

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

Accident Reports.

29 December 1877

BoT Report into Accident at  
New Moss Colliery Junction.

(3 Pages).

caution, and notwithstanding that the coupled wheels of the engine, as well as all the wheels of the tender were fitted with the vacuum break, (which the driver says he applied, and which he says promptly took effect), notwithstanding that the guard's break, applying to five out of the seven vehicles composing the train, are said to have been put on very shortly after passing the distant-signal, and notwithstanding that the gradient rises at 1 in 264 from close to the distant-signal to the point of collision, the passenger train came into collision with goods engine at a point 650 yards inside the distant-signal, and 214 yards inside the home-signal (at which latter signal the engine ought to have stopped) at a speed which could hardly have been less than 15 miles an hour.

In spite of this great want of caution on the part of the driver, yet had the block telegraph rules not been departed from this collision would not have occurred. For the breach of these rules, I think there is but little doubt that signalman Corcoran (who was at the time of the collision under notice to leave the Company's service on account of previous irregularity in block working) is to blame, and that he gave "Line clear" for the goods train to Radcliffe goods yard while the engine of this train was still on the up line in the station, and absolutely moving backwards along this line towards Bury; he probably acted thus under the foolish idea that as he was bound to stop the passenger train at the home-signal in order that he might inform the driver of the absence of a tail light on the previous train, he might with impunity break the block telegraph rules, and thus save the fast train a little time.

The driver of the goods engine, while showing promptness in endeavouring to get his engine into motion towards Manchester on being informed of the approach of the express, so completely lost his presence of mind before jumping off his engine that he forgot to close the regulator, and had the shock of

the collision not closed it, the engine would have run away towards Manchester, with results which might have been most serious. The goods train in this case should not have been allowed to leave the locomotive sidings at Bury till after the fast train had passed. The signalman at these sidings should be informed by telegraph as to how fast the trains are running, in order that he may know how to deal with goods trains, so as not to detain them unnecessarily.

Although even had a fog signalman been at his post at the Radcliffe Bridge up distant-signal, the collision would have occurred all the same,—for as the fog was so dense the man would have had to stand very close to the distant-signal, and would have hardly given more warning than the signal did itself,—yet the question is again raised as to the unsatisfactory state of things with regard to fog signalling arrangements, especially in cases such as the present where a fog suddenly comes on, and renders the attendance of fog signalmen necessary before there is time to summons them from their houses. Some mechanical means of dealing with this question, such as that now under trial on the suburban lines of the Great Northern Railway (and as I understand with satisfactory results) is greatly to be desired.

It is probable that had the driver of the passenger train had control of the whole of the break power with which it was supplied he might have stopped in time to have avoided the collision.

The up distant-signal at Radcliffe station is not at present far enough from the home-signal, and the superintendent of the line proposes to have it repeated on the Radcliffe goods yard up home-signal post; this will be a decided improvement.

I have, &c.,  
C. S. HUTCHINSON,  
Major-General R.E.  
*The Secretary,*  
*(Railway Department,)*  
*Board of Trade.*

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 7th January 1878.

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

SIR, *Darlington, 16th January 1878.*

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in the Order of the 2nd inst., the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the collision which took place on the 29th ultimo, at New Moss Colliery junction, on the Skelmersdale branch of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

In this case the 7.25 p.m. passenger train from Rainsford junction to Ormskirk and Southport came into collision with a mineral train which was shunting at the colliery junction.

Five passengers are reported to have been injured, and the guard of the passenger train was also badly shaken.

In the passenger train the engine had its buffers and buffer beam broken, its cylinder taps and foot-steps knocked off, and the smoke-box door damaged. The bodies of all the carriages were moved on their frames. The leading and driving wheels of the engine, and the leading wheels of the carriage next it, were knocked off the rails.

In the mineral train two waggons were knocked to pieces, and two others damaged.

### *Description.*

The Skelmersdale branch is a double line, full of colliery junctions. New Moss Colliery junction is situated between Bromilow and White Moss east colliery junctions, at each of which junctions there are signal-cabins in which the levers for working the points and signals are concentrated and properly interlocked, and block telegraph working carried on,

Bromilow cabin is, however, closed at night, and block working is then carried on between New Moss and Bushey Lane junction,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles from New Moss. As regards the down line, on which the collision occurred, the New Moss Colliery junction is protected by a down distant-signal and down home-signal, the former of these serving also as the down starting-signal at Bromilow Colliery junction, and the latter also as the down distant-signal from White Moss Colliery junction.

