

## 1942 TRAIN CRASH IN THE SWAN VIEW TUNNEL

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# TRAIN WRECKED.

## SWAN VIEW SMASH.

### A DRIVER KILLED.

### THREE MEN INJURED.

One of the most spectacular train smashes in the history of Western Australia occurred shortly after midnight on Wednesday when a goods train, which was being hauled by 2 engines, got out of control on a steep gradient near Swan View, about 14 miles from Perth, careered backwards down the line and was wrecked. An engine-driver died as a result of severe injuries while the other 3 members of the engine crew were admitted to a private hospital suffering from injuries. The victims were:

#### Dead.

BEER, Spencer Trobridge (44), married, of First-avenue, Mt Lawley.

#### Injured.

ROBERTSON, David (48), of Amherst-street, West Midland—burns and minor injuries.

DOVE, Clement Frederick (23), of Cope-street, Midland Junction—burns and minor injuries.

GRIFFITHS, Percy (24), of Wright-street, East Perth—concussion and burns.

The train passed through Swan View station about 11.40 o'clock on Wednesday night on its way from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The 2 engines, an L class and a S class, were pulling a heavy load of 53 trucks carrying mainly personal effects, perishables and livestock. The train stopped in the long tunnel about half a mile from Swan View station, in the first line of hills in the Darling Range. Shortly afterwards the train began to run backwards and became out of control. It careered down grade and passed through Swan View station at a terrific speed. The train ran madly on and crashed, about 250 yards farther on, into a runaway siding to which it was diverted automatically from the main railway line by emergency points. The heavily-laden train crashed with terrific force into the dead-end of the safety line. Trucks were telescoped and splintered. Goods and livestock were thrown for some distance from the smash. Many of the livestock were killed.

A railway official described the smash as the worst in the history of the State. He said that more material had been damaged than in any previous accident, although more loss of life occurred in the

any previous accident, although more loss of life occurred in the smash about 30 years ago when a heavily-laden timber train got out of control near Wokalup.

#### Guard's Narrow Escape.

The guard of the train, Percy Cornelius O'Sullivan, had a narrow escape from injury. When the train started to run backwards he tried unsuccessfully to apply the brakes. He jumped from the moving train and was unhurt. He later walked to the scene of the smash.

First on the scene was Mr Tomkins, a railway engine-driver who lives about 100 yards away. He found the crew of the 2 engines in a state of collapse and Beer appeared to be badly injured. The police were notified and Constables Napier and Taylor attended from Midland Junction. Members of the Midland Junction St John ambulance had a difficult job in extricating the injured men from the cabins of the engines. Robertson (driver) and Dove (fireman) were in the leading engine, while Beer (driver) and Griffiths (fireman) were in the load engine. The injured men were taken to a private hospital in West Midland but Beer was found to be dead on arrival. The coroner has been notified and a post mortem has been ordered.

Railway and police officials visited the scene of the smash early yesterday morning. Wreckage was strewn alongside both sides of the line and trucks were piled high on top of a mound of twisted wood and iron. Amidst the chaotic scene were scattered dead cows and pigs, kegs of beer, fruit and vegetables, cases of personal effects and broken bottles. A truck-load of cattle in the middle of the train was unharmed and trucks of coal remained on the line. One engine remained on the line while the other was on the line with the exception of the rear wheels of the tender. The railway telephone line was brought down and a signal mast and its square concrete buttress formed part of the wreckage.

#### Traffic Disorganised.

Traffic was disorganised and had to be diverted to the Mundaring line. The inward bound Westland express came in by way of Mundaring and Darlington and was not seriously delayed. The breakdown gang was early on the scene and yesterday afternoon had cleared the wreckage from the main line to Perth. The up or outward line is expected to be cleared by this afternoon.

The Deputy Commissioner of Railways (Mr J. P. Tomlinson) said yesterday that the load of the train was well within the capacity of the 2 engines. The cause of the accident had not yet been determined and for this purpose a board of inquiry had been appointed. It would consist of

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for this purpose a board of inquiry had been appointed. It would consist of Messrs S. J. Hood, chief civil engineer, who would be chairman; R. M. Evans, deputy chief traffic manager; and J. Flaherty, superintendent of locomotive running. Mr Tomlinson said that the board would hold an inquiry into the incident and make a report to the Commissioner at an early date.

At a late hour last night the condition of Robertson, Griffiths and Dove was reported to be satisfactory.

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## HILLS TUNNEL.

### LOCO UNION'S DECISION.

#### Only Single-engine Loads.

The management committee of the Loco Drivers' Union decided last night to inform the Commissioner of Railways that the union would not agree to the working of more than single-engine loads through the railway tunnel near Swan View. A special meeting of the committee was held to consider the union's attitude to the working of trains through the tunnel, following the collapse of an engine-driver and fireman on one of two engines which were drawing a passenger train through the tunnel on Tuesday.

A conference between representatives of the Railway Department and the union began on Thursday and was continued yesterday. A further adjournment was decided upon to enable the union officials to consult their management committee on a proposal which the Deputy Commissioner of Railways (Mr J. F. Tomlinson) had placed before them. It is understood that the proposal included a suggestion that for the time being no double-engined trains would be taken through the tunnel.

In giving the decision of the committee last night the secretary of the union (Mr W. Rudinger) made the following statement: "The committee also gave consideration to the Railway Department's statement in 'The West Australian' of Thursday that for many years it had been the daily practice to use 2 engines on trains through the tunnel, and desired to state in reply that the union had for many years protested to the Commissioner against this dangerous practice. The file on this matter is voluminous. Many of our members who have collapsed and had bad trips through the tunnel are now in poor health. The department's statement that the use of 2-engine loads on goods trains had been discontinued since the accident is quite correct, but this decision was reached only because we approached the Commissioner and asked him to suspend doubleheader loads until such time as an agreement was reached. Our request had been refused. The union decided after that refusal and years of protest that the attitude of the department was impossible and that the dangerous practice would have to be stopped once and for all, and informed the Commissioner to that effect.

"There is something wrong somewhere when men have to risk their lives daily, and one life has to be sacrificed, and when the union has

lives daily, and one life has to be sacrificed, and when the union has to take the law into its own hands to obtain relief. The department's statement regarding Tuesday's incident when referring to the load says little, but covers a mass of controversial matter. The Coroner after the inquest made certain recommendations regarding passenger trains and pointed out the dangers to enginemen and the travelling public. The department's statement contained no assurance that anything had been done regarding those recommendations, which the Coroner stated would be forwarded to the Commissioner.

"We are convinced that the public have no idea of the deplorable conditions that exist and the disabilities that enginemen labour under. A Royal Commission is long overdue. Items to be inquired into would include condition of engines, new engines being built, regrading, overloading, understaffing, administration, train delays, signals, general working conditions, health of members and provision of time for meals."