

## OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

### **October 10 1859 Worcester**

**CAUTION TO BOATMEN** An elderly man named **Wakeman**, a boatman, has been fined £6 and costs by the Magistrates at Worcester, for wilfully causing an obstruction in the lock of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, in that city, in August last, by keeping his boat therein for upwards of four hours. A dispute, it appeared, had arisen between Wakeman and the keeper of the lock, when, to gratify his revenge, he kept the boat in the lock for the time mentioned, having stayed the egress of the water by letting down the paddle. Mr Hodgkinson, of Birmingham, clerk to the company, with a solicitor, attended before the Magistrates this week, and instituted a prosecution against the defendant. The bye laws of the company state that if any boatman keep his boat or barge more than five minutes unnecessarily within the lock, he shall forfeit 20s, and a further penalty of £5 for each hour beyond the first ten minutes he shall so remain. The Bench animadverted severely on the conduct of Wakeman, and as Mr Hodgkinson wished to press the case, they ordered the defendant to pay a fine and costs as above. The practice is said to be a very common one between Birmingham and Worcester.

### **March 26 1860 Wolverhampton**

**A QUESTION OF INTEREST TO WORKMEN AND MASTERS** At the Public Office, on Saturday last, a boatman named **Benjamin Brookes** summoned his employer, Mr John Gittoes, coal merchant, Gold's Green, for 10s 6d, wages alleged to be due. Mr G H Hinchcliffe was retained for the defendant. A rather lengthened hearing satisfied the Magistrates that the only point for their decision was as to a sum of 3s which had been stopped out of complainant's wages under the following circumstances. Brookes had been sent some distance to a customer with a boat load of coke. During the voyage, complainant had idly and carelessly trodden down the surface of the coke to save himself trouble. When, therefore, Mr Gittoes went to receive the sum for this boatload of coke, the cargo had been so much damaged by the conduct of the boatman, that the consignees compelled Mr Gittoes to take off a sum of 30s for the damage done to the article. In such a state of things the Bench thought that Mr Gittoes, who had withheld the 3s referred to towards the cost of the coke damages, could not do so. His remedy must be at the County Court. It was quite clear that the wages of Brookes had been duly paid, and all he got today was the sum just mentioned.

### **April 15 1881**

#### **Birmingham Police Court**

**LEAVING CANAL BOATS** For leaving two boats adrift and unattended in the canal of the Birmingham Canal Navigation Company with intent to evade payment of toll, **William Wilson** (24), boatman, of Cross Street, Smethwick, was fined 40s and costs, or a month in default.

### **June 26 1882**

**WASTING CANAL WATER AT PERRY BARR** At West Bromwich Police Court, on Saturday, **John Compton** (22), boatman was summoned for opening the locks at Perry Barr, thereby wasting a quantity of water, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company. Mr Godlee, of Birmingham, appeared to prosecute. It appeared that on the day in question defendant, through his negligence, wasted sufficient to fill three locks. It was stated that defendant had been fined previously for a similar offence. He was fined 32s 6d, including costs, or in default fourteen days hard labour.

### **May 26 1883**

#### **Aston Police Court**

**THROWING REFUSE INTO THE CANAL** **John Mortiboy**, a boatman in the employ of the Birmingham Corporation, was summoned for throwing night-soil into the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal. Mr Godlee, who appeared for the canal company, said great complaints had been made of the conduct of boatmen in this respect. The Corporation authorities did all they could to prevent the offence complained of, and several men had been dismissed for it. Defendant admitted throwing a portion of his cargo into the canal, and had no explanation to give. Mr Hill said it was a serious offence. The defendant was paid for doing his work, and he should have done it properly instead of creating a great nuisance in the canal. The defendant was fined 40s and costs.

### **May 13 1884**

#### **Walsall**

**WASTING THE CANAL COMPANY'S WATER** At the Police Court, yesterday, **Joseph Green**, boatman, was summoned for having wasted water, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company. **Samuel Whitehouse**, lock-keeper at the Walsall Locks, deposed that on the 4<sup>th</sup> inst he saw the defendant take a boat into one of the locks, but instead of drawing the boat into the lock he opened the bottom paddle before he closed the top one, the consequence of which was that the boat was sucked into the lock, and a great quantity of water was wasted. Witness opened the second lock himself, and complained to the defendant, who promised that he would not offend again, but on reaching the third lock he wasted the water again in the same manner as before, and on being spoken to became insolent, and said he would pass through the locks in that way as often as he liked. The Bench imposed a fine of 20s and costs, or fourteen days imprisonment.