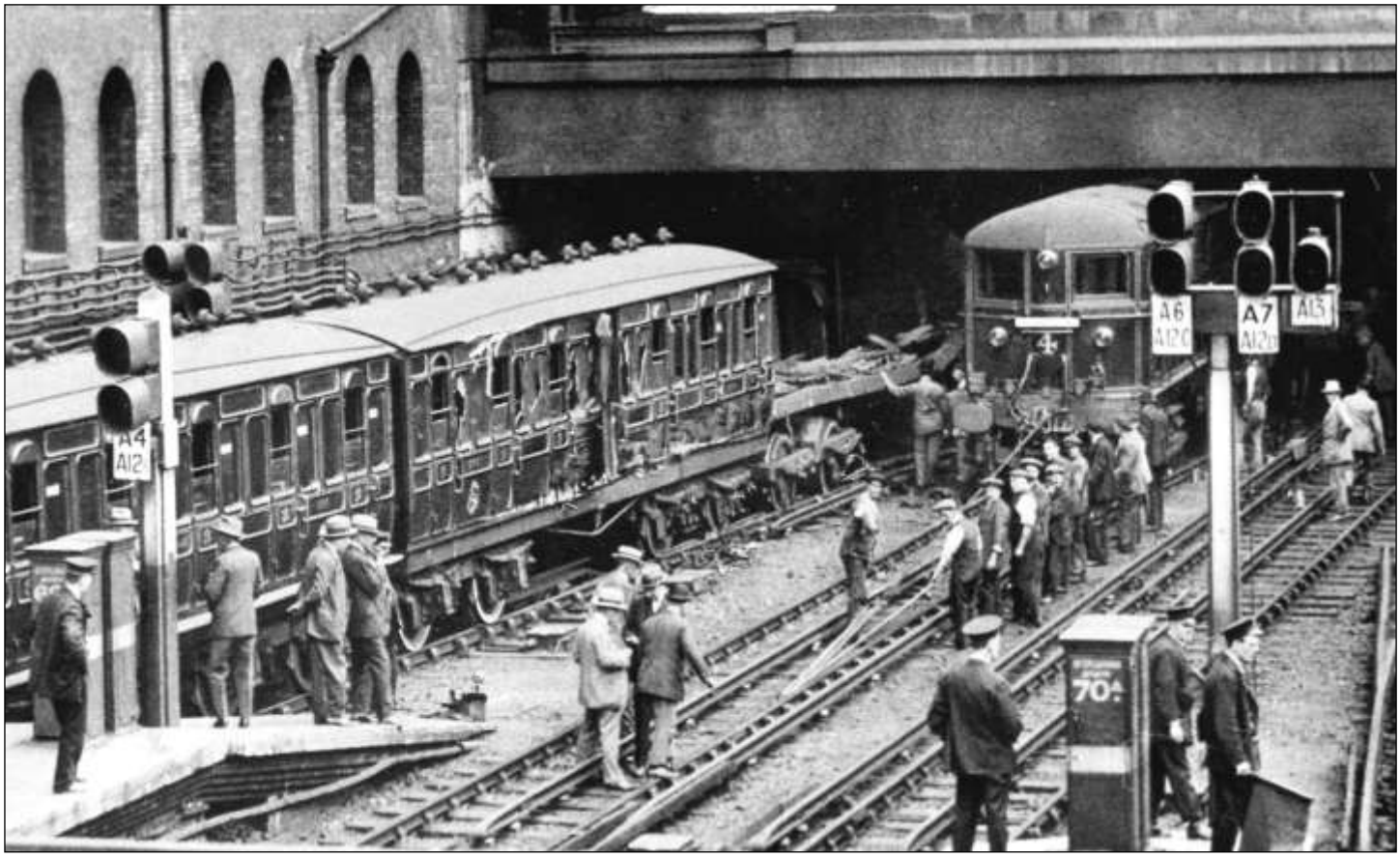
BAKER STREET STATION ACCIDENT – 14 JUNE 1925

by Michael Hayward



The photograph *(Above)* of the aftermath of the accident that occurred at 10.28 on Sunday 14 June 1925 at the Metropolitan Railway's Baker Street station was found amongst the photographic collection of the Manchester Locomotive Society but has little to trace its origins. It shows the railway officers and staff hauling electric locomotive No.4 away from the carriages that it had hit earlier. The following has been printed on the reverse of the photograph:

