

LONDON, MIDLAND AND SCOTTISH RAILWAY.

Ministry of Transport,
7, Whitehall Gardens, London, S.W. 1.

15th April, 1925.

SIR,

I have the honour to report, for the information of the Minister of Transport, in accordance with the Order of the 30th March, the result of my Inquiry into the circumstances of the accident which occurred at about 3.49 a.m. on the 26th March at Luddendenfoot, on the London, Midland and Scottish Railway.

In this case, after having stopped to change engine crews at Mytholmroyd East, less than a mile from the scene of the accident, the 1.50 a.m. down freight train, Castleton to Normanton, was approaching Luddendenfoot upon the loop line, when the stop signal, which controls the exit from the loop to the main line, was passed in the danger position.

Violent collision resulted with the buffer stops of the loop trap siding, and I regret to report that driver Clifford Lumb and fireman Ronald Bailey, both of Sowerby Bridge, were killed instantly. As mentioned above, they had only just previously taken charge of the train.

The buffer stops were carried forward about nine yards. The weight of the train, unfitted throughout, forced the tender on to the footplate of the engine, the rear of the tender being lifted by the leading wagon and thrown into the air. The second wagon was over-ridden by the third, a box van; and the fourth vehicle was also damaged. The men were crushed in their positions on either side of the footplate.

The train comprised 37 loaded and 66 empty wagons, with a 20-ton brake van—total weight, 870 tons. It was drawn by six-wheeled tender engine No. 12795, type 0—8—0, weighing 93½ tons, fitted with the vacuum brake operating blocks on all wheels; also with the hand-brake working the same blocks on the tender wheels.

It was a fine, cold night, and visibility was good.

Description.

The railway in this locality lies in a general east (Luddendenfoot) and west (Mytholmroyd) direction on continuously falling gradients towards the former not exceeding 1 in 300. There is a loop line on either side of the up and down mains, the down loop being the most northerly of the four roads. The loops extend for rather less than 1¼ miles between Mytholmroyd West and Luddendenfoot.

Measured from Luddendenfoot West box, the following are the approximate distances to various points relevant to this case:—

| | | |
|---|--------|-----------------------|
| Mytholmroyd West box | | 1 mile 697 yards west |
| Facing points of down loop | | 1 mile 553 " " |
| Mytholmroyd East box | | 1,621 " " |
| Water column | | 1,586 " " |
| Down main distant signal | | 1,293 " " |
| Down main and down loop home signals on bracketed post | | 206 " " |
| Facing points in down loop of crossover to down main line | | 191 " " |
| Buffer stop of down loop trap siding and point of collision | | 111 " " |

Down trains approach Luddendenfoot over an easy right-handed curve in cutting. In consequence, the view of the home signals is somewhat restricted, but their siting could not be better in the circumstances. The post is situated between the down loop and main lines, the lower bracket arm relating to the loop being located centrally over that line. From the right and left (driver's) hand sides of the footplate, respectively, these signals can be seen from the loop line at distances of 693 and 267 yards, the loop line signal coming into view a little before that relating to the main line.

The loop line is worked under the permissive system, a stop signal at Mytholmroyd West and the signal referred to above controlling respectively the entrance to and exit from the loop.

Conclusion.

The train in question was apparently heavier than usual, but its maximum scheduled loading was 900 tons, and on this section of the road the load for the engine was 1,000 tons.

There is, however, no question of overpowering, and the case is a simple one. The only point which must necessarily remain in doubt is whether driver Lumb's tragic error was the result of misreading signals or mistaking the road upon which his train was running.

The train arrived at Mytholmroyd West more than an hour late, in charge of driver Pemberton, who stated that the brake was in good order and no difficulty had been experienced on the steep gradients during the run from Castleton. Pemberton was booked to change engines with Lumb, who was working another freight train in the opposite direction. On arrival at Mytholmroyd West, in accordance with usual procedure, signalman Priestley advised Pemberton where the change of crews was to be made. It depends upon the running of the respective train, and on this occasion it was to take place at Mytholmroyd East. On the previous evening it had been made at Mytholmroyd West on the main line between the same crews, and on the following day it was carried out at Brighouse, further down the line.

The train had been accepted by signalman Smith at Luddendenfoot West on the down loop, and Pemberton, as instructed, brought it to a stand with the engine opposite the water column at Mytholmroyd East, in which position Lumb's train was standing on the up loop. Both Pemberton's evidence and that of his fireman, Sumner, was very definite as to what transpired in the next five minutes. The booked arrival at Mytholmroyd East was 3.40 a.m., departure 3.45 a.m., the accident occurring at 3.49 a.m.

