

CHESHIRE OBSERVER

1 August 5 1854

Runcorn

POLICE COURT 28TH ULT **John Hatton**, a boatman, of Winsford, was charged with being drunk and incapable of taking care of himself on the previous night, and was locked up for safety. Discharged with a reprimand.

2 October 7 1854

Runcorn

ROBBERY BY A SERVANT Mary Clarke, lately in the service of Mrs Greener, beerhouse keeper, Alcock Street, was, on Wednesday, charged before Philip Whiteway Esq, at the Town Hall, with stealing a small box, containing 15s 6d, the property of her late mistress. The prisoner, on Monday evening, left Mrs Greener's service, and the property in question was missed shortly afterwards. Early on Tuesday morning she was met by Davis, assistant constable, in the company of **John Bradshaw**, a boatman. She had then only 3 1/2d in her possession, but she subsequently acknowledged that she had taken the box and money, and said she had given the money to a young man. She was committed to trial for the theft, and Bradshaw, the boatman, was committed as a participator in the offence, but was allowed to find bail for his appearance.

3 April 14 1855

Cheshire Assizes

BURGLARY **William Gaskell**, boatman, aged 24, for feloniously breaking into the dwelling house of Thomas Hughes, clerk, on the night of the 8th August last, and stealing therefrom a silver salver and various other articles. Sentenced to 4 years penal servitude.

FORGERY **Joseph Bennett**, boatman, was indicted for forging an acceptance upon a bill of exchange, with intent to defraud Mr Henry Smith, of Stockport, on the 29th of August last; also with uttering it with the same intent. Mr Horatio Lloyd appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Macintyre defended the prisoner.

The prosecutor deposed that he was a brewer and wine merchant residing at Stockport. He received from the prisoner the bill of exchange at his place. It purported to be accepted by Meadows and Bibby, and it was for £25. The bill became due after the prisoner was apprehended.

Mr Richard Edwin Bibby deposed that he was a lime burner at Manchester, in partnership with Mr Meadows. The acceptance of the bill (put in) was not in his handwriting, nor in that of Mr Meadows. Never gave any authority to any one to accept the bill. Mr Meadows has not been fit to attend to business for two years.

Mr Macintyre having cross-examined the witness for some time, observed that after what had been stated by Mr Bibby, he would not feel justified in defending the case further, as he had been instructed to set up that the prisoner had received permission to draw the bill.

The learned Judge then summed up, and the prisoner having been found guilty by the Jury, he was sentenced to four years penal servitude.

4 August 11 1855

Cheshire Assizes

HIGHWAY ROBBERY **John Machin**, a boatman, was indicted for robbing Peter Verga of eight shillings, on the highway on the 27th June last.

Mr Macintyre prosecuted and Mr Morgan Lloyd appeared for the prisoner.

On the 27th June last, the prosecutor was returning home from Burslem to Congleton, and on arriving at a place called Kidsgrove about nine o'clock, he overtook the prisoner, who enquired if he was going to Congleton, he replied that he was, and he gave the prisoner a lift. They pulled up at a public house called the "Bleeding Wolf", when the prisoner had two glasses of ale which Mr Verga paid for. They then drove on as far as old Moreton-hall, a distance of two or three miles, when the prisoner said to the prosecutor that he thought he would return, and asked the prosecutor to give him some money. He gave him sixpence. The prisoner replied that it was not enough, and the prosecutor declined giving him any more, and ordered him out of his cart; a quarrel ensued, and the prisoner pulled the prosecutor out of his cart and held him on the ground by the throat. He then put his hand into the prosecutor's right hand pocket and took out the money it contained. The prisoner

then left him. On reaching Congleton, the prosecutor gave information of the robbery to the police, and on the following Saturday saw the prisoner in custody at Congleton, when the prisoner asked him "what he was going to do at him" and "could he make it up as he was a poor lad and his parents were poor". On behalf of the prisoner the learned Counsel contended that the prosecutor was so drunk that it was utterly impossible that he could know what he was about. The prisoner was found guilty, and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment with hard labour.

5 September 1 1855 Birkenhead

POLICE COURT – WEDNESDAY One of those amphibious beings, a boatman, named **William Ecclestone**, formerly employed on the Rock Ferry boats, was charged with having stolen a pair of pistols from a yacht belonging to Mr Hethrington at Rock Ferry. On the day previous the prisoner had been engaged in cleaning the complainant's yacht, and upon the yachtsman going on board in the morning the fire-arms were missed. Information was given to the police, and the lost articles were traced to a beerhouse kept by a man named Smith, in Limekiln Lane, the prisoner having sold them to the landlord for 18s. He was soon after arrested. Mr Hethrington sen said he did not wish to press the charge. The prisoner was remanded to Saturday.

6 September 1 1855

NANTWICH PETTY SESSIONS **Edward Evans**, boatman, was convicted in the penalty of £5, including costs, for violently assaulting William Webb, captain of one of the Shropshire Union Canal Company's boats on the 28th last; in default, to be committed for twelve months to Chester Castle.

7 November 10 1855

CREWE PETTY SESSIONS **Thomas Price**, boatman, in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, was summoned by John Jones, wharfinger, Audlem, for wasting the water in the canal wharf at the above place, was committed in the penalty of 20s, including costs, and in default one month to Chester Castle.

8 November 10 1855

SANDBACH POLICE COURT **John Mason** alias Hall Green Jack, was charged by Police Constable Walker with stealing a pair of trowsers and one pair of boots from a boat on the Trent and Mersey Canal, the property of **George Green**. It appears that the robbery took place in June last, when the prisoner absconded, and was not heard of until last Friday night, when he was apprehended in a boat at Lawton. The prisoner was further charged with stealing a pair of boots, the same night, from **Robert Corden**, another boatman. The prisoner, who had been previously convicted for highway robbery, was committed for trial on both charges.

9 December 8 1855

DISCOVERY OF THE BODY OF THE LATE MR F O TAYLOR All apprehensions as to the fate of this highly-esteemed gentleman, who was the manager of the North and South Wales Bank in this city, were set at rest on Tuesday morning last, by the discovery of his body in the Shropshire Union Canal, nearly opposite Messrs Huxley's brewery, by a boatman named **William Jackson**. The gold watch and ring which he wore, also two keys and a small sum of money were found in his pocket. Information was immediately conveyed to John Hostage Esq, the city coroner, who summoned a highly respectable jury, who met at the Exchange at 4 o'clock the same afternoon, and after viewing the body, adjourned until yesterday morning.

10 January 5 1856

CHESTER POLICE COURT **Thomas Price**, a boatman, was charged with being drunk and disorderly about half past one o'clock on Sunday morning, being found by a policeman knocking at the door of the Coach and Horses. Fined 5s and 4s 6d costs.

11 May 3 1856

THE LATE ATTEMPTED MURDER AT RUNCORN It will be in the recollection of our readers that a fortnight since we gave an account of the attempted murder and suicide at Runcorn. The party charged with the rash act is a boatman, named **Richard Francis**; the person on whom the attempt was made is his wife. The prisoner has been several times brought up and remanded, his wife not being sufficiently recovered to give evidence. He was finally brought up yesterday week, before Philip Whiteway, Esq, charged with attempting to murder his wife, Mary Francis, by cutting her throat. The woman was brought to the Town Hall in a car, and she appeared to be in a very weak state from loss of blood. Upon the case being proceeded with, Mary Francis stated that on the day in question she was in Runcorn with the prisoner, who is a boatman. She went with him to a public house to have a glass of ale, where they met with the captain of his boats and his wife. Prisoner wanted them to have a second glass, which they refused. The Captain said to make it equal, his wife should pay for a noggin of rum, which was called for and drunk, after which the prisoner and witness quarrelled; she believed it was because he would not pay for another gill. The prisoner struck her, and the captain's wife pulled him off. All of them went to their boats; the captain and his wife went first into the boat; the prisoner then began to abuse witness, and the captain told him if he did not be quiet, he would force him from the boat, but would not turn witness and child out until they got to Manchester, where witness lives. The Captain went away, and left the prisoner in charge of the boats. The prisoner then jumped off the captain's boat on to the boat where witness was. She was afraid of him sticking her. She said, "If you do not alter I will not live with you; if you do not be quiet, I will call for help". He said, "Mary, forgive me, and I will quarrel no more". She replied, "I have forgiven you before". He said, "Well, but I won't any more, and give me a kiss". He then drew her to him to give her a kiss. She did not feel the knife go across her throat; nor did she know it was cut until she felt his finger in the wound, and saw blood streaming down; she then screamed out when she saw people coming towards the boat. She got on the top of the boat, when prisoner caught her by the clothes to pull her down, and on looking down, she saw prisoner cutting his own throat. A person named Cox came up at the time to her assistance. She got three of her fingers cut in trying to save herself; the knife produced is the one with which prisoner cut her throat, she saw it in his hand and knew it well. The captain corroborated the prisoner's statement with regard to the quarrelling between the prisoner and his wife. Mr Cooper, surgeon, said he was called in to attend the wounded woman; he found her in a very dangerous state; she was in great danger for two or three days; the wounds in her neck were such as might be caused by the knife produced. Police-constable Clayton stated he found a crowd near the Delph Bridge, round the boats. On the top of one boat lay the prisoner with his throat cut and bleeding, on the other side lay his wife, supported by William Cox. Witness took the prisoner into custody. A boy about ten years of age saw the scuffle, and saw the prisoner cut the woman's throat. William Cox stated that he went to the boats, and assisted the woman, and kept the prisoner from again attacking her. Superintendent Black said that he saw what Police-constable Clayton described, and sent for two surgeons, and assisted to remove prisoner to the police office. When there, the prisoner charged his captain with having cut his and his wife's throat. Witness went and brought the captain before the prisoner, when he denied the charge. Witness inspected the captain's clothes, but found no marks of blood on them, and he let him go. Witness produced the knife, covered with blood, which he found on one of the boats. Prisoner denied that it was his property, but his wife declared it to be so, and the one with which he committed the deed. The prisoner was then committed to take his trial at the next assizes at Chester Castle for attempting to murder his wife. The prisoner appeared much distressed, and said he hoped his wife would soon recover.

12 May 24 1856

CHESHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **James Woolley**, 48, boatman, **John Woolley**, 16, boatboy, **James Eaton**, 37, boatman, and Charles Marklaw, were charged with stealing 55 feet of timber, the property of Gilbert Greenhall, Esq, at Walton Superior. James Woolley, 21 days imprisonment; the

other prisoners not guilty.

13 June 7 1856

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS Joseph Hodgkinson and William Hodgson, boatmen, of Elton, were brought up by warrant for assaulting **Ann Sherwin**, and **S Sherwin**, her husband, boatman, also of Elton, on the 30th of May last. From the evidence it appeared that the parties are relatives, and have been for some time on no very friendly terms, on account of some property in dispute between them. Hodgkinson was fined 40s including costs; the case against Hodgson was dismissed.

14 July 12 1856

Runcorn Petty Sessions

ATTEMPT AT MURDER James and Ann Spencer, man and wife, and **Edward their son**, in the employ of Ackers, Whitley and Co., Bickershaw's Colliery, Lancashire, were charged with attempting to murder **Samuel Bayles**, a boatman of Runcorn, at Preston Brook. The complainant deposed that about two o'clock the previous day he was at Preston Brook with his boat, which was loaded with iron, and in going through Norton Bridge he met with the prisoners' boat which was loaded with coals, his rope was across the canal, and the prisoners wishing to get before him went on and came in contact with the rope; the female prisoner called out for the axe, which her son Edward brought and she cut the line in two, when Edward was going to cut it again, and the prosecutor cried out "do not cut the rope", and prosecutor jumped on board the prisoners' boat for the purposes of preventing him doing so, when the prisoner Ann up with the mop, and made a blow at prosecutor which he warded off with his arm, and the mop fell into the canal, at the same time he received a blow which knocked him down, when the elder prisoners came and kicked him and struck him in a most violent manner; the younger prisoner then ran from the tiller and kicked him in the face with his clogs, after which the two elder prisoners came and laid hold of prosecutor and threw him into the canal; prosecutor clung to the side of the boat, when they commenced kicking him and broke one of his fingers when he was compelled to relinquish his hold, and if unable to swim must ultimately have drowned, as the prisoners went off and left him. Witnesses were called to prove the case, and they were committed for trial at the next Chester assizes.

15 August 9 1856

Cheshire Summer Assizes

ATTEMPTING TO DROWN James Spencer, Ann Spencer and Edward Spencer, father, mother and son, were indicted for assaulting a boatman named **Samuel Bealis**, at Norton, on the 7th July last. Mr Brandt appeared for the prosecution and Mr Macintyre for the defence. The following are briefly the facts of the case which appeared in the *Observer* at the time. On the day in question, the prosecutor's boat came into collision with that of the prisoners' on the canal at Preston Brook. The female prisoner cut the rope attached to the prosecutor's boat, and on his jumping aboard their boat to secure the end of his own rope, the prisoners severally assaulted him, kicking him about the head, and knocking him into the canal, whence with difficulty he was rescued. After a number of witnesses had been called for the prosecution, the Judge advised that a verdict of guilty of a common assault should be entered, and considering that the prisoners had been already some time in custody, ordered the prisoners to enter into their own recognisances to come up for judgement when called upon.

ATTEMPTED MURDER AT RUNCORN Richard Francis, boatman, was charged with cutting the throat of Mary Ann Francis, his wife, with intent to murder, at Runcorn, on the 17th of April last. Mr Brandt appeared for the prosecution and the prisoner was undefended. Mary Ann Francis was the first witness called, who said that on the 17th of April, she was with their boats at the locks at Runcorn, and with the prisoner. The captain and his wife went to a public house, where a row ensued in consequence of witness refusing to pay for more drink for him, they afterwards went on board the boat, (witness and prisoner) where the prisoner recommenced the quarrel; the captain **Phineas Veere**, was on the bank. Thinking the prisoner was going to strike her, she jumped down

into the cabin; he followed and she told him that she would not live with him any longer if he continued to lead that life; he asked her to forgive him, but she said that she would not stop with him; he then put his arms on her shoulders and asked her to give him a kiss, at the same time she felt him pressing a knife into her throat with his right hand; she then put the fingers of his left hand into the wound and tore it open; causing the blood to flow in streams; she then got away from him, and while trying to get on deck, he tried to pull her back by the clothes; she succeeded however in getting on deck, and screamed for assistance; she looked down into the cabin and there saw the prisoner in the act of cutting his throat, with the same knife; he came up from the cabin and she got up onto the adjoining boat, where he was prevented following her by a man named Cox, who came up at the time; she then became insensible. The witness stated that the prisoner was not quite drunk, though far from sober; and that while at the inn the captain had told the prisoner he should discharge him if he did not treat the witness better; while on the boat she was backing away from him when he took hold of her as if to kiss her. **Phineas Veere** said he was captain of the two boats Alice and Margaret, and on the day of the attempted murder, he was with them in Stelfox's public house, and there he saw the prisoner abuse his wife; he afterwards sat them on board their boat, and heard them quarrelling; they were neither drunk nor sober. Henry Humphries, a boy, stated that while standing on the bank, he saw the prisoner draw something across her throat on the deck of the boat. Cox, the witness previously spoken of, said he heard the scream of murder, and went to the boats, and saw Mrs Francis coming up from the cabin, with her throat cut. Mr Cooper, surgeon, of Runcorn, said he attended the woman; the wound extended from one side of the neck to the other, seven inches long and half an inch in depth, the haemorrhage being very considerable, and her life being seriously in danger; he stitched up the wound, and had her removed to a lodging house. William Blake, policeman, deposed to finding the knife at the entrance to the cabin, covered with blood; the wound on the prisoner's throat was a very bad one. The prisoner in defence said that they had seven or eight half pints of rum and raspberry brandy at the public house, and that he was so drunk afterwards that he did not know what he was doing. Verdict guilty of the attempt to murder. Sentence of death recorded.

16 September 13 1856 Chester Police Court

A DROP TOO MUCH **Michael Stout**, boatman, was charged with assaulting his wife on Sunday morning last. The defendant stated that he had been up the river on Saturday night last, and he was treated with some liquors by the party he was rowing. Fined 5s.

17 November 15 1856 Chester Police Court

ROBBING GOOD NATURE **Joseph Fletcher**, boatman, was charged with stealing 5s. The complainant, also a boatman, stated that he was in a public house, yesterday, when the prisoner came in and said "he was very hard up"; he (complainant) gave him a glass of ale, and paid for a bed for him. He fell asleep, and when he awoke found that he had been robbed of 5s; the prisoner had disappeared, but shortly afterwards returned. The prisoner told him when he first saw him that he had not a halfpenny, but when he returned, had bought a loaf and a quarter of bacon. The Magistrates ordered him to be imprisoned for 7 days.

18 January 24 1857

RUNCORN COUNTY COURT The following persons were committed to prison for non compliance with the orders of the court. **Edward Cooke**, boatman.

19 January 31 1857

CHESTER POLICE COURT **Daniel Evans**, a boatman, was charged with being drunk and disorderly last night. Discharged.

20 February 14 1857

RUNCORN COUNTY COURT The following persons were ordered to be committed to gaol for

non-compliance with the orders of the Court: **William Brown**, waterman, 10 days; **George Ellis**, boatman, 7 days.

21 February 14 1857

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS **Thomas Lydiate**, labourer, **John Percivall**, labourer, **Samuel Lydiate**, boatman, and **William Reynolds**, labourer, all of Runcorn, were each fined 5s and costs for being drunk in the public streets.

22 February 28 1857

SANDBACH **William Hodson**, boatman, from Elton, was summoned by **Richard Glass**, canal officer, for having, on the 26th January last, damaged the gates at the Boat-lane bottom lock, on the Trent and Mersey Canal. Fined 20s and costs.

23 June 13 1857

Chester Police Court

A PILFERING BOATMAN **William Jones**, boatman, was sent to gaol for 21 days for stealing from the Canal Wharf, six pieces of wood the property of Mr John Jones, the Newgate.

24 June 20 1857

INQUEST On Monday last, at the House of Industry, an inquest was held on the body of **Harriet Boez**, aged 11 years, daughter of a boatman. The child, it appears, had been sickly from its birth, and had never been able to walk without assistance. Mr Brittain, surgeon, examined the body, and gave it as his opinion that she had died from disease of the heart. Verdict, "Died by the visitation of God from natural causes".

25 July 4 1857

CHESHIRE GENERAL QUARTER SESSIONS **David Sergeant alias Matthews, alias Prosser**, 25, boatman, stealing a watch and chain, the property of Joseph Radley, at Birkenhead; also stealing a pair of trousers and a razor, the property of Michael McGragh, at Birkenhead. 3 months imprisonment on each count.

26 July 4 1857

Chester Police Court

A DISHONEST SERVANT **Thomas Knight**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of rope, the property of **John Evans**, captain of a boat. The prisoner pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to three calendar months hard labour.

27 July 18 1857

Chester Quarter Sessions

STEALING WEARING APPAREL **Edmund Price**, 21, boatman, was indicted for stealing on the 28th April last, various articles of wearing apparel, the property of Catherine Davies. Mr Morgan Lloyd prosecuted, the prisoner was not defended.

In January last the prosecutrix on her way to Wales from Leamington left two boxes in Chester, in charge of Edward Davies of Francis Street. About the end of April she sent directions to him to forward her boxes, and on the 21st of that month he took them, properly directed, to the offices of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company; they were sent to the wharf the same day, and put on board one of the canal barges, the prisoner assisting in stowing them away; they were seen safe in the boat till eleven o'clock at night; the boat was at the end of Queen Street, and, about two o'clock on the following morning, the master of a boat lying near, was disturbed from his sleep, and on looking out, saw the prisoner leave the boat, in which the boxes were, and carry a bundle to some stables in the neighbourhood; the bottom of one of the boxes was afterwards found to be broken open, and the contents removed; various articles of wearing apparel identified by the prosecutrix were discovered, together with a hat belonging to the prisoner, in a stable, and also in a hay loft, which it was proved he had visited during the night.

The prisoner had been once convicted of felony, and once summarily. He had served two years in

the Grenadier Guards, in which regiment he had obtained a good character, and the Recorder taking this late consideration, sentenced him to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for eight months.

28 July 18 1857

FATAL FIGHT On Saturday afternoon, **Henry Ashton**, a youth 19 years of age, employed as a boatman on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, was killed by **Henry Webster**, another boatman, at Shevington, near Chorley. For some time past a grievance had existed between the men, who were cousins, and on Saturday afternoon they met at Shevington and agreed to settle the difference by a stand up fight. In the third round, Webster struck Ashton a blow in the region of the heart. Ashton fell from the effect of the blow, but rose again, and died immediately. Webster has given himself up to the police authorities.

29 August 22 1857

Chester Police Court

TOO FOND OF A GOOSE **John Crowthers**, a boatman, who said he came from Halifax, was charged with stealing a goose, the property of Mr Jones of Sealand. It appeared that the prisoner was coming from the direction of the Sluice House on Sunday morning, when he on observing a police officer, let a bag fall which he was carrying. A goose was found in the bag. On the prisoner being asked what he had got to say in defence, he said, "It was not found on me". On the prisoner's coat being produced the stains could be plainly seen where the blood had oozed out through the bag; the prisoner then pleaded guilty, and the Magistrates ordered him to be imprisoned for three months with hard labour.

30 September 19 1857

CHESTER POLICE COURT A destitute looking boy came into court, and complained that he had been beaten and deserted by a boatman, **James Dowley**, for whom he had been working. He came from Hanley, and had been with Dowley for four days. Ordered to be sent to the House of Industry.

31 September 19 1857

Runcorn

DEATH FROM EXCESSIVE DRINKING On Monday last, an inquest was held at the house of Mr Thomas Jones, New Inn, on the body of **Joseph Blood**, a boatman aged 20 years. **John Millington**, boatman, residing in Runcorn, deposed that on Friday night he was drinking with the deceased at the Bridgwater Arms, Mrs Rigby's. Deceased had four glasses of rum; witness had four glasses of gin. They had had two glasses of rum each in the same house an hour before. Deceased went out and fell against the rails. Witness lifted him up, and took him into the house again; after he had placed him on a seat, he fell off and lay on the floor asleep. He never spoke after he fell against the rails. He got him up, but he would not walk; with the assistance of his father, he carried him on his back to the boat, and placed him on the sideboard, with his head on the bed, in a comfortable position, where he could breathe freely, and loosened his clothes, and then left him. Peter Millington, father of the last witness, confirmed his statement. **Robert Harrop**, master of the ship Julia, belonging to Messrs Simpson and Potter, deposed that deceased, who is a hand on board his boat, was with him in the boat about six o'clock; he was then sober. He gave him five shillings. Witness went on board the boat at seven o'clock on Saturday morning; he found deceased lying on the sideboard with his head on the bed. He had been sick and smelled strongly of rum. He was quite dead. Verdict "Died suddenly from excessive drinking".

32 April 3 1858

Chester Spring Assizes

PERJURY James Rowland, 52, farmer, was charged with committing perjury before J W Harden Esq, judge of the County Court at Nantwich.

Mr Morgan Lloyd appeared for the prosecution, and Mr V Williams defended.

The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

During the trial of the above prisoner the Grand Jury came in with a number of bills, and on presenting a true bill in the case of **David Seddon alias Abel Jones**, charged with stealing a mare,

the foreman said that one witness in the case named **John Goff**, a boatman, was so tipsy that he could not give evidence. His lordship ordered the man to be brought into court. Two policemen shortly after brought him into court, and his lordship asked him what reason he had to give why he should not be committed to gaol for contempt of court? The man was too drunk to understand the question or reply, and his lordship ordered him to be imprisoned for a week for contempt of court. HORSE STEALING David Seddon was indicted for ateating a mare, the property of David Bullmer, on the 23rd February last; also stealing a horse collar and other articles, the property of John Gough, on the sme day.

Mr MacIntyre conducted the prosecution; the prisoner was undefended.

William Avers, innkeeper, of Union Street, Ancoats, Manchester, recollected the prisoner coming to the house and asking him if he would buy a horse; the prisoner brought a horse and some harness to the house next day; afterwards heard that the horse was stolen; and it was subsequently claimed and given to Bullmer; witness bought the collar for 1s 6d.

David Bullmer, a boatman, residing at (Lees?), Lancashire, said he had a horse safe in the stable on the 23rd February, and the next day missed it; on the 25th found it at Mr Avers's; a collar and other harness belonging to a boatman named Gough were also taken from the stable.

John Gough, who on the previous day had been imprisoned for being drunk in court, said he was a boatman living at Runcorn and owned the harness left in Bullmer's stable.

The prisoner, who examined the witnesses at some length, addressed the jury, and contended that his identity with the person who sold the horse was not proved.

The jury at once found the prisoner guilty, and a previous conviction for horse stealing was proved against him.

Sentenced to four years penal servitude.

33 June 12 1858

Chester Police Court

AN INJURED MAN **Walter Davies**, a boatman was charged by a lankey man, named Henry Baker, with stealing a quantity of gooseberries; Baker said, "I live in Garden Lane; I took Davies and his wife as a lodger for £3 10s a year. They went away for three weeks and came back again, knocked at the door, and asked for the keys; I said "Bill" to another lodger, have you got the keys, and they were given them, I determined not to speak to them again. A short time after I went in my garden, when I saw Davies pulling the gooseberries in a most disgraceful manner, and when I interfered he made use of disgraceful language, it was the language that vexed me". Davies in his defence said it was stated in an agreement between complainant and him that he should have some gooseberries, and he handed the agreement to the Bench, upon perusal, it was found that the defendant had the right of the run of his garden, and the Bench told the complainant that he could not charge defendant with stealing the gooseberries. Baker exclaimed, "But Davies has broken the agreement by not making my bed, and washing my clothes. Defendant's wife said she could never find the clothes to wash. An altercation ensued between complainant and defendant, which was brought to a close by the Bench dismissing the case.

34 July 3 1858

CHESTER QUARTER SESSIONS **Thomas Cook**, 23, boatman, stealing 12 pigeons, the property of Albert Dean, and his two brothers, at Altrincham. 21 days.

35 August 7 1858

Chester Summer Assizes

ASSAULT AND ROBBERY AT ODD RODE Thomas Povey, a labourer, aged 56, was charged with assaulting **George Bentley**, a boatman, and stealing from him a knife, at Odd Rode, on the 8th of May last. Mr Latham prosecuted. Verdict, Guilty. Sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment and hard labour.

36 August 21 1858

MISCELLANEOUS An inquest was held at Chesterfield on Monday, on the body of **Herbert**

Holt, boatman, who was killed by a cartload of ironstone falling on him, whilst in a boat, on Saturday last. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

37 August 28 1858

THE DEAD Whimsey Inn: **Henry Marshall**, boatman, from Worcester, leaving wife and family. Injuries to body and legs.

38 September 25 1858

SUDDEN DEATH AT NANTWICH On the 14th instant an inquest was held by Henry Churton Esq, coroner, on the body of **Thomas Smith**, a boatman from Stratford-on-Avon, who at the time of his decease, was located at the Basin End, Nantwich. It appeared that the unfortunate man was taken seriously ill about six o'clock on the evening of the 12th instant, and in about two hours was a corpse. The jury having heard the evidence, were of opinion that the deceased died from natural causes, and returned a verdict accordingly.

39 October 16 1858

MISCELLANEOUS A boatman named **Abrahams** and his wife have been committed for trial, on a charge of having feloniously killed the son of a farmer named Leather, of Hindley near Wigan. The father of the deceased had exchanged a horse with Abrahams, but the male prisoner repented the bargain, and endeavoured to recover by violence his former animal. Joseph Leather resisted this attempt, a scuffle ensued, and the prisoners beat the young man so cruelly that death ensued.

40 October 30 1858

THE COUNTY SESSIONS AT CHESTER **John Turner**, 33, boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of coals, the property of George Bebbington, at Tiverton, on the 8th October 1858. Mr Beaven appeared on behalf of the prosecution. On the evening of the 8th of October the prisoner was seen by the prosecutor's wife loitering about her husband's coal yard, and on going to him he said he was fishing coal up out of the canal. Mrs Bebbington then made the prisoner empty a bag which he had on his shoulder, when she found the coal was perfectly dry. Sentenced to two months imprisonment.

Richard Meredith, 41, boatman, and **Elizabeth Meredith**, 40, charged with stealing a watch, chain and key, the property of John William Towers, at Whitby, on the 11th August 1858. Acquitted.

41 November 5 1859

SERIOUS ACCIDENT ON THE MERSEY A deplorable loss of life occurred in the Mersey, on Tuesday, by the swamping of a "flat", which was moored alongside the *Hungarian* steamer, for the purpose of putting coals on board. The "flat" had 12 or 14 men for her crew, and in consequence of the heavy sea, she lurched, broke the rope which fastened her to the *Hungarian*, and then filled with water. The whole of the crew were submerged, and six of them were rescued by the heroism of a boatman named **Joseph White**. It is feared the remainder of the number are drowned.

42 December 10 1859

KNUTSFORD ADJOURNED SESSIONS **George Houghton**, 48, boatman, stealing a truss of hay, of the Right Hon G W Frederick Earl of Carlisle, and other trustees of the late Duke of Bridgewater, at Lymm. 3 months.

43 December 17 1859

Cheshire Winter Assizes

CUTTING AND WOUNDING **David Hatton**, 23, boatman, Stockton Heath, Warrington, was indicted for wounding Reves Slater, a peace (*police?*) officer, in the execution of his duty, with intent to do bodily harm, at Appleton on the 11th September last.

44 March 17 1860

CHILD MURDER AT HYDE On Thursday week as a boatman, named **John Mellow**, was pushing a boat off from the Hyde Wharf the boathook brought to the surface the body of a male child about three months old. An inquest was held on Saturday when Mr Payne, surgeon, deposed that on removing the scalp he found a lacerated wound on the back part of the head. There was a good deal of blood under the scalp and on the surface of the brain. His opinion was that death had been caused by a blow, which appeared to have been given with some blunt instrument. The blow was of sufficient force to cause death, without immersion in the water. The Jury returned a verdict of "Wilful murder" against some person or persons at present unknown.

45 March 31 1860

DEATHS HOOLEY – On the 26th inst, at Newton by Middlewich, Sarah, wife of **James Hooley**, boatman.

46 April 7 1860

Cheshire Assizes

Richard Parry, 30, boatman, Chester, was convicted of stealing an iron chain, the property of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, at Bunbury, on the 8th of February last. Mr Trafford appeared for the prosecution. It appeared that a boat was left about two miles above the Bunbury locks, and on the night in question the chain was stolen. It was afterwards found on board a boat of which the prisoner was captain. He had been seen near the prosecutor's boat about the time when the chain was stolen, and it was shown that he was the person who had taken it. He was found guilty, and as he had been convicted of felony before, he was sentenced to nine months imprisonment with hard labour.

