

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

11 March 1877

BoT Report into Accident at
Blackburn.

(3 Pages).

a slight check at Harbury, where a piece of single line was being worked. They found the Leamington signals at danger, and pulled up at the home-signal, and the tail of the train was 176 yards within the distant-signal. As soon as the train came to a stand he took his lamp and detonators, and after looking about for a minute he went back to protect his train. He went back about 50 yards when he heard the engine-driver of his train whistle, to indicate that he was about to move forward, and he, therefore, returned to his van. But he found his train had not moved forward, and he stood on the line looking to see what was the matter, and went back again to protect his train. He got as far as the distant-signal, and was just opposite it, when the passenger-train passed him at a speed of about 15 miles an hour. He showed a red light with his hand-lamp, but could see that they were doing all they could to stop. He could see fire flying from the tender-break as the train came out of the cutting.

Conclusion.

In the case, then, of this collision, a goods-train was stopped, in obedience to signals, on a part of the line, near Leamington, on which the view was limited in consequence of a curve, and of the position of some houses at the side of the line; and a separation also took place in the goods-train, the hinder part of it having been left on the line, when the engine-driver attempted to move forward through the station.

The engine-driver of the passenger-train had no doubt a good view of the distant-signal, 176 yards outside of the goods-van; he had also a light train; and if he had used more caution in approaching the station he would have been able to avoid the collision. But the position of the goods-train was, no doubt, what he would not expect; and any train standing in such a position ought undoubtedly (where the block-telegraph was not in force), to have been protected, not merely by the distant-signal, but also by detonating-signals, and by the guard, who should have been back to protect it.

The exact position in which the guard of the goods-train stood as the passenger-train passed him is the

subject of contradictory evidence. The engine-driver and fireman of the passenger-train assert that he was near his van, in the act of going back; whereas the guard, himself, states, on the other hand, that he was 176 yards from the goods-van, and opposite the distant-signal; but there were evidently no detonators on the rails, and it is impossible to attribute much blame to the engine-driver of the passenger-train, who was running down a steep gradient, on slippery rails, and who found the goods-train in such a position, without further protection.

There is also much excuse for the guard of the goods-train, as it appears that he did go back to protect his train in the first instance, and was recalled by the engine-driver; and that he then only rejoined his train in order to proceed forward with it through the station. If the coupling between the sixth and seventh waggons had not failed he would have gone forward with the goods-train, and the collision would not have occurred. He had not time, after finding that the hinder part of his train did not proceed, to go back, and efficiently protect his train.

With a view to the prevention of such an accident in future, it is obviously desirable, and especially so considering the dangerous nature of the approach to the Leamington station, that the line between Leamington and Oxford should be worked on the block-system.

This system has already been adopted in the other direction between Leamington and Hatton, but not between Hatton and Bordesley.

Considering the importance of the traffic between Oxford and Birmingham, there can be no question that the necessary appliances and apparatus should be provided as quickly as possible for working the block-system on the whole of this section of the Great-Western Railway, and I understand that it is the intention of the Company to carry out this much-needed improvement.

I have, &c.,

H. W. TYLER.

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

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 6th June.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),
2nd May 1877.*

SIR,

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 accident that occurred on the 11th March at Harrison's Level Crossing on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, in the town of Blackburn.

At about half-past six in the morning, a woman named Elizabeth Bradley, who was about 37 years of age, and who was out of her mind, was injured, and found on the railway about 60 yards to the west of the level crossing in question. Her skull was fractured, and she was insensible. She died in the infirmary at Blackburn about nine days afterwards.

This accident having been brought to the notice of the Board of Trade by Mr. Briggs, the Member of Parliament for Blackburn, I informed him of the time when I should investigate the matter, and I was met at the level crossing in question by the mayor, Mr. Hornby, and some other members of the town council; Mr. Bryan, the borough engineer for Blackburn; Mr. Potts, the chief constable; and several other gentlemen who represented the local residents.

Mr. Pilkington, one of the directors, and several officers representing the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company.

After having examined the locality, and the plan for doing away with the level crossing in question, in accordance with an Act obtained by the company in 1873, the inquiry was adjourned to the Town Hall, at the request of the mayor. Two delegates, Mr. John Stone Hargreaves and Mr. James Taylor, who had been foreman to three or four coroners' juries which sat on deaths which had occurred at Harrison's Crossing, were chosen by the residents to represent them at the inquiry, and attended at the Town Hall accordingly.

A statement was put in by the town clerk showing that five fatal accidents had occurred at this crossing since November 1869, and he stated that numerous other parties had been more or less injured.