The down line rises on a gradient of 1 in 128 up to the down home-signal, where it changes to a falling gradient of 1 in 190. The collision occurred 50 yards west or inside of the down home-signal, and 165 yards east of the signal-cabin.

### *Evidence.*

1. *Charles Lcc*, passed as a driver and in charge of engines for three years, fireman six years. I started from Rainford junction on the 29th at 7.32 p.m., seven minutes late (waiting for a train from Manchester), with a tank-engine (chimney first) and five vehicles, all coupled with Newhall's breaks, having first to stop at Skelmersdale. I got all right signals at Bushey Lane junction. Bromilow distant-signal, which is the home-signal for Holey Fold crossing, was showing all right. Bromilow home-signal was not alight, but I saw that the arm was down. Bromilow starting-signal, which is also the distant-signal for New Moss, was not alight, and I could not see whether the arm was at danger or not. This signal is generally alight, and I therefore treated it as a danger-signal and proceeded slowly to the New Moss home-signal; this was also not alight, and I was

prepared to stop at it, when, within about 10 yards of the signals, and running at a speed of about 10 miles an hour, my fireman said there was a white light waved from the box. I looked across the engine, and seeing this waved light, I told the fireman to ease his break. Just as I had passed the signal I saw the red light of a goods-guard, upon which I whistled and reversed the engine, and as soon as I had done so struck the waggons. The engine turned the waggons over, then dropped off the rails and came to a stand. The mineral train was not in motion, so far as I could see. We neither of us jumped off and were not hurt. The home-signal is not one which I was in the habit of being called past by hand-signals. On seeing the waved light I concluded the line was clear for me to proceed to Skelmersdale, as I saw the home-signal at the next cabin (White Moss east) showing a white light. I have often run over this line on Saturday evenings, and as a rule I have found the New Moss home-signal alight, though I have occasionally seen it out. I asked the signalman why he had not blocked the line to Bushey Lane junction, and he said he thought it was not necessary. My speed on striking the waggons was about 10 miles an hour.

The guard of the passenger train was too ill to attend the inquiry.

2. *James Wignall*, driver 14 years, about six years on the Skelmersdale branch. I started from White Moss at 6.55 p.m. with a pick-up train for Liverpool. I had on 15 waggons and two break-vans. We had waggons to fetch from the sidings at New Moss, and arrived there at 7 o'clock. I put the train across the line into a loop on the down side, to get out of the way of an up passenger train. I did not notice whether the signals were alight or not. I left all the train except the front van in the loop, and went up with it into the colliery and brought down about 13 waggons. I left these waggons in the colliery line, rejoined the waggons in the loop, and drew them all out, except one wagon and the rear van, through the crossing on to the up line. I then set back and joined on to two waggons on the colliery branch, drew these out again on to the up line, and was about at a stand previously to again setting back into the loop when the passenger train ran into us. I had not seen it, as I was looking back for signals, nor had I heard it coming. The speed as it passed my engine would be 20 miles an hour. The driver whistled as he passed my engine, but I could not say whether the engine was reversed or not; there were no breaks on that I saw. The last signal I saw given from the cabin was a white light to call me out of the branch, and I then got a red light from my guard to tell me I had gone far enough. I did not think of looking to see if the signals were alight to protect me (rule 266). I do not remember ever seeing the New Moss down home-signal out before. I did not ask the signalman why he had allowed the passenger train to leave Bushey Lane junction while I was shunting. I have never before this seen a passenger train standing at the New Moss home-signal while I have been shunting across the line. The collision took place at 7.33 p.m., the passenger train being due to pass at 7.28 p.m.

3. *John H. Cheetham*, goods guard about three years. I started at 6.55 p.m. with the mineral train from White Moss Colliery for Liverpool, having work to do at New Moss, Kirby, and Preston Road. We were 3½ hours late, having been detained on the two previous journeys. We started with 15 waggons and two break-vans, one front and one rear. I was the only guard, travelling in the last break. We stopped at New Moss, and set across into the down loop out of the way of an up passenger train. I saw the glimmer of a light on the home-signal post. Directly after getting into the loop I detached the front van, and I went up with the engine and van into the colliery, and brought down 19 waggons.

