

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

14 November 1867

BoT Report into Accident at

Knottingley GNR.

(2 Pages).

Board of Trade,
Whitehall, 14th January 1868.

SIR, 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, in conformity with your minute of the 18th ultimo, into the circumstances attending an accident which occurred on the 14th ultimo to a train on the Muirkirk Branch of the Glasgow and South-Western Railway, from its running on to a siding at Well Trees, and breaking down a wooden bridge intended only for carrying lime waggons. I regret to state that this accident resulted in the death of the driver and fireman of the engine, though no passengers were injured.

The Muirkirk Branch of the Glasgow and South-western Railway is a single line, leaving the main line at Auchinleck, having a station at Lugar and a terminus at Muirkirk. Numerous coal and other sidings join the line at various points. Between Lugar and Muirkirk occurs the Well Trees siding, leading to some lime works in the neighbourhood. The siding joins the main line by points, which are facing points for a train from Lugar to Muirkirk. These points are weighted to lie right for the main line, and are kept locked in that position by a padlock attached to a bolt; the same description of padlock is used at all the sidings, keys being in possession of the surfacemen, guards, and firemen. There are no signals of any description either at this siding or at a great many others which I passed on the branch. For a few yards from the points the siding is provided with the same rails, &c. as the line itself, but after this it becomes merely suitable for the transit of light waggons drawn by horses. About 100 yards from the points the siding crossed the course of a rivulet by means of a wooden bridge, strong enough for the traffic it was intended to carry, but much too weak for the passage of an engine over it. The banks of the rivulet are high and somewhat steep at the point where the bridge stood.

The train to which the accident occurred was composed of an engine, tender, seven empty coal waggons, two goods trucks, one empty pig-iron waggon, one break waggon, and two composite passenger carriages, with a guard's break compartment in the centre of the last carriage. It had left Auchinleck at 7 p.m. on the 14th ultimo, and Lugar at 7.5. The night was wet, dark, and stormy. All went right until the Well Trees siding was reached (at which time the speed was from 20 to 25 miles an hour), when the driver at once felt he had left the main line. He appears to have immediately reversed his engine, and the guard to have applied his breaks, but the speed was of course not materially checked before the bridge was reached. The left-hand girder broke into three pieces directly the weight of the engine came upon it, and the engine and tender both fell into the stream upon their sides, the boiler lying lengthwise across the current, and the tender nearly at right angles to the engine, both on the down-stream side of the bridge. The coal waggons, &c. were piled up on each other in the stream above the bridge and on the bank, and were nearly all more or less smashed; but the passenger carriages sustained no injury, and none of the passengers, of whom there were from 16 to 20,

complained of being hurt. The driver and fireman fell with the engine and tender, and were found jammed in between them in the angle they formed with each other. After about 1½ hour's exertion, the guard, with some assistants, managed to extricate the driver, who was uppermost. His thigh was broken, he was otherwise burnt and injured, and died on the next day but one. During this hour and a half the night had continued stormy, and the stream rising, and the engine and tender having dammed its course, the water was gradually deepening where the fireman had fallen, and was being supported by some of the men in a half-lying posture. Notwithstanding every effort to release this poor man's legs, and divert the course of the stream from his face, it is the melancholy fact that in about half an hour after the driver had been removed, the water gradually rose and drowned him while lying in the guard's arms. He was got out the next morning, when the water had fallen, without much difficulty, and was found to have received but little apparent injury.

As to the reason why the points were open for the siding, it appears difficult to account for it on any other theory than that they must have been held open maliciously with the intent to cause an accident. All the evidence that I could collect went to show that the siding had been disused for six months; the lock had been seen on the bolt which passes through the switch handle at 10 a.m. on the day of the accident; a train from Muirkirk had passed over the points at about a quarter to six, showing that they could not at that time have been kept open by a wedge or block; and at about a quarter past six on the same evening (or about an hour before the accident occurred) the points had been observed by a watchman, who was passing along the line with a lamp, lying right for the main line. Shortly after the accident occurred, both the guard and a permanent way man examined the points and found them uninjured, and lying right for the main line. The padlock was lying on the switch box, and the bolt resting against it; no violence appearing to have been used to open the padlock. The switch handle might have been held either by hand, or by a cord from the far side of the fence, the night having been so dark as to have rendered either plan feasible without risk of detection.

A reward of 250*l.* (100*l.* by the company, 50*l.* by the servants of the company, and 100*l.* by the county), has been offered for the discovery of the supposed offender.

Had this siding been provided with signals arranged so that the points could lie open for the siding only when the main and distant signals were at danger, or even had there been only a signal working with the points, and had the signal lamps been lit, it would have been far more difficult for a malicious person to have caused this accident. As, however, the siding was not in use, the lamps would probably not have been lit; and in such cases of unused sidings, the only safe plan seems to be the removal of the points.

I have, &c.

The Secretary
Railway Department,
Board of Trade.

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

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY.

Board of Trade
(Railway Department),
Whitehall, 1st January 1868.

SIR, I AM directed by the Board of Trade to transmit to you, for the consideration of the Directors of the Great Northern Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Colonel Rich, R.E., the officer appointed by the Board of Trade to inquire into the circumstances connected with the collision

which occurred near Knottingley on the Great Northern Railway, on the 14th November last.