He also put in the following return, taken on the 26th ultimo, of the number of persons who had used the crossing during the 24 hours of that day; viz. :— 2,786 foot passengers; about 550 of these had used it between 12.0 noon and 2.0 p.m.; about 670 between 5.0 p.m. and 7.0 p.m.; and about 400 between 5.0 a.m. and 6.0 a.m.; 72 conveyances passed

over the railway at the crossing during the same day, and 147 trains passed over the crossing along the railway. He also represented that the crossing was badly protected, there being only one man kept there, who lives in the house belonging to the Company at the crossing. This man locks the gates about half-past eight at night, and opens them at half-past six in the morning, but the wicket-gates are left open for foot passengers during the day and night. If there are any conveyances that require to cross during the night, the gatekeeper gets up on being roused by the parties wanting to cross.

The gates close across the road, but they are not large enough to close across the railway.

The railway is straight, and there is a good view along the line for 500 yards on each side the crossing. The ground adjacent to the railway is laid out for streets, the greater part of which are already lined with houses, and the remainder will probably soon be covered with shops and houses for the working classes.

There is a bridge over the railway carrying a public road about 613 yards to the east of the crossing, and one under the railway about 448 yards to the west of the crossing.

The railway is the main line from Blackburn to Preston. It was opened for passenger traffic about the year 1846 or 1847.

In 1873 the Company in their Parliamentary Omnibus Bill, took powers for obtaining land and constructing an under bridge at the west side of Harrison's level crossing, and for closing this public crossing. These powers lapsed in 1876, and nothing has been done.

The Mayor and persons interested in the matter on the part of the public would be satisfied if the works which were then proposed were carried out, and it seems to me very desirable that this should be done as early as possible, as the longer it is deferred the more difficulty and expense there will be in obtaining the land for the purpose. I think the Company should construct the approaches and the bridges under the line; and that the Corporation, or the owner of the property, should carry out the small works necessary to connect the present streets with the new road to the under bridge.

As regards the unfortunate woman who was killed on the present occasion, it seems that she left her friends at Church Parish, about four miles from the scene of the accident, about six o'clock on the previous evening, and it is supposed that she was making her way to some friend's house at Mill Hill.

The most direct route for her to proceed to Mill Hill was by Harrison's level crossing, and her road thence to Mill Hill was a little shorter along the railway than by the high road. Whether she was a wilful trespasser on the railway or not has not been ascertained.

The first marks of the woman's blood were found about 30 yards west of the level crossing, on the up line from Preston to Blackburn. They extended thence across the railway to the door of a hut on the south side of the line, and thence along the down line for 30 yards to where she was found at half-past six the following morning, lying in the west ditch at the side of the line, 60 yards west of the level crossing.

(Signed)
The Assistant Secretary,
Railway Department.

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

BOARD OF TRADE to the SECRETARY of the
LANCASHIRE and YORKSHIRE RAILWAY COMPANY.

Board of Trade,
Railway Department,
7th May 1877.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Board of Trade to transmit to you, for the information of the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of Colonel Rich's report of his inquiry into the circumstances attending the fatal accident which occurred at Harrison's level crossing on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

I am at the same time to request that the Board of Trade may be informed whether it is the intention of the Directors to apply to Parliament for an extension of time for carrying out the works referred to by Colonel Rich, in order that this dangerous level crossing may be done away with.

I am to add, that the Board of Trade purpose to lay the report in question, and the reply which they may receive from you, before Parliament.

I am, &c.,
HENRY G. CALCRAFT.

(Signed)
The Secretary
of the Lancashire and Yorkshire
Railway Company.

SECRETARY of the LANCASHIRE and YORKSHIRE
RAILWAY COMPANY to the BOARD of TRADE.

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

SIR,

16th May 1877.

I HAVE submitted to the Directors of this Company your communication of the 7th inst., with copy of the report from Colonel Rich accompanying it of his inquiry into the circumstances attending the fatal accident which occurred at Harrison's level crossing on this Company's line, near Blackburn, on 11th March last, to Elizabeth Bradley. In reply, I am directed to state that the crossing in question was provided by arrangement with the landowner, when the line was constructed, as a field occupation crossing; the town, however, has since extended considerably in that direction, and streets have been made leading to the crossing. Owing to the consequent increase of road traffic, the Company, some time ago, though not under any legal obligation to do so, built a gatehouse, and appointed a man to attend to the gates as stated in Colonel Rich's report.

In 1873 the Company obtained an Act of Parliament, containing permissive powers to substitute a bridge for this level crossing, and subsequently entered into negotiations for the purchase of the necessary land, but found when the price asked was added to the estimated cost of the works, the total expense would be upwards of 7,000*l.* With this estimate before them, and bearing in mind that the Company was under no legal obligation to construct the bridge in question, and especially that the desirableness of abolishing the level crossing arose, not merely from the use of the railway, but from the public having adopted the use of it for their own convenience, the Directors thought that the Corporation of Blackburn, as representing the public, might fairly be asked to contribute towards the construction of the bridge and approaches, an application was accordingly made to the Corporation; copy of which, and the reply to it, are as follows, viz. :—

" Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway,
" Hunts Bank, Manchester,

" DEAR SIR,

12th April 1876.

