

CORNWALL ROYAL GAZETTE, FRIDAY MAY 19, 1848

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY AT
SHRIVENHAM

(Transcribed by Vivien Moss)

It is with deep regret we have to state that the rumour mentioned on our postscript last week, of a fatal accident on the Great Western Railway, on Wednesday afternoon, has been more than confirmed; and that among the numerous victims and sufferers were some passengers from Cornwall. An esteemed and beloved clergyman, the Reverend Phillips of Chacewater was instantaneously killed; and his wife and child received some injury. Capt Blair, R.N., of the Coast Guard Service, at Penzance, had his neck dislocated; and there is no possibility of his recovery. Among the passengers who, providentially, were preserved amid the death and destruction by which they were in a moment surrounded, were the Rev Henry Graham, vicar of Ladgvan; Mr Charles Coulson, draper of Penzance; Mr Henry Andrews, and Mr Crowle, drapers, and the Rev J.H. James, Wesleyan Minister of Truro. Mr Coalson remained at Shrivvenham, to attend to his unfortunate fellow townsman, Captain Blair. The Cornish passengers had all reached Bristol by steamer, from Hayle, having had a pleasant passage. We have been favoured with a sight of a letter from Mr Henry Andrews, in which after giving particulars of the accident, corresponded with the fuller statement which we have adopted below from "The Times". He says, in order to give an idea of the force of the collision, that an axle, 4 inches diameter, of wrought iron, was bent up in the form of the letter U. He says that all the passengers in his carriage escaped. It would appear almost miraculous that they should have done so; for he adds that the side of the carriage was smashed to pieces and the roof broken in; the passengers were all thrown together; two ladies attempted to jump out, but he held them fast, and prevented their doing so.

This awful accident has called for expressions of deepest regret in Cornwall, characterised as its inhabitants are, by sympathy and attachment towards each other. The occasion has also been made use of in the pulpit as a solemnly impressive illustration of the warning that, "in the midst of life we are in death."

The following are full particulars of the accident as they have been gathered by the "Times" Reporter, and at the Coroner's Inquests. It will be seen that this distressing event is due to culpable negligence on the part of the Railway

Company's servants at the Shrivenham station, and that two porters have been committed for trial on a charge of manslaughter.

On Wednesday evening considerable anxiety and consternation prevailed at the terminus of the Great Western Railway, Paddington, in consequence of the non-arrival of the express 12 1/2pm train from Exeter, which should have reached the station at 4 1/2 pm. No information of its approach having been received up to 6 o'clock, shortly after that hour a communication was forwarded by electric telegraph from Slough, that the train had met with a most disastrous collision at the Shrivenham station. It appeared that the train consisted of two first-class carriages, four second class carriages, which were drawn by an engine (the Sultan), and tender. Next to the engine was a luggage van, which was followed by a second-class carriage, which was unusually full of passengers. The train started at about 25 minutes to 1 o'clock, being five minutes after the usual time. It was driven at the usual speed, which is between 45 and 50 miles an hour - a speed which is faster than that of express trains on any other line. Its progress was uninterrupted till its approach to the Shrivenham station, where it is stated, the signal was given by the signal telegraph that the line was clear; in consequence of which the speed was continued. At this part of the line there is a branch rail for turning off the carriage. At the angle of divergence of the off line was an empty horse-box with a truck attached, on which was a gentleman's carriage, which, it is supposed, just overlapped the main up line, as a collision took place, the effect of which was that the engine struck the horse-box, when, owing to the velocity with which the train was progressing, the horse-box and the truck were swung round. In a moment, the second-class carriage which was connected with the luggage van, in the rear of the engine, was dashed to pieces, and the unfortunate passengers were flung out in every direction. The driver of the engine, who was unable to avoid the collision, used the utmost exertions to arrest the progress of the train, and promptly reversed the engine. Upon returning to the Shrivenham station a most appalling spectacle was presented. The line was strewn with the wreck of the carriage, while a number of passengers, wounded and dying, were lying in different parts, to whom every assistance was being afforded by the servants of the company, and by others who had arrived at the station, having heard of the disastrous occurrence. Four of the passengers exhibited no signs of life, and two others were so seriously injured that they are stated to have died shortly after their removal. Those who were wounded were conveyed in carriages to the Swindon-station. Medical advice was promptly received. There was only one passenger who received no serious injury; he was seated in one corner of the carriage. It is unnecessary that the greatest alarm prevailed among the passengers in the other carriages. The Sultan received so much injury that that another engine was provided from

Swindon for the purpose of conveying the train to Paddington, and which arrived there a few minutes after 7 o'clock, being about two hours and a half beyond its usual time. On the information being obtained at the terminus, Mr Seymour Clarke and other gentlemen connected with the establishment proceeded to the scene of the accident to afford every proper assistance. From all accounts, there is no doubt that the horse-box had been negligently left at the point where the accident occurred, by some of the servants at the station.

