

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

16 December 1872

BoT Report into Accident at

Low Moor.

(1 Page).

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),*

SIR, *Whitehall, S.W., 6th January 1873.*

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 21st ult., the result of my investigation into the circumstances connected with the collision which occurred on the 16th ult., near Lowmoor station, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, between two passenger trains.

Four passengers are returned as having been bruised, shaken, or otherwise injured. The guard of one of the trains received a severe blow on the head.

The morning of the 21st ult. is described as having been very foggy in the neighbourhood of Lowmoor, and fog signalmen were consequently employed at the distant-signals both at Lowmoor and Cleckheaton, the next station towards Huddersfield. The distance between Cleckheaton and Lowmoor is $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and the gradient rising towards Lowmoor at 1 in 100.

At 10.30 a.m. a goods train passed Cleckheaton on its way to Lowmoor, and was stopped inside Lowmoor distant-signal, there being an obstruction at the station. The fog signalman on duty (Harper), as soon as it had passed, put down two fog signals on the rails near the distant-signal.

At 10.41 a passenger train from Huddersfield to Bradford, consisting of engine, tender, break-van, and four coaches, the five vehicles being all coupled together with continuous breaks, left Cleckheaton for Lowmoor. This train was 16 minutes late, having been detained at Huddersfield, waiting for a London and North-western Company's train. The driver having been informed that there was a goods train in front of him approached Lowmoor distant-signal cautiously, ran over the fog signals placed by Harper, and had brought his train to a stand with the van close to the distant-signal, when, hearing the whistle of a following engine, he tried to move his train ahead, and had succeeded in doing so for some 50 yards when the collision occurred. The hind wheels of the last carriage had its end knocked off and floor damaged; the other carriages were all more or less injured. The van broke away from the carriage behind it, and ran on with the engine a short distance. The guard, who had just taken off his break, on hearing the engine whistle, was preparing to jump out when the collision occurred; he was thrown on to the ground and received a severe blow on the head.

The express train was one running only twice a week between Huddersfield and Bradford. On the present occasion it started from Huddersfield punctually at 10.30, consisting of engine and tender, a break van, and three coaches, the van and two coaches being coupled together with continuous breaks. The driver states that on approaching Cleckheaton he found the signals against him, and was prepared to stop at the home-signal, when it was dropped to caution; that he accordingly went on again, being informed by the foreman porter as he passed him, by word of mouth and by his holding up three fingers, that a train in front had been gone three minutes; that he saw the signalman, but denies getting any caution from him; that he then went on cautiously towards Lowmoor, keeping a good look-out ahead, and first caught sight of the van of the train in front (which was in gentle motion) when a few yards from it, close to the Lowmoor distant-signal, at which time his

steam was shut off and his speed about five miles an hour; that he had just time to reverse and whistle for the breaks before the collision; that he met the fog signalman about 20 yards behind the other train, running back as hard as he could.

The fireman rates the speed on collision at 10 miles an hour, but otherwise his evidence agrees with that of the driver.

No wheels left the rails in the express train, nor were any of the vehicles damaged.

The signalman at Cleckheaton acknowledges lowering his home-signal to caution as the express approached, although the previous train had left only three minutes, the rule being to keep it at danger for five minutes. He states that he informed the driver, both by word of mouth and by holding up three fingers, that a train had preceded him three minutes, that the fog at Cleckheaton allowed objects to be seen at a distance of about 100 yards.

The foreman porter at Cleckheaton was standing near the signal-cabin when the express passed, on the signalman lowering the signal to caution after having kept it at danger. He declares that the signalman told the driver that the previous train had been gone only two minutes, and that he himself gave the same information to the fireman. He acknowledges that he ought not to have allowed the signalman to permit the train to go on till after the lapse of five minutes.

The platelayer who was fog signalling at the Lowmoor distant-signal states that the fog was so dense that he could not see the distant-signal for more than 30 yards; that after the arrival of the goods train he put down two fog signals to protect it; that the first passenger train approached cautiously, and that as soon as it had reached the distant-signal he heard the express approaching, and had not time to run back more than 30 yards from the signal when the engine passed him at a good speed, so fast that he could not have jumped up on the engine.

This collision is primarily due to the misconduct of the signalman and foreman porter at Cleckheaton, in not having carried out the rule of preserving an interval of five minutes between following trains. If there ever was a case in which it was necessary that this rule should have been strictly obeyed it was so in the present instance, when, on a densely foggy morning an express train was following a passenger train, which again was closely on the heels of a goods train. The ill observance of the time interval on this occasion is no doubt to be attributed to the general habit of inattention to the rule upon the subject, it being pleaded that if it were strictly enforced the traffic could never be worked on busy lines. Such being the case, it only shows the importance of substituting as soon as possible, by means of block telegraph working, a space interval instead of an ill-observed time interval in the working of the traffic.

The driver of the express deserves censure for not proceeding with more caution in approaching the Lowmoor distant-signal, considering the foggy state of the morning and the caution he had received at Lowmoor.

The Lowmoor distant-signal towards Cleckheaton is not well placed, being only 310 yards from a siding it has to protect, and the sight of it not being good.

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

I have, &c.,
C. S. HUTCHINSON,
Lieut.-Col. R.E.