47 June 9 1860

City Police Court

A DISHONEST MILITIAMAN John Lightfoot, a boatman from Winsford, was charged with stealing a pair of boots from the house of Mr Richard Jones, the Liverpool Arms, in Northgate Street. Prisoner had been up with the militia and had been billeted there. On Sunday morning last, about half past one, prisoner came knocking at the door and begging for admittance, when he was let in by the landlady. Mr Jones had placed the boots under the bed where the prisoner slept, and had missed them about ten o'clock the following morning. Paul Powell, a farmer from Capenhurst, stated that he was sleeping at the Liverpool Arms on Saturday night last in the same room as the prisoner, he saw him get up about 8 o'clock yesterday morning; he dressed himself and left the room; he came back again, put his hand under the bed, took the boots with him under his left arm and then went away; the boots produced appeared to be the same as the prisoner took from under the bed. By the prisoner: did you not pitch the boots into my bed, and say as you have lost your boots I will give you these? - This the witness positively denied, but asserted that prisoner was the man who took the boots. William Jones, a coal dealer, residing in Crook Street, stated that prisoner came to his house yesterday morning, accompanied by a person named Speakman, who offered the boots to him for 4s, as he was hard up and on the road, witness paid him the 4s asked and took the boots. The usual caution having been given to the prisoner as to how he would be tried, said he should like to be tried at once and pleaded guilty to the charge. Ordered two months imprisonment with hard labour. As a sum of money was found upon the prisoner amounting to 3s 10d, it was decided to give the amount up to Mr Jones in order to cover his loss.

48 June 23 1860

City Police Court

ROBBERY FROM A CANAL BOAT In this case **Joseph Hanslow**, a boatman belonging to the Shropshire Union Canal Company, and who had been in their employ upwards of 26 years, was charged with unlawfully disposing of sundry clamps and connecting irons, used to fasten together plates of sheet iron. Mr Jackson, an agent of the company, stated that the prisoner is captain of the Silver Key boat, belonging to the company, and that the banks and connecting irons were not the perquisites of the captain, and he had no right to sell them. Sergeant Sutton when he apprehended

the prisoner said, that he told him it was usual that all bands that were not received by the parties who had purchased the plates were usually allowed to the captain of the vessel in which they had been forwarded; that under that impression he had sold what had been left in the boat, to Mr **Samuel Harrison**, marine store dealer, and at that time he did not think he was doing any wrong to the company. Admitted to bail until next Saturday, for further enquiries into the matter.

49 August 11 1860

Chester Summer Assizes

ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON Mary Ann Tomlinson and Thomas Roberts were charged with stealing £2 and a purse from William Bradbury at Macclesfield on the 5th July last.

William Bradbury, the prosecutor, said that he was a boatman, and that on the day when he was robbed he was at Brokes's public house, both prisoners were there at the time. He pulled his purse out to lend a shilling to a friend. Some of the people got up and went into the skittle ground. He (prisoner) went out too, and the female prisoner went also, and sat close by him, and he remembered her putting her hand in his pocket. He had not the presence of mind to see whether she had robbed him or not. He had two sovereigns and some coppers in his purse at the time. In a moment or two after she had gone he found that he had been robbed.

Gamaliel Brooks was a son of the keeper of the house in which the robbery had taken place. He saw the prisoners in the same room with the prosecutor, and he was afterwards told that a robbery had taken place, and he followed the prisoners. He saw the woman throw a bit of paper away, and he picked it up, but found nothing in it. Still following them, he saw the man throw the purse away, and he then shouted after them. When he got up to them he charged them with having robbed a man, and took them back to the house. He saw gold in the male prisoner's hand; so he also saw him try to put a sovereign down his back, but he put it in his mouth. He did not see him put it out again. When he got them to the tap room the people told him to turn the money up. He said first that he had not got it, and then he threw one sovereign down, and put the other in his mouth, and some one cried out that he was swallowing it. Both prisoners had been previously convicted – the female as a disorderly prostitute, and on other charges four times. The male prisoner is said to be a “bully” of hers, and had several times been before the magistrates for being drunk and disorderly. They were both found guilty, and were each sentenced to a years imprisonment, with hard labour.

50 August 11 1860

FORGERY **William Cole** (53), rigger, Birkenhead, was charged with forging an order for three deal planks, with intent to defraud William Henry Haynes, at Birkenhead, on the 24th ult. From the evidence it appeared that the prisoner is a boatman, having a boat of his own, and he earns his bread by conveying store &c to and fro between the docks and vessels in the river, and by such other employment as may be given to him. Up to lately he was been a steady man, but for some weeks before committing this crime with which he was charged he had been continually drinking. He had been engaged helping to get the ship *Rosaline* ready for sea, and a short time before the vessel sailed he saw deal planks lying about, and spoke to someone about them, so as to ensure their being got on board. From the Sunday to the Friday he was with the *Rosaline* in the river, she being then starting on her voyage. On coming back he found that the planks had been left behind, and he therefore wrote a pretended order for them, which order he presented to the dock watchman, who had charge of the planks. Having got the planks, he in company with another man went and sold them to one John Heaps, and the three went together to a place where part of the purchase money was spent in drink. On being asked why sentence should not be given according to law, he pleaded that if he was away his boat would go to ruin and he would thus lose the means of supporting his family. He also said it was through drink that he had done it. The overlooker of the ship from which the planks were stolen, and a ship storekeeper, who had known him for five or six years, gave him a good character for honesty and steadiness. His lordship addressed the prisoner very feelingly, saying that instead of sentencing him to penal servitude for life, which he might do, he would only order him to be imprisoned for a week.

51 November 24 1860

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS Offences against the Trent and Mersey Canal Acts – **John Aspell**, boatman, was fined 20s, including costs, for permitting his boat to lie in a part of the canal where boats are not permitted to lie, at Dutton, on the 12th inst. **William Bradshaw and Josiah Thomason**, for obstructing the passage of Barnton Tunnel, on the 20th Oct, were fined 1s and 11s 6d costs each.

52 February 2 1861 City Police Court

SUSPECTED Samuel Evans, a boatman, was brought up on suspicion of having stolen a bag. PC21 had met him on the banks of the canal, and noticing that he looked rather bulky, searched him, and found the bag. As he gave three different stories about how it came into his possession, the PC took him into custody. Remanded to today.

53 March 2 1861 City Police Court

DRUNK AND DISORDERLY Edward Griffiths, boatman, of Neston, was charged with being drunk and disorderly, and was ordered to pay 2s 6d to the poor box.

54 May 11 1861 City Police Court

IMPORTANT TO FISHERMEN, AS TO THE RIGHT OF FISHING IN KING'S POOL Wm Lloyd, boatman, **Joseph Catherall**, boatman, Duke Street, and Thomas Gerrard, tinsmith, Foregate Street, were summoned under the 7th and 8th Geo 4th, that they, on the 22nd April, between the hours of eight o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening, unlawfully and wilfully attempted to take a fish in a certain water (the Pool) in the said city and borough without having the right of fishing therein, the right being vested in one Ralph Moulton, of the said city and borough, fish dealer.

Mr Tatlock appeared for Mr Moulton, and Mr Bretherton, of Birkenhead, for the defendants.

Mr Tatlock stated the facts of the case. Mr Moulton is the lessee of the salmon cage, and pays £50 a year rent to Mr John Topham for it. The defendants are in the habit of going to the causeway with a rod and line to fish in the pool, and if they were permitted to do this, all the people of Chester would be entitled to follow their example. The defendants had been repeatedly cautioned to desist from fishing at this spot, but still continued to do so. The offence complained of was committed on the 22nd April last, when Joseph Dobson, the watcher employed to look after the cage, saw defendant Lloyd, about seven o'clock, fly fishing in the pool. He went and warned him off, on seeing him pull out several salmon fry, and told him he had no right there, as it was private property. Lloyd, however, refused to leave, and said he would fish there whenever he liked. In the case of Gerrard, he should not press for a conviction, as he went away from the causeway when he was told. But in the case of the other two men it was quite a different matter as they almost made a living in taking people upon the causeway for fishing. He then called

Mr Ralph Moulton, fruiterer, &c, of this city, who said – I rent the pool between the salmon cage and the bridge.

Mr Bretherton – Have you that in writing?

Mr Moulton – No I have not.

Mr Bretherton – Then I object to your going any further upon that point. The agreement must be in writing, a verbal one will not do.

Mr Tatlock did not think there was any such law as that laid down by Mr Bretherton. He had simply to prove that Mr Moulton had a right to the pool as a private fishery.

Mr Bretherton – The Act of Parliament only deposes the right to those in whom it is invested.

Mr Tatlock did not consider it made any difference whether it was occupied by Mr Topham or Mr Moulton.

Major French – I know very well that in Ireland the Duke of Devonshire has a private fishery, which is let out to a tenant, and no one dare go there to fish.

Mr Bretherton contended that until a legal right was shown to the magistrates they could not enforce

a penalty for infringing a right which was not invested.

Major French – It is notorious that this is a private fishery. We make him open his cage at a certain time of the year to let the fish go through, and he does not close it until we allow him to do so.

Mr Bretherton – Before you can charge the defendants with trespassing upon the property of Mr Moulton, we must know that it is his property.

Major French – You want to drive it into the Court of Chancery. We know that it is a private grant to Mr Topham and his family, and it is let by him to Mr Moulton.

Mr Bretherton said there must be legal ownership, and not a mere assumption. He protested against such remarks from the bench.

Mr Tatlock remarked that it was simply a title between Mr Moulton and Mr Topham, but that there was no doubt that the defendants had no right whatever to fish in the pool.

After some further discussion the examination of Mr Moulton was continued. He said – I take the salmon cage between the pool and the causeway from Mr Topham, for which I pay £60 a year. I have the exclusive right to the fishery inside the pool, and what comes into it.

Mr Bretherton objected to this, as the plaintiff had no writing, and he had not paid any rent.

Mr Moulton said the rent is not yet due. I am tenant from year to year.

Mr Bretherton still contended that a right of fishing must be in writing.

Mr Tatlock asked to have the information in the summonses changed and vested in the right of Mr R Topham.

Major French said the summonses could not be altered; they must be conducted as they were before them.

The Magistrates requested that the examination might continue, and meanwhile they would take the objection made into their consideration.

Cross-examined by Mr Bretherton – I have taken by word of mouth a certain right of fishing. The boundary of that right is inside the large causeway, running up to the mill bridge. I have no plan; Mr Topham has one of his right, which extends up to the bridge. I do not know where the bridge begins or ends. I do not repair the causeway, as it does not belong to me. I claim the fish that comes into the pool. I took it on the 6th of January, but I do not know when my rent is due.

Thomas Bennett proved having seen the defendants fishing in the pool, but not on the day in question. He had cautioned them from doing so, as it was private property.

James Dobson, fisherman, said he was employed by Mr Moulton to watch the salmon cage and fishery. He was doing so on the 22nd April last, between six and seven o'clock in the evening. He saw Lloyd fly fishing on the causeway into the pool on that evening, but did not see him catch any fish. He told Lloyd to go away once or twice, as it was private property, and that he had no right there. He (Lloyds) said he would fish there as long as he liked, in spite of him or anyone else.

55 September 7 1861

Chester News

SHOCKINGLY SUDDEN DEATH Last Tuesday afternoon, about five o'clock, a boatman named **John Cholmondeley**, was standing with his wife by the side of the locks near the canal basin, when all of a sudden, without previous intimation of any sort, he fell down and died. He was about the middle of life, but though married was childless.

56 September 14 1861

INQUEST – ACCIDENTALLY DROWNED On Monday last an inquest was held at the Red Lion Inn, Betchton, near Sandbach, on the body of a boy, six years of age, named **William Theobald**. It appears that his father is a boatman, residing at Odd Rode, and that last Saturday the boy went with an uncle who is also a boatman. They got as far as Betchton with the boat, when the uncle left the lad in charge of the horse whilst he went forward to open a lock. He was not away more than a few minutes, but when he returned he missed the lad. Suspecting him to have fallen into the water, he searched for him, and found him, but the boy was dead. A verdict of accidentally drowned was returned.

57 March 8 1862**Chester News**

CORONER'S INQUESTS An inquest was held on Saturday last, at the House of Industry, before J Tatlock, Esq, on view of the body of Ann Roberts, wife of John Roberts, aged 37 years, who had been found dead in the canal on the previous day. The deceased's husband is a cripple, and lives in the Boughton Workhouse, and she had of late been leading a very irregular life, being very fond of drink. Her sister, with whom she formerly resided, saw her on Thursday night, about 8 o'clock, standing by Clark's vaults, in Foregate Street, when she appeared to be in drink. She was seen in Eastgate Street about one o'clock on Saturday morning, by P C Evans, when she was quite tipsy. Nothing more was known of her from that time until she was found at the canal in the Northgate, about 20 minutes to 12 on Saturday morning. The lock-keeper, **Samuel Bailey**, lifted up the paddle of the middle lock at that time, when he found he could not get the paddle sufficiently low enough to let a boat pass through. He then ran the middle lock off, when he found the deceased lying with her legs in one paddle hole, and her body bent up. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned". The deceased was subject to fits, and had often threatened to drown herself. On Tuesday, J Tatlock, Esq, held an inquest at the same place on the body of a man unknown, who had been found dead in the Northgate canal on Sunday. Samuel Bailey, who resides at the Northgate lock, stated that on Sunday morning a boatman came to him and said that in coming up the lock he thought he had seen the hand and back of the head of a child in the lock. He went to the lock and let the water out of the middle lock, when he saw the deceased lying across the bottom of the lock on his back. He, with the assistance of Detective Snell, got the deceased out, when he observed his trousers unbuttoned, and the left hand pocket turned outside. His coat and waistcoat were undone, and his neckerchief appeared loose. The deceased was then removed to the Workhouse. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

58 November 22 1862**Birkenhead**

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING On Saturday last, Mr James Littledale, of Chester Street, Birkenhead, had a very narrow escape from drowning. He was coming from Liverpool to his home, and getting to the steam boat just as she was leaving the stage, made a jump and fell into the river. After falling, it was some time before he made his appearance at the surface of the water, but ultimately he did so, and a boatman named **John Bennett** jumped into the water and supported him until both were picked up by a boat. Littledale (who is the steward of a ship) was in a very exhausted state, and did not rally until after he was put into a bath at the receiving-house at the Prince's Dock.

59 December 6 1862

KNUTSFORD ADJOURNED SESSIONS **Matthew Jeffreys alias Tiffey alias Smith**, boatman, stealing coal and cabbages, at Bunbury, on 5th Nov. Fourteen days hard labour.

60 December 27 1862

CHESTER POLICE COURT **Mr Edward Roberts**, boatman, charged John Cheers with using threatening language towards him, at one o'clock on Tuesday morning. Complainant was passing Seller-street Bridge, and saw the prisoner and two other men break a window. P C Rowe deposed to hearing a cry of "Police!" and seeing three men running along Seller Street. He caught the prisoner but the others made their escape. Upon the prisoner paying for the damage done to the window he was discharged.

61 May 30 1863

CHESTER CITY POLICE COURT **James Evans**, boatman, Welshpool, was charged by P C Rowe with tying his boat up at the end of Queen Street. Complainant stated on Wednesday morning he went down by the end of Queen Street, and saw the defendant's boat (which smelt very badly) lying in the canal. It remained there during the whole of that night. Defendant – I did not think it did any harm. Dr Jones – You come under a penalty of 40s. He have often heard that boats

had been tied up to the annoyance of the inhabitants, and put them to great inconvenience. I hope you will not come again. Defendant – I will not. Fined 10s and costs.

62 July 18 1863 Sandbach

THE POLICE COURT – MONDAY A boatman, named **John Heathcote**, was charged with having committed an assault upon Eliza Ann Green, at Betchton, and stolen a slipper and bonnet, the property of the prosecutrix. On the night of the 12th inst the prosecutrix was passing over Hassal Bridge, when she was accosted by the prisoner, who took hold of her and threw her down. She shouted murder, and the prisoner after struggling with her, got up, and took away her bonnet and slipper. The prosecutrix informed P C Turnock of what had taken place, and the prisoner was apprehended. The prisoner was remanded.

63 August 1 1863

CHESTER CITY POLICE COURT William Bradshaw, Peter O'Brien, Henry Cohen, and Mary Cohen, were brought up on remand charged with stealing a silver watch, the property of a boatman named **Wooden**, from the Groves. The female parties name is Kelly, a convicted thief, but she represented herself when arrested as the wife of Cohen. Upon information from Liverpool, it was found out that she goes by the name of Mary Williams, and that she is not married to Cohen, who is a photographic artist, at all, but his wife was outside the court. As no case was proved against the prisoners, they were dismissed with a caution.

64 August 15 1863

KNUTSFORD ADJOURNED QUARTER SESSIONS **William Kent**, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing 15s belonging to John Barton, at Sutton, on the 22nd July. Mr Brandt appeared for the prosecution. Prisoner and prosecutor were journeying together on a carrier's cart, when the latter offered to "stand Sam" at the next inn (appropriately called the Fool's Nook). Whilst going along the road he pulled out his purse and the contents fell on the ground. The prisoner volunteered his assistance in picking up the coins, and when all the money had been gathered up, the prosecutor found himself minus six half crowns. Prisoner scampered off, but was chased. He succeeded in getting out of sight, and when next his pursuers came in sight of him he was leisurely walking towards them as though nothing had happened. He was at once seized and searched, but no money was found upon him, having, it was supposed, succeeded in secreting it in the canal bank during the brief time he was unobserved. When questioned about the money he refused to tell where it was, but said, that when he saw Barton "slattering" half crowns in the high road, he thought he might as well have a few. He was sentenced to one month, hard labour.

65 September 12 1863 Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS 5TH SEPTEMBER 1863 (Before R Wilbraham Esq) **John Smith**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of potatoes, on the 3rd inst, at Church Lawton, the property of Samuel Massey. From the evidence it appeared that prisoner was seen by some boys coming out of prosecutor's garden. Information was at once given to P C Dale, who apprehended the prisoner with the potatoes in his possession. Prisoner pleaded guilty and was remanded until the 12th inst, it being Congleton Petty Sessions.

John Sims, of Tunstall, **Absolom Reeves**, of Congleton and **Thomas Newton**, of Preston, all boatmen, were charged with sleeping at Lime Kilns, at Church Lawton, the night previous. Sims was committed to Knutsford for one month, and Reeves and Newton, who were old offenders, to two months hard labour.

66 October 17 1863

CHESTER CITY POLICE COURT A man named Harry Wylde was fined 5s and 7s costs for assaulting **Edward Parry**, a boatman.

67 March 12 1864

SHOCKING CRUELTY BY PARENTS At the Stafford Assizes, on Tuesday, **John Stokes**, a boatman, and Sarah Stokes, his wife, were indicted for feloniously cutting and wounding their son Samuel Stokes, a child eleven years of age. The prisoners live at West Bromwich. On the 21st of January a police inspector went into their house and, in an upper room, found the child stripped to his shirt, with his wrists tied fast to his sides by cords so tight that the hands and feet were swollen and bleeding. The child's body was literally covered with wounds and bruises, many recent and some old. The principal wound was upon the head of the child. This, the little fellow said, was occasioned by his mother who, a few days before, beat him on the head with a frying pan. This formed the first count against the woman, but there was a second, in which she was charged with tying him up by the hands naked and beating him; and afterwards with kicking him downstairs. The man was shown to have employed the boy on board his boat; and because he could not, for want of strength, throw ashore a heavy boat hook sufficiently near his father to enable him to catch it, he (the father) cried out with an oath that "if he were only near enough he would job it into him", and then threw at him a brick, which striking him on the leg inflicted a serious wound. Both the prisoners were found guilty on the counts on which they were respectively charged. The woman was sentenced to twelve months, and her husband to eight months imprisonment.

68 April 23 1864

Chester County Police Court

ASSAULT **Charles Smallwood**, boatman, charged **John Smith**, boatman, with assaulting him on the 14th April last. Mr Cartwright appeared on complainant's behalf. The facts of the case appeared to be these: - On the 14th April last the complainant, defendant and a number of other boatmen met together at a public house at Whitby locks, and stopped drinking together till closing time. It appeared that while in the public house something took place which was calculated to create a disturbance between Smallwood and Smith. In order to avoid any altercation with the defendant, complainant retired from his company upon leaving the house, and was walking towards the canal side when Smith went after him, struck him, knocked him down, and when on the ground kicked him. He then endeavoured to choke him and succeeded in throwing him down the embankment on the canal side. Complainant bore evident marks of ill-treatment his face being covered with cuts and bruises. Mr P Ewart said that similar complaints had frequently come before their worships, and he thought that some heavy punishment ought to be inflicted in order to check such disturbances. Fined 30s and costs; in default one calendar months imprisonment.

69 July 16 1864

Chester City Police Court

ALLEGED ATTEMPT TO DROWN A MAN IN THE RIVER A respectably dressed man named Joseph Crawford was brought up under the following circumstances. The prisoner, it appeared, on Sunday evening, while in a drunken state, struck a boatman named **Henry Huxley**, in the Groves, while standing in his boat, and knocked him into the river, where he would have been drowned had it not been for assistance rendered to him by other parties. On the case being called, Detective Bray said the prosecutor was not forthcoming. He had been in the police court that morning, but had been fetched away by the prisoner's brother. Major French expressed his surprise that such an occurrence had taken place. Mr Superintendent Hill said he should be able to produce sufficient evidence to warrant a remand, and he would now call George Gibbons. This witness, who is employed in the drapery establishment of Messrs Brown Brothers of Eastgate Row, said that on Sunday evening, about half past seven, he had been visiting a friend in the Groves, and as he was coming away he saw the prisoner drunk, walking up and down the Groves. The prisoner got into a boat, and being very intoxicated tumbled into the water up to his middle. He got out and went towards the prosecutor, who was in another boat, and jumped into his boat and struck Huxley (the prosecutor) a violent blow on the face with his left hand, and then pushed him into the water. Prosecutor could not swim an inch, and was very near drowning. Witness and another man got an oar and told him to seize it, and by that means the prosecutor, who was in a very exhausted state, was pulled out and conveyed insensible to the Deva Hotel. Witness observed that the prosecutor's

head was cut severely. The prisoner on being asked if he had any questions to ask the witness said he would like to enquire whether someone did not push him (prisoner) into the water first. Witness: I never saw anyone. Prisoner was about making a statement to the effect that prosecutor did not wish to press the case, when he was stopped by Major French, who told him that that was not the proper time to make his defence. He would have an opportunity by and by, and as regarded the non-appearance of prosecutor, who it appeared had been kept back by prosecutor's(sic) brother, fortunately at the commencement of the case they could do without him. But it was clear that he had been tampered with. Thos Wilson, also an assistant at Messrs Brown Bros, drapers, was next examined. He said he was at the opposite side of the river to the Groves on Sunday evening. About half past seven o'clock his attention was drawn to a cry on the other side of the water. He saw the prisoner get into the boat where the boatman was, and deliberately strike him with his fist (he could not say on what part of his body), and then the boatman was pushed into the water. The man appeared to be drowning, when he was rescued by two young men, who held out an oar for him to seize. The prisoner declined to ask this witness any questions. Detective Bray was next examined, and said, on Sunday evening, while in the Groves, he saw the prisoner take hold of the man Huxley and throw him into the water out of the boat. Witness immediately asked some persons near to get an oar, which was handed to the drowning man, who was then got out and moved to the Deva Hotel, in an insensible state. While the man was in the water he saw the prisoner give the prosecutor a push on the back of the head with an oar. Witness immediately apprehended the prisoner, and locked him up and afterwards went back to the Deva Hotel to see after the prosecutor. By the Prisoner: Did you not see me give the man the oar for the purpose of saving him when he was in the water? Witness: No; you pushed him with it on the back of the head. Dr Charles Bantock said: About half past eight on Sunday evening, he was summoned to the Deva Hotel, as a man was said to be dying from the effects of having been in the river. He went there, and was shown the prosecutor Huxley, who was lying in a semi-conscious state on a bed in a top room of the hotel. He tried to arouse him by shouting to him several times, but it had no effect. He then moved his hand, which was at the back of his head, backwards and forwards, and he afterwards came round. He found that the man's forehead was swollen, and a small bruise at the right side of the back of the head. In reply to Major French, the witness said it was more than an hour after the occurrence when he saw the prosecutor. Mr Superintendent Hill said that was all the evidence he could produce that day, and he should wish for a remand till Wednesday. The prisoner asked to be allowed to go out on bail. Major French said that he for one should object to bail being allowed, the prisoner's brother having tried to defeat the ends of justice by keeping the prosecutor away. Bail was then declined, and the prisoner remanded until Wednesday> Later in the day the brother of the prisoner appeared to tender bail, but was severely reprimanded by Major French for having kept back the prosecutor. The applicant replied that he had been wanted on business. Major French: You had no right to tamper with the witness, and you deserve to be committed for contempt of court. Your brother has to thank you that he has not had bail allowed him. I am not sure that he will not have to take his trial upon this charge. Prisoner's brother: I am very sorry for it. Applicant then left the court.

70 July 16 1864

THE ALLEGED ATTEMPT TO DROWN A MAN IN THE DEE UNEXPECTED TERMINATION OF CASE

Joseph Crawford was brought up at the Chester City Police Court on Wednesday, on remand, on the charge of attempting to drown **Henry Huxley**. Messrs Cartwright and Churton appeared for the defence.

Mr Cartwright, at the opening of the case, asked what was the charge?

Mr Hill said that of knocking a man down and pushing him into the river.

Mr Cartwright – Attempted murder?

Mr Hill – Certainly.

The witness Gibbons, having had his deposition read over, was cross-examined by Mr Cartwright

and Mr Churton, but no material additional evidence was elicited. Wilson's deposition was also read over to him, but neither of the attorneys asked any questions.

Bray was next cross-examined, and stated that he called out, "throw him an oar", when Huxley was in the water. He saw Huxley immediately after he was taken out. He saw two or three oars thrown to him. Prisoner did not tell him when in custody that he threw an oar to save Huxley. He said nothing about an oar. He was quite sure that the prisoner did not. He apprehended Crawford there and then. He was standing under the Suspension Bridge when he first saw the scuffle.

Thomas Jones, a smith, was next examined. He said he saw Huxley and Crawford in a boat on Sunday night. Crawford struck Huxley, and they had a bit of a scuffle, and Huxley was put in the water up to his neck. He was pushed out of the boat. The prisoner got an oar, put it between Huxley's shoulders and pressed him towards the shore with it. He did not strike him – merely pushed him. Witness got him out and assisted him to the Deva Hotel.

Mr Cartwright: Tell the magistrates what state he was in when he came out of the water.

Witness: He was running wet. [Laughter] He was very bad. He complained of his head.

Mr Cartwright: Tell the magistrates what state he was in when pulled out of the water.

Witness: (Snappishly) He was wet. [Renewed laughter] He rolled about the floor of the bank till we got him up in our arms to the Deva Hotel.

Mr Cartwright: Did you carry him upstairs?

Witness: No I didn't. He walked up.

The Chairman: Did he walk from the bank into the hotel?

Witness: He could walk without any assistance. We just held him by the arm, that was all.

The Clerk (Mr Horden): Did he walk into the Deva Hotel?

Witness: He walked in just with me and another. He didn't require much assistance at all.

The Chairman: Could he if left to himself?

Witness: Yes, he could.

The Clerk: Did he do so?

Witness: We just held him by the arm. I don't know any more. I pulled off his clothes. He had a glass of brandy administered to him, but he threw it back. Then he went upstairs to bed. After he had a dry shirt on he walked upstairs by himself.

The Clerk: Did you see him walk upstairs?

Witness: I saw him go right along the landing. I did not go upstairs after him. I consider he could have walked into the hotel without any assistance whatever. I saw him with another young gentleman on the boat. He jumped out of the boat. Huxley was splashing him. He jumped out and ran along the bank right down into the water because he could not stop himself. He was fresh in drink. Woodin had refused to let him have a boat, and I heard that his brother James had refused him.

Henry Huxley, the plaintiff, was then called. He said he was a boatman at Saltney, and plied for George Woodins and James Crawford. Nothing particular occurred, except that he and Crawford had a "wrestle", and he happened to get out of the boat in the scuffle. He fell out. Prisoner put the oar on his shoulder and pushed him towards the shore. He never had any disagreement with Crawford, and was nothing the worse for his ducking.

Henry Sharman, a cab driver, residing in Watergate Street, said he saw Crawford going into the boat where Huxley was from the bank, strike him over the head, lift him up and "chuck" him into the water. He saw him pulled out, he was brought ashore and lay insensible on the bank.

Mr Potts: How long was it?

Witness: I dare say for a minute or a minute and a half after being out of the water. Huxley was drawn to shore with the oar. He saw him take hold of it when it was put to him.

John Brookes, of Boarding School Yard, Bridge Street saw Crawford strike Huxley in the boat with his fist, he got hold of him and said, "You ----, I'll drown you". He threw him over, and then he took an oar and pushed him betwixt the shoulders. He got Huxley's head under his arm and rolled him over into the water. Huxley was lying down in the boat after he was struck. When the scuffle commenced Huxley was sitting upon the seat of the boat.

William Cawley, cooper, residing in Baording School Yard, gave similar evidence to that of the preceding witness, and also stated that Huxley was thrown out towards the bank about three yards, and the boat was about three yards from the bank. Huxley could not have got out without assistance.

Bray was here recalled.

Mr Hill: You tried the depth of the water where this man was thrown in?

Witness: I have.

Mr Hill: What depth is it?

Witness: Thirteen feet.

Huxley recalled.

Mr Churton: What depth was it where you tumbled in?

Witness: I went with one of our sculls, which is about 9 feet 6 inches long, and tried it. It was about 6 feet. At the time, I should say, it was about 6 feet deep.

Mr Hill to Bray: When did you measure it?

Bray: Yesterday morning about four o'clock.

Huxley was here understood to say there was not thirteen feet of water near there. It was about four feet deep now.

Mr Cartwright: You do not prosecute in this matter at all.

Huxley: I don't wish to do it.

Mr Cartwright: Are you willing to be compensated for what has been done?

Huxley: With the greatest pleasure.

Mr Cartwright: You would rather be compensated and not prosecute?

Huxley: Yes, sir.

Mr Cartwright, in his address to the bench said it was clear from the evidence they had just heard that it was impossible to bring the prisoner in guilty of attempted murder. It was plain that the prisoner was not in his right mind at the time of the occurrence. He had been seen in the Groves by many of the witnesses present quite drunk. There was not a doubt that the man went into the boat without the slightest intention of causing the mischief which he did. It appeared from the evidence of one of the witnesses that Huxley had splashed the prisoner as he passed him. Prisoner, mad drunk, jumped from the bank into the water, they wrestled in the boat, and the prosecutor stumbled overboard, and according to the statements of several witnesses as well as the prosecutor himself, the prisoner took up an oar and pushed him towards the shore. The only part of the evidence which he considered looked at all black was the threat prisoner had used, and that was not an uncommon thing for a drunken man to do. Many a man in drink used threats without the slightest intention of carrying them out. Had the prisoner premeditated an attack upon prosecutor's life, the Groves, at that hour, was the last place he would have chosen to carry out his design. Huxley himself could see and hear all that had passed, and it appeared from his statement that prisoner did all in his power to render him assistance. He also stated that he had no desire to prosecute, and would rather the prisoner was discharged. From the light in which he viewed this case, he thought that the only thing which could be done was for prisoner to make Huxley a small present, by way of recompense for the ducking he had caused him.

Mr Churton said he was convinced from what Mr Cartwright had said there was little left for him to do, and that he merely wished to call the attention of the magistrates to the fact that it was impossible to bring the prisoner in guilty of manslaughter. It was done in drink, in the heat of a moment. It was not an accident but an assault, so that it was utterly impossible to bring the prisoner in guilty of anything except an attempt at murder or an assault.

