

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

17 January 1863

BoT Report into Accident at
Wakefield.

(2 Pages).

The fitter who examined it next day states that it did not act properly for want of oil, but as parts of the broken waggons had fallen on the wire, the latter has probably caused the defect which was found to exist next morning.

There is no doubt that a red light was exhibited at the station signal, which can be seen in approaching Brucee Station at 180 yards from the point where the collision took place, and would have afforded sufficient space to stop the passenger train if it had approached the station at a low speed. The driver and fireman state that they were only going about three miles an hour at this time, and as there can be no doubt that if such was the case, he had ample time to stop his train if he had noticed the station signal when in sight of it, or of the lamps exhibited by the pointsman and guard, I am inclined to believe that no proper look-out was kept.

The station signal is seen well from the distant signal, and for a short distance within it. It is then hidden from view by an intervening goods shed, and comes again into view about 280 yards from the station. It would be desirable that it should be raised so as to be seen plainly above the goods shed.

Though it appears that this collision would not have occurred if the driver, fireman, and guard had kept a proper look out, it would also not have taken place had the station-master at Brucee obeyed the

instructions he had received from the superintendent relative to the 5.45 p.m. goods train, which instructions directed him to keep the goods train back some distance from the station signal, when there was not sufficient room for it in the goods siding. Instead of complying with his instructions he acted contrary to them, and did not take the trouble to go and see his orders carried out, but left the porters and engine man to act as they thought best.

The station-master appears further to blame in not having given any supervision to the working or care of the signals.

The traffic has much increased at Brucee since the opening of the line. It has since then been made a passing station, and a loop line is much required. This is now laying, and should be completed as soon as possible, with proper indicators. A second platform is also desirable.

The station-master's want of attention to the instructions he had received appears to have been the primary cause of the accident, but the engine-driver, fireman, and guard of the passenger train do not appear to have been on the look-out when approaching Brucee Station.

*The Secretary to the
Board of Trade.*

I have, &c.,
F. H. RICH,
Capt., R.E.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, 18th February 1863.*

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 Capt. Tyler, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances which attended the collision at the Wakefield Station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway on the 17th ultimo.

I am, &c.
JAMES BOOTH.

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

SIR,

York, 13th February 1863.

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 22d ultimo, 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 which attended the accident that occurred on the 17th ultimo, at the Wakefield Station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

About 30 yards to the west of the east end of the passenger platforms at this station, there is an elevated junction box, which has received the name of "the tower;" and 109 yards to the east of "the tower," there are a pair of points connecting some sidings with the main line from Normanton. A semaphore signal, 40 yards beyond the points, worked from "the tower," enables the signalman to protect the main line, by prohibiting the engine-drivers with the goods trains from leaving the sidings when it is not safe for them to do so.

The 5.55 p.m. passenger train left Normanton punctually on the day in question for Wakefield and Manchester, consisting of an engine and tender, five carriages, and a break-van. The engine-driver saw the distant-signal from "the tower" turned off when he was about 300 yards from it, to admit him to the station; but he proceeded cautiously forward, because he noticed that the main-signal at "the tower" was kept up at danger. It was a very dark, though a clear evening. He was watching the main signal, expecting to see it lowered for his train, when his attention was suddenly attracted by some goods

waggons a few yards before him on the main line. His engine struck them, he believes, at a speed of 5 or 6 miles an hour, but was not thrown off the rails. Three of the waggons were damaged, and the axles of one of them were both fractured. Four of the passengers in the train were also, unfortunately, more or less hurt.

This train was approaching the station at 6.3., according to the evidence of the guard, and was due to leave it again at 6.5 for Manchester. It was in the habit of running with great punctuality, and there was the less excuse, therefore, for any obstruction of the main line. The wagon which it first struck was the 8th of 13 which were being drawn by a goods engine out of one of the sidings which communicate with the main line at the points previously referred to, 109 yards to the east of "the tower."

The driver of this goods engine had commenced duty at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He went to Normanton, left that station on his return journey at 5.25, and reached Wakefield again at 5.35. He then put his train into a siding, and proceeded to collect other waggons which were to go forward with it. He received a signal from the hand-lamp of his guard a few minutes before six, directing him to proceed towards the main line with 13 waggons from a siding fourth from the main line; and he observed that the siding signal, 30 yards from him, showed all right. He drew these waggons forward, in order to separate the four last of them, which were for Manchester, from the remainder, and to attach them to his train. After he had reached the main line, and when he was, therefore, some little distance past the siding signal, he saw that signal turned to danger. He reversed his engine, and told his fireman to apply the tender break. He had just time to bring his train to a stand according to his own account, or to get it into backward motion, according to that of his fireman, when the passenger train arrived, and came into collision with the 6th, 7th, and 8th of his waggons as has been already described.

This engine-driver has been about eight years in the service of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Company, had been a regular driver for ten weeks at the time of the accident, and had been engaged, off and on, in shunting operations at the east end of the Wakefield Station during the whole of the latter period. His evidence is corroborated by that of his

fireman, and also by that of the guard of the train; and I see every reason to believe that the siding signal remained at "all right" until after he had passed out of the siding, and had obstructed the main line. These three men all saw the signal turned to danger, the driver and fireman from their engine on the west of it, and the guard from the 9th waggon, on which he was riding, to the east of it.

