

I have only to add that several of the weekly abstracts of the trains were laid before me, and that they show a degree of punctuality in their arrival at the termini which is very creditable.

I inquired into the circumstances attending the accident on this railway on the 2nd instant, by which a waggoner's boy of the name of Ward had some ribs broken, and received a severe contusion of the knee, while driving an empty waggon on an incline of the Brentwood Hill works. Mr. Braithwaite informed me that this unfortunate boy was in the service of the contractor, and engaged in the construction of that part of the railway which is not yet opened to the public, and as the boy is now doing well, and the accident appears to have been chiefly through his own neglect, I have no further observations to make upon it.

I have, &c.

FREDERIC SMITH, Lt.-Col., R.E.,  
Inspector-General of Railways.

The Right Hon. Henry Labouchere, M.P.,  
&c. &c. &c.

Appendix.

II.

Reports on  
Accidents.

No. 4.

Eastern Counties.

No. 5.

LONDON AND GREENWICH RAILWAY.

REPORT of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Frederic Smith on the Accident which happened on the 28th May, 1841.

No. 5.  
London  
and Greenwich.

SIR,

Board of Trade, Whitehall, 3rd June, 1841.

I HAVE the honour to acquaint you that I have this day inquired into the circumstances connected with the accident which occurred, in the course of the public traffic, on the London and Greenwich Railway, on the 28th ultimo, and I have to submit the following report:—

In the return sent in by the Company, dated the 29th ultimo, and signed by Mr. Akerman, the secretary, it is stated that a carriage of the half-past 2 o'clock up-train from Greenwich was thrown off the rails, by coming in contact with a log of wood or post, which had been left on the line by the preceding up-train, to be used in a fence about to be substituted for a part of the parapet wall which had been pulled down. It is further stated that John Nash, the conductor or guard of the train, fell under the carriage that was off the line, and in consequence broke one of his legs; and also that a carpenter's labourer, in the employ of the Company, named Jabez Delderfield, being under alarm, on seeing the carriage thrown off the line, jumped from the new works in the hope of alighting on the scaffolding, but fell and injured his spine.

It is remarked by Mr. Akerman, that a watchman, named Joseph Fryer, had been placed at the spot to keep the line clear, but that from negligence he omitted to remove the post from the rails, and hence was the primary cause of the accident.

Mr. Akerman and Mr. Miller, the resident engineer and superintendent of the line, afforded me every facility for conducting the investigation with which I was charged, and at my request furnished me with such details respecting the accident as were personally known to them.

I examined Mr. Henry James, the overlooker of the line; John Barrett, the foreman of carpenters; Pankhurst, the conductor of the previous train; J. Walker, the driver of the half-past 2 o'clock train; Joseph Fryer, the breaksman or guard of the hinder carriage of the half-past 2 o'clock train; and William Forster, the watchman, whose duty it is alleged to have been to remove from the rails the timber which caused the accident now under consideration.

It appears that the Greenwich Railway Company are now constructing a part of the line which they have covenanted to form for the Croydon, the Brighton, and the South Eastern Railways, and that the workmen are at present engaged on that portion of this new line which lies between the Blue Anchor Road and the junction with the Croydon Railway. In order, as it would seem, to appropriate the materials to the new work, portions of the south parapet wall had been taken down, leaving the line at such places exposed to depredation. But recently, on the representation of the resident engineer, that danger might result from leaving these openings during the Whitsuntide holidays, the directors determined that they should be filled up by means of a wooden fence.

From the evidence of the parties whom I examined, I learn that the wood for this purpose was conveyed from the station at Greenwich to the spot where it was required to be used, partly by the passenger trains and partly by a special engine before the starting of the first train on the morning of the 28th.

The timber and planks, when carried by the passenger-trains, were placed on the hinder platform of the last carriage, and pursuant to the verbal orders of Barrett, the foreman of carpenters, were thrown off the carriage upon the line by the breaksman or guard, without the trains being stopped.

The "beat" of William Forster, the watchman, which was about a quarter of a mile in length, between Blue Anchor Road and the Croydon Junction, comprehended that part of the line where the wooden fence was in course of construction. The 28th ultimo was the first day on which he had performed the duty of watchman on that beat, but by his previous employment in the service of the Company he appears to have had sufficient knowledge of his duty to have been aware that it devolved upon him to clear the line of any obstruction left upon it by other parties.

