

## **FREDERICK GEORGE BAKER 1872 - 1905**

Fred was born to Charles and Mary Baker. The 1881 census finds them living at 46 Dolberrow, Churchill Somerset. They have 5 children (including Fred age 9) plus another family member at the house. 'Charles' is described as a labourer.

The 1891 Census finds Fred lodging at 44 Stone Cottages, Stoke Prior, Worcestershire. Also in the house are his uncle (also named Frederick), an aunt and 3 cousins (one of whom is also named Frederick). Fred is age 19 and working as a Groom.

In October 1896 Fred marries Minnie Cleaver (Born in Hinckley). The wedding is in the Bromsgrove district.

The 1901 census finds Fred living at 54 Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior (possibly in Foley Gardens) with his wife Minnie, 2 Children and a lodger - Percy Collier. Fred is now described as a Gen. Labourer (Rwly Co).

On 29 August 1905 Fred is killed while working on the ash pit siding at Bromsgrove. He was struck down by an engine reversing along the siding and died immediately of his injuries.

Newspaper reports show that Fred left a widow, Minnie Baker and four children. The Railway Compensation paid a sum of £150 to the family.

### **BROMSGROVE DROITWICH AND REDDITCH MESSENGER, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1905.**

Tuesday's fatality on the railway near Bromsgrove raised questions of importance which occupied the attention of the jury for a considerable time at the inquest on Wednesday evening. The unfortunate man Baker was knocked down by an engine and was killed while following his employment as a platelayer in a siding near the station. In the case of operations on the main line a look-out man warns the workmen of the approach of trains, but it seems that smaller parties working in a siding are left to look after themselves. As the result of Tuesday's incident the jury recommended that in future a look-out man should be employed in sidings as well as on the main line, but this, of course, only applies to sidings on which engines are in motion. If the recommendation is carried into effect it will necessarily entail considerable additional expenditure, but we are sure the **authorities** will not be found wanting in anything that will conduce to the safety of their men. The evidence appeared to indicate that the present system is at fault, for there was nothing to show that blame attached to the engine driver or anyone else, and the former was specially exonerated. The driver could not see the men at work, the men themselves did not realise that they were in any danger, and it was no doubt the noise made by passing trains which drowned the sound of the approaching engine. Under these circumstances it would seem desirable to post a look-out man or have a system of closing the portion of the line on which men are at work by means of flags or other signals, which should be removed only after warning had been given to men working in the vicinity.

**BROMSGROVE, DROITWICH AND REDDITCH WEEKLY MESSENGER  
SEPTEMBER 2 1905**

**ACCIDENT BROMSGROVE STATION - PLATELAYER KILLED.**

**SUGGESTION BY THE JURY.**

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 Juryman : Did not the driver know you were in front of the engine ?—Witness : He knew we were at work there because I spoke to him as he went up.

Did not he warn you when he started ?—I did not hear him warn us.

The Coroner : How far would the engine have to come from off the pit to where you were at work ?- : -About thirty yards. \_

Was he coaling up ?—They do not coal up on the pit.

A Juryman : If you were only 30 yards away he would be able to see that distance before he started ? —Witness : Yes.

How did he come ?—Tender first.

Is it usual to signal when they start from 10 or 12 yards away ?—I could not say. He was going to follow up a goods train ?—I could not say, but he was going to the goods road. He was coming off the ashpit road to come on the up goods line.

Is a driver allowed to move an engine without having proper signals, and to move about just where he likes I—Most certainly not.

No one signalled to you when a train was approaching ?— In a place like that it is not required. If it was a place where there was a lot of shunting, or on the main line, it would be necessary.

I should think it is necessary where someone is always crossing?—No. It is only near the coal stage.

The Coroner: Where would he get the signal to move in the ashpit road ?—

Witness: He would move at his own discretion. There are a pair of points, and he could not come up until these were opened.