" IN the session of Parliament 1873 this Company obtained parliamentary powers to make " a bridge underneath the Blackburn and Preston " section of their railway within the borough of

“ Blackburn, and when made they have power to stop up Harrison’s level crossing, both of which are shown upon the enclosed tracing, copied from the parliamentary plan. The Directors have had estimates made of the probable cost of the work, and find it is so serious (about 7,200*l.*), that the object to be gained does not justify so large an expenditure, and they hesitate to incur it unless they can obtain a contribution from the Corporation of Blackburn towards the object, and I am requested to lay the matter before them with this view. The grounds upon which the Directors seek to ask such assistance is that the Corporation having the control of matters within the borough for the safety of the public, and the work referred to being executed for the public safety, the Directors hope that the Corporation will consider the matter in a favourable light, and let them know to what extent they will be disposed to meet the Company in the expenditure.

“ I remain, &c.,
 (Signed) SAMUEL BURGESS.
 W. E. S. Gaine, Esq.,
 Town Clerk.”

“ Blackburn.

“ Re Harrison’s Crossing.

“ DEAR SIR, Blackburn, 25th April 1876.

“ I HAVE submitted your letter of the 12th inst. to the Highway Committee of this Corporation, and I am desired by the committee to inform you that the committee, while of opinion that it is most desirable that the work referred to therein should be executed, do not see their way to recommend the Corporation to contribute towards the cost of same.

“ I remain, &c.,
 (Signed) WM. E. S. GAINE,
 Town Clerk.

“ S. Burgess, Esq.,
 Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway,
 Manchester.”

Since the failure of these negotiations with the Corporation nothing further has been done in the matter.

With regard to the question as to whether the Directors of the Company intend to apply for further parliamentary powers with respect to this level crossing, I am desired to say that the Board would most willingly adopt this course in conjunction with the Corporation of Blackburn as, whilst fully recognising their own position in the matter, they do think that there is just claim upon the Corporation to contribute towards the cost of substituting a bridge with the necessary approaches at the place in question.

As you say that the Board of Trade proposes to lay Colonel Rich’s report and this reply before Parliament, my Directors trust they may be excused for expressing an opinion that it is a great hardship on railway companies to be called upon to expend large sums of money in abolishing level crossings on their railways already sanctioned by Parliament, and the inconvenience of which has arisen from other circumstances than those of the use of the line, and they venture to express a hope that Parliament will see fit to pass some general Act by which, in cases where found desirable that costly works shall be executed for the purpose of meeting the public convenience and security, by substituting bridges for level crossings, the expense should be fairly apportioned between the railway companies and the public authorities according to the circumstances of each case, and the decision of some disinterested tribunal.

I am, &c.,
 (Signed) J. H. STAFFORD,
 The Assistant Secretary,
 (Railway Department),
 Board of Trade.
 Secretary.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Board of Trade,
 (Railway Department),
 April 14th, 1877.*

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your Minute of the 5th instant, 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 3rd instant, at Salford goods yard junction, about half a mile to the west of Salford station, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

The 7.0 a.m. passenger train from Manchester to Liverpool ran into a mineral train which was being shunted into the goods yard at Salford. Five passengers have complained of being hurt, but their injuries are believed to be slight.

About half a mile on the Pendleton side of the Salford station, there is a junction of the goods yard lines with the passenger lines. This junction is protected by the ordinary home and distant signals, which are worked from a raised cabin close to the junction. The points and signals are interlocked. This junction-cabin is called the Salford engine-shed cabin. The view along the line in both directions is very limited, owing to the curves and the high walls which bound the railway. The distant-signal at the Manchester side of the engine-shed cabin is 530 yards,

and the home-signal is 37 yards from the cabin. This home-signal can be seen by a driver approaching from Manchester about 203 yards before he reaches it. The mineral train, which was being shunted at the engine shed-cabin junction, could be seen about 150 yards before it was reached.

The railway is practically level at this place.

On the day in question, a mineral train, which consisted of a tank-engine, 5 wagons of stone, and 10 empty cattle waggons, left Oldfield Road, which is at the west side of Salford station, at 6.55 a.m., and reached Salford engine-shed junction at 7.0 a.m. It stopped just beyond the junction, in order to set back into the goods yard through a pair of points which are situated about 16 yards to the west of the junction cabin. As the train was backing into the yard, the last waggon was run into by the engine of the passenger train which left Manchester at 7.0 a.m.

The passenger train consisted of an engine and tender, a third-class carriage with brake compartment and the guard in charge, three coaches coupled to it by continuous breaks, and two coaches without breaks at the tail of the train.

The pointsman at the engine-shed cabin moved the levers of his home and distant signals so as to place these signals at danger before he allowed the