I am, &c.

The Secretary of the
Great Northern
Railway Company.

C. CECIL TREVOR.

*Board of Trade
(Railway Department),
Whitehall, 28th December 1867.*

SIR,

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 13th instant, 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 collision that occurred near Knottingley, in consequence of the Great Northern express, which leaves London at 10.0 a.m., overtaking a Great Northern train of empty waggons about three quarters of a mile to the south of Knottingley station.

Only one passenger is reported to have complained of injury. He was examined by a medical man, and proceeded to Malton. The guard of the train of empty waggons, had his knee dislocated and his shoulder bruised. He could not attend the inquiry. The guard of the express was slightly shaken.

On the 14th November 1867, a pick-up goods train belonging to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company left Doncaster for Knottingley at 12.19 p.m. It was followed at 1.2 p.m. by the Great Northern express, which left London at 9.0 a.m. and passed the pick up goods train at Norton station.

At 1.7 p.m., a train of empty goods waggons, belonging to the North-Eastern Railway Company, followed the Great Northern express from Doncaster; at 1.13 p.m. a Great Northern special train of empty waggons followed the North-Eastern train; and at 1.48 p.m. the Great Northern express, which left London at 10.0 a.m., followed the Great Northern train of empties.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire pick-up goods train, stopped at the stations between Doncaster and Knottingley to do its work, and the North-Eastern and Great Northern trains of empties were close behind it, when it reached Knottingley. The Great Northern special train of empties left Womersley (which is the first station south of Knottingley) at 1.42 p.m. The Great Northern express passed that station at 2.2 p.m.

The day was foggy and the atmosphere was particularly thick between Womersley and Knotting-

ley. There are a number of limekilns close to the railway on this part of the line. The driver of the Great Northern train of empties was approaching the distant signal at the south side of Knottingley, cautiously, at about eight miles per hour, when this train was overtaken and run into by the express, which was travelling at a speed estimated by the driver, as 15 miles per hour, and by the guard, as 16 to 20 miles per hour.

In clear weather, the distant signal at the south side of Knottingley station can be seen by a driver for about a mile before he reaches it, but on the day in question it appears from the evidence that the weather was so thick, that objects could not be seen more than 60 to 80 yards distant.

The collision took place about 400 yards south of the Knottingley south distant signal.

The Great Northern train of empties consisted of an engine and tender, 50 waggons, and a guard's van. The express train consisted of an engine and tender, a guard's break-van with a guard in it, two composite, two first-class, and a second-class carriage, coupled in the order given.

The guard's van and 11 waggons at the end of the train of empties were thrown off the rails and partly broken up. The driver of this train was not aware of the collision until he got into Knottingley station and was told that he had left part of his train behind.

The buffers of the engine of the passenger train were the only parts of that train that were damaged. None of the vehicles left the rails, and the permanent way was not broken.

The driver, fireman, and guard of the passenger train state, that they were not aware of the danger, till their train was within 100 yards of the van at the tail of the train of special empties.

I submit, that the block system of telegraph should be adopted, on a line which is used by so many Companies, and where trains of all sorts follow each other so closely.

I have, &c.

F. H. RICH, R.E.,
Lieut.-Col. R.E.

*The Secretary of the
Board of Trade,
Railway Department.*

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY.

*Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),
Whitehall, 10th January 1868.*

SIR,

I AM directed by the Board of Trade to transmit to you, to be laid before the Directors of the Great Northern Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Colonel Rich, R.E., the officer appointed by the Board of Trade to inquire into the circumstances connected with the accident that occurred to a passenger train on the 16th November last at the Seven Sisters station on the Great Northern Railway.

I am, &c.

R. G. W. HERBERT.

*The Secretary of the
Great Northern
Railway Company.*

*The Woodlands, Dulwich,
6th January 1868.*

SIR,

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 13th 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 16th November, at Seven Sisters station, on the Great Northern Railway.

Three persons are reported to have complained of being hurt. One was cut in the head by the lamps of the carriage falling on him, and the other two complained of being shaken.

A train, which consisted of an engine and tender, a guard's van, a second, three first, a second, a composite, a horse box, a guard's van, two first and a second-class carriage with a break compartment, coupled in the order stated, left Hitchin for London at 3.21 p.m. on the day in question.

There were three guards with the train. The proper time for leaving Hitchin was 3.13 p.m., and the train was due in London at King's Cross station, at 4 p.m.

The train proceeded all right to the north side of Seven Sisters station, where the Edgware line joins the Great Northern Railway. It reached this point, which is about 2½ miles from King's Cross, about 4.3 p.m. Immediately after passing the junction, the driver's bell (which had a cord attached to it from the guard's van at the tail of the train) was sounded, and he felt a slight jerk. On looking round, he saw a carriage at the tail of his train jumping on the ballast. This was the carriage that had been third from the tail of the train. The last two carriages had broken away from the train, and had been left at the north side of Seven Sisters station.

The driver, who was travelling at 15 to 20 miles per hour at the time of the accident, pulled up his train as soon as possible. It was brought to a stand, with the last vehicle a little way to the south of the signal box, at the south side of the Seven Sisters station, about 300 yards from where the other vehicles got off the rails.

The points and signals at the Edgware branch