

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

2 August 1871

BoT Report into Accident at

Holbeck GNR.

(1 Page).

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY.

SIR,

Pontefract, 26th August 1871.

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 12th 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 close to Holbeck Station, on the Great Northern Railway, on the 2nd instant, between a passenger train belonging to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company and a goods train belonging to the Great Northern Railway Company.

No person had complained of injury up to the date of my inquiry.

Holbeck Station (about three quarters of a mile from Leeds Central Station) is situated at the foot of an incline of 1 in 50, which continues for $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile towards Lowmoor. Through the station the gradient changes to 1 in 400, still falling towards Leeds, and then again increases to 1 in 100. On this latter gradient occurs the junction (arranged for running to and from the central station) of the lines from the Great Northern low-level goods yard with the passenger lines. This junction is protected on the Holbeck side by a stop signal 130 yards from it, and by a home signal, which, however, is 100 yards on the Leeds side of the points. There is a cross-over road between the two passenger lines, the points of which nearest to Holbeck Station are close by the stop signal from the junction. None of the junction points or cross-over road points are at present interlocked with the signals, but I am informed that a complete re-arrangement of the junction is about to be effected, including proper locking arrangements.

The Leeds end of the Holbeck platform is only 65 yards from the junction stop signal, the platform being about 210 yards long. The station signals are 200 yards from the stop signal (or 75 yards inside the Lowmoor end of the platform), and the distant-signal towards Lowmoor 515 yards from the station signal, on the incline of 1 in 50.

Between Lowmoor and Holbeck Station the absolute block system is in force.

On the 2nd instant, at about 3.15 p.m., a Great Northern goods train, consisting of engine, tender, 12 waggons, and a van, had left the Great Northern low-level goods yard to proceed to Bradford through Holbeck Station. With this object the engine had pushed the waggons through the junction towards Leeds, and the driver was in the act of drawing ahead through the cross-over road before referred to, so as to get on to his proper road, when he saw a passenger train coming through the Holbeck Station at a speed which he felt sure would lead to a collision with his train. He put on steam so as to get his engine and tender clear of the crossing; had just done so, and was slowly moving ahead, when the passenger train came up at a speed, he estimates, of 15 miles an hour, struck the first waggon, and then the second and third, which three waggons were seriously damaged, the fourth having an axle-guard broken. The crossing operation he was performing was covered by the main and stop signals. The collision occurred at about 3.20 p.m.

The passenger train had left Manchester for Leeds, &c., at 1.30 p.m., correct time, and Lowmoor at 3 p.m., correct time, being next timed to stop at Holbeck Station at 3.18. It consisted, on leaving Lowmoor, of engine and tender, guard's break-van, two second-class and one first-class carriage, all four vehicles coupled together with Fay's continuous breaks. The engine and breaks were all stated to be in good working order. The driver and fireman were both experienced men, and used to running in and out of Leeds. The guard had acted as such for three years, and as assistant guard for five years previously. He was not well acquainted with this part of the line, having worked over it once about two years since; twice each way the day before the collision, with a different driver; and once each way on the 2nd, prior to the trip on which the collision occurred, with the same

driver. On the previous journeys, and as far as Lowmoor on the present one, all had gone right. On approaching Wortley West junction, (about three quarters of a mile from Holbeck) steam being shut off in consequence of the descending gradient of 1 in 50, the signals were found to be at danger, and in obedience to the driver's whistle the guard applied his break, the speed being thus reduced from about 30 to 15 miles an hour. The signals were, however lowered before the distant-signal was reached, and the breaks being released the train again attained a speed of 30 miles an hour. On nearing the Holbeck Station distant-signal (both home and distant signals being off) the driver states that, seeing some steam at the junction, he turned round to the guard, and motioned him to put on his break; that the guard looked at him, and leaned back against the side of his van; that upon this he commenced whistling the break whistle, to which the guard still paid no attention, and did not begin to apply his break till he was passing the Holbeck Station home-signal, soon after which the wheels began to skid. The driver further states that his fireman had his tender-break hard on by the distant-signal, and that he reversed his engine, and put on contrary steam before he reached the platform; that his fireman and he jumped shortly before reaching the waggons, the speed on collision being eight or nine miles an hour.

The fireman corroborates the driver's evidence in all essential particulars.

The guard declares that he commenced putting on his break at the same time as the fireman, viz., half-way between the distant and home signals, and that the van wheels were skidding when the home signal was passed. His statement is, however flatly contradicted by the evidence of a porter, and ticket collector on Holbeck platform, whose attention was directed to the train by the driver's break whistle, and who both state that they distinctly saw the guard go to his wheel as the train was passing the home signal, and that the wheels did not begin to bite till some distance further on. One of them also states that the tender wheels were skidding before the train reached the home signal; and the other, that the engine was reversed with steam against it, when it passed him on the platform.

The damage to the engine consisted in its buffer beam, one buffer and one cylinder cover being broken. The carriages sustained no injury, and no wheels left the rails.

There appears then to be no reasonable doubt but that the collision was caused by the negligence of the guard in not applying his break sufficiently soon, although warned to do so by the driver. There is no evidence to show that he was under the influence of drink. Both driver and fireman state that he had on previous occasions acted in a somewhat similar manner, though not so as to cause an accident. If this be so, he is evidently not a man to be entrusted with the responsible charge of continuous breaks.

The occurrence of this collision is another proof of the great need there is of placing the control of continuous breaks in the hands of the driver as well as of the guard. The mechanical genius of the country ought certainly to be equal to the production of a satisfactory break that can be so worked.

The improvements at Holbeck Junction should include a distant signal towards Lowmoor, which does not at present exist; the station distant signal should also be moved further from the home signal, a distance of 515 yards on an incline of 1 in 50 being insufficient; and when any crossing is taking place between the station and junction, it would be a wise precaution to keep both the home and distant signals of the station at danger.

I have, &c.,

C. S. HUTCHINSON,
Lieut.-Col., R.E.The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.