

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

4 October 1856

BoT Report into Accident at
Preston.

(2 Pages).

Accidents appertaining to the Management.

Accidents at stations or sidings from shunting operations.

As a goods' train, composed of twenty-five loaded and two empty waggons, and a van, was standing at the Longton Goods' Station at 1.10 a.m. on the 17th ultimo, with its van seventy yards within the distant signal, another goods' train, consisting of engine and tender, twenty-four loaded and one empty waggons, and a van, came into collision with it at a rate stated to be ten miles an hour.

The effects of the shock were considerable. The chimney breast of the engine of the second train was stove in, the buffer plank shattered to pieces, and the exterior framing and foot plate much bent; the tender was turned round and thrown on its side by some of the waggons in the rear, whilst others mounted the engine, and bent and damaged the regulator handle, the reversing lever, and other parts of the projecting portions; and the driver and fireman, who fell under the tender, were so crushed and injured that one died on his way to the infirmary, and the other shortly afterwards.

The first goods' train left Burton at 10 p.m. on the 16th ultimo, and Uttoxeter at 11.10, ten minutes late, and arrived at Longton at 12.30, half an hour late. The second train left Derby at 10 p.m., and Uttoxeter at 11.43, three minutes late, and arrived at Longton at 1.10, thirty-five minutes late. They were both heavy trains, and the gradients between Uttoxeter and Longton are severe and rising for the first part of the journey.

The first or Burton train was detained at Longton for an unusual length of time, in consequence of the inability of the driver to attach to his train ten waggons heavily laden with iron, which it was his duty to take on with him. He uncoupled his engine from his train, and endeavoured to get these waggons out of the siding by means of a tail rope, when the rope gave way; and, after several unsuccessful attempts, the breaksman went back with his hand lamp for the purpose of stopping the Derby train, and requesting the assistance of its driver.

He had only proceeded 440 yards from the tail of his train, however, when he met the Derby train approaching at what he thought was very great speed for that part of the line, "perhaps twenty miles an hour."

The gradient falls 1 in 100 for two miles from the eastward towards Longton, and as far as the point of collision. The breaksman of the Derby train had said to the driver at Uttoxeter, "We are all right for Longton," by which he intended to communicate to him that they had no trucks to leave at that station, and that, therefore, it would not be necessary to stop there, unless compelled to do so by the signals in order to take on other waggons. Half an hour had been lost on the road after leaving Uttoxeter, and it would appear that the driver, with a probability of not having to stop at Longton, considered that this incline would afford him the means of making up some part of it; for the guard says that he gradually increased his speed after passing the summit, until he travelled over the Millfield crossing at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

The gateman at the crossing observed the train coming, and showed the green light from his distant signal, which, as the white light is never shown at it, was not an indication of any obstruction. He then, seeing that the train was travelling so fast, showed the green light from his hand lamp to tell the driver to proceed cautiously, because he thought it possible that the other train, which he imagined had passed him three quarters of an hour before, might not have got out of the way. The gateman says that he had never seen, in two years' experience, a goods' train pass him at so rapid a rate before, on that part of the line, though he had seen some of the passenger trains going by at greater speed.

There seems no doubt, therefore, that the unfortunate man who lost his life increased his speed to a highly imprudent extent in descending the incline, and, having done so, it is not to be wondered at that he could not then stop his train on so severe a gradient in time to avoid the collision. The reversing lever was found in forward gear after the accident, but from the way in which it was bent, and from the appearance of the segment in which it worked, there seemed little doubt that it had been reversed before the collision, and was forced forward with great violence by the waggons which mounted the engine. For similar reasons, it is most likely that the steam was on when the collision took place, and, as the handle of the tender brake was tightly screwed down, there is good cause to believe that when too late the driver was using his utmost endeavour to pull up his train.

He is represented to have been an exceedingly steady and deserving man. He had been in the Company's service since 1849, and had driven those particular trains for four years. The locomotive superintendent had never received a complaint in regard to him, nor was there to be found a report against him in the books. The man who was with him was not his regular fireman, but is stated to have been an experienced and good man.

