

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

13 August 1860

BoT Report into Accident at

Blue Pits.

(2 Pages).

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, September 10, 1860.*

SIR,
I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, to transmit to you, for the careful consideration of the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Colonel Yolland, R.E., of his inquiry into the circumstances attending the collision that occurred on the 13th August last, at the Heywood and Bury Junction of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railways, near Blue Pits station.

I am, &c.

*The Secretary to the
Lancashire and Yorkshire
Railway Company.*

T. H. FARRER.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, September 6, 1860.*

SIR,
I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, that, in compliance with your minute of the 16th ultimo, I have inquired into the circumstances which attended a collision that occurred at the Heywood and Bury Junction of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, situated near Blue Pits station, on the 13th August, between an up special excursion train returning to Manchester, and a down passenger and goods train, by which one person had his arm broken, and 10 others received contusions and slight injuries.

A special excursion train, containing workmen in the employ of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, at their locomotive establishment at Miles Platting, were on their return from Liverpool, and the train, which consisted of engine and tender, and 22 carriages, including one break van at the tail of the train, approached the Heywood and Bury Junction, about 10.50 p.m., and the engine driver sounded the steam whistle for the distant and junction signals to be taken off, as both stood against this train. The driver ran inside the distant signal, and did not stop as the Company's rules prescribe, but slackened his speed, until the junction signal was turned off, and then he put on the steam, and proceeded steadily across the junction, and had got the engine and tender and 8 carriages past the down main line from Manchester, leading to Blue Pits and Rochdale, when the ninth carriage was run into by the 10.15 p.m. down main line train, which is a mixed passenger and goods train as far as Rochdale, and from thence is only a mail train to Normanton, intermixed with goods. The 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th carriages were knocked off the rails, and the 12th was overturned. Both up and down main lines were blocked, and remained so until about $\frac{1}{4}$ to 2 A.M.; but the collision does not appear to have been a violent one, or the consequences would in all probability have been much more serious, as the driver of the down train had nearly succeeded in stopping his train, when his engine came in contact with the carriages of the up excursion train, as it was passing from off the branch on to the main line.

This junction is protected, as far as the main down line is concerned, by junction semaphore signals, placed south of the main line, and by a distant disc signal 400 yards west of this junction. This distant signal can be seen for a considerable distance before it is reached, when the weather is favourable; and there is a rising incline of 1 in 180, as the junction is approached from Manchester. Gas is used for the lamps at the Blue Pits Station, and for the junction signal lights.

The driver of the 10.15 p.m. down train informed me that "he approached the Heywood and Bury Junction from Manchester shortly before 11 o'clock, and that when he was 200 yards or thereabouts, outside of the distant signal, he observed that no signal light was burning at the distant signal, and

"thereupon," he says, "he shut off the steam: that when he came abreast of the distant signal he passed an up goods train, which he mistook for the Liverpool goods train from off the branch, which he was in the daily practice of meeting within 100 yards of the same spot, and that in consequence he thought the junction main line down signal would be all right for him to proceed, and that he came up faster to the junction than he otherwise would have done: that he could not see the down junction signal until he was within about 50 yards of the crossing where the collision afterwards occurred, in consequence of steam from the up train which he had passed, or from the excursion train, and then he saw that this junction signal stood against him, at the same time that he saw the carriages of the excursion train, and he reversed the engine, and applied the steam the reverse way, opened the steam whistle for the guard's breaks, and the fireman put on the tender break, but he could not stop his train until it had come into collision with the carriages of the excursion train, and until his engine had run a few yards past the junction down signal, standing at danger."

There is no doubt whatever, that there was no light burning at the distant signal when this down train approached it, as the driver, immediately after the collision, called the signalman's attention to the fact; and no light could be seen, and the guard went back and lit it. This fact is not at all disputed by the signalman, who says "that this lamp was first lit that night by the signalman, whom he relieved, at 7.15: that he observed that it was out at 8.5, and as soon as the up Yorkshire train had passed, he re-lit it at 8.15; that the gas was escaping, and it lit readily when the lamp was held to it; that it burnt very well up to 9.20, and then it went out again, and as soon as the Heywood and Bury up passenger train had passed, he went to it again, and once more relit it; and that he had not noticed that it was out again until after the collision occurred." He also stated, "that it was burning when the 10.28 up parliamentary train passed, as he took particular notice of it; that it was a very calm night; that after the guard came back from lighting the lamp, he told the signalman that the gas was turned off, and the signalman told him that if it was turned off, he must have turned it off himself." The guard informed me "that he tried to light the lamp with a piece of paper, but could not do so, until he had turned the gas on." Also "that it was a very difficult lamp to light, as the ladder was too short, and he was obliged to stand on the top step of the ladder and to hold fast by one hand, while he lit the lamp with the other."

The signalman also informed me "that the lights at the junctions have frequently gone out during this summer, and that they were very much plagued with them 12 months since." Another signalman who was on duty at the junction, at the fork of the triangle the same night, told me "that his distant signal went out six times that night, and at last he placed his own hand lamp within the glass as a precautionary measure."

Singular as all this may appear, it is susceptible of a very simple explanation.

