

The  
**VIRTUAL MUSEUM**  
of the  
**LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY**

Accident Reports.

28 May 1849

BoT Report into Accident between  
Lostock Hall & Blackburn.

(3 Pages).

that this is the first accident which has occurred since the opening of the railway in 1844, and partly owing to the neglect of the woman who suffered, I feel reluctant to recommend the Commissioners to enforce the immediate substitution of a bridge, which would cause a great outlay, destroy house property to a considerable extent, and, after all, only partially remove the risk; but if the following recommendation as to working the line be carried out, I conceive that the level crossing, unless the traffic upon the road increases very rapidly, may continue to be worked with safety.

Coming up to the level crossing from the east side, the railway being on the ascent, and the view good, the risk is small; but on the other side the railway is on a curve, and passes through a short tunnel about 50 yards long, and distant about 250 yards, at the other end of which is the Bishop Auckland station. An engine cannot be seen beyond the station. I should, therefore, recommend that some means be contrived, either by means of a bell in the gateman's box, or a fixed signal, by which to let the gateman know when an engine or train was approaching, which being rung or made from the station, would notify to him that no person must be allowed to cross the road until the engine or train had passed.

I should also recommend that a signal be erected eastward of the gate, to be worked by the gateman by means of a wire, which before allowing horses or cattle to pass, he should turn so as to stop any coming train, the signal to be seen at least 600 yards from the gate. With these arrangements, and due attention on the part of the Company's servants, I should consider that the traffic might be carried on with safety as at present, but in case of any great increase or of neglect, it might become advisable, at any sacrifice of property whatever, to get rid of the crossing by substituting a bridge.

Capt. Harness, R.E.,  
 &c. &c.

I have, &c.,

J. L. A. SIMMONS,  
 Capt. Royal Engineers.

Office of Commissioners of Railways, Whitehall,  
 May 17, 1849.

SIR,

I HAVE been directed by the Commissioners of Railways to forward to you the enclosed copy of the report made to them by Captain Simmons upon the unauthorized level crossing at Bishop Auckland, referred to in the letter from this office of the 13th ultimo, and to inform you that, under the circumstances described in that report, they do not consider it necessary at present to commence any proceedings to compel the substituting of a bridge from the level crossing in question, but that they consider it incumbent upon the Company to adopt the precautionary arrangements recommended by Captain Simmons, or others equally efficient.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary of the  
 Stockton and Darlington Railway Company.

H. D. HARNNESS,  
 Capt. Royal Engineers.

Secretary's Office, Darlington,  
 June 1, 1849.

SIR,

I AM instructed to inform you, in reference to the report of Captain Simmons on the level crossing at Blue-row, that the Directors have given orders that the suggestions be fully carried out.

I have, &c.,

Capt. Harness, R.E.,  
 &c. &c.

OSWALD GILHES, Secretary.

APPENDIX No. 59.

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY.

SIR,

Whitehall, June 11, 1849.

I HAVE to report to you, for the information of the Commissioners of Railways, that, in compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 1st instant, I communicated with the East Lancashire Railway Company, and, on the 6th instant, inquired into the circumstances of a collision on that railway, which occurred on the 28th May, between Lostock Hall junction and Blackburn. From the evidence given to me it appears that, being the Whitsuntide holidays, a special excursion train left Liverpool shortly after six o'clock in the afternoon on the 28th of May, consisting of 32 carriages, which were drawn by one engine, another propelling from behind. After having travelled about 10½ miles from Liverpool, the train was stopped, in order that the engines might obtain a fresh supply of water. The tank of the leading engine was filled, but the supply at this watering-place, Ormskirk, being deficient, the propelling engine, named "Bacchus," was only able to obtain a few inches of water

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in its tank, and took so much time in getting even this, that the leading engine proceeded with the train, leaving "Bacchus" behind, which only came up with the train at Lostock Hall, being the junction close to the point where the East Lancashire Railway from Liverpool, through Ormskirk to Burnley, crosses the North Union Railway, about two miles south of Preston. At this (Lostock Hall) junction a watering tank had been erected, filled by a hand-pump, but which scarcely contains more than sufficient water for one or two engines. The leading engine required and took nearly all that was in the tank, leaving very little for the propelling engine, "Bacchus," whose tank was quite dry.