Before the occurrence of this accident, it was not the custom to use the signals of the passenger station, or, to keep them lighted at night, because there is no passenger train after eight o'clock in the evening; and the only danger signals which were exhibited to the deceased driver, were the lights on the rear of the van, the distant signal from the goods' station, seventy yards in rear of the Burton train, which could be seen 660 yards further, and the hand lamp of the breaksman, who had gone 440 yards to the rear when the Derby train passed him. It is true that the gateman at Millfield exhibited the green light both from his wire signal and from his hand lamp; but the former would not indicate any obstruction, and the latter was shown on account of the speed of the train and the possibility of the other train not having started, and not from any knowledge that an obstruction existed.

Under these circumstances, and taking into consideration the nature of the gradient, it is evident that the arrangement of these signals is capable of, and requires, improvement. There is always a gateman at the Millfield crossing, and it is highly desirable that he should be kept informed, either by a wire signal or by other means, of the state of the station, in order that when there is an obstruction he may be able, at 1,100 yards from the passenger station, to give warning to an approaching train from his post, as well as with his wire signal, which extends some hundreds of yards further up the incline.

This accident is mainly attributable to the recklessness of a most experienced and careful driver, who was, from long practice at this particular point, and from having been stopped frequently for the very train against which he struck, in a position to appreciate to a nicety the amount of risk which he ran in increasing his speed down the incline. He could not, of course, foresee the breaking of the tail-rope, and the consequent unusual delay of the train which he knew to be in front of him, but this was a contingency against which he might reasonably have been expected to have provided, by proceeding at a more cautious speed, if it were safe to trust to individual discretion.

This is a striking and melancholy instance, however, amongst many others, of the danger of relying too much upon the caution even of the best drivers, and of the necessity that exists for providing signals at ample distance from every point of danger; and to the want of better signal arrangements on this occasion, therefore, the accident in question must also be partly attributed.

H. W. TYLER,
Captain Royal Engineers.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

NORTH UNION RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 16, 1856.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, that I have inquired into the circumstances connected with a collision that occurred on the North Union Railway, on the 4th inst., near the Preston Station.

The accident which I am about to describe belongs to a class of accidents to which, in my opinion, a more than usual amount of blame attaches, inasmuch that in most instances they arise, not from carelessness or forgetfulness, but from the persons in charge deliberately undertaking a hazardous operation without allowing sufficient time for its execution. The operation to which I refer, and which caused the collision, was from shunting carriages and engines in and out of a siding on to a line of great traffic within a few minutes of the expected arrival of a fast train.

The limited nature of the siding accommodation at Preston obliges the Company to have a siding inconveniently placed about half a mile south of the station; this siding is a very long one, off the down line. On Saturday the 4th inst. there were forty-two carriages and trucks standing in this siding; of these, the twelve last, which were carriages, were required; to get at these, therefore, the whole number of carriages had to be drawn out beyond the points of the siding on to the down line; when this was done they were halted, and the twelve last carriages being uncoupled, they were shoved through a crossing on to the up line; in drawing back the remainder a portion, consisting of the nine last waggons, became detached by the couplings breaking, the disconnected portion resting on the down line between the points of the siding and the points of the crossing into the up line; whilst standing in this position they were run into by the 5.15 p.m. fast train from Manchester, due at Preston at 6.29, and at the place where the collision occurred at about 6.27. According to the statement of the pointsman it was eighteen or nineteen minutes past six when he allowed the engine to go into the siding to bring out the carriages, leaving but eight or nine minutes for the operation; but there is independent evidence of an inspector of carriages and a signal man to show that the engine employed to bring the carriages out of the siding did not leave the station yard till between twenty and twenty-five minutes past six; but, giving the pointsman credit for his statement being true, the time was inadequate for the operation with a due regard to safety, and most hazardous with a fast train nearly due.