Whether it arose from the receipt of special instructions from any superior officer or not, I could not learn, but it seems that the station master at Blue Pits had, with the view of economising the consumption of gas in the summer time, given instructions that the Company's gas lamps should be put out at the proper hour at daylight, by turning the stop cock placed close to the gas metre; and of course, when this stop-cock was turned, and the supply cut off, in a short time the whole of the lights would gradually go out, one after the other, if they had not previously been put out by the person in whose charge

they might have been turning the tap. Now it is surmised, that in consequence of the lights being put out in this manner, many of the taps were not turned off, and as a consequence, the gas pipes would gradually become filled with atmospheric air during the day; and when the lamps were lit in the evening, this atmospheric air would have to be gradually expelled by the pressure of gas; and it might therefore readily happen, where there were, as in this case, a large number of lights burning, that a lamp after consuming gas for a considerable time, might have atmospheric air driven into the pipe, from some collateral pipe, and when the gas in front of it was all expelled, the light would go out. That this is the true explanation to be given to the fact of the lights not burning, may be gathered from the circumstances that after the collision occurred, fresh instructions were given not to put out the lights by means of the stop cock; and there has been no trouble in making the gas lamps burn since that time, and the same cause affords an explanation how it was that the guard had difficulty in lighting the lamp at the distant signal after the collision occurred; and I think he was in all probability mistaken in supposing that the gas was turned off, but that air and not gas was issuing from the orifice when he first tried to light it.

The collision was evidently occasioned by the gross negligence of the driver of the 10.15 P.M. down passenger and goods train, in not having immediately taken steps to stop his train as soon as he ascertained that there was no signal exhibited at the down distant signal, especially as he could not see the junction signal light which would be visible from the same spot: but I am sorry to be obliged to state that this accident brings forward additional evidence that there is great laxity of discipline on the line. In making this statement, I am assuming, that the directors and managing officers of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company in issuing printed books of regulations, wish them to be observed. If they have no such wish, the sooner these printed regulations are thrown away the better.

The company's regulations prescribe that engine drivers are not to pass danger signals, but to stop; and as regards distant signals, to draw inside of them after stopping. The drivers of the up excursion and down passenger and goods trains both disobeyed this regulation, as the absence of a light at the down distant signal must be regarded as tantamount to the exhibition of a danger signal, and the driver of the down train also passed the junction signal

whilst it stood at danger, or the collision would not have occurred.

Again, rule 9, page 70, states, "In case of trains on both lines approaching the point of junction at the same time, the *main line trains* are to have the *right of road*, and the other trains must be stopped until such main line trains have passed. If the other trains have to follow the trains on the main line, or *vice versa* past the point of junction, an interval of *five minutes* must elapse previous to their being allowed to do so, and then great caution and the general regulations as to distance must be observed." Now, in the teeth of this rule, the up excursion train was permitted by the signalman at the junction to follow the up goods train without any delay. I do not say that the rule is a good one, but it is to be found in nearly all the books of regulations that have come before me; and I believe I may say that it is very generally disobeyed on all railways, and the interval of 5 minutes between following trains at stations and junctions is not preserved.

Again, engine drivers are directed to report anything unusual they may have observed in going along the line. Now an engine driver of a down train along the main line, which had preceded the 10.15 P.M. down passenger and goods train that night, had observed that the light at the down distant signal was not burning as he passed. If he had done his duty to his employers and to the public, he should have stopped his train at Blue Pitts station, and have told the station master of the fact. His neglect in doing so might have been attended with very serious results. But he mentioned the circumstances at Sowerby Bridge some hours after, when he heard that a collision had taken place, as an excuse for the accident. I have also to call attention to the fact, that the up excursion train was run with one ordinary break to 21 other carriages. I do not say that the insufficiency of break power had any thing to do with causing this collision, but it is another exemplification of the reckless way in which the lives of the public are risked; and the company appear to take more care of goods than they do of human beings, as the down goods train had only 10 loaded waggons, and 1 passenger carriage as far as Rochdale, and yet it was provided with 2 guards, and 2 guards' break vans.

I have, &c.

W. YOLLAND,
Colonel, Royal Engineers.

The Secretary
to the Railway Department,
Board of Trade.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 10th, 1860.

SIR, I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the careful consideration of the directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Colonel Yolland, R.E., the officer appointed by their lordships to inquire into the circumstances connected with the accident which occurred at the Helmshore Station, on the 4th September.

I am, &c.

JAMES BOOTH.

The Secretary to the
Lancashire and Yorkshire,
Railway Company.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 3rd, 1860.

SIR, I HAVE the honor to report for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade that in compliance with your minute of the 5th ultimo, I have inquired into the circumstances which attended the collision that happened on the

early morning of the 4th September close to Helmshore station on the East Lancashire section of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, between two excursion trains, when 10 persons were killed, and 1 has since died of the injuries then received; 4 have had their thighs fractured, 2 have had both legs, and 12 one leg fractured, 10 have had ribs or arms fractured, knees or clavicles dislocated, joint ligaments lacerated, or received concussions of the brain, while 49 others have received bruises and contusions.

Helmshore station is situated seven miles north of Bury about half-way up an incline of six miles in length, extending from Ramsbottom to Baxenden, whence the line falls by a steeper incline (1 in 39) past Accrington. At Helmshore, there is an incline of 1 in 100 for a length of 150 yards on which the station stands, but above and below the station, the incline is one in 78. Forty yards north of the south end of the incline of one in 100, the railway is crossed on the level by a public road, and the station buildings and platforms are constructed north of this level crossing.

According to the printed notice of special trains on