
Who Was Involved in the Quintinshill Rail Disaster of 1915?

Description

The Quintinshill Rail Disaster, also known as the Gretna Green disaster, was a catastrophic event that took place on May 22, 1915, near the Quintinshill signal box outside Gretna Green in Dumfriesshire, Scotland.

The Trains Involved

The disaster involved five trains on the Caledonian Main Line linking Glasgow and Carlisle:

1. **Northbound Local Passenger Train:** This train was standing on the southbound main line due to a delay in the schedule.
2. **Southbound Troop Train:** This train was carrying soldiers from the 1/7th (Leith) Battalion, the Royal Scots, from Larbert to Liverpool. They were on their way to Gallipoli.
3. **Northbound Sleeping Car Express Train:** This train was traveling from London Euston to Glasgow Central.
4. **Two Goods Trains:** These trains were occupying the passing loops at the time of the disaster.

The Sequence of Events

The disaster unfolded in a series of tragic events:

1. **First Collision:** The southbound troop train collided with the stationary local passenger train. The impact was severe due to the high speed of the troop train.
2. **Second Collision:** Just a minute later, the wreckage was struck by the northbound sleeping car express train. The express train was unable to stop in time to avoid the collision.
3. **Fire:** The old wooden carriages of the trains were equipped with the Pintsch gas lighting system. The gas from this system ignited due to the collisions, causing a fire that engulfed all five trains.

The Casualties

The Quintinshill Rail Disaster is known for its high casualty rate. The official death toll was 226, including 215 soldiers, nine other passengers, and three railway employees. However, the Army later reduced their figure by one. A total of 246 people were injured in the disaster.

The Cause of the Disaster

The disaster was primarily caused by a signalling error. The northbound local train had been reversed onto the southbound line to allow passage of two late-running northbound sleepers. However, its presence was overlooked by the signalmen, and the southbound troop train was cleared for passage.

The Aftermath

In the aftermath of the disaster, both signalmen were charged with manslaughter in England and convicted of culpable homicide in Scotland. Despite their convictions, they were later re-employed by the railway company, although not as signalmen.

The soldiers who lost their lives in the disaster were buried together in a mass grave in Edinburgh's Rosebank Cemetery. An annual remembrance is held at this site to honor their memory.

The Legacy of the Quintinshill Rail Disaster

The Quintinshill Rail Disaster remains the deadliest rail disaster in British history. It serves as a stark reminder of the importance of safety regulations and procedures in the railway industry. The disaster led to significant changes in railway safety practices, including stricter rules for signalmen and the phasing out of wooden carriages.

CATEGORY

1. Dumfriesshire

POST TAG

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2. James Tinsley
3. Major Incident
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