The siding, as I before stated, is 800 yards from the station, and the pointsman being therefore removed from any superior control, should have specific instructions with regard to the minimum interval in which he might shunt carriages or waggons in advance of a train being due, and not left as he is, altogether to his own discretion. I would also remark, that there is no time piece to his box, and he has therefore nothing to guide him with respect to time beyond his own indifferent watch.

The siding is protected by a distant signal 800 yards from the points. The evidence is very conflicting as to whether the signal was on at the time of the collision, and I am therefore unable to decide on this point, though my impression is that it was on, and that the driver of the fast train ran past it, his attention being engaged by two signals which were farther down the line, and which showed all right for entering the station, and which are quite independent of the siding signal.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.
GEO. WYNNE,
Lieut.-Colonel Royal Engineers.

Accidents appertaining
to the Management.

Accidents at stations or
sidings from shunting
operations.

ACCIDENTS FROM TRAINS ENTERING STATIONS AT TOO HIGH A SPEED.

EDINBURGH, PERTH, AND DUNDEE RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, 27 March 1856.

Sir, I HAVE the honour to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, that I have inquired into the circumstances connected with a collision that occurred in the Leith Station of the Edinburgh Perth, and Dundee Railway, on the 8th instant.

The train consisted of two passenger carriages and two loaded wagons. The passenger carriages are provided with powerful breaks, and they are always so placed as to have their ends from whence the break handles are worked adjoining, so that if one break is not sufficient to check the train, the guard who rides outside may step from one carriage to the other, and apply a second break. The line falls with a steep gradient to within 600 yards of the Leith Station, when the gradient changes to a rising one. The engine is detached from the train about 700 yards from the station, and it is left to the guard to bring it up safely to the platform, the break power he has at his command being considered quite sufficient. On the occasion of the collision he failed to bring up the train, and the leading carriage in it came in contact with the fixed buffers at the end of the station. The excuse the guard makes is, that the break of the carriage in which he was riding would not act, and as he was stepping on to the other carriage to apply its break, the collision occurred. The locomotive superintendent assured me that nothing had been done to the breaks since the collision; and if this be the case, and I have no reason to question the truth of his statement, the break must have been in perfect order, as I found it perfectly efficient when I inspected it, and having tested it, I found its power was ample to bring up a train similarly composed to the one which came into collision with the buffers. There is however no doubt that the other break was efficient, and in good working order; and I think, therefore, the accident must be ascribed to carelessness on the part of the guard. The arrangement of the Company in placing two breaks within control of the guard is a good one, and should be sufficient to keep the train under perfect control.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I am, &c.
GEO. WYNNE,
Lieut.-Colonel Royal Engineers.

Accidents from trains
entering stations at
too high a speed.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, October 30, 1856.

Sir, In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 14th instant, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the accident which occurred on the 6th instant, at the Salisbury Station of the Great Western Railway.

It appears that the regular fortnightly cattle train, from Bristol to Salisbury, left Bristol on the 6th October, at 1 h. 35 m. p.m. The train consisted of 35 trucks and one break-van, and it reached Westbury at 4 h. 0 m. p.m.

The line of the Wilts, Somerset, and Weymouth Railway, between Westbury and Salisbury, is single throughout, and in consequence, it is worked with the aid of the electric telegraph. Between Westbury and the next station, 41 miles distant, (Warminster,) there is a steep incline, and in consequence the train had to be divided into two parts; and the second part, drawn by two engines, the leading one of which was a tank engine, left Westbury at 7 h. 15 m., reached Warminster with the second part of the train at 7 h. 40 m. p.m., and left at 7 h. 50 m.; reached Wyllye, 10 miles from Salisbury, at 8 h. 15 m., where the leading engine took in water.

The train had been placed in charge of the driver of the leading engine, as he had previously made three trips with the only cattle trains that had been sent to Salisbury; but the driver and stoker of the second engine had not been down the line before.

