

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

22 March 1871

BoT Report into Accident at
Accrington.

(2 Pages).

in the order that the vehicles are given, left Omagh for Londouderry at 12:30 p.m.

The train was 15 minutes late in leaving Omagh, having had to wait for the up mail, which was late.

It stopped at Mountjoy, to set down a passenger, and then proceeded on its journey towards Newtown Stewart.

The line from Mountjoy to Newtown Stewart falls on a gradient of 1 in 132 for the first mile and a half, and the gradient then falls 1 in about 870.

The down train was proceeding at a speed of about 20 miles an hour, when it reached the place where the 112 feet of rail had been laid in to connect the new sleeper road with the old iron road. Both engines lurched violently in passing over these 112 feet, so much so that the drivers of both engines thought that their engines had left the metals. They observed at once that their train got off the rails as soon as it reached the place where the sleeper road joined the iron road, and both drivers shut off steam.

Their firemen commenced to apply the tender breaks, but the drivers directed them not to apply them, as they thought it best to allow the train, which was dragging on the ballast, to pull up their engines, and thus keep the couplings tight. The coupling between the fourth and fifth waggons gave way and, the fifth waggon, and that part of the train behind it ran into the bank at the east side of the railway, and one waggon fell over on the west side of the line.

The third-class carriage fell over on its side across the line, the leading end being pulled round towards Mountjoy station. The ninth waggon of the train smashed in the side of the third-class carriage, and a blind woman, who was travelling inside the third-class carriage, was squeezed to death by the weight of the waggon bearing on her. Two other passengers were travelling in this third-class carriage. One of them is reported to have had his mouth cut, and the other is believed not to have been hurt. They both walked away to Newtown Stewart.

The engines and tenders remained on the rails,

except the two hind wheels of the rear tender. All the other vehicles of the train left the rails, except the waggon at the tail of the train, which came to a stand before it reached the spot where the sleeper road was connected with the iron road.

On examining the permanent way after the accident, three or four lengths of rails on the Mountjoy side of the spot where the sleeper road joined the iron road were found to have been pushed considerably out of their places. The cheek of the iron joint chair which held the ends of the rails, at the spot where the sleeper road and the iron road were joined together, was found to be broken, and the ends of the rails were out of line. The inside of the head of the rail next to Newtown Stewart station had been shorn off, and the marks of the vehicles on the ballast and on the iron tie rods were distinct from this place forwards towards Newtown Stewart.

There appears to be no doubt that the rain softened the 112 feet of railway that had been laid on the Saturday previous, and had not been properly boxed up with ballast. The line has a curve of sixty chains radius at this spot.

The weight of the engines pushed the rails out of gauge for three or four rail lengths before they reached the iron road, the first joint of which gave way under the pressure, and caused the train to leave the rails on the outside of the curve. The rocking of the engines and the sudden shutting off steam, would give the waggons a jerk, which would assist in throwing them off the rails.

The accident was caused by the neglect of the platelayers, who left the line in an unsafe condition, and also neglected to inform the officers of the company of the state of the line, or to take the proper measures for cautioning the engine drivers.

I have, &c.

F. H. RICH.

Col. Royal Engineers.

The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.

Copies of the above report were sent to the company on the 12th May.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),
19th April 1871.

SIR,

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 28th ult., I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the collision which occurred on the 22nd ult. at Accrington station on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, owing to a passenger train, while entering the station, running into a siding containing a van and some waggons.

Up to the date of the inquiry sixteen passengers had complained of being more or less injured.

Accrington station is situated at the foot of an incline of 1 in 40 leading to it from Manchester and the south. There is a triangular junction in the station yard, connecting the lines to and from Manchester, Colne, and Blackburn. Both goods and passenger trains arriving from the Manchester direction are usually stopped on the incline a short distance from its foot, and the different portions are then allowed to proceed by gravity through facing points in the down line to their respective sidings or platforms. There are indicators attached to the several facing points; but at the date of this accident there was no concentration nor interlocking of points and signals, though arrangements were in progress with these objects, so far as the south junction is concerned, and will shortly be completed.

On the morning of the 22nd ult. a man named Thompson, employed for two months previously as a points-

man in Accrington yard, having been altogether 10 years in the company's service, was on duty at a cabin near the foot of the incline, having charge of the points and signals in the immediate neighbourhood.

The facing points a short distance north of his cabin are those on the down line to Blackburn, which in their normal position lie right for that line, and so require holding over for anything proceeding in the Colne direction. Another set of facing points on the Colne down line, about 50 yards north of the Blackburn points, lead into a siding called the Burnley siding, and in their normal position lie right for the line to Colne.

