

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

Accident Reports.

11 July 1863

BoT Report into Accident at  
Sowerby Bridge.

(2 Pages).

passenger traffic over the line. There is no doubt that in a case like the Sunday morning of the 26th July, when the gates were kept open for a continual stream of people going to chapel, that the signal ought to have been at danger, and the regulations which have been laid before me by one of the Company's officers would appear to order such at paragraph 19, page 64. The gateman, in opposition to this, states that passengers or carts were never considered obstructions, that the officer who landed in the regulations, and is in charge of this part of the line, was aware that the gate signal was never used for passengers on the road, and that it was solely intended to be used for obstructions consequent on trains breaking down, or trains following each other too closely, and that for 14 years that he had been in the Company's employment, he had never used it otherwise.

The regulations referring to this question will be found at pages 8 and 9, 56 to 59, and page 64. They appear to me all to refer to danger to be apprehended, from circumstances that might occur, to interrupt the traffic on the railway. Not one appears to me to refer to the danger to be apprehended to passengers crossing the line.

No. 3 Rule, page 56, states, that the gates are never to be closed across the line, when a train can be seen or heard approaching. The risk of this regulation being disobeyed, was amply provided for by the arrangement of the gates, which rendered it impossible to close them across the railway at any time.

The engine which caused the accident, had taken the train with the American mail from Cork to Dublin on the evening previous; she left Dublin to return to Cork early Sunday morning, stopped at the Limerick Junction on her way, and reached Glenbane level crossing about 9:30 A.M. She is said to have been travelling at the rate of 25 miles per hour, but in the present instance her rate of travelling would not signify, as it must have been so close to the level crossing, when the donkey cart entered the line of railway, as to render it impossible to pull up. The signal at the gate was at "all right," and the driver could not tell whether the gates were open or shut, owing to their construction.

The driver did not whistle when approaching the crossing, it not being the rule of the Company, and no notice was given to Twiss, (the level crossing gateman), that an engine would pass at such an hour. It appears that Twiss had always been in the habit of receiving notice of trains that were to pass, till about six months since, when the notices were discontinued. They have now been again ordered to be given. It is doubtful whether such notices are advisable or not, considering that it must sometimes be impossible to notice all gatekeepers, of the times of trains and single engines passing, and, relying on such notices, they will doubtless become less alert, at intervening periods. From reading the gatekeepers' instructions, page 57, I should have supposed that the gatekeeper was always to exhibit a flag or hand signal before drivers should pass, but I am informed that, having a semaphore at this crossing, the driver of an engine was not expected to look for a hand signal. I can not but think, however, that it would be advisable for all drivers of single engines or special trains, to whistle on approaching public level crossings, though it may not be so, for those of regular passenger trains, and that *none* should pass without a hand signal from the gatekeeper. Such regulations would oblige the gatekeepers to be in attendance at all times, which I am aware is not the case, in very many instances.

The engineer of the Great Southern and Western Railway suggested the expediency of a distant signal, at the Limerick side of Glenbane level crossing. There is a slight curve in the line at 500 yards from the level crossing, but it does not prevent the gate signal, which is approached on a rising gradient of 1 in 650, from being seen for 900 or 1,000 yards before reaching it; therefore, I should not conceive it necessary, though there can be no objection to this additional precaution. The whistling, when special engines pass at uncertain times, and hand signals at all times, are precautions which I consider very desirable; but the cause of the unfortunate accident, which forms the subject of this report, appears to me to have been the faulty construction of the gates, which rendered it impossible to close them across the railway, or for the engine driver to know whether they were open or shut. The boy in charge of the gates should not have gone into the house and left them open, but considering the flow of passengers which are said to have been passing to chapel at the time, and that he had no reason to expect a train till 1:50 P.M. on a Sunday, such omissions will occur. I recommend that proper gates to close across the road and railway, and furnished with proper signals and lamps, be at once substituted for the wrought-iron gates now in use. That a proper turnstile for foot passengers be placed alongside the gates, and that the gates be so fixed that they cannot move in any other way, except to close across the public road or railway. By fixing a proper disc or arm and signal lamps on the gates, it will be seen by engine drivers if the gates are shut across the line to allow passengers to pass over it, and by passengers on the road when they are shut across the road, in which position they should always be kept, except when opened by the gatekeeper to let people through. It would be desirable for the Great Southern and Western Railway Company to make these alterations generally along their system, and if the level crossing gates cannot be seen for a considerable distance along the line, that distant signals should be fixed and worked in all cases, where the gates require to be closed across the railway.

The men in charge of gates should have clearer and more decided instructions and regulations.

I have, &c.,

F. H. RICH,  
Capt. R.E.

*The Secretary,  
Railway Department,  
Board of Trade.*

*Great Southern and Western Railway,  
Secretary's Office,  
Kingsbridge Terminus, Dublin,  
9th September 1863.*

Sir,  
I AM instructed by the Directors of this Company to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant enclosing a copy of the report of Captain Rich relative to the melancholy accident which occurred at Glenbane crossing on the 26th of July last.

This report shall receive the careful consideration of the Board, and the necessary instructions have been given to the Company's officers to adopt the system of hand signals and the practice of sounding the whistle by the drivers of special engines as suggested by Captain Rich, and to report with respect to the proposed alteration of gates.

I am, &c.,

*The Secretary,  
Railway Department,  
Board of Trade.*

WM. TAYLOR,  
Secretary.

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,  
Whitehall, 23rd July 1863.*

Sir,  
I am directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, to be

laid before the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the Report made by Colonel Yollaud, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the cir-

circumstances connected with the collision that occurred on the 11th instant near the Sowerby Bridge Station on the Lancaster and Yorkshire Railway.

