

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

17 December 1874

BoT Report into Accident at

Oldham, Clegg Street

(3 Pages).

APPENDIX.

North-Eastern Railway,
Locomotive Department,
Engineer's Office,
Gateshead, 9th January 1875.

DEAR SIR,

I beg to enclose tracings of the wheel and axle which came out of the carriage at Knitsley. The axle was made by this Railway Company ten years ago, and has been running since. In the spring of last year the carriage was fitted with the Westing-

house air-break, and at that time the wheels and axles were taken out and thoroughly examined, and found to be in good condition, and have been examined every day since, and were examined before starting on the day that they came out at Knitsley.

Yours truly,
Capt. Tyler,
Of the Board of Trade,
London.

T. FLETCHER.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 20th February.

OLDHAM, ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE, AND GUIDE-BRIDGE JUNCTION RAILWAY.

Sir, Oldham, 5th January 1875.

IN compliance with the instructions contained in the Order of the 23rd ultimo, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my enquiry into the circumstances connected with the collision that occurred on the 17th December, near the Clegg-Street station, Oldham, on the Oldham, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Guide-Bridge Junction Railway.

In this case, a train of passenger-carriages, without an engine attached to them, was being lowered down from the up-platform at the above station, when they came into collision with some loaded coal-waggons which were standing on the up-main-line in a tunnel on the west of the station. Two passengers have complained of injury. No servants of the Company were injured.

Description.

At the Oldham passenger-station there are two platforms, with two lines of rails between them; and on the west of the station there is, 30 yards from the passenger-platforms, a tunnel formed with cast-iron girders upon iron columns, and the lines through this tunnel are, more or less, in the dark. The tunnel is about 100 yards long, and there are two openings in it for the admission of light and air. One hundred and fifty yards on the west of the passenger-platforms are a pair of points connecting a siding on the south of the main-lines with the up-main-line. I shall have occasion specially to refer to this siding, which is known as the up-tunnel-siding, and to these points, in the course of the present report.

The following is a list of the passenger and goods trains using this station daily:—

O. A. and G. B. : From Oldham :		
Passenger trains	- -	22
Goods	" - -	4
		26
To Oldham :		
Passenger trains	- -	22
Goods	" - -	5
		27
Empty engines	- -	2
		55
L. and N. W. : From Oldham :		
Passenger trains	- -	12
Goods	" - -	4
		16
To Oldham :		
Passenger trains	- -	12
Goods	" - -	4
		16
		32

L. and Y. : From Oldham :

Passenger trains	- -	6
To Oldham :		
Passenger trains	- -	6
Empty	" - -	2
		14
		14
Total	-	101

With regard to the trains coming into the station from the direction of Rochdale, the ordinary practice is for the passenger-carriages to be brought to a stand at the platform on the up-line, and then for the engines to run round the carriages by means of two cross-over-roads, one on the east and one on the west of the station, that they may get to the proper ends of their trains for their return-journeys. But in cases where the down-line is obstructed, and an engine is unable thus to run round its train at the platform, or when the up-line is obstructed by a following up-train, then the carriages are allowed, after the engine has been detached from them, to run down the up-line on a gradient of 1 in 86 to the west of the station by the force of gravity, so as to get clear of the points of the cross-over-road between the tunnel and the station, by means of which the engine rejoins them at their east end on the up-line.

Evidence.

The 10.50 a.m. Lancashire-and-Yorkshire passenger-train from Rochdale for Oldham reached the Oldham station at 11.20 a.m., five minutes late, on the day in question. The engine, after it had been detached from the train, started from the platform, went into the tunnel to clear the points of the cross-over-road, and set back upon the down-line, in order to get clear of the carriages, that they might be lowered into the tunnel for the engine to come back and rejoin them on the up-line.

The engine-driver and fireman, not being concerned in the accident, did not attend my enquiry.

