

**March 10 1859 Birmingham Police Court** STEALING A WATCH A young woman named Ann Stewart, a prostitute, living in Granville Street, was brought up, charged by **David Pearson**, a boatman, living in Oldbury, with stealing his watch. It appeared that on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February last, the complainant went to a beer house in Broad Street, where he saw the prisoner, they had some beer, and he subsequently went home with her. The complainant shortly afterwards went to bed, and awoke about twelve o'clock hearing a noise in the room; he felt for his watch, but found that it was gone, he immediately dressed himself and left the house. He did not see his watch again till Monday last, when he found that it was in the possession of a man named Harris, who was in the public house in Broad Street, where the complainant had first met the prisoner. Asking how he got possession of it, he replied that he had given the prisoner 3s 6d for a pawn ticket, the watch being in pledge. The prisoner, who pleaded not guilty, was committed to the Sessions

**September 22 1863** THE SUPPOSED MURDER AT WILLENHALL - THE INQUEST YESTERDAY Yesterday afternoon, an inquest was held at the Black Lion, Willenhall, before Mr T M Phillips, on the body of a woman, aged twenty three, the wife of a locksmith named Benjamin Wright, who was found dead in the canal. Wright had recently been away at Burton, and the deceased, having received a letter from a brother-in-law at Linton, instructing her to meet her husband at the Walsall Railway Station last Wednesday night, went there, and was seen at the railway station as late as nine in the evening. Nothing more was seen of her until Saturday, when her body was found in the canal near to the blast furnaces of Messrs Fletcher, Solly and Co. The circumstances which led to the finding of the body were unusual. In consequence, suspicion at one time existed that she had met with her death by foul means. There does not, however, seem to be any reason to conclude that the woman's death was otherwise than accidental. The circumstance which excited suspicion was the fact that a pawn ticket, which deceased was known to have had in her possession, and which related to a portion of her husband's clothing, was presented at the pawnbrokers, in Willenhall. The pawnbroker knew that the woman was missing, and detained the man. He, however, accounted for his possession of the ticket by saying that he had bought it and five others from a boatman who had found them floating in a purse on the canal. The man from whom he bought the tickets was found, and his statement as to the finding was confirmed by his wife and child. The spot where the body was found is where boats are unloaded at Messrs Solly's furnaces. A person walking towards Willenhall from Walsall along this route would have the glare of the furnaces behind him, and the flickering light and dense smoke of coke heaps in front, and would be very likely, if walking near to the brink of the canal, to stumble and fall. Such, it is surmised, was the manner in which the deceased came by her death, for when found she had no marks of violence upon her. But her husband maintains that she must have been thrown into the canal. But he is unable to give any further reason for coming to this conclusion than that, because she had often gone this way before, she knew the road well. The first witness called was Ann Evans, with whom deceased and her husband had lodged about two years. She deposed that they lived comfortably together. Deceased's husband was a locksmith. Last Sunday week he went to Derbyshire, where his mother lived. On the following Wednesday the deceased left home and had not since returned. The husband came back on the succeeding Thursday, and afterwards engaged with the deceased's father and others in trying to find out where his wife was. At one time trade was bad, and the deceased pawned some of her husband's clothes. Before leaving home on Wednesday, deceased said that she had received a letter telling her to meet her husband, who would arrive at Walsall either at twenty minutes past four, or twenty minutes past seven. On Saturday, deceased's body was brought to her (witness's) house, but she was unable to detect any bruises or marks of violence upon it. She had on the same clothes as when she went away, excepting her shawl, and the body had no shawl upon it. The corpse was not disfigured when it was brought to her house, but it was now discoloured. Witness did not think that the deceased meditated suicide. Deceased knew the road well, and used to pass the spot where she was found several times a week. Thomas Rowley deposed that he was walking along the canal, watching the men who were dragging it when, in the water, he saw the deceased's body rise to the surface of the canal. It came up after a loaded boat had passed over it. The bonnet was hanging down at the back of her neck, with the strings tied under the chin. - **Moses Wells**, a boatman, of Stratford on Avon, deposed that on Thursday morning, at six o'clock, he started with his boat from the top of Wednesfield lock. His wife, and a child aged twelve, were with him. He went with his boat to Mr Rose's, of Moxley. In the pound, between the two locks at Messrs Solly's, he found a portmonnaie floating on the surface of the water. There was no money in it – only a plain brass finger ring, and six pawn tickets. The purse was nearly all to pieces, and he had destroyed it; but he took the pawn tickets, and sold them on the towing path at Wolverhampton, to a boatman, named **Henry Thomas**, who gave half a crown for the tickets. He did not then know that the deceased was missing - James Jones, a labourer at Fletcher and Solly's, said that he lived near the spot where the body was found. On the preceding Saturday, a man named Rowley had said that a woman's head had appeared above the water. A boat-hook was procured, the canal was probed, and the body brought out. It was stiff, cold and dead, and was clothed in a lilac dress, much soiled by mud. The bonnet was hanging from the back of the head. The cheeks were very purple, probably from the effects of the water; but beyond this nothing unusual was apparent, and no bruises could be discerned. - Mr Taylor, assistant surgeon to Mr Harthill, was present, and was asked by the Coroner from what cause the woman had died? Mr Taylor: From drowning. - Coroner: Why do you come to that conclusion? From her appearance. - Coroner: Were there any marks of violence? - Mr Taylor: Not the slightest mark. - The Coroner said that as yet there was no satisfactory evidence. It was not positively certain that the woman had been drowned. Because she was found in the water was no reason which could lead to a satisfactory conclusion respecting the cause of death. He thought that the inquest should be adjourned for a *post mortem* examination.