Shrivenham station is situate within about six miles of Swindon, being midway between the latter station and Faringdon-road. There is a curve in the railway a short distance below the station, which obstructs the clear view of the line beyond a few hundred yards; but the signals are so arranged are so arranged that if any obstruction exists upon the railway, the fact may be telegraphed to the driver of an approaching train at a distance exceeding 1 ½ miles. This was distinctly proved by several witnesses, and the railway company are thereby relieved from all possibility of blame which might otherwise have attached to them under this head. The 12 o'clock up express train is timed to arrive at Shrivenham at 2 minutes after a3. Owing to some delay on the South Devon line, the train on Wednesday was 13 minutes late on leaving Exeter, and this loss of time was subsequently increased by the necessity of taking on two additional carriages at Bristol, and the slippery state of the rails in the Box tunnel, so that when the train left Swindon it was 23 minutes behind time. The staff officers at the Shrivenham station consists of the station clerk (Mr Corbett Hudson), one policeman (George Pargetter), and three porters (Weybury, Willoughby, and Copley). The duty of the latter is to attend the trains on their arrival, and to load and unload the tracks arriving and departing from Shrivenham. These porters take their meals alternately, so that in the middle of the day only two of them are on duty at the same time. Weybury went to dinner at 5 minutes after 2 o'clock on Wednesday, and returned at 5 minutes after 3. The first thing he did upon his return was to attend to the down train due at 17 minutes past 3, which arrived about the usual time, and was duly despatched. He subsequently went to the goods shed for the purpose of assisting in unloading a truck of merchandise consigned to Mr Kent, of Highworth. In order to get this particular truck in the required position under a crane, it was necessary to draw out nearly on the the main line an empty horse-box and a cattle trunk. This was done by Weybury and Willoughby together assisted by a carter in the employ of Mr Kent, and another person. While they were thus engaged, the horse-box being actually on the main line, and the cattle-truck on the crossing immediately behind it, the approach of the express train was heard in the distance. The next moment it had passed beneath the bridge below the station, and in another instant it was within 150 yards of the crossing.

Weybury vainly extended his hands to give notice of the imminent danger of a collision; almost before he was observed by the driver of the express train, the horse-box was shivered into a thousand pieces and thrown up on the platform. At the same instant the buffer plank of the engine caught the off corner of the cattle truck, which latter, standing upon the crossing, offered some resistance to the train. On the first blow from the engine, this truck was turned completely round, one corner becoming jammed against the stone platform, while the other corner, opposing itself to the train, struck first the luggage van immediately behind the tender, and successively crushed more or less all the carriages which followed. One second-class carriage - it is believed third from the engine - was completely gutted, so to speak, and the passengers, nearly 30 in number, either thrown out along the down line or doubled up among the broken timbers of which it consisted. One most extraordinary circumstance in connexion with the shocking affair, is that, notwithstanding the resistance offered by the cattle truck, it had no effect so far as stopping the train, the impetus upon which was so great that the driver was not able to bring up until he had gone nearly half a mile beyond the station. The cattle truck, after having been nearly torn to pieces, was tossed up to the platform, very near the spot where the horse-box was cut completely off by the collision, and passing over the engine, where the driver and stoker had a very narrow escape of being killed by it, fell upon the tender, where it rested until the train was brought to a standstill. Mr Hudson, the station clerk, had just issued a ticket to a passenger for the down train due at half-past three o'clock, and was in the act of passing on to the platform from the office, when the train dashed through the station. But for the presence of mind of the man to whom he had just issued a ticket, and who, observing the danger, pulled him back into the office, he must inevitably have been killed.