The magistrates adjourned to their retiring room, and returned after a space of ten minutes, when Mr Clemison said the Bench did not consider it a case to be brought before a jury, and it was therefore dismissed.

The decision was reached with clapping and applause in court, to repress which there was no attempt made.

71 July 23 1864

PUBLIC HOUSE ROBBERY AT MIDDLEWICH Three men named Abraham Jackson, William Sant and John Woodbine were charged before James France Esq, on the 12th instant, with having on the evening of Wednesday, the 5th instant, stolen from the person of **James Hooley** two five pound Bank of England notes. It appears that the prosecutor, a boatman, had disposed of his boat, and on the evening in question he, with several others, was drinking at the Junction Inn, in Middlewich. He had in his possession two £5 notes on entering the house, and the next morning the notes were missing. He gave information to the police, and the prisoners were apprehended. It was proved that all the prisoners were drinking with the prosecutor, and the same evening Jackson changed a £5 note, and with the others adjourned to the Talbot public house and had some drink. Mr Burditt (Sandbach) appeared for the prisoners Sant and Woodbine, and argued there was nothing whatever to connect Sant with the offence. Sant was accordingly acquitted, but the other two prisoners were remanded until Thursday. On being brought up again on Thursday, Mr Edleston (Nantwich) appeared for Jackson, and Woodbine was again defended by Mr Burditt. After a long and patient hearing, the magistrate decided that the case was one for a jury, and committed the prisoners to take their trial at the next Adjourned Quarter Sessions at Knutsford. Bail was applied for and accepted in both cases.

72 August 13 1864

Cheshire Midsummer Assizes

BIGAMY – EXTRAORDINARY CASE Hannah Green was indicted for marrying Henry New after she had been married to Thomas Parkes.

Hon Robert Bourke prosecuted; Mr Swetenham defended.

Theophilus Holding, parish clerk at St Peter's, Wolverhampton, proved that on the 30th August 1847, Hannah Green was married to **Thomas Parkes**, both of Bilston; he was a puddler.

John New, boatman, Runcorn said he knew the prisoner and Parkes; they lived together as man and wife. Witness's cousin Henry New and the prisoner lived together as man and wife, he is dead. He knew Parkes 20 years; he never knew him nought but a boatman. The prisoner was never called Hannah Green; he knew her father and mother; their name was Wood. Parkes behaved very badly to her; had heard of his selling her with a halter round her neck.

Rachel Woodward, living in Leigh, in Lancashire, said she knew the prisoner; she saw the prisoner about four years ago at the Presbyterian Chapel in Pennington; she was getting married to Henry New; he died about three and a half years ago; he was very ill when she married him.

Cross-examined – **Thomas Sparks** sold her to Samuel Thompson for a shilling; that was before she married Henry New; I was present when he bought her; the halter was not on when I saw her; the prisoner was agreeable to the sale; it was up in Brummagem; she had been ill used; up in Brummagem they say the sale breaks the marriage.

Re-examined: The sale took place about 9 years ago; the name of the man who sold her might have been Parkes, they called him Sparks.

To the Judge: I am a boatman's wife; I was present when prisoner's husband said he would sell her; she said the man was her husband: Parkes was a boatman.

Henry Watson, inspector of police, Runcorn, produced certificates of the marriage of Hannah Green and Thomas in 1847, and of Henry New and Hannah Parkes in 1859; he took the prisoner into custody; he charged her with marrying Samuel Thomas and Henry New while her husband was alive; she said she did it with his consent. Cornelius New applied to him to take the woman up; I was told he was Henry New's brother.

73 September 3 1864

SINGULAR DEATH An inquest was held at the infirmary, yesterday, touching the death of **George Sconce**, a sawyer and boatman by trade, who had recently been engaged ferrying the boat at Higher Ferry. Deceased was in the custom of coming home every Saturday, and last Saturday he complained of a tightness across his stomach. He went to the ferry as usual on Monday, but returned on Thursday very poorly. On Friday morning, he rose at six o'clock, and his daughter had

impossible, owing to decomposition. The jury returned an open verdict of "Found dead in the waters of the River Dee".

80 August 12 1865

Cheshire Summer Assizes

A BOATMAN KILLED IN A ROW **John Wood**, 57, boatman, Astley, and **Richard Wood**, 16, boatman, were indicted for killing William Lovatt at Anderton on the 28th of June 1865, Mr Morgan Lloyd appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Brandt for the defence.

Sarah Williams, of Barnton, deposed that about nine o'clock on the evening of June 28th she was an Sutehill Bridge in company with a man named Bowyer, the deceased, and others. Bowyer and Lovatt were not sober. She saw a number of boys there, the prisoner Richard Wood being one of them. The boys jeered, and Bowyer went towards them. All the boys except Richard Wood ran away. Some words passed between the two, and Bowyer struck the boy. The quarrel continued, and Bowyer and Lovatt followed the boy. Witness and those with her passed the Stanley Arms, where they met the two prisoners. Some words passed between the prisoners and the deceased. After a time, she heard John Wood ask Bowyer what he had "made the lad that face for". The quarrel continued and blows passed. Richard Wood struck Lovatt more than once. She saw Lovatt fall and Richard Wood kicked him. Another man, not in custody, also kicked him. She heard someone say, "Kick the b---r now you have him down". John Wood had Bowyer on the ground at that time. Witness particularly noticed Richard Wood kicking Lovatt on the head and body. She did not see anyone holding the deceased whilst he was being kicked. Witness screamed, but no one came to her assistance for some time. At length Mr Johnson came and raised Lovatt in a sitting position. He was then dead.

In cross-examination witness said she counted four persons kicking Lovatt and one kicking Bowyer. Miss Barlow said that she heard screams, and running up saw John Wood on the ground holding Lovatt down, and Richard Wood kicking him. She distinctly heard the elder prisoner say to the younger, "give it the b---r, give it him".

Thomas Moreton, surgeon, deposed that he examined the body of Lovatt. He made a *post mortem* examination 16 hours after death. There were three contused wounds on the scalp, one on the forehead, and one on the nose. There were no other marks of violence. The first wound was about an inch and a half in length, and about two and a half inches above the left ear. The direction was from behind forward, and reached to the bone. The second was parallel to the first about an inch long and of equal depth. The third was over the right ear about half an inch in length, but not so deep as the others. Under the two first wounds were patches of clotted blood; and upon the skull cap being removed a quantity of blood escaped. All the blood vessels of the brain were enormously congested. On cutting through the external membrane clotted blood escaped and about a pint of liquid blood. He considered that the cause of death was extravasation of blood on the brain.

Mr Brandt, for the defence, pointed out that the two drunken men had first assaulted the boy, who had then obtained the assistance of his father. Lovatt had attacked the old man and thrown him down, and the boy had gone to his assistance.

Mr John Copley, licensed victualler, was called as a witness to the peaceable character of the elder prisoner, who had been in one employment fifteen years.

The jury found both prisoners guilty, but recommended them to mercy. Both prisoners were sentenced to four calendar months imprisonment with hard labour.

81 September 23 1865

Birkenhead Police Court

STEALING WEDGES A boatman named **John Muir** was charged with having stolen twenty seven dozens of wooden wedges, belonging to Messrs Bowdler, Chaffer and Co, ship builders, Seacombe. Mr Moore defended. On Saturday last an iron barque was launched from the yard of Messrs Bowdler, Chaffer and Co. The wedges were used in launching and were drawn into the river with the vessel. A man named Ashton, who was engaged by Messrs Bowdler, Chaffer and Co to pick up the loose timber, saw the prisoner pick up some wedges which were fastened together by a spun yarn, and put them in his boat. Ashton told him he would get into trouble, and the prisoner

replied that Ashton had better mind his own business, and at once cut the yarn and put the wedges in the boat. William Wheatley, store keeper at the Wallasey Ferries, proved that on Monday last he bought 27 dozen wedges, paying 4 1/2d a dozen for them. The wedges could not be identified. Mr Moore, for the defence, said there was a custom among the boatmen at Seacombe to put off in their boats to pick up all floating timber after ship launches. He did not mean to say that they acted honestly or properly, but in the present case the prisoner had not acted with any felonious intention. On the Thursday previous Messrs Andrews and Co had given the prisoner all the wedges used in the launch of their vessel. Mr Ledward said the fact of a respectable body like the Wallasey Commissioners purchasing the wedges was to him in some degree evidence that there was a custom such as that spoken of. The prisoner had clearly done wrong, and he had his doubts about sending the case to the sessions. He thought, however, that the ends of justice would be met by the prisoner being bound over to appear when called on. It might be well for it to go forth that this kind of thing was very improper, and would lead to punishment if persisted in. Prisoner was then bound over to appear if called on.

82 October 7 1865

Chester City Police Court

DRUNKENNESS **Thomas James**, Chester, boatman and **Wm Cox**, Wolverhampton, boatman, were each fined 5s and costs or 3 days for being drunk and disorderly in the streets.

83 December 2 1865

CHESHIRE WINTER ASSIZES **Moses Gough**, 30, boatman, Runcorn, charged with assaulting Edward Bower, and stealing from his person 30s, at Runcorn, on September 19, was acquitted.

84 April 7 1866

Cheshire Spring Assizes

MANSLAUGHTER AT KNUTSFORD **Richard Hammond**, boatman, was charged with the manslaughter of **John Parker**, at Knutsford Inferior. From the evidence it appeared that the deceased was employed by prisoner as a hand upon his canal boat. In October last, while the boat was proceeding along the Duke of Bridgewater's canal, near Agden Bridge, the deceased called out to a man who was passing in another boat to take him on board. Deceased was lying on the top of the cabin at the time with his face down. He was taken on board and, according to his wish, was left at Preston Workhouse, where he was examined and several bruises were found upon his body. From the medical evidence it appeared that there was no reason to believe that the death was caused by violence, although bruises were found upon the body.

His Lordship said this was another case in which he had to complain of the insufficiency of the evidence, and to regret that the case had not been taken before the magistrates as well as the coroner. The prisoner was discharged.

85 May 19 1866

Chester City Police Court

CHARGE OF STEALING WHEAT **James Done, alias Jones**, boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of wheat from the hold of a flat on which he was employed, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company.

Mr Cartwright appeared for the prosecution, and Mr London defended the prisoner.

Mr Parry, manager for the company, deposed that on Monday evening last he was down at the wharf about seven o'clock in the evening near to the spot where the flat "Emma" was lying, and seeing the tar sheet turned up and the hatches off, hailed the boat to see who was on board. In answer to his call the prisoner made his appearance from the hold and seated himself on the combings running round the top, with his legs hanging below. Witness asked the prisoner what he had been doing down there, it being contrary to the regulations of the company for anyone to go into the hold of a loaded vessel. Prisoner answered that he thought the boat was making water and went down to see. Mr Parry knowing that was not the usual way to ascertain if a boat was making water, went on board, and on passing where the prisoner sat, saw a bag containing grain close behind him. Mr Parry then asked what he was doing with that bag, to which the prisoner replied

that he had not before seen it, and did not know anything about it. Witness asked him how he could get in and out of the hold without seeing it when he must have had to step over it had the bag been placed in that position when he descended, to which prisoner replied that he did not know. Prisoner was then handed over to the watchman, and afterwards given into custody. The value of the wheat was 2s 6d.

Cross-examined by Mr London – There were two or three ways to ascertain whether a vessel was making water easier than by going down into the hold.

James Davies, master of the flat, stated that he met the prisoner about the time stated, when he said he was going on land to clean himself. He appeared to have had some drink, and borrowed sixpence; he was then a short distance from the wharf. The flat Emma was loaded with foreign wheat in bulk. In bulk meant it was loose in the hold, not in sacks. Witness had just left the boat when he met the prisoner, and all was then safe. He left no one on board, the watchman being on the wharf.

Cross-examined by Mr London – It was possible that someone else might have gone on board, and filled a small bag of wheat, similar to the one produced, in ten minutes. He did not think the prisoner would do so, and could give him an excellent character for the time he had been with him. John Jackson, watchman, deposed to being called by Mr Parry to take charge of prisoner. He had passed the flat about ten minutes before, and the hatches were then down, and all was safe. Committed to the sessions, bail being accepted.

86 June 16 1866

MURDEROUS ASSAULT AND ROBBERY NEAR BRADFORD On Monday, at the West Riding Court, at Bradford, **Abraham Varley**, master of the boat Ada, running on the Liverpool and Leeds Canal, and another young man, named **Isaac Furbeck**, a boatman, were charged with having, at an early hour on Saturday morning, made a murderous attack upon one Jonathan Sugden, a weaver, residing at Windhill, near Bradford, and also with stealing a Paisley shawl from Mrs Sugden. Between one and two o'clock on Saturday morning, the prosecutor, who was slightly the worse for liquor, was out smoking in front of his own house, when his son, a young man, came up, hotly pursued by the prisoners, in the direction of his father's house. As the prisoners came across a bridge, the prosecutor asked what was the matter, and the prisoners, without giving any reply, immediately knocked the prosecutor down, and made a violent attack upon him, kicking him upon the head and face until the blood flowed profusely therefrom. Alarmed by his cry, the prosecutor's wife went to his assistance, and Varley took from her a shawl which was on her head and took it away with him to his boat. The prisoner returned to the attack, and Furbeck on the second occasion carried a large iron bar, which was found to be marked with blood, though there was no other evidence of its having been used. The prisoners were committed for trial at the assizes.

87 July 14 1866

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

ROBBERY FROM A CANAL BOAT **William Jones**, 24, boatman, Ellesmere Port, was charged with stealing 30lbs of wheat, value 3s, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, from the flat Emma. Mr Wynne Ffoulkes appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Swetenham for the defence.

Mr H Parry, superintendent of the Shropshire Union Co, stated that the flat Emma was lying at the Tower Wharf, loaded with grain, in bulk. He noticed that the tar sheet had been lifted, and one of the hatches was awry. He hailed the flat, and the prisoner, who was a hand on the flat, came up the hatch on the starboard side. In answer to witness, as to what was his business below, the prisoner said he had been below to see whether the flat was making water. Witness asked why he had not tried the well, to which prisoner said, there was no well, which was true. When asked why he had not tried the pump, prisoner gave an evasive answer. Witness went on board and found a small bag of grain behind the prisoner, and almost touching him. On being questioned, prisoner denied all knowledge of the bag, but he could not have come from the hold without seeing it. The prisoner

had no right to go down into the hold, as it was expressly forbidden by the company's rules. Confirmatory evidence having been given, the jury found the prisoner guilty, but recommended him to mercy. The Recorder, taking this into consideration, sentenced him to two months imprisonment with hard labour.

88 August 18 1866

SATURDAY **William Whitelegge**, 16, boatman, was indicted for indecently assaulting Elizabeth Ellen Higginbotham, at Lachford, on the 18th June. Guilty, three months imprisonment.

89 November 3 1866 Chester City Police Court

ASSAULTING A LITTLE GIRL **John Williams**, a canal boatman, was charged with indecently assaulting a little girl 12 years of age, named Hannah Orme, daughter of a publican in Crane Street. On Friday the complainant was left in charge of the house, her father and mother having gone out. Prisoner was drinking in one of the rooms, but was sober, and he called for drink, with which he was served by complainant. He then committed the offence with which he was charged, and complainant raising an alarm, the prisoner ran away from the house. He was apprehended on the same day, when he said he knew nothing about the affair. Fined £5 and costs, or two months imprisonment.

90 March 23 1867

A FLINT BOATMAN We have this week to record the death of **Humphrey Foulkes**, one of the last of the Flint boatmen of that family, who are well known to all travellers before the days of "railway", as the boats were the only communication with Chester. They were largely patronised by rich and poor, and it will not be forgotten by those who enjoyed the sail on a fine summer's day, to or from the city, how the spirit of rivalry was kept up between the "**Foulkes**", "**Prices**" and "**Bithells**" in their efforts to be "first boat" and secure the greatest number of passengers, and the frequent quarrels that arose in consequence. But now ferry boats and boatmen are almost things of the past.

91 April 6 1867 Cheshire Spring Assizes

WEDNESDAY **Robert Hindley**, boatman, was acquitted of an indecent assault upon his step-daughter, Martha Rowson, at Runcorn, on the 18th December 1866.

92 August 17 1867 Cheshire Adjourned Sessions

SECOND COURT **Samuel Bedhall**, 55, boatman, stealing from a certain boat a quantity of vinegar of the value of 9s, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, at Barbridge, on the 16th July last. Four months.

93 August 31 1867

A MAN STABBED BY HIS WIFE AT WIDNES Elizabeth Hatton, of Widnes, was on Thursday charged before Mr W Pilkington, at St Helens, with cutting and wounding her husband, **Thomas Hatton**, boatman, of Widnes, on Monday, the 19th instant, with a knife. Thomas Hatton, the injured man, deposed that on Sunday night, the 18th inst, he and his wife, the prisoner, were at his son's house, where they had some drink, and they returned home about nine o'clock, and he went to bed shortly afterwards. About eleven o'clock he got up and came into the room where his wife was, and found her lying on the floor with a man named John Cook. A row ensued, and he afterwards went to bed. Early on Monday morning, when he got up, the disturbance was renewed, and his wife took up a knife and threatened to "take his heart's blood", at the same time giving him a severe cut on the back of his head. He then gave information to the police.

Charles Julott of Widnes, surgeon, said he attended Thomas Hatton on the 19th instant, whom he found weak and faint from loss of blood. He examined his head, and found an incised wound two inches in length, which cut through the scalp to the bone at the upper and back part of the head. He

dressed and stitched the wound, which he believed had been inflicted with a knife or some sharp cutting instrument.

James Baines, police-constable stationed at Widnes, deposed that Thomas Hatton, on the morning of the 19th instant, came to the police station covered with blood, and seemed very faint and weak from loss of blood. He (Hatton) said that he had caught a man named Cook with his wife on the cellar floor, and because he began to talk about it his wife took up a knife and swore she would have his heart's blood, and directly afterwards he found himself bleeding from a cut on the top of the head. Dr Julott was called in, who dressed his wound, and witness afterwards apprehended the prisoner on the charge of cutting and wounding her husband with a knife, which she denied having done; but on Friday last she admitted having cut him on the head with the knife he used for cutting his tobacco. The prisoner on Thursday stated that she stabbed him, and expressed sorrow for the act. The prisoner was committed for trial at the quarter sessions.

94 December 7 1867

BANKRUPTS John Hampson (or Enson), Lower Tranmere, Cheshire, boatman.

95 December 7 1867

FOUND DROWNED On Monday afternoon last, the 2nd inst, an inquest was held at the Cheshire Cheese, Newton by Middlewich, before Mr W R Dunstan, coroner, on the body of **John Shackleston**, aged six years. From the evidence it appeared that the deceased was the son of **John Shackleston**, boatman, who resides at Cledford Bridge, about a mile from Middlewich. The deceased, who was a scholar at the National School, went home on Friday at noon from the school with some more children, who left him at their own door all right. The deceased had then to cross the canal bridge to his own home, a distance of little more than thirty yards; he did not arrive, and was never seen again alive. About ten o'clock the same night his lifeless body was found in the canal, close to the bridge. The mother, though expecting him to his dinner, excused herself for not inquiring about him until night by saying she expected he had gone off with some boys who lived close by. Verdict "Accidentally drowned".

96 December 14 1867

Cheshire Winter Assizes

FELONIOUS ASSAULT AND ROBBERY John Barrow, boatman, Halifax, was indicted for assaulting and putting in bodily fear one Mary Hall, and stealing from her person one purse and £1 18s, the property of William Hall, at Lymm, on the 7th June 1867; and further with assaulting the said Mary Hall with intent to commit an unlawful offence, at Lymm, on the same day.

Mr Wynne Ffoulkes prosecuted; Mr Swetenham defended the prisoner.

On the first count no evidence was offered by the prosecution, and an acquittal was taken. The statements of the prosecutrix were as follows: - On the day in question the prosecutrix was returning from Sutton to Adlington, near Macclesfield, and having missed the train at Broad Heath, she walked along the canal side towards Warrington, where she expected to meet with a train to convey her home. Whilst going along the canal side she came up to a boat, in which the prisoner was standing. He asked her where she was going to and she said to Warrington. Prisoner then said he was going in the same direction and invited her to the boat. She accepted the invitation and after she got to the boat, the prisoner pressed her to the cabin. There were two other men in the cabin at the time, and she refused to go. Shortly after the seamen went into another boat, and after they had gone the prisoner dragged her into the cabin, tore her clothing, and committed the offence with which he was charged. She then got out of his hands and jumped on the canal bank, and walked to Lymm where she gave information to the police. The police went in search of the prisoner but he could not be found. However, some time after he was handed over to the authorities at Lymm by the Yorkshire police. When charged with the offence, prisoner denied it.

Mr Swetenham for the defence suggested that if the offence had been committed the prosecutrix had connived at it.

The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

97 March 14 1868

HORRIBLE BARBARITY NEAR WIGAN On Tuesday an inquest was held at the Crown Inn, Aspall, close to the boundary of the borough at Wigan, before Mr W S Rutter, county coroner, touching the death of a child 13 months old, named **William Barron**, the son of a boatman plying on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. The deceased, it was alleged, met his death owing to the inhuman conduct of his father in pouring a kettle of boiling water over the unfortunate baby and its mother, as they were lying in bed in a cabin of the boat at Aberdeen, Blackrod. On the 19th of last month the boat was lying at Aberdeen, and the father was drinking at an adjacent beerhouse, where his wife followed him and tried to induce him to return home. At last she was obliged to leave him, to attend to her children, one three years of age and the other barely 13 months, who were then in the cabin of the boat. She went to bed to her children, leaving a kettle of water on the fire, intending to prepare some potatoes for her husband's supper when he returned. In about an hour he reeled on to the boat, and awakening his wife demanded his supper. She, hurt by his conduct, told him there was no supper for him at that time of night – he must go and get it where he had been drinking; upon which he seized the kettle, the water in which was then at boiling point, and flung it upon the bed in which the woman and the infants were lying. The lid falling off, the water was thrown principally on the wife and her younger child. The former was fearfully injured about the face and breast, and the latter was scalded so severely upon the head and stomach that death resulted last Sunday morning. A post mortem examination was ordered, and the surgeon who conducted it, Mr Fisher of Wigan, expressed his belief that the scalding had caused the congestion of the lungs which had resulted in death; but as he had found that there existed disease of the lungs of some months' standing he was unable to swear positively. In consequence of this evidence, and the ruling of the coroner, who also pointed out that the husband would not escape a conviction for inflicting grievous bodily harm, the jury returned an open verdict.

98 May 30 1868

MELANCHOLY BOAT ACCIDENT ON THE MERSEY On Saturday afternoon last, an accident occurred on the river, by which two boatmen were unfortunately drowned. It appears that a young man named Wm H Foxall purchased, about a week ago, a speculating gig called the Surprise from a boatman named **John Moore**. On Friday Foxall paid for the gig; and on Saturday, about half past one o'clock, he left the George's Landing stage accompanied by two boatmen named **Wm Murphy** and **John Nelson**. At the time the tide was ebbing, and there was a strong breeze, approaching to a gale, from the WSW. When abreast of New Brighton, in the middle of the stream, the gig was caught in a heavy squall and capsized. Nelson clung to the bottom of the boat and, after being a considerable time in the water, was rescued by a punt belonging to No 2 pilot boat, and put on board one of the New Brighton steamers. Unfortunately, Foxall (the owner of the gig) and Murphy were drowned. The boat was afterwards washed ashore at Formby, and taken in charge by the coastguardsman. Foxall, it is said, belonged to Cleckheaton, Yorkshire, had been at one time a sailor, and had also served as a policeman in Mauritius. The bodies of the two men have not yet been recovered.

99 May 30 1868

LOSS OF LIFE THROUGH TAKING A BIRD'S NEST On Friday a boy, named Richard Gibbons, aged 10 years, son of **John Gibbons**, a boatman, was killed while taking a bird's nest at the salt works, Winsford. The deceased it appears had got on to the roof of a building at Mr Cross's "Island Works" in the township of Over, and, while in the act of taking the nest, a slate, on which he was standing, gave way, and the deceased was precipitated to the ground, a distance of 16ft, and was taken up dead. An inquest was held by Mr Churton, on Saturday, at the Navigation Inn, when a verdict of "Accidentally killed" was returned.

100 August 15 1868

Chester Summer Assizes

MONDAY **Thomas Harrison**, 50, boatman, was indicted for a criminal assault upon a girl under ten years of age, named Mary Eliza Hedgcock, at Runcorn, on the 26th June. The prisoner was found guilty, and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

101 October 24 1868

Chester City Police Court

MONDAY **Edward Roberts**, boatman, Catherall's buildings, was charged with indecent conduct towards Martha Evans. Mr Churton appeared for the defendant. The complainant told a straightforward tale at first, but when cross-examined grossly contradicted herself, and even admitted that no offence had been committed. The Bench dismissed the summons.

102 December 5 1868

CHESHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS AT KNUTSFORD **Ellen Irlam**, 19, boatwoman, pleaded not guilty to stealing a silver watch, the property of **Edward Williams**, at Runcorn, on the 22nd October last. Mr W W Ffoulkes prosecuted. The prosecutor is a boatman, and on the day in question he was at Lymm with his boat, and the prisoner asked him to give her a ride. She got into the boat and went with prosecutor as far as Runcorn, where she left him. When the prisoner was in the boat the prosecutor saw his watch safe in the bed-place of the cabin. Next morning he missed it. The prisoner was apprehended on the 26th, and charged with stealing the watch. She confessed to the constable who apprehended her that she had taken the watch to the shop of Mr Kaye to have it repaired. That statement was found to be correct, and it was ascertained that when she left the watch at Mr Kaye's she said he would find her name engraved upon the watch. E Williams, prosecutor's name, was engraved on the watch. The prisoner was found guilty but recommended to mercy. One months imprisonment.

103 January 16 1869

INQUESTS BEFORE MR CHURTON An inquest was held at Over, on Saturday, on the body of **Peter Gibbons**, four years of age, the son of a boatman. The deceased was on board a flat, and while his mother was in the cabin he fell overboard into the river Weaver. His father rescued him, and every effort to resuscitate him was used, but he died, having been in the water above three minutes. It is somewhat remarkable that on the day of the occurrence deceased's father had gone to attend his brother's funeral. When he got nearly to Winsford he turned back, having a foreboding that all was not right at the boat, and just reached it in time to rescue the boy from the water. A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

104 April 4 1869

INQUEST AT CHURCH LAWTON On Saturday last, Mr Dunstan held an inquest at the Red Bull, Church Lawton, on the body of **Sarah Jenkinson Hollingshead**, aged 50 years, the wife of **Joseph J Hollingshead**, canal boatman in the employ of the Duke of Bridgewater Trustees. Deceased always accompanied her husband with the boat, they being not house dwellers. On Thursday evening last, about seven o'clock, they were proceeding along the canal with the boat, and when at the Lime Kiln Lock deceased said she would go forward and get ready the further lock. She did go forward and fell into the lock and was drowned. Verdict "Accidentally drowned".

105 July 3 1869

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

NO BILL The Grand Jury found no bill against **Wm Steventon**, boatman, Wellington, charged with stealing 56lbs weight of coal, the property of G Bebbington, at Tiverton, on the 12th June.

106 August 21 1869

Whitchurch Petty Sessions

THREATENING A BOATMAN Richard Davies, William Davies and Richard Brown, three labourers, were charged with having, on the 3rd of this month, made use of violent, abusive and threatening language to one **Edward Hammonds**, of Gobowen, at Grindley Brook, near

Whitchurch. Hammonds said he was captain of a canal boat named the "Star", and was with that boat at Grindley Brook, between seven and eight o'clock, on the evening of the 3rd instant. He saw the three defendants at the bottom lock there. One of them said he had thrashed a boy, which he denied. On this, two of them ran at him and swore they would kill him and put him in the canal. He then ran off to Cliff's house near to, and stopped there about twenty minutes. He then started to go to his boat, but as soon as he got outside the three men again ran after him and threatened him, so he came to Whitchurch. **Thomas Jones**, a boy belonging to the "Star" boat, gave evidence to show that two of the men had jumped at his master when he was drawing up the paddle of the lock, and the other one ran round the lock to meet him. They said they would kill him and "chuck" him in the lock. Defendants strongly denied the charge, and called Hannah Speake, of Grindley Brook, and Elizabeth Caulcott, of Tilstock, in defence, but their evidence did not in the least go to prove their innocence. Defendants asserted that they had taken Hammonds for another man. The magistrates said that no doubt the row originated in a mistake in the man, but threats had been used, and they must take the consequences. Bound over in £5 each to keep the peace, and ordered to pay costs 13s 4d each.

107 September 25 1869

Whitchurch Petty Sessions

STEALING A BRIDLE **John Ashley**, a boatman of Brown Moss, near Whitchurch, was brought up charged with having, on the 14th inst, stolen a bridle, value 5s, the property of Mr William Ruscoe, builder, Whitchurch. Richard Pearson, waggoner to Mr Ruscoe, said he left the prisoner in the stable when he went to his work, and when he came back, about five o'clock, he missed the bridle, and after looking for Ashley for some time without success, he gave information to Sergeant Brown of the theft. Mary Henshall, of Green End, said she saw the prisoner with a bridle over his shoulder on the evening of the 14th. Sergeant Brown said he went after Ashley and found him in a boat on the canal, but on seeing him he got out on the opposite bank, and ran off. He (witness) then jumped into the canal, and went after him, took him into custody, but did not see the bridle. Prisoner was remanded for a week.

108 October 2 1869

Whitchurch Petty Sessions

CHARGE OF FELONY **Jno Ashley**, boatman, of Brown Moss, near Whitchurch, was brought up on remand, charged with having, on the 14th inst, stolen a bridle, value 5s, the property of Mr Ruscoe, builder. We reported the evidence given in the case last week, and as there was now no more proof forthcoming, the prisoner was discharged.

109 November 6 1869

SUDDEN DEATH On Tuesday morning a boatman, in the employ of the Shropshire Union Company, named **Thomas Hawkins**, aged 60 years, fell down whilst transacting some business in the office at Cow Lane, and immediately expired. An inquest was held upon the body in the afternoon, and the medical evidence attributing death to disease of the heart, a verdict of "Died by the visitation of God" was returned.

110 November 13 1869

CHESTER CITY POLICE COURT **James Jones**, boatman, Staffordshire, was charged by P C Rowe with being drunk and incapable in the Slate Yard, at the end of Crane Street. Ordered to contribute 2s 6d to the poor box.

111 December 11 1869

CHESTER CITY POLICE COURT **William Hough**, boatman, was charged with assaulting Mary Dale, Boughton. Bound over to keep the peace.

