



Railway Accidents 1

November 13th 1858 – Accidentally Killed

A man by the name of John Fielding has been killed at Bacup Station by the accidental falling of the smoke box upon his head while he was engaged in cleaning the engine. He had four brothers all accidentally killed as well.

May 4th 1880 – Serious Accident on the New Line

Yesterday afternoon an inquest was held before Mr.J.Molesworth, at Britannia, a village near Bacup, touching the death of James Beswick, engineer, who was employed on a new, line which is being constructed from Facit to Bacup. At a deep cutting near Britannia a crane had been erected, and it was worked by an engine which ran on a gantry. A temporary bridge had been erected over the line, and when carts and horses passed over his bridge, two swinging rails, on which the crane ran, moved on a pivot, and were turned on one side to allow the carts to pass, and afterwards were readjusted. The deceased and a boy worked the crane from the engine hut, and one of this boy's legs was seriously broken by the accident, and another boy was seriously injured. Mr Phillips of Bacup watched the evidence on behalf of James Spellman, Mr Superintendent Tindall was present on behalf of the police. The first witness called was that of Sarah Beswick, who stated that the body laying at Fair View, Troughgate was that of her late

husband James Beswick. She had not lived with him lately. The deceased was about 40. William Thomas was the next witness.

Mr William Thomas said he resided at Pickup Cottages and was a stonemason employed by Messrs, Becket and Bentley the contractors. On Friday last he was working at the bridge which crosses the New Line at Britannia. At this bridge there had been erected a gantry, with a travelling crane at the top. The gantry crosses the temporary road over the railway.

The gantry was three or four feet over the temporary road, in order to allow carts to pass over the road. For this purpose part of this gantry had to be removed. This had to be done by a swing rail on a balk of timber. At twenty five minutes past five on Friday evening, William Lord the driver of a coal cart came up to the bridge and he heard him ask James Spellman, who was in charge of the swing bridge, and how long he was to be kept there. He did not hear the reply. He saw Spellman open the lower swing rail and the cart passed over the bridge. He then saw Spellman close the top swing rail.

Directly after he heard a crash at the bottom of the cutting, which was about 40 feet deep. He saw the steam engine which ran the crane fall then followed and escape of steam. At that time he saw that the bottom swing rail was open and the top one was shut. In answer to Mr Phillips, he said that he heard the cart pass over just before the accident. Spellman he had always regarded as a careful and attentive man. It was the duty of Spellman to give warning as to whether the road was clear.

The Superintendent asked the witness if he had heard Spellman give any warning. Witness replied that he had not. William Lord said that he lived at Troughgate. On Friday he was in charge of a horse and cart, and he arrived at the bridge at about twenty minutes past five. The swing rails were shut, and he asked Spellman how soon he could get through the swing rails, as he was in a hurry. Spellman did not reply, but about three minutes after Spellman opened the swing rails, and he passed over the temporary bridge with his horse and cart, and after travelling about sixty yards and partly loading his cart, he heard the crash, and saw a large number of persons collecting at the temporary bridge. George Rawson said he was foreman over the quarrymen, and that a few minutes after the accident Spellman told him that he had left the lower swing rail open. William Gill farmer said he saw Spellman let the cart over the and while Spellman was fastening the top swing rail the accident occurred. After the examination of other witnesses the jury returned a verdict of accidental death with no blame attached to Spellman.