

CHARLES BIDDLE 1858 - 1949

Research into the death of Fred Baker (died 1905) prompted research into Charles Biddle. He was a witness working with Baker at the time of his death. The Railway Inspectorate report shows:-
“*Baker and Biddle were working in front of an engine when it set back and struck both of them*”
It was noted that the same name was involved in another accident 20 years later. Charles had spent his entire working life on the railway at Bromsgrove and was still labouring at the age of 67.

Charles Biddle was born in Bromsgrove in 1858 to Francis and Hester Biddle of Kidderminster Road. Charles was baptised on 31 October 1858. The 1861 Census shows the family living in Worcester Street (just a few doors along from the Black Cross) Frances and Hester now have 5 children, Anne age 6, Jane age 4, Charles age 3, Elizabeth age 1, and James age 1 month. There is also a Sarah Spiers, age 40 living at the house.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/>

[#zoom=18.8&lat=52.33195&lon=-2.06505&layers=117746211&b=1&marker=52.331750,-2.064845](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=18.8&lat=52.33195&lon=-2.06505&layers=117746211&b=1&marker=52.331750,-2.064845)

The 1871 Census shows the family at 106 Worcester Street now with 9 Children Anne, Charles, Elizabeth, James, plus William age 8, Mary age 7, Frederick age 4 and Kate age 1.

In October 1880 Charles married a Bromsgrove girl, Susan Porter. Her family were nail makers from Sidemoor. The 1881 census finds Charles and Susan living with Susan's parents in Sidemoor (Churchfields) Charles is described as Railway Labourer. Both Susan and her father are recorded as Nailmakers. It seems a tough trade for a woman but this was not unusual, particularly at this time. The nail trade in Bromsgrove was in decline due to competition from machine made nails. Families would work the forge around the clock to make a living.



The 1891 census finds Charles still in Sidemoor, described as a Railway Platelayer. Now living next door to the in-laws. Charles & Susan have 3 daughters, Florence age 8, Ellen age 7 & Alice age 2.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/>

[#zoom=17.7&lat=52.32298&lon=-2.05204&layers=168&b=1&marker=52.322843,-2.051423](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=17.7&lat=52.32298&lon=-2.05204&layers=168&b=1&marker=52.322843,-2.051423)

The couple sadly lost a child that year.

BROMSGROVE & DROITWICH MESSENGER - SATURDAY 07 MARCH 1891

DEATHS.

BIDDLE.- March 3, at Church Fields, Bromsgrove, Jessie, infant daughter of Charles Biddle.

The 1901 Census finds the family, now living in Birmingham Road with 4 daughters the youngest, who the couple have also named Jessie is age 7. Interesting to note the in-laws are still next door.

A 1904 Messenger article records Charles Biddle having to resign his plot on the allotments at Church Lane Sidemoor. The reason is not stated but possibly he had moved away from Sidemoor so had to resign his plot under Allotment Society rules.

In September 1905 Charles was witness to the death of a workmate, Fred Baker. Charles gave evidence at the inquest:-

*BROMSGROVE, DROITWICH & REDDITCH WEEKLY MESSENGER SEPTEMBER 2 1905
ACCIDENT BROMSGROVE STATION - PLATELAYER KILLED.*

Mr A H. Hebbert (Deputy Coroner) conducted an inquiry on Wednesday evening, at the Dragoon Hotel, Bromsgrove Railway Station, concerning the death of Frederick Baker (32), platelayer, Stoke Pound, who was knocked down by an engine, killed while at work near Bromsgrove Station on Tuesday morning. Mr. G. H. King (District Traffic Inspector), attended on behalf of the Midland Railway Company.