The timber which caused the accident was conveyed by the train which left Greenwich at quarter past 2. It was placed on the platform of the hinder carriage under the charge of Pankhurst, and was by him thrown upon the line, together with some planks. He had done the

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same by the quarter past 1 o'clock train, and the materials had then been promptly cleared away by the carpenters employed in making the fence, from which circumstance, as well as from the assurance he received from Barrett, the foreman, Pankhurst concluded that the same would be done with respect to the timber and deals which he threw upon the line from the quarter past 2 o'clock train.

Walker, the driver of the half-past 2 o'clock train, informed me that he was keeping a good look out a-head as he approached the spot where the workmen were forming the wooden fence, and that when within about 100 yards of it he saw a piece of timber lying across the south rail of the line upon which his engine was running; he immediately reversed the engine, and directed the fireman to apply the engine-break, and the conductor of the leading carriage to apply his break also. I understood that both complied with this order, but still that the speed of the train was not sufficiently checked to stop the engine before it came in contact with the timber. The engine and tender are said to have both passed over the post and to have regained the rails, but the four leading carriages were thrown off, alternately to the right and left, without however falling on their sides, or, as far as I can learn, injuring any of the passengers.

On inquiring of Joseph Fryer, the breaksman of the hinder carriage of the half-past 2 o'clock train, as to whether he had applied his break, he informed me that he had not done so, because his attention had been directed to throwing off some materials that had been placed on the platform of his carriage.

John Barrett, the foreman of carpenters, stated to me that he had been employed for four or five years by the Greenwich Railway Company, and that he had been in the habit of sending materials along the line both on and in the carriages of the passenger trains.

Having now laid before you in sufficient detail the circumstances connected with this accident, I shall proceed to give my opinion as to the culpability of the parties concerned in it.

In the first place great blame must be attached both to William Forster, the watchman, and Knoeldon, the carpenter, who was employed in forming the fence.

It was the duty of the former to have cleared the line before the arrival of the half-past 2 o'clock train, and it was quite practicable for him to have done so; on the other hand it appears that Knoeldon, the carpenter, had removed the *planks* which were thrown down by Pankhurst with the timber, and it is very surprising that Knoeldon, aware of the danger, and being on the spot with three labourers to assist him, should have left the timber in question in a position to cause imminent risk to the approaching train. There is this difference between the misconduct of Knoeldon and that of Forster, that the former *must* have been aware that there was an obstruction upon the line and negligently omitted to remove it, whereas it would seem that the culpability of the latter consisted in a want of proper vigilance, for he says that he did not see the timber. Both are deserving of the marked displeasure of the Greenwich Railway Company, but as I am informed that the previous character of Forster was most exemplary, I am not, under all the circumstances of the case, prepared to recommend that he should be prosecuted under Lord Seymour's Act; and I find that Knoeldon, the carpenter, is no longer employed by the Company, having completed the work for which he was engaged.

It is now my duty to make some remarks on the state of the Greenwich Railway, and on the practice of sending materials by the passenger trains, which, on this occasion, has been attended with serious consequences.

That part of the permanent way which I inspected was in very indifferent order; in many places the joints between the rails were very imperfect; some of the chairs were loose; many of the spikes were out or broken; and some of the rails were much shaken and weakened by the splitting and laminating of the iron. I am aware that the Directors of the Greenwich Railway are gradually removing the original rails of 50 lbs. to the lineal yard and substituting other rails of 80 lbs. to the yard, and that it is intended to replace the stone blocks by wooden sleepers. These are very desirable alterations and will greatly improve this railway, but I think no time should be lost in rectifying the defects of the present rails and chairs in order to diminish the risk of danger to passengers, and I would suggest that the attention of the Directors should be especially called to the defective state of their line.

When proper care is used there may be no danger in carrying from terminus to terminus by the passenger trains, materials of the nature of those which caused the accident of the 28th, but it appears by no means a safe practice to throw such materials down at intermediate points, with the chance, if not the certainty, of obstructing the line.

From the nature of the traffic upon this railway it might be difficult in all cases to send special engines with materials to be used along the line during the hours when passenger trains are running, but there seems no reason why, on the morning of the 28th, when the passenger trains did not commence running before 7 o'clock, the whole of the materials required might not have been sent for the fence at an earlier hour; and the rule of transporting materials along the line before the first train might be of almost general application.

If, however, there should be any insuperable difficulty to this proceeding which has not presented itself to my mind, then, seeing the want of space for stowage on this line, it would be preferable in cases of emergency, rather than incur such risks as those which caused the accident of the 28th ultimo, to drop one or two trains in the course of the day, so as to leave time for the safe transport of materials.

Right Hon. Henry Labouchere, M.P.  
&c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.,  
FREDERIC SMITH, Lt.-Col., R.E.,  
Inspector-General of Railways.