On coming back I hooked off the engine and break, and told the driver to whistle for coming out, which he did, and the pointsman gave us a white hand-light to do so. There is a ground disc, but it was not alight. We went on the main line, whistled for the loop, and set back and attached 14 waggons, and drew out with them. We then set back on to the colliery branch, and had again drawn out on to the up line, when the collision occurred. My driver was still going forward when it took place. I had not seen the passenger train till it was close to the home-signal, and then, looking up, saw the engine, and gave the driver a red light. I think he saw me, for he gave a whistle, and the engine lurched. I think his speed was 10 to 15 miles an hour. Up to this time I had been under the impression that the home-signal was alight, and I was not aware it had not been so till after returning from Skelmersdale, where I went to give notice of the collision. The last light shown from the signal-cabin was a white light to permit us to leave the loop. I was aware that a down passenger train was due, but I knew it ought to have been stopped at Bushey Lane. I never before saw a passenger train come to the home-signal while we have been shunting. I have not before known this home-signal not to be lighted, but I have not worked this train on Saturday for a long time. Two waggons were smashed, and two others damaged.

4. *Walter Price*, signalman six months, all the time at the New Moss Pit cabin. I came on duty at 5.33 a.m. on the 29th, to remain till the last coal-train, due to leave at 3.40 p.m., had done its work. I was alone in the cabin at the time of the collision. I keep a register of passing trains. I work block between Bromilow and White Moss cabins, but Bromilow was shut at 3.58 p.m., and I then worked to Bushey Lane. Reynolds is the man who should light the signals; he commences with Bushey Lane distant-signal. I saw him pass up towards Rimsford at about 1.45 p.m., but I did not see him come back. I saw that my up-signals were alight at about 3.30 p.m.; and also that my down distant-signal and down-starting-signal were alight at about 7.32 p.m., but not the down home-signal; this had not been lit at all; why, I do not know. I ought to have gone to light this signal on seeing that it was not alight, and I cannot say how it was I did not do so. The mineral train arrived from White Moss at 6.55 p.m., and I had it crossed over the down line into the loop, an up passenger train being due. I did not block the down line to allow of this crossing, though there is a distinct rule to that effect, my predecessor (Alfred Lord) having told me he never did so; the train therefore crossed without any protection except from the down distant-signal. I got the up train on line from White Moss at 7.3 p.m., having at that time got the mineral train into the loop, and it passed at 7.4 p.m. I then allowed the engine and van to draw out on the main line in order to proceed into the colliery. Although this fouled both main lines, I blocked back in neither direction; the telegraph semaphores were both hanging at "line clear." The engine and van returned about 7.18 p.m. with some waggons. The engine and van unhooked from these waggons and I allowed them to come on to the main line before setting back into the loop. They then recrossed the main line with a portion of the train which had been left in the loop, set back into the colliery branch, attached two Kirby waggons, and again drew out on to the main line, previously to again setting back into the loop. Seeing that the driver was going to stop as soon as he had cleared the loop points I waved him forward with a white light, in order to get the whole of his waggons on to the up line, and intending to keep him there till the down passenger train had passed. While giving him the white light I received the "be ready" for the passenger train from Bushey Lane at 7.30 p.m., I acknowledged it, and within 30 seconds received "train on line", at 7.31 p.m., and I took it. Meantime the mineral train appeared to be standing, and I again waved the driver

forward, and directly afterwards I heard the smash at 7.33 p.m. I cannot imagine what the mineral driver could have been doing. I have before allowed passenger trains to come up to the home-signal while shunting has been going on. I could see the distant-signal back light burning, as I imagined, when I received the "be ready" signal for the passenger train. The block telegraph rules are perfectly distinct as to what is to be done in case of shunting. I have not known five main line signals not to be lit on any Saturday evening when I have remained after dark, and the signal lighter must have been stating an untruth if he says they had not been lit.

5. *Alfred Lord*, now signalman at Bacup. I left New Moss in July. Price was with me there learning his duties for about three weeks. I impressed upon Price the necessity of always blocking back for passenger trains in case of shunting. I should never take the "train on line" signal for a passenger train if a goods train were crossing at the time.