Between Wyllye and Salisbury there are three intermediate stations, viz., Landford, Whishford, and Wilton, the last being 2 m. 52 ch. from Salisbury. After passing Wilton, there is a rising gradient of 1 in 270 for three-fourths of a mile, then a level portion of 150 yards, and then rather a steep incline down of 1 in 99 for 54 chains, succeeded by 1 in 182 for 72 chains, and then level to the platform at Salisbury for 18 chains.

The station at Salisbury is protected by a station signal, and a distant signal 23 chains from the platform, which distant signal is always kept at "danger," and changed, when all is right within the yard, as soon as the sound of the sharp signal whistle from an advancing engine is heard. It can be seen from the engine 43 chains before it is reached, but the advancing train cannot be seen from the signal post at a greater distance than 30 chains.

The train left Wyllye at 8 h. 25 m., and about a quarter of an hour before 9 o'clock, the sharp signal whistle was sounded as the train came in sight of the policeman, stationed at the distant signal, who at once changed the red light to a white one, for the train to come on, all being right within the yard; but when the policeman noticed that the train was advancing at a very rapid rate, he very properly showed a red light with his hand-lamp. The policeman states, that the train passed him at the rate of about 20 miles an hour, and that when about one half of its length had passed him, the loud whistle for the guard's break was first sounded, and was continued until the accident occurred. The train proceeded so rapidly into the station, that the foreman of porters, who was on the end platform facing the train, looking out for its arrival, immediately became alarmed, and took to his heels, and had just got through the inner door of the office, opposite to the departure platform, when the crash took place. The stout wooden stop buffers at the end of the rail were first disposed of, the train then passed through the platform, knocked down the wall of, and made its way into the ladies' waiting room, and was finally brought up by the outer wall of the same room, which it overthrew, and which bulged outwards and fell, as the porter got through the outer door.

A very extraordinary scene of destruction was found in the station. The two engines were greatly damaged, and the tender of the second engine was raised on end, and had fallen on the fire-box of the engine, and had crushed both the driver and stoker immediately to death. The poor fellows were, I understand, shockingly mangled. The force of the concussion was such, that trucks were forced up and piled upon trucks, and no less than 108 sheep were destroyed; and although two other engines were brought from a distance, and every effort made, the bodies of the driver and stoker could not be removed before four o'clock in the morning.

The driver of the leading engine (tank) remained at his post and was unhurt; but the stoker threw himself off the engine as he entered the station, and was severely injured by coming in contact with one of the iron pillars which support the roof. Fortunately the whole of the trucks kept to the line of the rails, or the consequences might have been even still more deplorable, as the whole roof might then have been thrown down.

There were two guards belonging to the train, riding in the break at the tail of the train, together with two gentlemen connected with the cattle, and four drovers.

The head guard informed me that as they passed Wilton, he thought the speed was about 25 miles an hour, and that shortly afterwards it increased; that when he was about a mile or a mile and a half from Salisbury, he put on his break, and his mate assisted him to do so, but this was done without any signal being given from the driver, and that before he saw the policeman's red light in his hand-lamp, he exclaimed, "Good God, where are they going to!" He states, that he heard the sharp signal whistle sounded "some time," a "good bit of time," after he had put on his break; that the loud break whistle was sounded just before he saw the policeman's hand-lamp, "it might be the length of the train." But the policeman distinctly states, that it was not sounded until about half the train had passed him. This would only leave about 370 yards for the train to pull up in.

The head guard also told me, that the watch of the driver of the second engine agreed with his own at Westbury, and when it was taken from his body, it was found to have stopped at 8 h. 43 m. This would indicate that the time occupied in performing the journey from Wyllye to Salisbury (10 miles) had been 18 minutes, or an average speed of rather more than 33 miles an hour.

The train was not appointed to stop between Wyllye and Salisbury, and the driver of the leading engine informed me that he distinctly noticed passing the stations, Landford, Whishford, and Wilton, the latter at about 20 miles an hour; that in consequence of the rise, after passing Wilton, he had to go a little faster to get up the bank, and that he does not think he was travelling any faster when he got to the top; that he shut off his steam when about a mile beyond Wilton or as soon