***Charles Biddle**, Charford Road, Aston Fields, second ganger over the platelayers, employed by the Midland Railway Company, stated he had known the deceased over 12 years, and had worked with him over seven years. Deceased was a platelayer's labourer, and he was at work under witness's direction on Tuesday. The accident happened about 10,0 a.m. They were packing the sleepers on the engine pit road near the south signal box. An engine came off the pit, and knocked down both witness and deceased. They were both working between the metals. He did not hear any signal from the engine, and they were knocked down before he was aware the engine was coming. He saw no steam or smoke. The engine struck witness on the hip, knocking him against Baker, and he tumbled between the metals. Witness's only injury was a slight bruise on the hip, the engine passing over him. When he got up Baker lay three or four yards in front of him, and he saw that he was injured. He appeared to be quite dead. It was usual for men to work on the metals without a look-out in a lie-by siding like that. The engine was not going fast. A down train was passing at the same time, and that might have had something to do with them hearing no signal from the engine. When he saw Baker the latter was apparently dead. He fetched the ambulance men as quickly as he could.*

A 1907 Messenger article names him as a committee member of the newly formed Railwaymen's Coal Club:-

BROMSGROVE MESSENGER - SATURDAY 27 JULY 1907 - ASTON FIELDS.

*COAL CLUB -At a recent meeting of railway employees, held in the Council Schools, Aston Fields, it was unanimously decided to commence a coal club, named " The Bromsgrove Railwaymen's Direct Coal Supply Association," and the following officers were elected from the meeting from the various departments at Bromsgrove Station :-President, Mr. G. Cheetham; treasurer, Mr. T. Hobday honorary secretary, Mr W Birch, Wellington Road : auditors, Messrs, E Mason and J. Dyer; managing committee, Messrs. A. H. Albutt, **C. Biddle**, J. Clapton, J. Gibbs, J. Ship-ton, W. Scrivens, M. Troth, F. Whiting, and H. Williams. Between thirty and forty members have already joined the association, which is only open to railway employees.*

The meeting took place at the school in Stoke Road just across from where Charles was living.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/>

[#zoom=17.7&lat=52.32313&lon=-2.05205&layers=168&b=1&marker=52.322502,-2.051783](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/?#zoom=17.7&lat=52.32313&lon=-2.05205&layers=168&b=1&marker=52.322502,-2.051783)

The 1911 census finds Charles and Susan still living in Stoke Road, Aston Fields with 4 unmarried daughters.

A 1911 Item in the Bromsgrove Messenger advertises the sale of a property in Stoke Road with Charles Biddle as a sitting tenant.

BROMSGROVE MESSENGER - SATURDAY 13 MAY 1911 - STOKE ROAD, ASTON FIELDS.

Lot 5.-A Pair of Brick built and Slated FREEHOLD SEMI-DETACHED VILLAS,

Occupied by Messrs. Charles Biddle and William Baker, producing a gross annual rental of £27 6s. Each House contains Front Sitting Room, large Living Room, Back Kitchen with Furnace and Sink, Pantry, three good Bedrooms, Coal House, Closet, and Front and Back Gardens. Tap Water is laid on.

This Property is very substantially built, always well tenanted, in good repair, pleasantly situated within three minutes' walk of the railway station, and would form a sound investment. Area 692 square yards or thereabouts.

Lot 6.—A Pair of FREEHOLD SEMI-DETACHED VILLAS,

Similar in all respects to and adjoining Lot 5, let to Mrs. Clements and Mr. Charles Biddle, producing a gross annual rental of £27 6s. Area 682 square yards or thereabouts.

The database at <https://www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk/> records an accident in which Charles (now age 67) is injured. It occurred October 16th 1925. The railway inspectorate report shows:-

“Biddle in response to a request by Trot entered a 5 compartment ballast brake to control it as it was gravitating along a dead end very slow. He entered the van 2 compartments from the brake lever, it was when he climbed over the back rails when he tripped and bruised his back”.

No more census records are available. Charles, Susan & Florence appear in electoral registers at Stoke Road in following years. The 1939 register records Charles, Susan and spinster daughter Florence residing at Marsden Villa (No 64) Stoke Road Aston Fields. Charles Now age 71 is described as a Permanent Way Sub Ganger Retired.

Susan Passed away in 1947.

Florence is at 64 Stoke Road in the 1949/51 Electoral Register. She passed away in October 1952.

Charles passed away in 1949 age 91.