The scene presented in the vicinity of the station after the train had passed is described to have been most awful. The ground for several yards about the station was strewn with dead and wounded persons, whose groans and shrieks were of the most dreadful character. Only four or five persons were at the station when the collision took place, and for the moment they were so paralyzed as to be unable to offer any effectual assistance. Mr Hudson, the station clerk, who, although a young man, has been several years in the situation, displayed great presence of mind under the terrible circumstances in which he was placed. His first act was to dispatch a messenger for the nearest medical man; he next obtained some water, and went around among the sufferers to assuage the parching thirst of which they all complained. In a short time the villagers from Shrivenham, about a mile distant, began to arrive, and as soon as possible the dead and wounded were removed from the line and conveyed to the nearest habitations. The express train was at length brought

back to the station, and with it arrived a large number of wounded passengers, who although not thrown out of the carriages in which they were seated, had sustained various fractures and contusions.

On a meeting of the passengers taking place, the following was found to be an accurate list of the killed and wounded:-

Dead

The Rev. Mr Phillips, of Chacewater - skull fractured.

The Rev. Mr Sands of Woolwich - skull fractured, and comminuted fracture of the left leg.

Wilshere, valet to Sir A.Mackenzie- fractured skull.

A male person (unknown), apparently a gentleman's servant.

Injured

Capt. Blair, R.N., of the Coast Guard Service, Penzance -injury of the spine. (this case will be fatal.)

Mr. Carlton - dislocated ankle. (A bad case.)

Mr. Conway, of the Temple - lacerated legs and much cut in the knee.

Mr. Lea, of Wadham College, Oxford - leg severely broken, and simple fracture of the left thigh.

Mr. Lindsay of Cork - severely bruised.

Nicholas Seymour, of Cork - broken thigh and contusions.

Mr Cohen, of Goodman's-fields - face severely cut.

Mr. G.Pearse, 15, Old Cavendish-street - arm severely cut, and ankle injures. (This gentleman has since undergone amputation of the arm.)

Mr. Machen, Junior United Service Club - contusions on the head, but not very seriously hurt.

Mr. Pearse - injury to both knees, but not very severe.

Mr.Sergeant, of Putney-heath - not much hurt. This gentleman is the son of Mr. Sergeant of the Treasury.

Mrs Phillips, of Chacewater, widow of the Rev. Mr. Phillips, who was killed by the accident. This lady had her son with her, a little boy aged about four years. They are both much shaken, but not otherwise seriously hurt.

Mr. J. Ellis - head cut

Hugh Hedge - head and face severely cut, and elbows much injured.

The two clergymen and Sir Alexander Mackenzie's valet were killed on the spot; but the fourth deceased man (who is not yet identified) lived about an hour and a half after his removal from the railway to an adjoining public house. Capt. Blair, Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Conway, Mr. Sergeant, Mr. Charlton, and Nicholas Seymour were conveyed to Shrivenham, where accommodation was found for them in two small inns, the one at the station, the other in the village. The remaining sufferers were sent back to Swindon as early as possible, where they were attended by several medical gentlemen, who were summoned at the first intimation of the accident. Among the members of the medical profession resident in the district of Shrivenham who hastened to the scene of the disaster immediately after the accident were – Dr. Mantell, of Faringdon; Mr. Mantell and Mr. John Hale Barnett, of the same place, surgeons; and Mr. John Martin of Highworth. The sufferers at Swindon were attended severally by Mr. J. Gay, sen, Mr. J. Gay, jun., Mr Albert Davis, and Mr Charles Arford, of Old Swindon; and Mr. Stuart Keith Rea, of New Swindon. Nothing could possibly exceed the promptitude and kindness of the above gentlemen in ministering to the requirements of the sufferers. Each appeared to vie with the other in soothing the pain, and endeavouring to comfort by the best means in his power the wounded parties; and even in the midst of their sufferings loud expressions of gratitude escaped from several of the unfortunate passengers.

As soon as the up line could possibly be got clear, information of the melancholy occurrence was forwarded to town, and about 10 o'clock Mr. Seymour Clarke, the superintendent of the railway, arrived, bringing with him Mr. Caesar Hawkins, the eminent surgeon, the only leading member of the profession who could be found at the moment. Mr. Hawkins saw the patients, and having approved of the treatment to which they had been subjected by the medical gentlemen in attendance, he went on during the night to Swindon, where he examined the various sufferers, and amputated the arm of Mr Pearse. Up to this moment (Thursday evening) the wounded persons, with one exception, are going on favourably. The exception is that of Capt. Blair, whose neck is dislocated, and who has continued to exist since the accident in a most remarkable manner. Dr. Mantell describes the gallant captain's injury to be a fracture of the 3rd or 4th cervical vertebrae, which has had the effect of totally paralysing the whole of his frame from the middle of the neck downwards, with this exception, that the power of the heart and diaphragm are sustained by the phrenic nerve, and its connection with the sympathetic system, which enables the circulation of the blood and respiration to be carried on. This state of existence, however, is not likely to be prolonged many hours. The gallant captain was a first-class passenger and was travelling to town to attend a trial in which he was interested; and which was fixed to come off today.