Up to about 9.30 a.m. shunting had been going on in connection with the Burnley siding, at which time Thompson states that a bank engine, which had been assisting in the shunting, returned from the Burnley siding, and was passed by him through a cross-over road near the Blackburn points to the up main line. He also states that at this time he saw that the Burnley siding points were tied open for the siding by a piece of string; but that, immediately after the engine had come out of the siding, he saw a porter named Mason, whose duty it is to oil the points, remove the string, so that the points fell right for the main line. Thompson states that he then went into his cabin, and that at about 9.35 a goods break van, which had been standing at the foot of the incline, went past him in charge of a yard shunter named Goddard, and stopped in the Burnley siding, but that he did not notice who held either the Blackburn or the siding points; that nothing further passed along

the down line until the train from Manchester due at 9.50; that on the approach of this he lowered the down distant signal for it, putting it to danger again as soon as the train had passed it; that the train, instead of stopping at the foot of the incline to detach the Blackburn portion of the train, came on at once, whistling for the junction signal (*i.e.* the signal at the junction at the north end of the triangle, through which the Colne portion of the train would pass, and then back into the platform), and that, understanding by this that there was no Blackburn portion on the train, he ran down to the Blackburn points, reaching them only five or six yards before the engine, and in his hurry did not notice how the Burnley siding points were lying; that the passenger train passed him at a speed of about 10 miles an hour; and that the first he knew of the collision was hearing the smash consequent upon the engine striking the van in the siding.

The porter, Mason, corroborates the statement of Thompson as to his removal of the string from the Burnley siding points before the van went into the siding, and states that this van passed him on its way to the siding as he was walking up the line at a point south of Thompson's cabin, but that he does not know who held either the Blackburn or siding points.

The shunter, Goddard, who let the van down into the Burnley siding, states that the pointsman, Thompson, called him on from the foot of the bank; that he *saw* Thompson hold the Blackburn points for him to pass through, but that, in consequence of his attention being attracted by an engine ahead of him, he did not notice whether any one was holding the Burnley siding points; and that, after alighting from his van, when he had brought it into the siding, he did not see any one near the siding points, nor did he notice whether they were tied open.

When examined immediately after the accident, Goddard had told his district superintendent that owing to his attention having been taken up with the engine he had not noticed who held either pair of points.

The passenger train had started from Manchester at 8.58 a.m., three minutes late, consisting of engine and tender, a composite carriage, and a set of a break van and two carriages coupled with continuous breaks for Colne, and another set composed of a van and two carriages with continuous breaks for Bacup. The train had usually a third set for Blackburn, which would be detached at the foot of the Accrington incline, but on the present occasion the Blackburn carriages had not been attached to the train. The driver (a man of 21 years' service as such) states that the Bacup carriages were detached at Ramsbottom; that he came down the Accrington bank at a steady pace of five to seven miles an hour; that after just coming to a stand at the foot of the incline, about 150 yards south of the Blackburn points, he was called on by Thompson, who *walked* down to the points, and held them, still calling him on; that his

attention being directed to the north junction signal, for which he had whistled (as he had to run through this junction, and then back his train up to the platform, which is one-sided and on the up line), he did not observe the indicator attached to the Burnley siding points till his engine had passed through the points; that he then seized his reversing lever, but struck the goods break van, which was only 50 yards from the points, before he had time to reverse; that his speed on collision was five or six miles an hour. The leading wheels of the engine were knocked off the rails, and one buffer casting was broken; the window of the passenger break van was also damaged. All the wheels of the goods break van were knocked off the rails, and its framing and rear horn plates were broken; a waggon next the van was also much injured.

The Burnley siding points were found tied after the collision.

It will have been observed that there are very considerable discrepancies in the evidence as sketched above. On consideration, however, of the whole of the circumstances, I am disposed to think that the Burnley siding points had never been untied at all by Mason after the shunting had ceased, and that both he and Thompson did not speak the truth with regard to them.

The immediate cause of the accident is to be attributed to the negligence of the pointsman, Thompson, in calling on the passenger train before assuring himself that a pair of facing points, only 50 yards from the pair which he was holding, were lying right for the passage of the train.

The tying open of these points was itself a most improper act, and one which had been frequently forbidden by verbal or written orders stated to have been issued after accidents had previously resulted from the practice. The pointsman Thompson informed me that about three weeks prior to the present accident the station master had told him he would not allow them to be tied *by day*. The inspector of the yard was also aware of the practice. Both these officials were, therefore, it seems to me, responsible for the continuance of this dangerous custom.

The true remedy for accidents of this description (as I pointed out in reporting on an accident which occurred at this station on 4th March 1870) consists in the concentration and interlocking of the points and signals, which the company is at last undertaking, so far as the south junction is concerned. The improvements, however, should not stop here, but be extended with the least possible delay to the other two junctions.

I have, &c.

C. S. HUTCHINSON,
Licut-Col., R.E.

The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.

Copies of the above report were sent to the company on the 10th May.

LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),
13th March 1871.

Sir,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 20th ult., I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended the collision that occurred on the 16th ult., at Birdwood junction on the London and North-Western Railway, between the down limited mail train and a portion of a mineral train.

Two passengers are reported to have been slightly hurt. Two post-office clerks have also complained of being hurt. The driver and fireman, two guards, and the conductor of the limited mail were also more or less hurt.

Birdwood junction is the place (between Crewe and Warrington) where the new line to Liverpool, *via* Runcorn, branches from the London and North-Western main line.

The railway from Runcorn approaches Birdwood junction through a wood, on a sharp curve and with a falling incline, of about a mile in length, of 1 in 90 and 1 in 100.

On the day in question the goods train due to leave Liverpool at 11.30 p.m. for the south was stopped on the Runcorn line at Birdwood junction for about 25 minutes, and it was kept waiting there until the auxiliary up limited mail, which was 25 minutes late in leaving Preston, should pass Birdwood junction.

When the up auxiliary mail passed, the 11.30 p.m. goods train was allowed to follow it. The 11.45 p.m.