

## **WILLIAM CREUZE (Engineer) 1810 - 1841.**

William Creuze was born 10 Jan 1810 at Portsea, Hampshire. He was the son of a Frenchman -Jacques Augustin Creuze and his wife Hannah Myles Browne. Jacques was a protestant and a Royalist so may have come to England to escape persecution. Jacques became Master of French Language at the Royal Naval College in Portsmouth.

William's elder brother, Augustin FB Creuze became a prominent Naval Architect and the first "Principal Shipwright Surveyor" for Lloyd's Register. A training room at Lloyds Register in London is named after him.

In 1834 William gained a degree in Mathematics at St. John's College, Cambridge and became 9th "Wrangler" (a term used to describe maths graduates at Cambridge). in 1840 Creuze moved from Cheltenham to join the BGR in as "Locomotive Superintendent" at Bromsgrove. He overcame problems with the design of the Norris engines and made numerous modifications. He kept the banking engines operational during the winter of 1839/40. In doing so he proved Moorsom's theory that locomotives could keep trains moving on the bank and ideas of a winching system on the incline were finally abandoned.

William creuze was laid to rest on 11 April 1841 in the old St Godwalds Church Yard (just by bridge 99 on Fininstall Road, Aston Fields) His head stone can be seen there today.



## LONDON EVENING STANDARD. MONDAY 12 APRIL 1841

### SHOCKING ACCIDENT ON THE BIRMINGHAM AND GLOUCESTER RAILWAY.

Early on Wednesday morning last an accident, unhappily attended with the loss of life of one individual, and the serious injury of two or three others, occurred on this line by the blowing out of a plug from the boiler of one of the bank engines, one the inclined near Bromsgrove station, by which Mr. William Creuze, the engineer of locomotives, was so dreadfully scalded that he died in about 24 hours after. Two or three other persons, who were on the engine and tender at the time, were also more or less injured, but they are all in a fair way of recovery.

On Friday evening an inquest was held at the Cross Hotel, Bromsgrove, on the body of Mr. Creuze, before Mr. Docker, one of the coroners for Worcestershire, and a jury summoned for the purpose. Some of the directors were present, together with the secretary of the railways, and also George Whateley, Esq. the Company's solicitor, who informed the coroner before the commencement of the proceedings that the directors were most anxious that the fullest investigation should be made into the circumstances connected with the melancholy occurrence.

The first witness examined was Edward Shaw Carter, the stoker, who was carried into the room and placed on a couch near the coroner, apparently suffering a good deal from the effects of scalds on his hands and face. He said that he was employed on Tuesday night on the bank engine called the Boston, one of the American locomotives employed in working the incline near the Bromsgrove station. He left the station about 10 minutes before 11 for the purpose of assisting one of the mail trains up the incline; accompanied by the deceased (Mr. Creuze) and the driver, Israel York. After assisting the mail train up the incline, they returned on the other line of rails as far as Vigo-bridge, a distance of about half a mile. York stopped the engine there and went home, leaving the witness in charge of the engine and desiring him to wait for Mr. Creuze, who had got off the engine. He remained about two hours in charge of the engine, until the watchman gave him notice that the next mail train from Gloucester to Birmingham would be up in about five minutes. He then ran the engine down the incline to the Bromsgrove station, where he crossed over to the other line, and got the tender filled with water. He afterwards took up Walworth, the foreman and his wife, and the second brakesman, and ran the engine back to Vigo, where Mrs. Walworth got off, and the second brakesman walked along the plane. He then ran the engine nearly to the top of the incline, and ran her back again in order to fill the boiler. He stayed here about 20 minutes, at the expiration of which time the deceased, Walworth and his wife, and a man named Archibald, Torrey, foreman of Messrs. Nasmyth and Co, came and got upon the engine and tender. He then slacked the brake, and they started down the incline at the rate of about seven or eight miles an hour, the balance indicating a pressure of 48lbs to the square inch. He knew that this was the exact indication, for he had himself altered it from a higher pressure, after they had ascended the incline with the mail train. The steam was just beginning to blow when they started.

