

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade
(*Railway Department*),
Whitehall, 21st October 1865.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the careful consideration of the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the Report made by Captain Rich, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances connected with the collision which occurred on 30th September last at the Sandhills station on that Railway.

I am, &c.

W. D. FANE.

The Secretary of the
Lancashire and Yorkshire
Railway Company.

Board of Trade
(*Railway Department*),
Whitehall, 18th October 1865.

SIR,

In compliance with your minute of the 12th 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 connected with the collision that occurred on the 30th ultimo, at Sandhills station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

Several persons are reported to have been injured, but none of them severely.

The exact number is not known.

The Southport branch of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, joins the main line from Manchester to Liverpool, at the west end of Sandhills station. There are four lines of rails in the station; two for the Southport branch, and two main lines.

The Company have been widening and renewing the bridge over the public road at the west end of this station, and in doing so, have removed the junction further to the west, so as to give more platform accommodation.

During the progress of these works, three of the lines of rails were closed, and the whole of the main line and branch traffic was carried for about 300 yards through Sandhills station on one line of rails.

A pointsman was stationed at each end of the single line, and another pointsman at a cross-over road, about the centre of the station. These three pointsmen were all acting under a conductor or pilotman, who was dressed in red, and stationed on the platform, about halfway between the pointsmen at each end of the single line.

The whole were provided with signal lamps, and all trains were ordered to stop at the outside pointsmen, till they allowed them to pass into the station, after receiving a signal to that effect from the conductor on the platform.

A train, consisting of an engine and tender, seven third-class, four first-class carriages, with Fay's continuous breaks, and a guard's van, coupled in the order stated, left Liverpool for Crosby at 11.25 p.m. (10 minutes late), on the 30th September 1865. The lamplighter at Liverpool neglected to put the lamps at the end of the train, and the guard in charge did not observe the omission.

The train travelled all right to Sandhills, which station it reached at 11.30 p.m. It was detained about seven minutes at Sandhills, in consequence of the doors of the carriages not having been unlocked, as they ought to have been, before leaving Liverpool.

An engine and tender on her way to Stable followed the passenger train out of Liverpool, about seven minutes after the passenger train left. It reached the cross-over road to the single line at the west of Sandhills station, whilst the passenger train was still standing at the platform. Though checked for a moment by the red light of the pointsman at the crossing, the driver of the single engine immediately got a white light signal to come into the station from the conductor on the platform and from the pointsman, who repeated the conductor's signal, and told him to go on.

The conductor, was by his own account, 30 yards from the tail of the passenger train; the other evidence makes the distance about 15 yards.

There were gas lamps on the platform, and though the passenger train was without tail lamps, the carriages were lighted with gas.

The conductor or pilot man must therefore have seen the passenger train, had he looked; and it is impossible for me to believe, that if he remained at his post from the time that he admitted the passenger train, that he would not have been aware that it was still there.

I can only suppose that after admitting the passenger train, he left his post for some minutes, and that when he returned, he admitted the single engine without looking down the platform to see whether the passenger train was gone.

The empty engine came on at about five miles per hour, and the driver did not observe the passenger train till he had passed the conductor, and was within 15 yards of the van at the tail of the train. He called to the fireman to apply the tender break, shut off steam, and reversed his engine, but could not avoid striking the passenger train, which he ran into at a speed of about three miles per hour, just as it was moving off. The break wheel of the guard's van was broken, and the back panel damaged. The first-class carriage next to it was shifted on its frame, but none of the vehicles left the rails. Two passengers complained of injury at the time, but all went home, and it is thought that about six others were slightly shaken.

The accident was caused by the conductor or pilotman giving the signal for the single engine to come on, whilst the passenger train was still at the station. Temporary absence from his post, or total absence of mind, and consequent want of thought as to what he was doing, must have been the cause. He has been 19 years in the company's employment, and bears a very good character.

Had the tail lamps been on, it is probable that the collision would not have occurred. The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company have inspectors at Liverpool, to start the trains, and these inspectors are responsible that the trains are in a proper state before they start them. The inspector last on duty leaves about 9.30 p.m. The inspection of the passenger trains which start after that, is entrusted to the guards alone.

I would suggest, that as the guards have other matters to attend to, it would be desirable for the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, to appoint some person to perform the inspectors duty after they leave, or to detain one of them on duty till the last passenger train has started.

I have, &c.

F. H. RICH,
Capt. R.E.

The Secretary,
Board of Trade,
Railway Department.
Whitehall.