

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

26 July 1856

BoT Report into Accident at
Bury.

(2 Pages).

255 yards from the platform, along a piece of straight road leading to the platform. As soon as it had passed, the goods train made one or two shunts into sidings leading out of the one on which it had been standing, and then drew ahead until it again stood on the main line, nearer to the platform than the curved cross over road before referred to, and the driver was directed by the shunter to stop.

The straight piece of road, along which the Woolwich train passed to the station, was thus left clear, and accordingly the up signal for the 11.15 a.m. up Broxbourne train was lowered from "danger" to "caution," to enable it to come forward.

The shunter then went to the Inspector to receive his orders regarding the disposal of the rest of the trucks of the goods train, which were intended for sidings lying north of the down main line, and was told he must wait till the Broxbourne train had arrived.

The Broxbourne train arrived at its proper time at 12.20 p.m.; it consisted of four carriages, and as it approached the curved cross over portion of the up main line, the driver saw that the goods train was in the act of backing out towards him, and he immediately reversed his engine and put on the steam the reverse way, whistled for the guard's break, and did all in his power to reduce his speed, which he estimates at four or five miles an hour when he struck the last of the goods trucks and knocked it off the rails, breaking the buffer plank of his own engine and the buffers.

The pointman at the commencement of this curved portion of the up main line, seeing that a collision was inevitable, very properly allowed the points to drop to their natural position, so that the two trains might strike each other fairly instead of permitting the Broxbourne train to pass along the straight road, as in that case the goods trucks would have struck the passenger carriages on the side, and probably have caused some very serious accidents. As it was, nine persons are stated to have been slightly hurt by the collision.

The driver of the goods train states that after standing about eight minutes where he had been directed to stop by the shunter, he heard some one call out, "Come back;" he admits that he did not see any one; and he says that he thought the voice was like that of the shunter. The fireman supports the driver's statement, but there is no other corroboration.

I am informed that the practice in the Bishopsgate yard, with regard to shunting operations, is, that the drivers are signalled to go ahead or go back, by means of waving the hand and by word of mouth during the day, and by waving a white light and by word of mouth by night. The driver of the goods train states that he has frequently been moved by word of mouth alone, without any waving of the hand or of a light; but the bulk of the testimony is the other way. There are no written or printed regulations on the subject, and it is therefore solely a question of practice.

The driver of the goods train further states that when he backed his train, in accordance with the call, he had no idea that he was going along the curved cross over road, but imagined that he was going back once more into the siding, as he saw the semaphore arm down for an up train to come in.

With regard to the cause of the accident, I have no doubt that it was occasioned by the carelessness of the driver, and a loose way of conducting the shunting in the yard; and I am of opinion that proper instructions on the subject of signalling for the shunting of trains should form part of those issued for the guidance of drivers and shunters.

Captain Galton, Royal Engineers.
&c. §c. §c.

I have, &c.
W. YOLLAND,
Lieut.-Col. Royal Engineers.

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, August 2, 1856.

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 30th 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 26th ultimo, near the Bury Station of the East Lancashire Railway.

As will be seen by the enclosed diagram, there are some points (marked A) on the main line, 833 yards to the south of the Bury Station, leading to the company's engine shed and workshops, and the sidings connected with them; and there is a signal at 80 yards from these points, and between them and the station, for their protection.

It is stated that the shunting from the sidings in the neighbourhood of this signal occupies sometimes three or four hours in the course of the day, but that at other times there is not more than an engine going twice to and fro in the same period.

It has not been customary to station a signalman at this point; but it has been considered the duty of each driver, who required to pass from these sidings to the main line, to see that the signal was turned to "danger" before he did so; and, in fact, a notice-board pointed out that the drivers were responsible in this respect.

An engine proceeding from the shed to the station, along the siding which contains the pit marked in the diagram, has to join the main line at A, then to run eighty yards up the wrong line to the signal, and there to cross to its proper line.

The gradient falls 1 in 132 from the station.

Such being the position and mode of working of the sidings, the points, and the signal, I will now proceed to detail the circumstances connected with the accident.

On the 26th ultimo, a driver was standing by the side of a new engine, which was over the pit near the shed, as his fireman returned from dinner; and, finding that it was necessary that he should go to the station for coke and water, he then directed the fireman to set the signal to "danger," that he might get out on the main line. The fireman obeyed him, and he moved forward to the main line; but he had no sooner reached it than he was run into by a passenger train from the station at considerable speed.

This driver could not have seen the passenger train approaching until he was near the main line, on account of the position of the sheds, and he was too much engaged with the pet taps of his new engine to observe it when he might have done so. The fireman, as soon as he had turned on the signal, heard a whistle from, and then saw, the approaching passenger train; but did not succeed in attracting the attention of his driver in sufficient time to prevent the catastrophe.

The goods manager of the company, who was riding on the passenger engine, unfortunately sustained a compound fracture of his leg below the knee in attempting to jump off, but the secretary of the company, who was also on the engine, the driver, and the fireman escaped unhurt. The guard was slightly cut by the van window, and two passengers received contusions.

The passenger train left Bury at 1.51 p.m., one minute late, and the driver was travelling at the rate of 25 or 26 miles an hour, and was within 150 yards of the signal, when he suddenly saw the fireman turn it to "danger." He therefore whistled for the breaks, and seeing the new engine coming on the line reversed his engine, and did his best to pull up. He was unable, however, to reduce his speed by more than about 10 miles an hour on so heavy a gradient; and the collision would have been even more severe but from the circumstance that the van and two carriages were fitted with Mr. Newall's break, which was applied by the guard upon hearing the whistle of the driver.

No blame can be attached to the servants of the company who were with the passenger train, but undoubtedly the driver of the new engine was guilty of great carelessness in bringing his engine on the main line without looking to see whether a train was in sight, and particularly when a passenger train was due.

The great cause of the collision, however, was the want of a signalman for the control of this means of communication with the main line; and I am happy to be able to enclose copy of a regulation which has been issued to the two men who have been appointed since the accident to perform that duty.

I may add that these men should be supplied with time bills, and the means of knowing the correct time, in order that they may not only prevent obstructions on the main line when trains are in sight, but also provide against dangers from this cause when trains are to be expected, as well as that a distant signal towards the station should be erected for their use, to be worked by a wire from the present signal. The latter precaution is the more necessary because fogs are not unfrequent on this part of the line.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

Enclosure.

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY.

Notice.

Sidings at Buckley Wells. Engine Shed.

Before any engine is removed from the sidings the driver must receive notice from the signalman specially appointed by the company that the main line is clear.

No engine must leave the sidings for the main line, or commence to shunt from one siding to another, until the driver has been assured by the appointed signalman that the main line is clear and properly protected by signals or otherwise.

The signals are not to be worked either in the day or night except by the persons specially appointed by the company to discharge that duty.

Locc. Dept., Bury, August 1, 1856.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of copy of the above.
August 1, 1856.

(Signed) R. PARKINSON, Day Signalman

I hereby acknowledge receipt of copy of the above.
August 1, 1856.

(Signed) JOHN SANDFORD, Night Signalman.

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