"In this case the electric locomotive, running light, was being shunted out of No.2 road and came into side-long collision with the 9.42 a.m. passenger train from Uxbridge, as the latter was crossing from the up line to No.1 platform road. The locomotive struck the second, third and fourth coaches, the body of the latter being knocked off the under frame and thrown outwards. The wheels of the fifth coach and the two back wheels of the leading bogie of the locomotive were derailed, and nine passengers complained of injury – some of these were taken to hospital but were not detained. The locomotive guard was also injured".

Presumably the last remark refers to Passed Guard Millar, who was travelling in the leading cab of the electric locomotive, though nothing was mentioned of any injuries to him in the Inspector's Report. Colonel J.W. Pringle who carried out the Accident Inquiry mentioned that nine passengers complained of injury as a result of the collision and some were taken to hospital but not detained, though a footnote to the report states that "*the death of one of these passengers at a subsequent date, from fatty degeneration of the heart, is stated to have been hastened by the shock received".*

The photograph shows the wreckage of the multiple unit and the locomotive (No.4) being manually pulled back from the point of collision by means of a pulley block and hawser. The body of the fourth vehicle, seen on the right (First Trailer No.362) is nowhere to be seen, with only its leading bogie and under frame on view. When looking closely at the photograph I noticed that the diameter of the wheels on the exposed bogie appear larger than that on the adjacent Third Trailer No. 344 though I would have expected them to be the same. Is this correct? The Third Trailer No.399 looks intact with no apparent damage though the Report mentions some damage to windows and footboards to both Third Trailers.

The distribution of work is clearly differentiated, with those wearing flat caps doing the manual work of moving the locomotive while the trilby hats surveyed the damage. Some of the uniformed station

staff were involved in signalling by means of hand held flags. The disputed shunt signal (No.12^{B}) can be seen on the left at the end of Platform 2 with the starting signal (No.4) above it on the same post though the associated trainstop cannot be seen in the photograph.

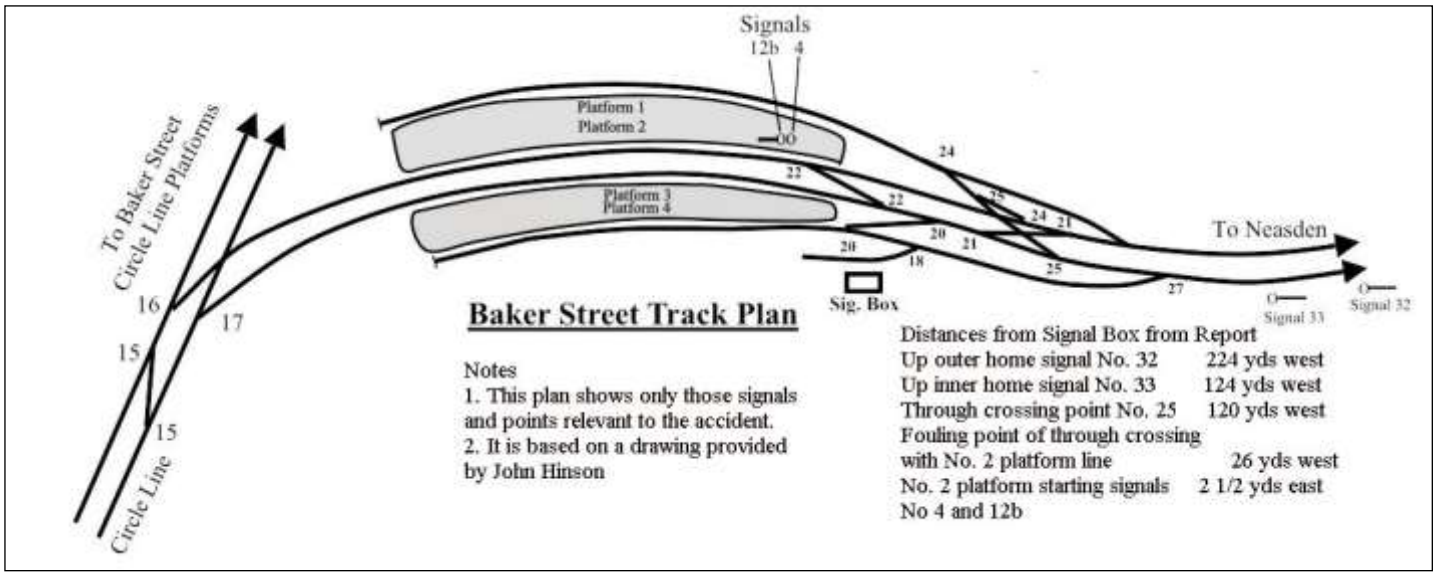
The track work was repaired and Inspector Alder tested the signals at 22.08 before ordinary working was resumed. Though Sunday was not a busy day for the Metropolitan Railway, nevertheless it must be to their credit that traffic returned to normal so quickly.