Walworth, as soon as they started, lifted up the balance and allowed the steam to escape until it had no longer sufficient power to raise the valve. When they had proceeded about 300 yards the water and steam began to escape in great quantities, and with great violence,

through the fire-box, on the deceased and himself and the other persons who were in the engine, by which the fire-box door was forced open. Witness ran immediately to the centre of the tender save himself, and the deceased stood with Walworth, with his back towards the firebox, a little on the left about five feet distant. After witness had got to the coke-box he attempted to get off the engine, in doing which his left hand got entangled with the brake, and he was about a minute before he could release himself. As soon as he had done so he jumped off the engine, which went on about 300 yards before it stopped. He then went towards the engine, and on his way met Walworth and his wife, and Torrey. On getting up they found Mr. Creuze sitting on the top of the tender. They spoke to him, but he made no answer. Walworth immediately slacked the brake, and started down the inclined plane towards the station. Witness did not know whether Mr. Creuze had been scalded or injured at all, but heard Mrs Walworth say that he was. He (witness) on arriving at the station got off, and walked home to get assistance. The engine had been lately repaired, but no accident had happened with it before. It had only been six or seven months in use. The witness in reply to questions put at the close of his evidence, stated that he had been employed as a stoker about five years, and was well acquainted with the mode of driving an engine. In the repairs which had been made, a copper stay had been introduced through the boiler in place of one of the tubes; but this would, in his opinion, afford additional security.

Thomas Horton, an engine-fitter, was examined as to the nature of the repairs that had been made in the engine. He was about four months in the company's service, and the first time he had anything to do with the engine was in taking it to pieces for the purpose of sending it to the boiler-maker's. He afterwards put it together again. A stay was introduced through the boiler from the tube-plate in the fire-box to the tube-plate in the smoke-box. The stay was introduced for the security of the tubes, and to keep the plates from being drawn in by the fire. Witness made the repairs under the direction of Walworth. The copper stay was fastened by means of iron nuts screwed at each end. The stay was an inch and an eighth in diameter. It was of the same thickness, and fastened in the same way as that in which he had been in the habit of putting them in other boilers. The engine had also a new fire-box put in, and she was started to work on Thursday week; taking the trains up the incline, at which she was continued until the time of the accident. On Wednesday evening last witness examined the boiler of the Boston, and found that a short tube that had been put into the boiler-plate of the fire-box had been blown out. It had been introduced in the place of one of the tubes, which had been taken away in order that a hole might be left at the smoke-box end to blow the mud out of the boiler. This short tube or plug was driven in the hole of the tube plate in the fire-box. It was fastened by means of a strong steel ferrule, driven with great force into the tube. A man named Morgan assisted him to plug up the hole. It was only fastened by being driven in with great force, and it would have to resist the pressure of the steam by the force with which it was driven in.

The Coroner inquired whether the jury perfectly understood it, according to the witnesses description?

One of the jury replied, that they perfectly understood it, but it was not so secure as if it went all the way through.

The Coroner here inquired if the Jury thought it would be necessary to call any further evidence, but they expressed themselves perfectly satisfied with the evidence that had been given.

Mr. Fletcher, surgeon, of Bromsgrove, who had been called in immediately on the occurrence of the accident to attend the deceased, described the nature of the injuries which

he had received, and the treatment adopted. He continued in attendance upon the sufferer until about an hour preceding his death, which took place soon after five o'clock on Thursday morning.

William Woodward, Mr. Creuze's servant, also described the state of the deceased after the occurrence of the accident. On his being taken to his house, close by the Bromsgrove station, a surgeon was sent for, but in the meantime witness tore up some shirts and bound up his legs and arms in linseed oil. He attended him constantly till his death. He appeared to be more composed about four o'clock on Thursday morning, when witness left him for a few minutes on his left side, but feeling anxious about him, he returned almost immediately and found him lying on his back, the breath just leaving him.

The jury, after consulting for about half an hour, returned a verdict of "Accidental Death," with a deodand of 25/-, upon the engine.

Mr. Creuze was a young gentleman of high attainments and great promise in his profession. He was educated at Cambridge, and was generally beloved and respected by the officers and servants of the company.

His brother, who holds a situation under government at Woolwich dockyard, arrived after the inquest on Friday evening.