Notwithstanding his state of suffering, he has been sensible ever since the accident, and appears prepared for the awful change awaiting him. He will leave a wife and six children to mourn his loss.

Among the remarkable escapes from fatal injury related to us, that of two passengers deserves mention. One of these was Mr. Rowland Brotherhood, the contractor for the permanent way of the district, who got out of the train at Swindon and was accidentally left on the platform and the train started without him. The other was a man named Trimmer, an employee of the company, who sitting in the corner of the second-class carriage which was literally crushed to pieces, altogether escaped.

THE INQUEST

Information of the melancholy occurrence having been forwarded to Mr. Wasborough, the coroner for this district of Berks, that gentleman issued the necessary warrant for holding an inquest on the deceased parties, and appointed 10 o'clock on Thursday morning as the hour for opening the inquiry.

Shortly before that hour, Mr. C. Russell, chairman of the Great Western Railway Company; Mr. Saunders, the secretary; Mr. Seymour Clarke, the superintendent; Mr. Gooch, the chief of the locomotive department; and Mr. M. Lane, the resident engineer of the line, arrived by the 8am down train, and proceeded to view the scene of the accident.

The coroner arrived punctually, and a Jury of yeomen of the district having been assembled (of whom Mr. George Ferris, of Shrivenham, was chosen foreman), the usual oath was administered.

Prior to entering upon the investigation the coroner addressed a few words to the panel, reminding them of the important nature of their duties, and calling upon them to dismiss from their minds any statements which they might have heard out of doors on the subject, and confine themselves strictly to an investigation of the evidence which would be laid before them.

After having viewed the bodies of the deceased, which were lying in a stable in the rear of the Station-Inn, where the Inquest was held, the coroner and jury proceeded to the railway for the purpose of personally inspecting the scene of the collision, and examining the wreck of the train, the greater portion of which

remained at Shrivenham. Here they were met by Mr.C.Russell, Mr Saunders, Mr Clarke, and the other gentlemen connected with the railway, with whom after completing their work of inspection, they returned to the inquest room.

Before the proceedings commenced, the room was inconveniently crowded. Among those present was the Rev.Mr Harrington, rector of Hinton, and several other respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood; Mr Collard, the chief superintendent of the company's police; and Mr. Archibald Sturrock, the resident engineer of the company's establishment at Swindon, etc.

Mr. C. Russell, chairman of the railway company, who was evidently suffering under intense emotion, here observed that he attended as representing that corporation, for the purpose of giving the coroner and the jury every possible assistance in the inquiry. The whole of the company's servants were at the entire disposal of the jury on the subject of any information that might be desired; and it was perhaps necessary for him to state that the directors had deemed it their duty to place in custody the subordinate officers, who, it was thought, had by their negligence caused the melancholy accident.

The first witness called was,

Mr.Charles Coulson, of Penzance, merchant, who identified one of the bodies as that of the Rev. Mr. Phillips, of Chacewater, in Cornwall. He said: "I came with Mr. Phillips on board the "Cornwall" steamer to Bristol, on Tuesday, and we were both passengers in the express train from the latter place. I was not in the same carriage with him when the accident occurred. The carriage in which I was riding was next but one to that in which Mr. Phillips met his death; he was further removed from the engine than I was. I cannot describe the accident. I heard the guard's whistle blown by the driver, and kept my place till the train stopped. I went to search for Mr Phillips at the request of his wife who was in the train, and I identified him amongst the four bodies lying in the Railway Tavern, where he had been removed on the stretcher. Immediately the guard's whistle was blown, I saw the guard, who was sitting in the compartment where I was, put on the break."

Dr Mantell was the next witness. He said: "I have examined the four bodies lying at the Railway Tavern. The body of the Rev.Mr. Phillips was pointed out to me. I find a fracture on the back part of the skull, into which I could pass the whole of my hand. Death must have been instantaneous. Another was pointed out to me as the Rev.Mr.Sandys. There was in this case also a fracture of the skull, which also must have caused immediate death."