VEHICLES INVOLVED IN THE COLLISION

The report gives details of the multiple unit vehicles involved as follows.

Vehicle 1 – Leading motor coach – Number unknown and undamaged.
Vehicle 2 – No.399 – Third Trailer – Some windows and foot-boards were broken or damaged – 1900 Ashbury Bogie Stock converted to electric working 1921 – LTPB No. 9772.
Vehicle 3 – No.344 – Third Trailer – Some windows and foot-boards were broken or damaged – No.344 was allocated to a Jubilee Stock 4-wheel Brake Third so had Colonel Pringle incorrectly recorded it in his report? Unfortunately the number of the vehicle cannot be read from the original photograph to verify this.
Vehicle 4 – No.362 – First Trailer – 1892 Ashbury Bogie Stock completely wrecked so it never carried an LTPB number.
Vehicle 5 – Number unknown – First Trailer – Not described in the report and undamaged.
Vehs 6 & 7 – Numbers unknown – Third Trailers – Not described in the report and undamaged.
Vehicle 8 – No.63 – Rear motor coach – Undamaged – 1905 Saloon Stock – LTPB No.2553.

TRACK LAYOUT



The diagram shows the track layout as it was in 1913 which I understand was the same in 1925. At their other end, platforms lines 2 and 3 formed a double junction with the Circle Line. They then curved sharply northwards so that a motorman operating from the rear cab of a locomotive moving from the Circle Line along Platform 2 line would sight number 12^{B} shunt signal at a distance of 76 yards but loose sight of this signal after running a further distance of 30 yards due to the curvature of the line. However, an assistant motorman in the front cab would have a continuous view of No 12^{B} for a distance of about 110 yards before passing it.

CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT

A full account of the evidence presented at the Inquiry can be found on the Railway Archive website so I will cover only that given by the main players.

The electric locomotive (No.4) had arrived with an empty train from Neasden on No 3 platform road and then uncoupled to run round the coaches via No.2 line. However, a train was standing on No.2 line and owing to its late departure, Signalman Harris stated that he had to hold the locomotive for a few minutes on the up Circle road. After the train had left, he signalled the locomotive through the cross over between the up and down Circle lines into No.2 platform. His illuminated diagram indicated at the same time the approach of the multiple unit train from Neasden. When the outgoing train from No.2 Platform had released the necessary track locks, he set Nos.24 and 25 points for the Neasden train to travel from the up line into No.1 platform line.

