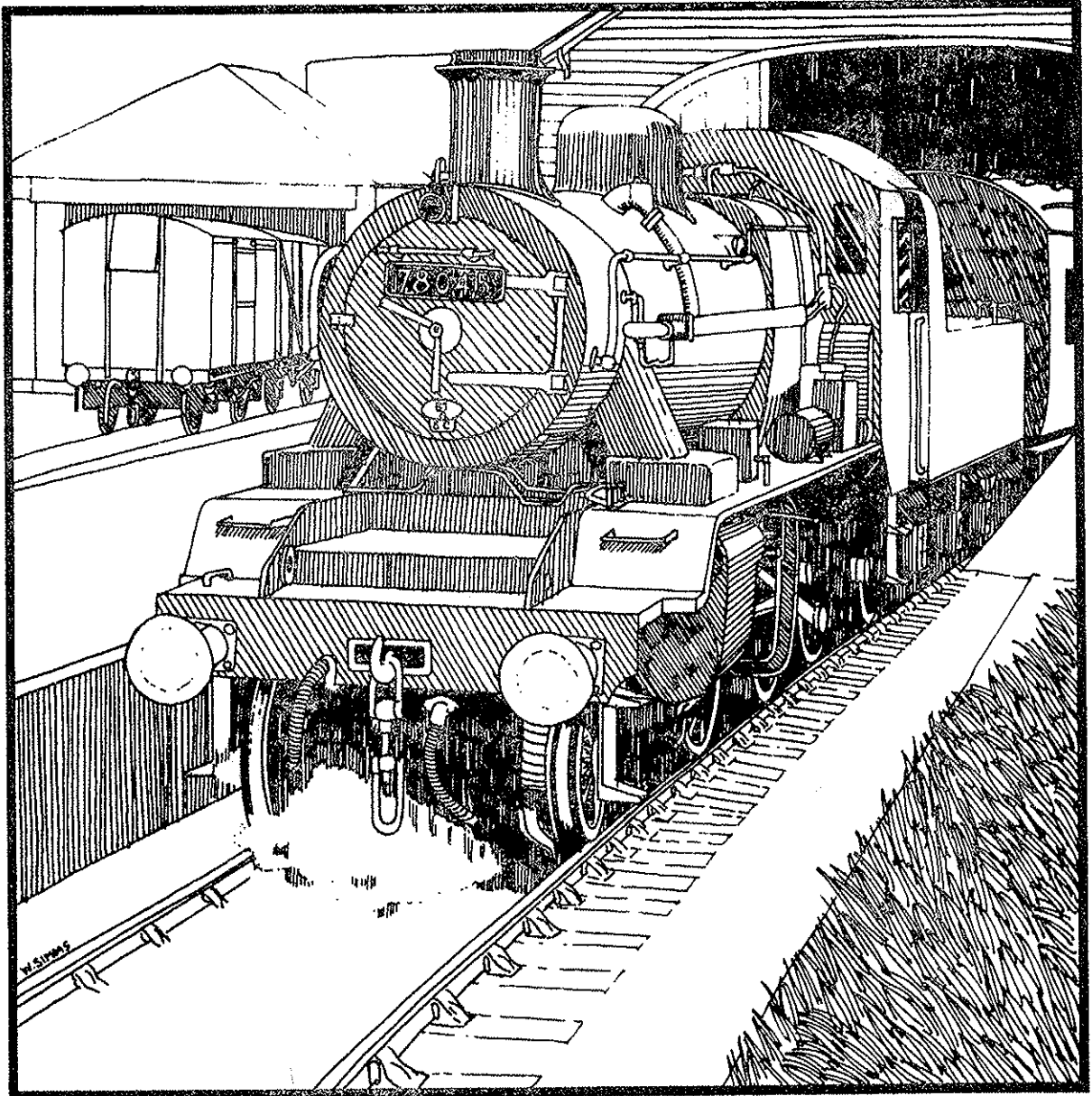


21/11/78

# COCK O' THE NORTH

1978

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGUS RAILWAY GROUP



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ANGUS RAILWAY GROUP  
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TOPS - THE SYSTEM IN OPERATION

In the memory banks of the computer are records of each and every wagon and there present contents and location, and also the status of maintenance of that wagon. Data applicable to locomotive maintenance and whereabouts is similarly stored.