Stephen Carter sworn: "I live at Shrivenham. I am in the service of Mr. Rowland Brotherhood, a contractor on the line, and am employed in packing the permanent way. I was at the station at the time the accident took place, and saw a horse-box on the main up line before the express train was in sight. It was not quite out on the main line, but on the crossing where the siding runs into the main line. Behind the horse-box-that is, on the siding, and coming close upon the main line-was a cattle truck. It was the cattle truck that the express train first struck. As the express train approached the station, Weybury, one of the porters now in custody, came from between the tracks that were on the siding, holding up his hands in the direction of the driver, but the engine struck the cattle truck a moment afterwards. He came out from between the two trucks that he and Willoughby (another porter also in custody) were pushing on the siding. Another person was helping, but I do not know his name. I did not see them move the horse-box or the cattle truck at the time of the accident. When I first saw the train, it was about 200 yards from the station."

A Juror: "You say that the horse-box was not wholly on the main line?"

Witness: "It was not entirely on the main line, but it was nearly so. The cattle truck was on the siding, but not so far back but that the engine could strike it in passing."

Mr. Saunders here handed to the coroner a drawing showing the position of the horse and cattle truck at the time of the accident.

The witness, in continuation, said: "Immediately Weybury held up his hands, the driver blew the guard's whistle. After the accident, I saw three dead bodies lying on the railway, as well as other persons who had been injured, and some of whom were thrown on the down line. I helped to remove the bodies. I think the accident took place about 20 minutes after 3 o'clock. I saw Weybury come out from between the trucks and held up his hands before I heard the guard's whistle. The collision forced the cattle-truck and horse-box off the road on to the platform. The engine and train went about a quarter of a mile past the station before they stopped. I think there were a dozen persons thrown out on the road by the collision. Willoughby is a super-numerary, in place of a porter who is ill. There are three porters at the station. "

The Rev. Henry Graham, of Ladgvan, Cornwall, examined: "I came from Bristol yesterday by the express train. We left that place a little before 2 o'clock I think. I believe I was sitting in the last of the second-class carriages. I was not aware that the train was late. I observed that it was driven remarkably well and steady. As we passed the Shrivenham station we heard a crash; but it was not until after we passed it that we found, by the breaking of glass and by splinters flying

about in every direction, that anything had happened. I was sitting with my back to the guard at the time the guard's whistle was sounded. This was before we came to the station, and my attention was particularly directed towards the guard by the exceeding activity with which he applied his break. The train was not thrown off the line. I think it my duty to state, being an utter stranger to the company, that the most praiseworthy and prompt assistance was rendered by the company's servants to those who were injured. Indeed, before we could walk from the train to the station, every person who had suffered from the collision had been removed from the line, and assistance was being rendered to them."

The Rev. Joseph Mansfield, perpetual curate of New Swindon, identified the body of the Rev. George William Sandys, of Woolwich.

Thomas Higgins examined: "I am in the employ of Mr. John Kemp, and every day drive his van to the station at Highworth. I was standing by the side of the loading-shed when the accident took place, and was helping Weybury and Willoughby, at their request, to push the trucks off the side line. They were getting a goods van on the rails where it could be unloaded. The horse-box was the first on the main line, and the cattle truck immediately behind; but they were not coupled together. Before we could get them back into the siding, the express train ran into them. I was not aware whether the express train had passed or not. Weybury and Willoughby did not say anything about the express train until it was heard approaching. A third person named Richard Cowley, was helping us. We were going back on the siding to move some empty wagons when we heard the train approach.

The coroner said, it appeared to him that the evidence of the last witness affected the two porters, Weybury and Willoughby; and he thought that, as they were in custody, it was proper they should be present, and have the opportunity of making any statement, and asking questions of the witnesses.

Weybury and Willoughby were then brought into the room, and the coroner read over to them the evidence given by Higgins.

Weybury said he had done all he could to stop the train directly he heard it, and that in his endeavour to do so he was nearly smashed by the engine. He went off duty at 5 minutes after 2 o'clock, and returned at 5 minutes after 3. After having given his assistance to the down-train, he went to assist in moving the trucks that were on the siding. He was not cautioned in the slightest degree that the express train had not passed. There were at the station two porters and a

policeman, whose duty it was to acquaint him of the fact. The horse-box had been on the line 4 minutes when the engine struck it, and yet no caution was given to him. They were loading and unloading goods, and while so occupied could not hear a train coming till it was close on the station.