112 December 11 1869

A GIRL DROWNED IN THE CANAL On Wednesday last, an inquest was held at the Bouverie

Arms, Garden Lane, on the body of a girl named Sarah Ann Dale, before John Tatlock, Esq, deputy coroner. The circumstances of the melancholy event are as follows. The deceased, who was 13 years of age, was the daughter of a boatman named **Thomas Dale**, and on Monday night, about seven o'clock, she went with her father to a barber's shop in Northgate Street. As there were a large number of persons in the shop, her father had to wait to get shaved, and he told her to go back to the boat, which was moored at the Tower wharf. He followed in about quarter of an hour, and when he arrived at the boat he found that the deceased had not yet made her appearance. He immediately gave an alarm, and went towards the locks, where he saw a tin bottle which had been in the possession of his daughter floating on the water. The third lock was then emptied, and the body of the girl was seen lying at the bottom. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

113 February 12 1870

Chester City Police Court

A BOATMAN USING ABUSIVE LANGUAGE **William Catherall, senr**, boat proprietor, Duke Street, was summoned for using abusive language towards Henry Moore. On Saturday morning the complainant took his cows to the river side, when one of them happened to touch one of the defendant's boats on the river bank, and the defendant then began to call the complainant ill names. The Chief Constable said he had requested defendant to remove his boats from off the river bank, but he declined to do so, and he should have to summon him for obstruction. The defendant said the cows damaged one of his boats, which caused him to use the bad language, for doing which he was now very sorry. The Mayor informed him that he had no right to have his boats lying on the river bank, and they must be removed. He must pay 5s and costs, or undergo three days imprisonment, for using the abusive language.

DRUNK AND DISORDERLY **Thomas Thompson**, boatman, Handbridge, and Wm Rigby, baker, were each fined 5s and costs, in default three days imprisonment, for drunken and disorderly conduct on Saturday.

114 April 30 1870

A CHESTER BOATMAN FOUND DROWNED An inquest was held before Mr C Aspinall, at Liverpool, on Friday, upon the body of a man which had been found floating in the Mersey opposite the George's Baths, at eight o'clock on Thursday morning, the 21st inst. The body had been identified as that of **James Martin**, captain of the flat Iris, which was lying at the time deceased was found in the Albert Dock. The deceased lived in William Street, Chester, and was in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, to whom the flat Iris belongs. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

115 May 7 1870

ATTEMPT TO DROWN A BOATMAN At the Warrington Police Court, on Friday, a boatman, named **Joseph Turner**, was committed for trial on the charge of attempting to drown another boatman, named **William Johnston**, by throwing him into the canal at Appleton, Cheshire, on the 23rd ult.

116 June 4 1870

CITY POLICE COURT SUMMARY **Thomas Holland**, boatman, Nantwich, and Margaret Evans of Oswestry, were sentenced to seven days imprisonment for sleeping in an outhouse belonging to Mr Pickavance, near the Soapery.

117 June 11 1870

CAUTION TO PUBLICANS – A NOVEL DEFENCE On Saturday last at the city Police court, Joseph Richards, landlord of the Grosvenor Arms Inn, Canal Side, was summoned for having his house open for the sale of liquor, at twenty minutes past one o'clock on the morning of the previous Tuesday. Mr Tatlock appeared for the defendant. At the time mentioned PC21 visited the defendant's house, and found inside about a dozen men, some of them having beer before them.

The defence urged was, in the first place, that the hands of the clock in the house caught each other shortly before eleven o'clock, and when this was discovered, it was put right as nearly as could be ascertained, and defendant was not aware that it was past the time for closing. In the second place, it was contended that the men were boatmen, and therefore travellers, to which the Chief Constable objected, as he considered the men had their "houses" in the town, their boats being moored in the canal, close to the Grosvenor Arms. A boatman named **Pemberton** gave evidence on behalf of the defendant, who was however fined 10s and costs.

118 July 9 1870

CHESHIRE ADJOURNED QUARTER SESSIONS **Erastus Lewis**, boatman, stealing a leather bag and other property, at Chester, two months imprisonment.

119 July 23 1870

City Police Court Summary

A ROW AMONG WOMEN **Sarah Boaz**, a married woman, living in Catherall's buildings, was summoned for assaulting **Jane Roberts**, one of her neighbours. Mr Churton appeared for the complainant, and Mr Cartwright for the defendant. Complainant stated that her husband was a boatman, and on Friday last she went to his boat to speak to some of the men, when defendant came to her door and began using most insulting language. The defendant insinuated that she was guilty of immoral behaviour, and came to her and scratched her face, the marks of her nails being still visible. Complainant acknowledged that if she had not been prevented she would have struck the defendant and that each of them was as bad as the other. Sarah Jackson supported the testimony of the complainant. The court then heard a cross-summons, in which Mrs Boaz charged Mrs Roberts with assaulting her. Mrs Boaz said that her opponent used disgusting language to her, and in retaliation she threw a piece of floor cloth at her. Mrs Roberts then caught hold of her by the arm and tore her gown, and she (Mrs Boaz) scratched Mrs Roberts's face in self defence. Several witnesses were called on behalf of Mrs Boaz, and ultimately the magistrates fined each of the women 5s and costs, or three days imprisonment. Mrs Boaz was then charged with using abusive language to Sarah Jackson, another neighbour, on the same occasion, and after hearing the evidence adduced on both sides, the Bench dismissed the summons.

120 October 8 1870

A BOY DROWNED IN THE CANAL An inquest was held at the Bouverie Arms, Garden Lane on Monday afternoon, before Mr Tatlock, deputy coroner, on the body of Robert Willis Gregory, 12 years of age, who resided with his parents at Cornwall Street, Newtown. On Saturday afternoon the deceased started to go to Stone Bridge to bathe in company with two playmates, but his companions altering their minds on the way, left him, and he went on by himself. Later in the afternoon a boatman found some clothes upon the hedge skirting the canal towing path, and a search was made for the body. Owing to the drags not holding, the body was not recovered until Sunday morning, when a young man named **Foster**, a boatman, went into the water and brought the body out. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

121 November 19 1870

EPITOME OF NEWS **George Harding**, a boatman, who on the 22nd ult pushed a man with whom he had been quarrelling, in reference to a woman, into the canal, thereby causing his death, was on the 12th inst committed by the Cardiff magistrates on a charge of wilful murder. The woman, who was the cause of the quarrel, and who stood by whilst her companion was drowned, was called as evidence for the Crown.

122 January 14 1871

City Police Court Summary

AN EFFEMINATE BOATMAN **Thomas Edwards**, described as a miner, of Tipton, was charged with committing a breach of the peace. The defendant, whose appearance created much amusement, was dressed in a gown and a shawl, and his head was covered with a hood, usually

worn by the wives of boatmen, in which was inserted a small, coloured paper flag. At eleven o'clock that morning the defendant was arrested by D S Wallace whilst parading in Eastgate Street in female clothing, leaning on another man's arm. There were a lot of boatmen with him at the time, who appeared to greatly enjoy the fun that was caused by the defendant. Sir T G Frost: Was he or she drunk? D S Wallace: Quite sober, sir. The defendant, whose mien would lead one to suppose that he was not very "sharp", and had evidently been the subject of a joke of his fellow boatmen, said he had only been one voyage as a boatman, and in consequence of the boats being frozen up, his companions urged him to don his unfitting apparel, alleging that they had the privilege of doing so, and that they had previously been round the streets in such a guise several times. By order of the Bench the defendant was taken down to the cells and stripped of his feminine clothing, when he was brought back into the dock. He promised not to repeat the offence, and begged their worships' pardon, whereupon he was discharged. Sir Thomas Frost: Mind you don't be "soft" in future. Mr Sharpe: And stick to your own sex! [Laughter]

123 April 1 1871

Cheshire Spring Assizes

MANSLAUGHTER AT RUNCORN Ellen Bridge, aged 30, a married woman, of Runcorn, was charged with having killed her infant son, Thomas Bridge, at Runcorn, on the 10th January 1871. She pleaded not guilty. Mr Horatio Lloyd was for the prosecution and Mr Dunn for the defence. Mr Lloyd having opened the case, and detailed the circumstances of the case – the neglect of a drunken mother for her offspring – called the following witnesses in proof of the offence of manslaughter alleged. He reminded the jury that neglect, ending in loss of life, rendered the person so neglecting guilty of the charge. **Sarah Roberts, wife of John Roberts**, said that on Monday, the 9th January, she was at the office on the canal lock at Runcorn, when she saw the prisoner and heard her ask for £1, to enable her to get victuals. The master lends them money when boatmen like her husband were frozen up. Prisoner said that her husband was at Dover Lock, near Wigan. Mr Giles, the manager, gave her 15s, and told her to make the best of her way back to Wigan, which she said she would do. She then left the office. Witness saw her in the Bridgewater Arms, Runcorn, in the evening. Prisoner was in the tap room. She (prisoner) was seated with her baby on her knees, but was asleep. Witness woke her. The prisoner was then far gone in drink. Witness asked her for the baby, but prisoner said she could take care of it for herself, using vile language at the time. She said she could take care of the "little beggar". Witness asked her to go to her boat, where there was a fire, but prisoner refused, upon which the witness left. She saw prisoner later, between nine and ten o'clock, when she was seated outside the Bridgewater Arms asleep, with the baby on her knees. Witness woke her up, and was again met with vile language. Witness told her that she would starve the baby to death. Prisoner swore at her, told her to mind her own business, and drove her away. In cross-examination witness said she did not go to the Bridgewater Arms with the prisoner. She did not know a person called Hill and had never been to prison. His Lordship said that the attorney who suggested these questions should be well advised. In continuation witness owned that she was fined in Manchester for using bad language. She was fined £2. Prisoner stated in her presence that she had had no food for two days. **David Baxter**, boatman, in the employ of the Bridgewater Trustees, said that on Monday, the 9th January, he was in the Bridgewater Arms about six o'clock, when he heard the prisoner call for a glass of whisky, which she drank. She sat by him in the taproom. She was then a little intoxicated and fell asleep. She had the baby on her knee. It rolled off and witness caught it. He then put the babe on her knee and twisted the corners of the apron under the strings to keep the infant on her knee. Ten minutes or a quarter of an hour afterwards she stretched her legs out, and the child fell again. She woke up and went to the bar, where she asked for another glass, which was refused her. Nobody said anything to her about the child in his presence. Cross-examined : The canal had been frozen up for some time. There were many people in the house – ten or twelve or more. **John Street**, a flatman, living at Runcorn, said he was in the Bridgewater Arms on the day in question shortly before nine o'clock. The prisoner was then in the taproom dozing. She afterwards went out, and he subsequently saw her sitting on the step dozing. The baby was on her knee. It was a frosty night. He spoke to her outside and

shook her. She said she had got her money and wanted to go to Wigan, but it was too late. He put his hand on her shoulder again, and she said she had nowhere to go. He told her the baby would be starved to death. He offered her his bed on board his flat, and to lie on the locker himself. She went to his bed. She was neither drunk nor sober. She carried her baby to the boat and went to the cabin. He undid her boots and unpinned her shawl. She was dozing and he pulled her things off. He asked her for the child while she got in bed. The child was lapped in her apron and a shawl. When prisoner got to bed he gave her the child and lay down on the locker. She gave the child the breast when in the cabin. When he had been some time on the locker, he heard the baby cry. It cried several times. About five in the morning he woke her up. She “reared” herself up, and he left the cabin. When she was dressed he went back and she went away – he walking with her to the main street in Runcorn. He woke her so early that she might go by an early train to Wigan. She did not tell him that the child was dead. By Mr Dunn: The baby was wrapped up, so he could not see how it was dressed. The baby might not have cried oftener than babies generally do. It was a small cry, but it was a small child. By the Judge: It was a weakly cry. Ann New, wife of John New, said that on the Sunday morning she saw the prisoner about nine or ten o'clock in Runcorn. She spoke to her and asked where the baby was that she had in her arms on the previous night. She said it was dead and laid out at the Lord Nelson. Prisoner was sucking an orange, and said that she was as glad the child was gone as if anybody had given her “a coal freight”. Ann Low, wife of Peter Low of Runcorn, said she saw the prisoner in December in Runcorn. It was on a Wednesday, but she did not know the date. Prisoner was sitting on a step near the Top Locks – in drink and asleep. Mr Dunn objected to the evidence, but his Lordship said it was admissible to prove habitual neglect. Examination continued : There was a crowd round prisoner at the time and the child was on her knee. Three sailors bought the child a pint of milk. A person took the child from prisoner's knee and gave it to witness. The prisoner was then asleep. Witness took the child to her home and put it by the fire; she was afraid the baby would get cold. It was a cold morning, and she warmed the child about half an hour. It appeared to be a fine baby, but she could not give its age. Prisoner came to look for the child about the next door, and said she wanted the baby, as it had “come down” somewhere about there. Witness gave her the child, which was in a pillow in the house. She asked the prisoner the baby's age, and the latter said it was a fortnight old. She then advised the prisoner that it was early of her to be out, and recommended her to take the child away – which prisoner did. [Here one of the jurors was taken ill, and a medical gentleman having examined him said that he was unfit to continue in the box. A fresh jurymen was then sworn in, and a considerable time was wasted in consequence of the whole of the evidence having to be repeated]. Sergeant Peter Buckley, of Runcorn, said that on the Tuesday he went to the police station, having been sent for. The prisoner was there with a child. He asked what was the matter, and she said that it was dead. He asked her where she came from and what she was doing in the town, and she told him. She said that she came for the money, as they were in distress, and that she had obtained 15s. He asked her how much she had left, and after some demur she showed half a sovereign, saying it was all. He questioned her as to the time she left the office, and she said nine o'clock at night. He took her and the child to the Lord Nelson Inn. When the child had been laid out, an hour and a half afterwards, she was drunk and asleep in the Lord Nelson Inn. He saw her drunk every day afterwards for three or four days. An inquest was held and adjourned, and prisoner was apprehended on a coroner's warrant. Cross-examined: Witness said that the prisoner made no reply when apprehended. She did not then say that she had not starved the child. He woke her up at the Nelson Inn and found she was drunk. Cross-examined: After she was committed by the coroner he charged her, but she made no reply at the moment. Dr Kenlay Macdougall, surgeon, of Runcorn, said he made the *post mortem* examination. The child weighed 5lb 7oz, and the body was much shrivelled and emaciated. The eyes and cheeks were sunk. It was dressed in a night gown when he saw it – it was laid out. Both lungs were congested with the exception of a small piece. The heart appeared healthy. The stomach was distended with gas and contained slime. The intestines were empty. He could not discover a single atom of food. In his opinion the child died from congestion of the lungs, caused by exposure to cold, and accelerated by want of food. The congestion might be formed within a

few hours of death, but the weakness of the child might be contributory to bringing on the congestion. Cross-examined: The congestion might have lasted several days. The heart was healthy, but there was some blood about it. That might or might not have been the case if the child died of starvation. There was a slight scratch on the body which might have accelerated the congestion, but he did not think so. If the mother had been without food for two days she might have been able to suckle the child. Excessive thirst is one of the attributes of starvation, but whether the child would cry much would depend upon its strength and temper. Re-examined: He was not able to discover any other cause of death than that he had stated. This concluded the case for the prosecution, and Mr Dunn replied, admitting that it was a sad and serious case. There was considerable difficulty in the case, but he trusted that the poor woman would not be found guilty. Simple negligence was not sufficient to establish the offence, but it was necessary that it should be reckless negligence. He held that there was no proof that there was such extreme negligence but admitted that she had been foolish and neglectful in a less degree. The frost had caused loss of wages and the prisoner and her family were without food for two days. If she had not wanted to nourish the child, she would not have gone for the money. Having the money, she foolishly resorted to drink, which took effect in consequence of her previous abstinence from food. Even in her drunken state she clung to the child, and thus showed maternal affection. Giving the child the breast in the boat was a proof that she did not want to neglect the child. The learned Judge at considerable length laid down the legal distinctions between murder and manslaughter. In France children of a very early age were not allowed to be taken out, and there was no doubt as to the danger of such early exposure. The jury must be satisfied that the prisoner had the opportunity of protecting the child better than she did, and also of giving it more food. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty with a recommendation to mercy. His Lordship said he could not accept the recommendation, as two of her children had died previously in a similar manner. She was sentenced to twelve months hard labour.

124 April 21 1871

Chester City Police

DRUNK AND DISORDERLY Edward Parry, a boatman, who was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Foregate Street last evening, was ordered to pay 2s 6d into the poor box.

125 May 6 1871

Chester

INQUEST Mr Tatlock, the deputy coroner, held an inquest on Tuesday at the Flint Boat House, Crane Bank, on the body of a male child found early the same day by a boatman named **William Morris**, at the Hoole Lane Locks. The child was found rolled up in a piece of lilac, and a copy of the Chester Chronicle of the 3rd of December, 1870. Although the body was in an advanced state of decomposition, the water had not penetrated the paper quite through. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

126 May 13 1871

Chester

AN ABUSIVE BOATMAN John Bayley, son of the canal lock-keeper at Northgate Street, was charged by a boatman, named **Edward Jones**, with assaulting him. Mr Cartwright appeared for the defence. It appears from the evidence of the father of the defendant that the complainant was in the habit when passing the lock of using most abusive language towards him, for which he had to report him. On the evening in question he threw a rope belonging to the boat across some of his tulips thus injuring them. On being remonstrated with for what he had done he became very violent and threatened to strike him with a "nose can" he had in his hand. In consequence of his conduct he called out his son, and the complainant threatened him also with the nose can, upon which he closed with the complainant and they struggled together. A letter was read from Mr Batley to Mr Cartwright asking him to be bound over to keep the peace in consequence of representations made by the lock-keeper as to his conduct towards him. The charge was dismissed, and the complainant bound over in his own recognisance of £5 to keep the peace towards the defendant's father.

127 August 19 1871

City Police Court

DRINK **Richard Barnden**, boatman, Northwich, was charged by P C Masham with being drunk and incapable in Lower Bridge Street at a quarter past two on Thursday morning, and discharged with a caution.

128 August 19 1871

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS MONDAY **Henry Green**, a boatman, from Kidsgrove, was committed for one month charged with stealing a bag of provender at Betchton, on the 29th ult, the property of William Duke, Hulme.

129 September 2 1871

THE FATAL STREET AFFRAY IN QUEEN STREET – VERDICT OF MANSLAUGHTER

The adjourned inquest on the body of Thomas Simpson, who died from the effects of injuries received by him in a drunken quarrel in Queen Street on Sunday morning, the 6th of August, was held at the Town Hall on Thursday last before Mr Tatlock, deputy coroner.

Mr Churton and Mr Cartwright, as before, appeared on behalf of Davies and Douglas respectively, while Chief Constable Fenwick watched the case on behalf of the police.

The first witness examined was

William Burns, who said he resided at Sharp's Court, the Bars, Boughton, and was a labourer. He was passing Queen Street about half past twelve on the 8th August, in company with Bancroft, King and Roberts (a boy), when they saw some persons standing at the end of the street. Believing that they did not know them, they passed on, and had proceeded but a few yards when Davies tapped King, and told him he wanted to see fair play. They turned back. There were two boatmen and a boatlad standing at the end of the street, and Simpson called to one of them to see fair play. Simpson, with the boatmen, then went up the street, following Davies. The deceased, Thomas Simpson, came up with his brother, who stripped off his coat and waistcoat as he went up the street; and on overtaking Davies he said, "Come on now". While Davies was pulling his jacket and waistcoat off James Simpson ran at Douglas and struck him, and one of the boatmen – the tallest of the three – then came up and struck Douglas. James Simpson and Davies then fought; he believed they had three rounds, and Davies knocked Simpson down the last round, and he lay on the ground for about three minutes. Davies, while putting on his clothes, said to Douglas, "Come, I want to go home, my mother will be in a way about my being out so late". He had, however, gone but a few yards, when James Simpson called him back. He returned and pulled his jacket and waistcoat off again, and stood before Simpson, when the tall boatman went between them, and knocked Davies down, and on getting to his feet he again knocked him down, and having laid there for some time he got up and ran away. After Davies had gone home the tall boatman and James Simpson ran at Douglas, when the former struck him a blow and knocked him to the floor, and while down James Simpson struck him with his fist. The boatman then laid hold of Douglas by the collar, lifted him up, and dashed him to the ground three or four times, and he and James Simpson kicked him. Douglas shouted out, "I'm spoiled", and afterwards for the police. James Simpson and the boatman not seeing the police coming, struck Douglas again. They looked to see if the police were coming, and not seeing them, they came back, and the boatman struck the deceased, who was standing on the foot walk close by the Britannia with his brother's coat on his arm, with his fist. The deceased then fell on the back of his head on the flags, and stretched out his arms, but did not speak. There was a shout the police were coming, and the boatman who struck the deceased, and another, laid hold of the deceased and carried him off in the direction of the canal. Witness went with them, and as they were going along, the boatman who had struck the deceased said he was very sorry he had done so, as he intended to strike Douglas. The deceased was simply standing by when he was struck, and was taking no part in the fight or disturbance. Witness was sure that neither Davies nor Douglas struck him; he was only struck by the boatman. It was not true what Huxley stated at the last examination, that he (Huxley) assisted to carry deceased home and no one else. The two boatmen carried him from where he was struck to the end of Union Walk, and then Huxley and his

mother carried him down York Street. When they left the deceased at the end of Union Walk he said, "Where am I going?" and he then dropped his head on the flags again, upon which the tall boatman struck a match to look at the back of the deceased's head to see where he was hurt. Witness did not know the boatman by name, but he should recognise him again if he saw him. He believed Griffiths knew who the boatman was, as he had been often in his company.

P C Haughton, who was next examined, said that on Sunday morning, the 6th of August, about 25 minutes to one, he and P C Plimmer were standing at the end of Frodsham Street, when they heard a noise, and went in that direction, and saw the deceased, James Simpson, Davies, Huxley and Douglas. They were then opposite the Raven. Witness told them that as it was Sunday morning they had better go. Huxley laid hold of the deceased by the arm and said, "Come on, let us make a start". Douglas then said, "Yes, you b---y b---, you had better go, or else I will knock your head off". Witness then told Douglas that if he did not go away he would find himself in the Town Hall. He then went up Frodsham-Street, accompanied by Davies, while the others went down Foregate-Street in the direction of Queen Street. When witness first went to them James Simpson pointed to Douglas and said he had stolen his brother's hat, as he had taken it off his head. Douglas said he was a liar. About seven or eight minutes afterwards Mrs Huxley came to him and P C Plimmer and told them there was fighting going on in Queen-Street. On going there they saw a crowd of people near the Britannia, and a woman pointed to James Simpson, who was going up the street, and said he was the instigator of the row. Witness brought him back, when Douglas said, "I give that man into custody, he has knocked and kicked me shamefully". Simpson then said, "Yes, I will give you in charge for stealing my brother's hat". Witness then took James Simpson and Douglas to the station. He did not see the deceased or any boatman in the street. The night was light, but the moon was a little overcast. The lamp near the Britannia was not lighted.

Robert Griffiths re-called, said he did not know the name of the boatman who had struck the deceased. He had been in company with him that night about ten minutes before the row took place. Witness had met him by Williams's, the grocer, in Foregate-Street, and the boatman was going towards Frodsham-Street, and witness towards Queen-Street. The boatman bade witness good night, and that was all the conversation they had. Witness had met him several times by the canal side before; he was generally called **Matthew Edwards**. Witness did not know the person who said he was sorry for striking the deceased.

By Mr Churton: When he met the boatman by Williams's, the grocer, he said, "Good night, Robert". Witness did not stop, nor did the boatman go with him to Queen-Street. Did not see him at the end of Queen-Street. Matthew Edwards was dressed about the same way as the man whom he saw in York Street, and who said that he was very sorry for striking the deceased. Witness, after much equivocation, said he had no doubt that it was Matthew Edwards who said in York Street that he was sorry he had struck the deceased.

This concluded the evidence.

The Coroner, in summing up the evidence for the jury, said the first thing they would have to ascertain was the cause of death of the man, and according to the medical evidence they would find that when the man was first admitted to the Infirmary he was treated as one who had had too much drink. On the following day, however, he exhibited decided symptoms of apoplexy and died on the Tuesday after his admittance. Dr Hamilton, who had made the *post mortem* examination, found a fracture on the head and a clot of blood on the brain corresponding to the fracture – a fracture which he stated might be caused by either a fall, a kick or a blow. Then again they had the evidence which showed that the deceased had been knocked down by a blow in the street, and therefore he thought they would have very little hesitation, if any at all, in coming to the conclusion that the deceased met his death by a blow, or a fall caused by the blow. Of course if they were of opinion that death could not be accounted for in any other way than by natural causes they could find that such was the case, though to him there was not the slightest doubt that he came to his death by the violence in Queen-Street. The Coroner then gave a careful resume of the evidence of the several witnesses, the result of which tended to show that the deceased had been struck by the boatman Matthew Edwards, who afterwards, as admitted by one of the witnesses (Griffiths) expressed his regret for what he had

done, and stated that it was a mistake of his to strike him. Then the question they had to consider was whether the crime was one of murder or manslaughter, and that was a nice point to decide. There was no provocation on the part of the deceased to warrant the assault committed upon him, as the various witnesses agreed in stating that he was standing quietly by holding his brother's coat. Probably they would be of opinion that whoever struck the blow did not intend to hit the deceased, but someone else. That, however, was of no consequence. If a man in the heat of a quarrel, and in a drunken row, struck a person it would be simply manslaughter; but if a man chose to knock another down, though he struck another man, with the intention of inflicting bodily harm, and reckless of the consequences that might arise from the blow, then, in his opinion, he was guilty of the crime of murder. On the other hand, if they thought the boatman was engaged in fighting and, while fighting, struck the deceased by mistake, then they might find him guilty of manslaughter. But either verdict must be returned, as there was no question of accident in the case at all. If they were satisfied that the man Matthew Edwards struck the blow, they must either return a verdict of murder or manslaughter; but if they were not satisfied that he struck the blow they must return a verdict against some person or persons unknown. The jury then retired, and after an absence of ten minutes, returned with a verdict of manslaughter against Matthew Edwards.

130 September 16 1871

City Police Court

WASTING CANAL WATER **Evan Morris**, canal boatman, the Cygnet, was charged by the Shropshire Union Canal Company with unlawfully wasting water, by opening the lock near the Canal Company's works on Wednesday, at Hoole Lane Bridge. The lock-keeper proved the charge; and the Bench fined the defendant 20s and costs, or 14 days imprisonment with hard labour in default.

131 October 21 1871

Sessions

SENTENCES **George Condliffe**, 24, boatman, for stealing a bedcover and other things, at Weston, three months.

132 January 6 1872

County Police Court

SEVERE ASSAULT **Charles Morris**, a canal boatman, with others not in custody, was charged with severely assaulting a labourer, named George Pulford, at a public house in Ellesmere Port, on Thursday night. The prisoner and his companions picked a quarrel with the complainant, and then hit, kicked and knocked him down, and severely ill-treated him. The prisoner was sent to gaol for a month with hard labour.

133 January 6 1872

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **Isaac Hammond**, aged 26, a boatman, and Emma Hammond aged 24, both belonging to Wolverhampton, were charged with having, at Audlem, inflicted grievous bodily harm on William Smith. Isaac Hammond was acquitted, and the female prisoner was sentenced to two months imprisonment.

134 February 10 1872

Sandbach Petty Sessions

DRUNK & C **John Machin**, boatman, of Harding's Wood, was fined 10s and costs for being drunk and disorderly and refusing to quit the Red Bull public house, at Church Lawton, when requested by Mr W P Mitford, the landlord on the 13th of January.

135 February 24 1872

Whitchurch Petty Sessions

DAMAGING A CANAL LOCK **Thomas Jones**, boatman on the Shropshire Union Canal, was charged with wilfully damaging the lock at Grindley Brook, near Whitchurch, on the 5th February. The damage was estimated at 4s 3d. **Thomas Shuker**, lock-keeper and general clerk in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company at Grindley Brook, said that on the 5th inst, Jones came

with his boat through the lock. Instead of letting the paddle of the lock down by means of the windlass, as he ought to have done, he allowed it to run down of itself, and with the force one of the teeth was broken off. The Company had sustained considerable loss through the carelessness of boatmen in this matter. Ordered to pay the amount of the damage and costs, 6s.

136 March 16 1872

INQUEST An inquest was held on Monday afternoon last on the body of a young man, name unknown, which was found in the River Dee on the previous Saturday. **Joseph Flint**, of Castle Street, boatman, said that on returning after putting a boat out on the river opposite the tobacco mills he saw something floating in the river above the Causeway, and on backing his boat to it he saw the head of a man. He caught hold of the head and the hair came off. He then tied a chain round the body and brought it ashore. The body, which was that of a young man apparently about 20 years of age, with no whiskers or hair of any kind on his face, was covered with mud, and was dressed in corduroy trousers, a blue serge jacket, a blue monkey jacket over all, and a check shirt. The deceased had no cap on. Michael Smith, of Crook Street, who stripped the body of the deceased, said he saw no mark of violence whatever, and in searching the deceased's pockets he found therein two old clay pipes and a blue pocket handkerchief. Detective Sergeant Wallace said he had made every enquiry with a view to the identification of the deceased, but without any success. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

137 April 20 1872

County Police Court

STEALING A TURKEY **William Tasker**, a towpath labourer in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, and **William Heath**, a boatman, were charged with stealing a turkey, the property of Mr Symes, farmer, of Little Stanney. Mr H Taylor appeared for the defendant Tasker. It appears that on Saturday, the 6th instant, Tasker was observed running down a turkey, and subsequently taking it with him to the canal side where a boat had stopped. The man Heath, who was in the boat, asked Tasker if he had anything to put the turkey in, and being told that he had not, he threw him a bag, in which Tasker put the turkey and threw both into the cabin of the boat, which proceeded up the canal a short distance and then stopped. Tasker, who accompanied them, returned to his work, and the boat with the turkey and the prisoner Heath went away. Information was given to the police and the prisoner Heath was apprehended in Wolverhampton with the turkey under his arm. The bird was identified by Mr Symes as being the one missing, and the prisoners, who reserved their defence, were committed for trial at the next Quarter Sessions.

138 May 11 1872

County Police Court

STEALING A WATCH AND CHAIN Thomas Wyche, John Kelly and Charles Fisher were charged with having stolen a watch, the property of a boatman, named **John Jenks**. It appears that on Monday night last the complainant met the prisoners Kelly and Fisher in Foregate Street, when they asked him if he wanted to buy a cap. He replied that he did not. They then told him that they wanted to sell it for a night's lodging. The complainant said that he could find them one without buying the cap, and he brought them to his boat, which was lying opposite Cow Lane. About one in the morning he awoke and found Kelly talking to Wyche, who was on the canal bank. Wyche subsequently came into the boat. The boat went on to Christleton, and the prisoners got out, and in consequence of what he had heard the complainant searched the cabin and found his silver watch and chain were gone. The prisoners were subsequently apprehended at the Trooper Inn, Christleton. P C 10 stated that when he went into the public house at Christleton and saw the prisoners there drinking, he charged the prisoner Kelly with stealing the watch, upon which Wyche stated that he had got the watch in his pocket, where somebody must have placed it. The complainant was then called in, and on being shown the watch, he said it was his property. Wyche was committed for trial at the next sessions, and the other two prisoners were discharged from custody.