The distance the train had to travel before a fresh supply could be obtained was 10 miles, 3 miles of which is on an ascent of 1 in 100. The leading engine started from the junction at 8h. 28m. p.m. with the train, leaving the engine, "Bacchus," to have its tank replenished; but it was only able to obtain a very small supply, about 6 inches, when the regular train from Liverpool, due at the junction at 8h. 30m. p.m., arrived, and it ("Bacchus") started at 8h. 37m., p.m., and overtook its train at the foot of the incline, just as it was coming to a stand-still for want of power in the engine. The two engines, one pulling and the other pushing, were, however, able to surmount the incline, and the gradient being then favourable, they went on very well, the pushing engine having its fire damped, in order, as the driver states, that its fire-box might not be injured; the leading driver also sparing his water as much as possible by damping his fire. On arriving about a mile from Burnley there is an incline of 1 in 110 to be surmounted, which brought the train to a stand still, the leading engine not having sufficient power to draw it, and the "Bacchus" engine being powerless for want of water, and its fire nearly out. The guard, who is a night porter at Colne, and has acted occasionally as guard during the last year with passenger and luggage trains, ran forward to the driver to tell him that there was a train due, and, upon being reminded of his duty by the latter, then ran back to stop any coming train. In the meantime the fireman of the pushing engine had run back, but he was not in sufficient time to prevent a collision, as the regular train was close after them. Fortunately, however, it was comparatively a light train of only 10 carriages, and the driver and two guards were able so far to reduce the speed that the collision was of a slight nature, and the engine, "Bacchus," being in the rear, and tender foremost, received the greater part of the shock on its buffer-beam, thus shielding to a certain extent the carriages. This last train started from Lostock Hall junction at 8h. 49m. p.m., 21 minutes after the excursion train, and stopped at every station, and neither guard nor driver received any notice at any of these stations as to the preceding train. Immediately that this train had been arrested in its progress, the guard ran back with a signal, but had scarcely gone a hundred yards when another special excursion train from Preston arrived, consisting of 21 carriages, and not having sufficient notice, it could not be stopped before running into the preceding train. The occurrence took place soon after leaving a sharp curve, round which the view was very soon obstructed. Miraculously no person was seriously injured, although the trains were all very full, and consisted altogether of 63 carriages with 4 engines.

In making the inquiry into this accident, I have had much difficulty to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to the neglect or otherwise of the station-master at Lostock Hall junction, in allowing the excursion train to start without ascertaining that the engines were sufficiently supplied with water. The drivers state that they remonstrated with him, stating that they could not reach their journey's end, and that they continued to do so to the last; whereas he states that they started willingly after having been under the water-tank, and without remonstrance. He, however, engaged to warn the driver of the regular train, so that he might assist them, if necessary, on the incline; but, seeing the excursion train well up the incline, four miles off, and it having had 21 minutes' start, he did not consider it necessary, more particularly as the excursion train had to stop at no intermediate stations, and the regular train at four. The second special train, being the last of the three, passed the junction at 8h. 55m., six minutes after the preceding one had left. Several points affecting the safety of the public appeared in the course of the investigation, and to which the attention of the Company might with advantage be drawn.

1st. The supply of water upon the line is not sufficient for the requirements of the extraordinary traffic which may arise from such causes as are of frequent occurrence, more particularly in a densely populous and manufacturing district. This defect is, I am informed by the manager, in course of being remedied.

2nd. The front excursion train was drawn by one engine, and propelled from behind by another, a practice which has been commented on in the printed reports of the Railway Department of the Board of Trade as highly objectionable. And, moreover, one of these engines travelled tender foremost, a practice which has also been similarly commented on, and has been very generally discontinued by all railway companies, this Company themselves having prohibitory rules in their printed regulations issued to their servants to meet both cases. The alleged excuse is, that the station accommodation is inadequate to the traffic, and so arranged that, as in the present case, an engine having arrived with one train cannot, when a train is being prepared to start on the other line, be turned and watered without a very considerable delay.

I therefore went to Liverpool, and, having watched the working of the station for an hour, was fully convinced of its insufficiency for the conduct of the present ordinary traffic in a satisfactory manner, much less when an extraordinary increase, such as occurred in the Whitsuntide holidays, may occur. The station, with the railway for about three miles from it, is the joint property of the Lancashire and Yorkshire and East Lancashire Railway Companies, and requires immediate attention and improved arrangements.