When a consignment is handed over to B.R. for conveyance, the nearest TOPS office should be immediately informed. Stored in that office is a card relevant to that wagon, which is fed into a terminal connected to the main BR computer and codes appertaining to its content and destination are thereafter typed in. Before the next train is scheduled to depart to the destination of that wagon, or to an intermediate marshalling yard, is composed, the computer lists its contents. On its departure, the time, loco., driver and guard can be stored on the computer's files but through the request of the relevant unions it is common practice for only the loco and time of departure to be stored.

Meanwhile the computer terminal in the TOPS office nearest to the destination is actuated and cards are printed out appertaining to the wagons on the train heading thereto and their contents ( these cards subsequently become those that are fed in when the wagons are moved once more). Periodic checks of the wagons located in the area of the TOPS office are made and the computer consequently updated.

Its Advantages Through TOPS the location of wagons can be easily be found by employees ( and the recipient companies of consignments by telex ) and that the wagons are processed sufficiently rapidly for a saving in turnround time and hence wagons that would have been used whilst others were awaiting unloading are used. British Rail are confident that the scrapping of wagons whose use would otherwise have been necessitated represents such a great reduction on their wagon maintenance bill ( £ 3m.) that the introduction of TOPS has already paid its cost of £ 16 m.

GILES BAKER.

" BACK TRACK "

TWO DIE IN ARDLER RAIL CRASH

'DRIVER STOPS HOLIDAY TRAIN 5 FEET FROM DEBRIS'

NARROWEST THING HE'S EVER SEEN

The worst rail crash in the Angus and Perthshire area for many years took place on Saturday afternoon. Two railwaymen were fatally injured and a number of passengers injured when two trains collided at Ardler Junction.

Meanwhile, an excursion train from Glasgow, crowded with Aberdeen bound holidaymakers, was approaching the spot.

By good fortune, driver Gideon McLean, 58 Girdleness Road, Aberdeen noticed something amiss and brought his train to a stop within five feet of the wreckage.

Mr. McLean told the " Courier & Advertiser ":- " We were still a good bit from the distant signal when I saw great clouds of steam. It looked peculiar, and I started bringing the engine under control, just in case there was anything wrong. There are tar boilers near the line at that point which have sent steam across the lines. I couldn't see anything for steam, but I wasn't taking any chances. "

" The distant signal was with me but I kept my eye on it. Just as I drew level it changed to danger. I put on the brakes and brought the engine to a stop. It was the narrowest thing I have ever seen. "

" We stopped five feet from the wreckage. If we had been a moment or two sooner and missed the signal we would have run right into it."

The men fatally injured in the collision were John Laing (52), 42 Step Row, Dundee, driver of the 4.20 p.m. Dundee to Blairgowrie train, and James Smith (22), 78 Kirkehill Road, Torry, Aberdeen, fireman on the 3.30 p.m. Aberdeen to Euston Postal Express.

Trains Locked Together

Just before 5.10 p.m., the trains, which were travelling west towards Coupar Angus, collided at the point where the Aberdeen - Perth line and the Blairgowrie line converge, a mile east of Ardler Station.

Locked together, the two trains ploughed up 100 yards of double - line track. The three postal sorting vans immediately behind the express engine were

smashed and came to rest in a potato field.

#### Coaches Derailed

All but one of the six passenger coaches were derailed, though none were extensively damaged. The engine of the express parted from its tender, swung round to face the direction from which it had come, and crashed into a small bridge spanning a ditch forming the boundary between Angus and Perthshire. It turned over on its side. The stone parapet of the bridge was demolished.

The Blairgowrie engine was separated from the two coaches and finished upside down. One of the coaches of the Blairgowrie train lay at an angle down the embankment, one side torn open. The other was jammed against the last coach of the express.

#### Express Driver Flung Clear

David Nutt, driver of the postal express, had a miraculous escape. He was on the brake side of the engine and it was on that side that the collision took place. He was thrown clear and landed in a ditch.

With Mr. McLean, he went in search of his fireman, Smith, and found him trapped by the leg in the engine.

Laing, driver of the other train, had lost one foot and was trapped in the wreckage. Mr. McLean paid tribute to Mr. Frank Gorrie, Mill of Cammo, Ardler.

"He was the first on the scene, and he did an amazing job, working like a Trojan to free the driver of the Blairgowrie train. We called for doctors among the passengers of my train and for volunteers to help clear the wreckage and bring out the injured. People were treated on the embankment until help arrived."

#### No Panic

Passengers from the wrecked postal express were transferred to the excursion train, which returned to Perth. "The passengers were marvellous," said Mr. McLean. "There was no panic, and the women were quite calm."