Joshua Moss examined: "I am in the employ of Mr. Rowland Brotherhood. I was standing on the platform a few minutes before the accident took place, and saw Weybury and Willoughby, assisted by Higgins, push a horse-box from a siding on to the main line, and leave it there. They then fetched a cattle truck and placed it against the horse-box, and then went back to fetch one which was on the turn-table. At that moment the express train came up, and ran into the cattle truck and horse-box.

Mr. C. Hudson examined: "I am the station-clerk at Shrivenham, and was at the station when the accident took place. I had not given the porters any orders to move the trucks, and was not aware they were doing so. I have been station clerk for three years. I had been at the station about a quarter of an hour when the accident happened. The porters are in the habit of moving carriages and trucks about the line without my orders. It is their duty to do so. It is not my duty- at least I do not consider it to direct three men in moving the carriages in every case. They are under my superintendence, and I am supposed to be attending to my duties as station-clerk in the office, and to be looking after the men. I do not make it a point at all times, and I am occasionally in the office issuing tickets. I am the only station-clerk. After I came to the station I went over to the 17 minutes after 3 o'clock down-train, and when I had started that, I went back to my office and issued a ticket to Swindon for the next train, which is a third-class train, due 20 minutes after the former. The express train generally passes this station about 3 o'clock, or a little after; we usually look out for the train at 3 o'clock. It is the duty of the policeman attending the signals to see that all is clear for the train; the policeman was at his post yesterday when the train was in sight. The trucks on the main line were between the policeman and the approaching train, and he would have seen them had he looked in that direction. I cannot tell whether the policeman turned the signal on for the driver to run through the station. It appears that the signal was on, though I do not know this of my own knowledge; it may be supposed that the signal was put on at its proper time - namely 3 o'clock. When I went to the 17 minutes after 3 down-train, the signal that all was clear upon the line was on for the express train. It was not absolutely necessary for the parties to remove the horse-box and cattle-truck from the siding on the main line: it was their own act and deed. I was quite ignorant they were doing it."

A Juror: "But you did not know whether the express train had passed or not?"

Witness: "Not of my own knowledge; but I took it for granted, seeing the signal that the line was clear was still on, that it had not passed, and therefore did not make any inquiry about it. The signal would remain until the express train had passed, and then it would be immediately turned against any train going in the same direction. The porters at the stations are aware that the "all right" signal remains turned on till the expected train has passed it. Weybury and Willoughby could of course see that the signal was turned on if they had looked towards it. Weybury leaves the station at 2 o'clock, and returns at 3; and if the express train is punctual, it would pass after he returns. If Weybury and Willoughby had used common caution, they would have seen that the "all right" signal was on, and have waited until the express train had passed the station. Weybury has been in the service of the company during the three years that I have been in the service of the company. He has been very attentive to his duty up to the present time. I believe he has been on the line nearly eight years."

Robert Roscoe: "I am an engine driver, and have been in the employ of the Great Western Company for the last three years. Before that I was a driver on the Midland line for the same period. I have driven the express train for the last three years. I brought the express train yesterday from Swindon. The train was 21 minutes late at starting. Shrivenham is six miles from Swindon. I was not driving faster than usual when I passed the station. I was running my regular speed. I did not attempt to make up lost time. We have had orders during the last fortnight that if we are behind time we are not to increase our speed. The usual speed in passing this station will be from 55 to 60 miles an hour. If I saw the signal was against me, I could easily bring up before I came to the station, but the signal was on for me to run through, and it remained so until after I had stopped the train. I saw the obstruction on the line when I was 150 yards from the station. I saw Weybury put up his hands, but that was after I blew the guard's whistle. I first saw the signal "all right" when I was crossing the Hackryon-bridge, over the canal. The bridge is a mile and a half from the station. I was driving one of the eight-wheeled engines; and in my judgement, the accident would have been far more serious if the engine had been a six-wheeled one. The eight-wheeled engines are a heavier class, and in my opinion we should all have gone together but for the construction and weight of the engine, which enabled it to sustain the shock, and keep the rails. A lighter engine must have been driven off the rails. Not a single carriage left the line. If the train had been an ordinary train, the accident could not possibly have been avoided. I was not running faster, or very little faster indeed, than we take the ordinary stopping trains. The accident must have occurred if I had been driving an ordinary train that does not stop at Shrivenham. There is not the slightest

doubt about the signal having been on for me to run through the station. It was left on for ten minutes after I had passed the station. I directed the attention of several persons to the fact.