## NOTES:-

In 1836 Capt. William S Moorsom was engaged by the BGR to survey a route for the railway and came up with a plan that would be the shortest and cheapest upon which to build the line. Moorsom envisaged using banking engines to assist trains up the Lickey Incline. English manufacturers, including George Stephenson and Edward Bury had declined to supply engines for use on the Lickey. George Stephenson had suggested a static engine and winching system be employed on the bank.

Moorsom had traveled in America and knew the capability of the locomotives built by Norris of Philadelphia. BGR Ultimately bought numerous Norris engines. 5 of these were "Class A Extra" locomotives designed for use as Banking Engines. In May "Philadelphia" was delivered. In June 1841 "Boston" arrived in Bromsgrove. A third "William Gwynne" came in December 1841. The final 2, "New York" and "Niagra" came in 1842.

In August 1841 there was a trial on the bank involving "Philadelphia" and an engine built by Edward Bury. The Bury was quicker up the bank under a light load. However, the Norris engine successfully pulled a heavy load up the bank, while the Bury engine ground to a halt part way up.

The inquest evidence of Edward Shaw Carter mentions Archibald, Torrey, foreman of Messrs. Nasmyth and Co. Nasmyth, Gaskell and Company of Salford. supplied 6 Engines Similar to the Norris 4-2-0s for use on the Birmingham Gloucester line. Torrey was present on the night of the explosion to enquire into the cause of the earlier incident with one of the Norris engines. A plug had burst out of a flushing tube in the boiler scalding Engineer, John Donohue. Flushing tubes had been installed to facilitate removal of mud that built up in the boilers due to the dirty water supply at Bromsgrove. Creuze had made complaints about conditions at Bromsgrove including problems with the water supply.

The inquest reveals that Creuze had got off the "Boston" at Vigo Bridge shortly after 11pm on Wednesday evening. It was around 3 hours before he returned to board the engine accompanied by Mr & Mrs Walworth and Archibald, Torrey. Creuze and Torrey had been at the Malt Shovel Inn (which stood about 100 yards along Hewell Lane from Vigo bridge) in a meeting with John Donahue about an earlier explosion.

After the inquest some tried to suggest an assumed "state of intoxication" as the cause of the explosion. However, it seems illogical to think that intoxication had any influence. Creuze, Torrey and the Walworths had only been aboard for minutes when the explosion occurred.

**The 1841 Census Shows a number of people Living at Bromsgrove Station including some of the witnesses named in the Inquest Report:**

Thomas Parkin, Engineer age 30 + wife and 4 Children  
John Barton, Engineer age 25 + wife and 1 child  
William Simpson, Engineer age 25  
John Fawcett, Engine Smith age 20  
Thomas Juke, Bookkeeper age 20  
William Haydon, Engineer age 20  
Hannah Rutherford (Widow of Joseph Rutherford) +2 children  
David Pearson, Engineer age 25  
Joseph White, Smith age 28 + wife and 3 children  
John White, Engine Driver age 25  
James White, Labourer age 65  
John Timmings, Grocer age 25  
Thomas Horton, Engine Fitter age 25  
John White, Engine Fitter age 30 + plus wife  
William Bromage, tailor age 20  
Thomas Richards, CopperSmith age 25 and 1 child  
Henry Brewin, Brazier age 20  
Joseph Bentley, Engineer age 25 + wife and 1 child  
Phillip Bentley, engineer age 15  
Thomas Sanders Station Inspector age 25 +wife  
Israel York, Engineer age 30 + wife  
Richard Walworth, Engine fitter age 30 + wife  
Henry Flyde age 10  
John Donahue, Engineer age 30

Aston Fields was not the bustling Village we see today. The Station environs were, at that time, a small industrial enclave within the mainly rural parish of Stoke Prior. A county map published in 1840 shows no railway, no station and no streets of houses around Aston fields. The railway and station do appear on the county map of 1845. The 1841 census record shows no street names or house numbers, just the names of isolated properties. Some of them familiar today - Lock House, Gambolds Farm, Finch End, Lower Gambolds, The Dragoon, Newton Farm and Fringe Green Farm.