3rd. The leading train was without a red signal lamp at its tail, a practice also highly

reprehensible, caused by the neglect of the Company's servants and their own defective arrangements, which, it appears, permit engines to leave their stations and proceed along the line without a red lamp at all.

4th. The leading train, consisting of 32 carriages, was in charge of a night porter, who has been employed as an occasional guard, assisted by three other porters acting under him as guards. The regulations of the Company do not require that any report of the times of arrival and departure of special trains should be made at each station, and I consequently, in the course of inquiry, was not able to ascertain the precise time at which this train was on various parts of the road, nor even of its leaving Liverpool, and this when the guard knew that another train was due close after him. It appears to me that special trains carrying passengers require the same amount of care and precision in working as other trains, and I would strongly recommend that a report should be made of them, as well as of all other trains, of the time of arrival at, and departure from, and passing all stations, by the guard in charge. The noting of these times would serve to keep the guards on the alert, and be a great check upon all parties, and would tend much to assist in ascertaining the parties who may be to blame in the working of the line, and so tend materially to the safety of the public. In the present instance, for want of reports of this nature, I am unable to ascertain whether the regulations of the Company as to the interval of time between the passing of stations by different trains, or where there are fixed signals, were enforced. It appeared, however, in the course of the inquiry that the station-master at Cherry-tree station, about one mile from the scene of the collision, had neglected his duty, according to his own showing, in not putting on the stop-signal at all after the passing of one of the trains. His evidence, however, was altogether so confused, and being in direct opposition to that of several other persons on one point, whether the regular train stopped or did not stop at his station on the evening in question, a fact concerning which one would imagine that there could be no difference, that I could place no reliance on anything he said.

5th. In dealing with these questions several minor points of neglect of duty appeared on the part of the servants of the Company, and a want of attention to regulations, which were commented on to the individuals by me at the time of the inquiry. But in concluding this report, I would suggest, for the consideration of the Company, whether all trains carrying passengers do not require that a regular and thoroughly experienced guard should on all occasions accompany them; for although the train in ordinary course may not require to be stopped upon the line, it is impossible to foresee all the exigencies which may arise requiring the most intimate knowledge of the working of the line before that train arrives at its destination. And also, I would suggest to them whether they were not a little premature in exciting an extraordinary excursion traffic when the line and its acquirements were in its infancy, and the terminal station at Liverpool professedly inadequate to the ordinary traffic.

I have, &c.,

Capt. Harness, R.E.,  
&c. &c.

J. L. A. SIMMONS,  
Capt. Royal Engineers.

Office of Commissioners of Railways, Whitehall,  
June 14, 1849.

SIR,

I HAVE been directed by the Commissioners of Railways to forward to you the enclosed copy of a report made to them by Captain Simmons, on the circumstances attending the two cases of collision which occurred on the 28th ultimo, between Lostock Hall junction and Blackburn, and to request you to call the immediate attention of the Directors of the Company thereto.

The Commissioners do not consider it necessary to refer in this communication to the several defective arrangements remarked upon by Captain Simmons, as each deserves the serious attention of the Company; but it appears to them that the encouragement of an extraordinary traffic by running excursion trains in the existing state of the Company's arrangements, which is remarked upon in the concluding paragraph of the report, was highly injudicious.

I am also to inform you that Captain Simmons has been directed to report upon the present state of the Company's station at Liverpool.

I have, &c.,

To the Secretary of the  
East Lancashire Railway Company.

H. D. HARNESSE,  
Capt. Royal Engineers.

APPENDIX No. 60.

LEEDS AND THIRSK RAILWAY.

SIR,

Whitehall, October 9, 1849.

I HAVE to inform you that, having received the instructions of the Commissioners of Railways, conveyed to me in your letter of the 22nd September, to examine into the circumstances attending a fatal accident to James Clarke, reported to have occurred on the evening of the 20th ultimo, at the Horsforth station of the Leeds and Thirsk Railway, I proceeded to Leeds, and having communicated with the Secretary to the Company, went to the spot and examined the site, and such parties as were likely to be able to throw any light upon the subject. A sketch of the station is annexed, from which it will be seen that the railway is on

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