The guard, John Anderton, states that after the engine had got out of the way of the carriages, and after he had been about two minutes at the station, he was told by Widdop, the foreman-porter, to lower his carriages down into the tunnel, and in doing so to go so far clear of the points of the cross-over-road as to allow the engine of a London and North-Western train, which had arrived behind his train, to run round its carriages by means of the cross-over-road. He was riding at the east end of his carriages, which were three in number besides his break-carriage, and he allowed them to run down into the tunnel in the usual way. He was unable, from the position in which he

was riding—with the carriages in front of him—to see any obstruction in the way, and before he was aware of the line being obstructed he felt the shock of a slight collision. He was not thrown down in his van, or in any way injured. His engine then backed to the carriages, and was attached to them, and drew them across on to the down line, and he ascertained that two of the passengers were injured, but he did not go up the line to see what obstruction had been in the way of his carriages.

The foreman-porter at the station, John Widdop, saw the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire train reach the station about 11.20 a.m., and saw the engine uncoupled from the train by the fireman in the ordinary way, and saw it run over the cross-over-road to the down line. There was room, on the arrival of this train, for the engine to run round the carriages by means of the cross-over-road, without moving the carriages from the platform; and the engine proceeded at first to do so but he (the foreman-porter) saw a London-and-North-Western train following the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire train into the station, and passing the cabin at the east of the station whilst the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire engine was on the down line; and he considered that he would be able the sooner to clear the station if he allowed the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire carriages to drop down into the tunnel, and the engine to set back and rejoin them on the west of the station, and if the cross-over-roads were at the same time employed to get the London-and-North-Western engine round the carriages of its train. He therefore instructed the guard of the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire train to lower his carriages into the tunnel. He knew that an engine and six or seven coal-waggons had previously gone into the tunnel from the station, and he thought that the engine was about to pass out at the west end of the tunnel, and so set these waggons back into the siding previously referred to as to the up-tunnel-siding. He did not expect that the waggons would have been left on the up-line in the tunnel, or that there was any risk of the passenger-carriages coming into collision with them in that position. He did not hear from anyone that it was intended to leave the waggons in the tunnel instead of at once shunting them into the siding.

The signal-porter on duty at the station, Edward Hanson, states that the goods-train, consisting of an engine-and-tender and six loaded coal-waggons, reached him at the west end of the station about 11.10 a.m. He knew that the waggons were to be placed in the up-tunnel-siding, but he did not know precisely in what way they would be dealt with. He pulled a lever on the ground showing a disc to the signal-cabin on the east of the station, to intimate that the line was blocked between that cabin and the station. He saw the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire passenger-train arrive. The fireman unhooked the engine, and he held the points of the cross-over-road to turn the engine after it had been detached from the train across from the up to the down line; and he saw the engine go eastward as far as the cross-over-road at the east of the station. He supposed that the engine was about to cross from the down to the up line on the east of the station, and to rejoin the carriages without the carriages being removed from the platform. He next saw the carriages being lowered from the station towards the tunnel, and, thinking that they might run into the waggons, he ran towards them, and whistled to attract attention; and as soon as he could see the guard, he waved his hands to him, and gave him a signal to stop. He believes the guard had his break hard on when the collision occurred. The collision was a slight one. No vehicles left the rails, and no damage was done to the rolling stock.

The goods-inspector at the station, Benjamin Watson, saw the 10.30 a.m. goods train arrive from Guide-Bridge at 11.8 a.m. and, as the goods-yard was blocked up with waggons, he directed the engine-driver to go forward with his train of six loaded

waggons into the tunnel,—to leave the waggons on the main line,—to fetch a passenger-carriage and a break-van out of the up-tunnel-siding with his engine,—and, having attached these two vehicles in front of the coal-waggons, to set back with the whole of them into the siding,—and to set his engine also clear back into the siding to allow the 11.25 a.m. passenger-train from Oldham for Guide-Bridge to pass along the main line from the station. In giving these instructions to the engine-driver and guard of the coal-train—he told the foreman-shunter (John Taylor) to send John Wood, another shunter, with the train. He had also warned Hanson, the signal-porter, of what was to be done.