He stated that the locomotive was to be held at the starting signals (Nos.4 and 12^{B}) at No.2 platform and thought that the locomotive might perhaps just have been entering No.2 platform line at the moment he pulled over the point levers Nos.24 and 25 which interlock with signals Nos.4 and 12^{B}. The signal and relative train stop would then have been in the danger position as the locomotive approached. Realising the danger of a collision, he threw back signal levers Nos.32 and 33 with the object of tripping the leading motor car of the incoming train. As he reversed No.32 lever he noticed that the track in advance of that signal was occupied and concluded that the trip cock of the train must have passed No.32 signal before it was reversed. At the time of the collision there was a repair man (Mott) in the signal box who confirmed Harris's statement.

Differing evidence was give by Motorman Stilton who was in charge of electric locomotive. He stated that he and his assistant, Millar, arrived at Baker Street No.3 platform. The locomotive was unhooked in order to run round the empty vehicles, which were intended to form the 10.28 passenger train to Aylesbury. They ran out on to the up Circle Line and were kept waiting there for perhaps three minutes. Eventually the signals were cleared for them to move over the crossover on to the down Circle Line, and thence through the junction crossing to No.2 platform line.

He stated that he then operated the locomotive from the rear cab on the right hand side, and his assistant, Millar, was at the leading cab on the left. His view was obstructed by the curvature of the line and the empty coaches which stood on No.3 line. Millar sounded the whistle before the locomotive had passed over the platform line curve in order to indicate that the shunt signal (No.12^{B}) was clear. Stilton estimated that the speed of the locomotive was then 10 to 15 mph. He said that he had sight of the signal from the rear cab when he moved on to the straight length of platform line. He continued by stating that he was not aware of the multiple unit train on the crossing until he heard the scraping noise made by the locomotive against one of the coaches.

Millar generally confirmed the evidence given by Stilton and stated that he was on the look-out for the shunt signal (No.12^{B}) as the locomotive travelled along on No.2 platform line. He caught sight of the coaches of the crossing train just after he lost sight of the shunt signal. He saw that they could not avoid a collision, and immediately applied both brakes to the full effect. He also stated that shunt signal (No.12^{B}) showed a green light from the moment he first sighted it until he had passed it.

Acting Motorman Lovelock and Passed Guard Rowe were working the multiple unit train with the latter travelling in the rear motor coach No.63. Rowe reported that he did not notice much effect of the collision in his coach. Evidence was given by Mr. R.F. Morkill, Signal Superintendent, who confirmed that the signaling and interlocking was working correctly at the time of the accident.

INSPECTOR'S CONCLUSIONS

Colonel Pringle noted that there was conflicting evidence but he found against Stilton and Millar and that the responsibility for the collision rested with them. As the latter was in a better position to see the signal as well as the train in front then a greater degree of responsibility rested with him. Colonel Pringle ended his report by asking the Company to consider the following points.

- Motormen to change their position and drive from the leading end whenever the direction of movement is reversed.
- The braking distance between No.12^{B} signal and the fouling point of the through crossing in advance was short (85ft 7ins) and unless speed was reduced to less than ten miles an hour, the margin for over-run was insufficient.

LOOSE ENDS

As with most aspects of research there are always a few loose ends that promote questions so can members shed any light on the following?

- Details of the multiple unit vehicles involved but not described in the report?
- Was No.344 correct for one of the Third Trailers?
- Apparent different sizes of the wheel diameters of Trailer Third No.344 and Trailer First No.362?
- Why was the injury to Millar not mentioned in the Report?
- Were Colonel Pringle's recommendations heeded by the Company?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Paul Shackcloth, the Manchester Locomotive Society's Photographic Collection Officer, who brought the photograph to my attention.
- Piers Connor for emailing to me a copy of the Inspector's report. The full accident report can be seen on the web site of Railways Archive.
- John Hinson for allowing me to use his drawing of the1913 track plan of Baker Street Station which can be seen on the Signal Box web site at www.signalbox.org

"Metropolitan Railway Stock – Appendix 1" by J.R. Snowden – Details of the multiple unit stock involved in the accident.