The excursion train travelled via Dundee to reach Aberdeen shortly before midnight. Mr. McLean travelled as a passenger. Relief driver was Mr. John Kelman, 79 Gairn Terrace, Aberdeen, who said that there was no doubt that that Mr. McLean's

presence of mind had averted a more serious accident.

" We were profoundly grateful to the driver for his carefulness ", said one of the excursion train passengers.

#### First Aid Among The Debris

Doctors and ambulances went to the scene of the crash from Dundee, Coupar Angus, Blairgowrie and Newtyle. Meanwhile, railway employees, passengers and local residents who hurried to the spot rendered assistance to the injured amid the scattered debris. Ambulances could approach no nearer than 500 yards. Stretcher parties were organised to carry the injured along the track and across the fields.

In addition to those that were taken to Dundee Infirmary, a number of passengers received minor injuries. Some were taken to their homes in cars and taxis. Among them was Mr. George Miller, Burrelton, who is on the staff of the Hilltown ( Dundee ) branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland. He received injuries to both legs. Mr. Miller was taken home by the Rev. A. Clarke - Barnacle, Coupar Angus, who motored to the scene of the accident to give assistance. Mr. Clarke - Barnacle also took with him Mr. James Lawson, 19 Hill Gardens, Coupar Angus. Mr. Lawson told a reporter he was travelling with Mr. Miller in the second compartment of the leading coach.

#### Another Rail Crash

" Mr. Miller had an evening paper " said Mr. Lawson, " and had just remarked to me ' I see there's been another rail crash ' when there was the most awful noise. Things seemed to hit me from all directions. I was flung across the compartment. Something hit me on the shoulder - I think it was the rack. I couldn't see anything for dust and stour. Somehow I scrambled out. I don't know where the door was - it had disappeared. "

" I still had my coat over my arm and was clutching my hat when I found myself on the track. I shouted to George and climbed up and helped him out. There was some screaming among female passengers. Some people appeared to be trying to kick windows out in order to escape. I got a ladder from the repair kit and

propped it up against doors so that they could get out easily. There was no panic, apart from a little shouting. We got out first aid kits and started to attend to the injured. "

He remembered seeing Mr. Harry Laing, guard of the Blairgowrie train, running past him with a red flag.

#### Track Ready Today

Breakdown gangs arrived shortly after 8.00 p.m. on Saturday with three steam cranes. Yesterday afternoon both engines were back on the track and towed away, and the wreckage was moved aside.

Mr. C. Foster, district manager ( goods and passengers ) for Perth area, said an inquiry will be held shortly. It will take place in private at Perth.

The lines were expected to be in operation for early trains today.

Driver Neett was resting at home, 51 Glenbervie Road , Aberdeen, yesterday. He was little the worse, though suffering from bruises and scratches.

#### Trade Union Worker

Mr. Laing was a Dundee man. He started on the railway when he was 16. He was delegate from the N.U.R. to Dundee and Labour Council continuously from 1919 and chairman of Dundee branch N.U.R. For two years he was vice - chairman of the Trades and Labour Council, until his appointment as chairman last February. At the same time he was made chairman of the North of Scotland Council of the N.U.R. Gardening was his principal pastime. He leaves a wife and two children.

#### Ex - Soldier

Robert Nixon, injured fireman of the Dundee - Blairgowrie train, is critically ill. Aged 25, he is the only son of Mr & Mrs. Robert Nixon, 144 Princes Street. His sister, Mary, works in the infirmary and was on duty when her brother was brought in. He had great regard for his driver and Laing's death was kept secret from him. Nixon has been on the railway since demob, almost two years ago.

#### Locomotives Involved in Ardler Junction Accident

The postal was hauled by Class 5 XP 4 - 6 - 0 No. 45716 " Swiftsure ". Built at Crewe in 1936 she was withdrawn from service in 1964.

The branch line engine was Class 2P 0 - 4 - 4 T No. 55180. Designed by

J. T. McIntosh, she was built for the Caledonian Railway in 1906 and numbered 125. One of the well known " 439 " class she was withdrawn in 1948.

( Extracted by Lindsay A.C. Horne from the Courier & Advertiser -  
Monday, July 19th, 1948.)

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FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES?

Before the shame of having a liquidator appointed, why not consider making a little money for yourself and the Group at the Swap Shop, which it is planned to hold as the last meeting this winter session. Now is the time to look out your old relics, put a price on them and bring them along. Sell them and you will get 90% of the proceeds, the Group retaining 10%. Quite a bargain for all!

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