

Railway Accidents

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 smokebox 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 the 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 lying 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.

14th July 1883 - Railway Accident At Bacup

A serious railway accident occurred at Bacup Station about half-past four o'clock on Thursday afternoon. A well-laden passenger train was entering the station when the engine left the metals at a crossing and turned completely over on its side. The stoker escaped by jumping from the tender, but the driver was caught and seriously injured.

The first carriage was fortunately empty, was telescoped. All the passengers received a severe shock and some of them are under medical treatment. Mr Jonas Tumer, builder and contractor of Accrington sustained an injury to the spine.

14th September 1880- Alarming Accident at Bacup

At a quarter past eight o'clock yesterday morning a railway accident, of an alarming nature, occurred at Bacup station when a number of carriages were being shunted from what is known as the Facit Extension Branch, in order that the 8.45 train for Manchester might pass. The siding from which the carriages were being shunted is considerably inclined towards the station, and owing to the brake not having been properly applied, the carriages to which no engine was attached ran down the line at a fearful rate, onto the permanent way in a northerly direction, where the booking-office and waiting-rooms are situate.

Upon the carriages four in number reaching the end of the platform, the protecting buffers were knocked down like matchwood with a terrible crash, the train dashed into the booking office which in an instant was a complete wreck. Fortunately no one but a telegraph clerk named Mark Benjamin Spraggon was present at the time, or the consequences would undoubtedly have been much more serious than they are.

Spraggon hearing the carriages smash the buffers at once ran out of the place and into the adjoining waiting-room, had remained but another moment he must certainly have been killed. The news of the accident quickly spread over the town, large crowds of people assembled in the vicinity of the station, and the greatest alarm was manifested. A breakdown gang were speedily at the spot., and during the day they worked most indefatigably in clearing away the debris from the permanent way.

It is only a week ago that four carriages, in being shunted from the same siding, came into collision with an empty train, on that occasion considerable damage was done to rolling stock.

1st May 1880 – Serious Accident

Two men were killed at last night at Rochdale by the falling of an embankment on the railway between Rochdale and Bacup. Several others were injured.