The signalman who was stationed at "the tower" does not, however, admit the truth of this evidence. He states that he saw the passenger train, on its way from Normanton, when it was about two miles from his box, at three minutes before six o'clock; that he signalled to Andrews, a pointsman, to protect the west-end of the station while he admitted it; that he received an all-right signal from Andrews in reply, by a white light from his hand-lamp; that he then lowered his distant-signal to admit the passenger train, while that train was still a mile and a half from his box; and that he turned the siding signal to danger immediately afterwards. He was about to lower his main signal also for the passenger train, when he observed that the goods engine was approaching from the siding. He shouted to the driver to "hold on," when he saw that he was about to obstruct the main line, but the driver appeared to him to take no notice, either of the siding signal or of his hand-lamp. He then saw that the goods engine had passed the siding signal and reached the main line, and he shouted to any one who might be in the way to stop the passenger train. He was firmly convinced that the goods engine was 150 yards on the east of the siding signal when he turned that signal to danger.

The only other evidence that I have received as to the relative positions of the trains, and the working of the signals, is from two "greasers," Thos. Atkinson and John Brown, who were standing near the door of a cabin, opposite to the goods train, as it moved out of the siding. The attention of Atkinson was first attracted by hearing the signalman shout. He did not notice the siding signal when the goods engine came out of the siding, but he saw that it was at danger (as it necessarily would have been), and that the goods engine was on the main line, when the signalman was shouting. He further observed that it was moving forward, and was brought to a stand in three waggon-lengths. Brown had his attention drawn to the goods train by Atkinson, and states that the latter said to him, "there's that chap coming out of the siding with the signal on." But the goods engine and two waggons were then past the signal. He did not hear the signalman shouting before he looked at the signal, but he heard him call out "stop that train," immediately afterwards.

It will be observed that the signalman admits having lowered the distant-signal for the passenger train before he turned the siding signal to danger, though he ought, on the other hand, to have made sure that the siding signal was at danger, and was obeyed by the goods driver, before he lowered the signal for the passenger train. It is further stated, indeed, that he ought, if he had acted in strict accordance with his regulations, to have turned the siding signal to danger five minutes before the passenger train was due. But this siding signal applies to a siding, called the Barnsley siding, which is unconnected with the main line, as well as to the siding which joins it, and which has been specially referred to, and the signalman is unable to turn it to danger as soon as he ought, without stopping the shunting on the Barnsley siding at the same time that he protects the main line. The Barnsley siding was occupied on this particular occasion; and it was for that reason that the signalman kept his siding signal at "all right" to the last moment, and longer than was safe. For that reason, also, the Manchester engine-driver was prevented from shunting over it instead of coming on to the main line from Normanton.

The engine-driver and guard of the goods train did not themselves exercise the caution that might have been expected of them, in coming out upon the main line at a time when a] punctual passenger train was due; but they are accustomed to work, it appears, whenever the signal is down; and they must be excused in some measure in consequence of its having been left at "all right" when it ought to have been at "danger."

The existing siding signal is well suited for the Barnsley siding, but cannot properly be made to answer for the other sidings also. A separate signal is required for the protection of the main line, and nearer to it. The lamp of this new signal should be shaded from the main line; the arm should have the word "siding" cut upon it; and as it cannot be placed in the precise position that would be best for it, to mark the point at which vehicles on the siding would endanger the traffic on the main line, it would be well to attach a board to it, containing an instruction to the engine drivers, that they must not approach within the requisite number of yards of it when it is at danger.

The collision has evidently been caused by the want of such a signal, and the consequent inducement afforded to, or necessity entailed upon the signalman, of keeping the joint siding signal at "all right" for a longer period than was proper or safe. After it has been supplied, it should be kept up, as a rule, at "danger," and only lowered, when necessary, to admit engines and trucks to the main line.

The signalman referred to, Joseph Cooper, has been acting in that capacity at Wakefield for eighteen years, and bears an excellent character. His hours of work are daily from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. He takes duty every alternate Saturday from 7 a.m. on that day to 8 a.m. on the following day; and every alternate twelve weeks, from 7 a.m. on Saturday to 8 p.m. on Sunday; remaining thus, in the former case, 25 hours, and in the latter case 37 hours at his post. He necessarily has his meals brought to him; and he states that he is never unoccupied for five minutes together during the day. This junction is an exceedingly important one, and any man who is kept in charge of it for 13 hours a day during the week, ought, in my opinion, to be allowed to have his Sundays to himself, without being obliged to perform 25 hours duty every alternate week, and 37 every alternate twelfth week, in order partially to obtain that privilege.

It appears in this, as in other cases which have come under my notice, that the men prefer, when left to themselves, to undertake shifts of 24 or 25 hours alternately, for the sake of corresponding intervals of rest; but they ought not to be permitted, in the interest of the public safety, if not on their own accounts, to remain on duty for such lengthened periods; and 37 hours at such a post, or indeed at any post, is preposterous.

There is no difficulty in avoiding these long hours, and in giving the ordinary signalmen intervals of rest, if only a sufficient number of relieving signalmen are employed. These latter should be of superior intelligence and character, and should be commonly engaged in taking day and night duty, at the different boxes on the line, besides being available for any post at which their services may be required in the event of the illness of, or accident to the occupant. The present accident has not, it is true, resulted in any way from the long hours referred to; but, as the facts were incidentally brought out in the course of my inquiry, I have nevertheless thought it right thus to allude to what is an important point connected with railway management.

I have, &c.,
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. R.E.

The Secretary,
Board of Trade,
Whitehall.