139 June 1 1872

Eddisbury

GROSS CRUELTY TO A HORSE **Joseph Hughes**, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, was arrested under a warrant issued at the instance of the company charged with ill-treating one of their horses. Mr Bent appeared on behalf of the company and, in opening the case, said that the animals purchased by the company were really valuable animals, but they were frequently ill-used by the boatmen in charge of them. It appeared that the defendant's horse was taken by him out of the stables at Bunbury and put to the boat. Shortly afterwards when he got into a retired place he beat the animal about the face, and holding its head down as much as he could he kicked it in the face in a most brutal manner. He was now instructed by the superintendent of the company to apply for a commitment. Mr Whalley of Tilstone was then called, and he said that on the 28th April he saw the defendant with his horse close to the bridge. The horse had just been taken out of the stables, but when it got some distance it ran back again, and the prisoner on laying hold of it commenced beating it. He first hit it on the nose with his fist, and then kicked it in the face several times, holding its head down as low as he could. He treated the horse so badly that he (Mr Whalley) reported the case to the company, having told the prisoner that he would do so. Mr Bishop, traffic inspector to the company and manager of the horses, said he had received a great many complaints as to the brutal manner in which the horses of the company were treated by the boatmen. Many of the horses were very valuable. In reply to the prisoner, Mr Bishop said he had never known the prisoner to abuse a horse before nor did he ever see him bring his horse home in a sweat. The prisoner said his horse was a regular kicker but Mr Bishop remarked that however quiet the animals might be, in less than a week, from the ill-treatment they received, they would be taught how to kick. The prisoner again stated that the horse was a regular kicker, and was in the habit of running away. On one occasion he had to jump from the boat to prevent its running away, and on the very same day that he was accused of ill-treating it he had to tie it down to prevent it getting away. The animal was well known among the boatmen as the "besom-legged" mare. As to the charge of cruelty he denied it, and on going to the next lock from that where Mr Whalley had seen him he called **Phillips**, the lock-keeper's, attention to the animal to show that it was not ill-treated. Mr Bent pressed for a commitment. The magistrates fined the prisoner 20s and 17s 2d costs, or in default 14 days imprisonment with hard labour. The fine not being forthcoming the prisoner was conveyed to the lock up.

140 June 8 1872

City Police Court

CHARGE OF MANSLAUGHTER AGAINST A BOATMAN **Matthew Edwards**, boatman, Stafford, was placed in the dock charged with the manslaughter of Thomas Simpson. The Chief Constable stated that the affair occurred on the 6th August last, and a coroner's inquisition was held at that time. The prisoner was not apprehended until yesterday at Wolverhampton, and it would be necessary to have a remand for a few days to complete the case. The Chairman asked what length of time was required? The Chief Constable replied that he should be glad to consult Mr Sharp's convenience. There were 13 witnesses bound over by the coroner. In reply to a question from the Bench, the Chief Constable said he would endeavour to have the case ready by Monday. The magistrates accordingly adjourned the case until Monday.

141 June 8 1872

Local intelligence

CAPTURED AT LAST On the night of the 9th of August last **Matthew Edwards**, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, had a dispute in Queen Street with a man named Thos Simpson. The result of the quarrel was a fight, in which Simpson was so injured that he died a few days afterwards. Edwards absconded as soon as he found the jeopardy in which he had placed himself, and the jury who enquired into the death of Simpson returned a verdict of manslaughter against Edwards. Nothing was heard of him until Wednesday last, when Detective Bishop, of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, saw him upon the canal bridge, Canal Street, Wolverhampton. He at once telegraphed to the police here, asking if he should arrest the man, and received a reply in the affirmative. Accompanied by Detective Cadman, of the

Wolverhampton police force, and Police-constable Day, Bishop went to a public house in Canal Street, where he found Edwards, who was made a prisoner, and conveyed to the police station. The same night Detective Sergeant Wallace removed the prisoner to Chester. He was brought before the Magistrates the following day and remanded until Monday next.

142 June 15 1872

County Police Court

THE CHARGE OF MANSLAUGHTER **Matthew Edwards**, boatman, Bridgford, Stafford, was brought up on remand, charged with the manslaughter of Thomas Simpson. Mr Churton appeared to watch the case on behalf of a man named Davies. The Chief Constable said he should not be able to complete the case that day, as the witnesses were scattered over the country. Having stated the facts of the case, the Chief Constable called Wm Haining M D, who said he was surgeon at the Chester Infirmary. On the afternoon of Sunday, 6th August, a man named Thomas Simpson was brought to the Infirmary. He seemed to be like a man who had been drunk overnight, and he was conscious as to what was said to him but could not speak. He lived until the afternoon of Tuesday the 8th. On examining him he found there was a slight bruise on the right temple, but no other marks of violence. He seemed to have pain in his right leg when he stood up. On the evening of the 7th he showed symptoms of effusion on the left side of the brain, and he became quite unconscious and never rallied. The prisoner declined to ask any questions. Alexander Hamilton said he was visiting surgeon at the Infirmary in August last. He made a *post mortem* examination of the body of Simpson on the 10th August by direction of the Coroner. He had a bruise on the right temple just where the hair began, and a slight bruise on the lower part of the right leg. Internally there was a slight extravasation of blood corresponding with the bruise on the temple. On opening the head he found a large thick clot of blood on the left side, and a fracture about 3 1/4 inches long about the same part as the clot of blood. The fracture was recent, and the blood resulted from it, the fracture running across the course of one of the vessels. The other organs were healthy. The cause of death was compression of the brain from effusion of blood. The blood on the right temple would cause a fracture on the opposite side, and is called contrecoup. This is a common occurrence. **Robt Griffiths**, boatman, 49 Victoria Terrace, Boughton, said he remembered being at the end of Queen Street one Saturday night about half past twelve o'clock. He could not fix the date now, but he gave evidence before the coroner and the date he gave then was the right date. He knew the deceased Simpson, and saw him there, and his brother James, Formston, Jno Huxley, and others. There was a disturbance and a fight between James Simpson and a man named Davies, and it lasted about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, when there was a cry of, "Police". At that time the deceased was standing against the wall near the Britannia Arms, Queen Street. He saw John Douglas knock the deceased down with his fist, and witness pushed Douglas away and raised Simpson, who was "in drink" against the wall. Witness walked down the street, when Huxley called out for help. Witness went back, and found Simpson (the deceased) lying on his back with his arms spread out on the pavement. Huxley was near him, and witness and Huxley carried him to the end of Union Walk, where two or three men joined them. He did not know who they were or what they were. He heard someone say, "Let the policeman come and I'll knock him down as well as him", meaning Simpson he supposed. One of the men said he was sorry he had hit Simpson, he would sooner have lost his right arm. He knew Matthew Edwards, but he could not say that he was one of the men. He said before the Coroner, "I have no doubt that the man who said he was sorry he had knocked the deceased down was Matthew Edwards," and he would say so now. He believed Edwards was out of work at the time and was bad with his legs. He had known him six months, and had not seen him since that occurrence until this morning. Witness worked under the same company as the prisoner worked, but he had not seen him on the canal since that night. It was very dark that night. The prisoner: Will you swear that I struck Thomas? Witness: No, I never said so. Prisoner: Do you say I said I was sorry for having struck him? Witness: I don't swear positively it was you. By the Chairman: I can't swear that the prisoner was the man who said that, but I believe he was. The Chief Constable: But you have sworn before the Coroner that you had "no doubt" about it? Witness: I couldn't hardly swear it. Wm Davies, labourer, Davies' Court, Steammill Street, said he

was at the end of Queen Street on the night of the 5th August, and there was a fight between James Simpson and Davies. He saw one of the boatmen who had come up run across and strike the deceased. The prisoner was not the man. The deceased fell down on the flags and stretched his arms out, and did not speak. He could not say whether prisoner was one of the three. The boatmen carried the deceased to the end of Union Walk, and witness heard one of the boatmen say he was very sorry for having hit him, as the blow was not intended for deceased, but for Douglas. No one else hit him, and the man who had hit him struck a match and lifted deceased's head. He said before the coroner that Griffiths would know who the boatman was who struck the deceased, as he had seen them drinking together many times. By the Bench: The man who struck the match was about "a quarter of an inch" taller than the prisoner. [Laughter] He saw the man Simpson's face by the light of the match, but he never noticed the face of the man who held the match. Wm King, labourer, 62, Boughton, also spoke to the row in Queen Street, and said the deceased was not taking part in it. He said he should not know the man who struck Simpson, but he seemed to be a boatman and a "middling tall chap". He was almost sure that the man who struck the deceased helped to carry him to the end of Union Walk. By the Bench: The man who struck him was a total stranger to him. The Chief Constable said he had no further evidence to produce today, and asked for a further remand to produce fresh witnesses, The magistrates adjourned the case until Monday next.

143 July 13 1872

County Police Court

ASSAULTING BY A BOATMAN **John Cubb**, a boatman, was charged with assaulting P C 181 at Ellesmere Port, on the previous night. It appears that the constable was assisting to get the prisoner and his wife out of a hotel there. The prisoner had already refused to go at the request of the landlady, and on the constable being called in he refused to go, and he was pushed out by force. On getting outside the prisoner aimed a blow at the constable's face, and while endeavouring to handcuff him he kicked him on the left shoulder. The wife of the prisoner, who was also drunk, incited her husband to resist the policeman's endeavours to bring him to the lock up. The Chairman, after speaking strongly of the disgraceful state of Ellesmere Port, fined the prisoner 10s, and 8s 6d costs or, in default, seven days imprisonment with hard labour.

144 July 20 1872

Latest News

MURDER AT LEEDS A boatman named **John Dearden** has been committed for trial at Leeds for the murder of his wife in a fit of jealousy by shooting her with a six barrelled revolver. The woman was drunk when the crime – the result of jealousy – was committed.

145 August 10 1872

Assizes

FRIDAY **Matthew Edwards**, 28, boatman, Bridgefod, was indicted for killing and slaying one Thomas Simpson, at Chester, on the 6th August 1871. the prisoner was charged on the Coroner's inquisition with the same offence. Mr Williams appeared for the prosecution; Mr Swetenham defended the prisoner. John Huxley, labourer, said he lived at Chester at the time of this occurrence. He was at the Brewer's Arms on the night of the 5th August. Witness, James Simpson, and deceased left, and when they got to the end of Frodsham Street, James Simpson and Davies had a fight, but no one else took part in it. They were separated by the police, but they went down to Queen Street, and Davies and Douglas followed witness, James and Thomas Simpson, and Formston. Simpson and Davies again started fighting. He did not see Thomas Simpson fighting at all; he remembered his being hurt, but did not know who did it. He did not know the prisoner. He saw the deceased lying on the ground on his back, and he heard a man saying that he was sorry he had hurt Thomas Simpson; he would not have done it for his right arm. He did not know who said that. William Roberts, a lad, said he was not in company with the other men, but whilst walking rapidly down Queen Street, he and Bancroft, another lad, stood looking at a lot of men quarrelling in the street. The deceased wanted to fight a man in black, but he did not know who the man in black was, but the latter said he did not want to fight him as he (deceased) was only a boy. No blow was struck by the other man, but he went back down the street towards Thomas Simpson when three boatmen

came up. The deceased asked the boatmen if they would see fair play, and the prisoner was one of these men and he was taller than the other two. He felt certain that the prisoner came out from the others and said he would see fair play. Thomas Simpson and another man started to fight and prisoner stood close to them. The man in black was knocked down by Simpson and walked away followed by Simpson, who was met by a blow from the prisoner. When before the magistrates he said he “believed” prisoner was the man who struck the deceased, but he was certain that the prisoner was the man who struck the blow. The blow was struck close by the Britannia. He could not say whether the men were sober or tipsy. The deceased fell down upon the flags. He was rather drunk. Someone went up to “Tommy” and said to the prisoner, “I believe you've struck Tommy”, and prisoner went and looked at him and said, “I would not have struck him for my right arm”. Someone said the police were coming, and the deceased was taken down to the end of Union Walk and placed against the railings. A match was struck by someone who looked at Simpson's head and said, “He's not cut and not hurt”. The deceased was asked whether he was hurt and he mumbled something which could not be understood. Prisoner again said he would not have struck the deceased for his right arm. Mrs Huxley, back Queen Street, said she heard a fight going on in the street and went out to see if it was her son. She saw the deceased at the end of Union Walk, and heard the prisoner say he would not have hit him for his right arm. She was almost certain that the prisoner also said he hit the deceased in mistake. Robert Griffiths said he saw Douglas knock Tommy down on the flags near the Britannia, in Queen Street. Witness helped to pick Tommy up twice, but did not see the prisoner there on either occasion. At the end of Union Walk he heard someone - he did not know who - say that he would not have done it for his right arm. The learned judge pointed out to the witness some discrepancies in the evidence he gave before the Coroner and before the Magistrates, and the witness said he had made a little mistake. He would swear that he saw Douglas knock the deceased down into the gutter. Mr Williams called his lordship's attention to the fact that what the prisoner had said before the Magistrates differed from what he had stated today. Witness now said he heard someone say that he would not have struck him (deceased) for his right arm. He believed it was the boatman; he saw only one boatman. He could not swear the prisoner was the boatman, but it was very much like his voice. Wm Burns said he saw Thomas Simpson knocked down in Queen Street by a boatman, but not Douglas. He could not say whether the prisoner was the man who knocked him down. After hearing other evidence the learned Judge stopped the case, observing that the evidence was of a very contradictory nature and put it to the Jury whether they could find the prisoner guilty upon such evidence. If they were of a different opinion the case would proceed. The Jury consulted for a minute or two and found a verdict of not guilty. The Judge, in discharging the prisoner, said he had been on his trial for some hours on the very serious charge of killing a man and punishment in these cases could be very severe, extending, as most persons knew who attended that court, to penal servitude for life. He must take this opportunity of saying, that in this city these cases of fighting were most distressing. For himself he must say that since he had been in this city he had seen more drunkenness than he had seen for several years past in any town in this kingdom and he called the attention of the town authorities and the public to that matter, who could best discharge their duties in preventing the repetition of crime, in effectively putting a stop to drunkenness, by fining those who were drunk, and imprisoning those who were incapable and in the drunken state as had been proved to be the case there, and by the Magistrates refusing the licence of every house in which these drunken bouts were proved to exist. The prisoner was then discharged.

146 August 22 1872

City Police Court

ASSAULTING A BOATMAN A number of boys, named Geo Williams, Jno Walthew, Thos Sherlock, Jno Igo, Jno Lunt, Ed Hughes, Jno Price and Chas Meacock, were charged with assaulting and beating **Robert Hayward**, a boatman in the service of the Shropshire Union Company. Walthew and Igo did not appear. The complainant stated that on Sunday he and his “missus” were on their boat, when a number of boys threw stones at them, and a stone hit his “missus”. He went out after them, and was attacked by a number of other boys from the other side of the canal. He

spoke to the danger and nuisance arising from boys throwing stones at the boats and boatmen. One of the lads said Igo was the boy who threw the stones. After hearing other evidence, The Magistrates adjourned the case until the two absent boys were found, when they will all be brought up again.

147 September 14 1872

County Police Court

DRUNK AND RIOTOUS James White, a boatman, was charged with being drunk and riotous at Ellesmere Port on the 23rd August last. The constable who preferred the charge said the defendant behaved in a very disorderly manner and threatened to knock him down. Fined 10s and 11s costs, or in default fourteen days hard labour.

148 September 21 1872

General

The inquest on the body of the boatman, **Ralph Greenwood**, who was killed on a canal boat near Wakefield, has resulted in a verdict of manslaughter against his assailant, Mountain.

149 October 12 1872

City Police Court

ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON Jane Jones, a young married woman, living in Parry's Entry, was charged with stealing a purse and 10s from the person of **John Evans**, a canal boatman lodging at the Grosvenor Arms, Canal side. The prosecutor said he belonged to Whitchurch. He met the prisoner in Eastgate Street on Saturday night between 10 and 11 o'clock, and she asked him whether he was going up the entry? and he said he didn't care, and went with her. He felt prisoner's hand in his pocket, and shortly afterwards accused her of stealing his purse. She then gave him the purse and 5s, and when he asked her for the remainder she gave him 3d more. He then told a policeman of what had occurred. Prisoner denied that she ever had the purse. The Magistrates' Clerk having inspected the witness's trouser pockets, remarked that they appeared to be constructed for the convenience of such people as the prisoner. P C 23 said he charged the prisoner with the theft, and she denied that she stole the purse or money. Eight shillings and three pence were delivered up by her, and she said it belonged to her and had nothing to do with the prosecutor. In reply to the Magistrates the prisoner pleaded guilty. The Chairman said the Magistrates would stop the prisoner's little game, and send her to prison for one month with hard labour.

150 October 19 1872

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS William Hall, 18, boatman, for stealing 17s 6d at Runcorn, belonging to **Wm Osbourne**, his master, on the 3rd of May, two months imprisonment.

151 November 23 1872

Chester

DROWNED IN THE CANAL An inquest was held at the Turf Tavern on Wednesday afternoon, before Mr Tatlock, City Coroner, on the body of a woman name unknown, about 26 years of age, who was taken out of the canal that morning. The jury having viewed the body which was lying in the dead-house at the Workhouse, the following evidence was taken :- P C Henry Hughes (No 11) said that about 8 o'clock that morning he received information of a woman having been found in the canal, and went on the canal bank near Messrs Frost's mills. He found the body lying on the towing path. She was dressed in a brown dress, but wore no shawl or cloak, hat or bonnet. She wore a pair of striped stockings and elastic side boots. A boatman named **Jones** told him that his towing line had picked up the body. The horse had stopped and the line went down and when the horse went on again the line drew the body to the surface. Jones took the body out of the water. Witness sent for the police hand cart and had her conveyed to the Workhouse where he saw her things taken off. There was nothing in her pockets. Witness had been on the force five years but did not recollect having seen the woman. He knew of a young girl being reported missing about a fortnight, but the deceased was not her; so the girl's friends said who had seen the deceased. He did not notice whether the deceased's arm was broken. It did not get broken in bringing her up to the Police Station. Her head was in a very dirty state, probably from the action of the water. In reply to the

Coroner, P C Hughes said that Jones told him he could not be detained in Chester, and that he knew no more about the matter than the witness had just stated. Mr Taylor, surgeon, said he had examined the deceased externally. The right arm was broken between the shoulder and the elbow. That was the only mark of violence. The arm he should fancy was broken after death. The deceased had the appearance of a person who had died from drowning. He should say she was about 26. She had been in the water several days but not a week he should think. The sleeve of the arm of the dress was torn in a place corresponding to where the arm was broken. The jury returned a verdict that the deceased was found drowned in the canal, but there were no marks of violence inflicted before death.

152 December 7 1872 Whitchurch

DRUNK AND RIOTOUS **John Evans**, boatman, Whixall (who did not appear) was fined £1 and costs for being drunk at the Welsh End, Prees, on the 2nd November. P C Harris proved the case.

153 December 14 1872 Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS MONDAY 9TH INST **Henry Wood**, boatman, of Church Lawton, was fined 20s and costs for damaging a lock gate on the North Staffordshire Canal at Church Lawton, on the 20th ult.

154 January 25 1873 City Police Court

DRUNKARDS **Richard Lewis**, boatman, charged with being drunk in Northgate Street, about two o'clock the previous afternoon, was let off on paying the cost of the summons.

155 April 12 1873 Cheshire Quarter Sessions

KNUTSFORD **John Swales**, boatman, for stealing a silver lever watch from a boat on the Shropshire Union Canal at Wardle, six months.

156 May 17 1873 Winsford

BRUTAL ASSAULT ON A CHESHIRE CONSTABLE On Tuesday afternoon a fight was taking place at Winsford between a boatman named **William Atherton** and a horse driver, when P C Bradshaw went to quell the disturbance, and in so doing he was frightfully ill used. He was thrown down, and when on the ground was kicked about the face and head in a most brutal manner. The disturbance was witnessed by a crowd of men, but no one volunteered assistance until Sergeant Steel came to his relief. Atherton was taken into custody, but the other man has for the time escaped.

157 May 31 1873 Eddisbury Petty Sessions

A RUFFIANLY ASSAULT **Thomas Hodgkiss**, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Co, was charged with assaulting a lock tender named **Thomas Miller** on the 21st April. Inspector Bishop watched the case on behalf of the Shropshire Union Canal Co. The complainant said he was a lock tender at Wharton's lock, and on the day in question the defendant came up with his boat closed, followed by a "fly" boat. He brought his boat into the lock, and he (the complainant) opened both gates to admit of the two boats being in at the same time. The defendant on seeing this drew the two upper paddles and shut the inside gate. Witness got it open again, and the defendant then seized hold of him by the head and "munged" him very severely, and frequently kicked him. The defendant said the complainant had commenced the assault, and was assisted by his son. The complainant denied this, and said his son, who was in delicate health, had been kicked several times by the defendant. The assault was proved by Mr C F Simpson, auctioneer, who witnessed it, and Mr Bishop said it was the duty of the defendant to have allowed the "fly" boat to pass him. The Magistrates said the assault was a serious one, and sentenced the prisoner to one months imprisonment with hard labour.

158 July 26 1873

City Police Court

ALLEGED THEFT Richard Edwards, Hoole, labourer, was charged on remand with stealing a quantity of wearing apparel, value 10s, the property of **Edward Jones**, Queen Street, on Wednesday, the 9th July. Prosecutor deposed: I am master of the canal "Cashier". On the 9th inst I moored it under the City Road Bridge. No one slept aboard the boat that night. The cabin door was not locked. On the following morning at six o'clock I missed a vest. I know the prisoner; he has been a boatman. Mary Jones, wife of the last witness remembered going on board the boat on the 10th inst. She missed a bed quilt, a pair of sheets, a pair of leggings, a waistcoat, and a pair of scissors. She afterwards missed a coat (produced). David Timothy said he was a pedlar. He remembered meeting the prisoner at three o'clock on the 19th inst, opposite the City Road. He had the coat (produced) on his arm, and asked him to buy it but he said he could not, as he only had ninepence in his pocket. Prisoner said, "Well, let me have the ninepence; I am hard up". Witness bought the coat for ninepence, and afterwards sold it to Mrs Robinson for 2s 2d. Elizabeth Robinson deposed that she was the wife of James Robinson, clothes dealer, Frodsham Street. She bought the coat produced from the last witness for 2s 2d. She gave it to Detective Bray. Detective Bray said he received the coat produced from the last witness. When he arrested the prisoner he said he had not stolen anything. Mrs Muras, of Watergate Street, said she had not the slightest doubt she sold the coat produced to the prosecutor. Within the past fortnight the prisoner came and offered her the coat for sale, but she refused to buy it, as she suspected it was stolen. Prisoner had also some sheets which he wanted her to buy but she would not. The prisoner was committed for trial at the Sessions.

159 August 2 1873

Chester

INQUEST Mr Tatlock, city coroner, held an inquiry on Monday last at the Turf Tavern, into the cause of death of a girl named **Mary Jones**, aged six years, daughter of a boatman, who was found drowned in the Canal on the previous Sunday. It appeared that on Saturday the boat of the father of the deceased was lying in the Shropshire Union basin, and the deceased, who was sent after her father, found him at the Grosvenor Arms, Canal Side, and told him to go to the boat. No more was seen of her until the next morning when she was found drowned in the canal. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

160 August 9 1873

Sandbach

ASSAULT AND ROBBERY AT CHURCH LAWTON At the Sandbach Police Court on Saturday the 2nd inst, before Mr F H R Wilbraham Esq, **George Sumner, alias London**, of Butt Lane, Staffordshire, boatman, was committed to take his trial at the ensuing sessions, charged with unlawfully assaulting Emily Jones, with intent to commit a rape, and stealing a gun from Mr E Massey, at Church Lawton, on Monday night, the 14th ult. From the evidence adduced it appeared that about nine o'clock on the night in question Emily Jones was overtaken on the highway, at Church Lawton, by the prisoner, who threw her down on the road side, put his hands over her mouth, and threatened to kill her if she made any alarm. She screamed "murder" and implored him to spare her life. Mr Massey came up, apprehended the prisoner, and was proceeding along the road with the intention of handing him over to the police, when Sumner turned upon him, knocked him down, and wrested a double barrelled gun from his hands, which he at once levelled at him, pulled the triggers and threatened to shoot him if he did not let him go. It very fortunately happened that the gun was not charged, and Mr Massey again rushed on his man, who brandished the butt end of the gun at him and ran away, taking the gun with him, leaving nothing but his cap behind for identification. Information was at once given to the police, strict search was made, and the cap was identified by several persons who had seen the prisoner in the neighbourhood, but nothing was heard of the prisoner until the 29th ult, when P C Bird of the Cheshire Constabulary, was informed that Sumner had disposed of a double barrelled gun at Bugsworth, in Derbyshire, under suspicious circumstances. He made inquiries into the matter, got possession of the gun, and very cleverly captured the prisoner, who admitted the offence, and expressed his sorrow for what he had done.

161 September 6 1873

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **James Dewison**, of Stoke, boatman, was fined 20s and costs for wasting water at Betchton Locks, on the Trent and Mersey Canal, on the 20th ult.

162 October 4 1873

Whitchurch Petty Sessions Sept 26

STRAYING ASSES **Edward Hamer**, of Whixall, boatman, was ordered to pay 10s, including costs, for allowing four asses to stray on the highway at Whixall on the 31st August. Defendant did not appear. The officer who proved the case said there had been frequent complaints by the people in the neighbourhood about the asses being on the road so often. He himself had also cautioned defendant's wife on the 28th August. In default of paying the money, defendant was ordered to be committed for seven days.

163 November 29 1873

City Police Court

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **Thomas Wagstaff**, boatman, of Canal-side, was charged with cruelty to a horse last evening. Inspector Warr deposed to seeing the horse attached to a canal boat at the Lead Works. The Inspector said the horse, which was a very small animal, was lame, and suffered very much, and was in a wretched condition. The defendant told him he had bought it for 25s, and gave an old one in return. Mr Hayes, veterinary surgeon, said the horse was in an emaciated condition, and was totally unfit for work. It appeared the animal had worked the boat all the way from Minshull Vernon that day. The defendant said there were a great many worse horses on the canal and being worked at the present moment. Major French, who examined the horse, said it was totally unfit for work. The defendant promised to destroy the animal, and was let off on paying 4s 6d costs.

164 December 13 1874

THE BURNLEY MURDER The boatman named **John Fletcher**, who is accused of murdering Bridget Russell by throwing her into the Leeds and Liverpool Canal was on Monday committed by the Burnley Magistrates for trial at the Liverpool Assizes on the capital charge.

165 January 13 1874

CHARGE OF WILFUL DAMAGE **John Parry**, a boy, was summoned by Edward Rowland, licensed victualler, for wilfully damaging a cart belonging to him. Mr Churton appeared for the defendant. Joseph Rowlands, a boy, deposed that on Tuesday week he was fetching some sawdust in a handcart along the canal side, when the defendant, who was on horseback, told another boy to hook the horse to the cart and run away with it. The boy did so, and the shaft of the cart was pulled out and the side broken. A little girl corroborated the statement of the last witness. The complainant said he did not see the affair, but he took the cart to Mr Smith, the wheelwright, who charged him £1 5s for repairing it. Mr Churton called a boy named Geo Jones who deposed that on the day in question he saw the defendant on a horse. Rowlands' boy was with a hand cart and asked witness to give him a pull. Witness spoke to the defendant who consented to allow the horse to be hooked to the cart. Rowlands' boy asked him three times to hook the horse to the cart. When the horse had drawn the horse about two yards the shaft broke. The Bench did not consider the case proved and dismissed the summons.

ASSAULT **Ed Parry**, a boatman, and father of the defendant in the last case, was then summoned for assaulting Ed Rowlands. Mr Churton defended. Complainant deposed that on the day in question the defendant chased his son into the yard and struck him. Witness remonstrated with the defendant, who also struck him (complainant). In self defence witness knocked the defendant down. Defendant was in liquor and very violent; even foaming at the mouth. A young woman named Sharp deposed that she saw Joseph Rowlands crying on the canal side. She asked him what the matter was, and he said the defendant had been beating him, and that the boy Parry had broken his hand cart. She saw the defendant chase the boy into the yard and strike Mr Rowlands. Mr

Churton contended that the defendant was standing on his flat when the boy Rowlands came up and complained about his cart being broken. Defendant told the boy to go away, when he became very abusive, and threw stones at him. Defendant followed the boy to the yard, and Me Rowlands struck the defendant first. A man named High said he saw the boy pick up a stone to throw at the defendant. Defendant followed the boy to the yard and witness walked behind them. As soon as witness got to the yard he saw Rowlands strike Parry. Did not see the defendant strike the complainant. He rushed in and took the defendant away. A man named Hall, who lives close to Mr Rowlands yard, said High did not come up until the “barney” was over. [Laughter] The Chairman said the Magistrates were of opinion that High had committed perjury, or something very near it. He had very narrowly escaped a prosecution, and they would give him this word of caution – not to come there and perjure himself again. Parry must pay a fine of 20s and costs, in default 14 days.

166 February 28 1874

Cheshire Adjourned Quarter Sessions

THURSDAY **John Royle**, boatman, for stealing a rope, value 25s, the property of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, at Preston Brook, seven days.

167 June 27 1874

A TRANMERE BOATMAN DROWNED **Alexander Sharples**, a young fellow in the employ of the Tranmere Ferry Company, was accidentally drowned on Thursday morning. He was drawing a bucket of water from the river during the 8 a m journey of the ferry boat between Tranmere and Liverpool, when it is supposed that the force of the “back-water” caused him to lose his footing, and he fell into the water, sinking almost immediately. Deceased, who has been engaged on the ferry boats since Christmas last, bore an excellent character for steadiness and attention to duty. His friends reside in Chester Road, Tranmere.

168 July 4 1874

City Police Court

A BATCH OF DRUNKARDS **Edward Price** of Welshpool, boatman, was charged with being drunk on the canal side on the 28th June. P C 21 proved the case, and the Bench fined the defendant 5s and costs.

INEBRIATES **Henry Roberts**, boatman, of no residence, was charged with being drunk in Union Walk. Fined 10s and costs.

169 August 1 1874

Whitchurch

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE An old lady, about 70 years of age, of rather weak intellect, named Miss Emma Corser, residing at Green End, Whitchurch, attempted to put an end to her existence at six o'clock on Sunday morning last. At this hour, a boatman observed a female in the top lock at Grindley Brook, two miles from Whitchurch. He at once went to her, caught hold of her – the lock being full of water – by the hair of her head, and brought her to the bank. She was taken into the house of the lock-keeper, **Mr Shaker**, and put to bed. Dr George of Whitchurch was sent for, and he attended to his patient in a very short time. It was several hours, however, before the doctor considered it safe to have her removed home, and when she arrived there she was far from well, but no doubt in a few days she will have fully recovered from the effects of her immersion. It appears that Miss Corser – who is a lady of independent means – has been in a “strange way” for some time, and a woman had been engaged to look after her. They went to bed as usual on Saturday night. At five o'clock on Sunday morning, while her attendant was asleep, Miss Corser got up, partially dressed herself, went downstairs stealthily, and succeeded in getting out. She was seen on the canal side by Hales Bridge by some young men, walking at a fast pace in the direction of Grindley Brook, but they, of course, had no suspicion what the good lady intended to do with herself, or no doubt they would have followed her. It is only some three months since Miss Corser made a similar attempt, and then it was not far from the Grindley Brook locks. On that occasion she was not allowed to do as she liked, but was fetched out. Miss Corser lives with her two maiden sisters, and there is only a year or two's difference in their ages.