George Pargetter, the policeman who had charge of the signals, here observed it was quite true that the signal was on for the express train to pass through the station. He turned it on a little before 3 o'clock, at which time the line was clear, and he kept a good look out for the express train. When the express train came in sight, he held out his arm to signify that all was right. The moment after, he saw on the line a horse-box, which he was sure was not there the previous moment. The horse-box must have had an impetus given to it from the siding and been thus thrown on the main line.

Weybury repeated that the horse-box had been on the main line four minutes when the train struck it.

Willoughby was asked by the coroner if he had any statement to make, when he said he did only what he was told to do.

A Juror asked Mr Saunders whether the porters were instructed in the duties they had to perform?

Mr Saunders said that the porters had general instructions in print given to them, and received particular instructions from the station-master. The printed instructions were very explicit.

Mr Hudson was recalled to speak to the character of Willoughby. He said that Willoughby was employed as super-numerary in the absence of one of the porters, who was ill. He had been continuously employed for the last three months, and was, there could be no doubt, perfectly acquainted with the duties of a porter. He was convinced that both Weybury and Willoughby knew that they ought not to place anything on the main line without giving notice to the policeman to put on the danger signal. Willoughby had, up to the present time, performed his duties very well indeed, and he believed that the same character would be given by the preceding station-master, who had employed him.

Mr Saunders here placed in the hands of the coroner the time table which the guard of the express train had kept of its progress from Exeter to Swindon. It appeared that the train, owing to delay on the South Devon line, left Exeter 13 minutes late, and that in consequence of the slipping of the driving-wheel while

running up the Box tunnel, it lost two or three minutes more, the engine being a comparatively light one and the train heavy.

The Coroner then briefly summed up the evidence. He said it was quite clear no blame could be attached to the engine-driver, and that the only question they had to consider was, whether the two porters and the policeman at the signal post, or any one of them, could be considered responsible for the terrible accident that had taken place. It appeared from the evidence of Mr. Hudson that the accident could have occurred only through the negligence of Weybury and Willoughby. It would be for the jury to consider whether the policeman at the signal post was also culpable. It was necessary for the jury to bear in mind that there was some discrepancy in the evidence as to the length of time that the horse-box was standing on the main line. If the jury thought that they were guilty of negligence, and that such negligence was the cause of the accident, the persons now in custody were guilty of manslaughter.

The jury remained in deliberation about an hour. At the expiration of that time the court was re-opened, when the foreman announced that himself and brother jurors had agreed to a unanimous verdict of "Manslaughter against Jas. Weybury and Wm. Willoughby," the porter and assistant-porter at Shrivvenham station.

The coroner, thereupon, made out his warrant for the committal of the two prisoners to gaol, to await their trial at the next assizes.

Disastrous as the effects of this most unfortunate accident have been, it is satisfactory to reflect that the calamity has in no way been occasioned by the speed at which the express train was travelling, nor by any act which the executive of the railway company could by possibility have controlled. On the contrary, the concurrent testimony of all those best able to judge of the matter, leaves no doubt that the effect of the accident would have been much more serious had the train been an ordinary one. In that event, in all probability, the whole of the passengers must have been immolated.

Shrivvenham, Friday

The sufferers by the late terrible accident, with one or two exceptions, are progressing satisfactorily. - Mr F.W. Slade, a barrister, came down this morning to visit Capt. Blair, with whom he is on terms of intimate friendship. The gallant sufferer, still retains sensibility, and, by the advice of his friends, has

this day made his will. Although the unfortunate gentleman may linger some days, no hope of his recovery is entertained.- Mr John Leahy, of Stowmarket-house, near Cork, arrived here last evening, and having viewed the body of the fourth deceased, identified him as his servant James Mahoney. Sir Alexander Mackenzie's valet has also been identified. An inquest on their remains will be held tomorrow.- Of the patients at Swindon, all, it is hoped, are recovering except one- Mr. Arthur A. Lee. Of Kidderminster and Wadham College, Oxford, who is in a precarious state. - In addition to the wounded persons mentioned in the list already published, the following have sustained injury. - Mr Hedditch, of Stourton, in the county of Somerset, who has concussion of the brain and severe laceration of the face; and Mr W.Ellis (included in our former statement,) who has sustained an injury of the knee joint.

Swindon, Saturday.

