

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

Accident Reports.

2 October 1871

BoT Report into Accident at  
Blue Pits.

(3 Pages).

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Manchester, 26th September 1871.

Sir, In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 20th 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 12th of September, near the Miles Platting station on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

In this case the 8.45 p.m. passenger train from the Victoria station, Manchester, for Middleton, came into collision, while approaching a new junction cabin east of Miles Platting, with a goods train which was shunting out of a siding on the west of that signal cabin.

The Miles Platting station is a mile and a quarter on the east of the Victoria station at Manchester, and is a station of enormous traffic. Since the dates of my previous reports, further progress has been made in adding to and improving the siding accommodation on the east of this station, and a long siding has been constructed on the north of the main lines, connected with a number of other sidings further to the northward. A new signal-cabin has been erected a quarter of a mile on the east of the Miles Platting station, and a locking-frame has been provided in it containing levers for working the necessary points and signals. This cabin and its connexions are, however, as yet only partially completed, and the present collision occurred in consequence of their incomplete condition.

The passenger train in question left Victoria station at 8.48 p.m., 3 minutes late, consisting of a tank-engine and 5 carriages, 4 of which were coupled together with continuous breaks. The engine-driver found the signals all right for him at Miles Platting, and after a short detention at that station he started again, also about 3 minutes late, for Middleton. The night was very dark, and the engine-driver, after leaving Miles Platting, increased his speed to about 15 miles an hour. He had no reason to suspect that the line was in any way obstructed before him, but while travelling at the above speed his engine came suddenly into collision with something on the main line, which he had not seen, and of which he had no notice. The passenger-engine was not damaged, except by the fracture of a footstep; nor was it thrown off the rails, any more than any of the carriages behind it. Two footsteps were broken off the carriage next behind the engine. Out of about 25 passengers who were riding in the train, none have, up to the present time, complained of injury.

The goods train which came thus in the way of the passenger train, left the Miles Platting station shortly before the passenger train, proceeded towards the signal-cabin above referred to, along

the main line, and backed near that signal-cabin into the new loop line. The train, consisting of an engine and tender, 24 waggons, and a break-van, was then divided into two parts; the one part, consisting of the engine and tender, 14 waggons, and the break-van, drawing out of the loop line, to go on with its shunting, while the remaining waggons were left standing in the loop line. The guard inquired of the signalman whether he might go on with his shunting, and the signalman gave him leave to do so. Their statements in regard to what happened do not entirely accord with one another, but it is plain that the signalman gave leave to the guard to go on with his shunting, and that the guard proceeded with his shunting accordingly, neither of them intending that the main line should be fouled by the goods train during the process. The signalman states that he told the driver particularly to beware of fouling the main line; but this the driver denies; and the engine-driver, obeying only the signals of the guard to proceed forward, and to stop when he had cleared the siding points, brought the train to a stand on seeing a red light exhibited to him by the guard from his hand-lamp for that purpose; but he had by that time fouled the main line; and, looking up, he saw that the main line signal had been turned off, and heard the passenger train approaching. The buffer-plank of the goods engine was partly knocked off, but neither the engine, the tender, nor the waggons were thrown off the rails.

It appears to have been the practice, previously, to go on with the shunting at this spot without stopping the main line trains; and such a practice was safely carried on while the trains were of such a length as to stand between the siding points and the fouling point for the main line, and as long as they were stopped short of that fouling point. But in this instance the portion of the goods train which was being shunted was, if not too long to stand between the siding points and the fouling point of the main line, too long, at all events, to have been properly shunted in the manner described, with so little margin between safety and collision.

The new work which is now being performed, and is nearly completed, at the signal-cabin, will prevent such a collision from again occurring, inasmuch as it will be impossible for the signalman to let a goods train out of the loop line in the direction of the main line at the same time that he lowers his signals for a passenger train to pass along the main line.

I have, &c.,  
H. W. TYLER.

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

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade  
(Railway Department),  
24th October 1871.

Sir, In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 6th instant, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances attending the collision which occurred on the 2nd inst., at Blue Pits junction on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, between a passenger train and two goods waggons.

Five passengers are returned as having been more or less injured.

At Blue Pits junction,  $8\frac{3}{4}$  miles from Manchester, the lines from Manchester and Bury unite, and thence proceed to Rochdale, Todmorden, and Yorkshire. The junction cabin and home signals are in the fork 160 yards on the Manchester side of the points, and

280 yards on that of the Blue Pits station signals. The junction home signals are close to the cabin, and there are distant signals towards Manchester and Bury, but none towards Rochdale. The junction points and signals are not at present interlocked; but I am informed that locking apparatus has been ordered for this and for a number of other junction cabins. The station is provided with a distant signal 510 yards from the home signal for trains approaching from Rochdale, and of this there is a long view. The junction home signal can be seen by trains approaching in this direction for a distance of only 440 yards, owing to an over-bridge and curve in the line. A siding joins the main line to Manchester 150 yards from the junction cabin, the signal for this siding being 56 yards nearer the cabin; another siding joins this first one 40 yards on the junction side of this signal; the siding points being worked from

a ground cabin nearly opposite, the junction cabin. Approaching from Rochdale, the line falls for two miles at 1 in 330 till it is close to the station; after which it is level for a distance of 46 chains.