Pemberton stated that fireman Bailey mounted on the right-hand side of the footplate, having crossed the main lines in doing so. Pemberton told him: "You are on the loop; you have a very heavy train on, and only a six-wheeled tender on; and we have filled up with water at Todmorden." Pemberton then left the engine, followed by Sumner, and proceeded to Lumb's engine on the up loop. He said he repeated these words to Lumb, and explained that the practice has always been particularly to warn the driver relieved in respect of the line on which the train was standing, and its load. Pemberton had no doubt that Lumb understood the position, and said that he appeared to be quite well. He left with the up train before Lumb started away with the down train.

Sumner confirmed this evidence, adding that the hand-brake was in working order, and that Pemberton had also informed Lumb that there were "no repairs" to the engine, Lumb replying: "All right." Sumner was also "satisfied in my mind that driver Lumb knew which road he was on."

Guard Evans had not worked with Lumb before. He stated that when starting away from Mytholmroyd East he observed the main line distant signal in the clear position and thus realised that a following train was approaching on the down main. He said he kept his hand-brake fully applied, and he thought that Lumb started away "pretty quick"; but evidently Evans was not apprehensive. When, however, he thought that the engine had reached a point within perhaps 10 to 20 wagon lengths of the home signals, viz., when his van was emerging from the cutting, he said he observed the main and loop line home signals in respectively the clear and danger positions. He was then "anxiously expecting the driver to slow down, but the speed continued until the train came to a dead stand." Even then, however, in spite of being thrown from his seat, Evans did not think the stop unusually rough. So much so, that it was not until five minutes later—when the driver of the freight train, Oldham Road to Goole, on the down main came to him and remarked upon the sudden stoppage of his train—that he walked forward to examine the train, reaching the engine about ten minutes after the accident. He had little idea of the speed at the time, but roughly estimated it at 15 miles an hour, which, having regard to the results of the collision, is, I think, approximately correct.

Signalman Smith, of Luddendenfoot West, witnessed the accident. He said he had all his down main line signals clear for the Goole train. He noticed the Normanton train for the first time when the engine was perhaps 500 yards away, and again as it passed the home signal, when he observed sparks flying from the wheels. There was nothing to indicate excessive speed and he heard no

whistling. Smith and driver Thompson are to be commended, the one for promptly reversing the main line signals, and the other for bringing the Gooch train to a stand. Thompson fortunately observed the main line distant signal return to the warning position as he passed it.

Smith could remember only one case in the last 15 years of over-running the loop line home signal, viz., on 17th April, 1923, when a light engine at night—the driver being under the impression that he was travelling upon the main line—similarly collided with the buffer stops.

Mr. Shawcross, the District Locomotive Superintendent, said he arrived at the scene about 6.15 a.m. and assisted in releasing the enginemen. Both faced in the direction of travel and were in their usual positions on the footplate. The regulator was closed and the reversing gear was about 25 per cent. notched up. The vacuum brake was fully applied, but the hand-brake was not applied. The tyres were in good condition, and there was no indication of skidding.

It may be safely accepted that Lamb only realised the position upon reaching the home signals, when it was then too late to stop. The position of the reversing gear would indicate that the regulator had been open and that Lamb just had time to close it and apply the brake. It would seem that he must have thought that the train was running upon the main line under clear signals. Doubtless, when starting away from Mytholmroyd East he had observed the distant signal in the clear position, and thus for the moment he must have forgotten the warning Pemberton had given him only a few minutes previously, and overlooked the fact that he had had to cross both main lines to reach his engine.

There was no doubt in respect of his knowledge of the road: and I understand that he was a most careful driver and a man of exceptional merit. He was 34 years of age and had 18 years' service. Fireman Bailey also had a good record, was 22 years of age and had 5 years' service.

In view of the results of this accident and of the circumstances of the previous case mentioned, the question arises of the substitution of a simple form of sand or ballast drag for the buffer stops at this trap siding. This is to be preferred as a means generally of minimising danger and reducing the risk resulting from over-running a stop signal at the exit from a loop. In all the circumstances, bearing also in mind the density and weight of trains, the continuously falling gradient and the somewhat restricted view, I hope that the Company will favourably consider making this change here. To obtain adequate length, the loop line crossover might have to be shifted back a short distance.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A. H. L. MOUNT,

Lieut.-Colonel.

The Secretary,
Ministry of Transport.