I am, &c.  
JAMES BOOTH.

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

SIR,

*Leeds, 18th July 1863.*

I have the honor to state for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, in obedience to your minute of the 15th instant, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended the collision that occurred on the 11th instant, between two passenger trains on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, a short distance west of Sowerby Bridge Station, when 14 passengers received injuries, and it is feared that several of their cases are serious ones.

Immediately adjacent to Sowerby Bridge Station, and west of it, there is a tunnel of about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile in length, and the station is protected in that direction by a distant signal worked through this tunnel, and as an additional security a signalman's hut is placed a short distance further west, with a semaphore signal close to it, and the signalman works another signal 1,190 yards distant from the hut towards Luddenden-foot Station. The signalman in this hut regulates his semaphore and distant signals by the indications of the distant signal which is worked from the Sowerby Bridge Station. The distant signal worked from the hut can be seen from Luddenden-foot Station which is nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Sowerby Bridge Station, or about 850 yards before the signal is reached; and the semaphore signal at the hut can be seen by the driver of a train as he passes the distant signal, but it is not continuously seen owing to buildings and the nature of the ground and a curve and cutting on the line; it is also seen at a distance of 600 yards, but is again lost sight of in the cutting. The line falls towards Sowerby Bridge Station on an easy gradient of 1 in 377.

It appears, that on the afternoon of the 11th instant the 2.0 p.m. Manchester train, consisting of engine and tender and 16 vehicles, including 2 break vans, on passing Luddenden-foot Station found the distant signal worked from the hut on at danger, and the driver says that he shut off his steam, and whistled for the breaks, but did not stop at the distant signal, which he should have done according to the regulations, but slackened speed and stopped at the signalman's box at 3.34 p.m. Shortly afterwards an East Lancashire train, which left Accrington at 2.40 p.m., followed the Manchester train, passed the Luddenden-foot Station where the all-right signal was exhibited, and found the distant signal worked from the hut on at danger against it. This train consisted of engine and tender and three carriages, two of them fitted with Newell's continuous breaks, and worked by one guard. The driver of this train admits that this distant signal was on against him, and says that it always is on against this particular train when the Manchester train is in front, and that he ran cautiously down until he got under the bridge where he could see the rear of the Manchester train, and then he whistled for the breaks and did all he could to stop by causing the fireman to put on his break, but did not succeed in doing so before he had run into the Manchester train, at a speed which he estimates at four or five miles an hour, but which another witness thought was 14 or 15.

He says he thinks he was running about 30 miles an hour as he passed Luddenden-foot Station. The signalman at Luddenden-foot Station stated that there was an interval of six minutes between the passage of the two trains at that place, and an entry to that effect is found in the train book, but it is admitted that the entry was not made until half-past 4 o'clock, when

the collision was known to have taken place, and it is certain that the times entered could not be absolutely correct, although they might show the interval of time between the two trains. Other witnesses state that the Manchester train had not stopped more than one or two minutes before the East Lancashire train arrived and ran into it. The two trains are timed to arrive at Sowerby Bridge Station at an interval of five minutes apart.

The book of rules of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company direct that the danger signal at a station is to be exhibited for five minutes after the passage of a train, and then the caution signal is to be exhibited for another five minutes; and drivers are directed to stop at an auxiliary or distant signal, and then to draw cautiously inside it. But it appears that at Luddenden-foot Station the first rule is not obeyed, as the station master, in answer to a complaint made by the guard of this same train that he had been detained at this station, wrote an explanation to the superintendent of the district that the East Lancashire train had been detained because the Manchester train had only been gone a minute and a half; but that in future he would not detain the train, but tell the signalman to give a caution signal, and trust to his being stopped by the signalman at the hut. It does not appear that this letter was ever answered, and the signalman did not give any caution signal to the East Lancashire train, but exhibited an all-right signal.

The signals at the hut, and the distant signal worked from it, were put up for the better protection of Sowerby Bridge Station last March, and the driver of the East Lancashire train stated that he obeyed the rule, which directed the driver to stop at the distant signal for about a week after it was put up; but when he found that the semaphore signal and the distant signal always worked together—which they were intended to do—he ceased to do so; and the signalman at the hut allowed that he never knew a driver obey that order.

The rules and regulations of the Company are drawn up in order to secure the safety of the public travelling on railways, and to protect the Railway Company from the serious cost of collisions and accidents; but it is perfectly hopeless to expect that these objects can be secured if the discipline on the line is not maintained and the regulations upheld.

If there are a sufficient number of efficient inspectors employed on the line these infractions of the rules cannot happen without their shutting their eyes and omitting to report them; but the fact is, that infringements of the regulations are considered of no importance, unless an accident occurs.

The collision was produced by wilful disobedience of the regulations of the Company by the engine driver of the East Lancashire train, and the only surprising circumstance is—not that a collision has occurred, but that with such a lax mode of working more frequent collisions do not occur.

*The Secretary,  
Board of Trade,  
Whitehall.*

I have, &c.  
W. YOLLAND,  
Colonel Royal Engineers.

*Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway,  
Secretary's Office,*

SIR, *Manchester, 30th July 1863.*

I have submitted to the Directors of this Company your communication of the 23d instant, and copy of Colonel Yolland's Report which accompanied same, and am instructed to inform you that Col. Yolland's remarks shall have their best attention

I have, &c.

*The Secretary,  
Board of Trade,  
Whitehall.*

W. S. LAWN,  
Secretary.