Some six months since the junction signal cabin was partially burnt down, and in consequence of the contemplated change in the signal arrangements has not yet been rebuilt. Telegraphic bell communication between the cabin and the booking office, which had existed before the fire, was destroyed by it, and the communication has since been kept up by means of a gong, the practice being for the telegraph clerk to inform a station porter the hour at which a train has left Todmorden or Rochdale; this porter again announcing the *fact*, not the *hour*, by gong to the junction signal man; the latter regulating shunting operations accordingly.

On the 2nd instant sundry changes had taken place in the running of the Lancashire and Yorkshire trains to and from Manchester and Yorkshire; among others the 8.30 p.m. train from Normanton to Manchester was to cease stopping at Blue Pits, but was to run through from Todmorden to Miles Platting, stopping only at Rochdale. The changes were announced on large handbills, which were posted at Blue Pits station on the 29th ultimo. This change appears to have been the only one affecting Blue Pits station, but the attention of the station staff was not drawn to it by the station master, who informed me that he considered that posting the bills was sufficient. That it was not so is shown by the fact that both the booking clerk (who also attended to the telegraph) and the station porter who had charge of the gong communication with the signal cabin had failed to observe the alteration, and did not become aware of it till after the occurrence of the collision.

At 10.38 p.m. on the evening in question the booking clerk at Blue Pits, a boy 14 years of age, was advised by telegraph that the 8.30 p.m. train from Normanton had left Todmorden at 10.35, three minutes late. The Rochdale telegraph office being shut at 10 o'clock, the departure of this train from Rochdale was never notified by telegraph. Upon receiving this message the boy declares that he went to the door of the booking office and shouted the information to Bond, the station porter on duty, who was standing three or four yards from him; that Bond made no reply, but 10 or 12 minutes afterwards came in and asked if the train had left Todmorden, upon which he again repeated the information; that he booked three or four passengers for Manchester, under the impression that the train would, as usual, stop at Blue Pits. Bond denies having received the first message from the boy, but states that he went to him at 10.50 to ask about the train, and on being told that it had left Todmorden at 10.35, he thought it was better not to gong to the junction signalman, as it might mislead him as to the time of its probable arrival; and that being under the full impression that the train would, as usual, stop at the station, he took no steps to give him any information about it, though he saw the siding signal off, signifying that shunting was going on upon the line to Manchester; that upon the near approach of the train he took off his distant and main signal and rang the bell for the passengers, three or four in number.

The junction signalman (Hessell) states that a goods train arrived from Rochdale at 10.54, and after taking in water went up, by his permission, at 10.59 to shunt at the siding, with which object he took the siding signal off; that he was aware that the passenger train was due to pass (not to stop) at 10.53, but that having received no gong from the station he concluded that it had not left Todmorden, and that it would not pass for at least 20 minutes; that upon hearing the bell being rung at the station for the passenger train he at once conjectured that the fact of the alteration in the running of this train had been forgotten at the station; but that he had no time to do more than give the driver a red light with his hand lamp; that the driver whistled at his signal, gave the break

whistle, and dashed past his cabin at a speed of from 18 to 20 miles an hour, with the guard's breaks on.

The goods train (from Wakefield to Oldham Road) had left Rochdale at 10.50 p.m., three hours and 40 minutes late, consisting of engine and tender, 14 loaded, 10 empty waggons, and a break-van. It arrived at Blue Pits at 10.54, having four loaded waggons to put off and some to take on, involving two shunts. The engine took in water, which occupied five minutes, and then drew up to the siding points, where it remained some minutes waiting to back in, the sidings not being clear. By permission of the ground signalman, the train then set back into the siding with the engine clear of the main line; the siding signal was then lowered, and the engine drew forward seven waggons, the last three of which were to be put into the other siding. The engine stopped just on the main line, with six waggons foul of it, and the seventh just clear. The under guard then unhooked the last three waggons from the four others attached to the engine, and just at this time the break whistle of the passenger train was heard about 350 yards off. The driver of the goods train upon hearing this started off as hard as he could with the engine and four waggons attached to it. The head guard gave the other driver a red light, and thinks the engine passed him at a speed of 25 to 30 miles an hour, with steam shut off, and some wheels skidding, dashing into and smashing the two front waggons of the three left in the siding, foul of the main line, injuring the third, and just overtaking, before stopping, the waggons attached to the engine.