170 August 8 1874**Cheshire Summer Assizes**

BURGLARY AT CHESTER **Edward Jones**, 41, boatman, was indicted for burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling house of Elizabeth Hooley, and stealing therein a clock, the property of the said Elizabeth Hooley, in the city and borough of Chester, on the 4th July. Mr Roberts prosecuted. It will be remembered that the prisoner broke into the prosecutrix's house on the night in question and stole a clock which was subsequently found hanging up in his house. Prisoner's defence was that he was drunk in the streets of Chester early on the morning of the 5th July, and that a man and woman, whom he did not know, sold him the clock. The jury found the prisoner guilty, and his Lordship, taking into consideration the imprisonment the prisoner had already suffered, sentenced him to a further term of one months imprisonment with hard labour.

BIGAMY AT CHESTER **Henry Edge**, flatman, on bail, was indicted for marrying and taking to wife one Eliza Hiron, at the parish of St John the Baptist, in the city and borough of Chester, on the 11th January 1874, Rebecca, his former wife, to whom he was previously married, to wit, on the 28th October 1851, being then alive. Mr Higgins prosecuted, and Mr Wynne Ffoulkes defended. Harriet Lloyd, sister to the prisoner, proved the marriage of the prisoner to his first wife at St John's church about twenty two years ago. The prisoner and his first wife lived together for five years. Eliza Hirons, living in Oulton Place, deposed that she went through the form of marriage with the prisoner on the 11th January last. In reply to the Judge, witness said she married the prisoner under the impression that his first wife had married again. The Judge: But you knew that she could not have two husbands? Witness: I merely understood that she was married again. Cross-examined by Mr Ffoulkes: The prisoner had made her a good husband. Geo Nixon, police clerk deposed that the prisoner came to the police station and gave himself up on a charge of bigamy. Prisoner said he had not lived with his first wife for twenty years, and that she had been living as a prostitute. His Lordship enquired who had instituted the proceedings. Mr Higgins replied that in consequence of a threat made by the first wife the prisoner went to the police and gave himself up. Mr Ffoulkes contended that as the prisoner had not heard of his first wife for seven years he was justified in marrying again. The jury found the prisoner guilty, but recommended him to mercy. The Judge sentenced the prisoner to a months imprisonment.

171 August 8 1874

SANDBACH **Thomas Dawson** of Marston, boatman, was fined 20s and costs for assaulting **Thomas Davies**, lock tender on the Trent and Mersey Canal, at Tetton, on the 30th ult. It appeared that the defendant was wasting the water in the canal locks, and when spoken to by the prosecutor he became very violent and committed the assault complained of. The defendant was also fined 1s and 10s costs for damaging a door at Tetton belonging to Jane Davis. The complainant in the last case took refuge in Mrs Davis's house, when defendant broke open the door with the tiller of his boat.

172 August 15 1874**Cheshire Summer Assizes**

ROBBERY WITH VIOLENCE AT APPLETON **Charles Swindell**, 21, boatman, Runcorn, and **Robert Houghton**, 20, boatman, Stockton Heath, were indicted for robbing, with violence, at Appleton, on the 15th April last, Edwin Asherton, and stealing from his person a bottle containing half a pint of rum and 4s 2d in money. Mr Ffoulkes prosecuted, and Mr Swetenham defended Swindell. The prosecutor is a carter at Appleton, and on the night in question he was in the London Bridge Inn, where the prisoners also were, but in another room. The prisoners went out first, and the prosecutor left the house about ten o'clock. He had only proceeded a short distance when the prisoners tried to trip him up. He said, "Drop that; I've a gill of rum in my pocket, and you shall have it when we get to the iron gate". The prisoners walked with him some distance, and then knocked him down, kicked him, and treated him brutally, robbing him of his rum, all his money, and a coal ticket. The jury found the prisoners guilty. His Lordship sentenced Swindells, who had been convicted three times, one of his sentences being twelve months imprisonment with three

years police supervision, to seven years penal servitude, and Houghton twelve months imprisonment with hard labour.

173 August 22 1874 Sandbach

MAGISTERIAL **Samuel Rigby**, boatman of Church Lawton, was fined 20s and 24s 6d costs for assaulting William Hodkinson, timekeeper at the Wheelock Iron and Salt Co's works, Wheelock on the 13th inst.

John Cotton of Wheelock, boatman, was fined 5s and costs for furiously driving his horse and cart on the Wheelock Road on the 11th ult.

174 September 19 1874

MURDER AT WIGAN The Coroner's inquiry as to the death of **Ann Worthington**, who, it is alleged met her death at the hands – or rather the feet – of her husband, a Liverpool boatman, was concluded at Wigan on Wednesday. The evidence revealed brutality to an atrocious degree on the part of the husband, against whom the jury returned a verdict of wilful murder. It is worthy of note that, between two assaults made by the accused on his wife, a Liverpool policeman was asked by persons who had witnessed the first attack to take Worthington into custody, but the “active and intelligent” officer refused to “interfere between man and wife”.

175 October 31 1874 Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SATURDAY **James Tucket**, 42, boatman, Birkenhead, for stealing a sewing machine, a carpet bag, a felt hat, a tin can, a marriage certificate, two sheets, and two shirt collars, the property of William Davidson, at Birkenhead, on the 11th September, eight calendar months hard labour.

176 November 7 1874 Nantwich

LIFE ON CANAL BOATS At a recent meeting of the Nantwich Rural Sanitary Authority, a letter was read by the Clerk from the Government desiring suggestions as to any further powers which it might be desirable for them to possess, in order to effectually deal with the evil of overcrowding on canal boats. After a short conversation, the Board relegated the duty to Mr J A Davenport, the Sanitary Inspector (who, it will be recollected, in the first instance called public attention to the lamentable state of affairs) and to the Clerk, Mr J Pick. On Saturday last, at a full Board, the following suggestions met with universal approval: 1. That no woman girl or boy under the age of 14 years should be employed on, or allowed to sleep in, canal boats. 2. That the cabins should be provided with proper means of ventilation, so that impure air may be allowed to escape and full supplies of pure air admitted. 3. That for every person using the cabin as a sleeping apartment, a minimum of 200 cubic feet of air space should be allowed. 4. That powers should be given to officers of the Sanitary Authority to search a boat at any time for infectious disease, and if this is found, to detain a boat until a Justice grants an order, on the certificate of a medical man, for the removal of the case to a hospital provided by the Sanitary Authority, where such a hospital exists. 5. That similar powers should be given to search and detain a boat carrying the corpse of any one dead from infectious disease, and for the removal of the body. 6. That boats should have legibly marked upon them what crew they are designed to carry, having regard to regulation 3, which should in no case be exceeded. 7. That it should be the duty of all Sanitary Authorities to periodically inspect all canal boats plying through their districts, and should have power to summon the owners and captains of boats infringing any of the foregoing regulations, to which, on conviction, a fine should be attached. 8. That the expenses of a Sanitary Authority in carrying out any of the regulations relative to canal boats should be made general expenses. The report thus concludes: - “At first sight it may appear a somewhat harsh step to prohibit boatmen from taking their wives and families with them in the boats, as they have always been accustomed to do; but, looking at the fact that seamen are away from their homes for months together, the Sanitary Authority cannot believe that the hardship of preventing the females and younger children of the boatman's family accompanying him on his journey would be so great as to outweigh the very

apparent advantages that would be obtained from such a step in every point of view”.

177 November 28 1874

Cheshire Adjourned Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **Joseph Fletcher**, 20, boatman, for an indecent assault upon Ann Elizabeth Gleave, at Marple, on the 21st October, was sent to prison for 12 months.

William Woodfine, 35, boatman, was sentenced to four months hard labour for stealing a quantity of rope, the property of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, at Runcorn, on the 26th October.

178 March 20 1875

Chester

LIFE ON CANAL BOATS Mr Tatlock, City Coroner, held an inquest on Saturday afternoon last, at the Oddfellows' Arms public house, Frodsham Street, Chester, touching the death of **Frederick Stokes**, the infant son of a boatman named **Henry Stokes**. Deceased's father said he resided at 27 Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham. He was a boatman, and had now four children living, all of whom slept in the boat along with witness and his wife. The mother of the deceased said that the child, regarding whose death the inquest was held, was born a fortnight ago. Shortly afterwards all the children caught the scarlatina. All lived and slept in the same cabin, in which there were two beds. Witness observed a few days after the child's birth that it had caught the fever. Last Monday it seemed worse. On Thursday morning the deceased had several convulsions, and on that day witness arrived in Chester. She took the child to the Infirmary, and there saw Dr Fleetwood. He prescribed for deceased, who only lived a few hours afterwards. The child had something the matter with its foot, but witness did not know of any accident it had come by. William John Fleetwood, surgeon at the Infirmary, said that deceased was brought there on Thursday morning by its mother, who stated to witness that deceased was suffering from convulsions. The child's left foot and ankle were very much bruised and swollen. Witness prescribed for the deceased and applied remedies. Since the child's death witness had made an examination of the body externally. He found that the left foot had got a wrench, and he thought that the injury thus sustained had been the cause of the child's death by bringing on convulsions. Witness thought deceased died from convulsions so caused. The injury might have been caused by bad nursing. The Coroner thought the state of life on canal boats was most disgraceful, and ought to have attention. The Jury returned a verdict that deceased died from convulsions.

179 April 3 1875

Cheshire Spring Assizes

A NARROW ESCAPE **Joseph Twigg** (16), boatman, was charged with unlawfully and maliciously wounding one Noah Bailey, by then and there stabbing him in the breast with a knife, with intent to do him some grievous bodily harm, at Runcorn, on the 19th December 1874. Mr Wynne Ffoulkes prosecuted, and Mr Higgins appeared on behalf of the prisoner. The prosecutor said that he knew prisoner, who was a horse driver in the service of the Bridgewater Navigation Company. On the day mentioned prosecutor saw prisoner standing by a fire on the canal bank. They had had no quarrel, and prisoner stabbed prosecutor without having received any provocation. Samuel New said that prosecutor made a “grab” at the prisoner's knife, prisoner being cutting some tobacco at the time. When taken into custody prisoner admitted having stabbed prosecutor by leaning forward, but not intentionally. Mr Mourits, surgeon, of Runcorn, deposed to examining prosecutor at the request of a constable. Witness found a small incised wound on prosecutor's breast three quarters of an inch long, which was bleeding freely. Mr Higgins, for the defence, urged that the prisoner had no intention in wounding prosecutor, this having been done purely through an accident. His Lordship, in summing up, pointed out that there were three questions for the jury to decide – whether prisoner was guilty of felony or unlawfully wounding only, or whether prisoner was guilty of either of these. The Jury, after consideration, returned a verdict of not guilty, and the prisoner was therefore discharged.

180 April 10 1875

Whitchurch

FOND OF CHEESE A boatman named **Thomas Davies** was charged with breaking into the

Shropshire Union Canal Warehouse, at the wharf, Whitchurch, on the previous night, and stealing therefrom four cheeses, the property of Mr George Lewis, of Market Drayton, cheesefactor. No evidence was given, and Sergeant Waterson asked for prisoner to be remanded for a week, which was granted.

181 April 17 1875

Whitchurch

PARTIAL TO CHEESE At the Police Court last week, before the Hon E Kenyon and P W Godsall Esq, **Thomas Davies**, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, was brought up in custody on remand charged with having, on the night of the 1st April, broken into and entered the company's warehouse at the Wharf, Whitchurch, and stealing therefrom three cheeses, the property of the company. Edward Suker, acting clerk at Whitchurch (in the place of Mr Tisdale, who is indisposed) stated that he locked the company's warehouse up at six o'clock on Thursday evening, the 1st April, at which time the cheeses were safe. From information received on the following morning he examined the padlock on the warehouse door and found it was broken. He then examined the premises near the warehouse and found a broken cheese in a bag amongst some barrels. From further information he went to Mrs Wright's shop, and Mrs Wright told him she had bought two cheeses from a strange man on the previous evening. Mrs Wright said that on the evening in question the prisoner came to her shop and wanted her to buy some cheese. She afterwards bought two cheeses and gave him 6d a lb for them. The two cheeses produced by Sergeant Waterson were those she bought from prisoner. Sergeant Waterson deposed to apprehending prisoner on the morning of the 2nd inst, and charging him with stealing the three cheeses. Prisoner said he knew nothing about them. Supt Haines stated to the bench that at the sessions in Shrewsbury in June last prisoner was committed for six months hard labour for stealing a metal frame belonging to the locks at Adderley, near Market Drayton, the same being the property of the Canal Company, and he was also suspected of having been convicted of fowl stealing at Bunbury, Cheshire. Prisoner, who had nothing to say in answer to the charge, was then committed for trial at the sessions at Shrewsbury, bail being refused.

182 May 22 1875

Cheshire Adjourned Quarter Sessions

A CANAL BOAT WAIF **Lewis Chadwick**, 11, boat-boy, pleaded guilty to stealing a silver watch the property of Mary Lawton, at Odd Rode, on the 5th of May. Mr Wood said the prosecutrix was a widow living at Mow Cop. Her brother was a boatman, and had the prisoner in his employ as an assistant. On the 1st of May, the prosecutrix's brother and the prisoner were at her house, where they remained a short time. After they left, the prosecutrix missed her small silver Geneva watch, which had been all right before her brother and the prisoner visited her. The prisoner afterwards sold the watch to "a man with a slop" for threepence and a knife. Although the prisoner had parents he was utterly neglected, and had been leading a roving life for some time. Sentence was deferred.

183 June 12 1875

A CRUEL HOAX A cruel hoax was perpetrated on Monday last on Mr Ravenscroft, of Wellington Street, Warrington. A bottle was found on Saturday last at Runcorn, by a boatman, purporting to be from **James Ravenscroft**, requesting the finder to convey the intimation to Mrs Ravenscroft of Warrington, and he would hear of something to his advantage. The bottle was taken to the Runcorn police, who communicated with Superintendent Hunt of the Warrington force. Mrs Ravenscroft was seen, and the information threw her into a state of great consternation as to the safety of her nephew. Inquiries were at once set on foot, but the nephew, a boatman at Runcorn, was found alive and well. The handwriting of the note in the bottle was good, but was written on poor paper, bearing a faint impression as if it had been written on the knee.

184 July 31 1875

CHILD DROWNED AT ELLESMERE PORT On Wednesday an inquest was held at Ellesmere Port, before Mr W H Churton, coroner, on the body of Wm Price, aged 2 1/2 years, child of

William Price, a boatman belonging to Wolverhampton. On Tuesday the deceased was playing at the edge of the canal, and was afterwards missed. Search was made, and the body was found in the canal. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

185 September 18 1875 Runcorn

FINED £10 FOR ASSAULTING A WIFE At the Runcorn Police Court, on Monday, before Sir Richard Brooke and Mr R M Brooke, **Thomas Hand**, a boatman, about 60 years of age, was charged with assaulting and beating his wife, **Mary Hand**, on the 9th instant. Mr Garratt defended, and stated that he had advised his client to plead guilty, but he hoped their Worships would deal leniently with him on account of the great provocation. He (prisoner) had saved £150, but his wife would persist in drinking it away, causing him to lose patience and ill-use her. Prosecutor, whose face was fearfully bruised from the effects of prisoner's violence, and bore two dreadful black eyes, stated that he had no excuse whatever for ill-using her. She worked hard and she let the drink alone. He never had more than £44 at once in his life. The Bench inflicted a fine of £10, or three months hard labour. Prisoner, with a glance of hatred at his wife, said he would serve the three months, but afterwards he changed his mind and paid the fine.

186 September 25 1875

THE MURDEROUS ATTACK WITH A SWORD At the Sandbach Police Court, on Thursday, **Thomas Newton**, a boatman, was charged with stabbing another boatman, named **John Baddily**, under circumstances already reported. Prisoner was committed for trial.

187 November 27 1875 City Police Court

INEBRIATES **Humphrey Roberts**, Welshpool, boatman, was charged with being drunk and riotous in Northgate Street. P C 22 said after ten o'clock on Saturday night he found the defendant so drunk and riotous that he had to lock him up. Fined 10s and costs, or, in default, the usual alternative.

188 November 27 1875 County Police Court

EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF MANSLAUGHTER **Joseph and John Owen**, two brothers, and Richard Lewis, all mere youths, were charged with causing the death of a girl named Isabella Roper. Mr Cartwright appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Churton for John and Joseph Owen. The Chairman (to the prisoner Lewis): You have no lawyer to defend you? Prisoner: I don't want no lawyer, sir. [Laughter]. Mr Cartwright, addressing the Bench, said he appeared on behalf of the prosecution. The case was a most important one, but at present the inquiries of the police were not complete. He was prepared with some evidence that day, but not sufficient to justify them in committing the prisoners for trial, and he should therefore ask them to remand the prisoners for a week in order that the police might have an opportunity of linking the various pieces of evidence together. On the 15th October a girl named Isabella Roper was found drowned in the canal near Ellesmere Port. Roper was engaged as a sort of servant by a boatman named **Hodson**, and his wife, and used to accompany them in their voyages. On the evening of the 5th October she was left in charge of the boat, Hodson and his wife going on shore. In the course of the evening she was requested to leave the boat by one of the prisoners, and she was last seen in the company of one of them. There was evidence that one of the prisoners had threatened this unfortunate woman, and the theory of the prosecution was that the prisoners, exasperated at the resistance of the girl to some improper overtures, pushed her into the canal. He should call before them one witness, but next week he hoped to be able to say that the police had sifted the case. He called **Emma Hammonds**, who deposed that her husband was the captain of the flat "Bosworth". Mr Churton: Why she is one of my witnesses. We have brought her all the way from Wolverhampton, and if the case is adjourned I submit that Mr Cartwright ought to pay her expenses. [Laughter] Mr Cartwright: We may not be indisposed to help you in that way. Superintendent Egerton: The woman made a voluntary statement to a police officer, and he took it down in writing. The examination of the

witness, who gave her evidence very intelligently, was then proceeded with. She deposed that on the night in question she saw the boy Lewis in company with Isabella Roper in Daw's garden. Lewis made an accusation against Roper, which she denied, and Lewis then threatened to drown her. Witness said to them: What are you doing here? and Roper replied, "Don't tell my mistress that you have seen me here". The prisoner Lewis (to witness): Mrs Hammonds, you are telling an untruth, and no good will ever come of you. During the remainder of the hearing the prisoner frequently asserted his innocence, and on more than one occasion accused the witness of telling abominable lies. In reply to Mr Churton, the witness stated that Roper was a girl of very loose character. Joseph and John Owen were in the "Dock Hotel" at the time. Joseph Owen had supper on board her husband's boat, and she saw John Owen go to his own boat. The witness further stated that Lewis had his arm around Roper's neck. Lewis (or "Dick" as she insisted on calling him) was drunk, but the girl was sober. They were standing behind a hedge. The prisoner Lewis: That is a "non truth". Mrs Hammonds, "If I was struck stiff this minute, it's a non truth". The prisoner also made a statement to the effect that he had spoken to one of the other prisoners "about getting Bella out of the boat". Joseph Brooks, Overpool, deposed that he knew Isabella Roper. She was called "Little Bella". She was last seen alive on the 5th October, and on the 15th October her body was found in the canal. Police-sergeant Rocke deposed, in reply to Mr Cartwright that he hoped to have further evidence by Saturday next. Mr Churton submitted that there was no case against his clients. It was all speculation on the part of the police, and if the case was adjourned they ought to be admitted to bail. The Chairman said that the Bench were unanimous in their determination to remand the prisoners for a week without bail.

189 November 27 1875

Knutsford Sessions

WEDNESDAY **Joseph Ward**, boatman, for stealing ten fowls, at Macclesfield, four months.

190 February 12 1876

City Police Court

THEFT FROM A CANAL BOAT **James Dickinson**, a boatman, was charged on remand with stealing a shirt and a pair of trousers, the property of **Walter Roscoe** and another. It appeared that on Saturday last the prisoner was a passenger on board the canal boat "Owl", on which the prosecutor Roscoe worked. At night the trousers and other articles of clothing were missed, and the prisoner, who was wearing the trousers, was subsequently given in charge for stealing them. The prisoner also wore a shirt which belonged to another man on the "Owl", and when charged with stealing the property he said "All right". He now pleaded guilty to stealing the trousers and was sent to prison for a month with hard labour.

191 March 11 1876

Sessions

NO BILLS **John Taylor**, 27, boatman, Sarah Fryer, 27, married, and **Elizabeth Ruen**, 27, boatwoman, charged with manslaughter of Sarah Jane Tyrer, two years, at Runcorn, on the 2nd March last.

192 March 11 1876

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **Henry Morris**, a boatman, was fined 40s and costs for assaulting Jane Smallwood at Betchton on the 5th ult.

193 April 29 1876

City Police Court

EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF WILFUL DAMAGE **Wm James, alias H Morris**, a boatman, of no residence, was charged with wilfully breaking a bottle of gin. Henry Phoenix, of the Pig and Whistle, Princess Street, said he sent a boy on the previous day for a gallon of gin, and when the lad was returning with it the prisoner, who was accompanied by three other men, seized the vessel containing the gin and broke it on the pavement. The price of the gin to him was about 13s 9d. The boy was called, and stated that after breaking the bottle the prisoner and his companions took to their heels, but he followed them and, subsequently recognising the prisoner, gave him into custody.

Another boy who was with the last witness, corroborated the foregoing. P C 18, who apprehended the prisoner, said he at first denied all knowledge of the matter, and that on the way to the Police Office he attempted to "bolt" in Northgate Street. When in the office he said he would pay the damage. The Bench imposed a fine of 1s and costs, and ordered prisoner to pay 13s 9d for the damage.

194 May 27 1876

Cheshire Intermediate Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **James Dickenson**, aged 18 years, boatman, for stealing a piece of pork and two rabbits, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, at Chester; also for stealing a candlestick, the property of David Fox at Audlem; six months and one days hard labour.

195 August 5 1876

County Petty Sessions

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **Robert Morris**, of the boat "Egret", belonging to the Shropshire Union Canal Company, was charged with cruelty to a horse, on the 4th ult, in the township of Great Boughton. **Ernest Wood**, boatman, said the defendant pulled the horse in question out of his hands, and backed him into the canal under the bridge where they both met, and it took nine of them to pull him out with a line. The defendant denied doing anything to the horse or being near him, but the complainant said he caught him by the bridle and deliberately backed him into the canal. The defendant again said he did not interfere with the animal, but the complainant cut it on the back with a whip and it backed in, and no effort was made to get it out for some time. The defendant was fined 10s and costs 11s 6d, or in default seven days hard labour.

196 August 19 1876

Whitchurch

EDWARD HAMER V JOHN EVANS, THOMAS PARKES AND WILLIAM BENNETT This was a claim for £2 3s 10d, damage done to plaintiff's property at the Platt Lane, Whixall. Mr Etches of Nantwich appeared for the plaintiff. Only the defendant Parkes appeared, and the case against him was heard, although the action was a joint one. Plaintiff stated that he was a boatman, and he rented a house and stable at the Platt Lane. He left home on the 19th of March last, and returned on the 28th. When he left the stable it was locked, the wicket was right, and there was a chain around the gate posts. On his return he found the hatch (wicket) off its hinges, and it was also broken. One of the stalls in the stable was broken, and also a manger. It appeared to him that a horse had fallen against the manger. There was a good deal of hay on the ground in the stable, and it had been trampled upon by horses. There was also hay in the rack. From 6 to 8 cwt of hay had either been eaten or taken away. There was hay outside the stable, and he traced it to the canal. He afterwards saw Parkes, who told him that his horse was knocked up, and he could not get him any farther, so he put him in his (plaintiff's) stable. He said he would satisfy him for the damage done if the others would come to terms. Witness gave information to the police, but he afterwards thought it better to take action in the County Court. Elizah Downing, clerk to Mr C S Brooke, stated that on the previous morning defendant came to him and wanted to have the matter settled. He admitted that the stable had been broken into and that there were several horses in all night, but his horse did not eat any of the hay. Defendant, who gave his evidence in an amusing manner, stated that it was quite true that there were four horses in plaintiff's stable one night in March last; they were taken in at 9 p m and brought out at five the next morning. Evans went in first and previously he followed him. [Laughter] His horse did not eat any hay; he was knocked up too much to eat. He did not see any hay in the stable. Cross-examined by Mr Etches: Defendant said he opened the latch. He did not think the stable door was open. They had come from Pool (Welshpool) that day. His horse died in a day or two after; he was old and worn out. The horse did not eat much hay when he was in plaintiff's stable, not more than he could eat himself, and he was sure he could not eat much [Laughter] He did not take any hay away. From Whixall they went to Barbridge. The horses had hay and corn out of defendant's own boats, and it was bought at Barbridge, but he could not give the exact date. His Honour said this was a joint action, and each defendant was liable. Parkes would

have to pay £1 damage by instalments of 10s per month. Parkes's wife (in the middle of the court): We cannot pay that much; we have had to buy a horse lately.

197 September 2 1876 County Petty Sessions

CANAL BOATMEN IN A BOUGHTON ROW **George Evison**, boatman, Middlewich, and **John Partridge**, boatman of Sandbach, were charged with a breach of the peace on Saturday evening last. Samuel Clarke deposed to seeing the defendants stripped on the canal bank, and on their seeing him they assaulted him without any provocation, P C Good said he saw the defendants, who were very drunk, at Boughton, having a large crowd around them. They attacked several persons, and altogether behaved in a very riotous manner. A witness named Jeffries, residing at Thomas's Buildings, was called by the defendants, and he stated that the witness Clarke commenced the quarrel. The defendants were sober at the time. William Peak, shopkeeper of the Bars, said he saw the defendants both assaulted by different persons at Boughton. There was a crowd after them, and Evison went up Sharp's Entry with a basket on his arm. He went away from the crowd, and when he returned down the entry he was assaulted in the presence of the police officer, The other defendant was also assaulted. The Chief Constable explained that a boy fired a stone at one of the defendants, and he ran after him to thrash him, when the witness Clarke interfered to prevent the boy being beaten, and he got the worst of it. The defendants then went down Boughton, and a large crowd followed them. A Mrs Morris stated that the witness Clarke was the aggressor in the first instance, and the defendants were stoned all the way through Boughton. The charge was dismissed.

198 December 16 1876 Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **Herbert Higgins**, boatman, of Wheelock, was ordered to pay £2 17s 6d owing by him to the Guardians of the Congleton Union, for the support of his mother.

199 January 6 1877 Cheshire Adjourned Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **Wm Baines**, 25, boatman, was sentenced to a months imprisonment for stealing wearing apparel the property of Wm Wood, at Preston on the Hill, on the 23rd December.

200 February 24 1877 Local Intelligence

CHESHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS – WEDNESDAY These sessions were concluded today. Absolom Marsh, 33, hawker; Joseph Westwood, 39, hawker; Richard Bradshaw, 27, hawker; **John Owen**, boatman; **Edwin Owen**, 30, boatman; **Robert Jones**, 36, boatman; and **Joseph Maddocks**, 72, boatman; were indicted for stealing three tons weight of pig iron, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, at Wardle, near Tarporley, on the 8th January last. The jury found John Owen not guilty and the rest guilty; Marsh, Westwood and Bradshaw were sentenced to nine months imprisonment, and the others to six months imprisonment.

201 March 10 1877

DENBIGHSHIRE ASSIZES **Henry Weldon**, 68, boatman on the canal, was charged with stealing two trusses of hay belonging to Maurice Jeffreys, of Llangollen. He was found not guilty.

202 March 31 1877

OUR FLOATING POPULATION – DEATH IN A CANAL BOAT IN CHESTER Mr J Tatlock, city coroner, held an enquiry at the Bouverie Arms, on Friday week, into the cause of death of **Elizabeth Swift**, an elderly woman who resided with her daughter and son in law on board the canal boat “Mastiff”, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company. The first witness called was **Elizabeth Oakley**, the daughter of deceased, who stated that her husband was a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, and worked the boat “Mastiff”. The deceased lived with them in the boat. They had no house, and the deceased used to go up and down the canal with them in the boat. She had been ill off and on since she had been with them, and would not let her fetch a doctor or take any doctor's stuff. She complained of a

difficulty in breathing, and had a bad cough. On Monday they started in the boat from Wolverhampton, and got into Chester on Wednesday morning. She could then sit up in bed. On Thursday about three o'clock she got much worse, and witness's husband tried to get a recommendation for the Infirmary for her, but did not succeed, and she expired about half past five o'clock in the evening. The deceased eat but very little, and what she did eat consisted principally of bread and lard. On Thursday she had only half a pint of ale, but did not drink the whole of it. She took to her bed on Wednesday. In reply to Mr McEwen, visiting surgeon of the Chester Infirmary, the witness said the deceased formerly took some gin and treacle, but had none that week. It was taken to benefit her breath. She had not taken any since the previous Tuesday; she would not have it. The deceased complained of no pain, and her illness before death was sudden. Witness did not call into her assistance any other woman, as the deceased was dying. **Thomas Oakley**, husband of the last witness, stated that the deceased had been with them on the boat about nine months, and was one day well and the next ill. She complained only of a cough, and had never been away from the boat except on two occasions, once at Chester and once at Wolverhampton. On Wednesday morning she got up and dressed herself, and he saw her in the steerage of the boat. She had to leave her bed, as his wife had only been confined the previous Friday. The deceased steered the boat while a lad named Morris was engaged "throwing the line". She afterwards returned to bed, and never got up again, but she sat up in bed on Thursday morning. She had had nothing to eat since Wednesday; she would not take anything. He asked Mr Davies, who was over the boats, on Thursday, to get an order for her for the Infirmary, but he said he could not get one. He could not afford a doctor, as he had no money. They were paid by ton work. On the previous Friday, he had received a sovereign and, with the exception of a shilling, that had been all spent on Thursday. He had three children, one five years old, a second three years old, and the infant born on the previous Friday. The deceased, himself and wife, the three children, and the boy Morris lived on his boat. The deceased was as thin when she first came to the boat as at her death. In reply to Mr McEwen the witness said the last meal the deceased had was bread and lard, and she gave that back. She had a "sup" of ale also on Thursday. She had been asked on several occasions to go into the Workhouse, but she said she would beg from door to door rather than do so. By the Coroner: Thought she had some gin and treacle on the previous Tuesday; but she only took a teaspoonful of gin at a time. The next witness called was **George Morris**, who acts as boat lad to the last witness. His clothes were of the most shabby description, and were barely kept together, while his hair, which stood up on end like that of an Indian, was quite as alien to the services of brush and comb, as his face was to that of soap and water. He, however, is an intelligent lad, and gave his evidence in a very clear, straightforward manner. In reply to the Coroner, he said he was 14 years of age, and had worked with Oakley off and on for about five months. The deceased lived with them while he was on the boat, and both her daughter and son in law were very kind to her, and he never heard any dispute between them. He then corroborated the other witnesses as to the state of deceased's health. He never saw her the worse for drink except on one occasion when they were at Norbury, where she had two glasses of brandy. On Thursday while getting his dinner in the cabin he noticed the deceased's eyes turn an ashy hue, and she cried out, "Lord help me", and during the previous two or three days she used frequently to moan and groan and cry out, "Lord help me". She appeared to be in pain, and complained of a pain on the right side of her chest. On the day she died she had some tea, and he fetched her half a pint of ale, but she did not drink the whole of it. She eat but little. Her daughter was continually begging of her to eat, but she would not do so. She always objected to have the services of a doctor, and stated that if any doctor's stuff was brought to her she would not take it. In reply to the Coroner and some jurors the lad said his father was killed at Crewe, and he could hardly say whether his mother was alive or not. Formerly he had been better circumstanced than at present, and at Birmingham was in a printer's office, and at Willenhall, where he went at the request of his mother, he was engaged in an iron foundry. He left, however, to go on a canal boat, the life in connection with which he thought would be much easier and better. He had always a fancy for the life, but now if he had only the opportunity he would give it up and go back to some respectable employment – such as the printing he had left. There were some relations of

his living in and near Birmingham, but he would be ashamed to see them in consequence of his present condition, as when he left them he was "like a gentleman". He further stated that he could read and write, received no wages from his present employer, and never took any intoxicating liquor although often asked to do so, and he hoped he would never take it. He and his master and family eat meat whenever their means allowed them to buy it; but there was always plenty of other food. The Coroner remarked that the lad was very intelligent, and it seemed to be a pity that he should be where he is. A Juror: The boy is lost where he is. Mr A C McEwen, visiting surgeon to the Chester Infirmary, was next called, and stated that about six o'clock on the previous evening Thomas Oakley informed him that his mother-in-law was lying dead in the canal boat "Mastiff" lying at the Tower Wharf. He asked him how long she had been dead, and he told him but a short time. In reply to further questions, Oakley said he could not tell what her disease was, but she was in the habit of taking gin and treacle and not much nourishment in the way of solid food. He went to the boat the same night and saw the body. It was much emaciated. He had seen it again that day (Friday), and he could find no external marks of violence. From the evidence he had heard he could not tell what was the cause of death; it might be from bronchitis and heart disease, but he should not like to say for certain. There was, however, no reason to suppose, from the appearance of the body and from all he had heard, that she came to an unnatural death. There was nothing that pointed to anything else but death from natural causes. The jury returned a verdict of "Died from natural causes".