The case of Mr. Arthur Augustus Lea, which excited serious apprehension on Friday, has terminated fatally. The injuries Mr. Lea received were very serious, one of his thighs being fractured, and the other leg broken below the knee. His dissolution, however, did not arise from either of these fractures, but from an attack of apoplexy, with which he was stricken a few hours previous to death. Several of the unfortunate gentleman's friends were present at his demise. The deceased was a young man of great promise. He took a double second degree at the last classical examination, and, it is said was only deprived of the highest honours by a long and serious illness which interrupted his studies for some months. - At 3 o'clock, an inquest was opened at the Swindon station, before Mr. W.B.Whitmarsh, coroner for Wiltshire. The identity of the deceased having been proved, the several witnesses examined at the inquest held at Shrivenham, before the Berks coroner, on Thursday, were successively called. Their testimony differed in no material point from that which they had previously given. The only fresh witness called was Mr. Michael Lane, resident engineer of the railway,- who deposed to having accompanied Captain Symonds to Shrivenham, for the purpose of making an experiment as to how much time would be occupied in placing the horse-box and trucks in the position they occupied on the railway when the accident occurred. From the experiment made, it had been found that to move the horse-box and cattle-truck to the position in which they were placed, and to bring the loaded truck on to the turntable, occupied five men nearly seven minutes. On the occasion of the accident four men only were employed, while in making the experiment, they had five men; so that a greater a greater time might be reasonably supposed to have been occupied. The policeman on duty, Pargetter, was stationed about 400

feet from the siding where the horse-box and cattle -truck entered upon the line, and he could not, as witness believed, have helped seeing the obstruction had he looked in the proper direction.

Captain Symonds, while the experiment was being tried, had gone to the signal post where the policeman stood, and his opinion was, that unless the man had shut his eyes or looked in another direction from that in which his eyes ought to have been fixed, it would have been utterly impossible for him to have missed seeing the horse-box on the line, and not only that, but a great way further down the railway. - At the close of Mr. Lane's examination, the Coroner said, as it would be utterly impossible to complete the inquiry that evening, he thought it would be better to adjourn at this stage of the proceedings, and, the jury acquiescing, the inquest was formally adjourned until Wednesday next.

On Saturday morning, Mr. Wasborough, coroner for Berks, held an inquest at Shrivenham, on the bodies of Edwin Wiltshire and Michael Mahony, two of the deceased persons whose remains were not identified when the jury previously met. In the course of the inquiry, the Coroner asked Mr. Seymour Clarke, the superintendent of the railway, for a copy of the instructions issued to the servants of the company, and, on referring to them, said he could find no rule forbidding the servants of the company to place any obstruction on the main line while the signal showed the line to be clear; although from the evidence of Mr Hudson the station clerk, he had been led to believe there was such a rule. - Mr. Clarke said, although not referred to in the rules, this was a thoroughly understood matter by all persons in the employment of the company; it was, in fact, the fundamental principle on which all the instructions were based. - Subsequently, Mr Clarke said a new set of rules was in preparation in which was embodied an instruction not to place any truck upon the main line before having turned on the danger signal. - After some questions by the Coroner, and explanations by Mr. Clarke, on the positions of the signals at the Shrivenham station, with regard to the convenience of the policeman appointed to watch them, the Coroner and jury adjourned to the station for the purpose of viewing the signals, and considering how far the duties of attending to them and to the gates at the crossing could be safely intrusted to one man.- The usual point for the policeman when signalling an uptrain, was shown to be at the cross-gates, a short distance above the station, and at this spot was the signal post for the down-line. The up-signal was about 50 yards from the down, and nearer to the station on the opposite side. A careful inspection proved that the policeman might, by walking twelve paces or thereabouts command a full view of anything approaching, even when a down-train was stopping at the station.

On the return of the jury to the inquest-room, the foreman said the accident had clearly been caused by the joint acts of the policeman, Pargetter, and the porter Weybury. The policeman's was an act of omission, and the porter's one of commission. The omission of the policeman might not have caused the accident, while that of the porter was sure to have caused it.

The jury agreed to a verdict of "Manslaughter against the two porters, Weybury and Willoughby," as in the other cases. - The policeman Pargetter has been suspended.

Captain Blair, to the great surprise of his medical attendants, has rallied considerably, and a slight degree of sensibility has returned in his extremities. His wife, as well as his father and brother, have arrived at Shrivensham, and remain with their unfortunate relative. The gallant sufferer retains perfect consciousness - indeed, his faculties do not seem to be in the least degree impaired.

This article has been transcribed from the "Cornwall Royal Gazette" 19 May 1848. It reflects the sometimes rather quaint style and punctuation of the mid 19th century. It seems that the last two entries have been written by a different journalist.

Vivien Moss