6. *Richard Reynolds*. I have been point clearer and lamp lighter for about three months. I light the lamps between Skelmersdale and Bushey Lane up distant-signal, a distance of 2½ miles. On the 29th I commenced lighting the distant-signal at Bushey Lane at about 3 o'clock. I missed lighting five signals on Saturdays by direction of Samuel Davenport, the signalman at Bromilow. The next signal I lit was the up starting-signal for New Moss, and after this I lit all the signals to Skelmersdale. I have never lighted these five signals on Saturday nights.

7. *Samuel Davenport*, signalman 17 years at Bromilow since December 1861. I left on Saturday the 29th at 4 p.m. I generally leave on Saturdays before dark. I told Reynolds that on Saturday evening he need not light my home-signals, but I told him distinctly to light my down starting-signal, which is Price's down distant-signal. On previous Saturdays I have seen him light my down starting-signal.

8. *Joseph Cheetham*, inspector of the Skelmersdale branch since the doubling. I know Price, and have visited his cabin every morning. I have always found him working regularly. I have never known either him or any other signalman violate the block telegraph rules. I cannot say what could have been his

reason on the present occasion for breaking the rules. I have no reason to believe that the lamps have not been lit on Saturday evening, and particularly these two lamps in question. I do not believe Davenport ever told Reynolds not to light the lamps.

#### Conclusion.

This collision occurred through the misconduct of signalman Price, on duty in the New Moss Pit cabin, who, in direct violation of the block telegraph rules, did not block either the up or down line, but actually accepted the signal for the down passenger train to pass Bushey Lane junction while the mineral train was crossing the down line at his cabin; and he committed these irregularities at the very time he was aware that his down home-signal lamp was not burning.

Price is a very intelligent man and of previous good character, and the only explanation of his conduct on the present occasion seems to be that, having been detained beyond his usual time by the lateness of the mineral train, he was anxious to save the further delay of a few minutes, which would have been caused had he blocked the line at Bushey Lane junction. He has been discharged from the Company's service.

The driver of the passenger train, though, no doubt misled by the white light waved from the signal-cabin, was, by his own acknowledgment, approaching an unlit signal, which he says he considered equivalent to a danger-signal, at a speed of 10 miles an hour when only 10 yards from the signal-post; this speed would have quite prevented him from stopping at this signal, had he not, as he supposed, been called past it by the hand-light; and he is accordingly to be blamed for not exercising sufficient caution in approaching it.

The signal lamp lighter is much to blame for not having lit the down distant-signal and down home-signal at New Moss Colliery junction. His omission to do this must have been to save himself trouble; he was aware that New Moss Pit was frequently closed on Saturday evenings after dark, but before taking upon himself not to have lit the signal lamps he should at least have asked the signalman when the traffic at his cabin was likely to cease.

I have, &c.,

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

C. S. HUTCHINSON,  
Major-Gen. R.E.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 11th February 1878.

## LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

SIR,

*Manchester, 23rd October 1877.*

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in the order of the 5th inst., the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the collision which occurred on the 3rd inst. at Eccles junction on the London and North-Western Railway.

In this case as the 8 p.m. up fast train from Liverpool to Manchester was passing Eccles junction it came into collision with an engine and van proceeding on the down line from Ordsall Lane to Ellenbrook (on the Bolton line) for a train of coal.

Five passengers were injured, the worst case being that of a contused head.

The driver and fireman of the passenger train were knocked off the engine, and injured in the head and body; the guard was shaken.

The driver of the mineral engine was found dead on the foot plate. The fireman jumped off before the collision, and escaped without injury. The break-

man who was on the engine also jumped off, but tumbled down and hurt his back.

The engine of the passenger train turned completely round, and fell over on its side; the tender became separated from the engine, and was tilted up on its side, both engine and tender being damaged. The front van was completely destroyed; the first carriage had both its ends knocked in; the leading end of the next carriage was knocked in; and the bodies of the other three carriages were shifted on their frames.

The tender of the mineral engine (which was running tender first) was knocked off the rails, separated from the engine, and more or less destroyed. The engine and van were knocked back along the down line, the engine having one of its buffers broken.

Owing to the injuries sustained by the fireman of the passenger train I was unable to examine him until to-day, and my report has, in consequence, been delayed.