

Age (Melbourne, Vic. : 1854 - 1954), Tuesday 21 April 1908, page 5

TERRIBLE RAILWAY DISASTER.

BALLARAT AND BENDIGO TRAINS COLLIDE.

MEET AT BRAYBROOK JUNCTION.

NINETEEN DEAD BODIES EXTRICATED.

SEVERAL OTHER FATALITIES FEARED.

FIFTY SERIOUSLY INJURED.

THE WRECKAGE CATCHES FIRE.

CASUALTIES CONFINED TO BALLARAT TRAIN.

RELIEF TRAIN DESPATCHED.

News of an appalling railway accident which occurred at Braybrook was received last night. The particulars, which slowly filtered through the telephone wires left no doubt that a frightful catastrophe had occurred. Both the Ballarat and Bendigo express trains met at the station. The Ballarat was due at Spencer-street at 10.27 p.m., but was late; the Bendigo train was due at 10.35.

It is believed that the Ballarat train was standing at the platform when the Ben-

digo train ran into it.

The collision must have been terrific in its impact, as fully 20 persons were killed and 50 injured.

The latest information received early this morning was that part of one of the damaged trains was on fire, and that some of the injured were supposed to be burned underneath.

A large number of people awaiting their friends were at the station this morning.

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A large number of people awaiting their friends were at the station this morning, and the utmost consternation prevailed amongst them when the news of the collision came through. The suspense became intense.

It was arranged that the whole of the suburban trains should be kept open, and friends of wounded persons should be apprised of their condition as soon as information came to hand.

As soon as the news of the catastrophe reached Spencer-street a relief train, with a strong staff of 20 ambulance men and all necessary appliances, was sent up along with one of the suburban trains. The services of Dr. Buchanan and Dr. Pearle were immediately secured to accompany the ambulance corps, and arrangements were made with the Melbourne and other hospitals to accommodate the wounded when they arrived.

The casualty train started about midnight, supplied with mattresses and all kinds of surgical appliances, with a large staff of railway employees, under Superintendent McCaw. Passing through Footscray the whole of the staff there was taken on. The train arrived at Braybrook Junction at 10 minutes to 1. The sight there was something pitiable. The Ballarat train, lit up and crowded with passengers stood on the station, but the back end of it was completely smashed to pieces. It appears that owing to some reason yet to be explained, the train from Bendigo, drawn by two engines, smashed into the Ballarat train while at Braybrook Junction station. Two first class carriages and a guard's van were smashed into a conglomerate, the wreckage being strewn all over the line. From a hasty glance it appears that at least the bodies of two carriages, very much smashed up, are overlying the undercarriages of two others, the sides of which are burnt out all over the line in the form of wreckage.

The impact was so great that it shifted the roofs of two of the carriages, and these roofs form an obstruction right across both lines and overlap on to the platform opposite.

The sight on the platform is appalling. People lying all over the platform with hideous wounds on them.

Driver Milburn was in charge of the first engine on the Bendigo train, and he was considerably bruised, but not otherwise injured, and was able to keep on duty. The fireman escaped injury.

The accident occurred through the Bendigo train running against the signals and

the train running against the signals and over the points. The station master at Bendigo says he was the only one on duty at the station. He had set the points for the Ballarat train to come into the station, and they remained set in that way. He was busy attending to the despatch of the Ballarat train, and had no time to alter the points, even if he had so desired, consequently the points stood against the Bendigo train, the driver of which disregarded the signals, with the result that the train ran over the points and smashed into the Ballarat train.

CAUSE OF THE DISASTER.

Had the Ballarat train got away from Bendigo at its proper time the accident would not have happened. The train was timed to leave at 2 minutes to 10, but being a long train, it was delayed in shunting up and down the platform, and it was just about to pull out on its journey to Melbourne at 25 minutes to 11. At that time the ordinary train was due, and the Bendigo special train came dashing in, supposedly in order to get in front of the ordinary train, with a frightful result, as the Ballarat train had practically no way to stop when it was struck. Five of the rear carriages—two first class, two second class and a van—were smashed into splinters, the occupants being chopped up and mangled by the broken wood and ironwork. The collision was so great that the whole neighborhood was aroused, and the train immediately burst into flames. The residents, realising that something very serious had happened, rushed to the railway station to render help. The local fire brigade came out the reel to extinguish the fire, and the bodies and wounded passengers were being taken from the splintered carriages. The engine of the brigade was playing around

them. The fire was quickly put out, but the dreadfulness of the happening was added to by the fire. Many of the confined people were burned more or less severely. The platforms were quite dark, and it was impossible for the uninjured passengers, as they rushed up and down in their excitement to avoid trampling on and tumbling over the dead and wounded, and when the first ambulance train arrived it took out Dr. Perry and a corps of railway ambulance workers, who were provided with first aid requirements. As their lanterns began to flit about the platforms a terrible scene was displayed in all its gruesome horror. The bodies of women and men, with their features battered out of recognition, and limbs mangled, lay about the platform. One man's corpse, with the head completely torn off, lay close by the mangled body of a mother with her dead baby clasped in her arms. The body of another man was hanging up between two of the carriages in a position where for a long time the workers could do nothing to extricate it. It was with the greatest

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extricate it. It was with the greatest difficulty that many of the bodies could be extricated at all, as they were impaled on the ends of sharp splintered woodwork. It was not until about 2.30 a.m. that the workers managed to extricate what they thought might be the last body, but of this they were not sure, because it was impossible in the darkness to see what might be under the great mass of woodwork lying about the line.

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