Mr. King handed in a plan of the scene of the accident, and explained the general

position. He remarked that the driver would be quite in order in coming back along the ashpit road, which was used exclusively by the engines.

Minnie Baker, widow of the deceased, living at Stoke Pound, said her husband was 32 years old, and he had been employed by the Railway Company for many years. She never heard her husband complain of his work being dangerous.

Joseph Clapton, 6 Warwick Terrace, Old Station Road, said he had been an engine driver on the Midland Railway nearly six years. He was driving a bank engine on Tuesday morning, and was on the line leading to the ashpit. He saw Biddle when he went up to the pit, and spoke to him, but he did not know Biddle and Baker were at work there—they might have been examining the road, and then might have gone away again. He looked before he started his engine, and did not see them. They were not far enough away from the engine for him to see them, but he would no doubt have seen them if they had been standing. His engine had a small bunker for coal, and not a tender, and the bunker would not impede his view except to a slight extent. He would see a man three or four yards away if he was standing upright, but not if he was stooping down at work. He did not sound his whistle before he moved. -

The Coroner : Have you any rules for your guidance in moving on to the ashpit ?—

Witness : We have a signal in coming off the road.

What had you gone on the ashpit for ?—To get out of the way of another engine. We have to do it to allow them to come in for coal and water, and then when the points are put right we can leave.

Is there a signal there ?—Yes, and I saw it showing the points were right for the to come back again, and the road was clear as far as I could see from the foot-plate.

What was the first you knew about Baker being knocked down ?—I thought I heard a shout, and I as once applied the brake and stopped.

What did you see ?—I saw Baker lying dead an the four-foot just in front of the engine.

Did you feel anything?—Not more than when a bit of ballast drops on the line— just a crunch like.

A Juryman: Were not the men working thirty or forty yards away?—Witness: No, not more than five or six yards, or eight at the outside. How long were you up the ashpit road ?—Not more than five minutes.

The Coroner: Biddle says he was thirty yards away. —Witness : It was not more than eight yards.

Mr. King remarked the blood on the rails was about thirty yards from the ashpit, but he did not know whether the deceased was knocked along the Line.

Witness: We did not go as far as the pit.

Mr. King: That would explain it then.

The Coroner: Did you see any blood on the engine ?—Witness : No.

A. Juryman: You would not be coming at much pace at starting ?—No, but these engines are quick in motion. If you were only eight or nine yards off you would not gather much speed ?—No, but the wheels would do the damage. An engine generally emits steam and makes a in starting ?—One train was coming up and another going down at the time, and that would account for nothing being heard.

In reply to the Jury, Mr. King explained that if a big gang of men was at work a look-out was employed, but where one or two men worked away the main line it was not the practice to do that. In a case like the present one the men were supposed to be their own look-out.

Dr. Coaker deposed he received a telephone message about 10.15, and when he saw deceased he !at lying in the four -foot way quite dead. His was split open from front to back.

The bones side of the head were born away, and, altogether with the brains, were lying by the metals. Deceased's right hand and left foot were also crushed. Death was instantaneous, as the result of a fracture of the skull. In summing up, the Coroner said he did not believe there was much he need call their attention to this case. The plan which the Inspector had supplied them with seemed to make the matter clear. They had heard Baker and Biddle were old employees of the company and were at work at the siding leading to the ashpit, up and down which, engines could run without waiting for any signal. There did seem to be one point which the jury grasped and that was the employment of lookout men. if they thought proper they could add to their verdict - which he took it would be a verdict of accidental death - any rider they they might think fit, in the form of a recommendation to the company, if they thought the circumstances justified it. He was quite sure anything the jury said would be reported to the company by the Inspector. After consulting together for a short time in private, the Jury found that the deceased came to his death by accident ; they exonerated the engine driver from blame and added they added a rider that look-out men should be employed when men were at work on sidings as well as on the main line. The Jury expressed sympathy with the widow and family of the deceased.