203 April 7 1877

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **Samuel Wilson**, aged 30 years, boatman, for breaking into the warehouse of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company, at Macclesfield, three months hard labour. John Royle and Frank Condliffe, charged with the same offence, were acquitted.

204 April 21 1877

City Police Court, Friday

BREACH OF THE PEACE **Robert Roberts**, Nantwich, boatman, and Thos Leech alias Frederick Jones, were charged with a breach of the peace by fighting in Water Tower Street on the previous day. P C 6 proved the charge. The defendants were dismissed with a caution on payment of the costs.

205 April 21 1877

SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF A CANAL BOATMAN Mr H Churton, county coroner, opened an enquiry on Wednesday last at the Black Dog Inn, Waverton, into the cause of death of **Charles Moston**, aged 21, who was found lying on his back on the towing-path of the canal near Waverton, in a dying state.

The first witness called was:-

John Morris, in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, and boatman on the "Star". He said: I knew the deceased, Charles Moston. He was a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company. I saw him last alive on Sunday evening about six o'clock, and about a quarter of a mile this side Bates's mill, near Beeston. He was then on the towing-path and jumped into a passing canal boat. He had not been, as far as I am aware, at Bebington's public house close by. I saw him go along the canal side and jump on to the boat. When I saw him first he was about a quarter of a mile from the public house. The boat he jumped on board was going at a rapid rate when he sprang on her from the towing-path. The boat is named the "Usk" and was in charge of **John Probert**, who is the master. Probert was on the towing-path leading the horse drawing the boat when the deceased jumped on board. There was no one on board at the time except Mrs Probert, who was steering the boat. The deceased was a boatman on board the "Usk". I had known the deceased several months, and the boat he jumped into was on its way to Ellesmere Port, being at the time I saw it empty. The deceased appeared to me to be sober when he jumped from the towing-path. On Monday morning about seven o'clock, as we were going to Ellesmere Port on our boat, I saw the body of deceased lying on the towing-path of the canal, near Waverton. He was on his back

and had all his clothes on with the exception of his hat, which was under him. I got off the boat, went to him and shook him, and shouted "Charley", after which he gave a groan. His eyes were closed when I first went to him, but after I shook him he opened them. I am sure he did so. Three of us then carried him to a boat belonging to Mr Parry, and one went to a farm house and got a little brandy with which we rubbed deceased's lips. He was not dead then, but life became extinct in about ten minutes after I first saw him. The deceased's face was marked in several places, but there were no wounds. His clothes were wet up to his middle, while the upper portion were quite dry. He was also covered with slush, just as if he had been rolled along the path. Where I found him there was a great deal of slush on the towing-path. I did not notice whether the ground around where the deceased lay bore any traces of a fight or struggle. I did not see the "Usk" on Monday morning when I found the deceased, but I saw it in the afternoon, about four o'clock, at Ellesmere Port. It was the same boat that brought the remains of Captain Coppack to Chester on Monday. While the boat was at Ellesmere Port I saw John Probert, the master, and told him we had found the deceased. The deceased had only been engaged on the boat about nine days. He was a regular boatman, and had been engaged at it all his life. As far as I know he was a very steady young man. I never saw him take any intoxicating liquor, nor did I ever see him the worse for drink. When we found the body on the towing-path we took it in the boat to Waverton Bridge and then sent for a policeman. I dare say the bridge would be about a mile and a half distant from where we found the deceased. By Mr W C Watson, surgeon: I saw the deceased breathe once when he was lying quietly. I did not see his chest move, but I heard a gurgling sound proceed from his mouth, around which there was a little froth. The deceased did not move at all, and I cannot say that he breathed distinctly. The Coroner: It is to my mind a most extraordinary thing that the man should have been able to open his eyes.

Mr Watson: Yes, it is most extraordinary. I dare say the shaking of the man would produce a sound from his throat, but it is difficult to account for the eyes being open. I cannot understand it, though I could well believe when the man was shook that a groan could be heard.

In reply to the Coroner, Mr Watson said he had seen the body and saw nothing externally to account for death. There were only superficial abrasions on the face. He had examined the head, and there seemed to be an unusual movement about the neck, which, he had no doubt, was caused by dislocation or fracture of the bones of the neck. He could not reconcile the fact of the man being alive at the time he was found on the towing-path with that of the spinal injury, and therefore it would be impossible for him to give an opinion as to the cause of death without a *post mortem* examination of the body.

The Coroner (to the Jury): We cannot proceed without a *post mortem* examination. It would be impossible.

Mr Watson: I think so.

The Coroner (to Superintendent Wilson): I suppose the other evidence you have will be simply a corroboration of what we have already heard?

Superintendent Wilson: I believe so.

The Coroner: There are circumstances in connection with this case which to my mind seem of a very suspicious character, and I feel it to be a case of some importance, and therefore should not be hurried over. I would therefore propose that this enquiry be adjourned until the day after tomorrow. Of course I will consult your convenience as to whether we shall hold the adjourned inquest in the morning or the afternoon. Probably it would be better that we should proceed with the enquiry in the morning, as we would then have the day before us. In the meantime a *post mortem* examination will be made, and the police will have an opportunity of further investigating the case, and bringing before you any evidence they may think necessary to bring forward as bearing upon the case. It would be useless to continue the examination of the other witnesses now. The most important witness, of course, at our next meeting together will be that of Mr Watson, who will make the post mortem examination. You have here I believe also the man who was master of the boat on which the deceased was engaged?

Superintendent Wilson: He is here, and I shall feel it my duty to take him into custody.

The Coroner: I can't help thinking, under the circumstances, that you are fully warranted in doing so. You have my sanction to arrest him, and I believe I have the power. There is a reasonable ground of suspicion, and upon that ground you can arrest him.

The inquest was then adjourned to Friday morning at ten o'clock, and John Probert, of Pant, Shropshire, the master of the "Usk", who was present with his wife, was taken into custody. He is a stout built man, of medium height, and is about 45 years of age.

The inquest was resumed at the Black Dog yesterday (Friday) before Mr H Churton. Mr J P Cartwright, Chester appeared for the man Probert who is in custody.

The first witness called was:-

Edward Parry. He said: I am a boatman and I belong to the Shropshire Union Canal Company. I knew Moston (the deceased) well. I did not see him on the Sunday night, nor before he was found on the towing-path. I last saw him at Newport, Staffordshire on Saturday, when he was with his boat, the "Usk". I saw Probert there at the same time. The boat was then on its way to Ellesmere Port, and we were going the other way. Our boat came to this district on Sunday night and arrived at Beeston about eight o'clock that night. About seven o'clock on the following (Monday) morning on arriving at a point about 400 or 500 yards on the Beeston side of Golden Nook Bridge, we saw the deceased lying on the towing-path. We also saw Morris and my father, **Edward Parry**, there. The deceased lay on his back. He was alive but did not speak; he only groaned. We carried him into our cabin, and I was left with him while my father went for some brandy. The brandy was brought, but he did not swallow any of it; his lips were merely rubbed with it. He lived about five minutes after we rubbed his lips with the brandy. We tried to get him to take some of the liquor with a table spoon, but he did not show any power of swallowing. It is about four miles from Bates Mill at Beeston to the place where we saw the deceased lying on the towing-path. It would take about an hour for a boat going at ordinary speed, to traverse this distance. There are no locks between these points. I did not take particular notice of the ground where the deceased was found. I saw nothing in the appearance of the deceased and Probert at Newport that was unusual. They both appeared to be sober. They had worked together for about three weeks.

By the Jury: There is no public house between Bates' and the place where deceased was found.

Superintendent Wilson: Bates' is the last. It is a public house.

By the Coroner: The deceased's clothes were very dirty, and his face was bruised. The upper part of his body and clothes was dry, and his hair was dry; the lower part of his body and clothing was wet.

By Dr Watson: The country whereabouts he was found was level. The tow path was level. I did not notice any big stones, but there might have been.

By the Coroner: The ground was wet and soft, and there had been a little rain that night/

By Mr Cartwright: I did not see the Snipe and the Usk go through the canal.

Dr Watson, Chester, said: I first saw the body of the deceased on Wednesday, lying at the Black Dog Inn. I examined him externally and found some slight abrasions of the skin on the face and nose. I found no other marks of violence on the body. On the same day I made a *post mortem* examination of the body. I first examined the neck from the unusual mobility of the head, and because I expected to find fractures or dislocation there. I found the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae were quite loose in the neck, and torn away from the seventh and fourth. The two bones were not fractured themselves, but there was a complete dislocation of them. There was no corresponding external injury; the neck was perfectly free from bruises. I then proceeded to examine the other organs of the body, and found the brain, heart, lungs, and all the organs, in fact, perfectly healthy, and the man seemed to have been very strong. The cause of death was pressure on the spinal cord in consequence of the dislocation of the neck. The effect of dislocation of the neck would be complete paralysis of all the parts below the seat of injury, and this effect would take place immediately. The heart would beat for a time. I think the *post mortem* examination is quite consistent with the statement of the witness that the man was found alive and that he groaned slightly. If the injury had been higher – if it had been a dislocation of the first and second vertebrae – death would have been instantaneous; the effect would have been the same as in hanging. When

I first saw the body I thought the injury was higher than subsequent investigation proved it to be, and that was the reason I asked the question at the opening of the inquest. A man in this condition would be positively motionless and helpless.

The Coroner: Suppose he received the injury on the boat, would it have been possible for him to have got out of the boat and placed himself where he was found?

Dr Watson: It would have been utterly impossible. He could not have moved hand or foot.

The Coroner: Suppose he had got into the canal after the injury?

Dr Watson: He could not have got out again.

The Coroner: I suppose your opinion is that there must have been a very considerable amount of violence to have caused dislocation of these two vertebrae?

Dr Watson: There must have been extraordinary violence. The connecting ligaments are very strong.

By the Jury: If his head had been forcibly pushed down there would be no marks, and if he had fallen from a height on a soft place there would also be no marks of violence.

The Coroner: I suppose it would not be possible for a man walking on the towpath, having an ordinary fall, to receive an injury of this kind?

Dr Watson: Quite impossible, I should think. Injuries such as this man had would in all probability be produced by the head being forcibly pressed forward by some means. I examined the stomach and found no smell of drink.

The Coroner: No; I'm told he was a very sober man.

By Mr Cartwright: You say you examined the stomach for any smell of drink, and you are quite clear there was no smell?

Dr Watson: Yes.

Mr Cartwright: How long would this be after death?

Dr Watson: I examined him on the Wednesday, and he was found on the Monday morning.

Mr Cartwright: Would it be possible for any smell of drink to have gone off?

Dr Watson: Alcohol might go off, but if he had been drinking sherry I think there would have been a trace of it. I attach no importance to the superficial injuries I have referred to.

Supt Wilson here said to the Coroner that several witnesses for whom he had telegraphed had not arrived.

The Coroner: Very well, I don't see the utility of keeping you gentlemen of the jury any longer.

The medical evidence we have just received is of very great importance, and renders the case so important that I think we should give Superintendent Wilson every possible opportunity of bringing up all witnesses whose evidence may bear on the case. I don't think we should be acting wisely in adjourning, as we did last time, for only two or three days. I think we should adjourn for several days, in order to give the fullest opportunity to Mr Wilson to bring before you such witnesses as he may think necessary. What do you say, Mr Wilson?

Superintendent Wilson: I should suggest an adjournment till this day week; it won't be too much time.

The Coroner: Very well.

The enquiry was accordingly adjourned until Friday next. We believe the deceased man was interred yesterday (Friday).

206 April 28 1877

SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF A CANAL BOATMAN – VERDICT OF WILFUL MURDER The adjourned inquest touching the death of **Charles Moston**, 21 years of age, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, who was found lying on the towing-path of the canal near Waverton in a dying state early on the morning of Monday, the 16th April, was resumed before Mr Henry Churton, coroner for West Cheshire, at the Black Dog Inn, Waverton, yesterday (Friday) forenoon. The deceased, it will be remembered, was connected with the boat "Usk", the master of which, whose name is Probert, is in custody on suspicion of murdering him. Mr J P Cartwright, Chester, appeared on his behalf.

Margaret Jones was the first witness called.

The Coroner: How old are you?

Witness: Fourteen the 10th of next June.

Coroner: Can you read or write?

Witness: No sir.

Coroner: Have you ever been to school?

Witness: No sir.

Coroner: Did you ever hear of the Bible?

Witness: No sir.

The Coroner: An awful state of things. This is an example of boating life.

The witness, however, exhibited much intelligence and readiness in understanding and answering the questions put to her. Her evidence was:- I am daughter of **Thomas Jones**, master of the canal boat "The Stag". Last Monday morning week, about five o'clock, we left the Brock Holes. The boat was empty and I was steering. We intended going to Ellesmere Port. Between Crow Nest Bridge and Golden Nook bridge I saw a young man lying on the towing-path, but whether he was dead or drunk I didn't know.

Coroner: I suppose it is not an uncommon thing to pass boatmen lying drunk by the side of the canal?

Witness: No sir. My father was driving and he stopped the boat as soon as he came up to the deceased. His head and shoulders were resting on the cop, and the rest of the body was on the towpath. I saw deceased's face and knew him to be "Charlie Mos'n". I had known him about six months, and he belonged to the "Usk". I last saw him on board that boat on the Sunday evening about five o'clock, at Tilstone Mills, on the other side of Beeston. The Usk was then travelling and he was driving the horse. I noticed Mrs Probert, the "missus" of the boat, steering; I did not see her husband. My father stopped the boat when I saw this man, for me to step off to tell another boatman to get deceased on the boat. I got off, and at my mother's request went back some distance and told **Joseph Boden** that there was a young man lying on the towpath. I then went to where the deceased lay. The time would be about a quarter after six o'clock. I did not speak to the deceased, but Joseph Boden spoke to him. Deceased did not speak, but made a gurgling noise in his throat, and groaned, "Oh! Oh! Oh!" His face was covered with blood; he had a whip tied round his shoulders, and his clothes were all over slutch. Deceased did not seem sensible. Boden tried to raise him and spoke to him saying, "Come Charlie, my man, and get on my boat, what are you doing lying here?" but he got no answer and he let him down again. Boden then said, "Maggie, let the donkeys go on again," and our boat then went on, and was followed by Boden's, deceased being left on the towpath where we found him. We saw no boat in front of us – nothing of the Usk, nor of the Proberts. We went on to Ellesmere Port, but saw nothing of the Proberts there. We met the "Brummagem Flyer" going towards Beeston.

The Coroner: When you saw this man in that position, did you think he was drunk?

Witness: Yes sir.

The Coroner: From first to last you thought he was drunk?

Witness: Yes sir. The towpath did not seem in an unusual condition. Deceased was a very quiet steady man; not a quarrelsome man. We told the "Brummagem Flyer" what we had seen, but nobody else. We remained with the deceased about 20 minutes. I did not see a hat about. The proper name of the "Brummagem Flyer" is the "Severn", the boatman of which, **Benjamin Foster**, I told what we had seen.

The Coroner: Your father does not seem to have been concerned about the matter at all.

Witness: No sir, he took no part in it.

At the conclusion of the girl's evidence,

The Coroner said: I am sure you are a very intelligent little girl, and you have given your evidence very nicely. It is a pity that a girl of your intelligence should not have the advantage of education; but I suppose it is very rarely that boatman's children go to school?

Witness: Yes sir.

William Williams was then called. He said; I am a boatman, and on the 16th inst I was employed on board the “Ceres”, the master of which was Joseph Boden. At a quarter to six o'clock on the morning of this date we came up to where deceased lay. Our boat, which was being driven by Boden and steered by me, was brought to a stand, and I got off; but before I got up to the deceased Boden said, “Never mind, start the donkeys and let us go on again”. I saw Boden take hold of him by the muscle of his right arm, raise him to a sitting posture, and put his hand at the back of his head. I did not touch deceased; I was not close up to him. I heard Boden say, “Charlie, come and go on the boat”. He did not speak, but made a groaning noise. We were not there more than a minute, and we did not stop again until he got to Chester. I knew deceased, and that he belonged to the Usk, which they saw on Saturday at the Tilstone locks, and on Monday forenoon in the Ellesmere Port “pound”, below Chester, coming back this way. I had known deceased for some time, and observed that he was a remarkably steady man, and also a quiet inoffensive man.

By Mr Cartwright: Did not tell the Proberts what we had seen when we met them at Ellesmere on Monday forenoon. We did not speak to them.

Joseph Boden, master of the “Ceres” was then called. He corroborated the evidence of the previous witnesses. He knew the deceased, and saw him lying on the towpath on the date in question a little past six o'clock.

The Coroner: What was your impression when you saw him?

Witness: I first thought he was in a “skirmage”.

The Coroner: You did not think he was in drink?

Witness: No, because he was not in the habit of getting drunk. When I went up to him he seemed to be in a sleep, and I did not do anything to him. He had two slight scratches on his face, but I saw no blood. I did not speak to him, nor raise the body up. I did not touch him; I merely looked on and noticed that he breathed. We remained about two minutes and a half. I was first told by the little girl Jones, who said that Moston was lying on the path bad. When we left there was no one with deceased.

The Coroner: Don't you think it would have been humane; part of your duty, in point of fact, to do something? Would it not have been better for you to have taken him to some place where he might have had help?

Witness: Yes sir.

The Coroner: You were not under the impression that he was drunk. You thought he was in some “skirmage” which accounted for his appearance, but you didn't attempt to do anything for him?

Witness: Well, I didn't know what was the matter; I have wakened several drunken folks.

The Coroner: But you have told me that it was not your impression that he was drunk; but that you thought he had been in some “skirmage”, and we know what that means. If he had been a dog you could not have treated him with greater indifference. Then you are sure you did not raise him up?

Witness: No.

The Coroner: Nor speak to him?

Witness; No sir.

The Coroner: Nor offer to take him upon the boat?

Witness: No I didn't. I saw the “Usk” at Ellesmere Port on Monday afternoon, about five o'clock, and Mr and Mrs Probert, but did not have any conversation with them. Did not see anything of the deceased afterwards.

John Palin, sergeant in the Cheshire Constabulary, stationed at Waverton, was then called. He said: On Monday morning, the 16th of this month, about eight o'clock, Edward Parry came to my house, and from what he said to me, I went to the Bone Works Bridge, over the canal at Waverton, and I there found the deceased, Charles Moston, dead in his (Parry's) boat. I then got a cart and conveyed him to the Black Dog public house. I observed bruises and blood on his face. I searched the deceased at the inn, and found 4s 9d in silver and 1s 8 1/2d in copper, a tobacco box, pipe and purse. I afterwards stripped and washed the body. The clothing was covered with dirt and slutch, and the trousers were saturated with wet up to his middle, but the upper part of his clothes was dry. His cap was wet. On the Thursday following I examined the spot where the deceased lay on the

towpath, and saw the marks of his coat and trousers in the mud very distinctly, and I also saw three finger prints, and that of the thumb of the left hand, and two finger prints and that of the thumb of the right. I judged the relative position of the hands from the impression of the clothes, by which I concluded that the deceased lay on his back. I also saw the impression of a man's boot on the cop where there was no grass. About three yards from where the prints were I saw some cinders and ashes, as if they had been thrown out of a boat; and about six yards further on the towpath I found some crushed oats and beans, as if the horse had been feeding there, and they had fallen from the nosebag. The distance from the cop to the canal would be from two to three yards. The depth of the canal near the side at this point is about three feet and a half. I saw Probert, the man in custody, at Chester on the Monday night, and warned him to attend the inquest, and he did attend at the opening on the Wednesday following.

Edward Parry sen said: I am master of the “Woodcock”, a boat belonging to the Shropshire Union Company. I knew Moston, the deceased, having become acquainted with him about three months ago. I was with my son Edward Parry (who was examined this day week), when our boat came up to the point at which deceased was lying on the canal towpath between six and seven o'clock on the morning of Monday the 16th. I was steering, and I got on the towpath and went to the deceased. When I got to him I said, “Poor fellow”, being under the impression that he had been kicked by a horse, and had been lying there all night. I also said, “He's starved to death; let us take him into our cabin”. He seemed as if he had no use in his arms or legs, but he was not stiff. The minute we got him on the boat I ran to the farmhouse by the bridge to beg a drop of brandy. I got some brandy, and when I got back I mixed it with hot water, lifted him up a bit and tried to make him take some of the liquor in a teaspoon, but I could not perceive that he swallowed any. I asked one of our boatmen named Morris to listen if he heard any breathing, and he said he heard a gurgling sound; but he died in a moment or two after. This would be about quarter of an hour after we saw him.

John Owen said: I am master of the “Dart”. I knew the deceased and saw him last on Sunday night, the 15th inst, about six o'clock, near Bate's Mill at Beeston. He jumped on to the boat “Usk” as she was on the move from that point at this time. John Probert was driving the horse of the “Usk”, and his wife stood in the hatchway steering the boat, and Moston, the last I saw of him, jumped on the boat and stood by Mrs Probert. He appeared to be very sober and steady. I don't work on Sundays and our boat remained there until between five and six o'clock on the Monday morning, when we proceeded towards Ellesmere Port. The next I saw of the deceased was John Morris standing beside the deceased, who was lying on the towpath between Golden Nook and Nixon's bridges. I got out of my boat and went to the deceased in company with Edward Parry, the last witness. Deceased was lying on his back, with his head on the cop, and insensible, and his face was covered with bruises and blood and dirt, and he was unable to speak or move. I assisted in getting him on to Parry's boat, and we did our best to see if we could bring him round. I was not on the boat when he died. I was driving the horses as fast as I could, in order to get the deceased to a police officer or a doctor. I saw the Usk leaving Ellesmere Port, as I was arriving there on Monday afternoon.

The evidence of **Thomas James**, master of the “Snipe”, which accompanied the “Usk” on its journey to Chester, and of the men employed on it, was also taken, but the hour at which the inquest concluded – six o'clock – prevents us from giving it until our Evening Edition is issued. The man Probert and his wife, Jane Probert, made voluntary statements.

In the result, the jury found a verdict of “Wilful murder” against both Probert and his wife, who were thereupon committed by the Coroner to take their trial on that charge at the Cheshire Summer Assizes.

207 May 5 1877

THE SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF A CANAL BOATMAN NEAR CHESTER – THE INQUEST – VERDICT OF WILFUL MURDER We continue the report of the proceedings at the adjourned inquest held before Mr Henry Churton, the county coroner, at the Black Dog Inn, Waverton, touching the death of **Charles Moston**, a canal boatman, who was employed on the Shropshire

Union Railway and Canal Company's boat "Usk", and who was found in a dying state lying on the towpath near Waverton early on the morning of Monday the 16th April. As the inquest did not conclude until a late hour on Friday evening, our First Edition only contained a portion of the proceedings.

Thomas James said: I am master of the "Snipe" a fly boat belonging to the Shropshire Union. I knew the deceased. The "Snipe" and the "Usk" went together on Sunday for some distance, and from what I saw deceased and Probert seemed on comfortable terms. My boat was in front. After passing the second bridge below Bate's Mill I went into the cabin as it was my turn to sleep. When we got to Darlington's Bank, which is on the Christleton side of Egg Bridge, about eight o'clock, Probert's wife came up and said to our steerer that their chap had stopped behind and had got in the canal. I got out and said, "Why didn't you stop and bring him with you?", and then I ordered my man to stop the horse so that we might go back for him. I then went to put my shoes on, and by that time Probert had come up with his boat. I said to Probert, "Where has he got into the canal?" and he said, "Egg Bridge". Upon that I along with Probert and one of my men named **Rowlands**, went back to about 100 yards on the other side of Egg Bridge from here. Probert then made a stop and said, "We'll go no further. It isn't at Egg Bridge that he got in, but the Halfway Bridge where he got in the canal".

Superintendent Wilson: That is the same as the Golden Nook Bridge.

Witness: I said to Probert, "Was he on the bank and all right?" Probert said, "Yes, he'll be after us just now; let us get back to our boats and go on".

The Coroner remarked that as this evidence affected Probert and his wife it would be right to have them both present. The two were accordingly brought into the room.

In cross-examination by Mr Cartwright, witness said they came on pretty quick, and about six miles was traversed before he was called by Probert's wife.

Mr Cartwright: During the time "Usk" and your boat were together was there anything to drink?

Witness: Nothing at all.

Mr Cartwright: Didn't Moston have some washings of sherry?

Witness: Nothing of the sort.

Mr Cartwright: Are you speaking the truth?

Witness: Yes; quite confident.

Mr Cartwright: On your oath?

Witness: Yes, there was nothing at all of the sort.

Humphrey Roberts said: I am employed on the "Snipe". I remember steering the "Snipe" on Sunday night week, and about eight o'clock remember Mrs Probert coming up to our boat and saying something. Our boat was stopped, and in about five or ten minutes Probert's boat was up to ours. The boats were never very far from each other, but I did not take particular notice as to who steered at particular points. At Golden Nook Bridge Probert's boat was three quarters of a mile behind. Mrs Probert said their "chap" had been in the canal, and wanted me to go back for him. This witness gave his evidence in a very fragmentary and disconcerted manner, and some points had to be almost dragged out of him. The Coroner, who said he could plainly see the man had been drinking, sharply rebuked him for sottishness in getting muddled with beer while waiting to give evidence on an enquiry of such an important nature as this.

Richard Rowlands said: I am one of the hands of the "Snipe" and remember Sunday evening week passing along the canal towards Christleton. When we got to Darlington's Bank, I was steering, and I remember Mrs Probert coming up and saying, "Our chap has stopped behind". She said at first that he was at Egg Bridge, and I and Thomas James and Probert went back. Mrs Probert also said the deceased had got into the canal. We did not go so far as Egg Bridge, for as we were going along John Probert said deceased was at the Halfway Bridge, and he was not going all that way and leave his horse standing on the bank. He would not go any further back. I didn't see anything more of Probert and his wife, nor have any conversation with them.

By Mr Cartwright: I don't recollect anybody saying that Moston was big enough and old enough, and could come on afterwards. It is a rule that flyboats must not stop anywhere, and Probert's boat

is a flyboat. Nobody was driving Probert's boat when Mrs Probert came up. Probert was steering. **John Jones**, a youth, said: I am employed on board the "Snipe". On the Sunday night in question I slept from Beeston to Christleton, and from that point I drove the horse to Chester. I met Mr and Mrs Probert at the stables at Chester near the canal, when I was putting up our horse. Probert gave me a bottle of gin to drink from. I drank from it and handed it back to him. Then Mrs Probert and myself walked away together. I said to Mrs Probert, "Where is Charlie?" She said, "He had stopped behind, and been in the canal. I can't rest in my bed till the chap comes. I'm sure somebody will find him dead in the morning". I had seen the deceased at Beeston on Sunday evening. He was then sober, and all right.

By Mr Cartwright: There was no one besides the two of us present when I had this conversation with Mrs Probert. I did not say anything of it until I told Thomas James. I saw Probert and Mrs Probert at Beeston, and they and the deceased appeared to be on friendly terms.

This concluded the evidence.