The passenger train from Normanton had left Todmorden two or three minutes late, consisting of engine and tender, two vans (one front and rear), and six carriages, each van and three carriages being coupled together with continuous breaks, there being one guard in the front van. The train was detained outside Rochdale, and left it at 11.2, 13 minutes late, having next to stop at Miles Platting, 8½ miles distant, the time allowed for running the distance being 16 minutes, or an average speed of 33 miles an hour. The driver, a man of 17 years service, during the whole of which time he had been concerned in no previous accident, states that the night was rather thick, and the rails very greasy; that on approaching Blue Pits station he found both the home and distant signals off, by which he understood, according to custom, that the junction would be clear; but that, it being the first time of this train running through Blue Pits without stopping, he whistled to give notice of his approach; that in consequence of steam from a shunting engine obscuring the junction signal he did not see it at "danger" till within 100 yards of it, catching sight at the same time of a red lamp signal; that he had only time to get his break applied, whistle for the guard's break, shut off steam, and get his engine into midgear, when he struck the waggons on the siding at a speed reduced from 25 to 12 or 14 miles an hour, knocking them aside, and, just as he stopped, overtaking the waggons attached to the goods engine.

The guard states that he got his break applied, and that the collision occurred at 11.6; he agrees with the driver as to the speed.

The left corner of the buffer plank of the engine, and the left leading axle box of the tender were broken; the front wheels of the third carriage left the rails, and the front van and carriage next to it were buffer locked; all the carriages had their left-hand steps and handles stripped, and one had its left-hand corner knocked in.

Two causes contributed to bring about this collision. In the first place, the absence of a distant signal worked from the junction prevented the driver receiving proper notice of the junction not being clear for him to run through. This defect will be remedied when the new locking apparatus is supplied; but as some time may elapse before this is done, I should strongly recommend a junction distant signal being at once provided.

In the second place was the mistake made by both the station porter and booking clerk in overlooking the fact of the passenger train ceasing to stop at Blue Pits. They are of course both to blame for not having made themselves acquainted with this change, which they had ample opportunity of doing from the bills which had been posted three days previously; but I blame still more the station master for not having drawn the attention of his staff to such an important change in the running of this train.

The method adopted, both before and since the fire at the signal cabin, of announcing to the junction signalman the fact and not the time of trains leaving Todmorden is very likely to be delusive, as in the

event of the telegraphic message being delayed in transit the signalman would conclude he had more time at his disposal for shunting than would be really the case. The telegraphic information should go direct or complete into the signalman's cabin to be of a really reliable value.

It may be remarked in conclusion that under a good system of block telegraph working this collision would, in all probability, not have occurred.

I have, &c.

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

The Secretary  
(Railway Department),  
Board of Trade.

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade  
(Railway Department),  
26th October 1871.

Sir,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 6th inst., I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the collision which occurred on the 3rd instant at the Victoria station, Manchester, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, between an engine and a passenger train to which it was about to be attached.

Three passengers are returned as having been shaken.

In this case a train for Bury, due out of Victoria station at 10.6 a.m., was waiting in one of the docks ready to start as soon as the engine, which was bringing in another train from Bury, should be attached to it. The train consisted of five vehicles and a van, all coupled with continuous breaks, which were on to hold the train, as the rails of the dock have an inclination downwards from the buffer stops of 1 in 150; the van being about 10 yards from these buffer stops.

The driver of the engine to be attached to this train had been accustomed to drive in and out of Manchester for the past six years, and had driven this engine, which was stated to be in good working order in all respects, about six months. He had arrived tender first with a train from Bury near the foot of the Victoria incline at about 10.8, five minutes

late, where, at a point about 270 yards from the front of the train to which he was to be attached, after having almost or very nearly stopped, his engine was, according to custom, detached by the guard from the train, which latter would, when the engine was far enough ahead, be broken down the remaining portion of the incline of 1 in 59 by the guard, having thereby gained sufficient impetus to ascend that of 1 in 150 leading to the platform. After being detached from the train, the break was eased off, and the engine having attained by gravity a speed of three or four miles an hour, the break was again applied at a point about 120 yards from the front of the train for Bury. The driver and fireman were then engaged in putting down sand to help them in the journey out, as the rails were greasy, and their attention was thus diverted from the train, and the driver only perceived just in time to reverse and put on contrary steam that the tender breaks alone, which were hard on, would not stop the engine. The collision then occurred at a very low speed without doing any damage either to the engine, tender, or carriages; the latter were knocked back about 2 to 3 yards.

The collision must be ascribed to a want of due care on the part of the engine driver in joining the train he was about to take to Bury.

I have, &c.,

C. S. HUTCHINSON  
Lieut.-Col. R.E.

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

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Railway Department,  
Board of Trade,  
26th October 1871.

Sir,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 9th inst., I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances attending the accident which occurred on the 4th inst. at Chorley junction on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, from the engine and part of a coal train leaving the rails.

The fireman had both his legs cut off, and died about eight hours after the accident.

At Chorley junction, 200 yards on the Preston side of Chorley station signals, the Lancashire Union line

to Blackburn leaves the main line of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway from Wigan to Preston. The junction is provided with a proper locking apparatus, the signals at the junction and station (by a slot arrangement) being mutually controlled.

There is a slight fall in the line from the station to the junction, soon after passing which the Blackburn line rises on a gradient of 1 in 60.

The permanent way is of a substantial character, consisting of steel rails weighing 70 lbs. per yard, fixed in chairs, at average central intervals of 2 ft. 8 in. weighing 42 lbs. each. At the time of the accident some new sidings were being put in on the station side of the junction, in carrying out which arrangement the ballast had been removed from the main line close up to the junction points.