Hanson admits that the inspector told him to shackle up the passenger-carriage and break-van in the siding, ready to be shunted when the goods train came down; but he denies having distinctly understood that the waggons were to be left on the main line while they were so shunted. Knowing what was to be done in the tunnel, he intended the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire engine to run round its carriages without the carriages being moved from the platform; and he had caused the down line to be cleared of goods-waggons for the purpose of enabling the engine so to run round the Lancashire-and-Yorkshire train. He considers it was Widdop's fault, in giving the signal for the carriages to run down into the tunnel when the line in the tunnel was obstructed by coal-waggons; but he did not see Widdop, and had no opportunity of informing him of the obstruction which he intended to cause on the up-line in the tunnel. Widdop would have no means of knowing that the waggons were to obstruct the main-line in the tunnel, though he might have expected the engine to come back, and ought, in the ordinary way, to have kept the line clear for it to come back before allowing the carriages to run down, and he thinks Widdop ought to have gone to see that the line was clear in the tunnel before allowing the carriages to drop down into the tunnel. He does not think, in the ordinary course of working, Widdop would go to Hanson to ask his leave before directing the carriages to be lowered into the tunnel, as on this occasion. He considers rather that Widdop, after seeing an engine going for shunting purposes into the tunnel, should take care, either that it was clear in the siding, or that it had returned to the station, before allowing carriages to run down into the tunnel.

Widdop upon this observes that he would have so ascertained that the engine had got clear into the siding, or had returned, before he allowed the carriages to drop down, if he had had time to do so; but there was another train outside of the station, viz., the London-and-North-Western train from Guide-Bridge, and the 11.7 express train from Manchester was overdue; and it was in his anxiety to clear the station that he adopted the course which led to this collision. He considered that the engine had no right to come back from the siding-points after depositing its waggons in the up-tunnel-siding unless it received permission to do so.

This, however, is contradicted by the station-master, the inspector, and the signal-porter, all of whom state that the engine is ordinarily allowed to come back after going down for shunting purposes without receiving any fresh permission to do so.

Conclusion.

This collision occurred in the course of a mode of working which was very unsatisfactory, but which appears to have been more or less forced upon the officers and servants at the Oldham station by the exigencies of their traffic. It is not right that passenger-carriages, with the passengers in them, should be lowered in such a way into the tunnel, under the control of a guard at the tail of them only, for the engine to get round them. With a view to preventing such an accident in future, it is very desirable that when a passenger train arrives at the station the

arranges should remain at the platforms, and the engine be taken round them, as far as is possible, at the cost even of extra delay, rather than that the trains should be allowed with the passengers in them to drop down into the tunnel as on this occasion. But in order that the traffic may be conveniently and safely worked through this station, extensive alterations are much required. The passenger and goods traffic have during the last few years completely outgrown the accommodation which was originally provided for the working of them at the station, and the few additional sidings that have been put in are by no means commensurate with the increase of traffic. The result is that, the goods-sidings not being sufficient for the accommodation of the goods-traffic, the passenger-lines are very frequently, and have been of late almost daily, obstructed by the shunting of goods-trains, and the passenger-trains have in consequence been worked over a single-line through the station. This was being done on the day of my enquiry at the station.

The passenger-lines, themselves, are also insufficient for the traffic which passes over them to be safely and conveniently worked. It is therefore exceedingly desirable that no time should be lost in providing extra accommodation for both passenger and goods traffic at this station. The Company is so far in a position to provide this accommodation, that they have already obtained power from Parliament for the purchase of land for the extension of their goods-accommodation; and a new dock is being made, from which passenger-trains may depart, which will to some extent relieve the station; but no further time should be lost in providing, by a comprehensive scheme, for the full amount of passenger and goods accommodation which are so urgently required.

I have, &c.,
H. W. TYLER.

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

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Oldham, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Guide Bridge Junction and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Companies on the 3rd February.