

**From the Steam Plough Times
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The Exploding Engine

by Pat Freeman

Ages ago as a boy, I lived in the lovely little village of Linton, in Cambridgeshire. My father drove a steam roller for the local council and on Saturdays I helped out on a farm when threshing was taking place, so I was involved with steam engines at an early age. However, it was not until I joined the Steam Plough Club that I discovered that an horrific explosion involving a steam plough engine took place at Linton about twenty years before I went to live there.

At last year's Roxton Rally, I was talking to Mr Chapman of Barnwell as he was unloading his BB ploughing engine 15344 from a low-loader. He gave me a copy of an article from a local Cambridgeshire paper which referred in some detail to the explosion and I give a precis as follows.

The engine involved was a Fowler single cylinder 3616 built in May 1879 and originally owned by the Eastchurch Steam Plough Company of Kent. Pamplins bought them in 1897 from the Oxfordshire Steam Plough Co. On the day of the accident, June 16th 1904, it was one of a pair involved in cultivation work at Catley Park Farm, belonging to Mr Henry Green. At about six o'clock in the evening, the engine blew up with a noise that was heard throughout the Linton area.

The driver Robert Morrison was struck in the chest but was not seriously injured. However his mate Frederick Myott was hit on the head and died on the spot. Some reports say Myott was the water-cart driver. The following day some 3,000 sightseers jammed the narrow lanes leading to the site of the accident.

At the inquest it became clear that the method of inspecting the boilers and the setting of safety valves was very much a hit and miss affair. The Coroner, Mr A.J,Lyon, returned a verdict of accidental death with a rider that Mr Pamplin should obtain expert advice when overhauling engines in the future.

Surprisingly enough, the engine was rebuilt the following year with a new boiler from Fowlers. Photographs of this unfortunate event appear in both Harold Bonnett's book, "Saga of the Steam Plough" and John Crawley's book, "Ploughing Engines in Focus".

Note by John Billard

This is a well-documented story but bears repeating if only for the Pat Freeman connection.