The Coroner then proceeded to sum up. He carefully summarised the evidence which had been called, and dwelt on the testimony showing the respectability and steadiness of Moston, and the indifferent and cruel manner in which the men who first saw the deceased on the bank had treated him, as contrasted with the humane conduct of the two Parrys and Morris. He then said it would be for the jury to sift all these facts, and so analyse them as to enable them to return a satisfactory verdict, not only satisfactory to themselves, but a verdict which would satisfy the public. The two main questions they had to deal with and determine were whether the deceased's death resulted from an accident, or whether there was any reason to believe that the injuries which caused his death were inflicted by either one or more persons. In considering these questions, it would be necessary for them to take into their consideration the theories and probabilities of the case. In considering whether death was the result of an accident, they must recollect the evidence as to the position in which the deceased was lying when found, and that the doctor had told them that it was utterly impossible that any fall the deceased might have had on the towing-path could have caused the immense amount of injury he found in making the *post mortem* examination of the body. The cervical vertebrae had been violently dislocated and the ligaments torn in such a manner as could only be caused by an enormous amount of violence inflicted on his person. It therefore seemed impossible that he could have received such injuries on the towing-path. It might be said that he had fallen into the canal accidentally and fallen against something with great violence; but this theory was a very improbable one, because if he had fallen into the canal accidentally from any part of the boat he would have been submerged, whereas it was shown that the deceased's clothes were only saturated to his middle, the other part of his body being perfectly dry. Again if he had, in falling from the boat, received the injury which had caused his death, he must of necessity have been drowned, because the effect of these injuries would be to utterly paralyse him and render him perfectly helpless – more helpless, as Dr Watson stated in his evidence a week ago, than an infant would be. Had he received the injuries by falling into the water from the boat death must have taken place immediately by drowning. The jury must take all these matters into their consideration, and also the possibilities of these injuries being inflicted by some person or persons. Who were the persons there at the time? There was evidence that there were only three – the deceased. Probert and Probert's wife. He (the coroner) must confess it astonished him how such a serious amount of injury could have been inflicted as was found and described by the doctor. There must have been an enormous amount of violence used to produce what he found. Then again, as he had said before, they had no motive, no apparent motive, for the infliction of such serious injuries. What might have taken place was mere matter for speculation; but, assuming that he was murdered, and that he had received these injuries from the hands of Probert, there must undoubtedly have been something beforehand. Supposing these injuries were inflicted in this manner, whatever might have taken place prior, it was quite clear that the injured man must be got rid of out of the boat. And if he was removed from the boat, was it possible for one person to have moved the deceased, a helpless, paralysed mass. The jury might suppose, and he might assume also, that there was more than one way of removing him from the boat. Probably the boat might have been in such a position that the

deceased might have been removed by two persons, one on the towing-path and the other in the boat. It was just possible that the head and shoulders might have been thrown from the boat and caught hold of by the other person on the bank, and the legs might have slipped into the canal, and that might in some measure account for the saturated condition of part of the clothing of the deceased. The evidence of the witness James was of the greatest importance to the jury in considering their verdict. The Coroner then read the whole of the evidence given by James, and proceeded to say that when James got information of the deceased being left behind he acted like any man would have done under the circumstances. He not only went back himself, but took one of his men with him, and these two, with Probert, went back along the towing-path. Before they had gone more than 200 or 300 yards in the direction of Egg Bridge, Probert, with the most brutal indifference, refused to go any further, saying he was not going to allow his horse to stand on the cop, and that it was not at Egg Bridge but at Halfway bridge where deceased was. So, in the first place, Probert came with a lie in his mouth. The jury must take into consideration the conduct of Probert in forsaking the man he ought to have protected, for, in a certain sense, he was the same relation as a master was to a servant. Instead of looking after him he refused to go any further, as much as to say, "He may take care of himself, and return when he chooses. Another part of the evidence which was most important was the statement made by John Jones, the last witness called. Mr Churton then read Jones's evidence, and said his statement as to what Mrs Probert said to him was very important, because it must have been perfectly clear to the boy, as it was perfectly clear to him (the coroner) and the jury also, probably that Mrs Probert felt very uncomfortable on the Sunday night, and was evidently under the impression that this poor man was left in a very dangerous condition. And he (the coroner) must say that during the whole of his experience he never met with a more cruel case than this, because, supposing the deceased man had met with an accident, everybody would have expected that he would have received from Probert, who was his master. He (Probert) must have known, and his wife must have known, what his condition was. It would have been a physical impossibility for this man to have placed himself where he was found, and he (the coroner) could not help thinking that the deceased received the injuries which were found upon him in the boat, and, judging from the conduct of Probert and his wife, he had very little doubt in his own mind that they were the persons who inflicted the injuries. He therefore did consider this to be a case of so much importance, and involving so much responsibility upon themselves, that he thought they would scarcely be performing the duty they owed to themselves and to the public unless they fixed the responsibility on one or the other of these two persons. The room was then cleared, and the jury proceeded to deliberate. Shortly after, however, it was announced that Probert and Mrs Probert wished to make statements. The Coroner again sat, and having cautioned each, took down the statements as follows:-

John Probert said: On Sunday afternoon week, when we were coming down to Chester, I was on board the boat "Snipe". I got off mine and went on it. There was a basin of sherry about three parts full, and Humphrey, who had shouted me on, asked me to drink some of it. Below Bate's Mill lock someone asked my man (deceased) to come on the boat. He went on, and remained there until we got to the third bridge from the lock, the bridge beyond the Brock-holes. The deceased then came on board the "Usk" and we three got our tea at about Crow Nest bridge. I then said, "Charles, one of us must go to the horse, as we are getting far behind the "Snipe" and we'll be shut out". He then went off with the whip in his hand. How he got off I can't say, as I was in the cabin, but my missus said, "Charles is in the cut". Upon that I came out and saw him on the bank. I said, "Charles, come on the boat". He seemed stupid. I asked him three times to get on, but he did not give me any answer. We let the horse go on, and it went on by itself until we got to the next bridge. I said to my missus, "It's no use waiting; he don't intend a-catching us. We had better go on to catch the "Snipe", and as we were coming through the Farm House bridge, I saw the deceased coming through the bridge behind. The missus went up to the "Snipe" and asked where was Thomas James, and on being told that he was lying down she told them that our man was behind, and to stop the boats. I said, "Tom, we had better go back and look for him". On going back, within a hundred yards of Egg Bridge, James asked me where did we leave him, and I said, "In the straight behind the

Farm House Bridge". He said, "I understood that your missus said it was at Egg Bridge, and I'm not going back if it is there". I said, "If you won't come I can't go, for I've only the missus with me". That's all I have to say about the young man. He was with me ten days, and I never had a bad "mis-word" with him.

Jane Probert, wife of John Probert, said: Before we came to Bate's Mill lock, Thomas James called my master on board the "Snipe". When we came to the lock there was a pair of boats in the lock. Waiting for these two boats to come out the wind blew our boats to the outside of the canal. I jumped off and went on to James' boat and looked what they were doing. He had got a brown can full of what I thought was ale, and there was a tea basinful as well. Tom James asked me to drink, but I said, "No, I don't drink ale". He said, "It's not ale; do you drink; it won't do you any harm". I then caught hold and I drank. It was sherry wine. The other boats were then out, and I called to my master to come out and assist them down the lock. My master came on his boat at the bottom, and Charles jumped on the "Snipe" and continued there until we reached the Farm House Bridge. There the three jumped off together, and afterwards my man came on board our own boat and had his tea while he steered. The deceased then jumped off the boat with his whip in his hand, and in doing so he slipped on the boat, caught the coping, and his legs went in the canal. My master jumped out and called to him to come on the boat several times. He did not come on, but he followed us along by the stern end of the boat. The horse gained on him, going by itself, my husband and I being both on board, and he fell behind. My master seeing this asked me to drive the horse a bit sharper to catch up to the "Snipe". I did so, and was not long before I did catch up. Rowlands was steering and I asked him where was Tom James, and he said he was lying down. I told him to get up, and when he did so I said to him, "Tom, I'm very sorry you've been giving him something to drink. He is lagging behind, and he don't seem as usual since he got off your boat. You go back with my husband to fetch him or see whether he will come". Three of them started to go back – my husband, Tom James and Rowlands – but they did not go out of my sight, when they turned back. When they came back I said, "You rascals, you never went; you only want a drop more of that stuff". Tom James made answer and said, "The man is not so bad that he can come on. He is old enough and big enough to come on". My husband said, "Yes, he's sure to catch us before we get to Chester, and if you go on, Tom, I shall go with you to get down the locks. We shall tie up at Chester to wait for him", and we did so. We took the horses to the stable. I never saw the deceased again, nor any of those who belonged to the other boat.

The room was again cleared, and shortly after the jury delivered their verdict "Wilful murder against John Probert and Jane Probert".

Superintendent Wilson then took the woman into custody also, and she and her husband were committed to Chester Castle on the coroner's warrant to take their trial at the Cheshire Summer Assizes on the capital charge.

208 May 5 1877

THE SUSPECTED MURDER OF A CANAL BOATMAN NEAR CHESTER – THE PRISONERS BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES **John Probert** and **Jane Probert**, man and wife, who stand committed to the assizes on the coroner's warrant for the wilful murder of **Charles Moston**, a canal boatman, at Hatton, Waverton, on the night of the 15th or the morning of the 16th April last, under circumstances which have already been detailed at great length in our columns, were brought before Mr R O Orton Esq at Broxton, on Thursday. Mr J P Cartwright, Chester, appeared on behalf of the prisoners. The man was the captain of the boat "Usk" belonging to the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, and the deceased was employed as a hand on board that boat; and early on the morning of Monday the 16th April, he was found in a dying state lying on the towing-path of the canal, at Hatton near Waverton, Probert was taken into custody by Superintendent Wilson, and as the coroner's jury implicated his wife as well, both have been in charge of the police since Friday night last week.

Superintendent Wilson having briefly opened the case, the first witness called was.

Mr Wm C Watson, surgeon, Chester. He said on first examining the deceased he found the head was unusually mobile, showing injury to the spine. He subsequently made a *post mortem* examination of the body. From the evident injury to the neck he examined that first, and found that the fifth and sixth vertebrae were torn from their attachments to the fourth and seventh; and the dislocation of these vertebrae and pressure upon the spinal cord caused death. Great violence must have been used to produce the injury; but it might have been caused accidentally if deceased had fallen on his head from a height on a soft place. He could not suggest any means except that violence had been used to press the neck forward, sufficiently strong to rupture the ligaments. The effect of the injury would be complete paralysis, rendering him incapable of moving.

The Clerk (Mr G F Boydell): How long is it possible for him to have lived after receiving the injury?

Dr Watson: It is possible he might have lived a day or two. There are cases where persons have lived.

The Clerk: Could you perceive any signs of his being in drink?

Dr Watson: No I traced no signs of drink. Alcohol might have passed away, but if he had taken sherry I think some traces would have been found as it does not evaporate so quickly. There was no smell of drink at all. If he had fallen into the water after the injury he would have been drowned. He could not have acted for himself.

By Mr Orton: The bruises on his face appeared as if his face had been rubbed on the ground.

By the Clerk: An ordinary fall on a flat surface could not have produced this injury.

By Mr Orton: If a rope had got twisted around his neck, I think it would simply have dragged him down and dragged him along; and it is more likely in such circumstances that the first and second vertebrae would have given way, causing immediate death. The effect would have been much the same as in hanging. The injury could not have been caused by a fall against the canal cop or bank; and there was no corresponding external marks, such as a kick from a horse would have produced; nor could it have been caused by tripping his foot on the path and falling down.

By Mr Cartwright: I observed a small scar under the chin. It is the same nature of abrasion as on the other parts of the head – merely a small piece of skin rubbed off. The injuries could not have been inflicted by pressing the head backwards. Apart from the appearance of any external injury, in my opinion direct sustained pressure on the neck would not have caused the injury.

Mr Cartwright: Would you undertake to say that this injury could not have been caused if a rope got twisted around the neck?

Dr Watson: My opinion is that the first and second ligaments would more likely have given way in that case; and I may add that if a rope had been twisted round his neck with sufficient violence to dislocate his neck there would have been some marks around the neck.

Mr Cartwright: Would you undertake to give an opinion that the injury could not have been inflicted by the sharp kick of a horse?

Dr Watson: I think it would not.

Mr Cartwright: Directly on the spot?

Dr Watson: Directly on the spot? I should expect to find in that circumstance considerable bruises externally, and crushing, not rupture, of the ligaments. The effect of the ligaments being torn showed indirect violence instead of direct. I would not undertake to say that the force of a horse's kick is not sufficient to produce this injury, but I would expect to find marks. The kick of a horse would produce bruising on the parts.

Mr Cartwright: Have you taken into consideration, in reference to the non appearance of external injury, the fact that the deceased wore a thick sleeved flannel waistcoat and strong undergarments?

Dr Watson: Yes, but I would still have expected to find bruising.

Mr Cartwright: From the extent of the tearing of the ligaments would you not have expected the deceased to have died very soon?

Dr Watson: From all established facts it is possible he might have lived a day or two. There are plenty of cases. There was immediate compression of the spinal marrow, and that caused death. There was no fracture of the skull; the brain was perfect.

John Morris, master of the “Start” canal boat, proved finding the deceased lying on the towpath near Waverton early on the morning of Monday the 16th April. He had last seen deceased alive and well at Bate's Mill, Beeston on the Sunday night, as the boat was leaving in the direction of Chester, and he described the conditions in which the man was found. He added that he saw Probert at Ellesmere Port, when Probert asked him if he had seen “Charles” anywhere (meaning the deceased) and witness told him he had found him dead. This was about four o'clock on Monday afternoon. Mrs Probert was standing with her husband when this conversation took place. No one else was present. Nothing else passed between them.

Cross-examined by Mr Cartwright: When Probert had finished speaking to him a man named **Thomas King** came and called him to go on his boat and he went. The man said to Probert, “Come, John, I want you quick”. Probert immediately got on the boat and went off. It would take a fly boat, such as the “Usk” was, about an hour to come from Bate's Mill to where the deceased was found. Deceased was covered with slush, as if he had been rolled along the towing-path. That was witness's impression. He never knew the deceased to be drunk; he was a quiet inoffensive man. Some men in the company's employ were unsteady, and occasionally the boats went on without them. Witness had once seen a man lying asleep on the bank.

Edward Parry junr, of the boat “Woodcock”, stated that he was present when the deceased was found. On the Monday night he saw the “Usk” tied up at Cow Lane, Chester. He saw Probert and his wife, but did not say anything to them about finding Moston. He saw Probert having a pint of ale at Pritchard's, by the canal side, and there were several people there, but witness heard no talk about Moston.

Edward Parry sen, master of the “Woodcock” repeated the evidence given before the coroner as to finding the deceased and tending him on his boat until he died.

John Owen, master of the boat “Dart” also repeated his evidence given at the inquest. He added that he had a conversation with Probert at Ellesmere, at the stable. He said to him, “We have found your man”. He said, “Well, whose fault is it?” Witness replied, “I don't know”, and then a man came and hurried Probert off with his boat. He had no further conversation with either of the prisoners subsequently that he remembered.

By Mr Cartwright: The only boat that he saw that met them was the “Brummagem Fly”, at the spot where deceased was found. He saw Probert's boat leave Bate's Mill about six o'clock on the Sunday night, and about half an hour or three quarters after two boats, which he thought were the “Ceres” and the “Stag” followed on. They were fly boats; but were drawn by donkeys, and would go very much slower.

By Mr Orton: It would take one of those boats about an hour and a half to go from Bate's Mill to where deceased was found. He had no “hand” on the boat. He and his wife and five children were the occupants of the cabin.

Margaret Jones, a young girl, and **William Williams**, both canal people, were then examined, and testified to the same effect as when before the Coroner.

Joseph Boden, master of the “Ceres”, said he came across the deceased lying on the towpath on his back with his head on the cop. Did not touch him, nor speak to him; but stood by him for about two minutes and a half, and noticed that he was breathing.

The Clerk: Didn't you try and do anything for him?

Witness: No, sir.

The Clerk: You think he was drunk?

Witness: No, sir.

Cross-examined by Mr Cartwright: There was some boat passed his somewhere about midnight; but he could not say what boat it was.

Mr Orton: You swear you did not touch him, nor speak to him?

Witness: No, sir, I did not.

Mr Orton: Don't you think it was a very unfeeling thing?

Witness: I didn't know that I should concern myself about other folks.

Mr Orton: If you had been lying there, wouldn't you have liked someone passing to concern

himself about you? I think it is a very unfeeling thing that you should have left any man there, and according to your own statement, just breathing.

Witness: I didn't know what was the matter.

Mr Cartwright: Why didn't you do anything for him?

Witness: I didn't know whether I would be doing right or wrong.

Mr Orton: You may be sure that you could be doing no harm in helping a fellow creature lying there in this condition.

Witness: No doubt sir, but I didn't know.

Henry Clegg, master of the "Delhi" (a new witness), said he was in the employ of the Bridgewater Trustees. He remembered the night of the 15th April. His boat left Beeston about eleven o'clock for Ellesmere Port. When about three miles from Beeston, the horse going by itself, and witness steering, the animal stopped at something for about a minute. He smacked the whip and shouted "Gee", and it went on. Didn't see nor hear anything. This was before they got to "Halfway" bridge, going from Beeston to Chester.

By Mr Orton: It was not an unusual thing for his horse to stop. She often stopped to "peg" at the bank, and sometimes turned back. It was so dark that he couldn't see the horse and could hardly hear anything for the wind.

By the Clerk: Saw Probert and his wife at Ellesmere Port on Monday morning. Probert said nothing about the deceased.

By Mr Cartwright: Didn't meet any other boat. It was not a usual thing to meet another boat at this point on Sunday nights. He knew the horse stopped because when she started again he felt the "snatch" of the boat.

Benjamin Foster (another new witness) said he was master of the "Severn". He remembered Monday the 16th April, and left Ellesmere Port about two o'clock that morning for Birmingham. Half way between Golden Nook and Nixon's Bridge they met a boat coming towards them, of which John Morris was the captain. This was at the point where the deceased was found, and another boat commanded by John Owen was close to. He didn't know the deceased, but saw him lying on the towpath and asked Edward Parry, sen, whose boat was a little way off, to take him on board. Witness did not leave his boat; in fact he had enough to do to keep clear, as the wind blew so roughly, and all the other people had left their boats and horses. Saw Probert's boat at Chester about five o'clock the same morning, but had no conversation with either him or his wife.

John Palin, sergeant in the Cheshire Constabulary, stationed at Waverton, was then called. He said: On Monday morning, the 16th of this month, about eight o'clock, Edward Parry came to my house, and from what he said to me, I went to the Bone Works Bridge, over the canal at Waverton, and I there found the deceased, Charles Moston, dead in his (Parry's) boat. I then got a cart and conveyed him to the Black Dog public house. I observed bruises and blood on his face. I searched the deceased at the inn, and found 4s 9d in silver and 1s 5 1/2d in copper, a tobacco box, pipe and purse. I afterwards stripped and washed the body. The clothing was covered with dirt and slutch, and the trousers were saturated with wet up to his middle, but the upper part of his clothes was dry. His cap was wet. On the Thursday following I examined the spot where the deceased lay on the towpath, and saw the marks of his coat and trousers in the road very distinctly, and I also saw three fingerprints, and that of the thumb of the left hand, and two fingerprints and that of the thumb of the right. I judged the relative position of the hands from the impression of the clothes, by which I concluded that deceased lay on his back. I also saw the impression of a man's boot on the cop where there was no grass. About three yards from where the prints were I saw some cinders and ashes, as if they had been thrown out of a boat; and about six yards further on the towpath I found some crushed oats and beans, as if the horse had been feeding there, and they had fallen from the nosebag. The distance from the cop to the canal would be from two to three yards. The depth of the canal near the side at this point is about three feet and a half. I saw Probert, the man in custody, at Chester on the Monday night, and warned him to attend the inquest, and he did attend at the opening on the Wednesday following. I examined Probert the Thursday after the inquest was opened, and found his right leg bruised.

Thomas James, master of the “Snipe” who was examined before the Coroner, was then called, and repeated his evidence so far.

The Clerk asked him if Moston had had anything to drink on his boat?

Witness said he had some weak stuff. Probert and his wife had some to drink above Bate's Mill.

The Clerk: Did they all seem sober?

Witness: Yes there was nothing to make them drunk; there was nothing but a drop of swillings.

Mr Cartwright (in cross-examination): You say Sergeant Palin told you on Monday about the man being found dead, and that you were with a number of other boatmen, Probert amongst others, in Pritchard's public house, was there any conversation there about the occurrence?

Witness: No sir, not the least.

Mr Orton: Are you quite sure there was no conversation?

I never heard anything sir.

Mr Orton: It is a very strange thing, if you were one of those who were going back to look for him, that you did not hear anything said, nor say anything yourself.

Witness (hesitatingly): There was so much talking, one amongst the other; but there was something said about this man being found.

Mr Cartwright: Well, then, you did hear conversation about it. Was it not the fact that they were talking about this generally in the public house.

Witness: I don't recollect.

Mr Cartwright: Will you swear?

Witness: No, I won't swear.

Mr Cartwright: Were you sober?

Witness: I dare say I had a drop of drink.

Mr Cartwright: Remember, now, this is a very serious thing. Do you mean to swear on your oath, when you knew the police were on the alert, that this was not the subject of conversation that night?

Witness: It might have been, but I don't recollect.

Mr Cartwright: You say Probert was there; didn't you say anything to him?

Witness: Probert was there, nearly tipsy.

Mr Cartwright: And were you very nearly tipsy?

Witness: Well I had a good drop of drink. I had been to different public houses in the course of the day; and I had been at Pritchard's two or three hours. I hadn't seen Probert before during the day. I did not say, when we were going back to look for Moston, that I would not go further, as he was old enough and strong enough to take care of himself; it was Probert who refused to go back further, and said Moston could come on after.

Mr Cartwright: Now about these swillings, where did you get them from?

Witness: Out of some empty casks; I didn't get them myself.

Mr Cartwright: In your boat?

Witness: Yes, out of some empty casks.

Mr Cartwright: Did you ask Jane Probert to have a little drop?

Witness: I won't say for certain, but I believe she had some. I might have asked her.

Mr Cartwright: And she did have some out of a basin?

Witness: Yes, I think she had; in fact it was little better than water.

Mr Cartwright: But she thought it was as good as sherry, and said so?

Witness: I don't recollect her saying anything about that.

Mr Cartwright: Now be careful, James, didn't she say it was sherry?

Witness: I don't recollect so.

Mr Cartwright: On your oath, sir, do you swear you don't recollect what the woman said?

Witness (hesitatingly): No I don't recollect.

Mr Cartwright: Will you swear she did not say it was sherry?

Witness: I will not swear that.

Mr Cartwright: And wasn't it sherry?

Witness: I don't know; it was swillings out of empty casks.

Mr Cartwright: Sherry swillings?

Witness: I can hardly say what it was.

Mr Cartwright: Do you suppose that people will believe you would drink a lot of stuff in which there was no good? Was it not sherry, now?

Witness: I don't know sir. It might be sherry swillings from empty casks.

Mr Cartwright: Where had you brought the casks from?

Witness: Newtown.

Mr Cartwright: And the "Snipe" had been taking sherry wine to Newton?

Witness: We took casks up; but I don;t know what they were.

Mr Cartwright: Do you mean to say you have been in this business so long, and didn't know what the casks contained?

Witness: We had some casks, that's all I know.

Mr Cartwright: Do you mean to say that it was not wine?

Witness: I don't know; we often have cargoes, and don't know what they are.

Mr Cartwright: You "suck the monkey" sometimes, don't you?

Witness: Sir. [Laughter]

Mr Cartwright: "Suck the monkey". You know what that means : tapping the cask?

Witness: No sir.

Mr Cartwright: Were not these swillings the produce of "sucking the monkey" out of the cargo you had up?

Witness hesitated.

Mr Cartwright: On your oath, sir, was that not where you got them from?

Witness: Empty casks was where we got them from.

Mr Cartwright: I believe Moston had some of this stuff?

Witness: Yes, he had some of these washings.

Mr Cartwright: He had a basinful or two, didn't he?

Witness: No sir, I don't think he had a teacup full.

Mr Cartwright: Now what makes you say that?

Witness: He drunk out of a basin.

Mr Cartwright: Did you see what he drunk?

Witness: Yes.

Mr Cartwright: Did you help him?

Witness: No, I didn't. He did not have so much as the others; about a teacup full.

Mr Cartwright: Probert and his wife, and Moston, all came on board your boat in search of these washings?

Witness: Yes.

Mr Cartwright: You invited them?

Witness: No, I didn't invite them.

Mr Cartwright: Have you had to give any account of these sherry washings to the Shropshire Union?

Witness: No sir.

Mr Cartwright: Have they not asked you some questions about it?

Witness: Yes, I think they did ask me one or two about some sherry that they wanted to know.

Mr Cartwright: An enquiry has been made, has it not?

Witness: Yes.

Mr Cartwright: The company would discharge any man interfering with the cargo in this way?

Witness: Oh yes.

The Clerk: But they have not discharged you, have they?

Witness: No, sir, not that I know of.

John Jones, a youth employed on the "Snipe" was then called, and repeated his testimony before the Coroner, and added that he did not see anyone drinking on the "Snipe", but they had some casks on board.

Humphrey Roberts, also employed on the “Snipe” repeated his evidence given to the Coroner.

Mr Boydell (the clerk) asked him if there was any drink on board.

Witness: There was a drop of swillings.

The Clerk: What were they made of?

Witness: There was a drop of water put into a cask.

The Clerk: What was in the cask?

Witness: I don't know.

Mr Orton: Not paraffin? [Laughter]

Witness: I don't know what had been in the cask.

Cross-examined by Mr Cartwright: I was not alarmed at Moston staying behind; sometimes men stay behind and run away.

Mr Cartwright: Now about these washings; when did you begin to “wash”?

Witness: We put a drop of water into an empty cask on Sunday morning.

Mr Cartwright: But you were drinking it out of a brown can. You transferred it from this barrel and put it in the brown can in the cabin?

Witness: No, it was on the top of the cabin.

Mr Cartwright: What did you drink out of?

Witness: A tea basin.

Mr Cartwright: Was that the smallest article you had got there.

Witness: Yes, it was.

Mr Cartwright: No glasses, or tumblers, or anything of that sort.

Witness: No sir, we never use them.

Richard Rowlands, a youth also employed on the “Snipe” repeated his evidence.

The Clerk asked him what they had to drink on board the “Snipe” on Sunday.

Witness: We had a drop of swillings.

The Clerk: What were the swillings of, do you know?

Witness: I cannot say,

The Clerk: Were they good?

Witness: Not much better than water. [Laughter]

The prisoners were then “called upon” in the usual way, and they put in the statements they made to the Coroner.

John Probert added: I got the bruise on my leg at Nantwich on Tuesday, in jumping on my boat there. The agent there saw this. I had no time to stay at Ellesmere Port on Monday, to make enquiries about the young man, as when I met the witnesses who speak to seeing me there I was called on in a hurry to proceed with my boat, which was bringing a corpse up to Chester.

Both prisoners were then fully committed to the Cheshire Summer Assizes to take their trial on the capital charge.

209 **May 12 1877**

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **Enoch Green**, a boatman, of Wheelock, was fined 20s and costs for wilfully exposing himself at Sandbach while suffering from smallpox. The defendant had been admitted into a smallpox hospital at Manchester, but escaped to Sandbach while suffering from the disease.

George Clad, of Middlewich, boatman, was fined 10s and costs for cruelty to a horse at Tetton the 13th ult.

210 **July 2 1877**

City Police Court

INDECENT BEHAVIOUR **Enoch Green**, boatman, and Catherine McTavish, prostitute, were charged with indecent behaviour in the same place (St John's churchyard), on Sunday night. Both defendants were sentenced to seven days hard labour.

211 **July 2 1877**

City Police Court

A DRUNKEN BOATMAN **John Owen**, a powerfully built man, was charged with being drunk

and riotous on the previous evening. P C 18 deposed that about a quarter to twelve on Wednesday evening he saw the defendant drunk and riotous in Seller Street, near the canal bridge. Witness went towards him, when the prisoner took his coat off and challenged witness to fight. Witness tried to remove him, but the prisoner became very violent and they both fell to the ground. A man who went to the assistance of the police officer stated that while the constable was on the ground a boat came along, and that if he had not lifted up the rope the officer would have been drawn into the canal. Defendant said he was very sorry for what had occurred. He had had some drink, and it had got over him, as he was not used to it. The Bench fined the defendant 10s and costs, and ordered the witness to be paid his expenses.

212 July 28 1877

MURDER CASES Public interest centred in the murder cases in the calendar. In that of the **Proberts** – man and wife – who had been committed for the murder of a boatman under circumstances which will be in the recollection of our readers, it was felt that the evidence amounted to nothing more than mere suspicion. The learned Judge felt this too, and in his charge to the Grand Jury, said that having carefully looked through the depositions of the witnesses again and again, he saw nothing to warrant them finding a true bill even. It would be a cruel thing, he said, to subject innocent people to the agony of a trial for their lives. Acting upon this, the Grand Jury ignored the bill, and the prisoners were discharged, but not before the Judge had taken the opportunity of saying rather emphatically that he did not believe the deceased had been murdered. That he met with a violent death there is not the least doubt. His neck had been broken, and yet there were no external marks of violence. How his neck was broken was left to conjecture. Certainly, if a murder had been committed, whoever did it had departed from the ordinary track, and deprived a fellow being of his life in such an original way as to leave it open to doubt whether the injury was the result of wilful violence, or accident merely. Certainly we agree with the Judge there was no proof that the man did not meet with his death by accident, and that is, indeed, the most likely way in which the deceased lost his life.

213 August 11 1877

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **William Allcock** of Tetton, boatman, was summoned to show cause why he should not pay £3 16s 6d owing to the above named Union (Congleton) for the support of his mother, and ordered to pay the same at once.

214 September 8 1877

GENERAL NEWS In referring to the disclosures made before the City Coroner, a few months ago, when an inquiry was held into the cause of death of an old woman on board a canal boat, we dealt with the subject of life on board canal boats generally. We took occasion to point out that the Government had not taken up the question one moment too soon. Men, woman and children were packed together in these boats in defiance of all sanitary laws, and in a manner quite shocking to all sense of decency. The ignorance of these people was of the most dense kind, and so their round of life went on. “Eating, drinking and smoking” as a correspondent says in another part of our issue, with reference to boatmen generally, enters largely into the occupation of their lives, and he might have added, varied by frequent fights and violence of various kinds, and the free use of as foul a vocabulary as could be found among any class of men anywhere. In January next all this will be changed. An Act for regulating these boats will come into operation, and with the Elementary Education Acts now in force, ought soon to change the aspect of canal boat life for the better. In the letter referred to, it is shown that the earnings of a boatman and his wife and children are put down at about £2 5s a week. That amount is higher, we are told, than the wages received by boatmen on the canal with which our readers are familiar, but even under the Shropshire Union Company, their pay equals the wages of the skilled labourer or the mechanic, and is ample to enable them to pay for the education of their children, and keep a house. We observe that an attempt is being made to set up a floating chapel upon the canal in Chester, with the view of bringing the canal population under

good influences. We wish the scheme all success, and hope its promoters will be able to make a better report of the results of their operations than the clergyman whose parish abuts upon the Grand Junction Canal. The main difficulty with these people will be their ignorance. In the course of time, under recent legislation, this will be overcome, but for the present any attempt to reach these people must prove to be uphill work. Still, the idea is well worth a trial, and we hope it may not hang fire for want of the small amount which is required to commence it.

215 September 8 1877

REVELATIONS OF LIFE ON A CANAL BOAT The special commissioner of a London contemporary, writing from Braunston, on Tuesday, says:-

Braunston is a straggling village, with a church and parsonage, on the borders of Northamptonshire. I am particular in mentioning this, for with the exception of the church, which has some pretensions to architectural merit, and the parsonage, which is as pretty in its surroundings as can well be imagined, there is nothing to commend itself to the visitor in the village of Braunston. The Oxford Canal lies in the valley at the foot of the hill leading from Dunchurch and Rugby (from which town it is distant eight miles), and crossing a bridge, and walking a hundred or so yards up the main road, you reach the terminal station on the Grand Junction Canal. A few red brick buildings, a blacksmith's forge, the curate's cosy dwelling among the trees, a half dozen or so dilapidated cottages, and a basin or dock for the repair of broken down barges, constitute the principal features of the station. I was anxious to reach Braunston, because I had been given to understand that it was a rallying ground for the boatmen, and besides was the place where dwelt a gentleman who knew about as much of barges, bargemen, bargewomen and their children as any man in England. When, therefore, Braunston Basin hove in sight from the rickety plank thrown across the barge's tarpaulin, doing duty as the boat's ridge, I was glad. I may say indeed that I rejoiced for more reasons than one. I had had enough of barge life for the present, and would fain have changed my resting place among the sugar bags for the more comfortable repose of the village inn.

This morning Captain Jonah took the opportunity of having a few words of friendly conversation with me on the canal bank. He wished me clearly to understand the position of affairs as far as himself and family were concerned. "Look you", said the skipper, "things could not be wuss with me and mine than they is at present. We're bound to be done some good by if they carries out this education of the children. Trade's awfu' bad. Prices is down to nothing on account of the comp'tition with the railroad. It's as much as us can do to make both ends meet now. If they takes the childr'n they takes in course their mothers, and if they takes the mother, that means rising the wages. D'yer see?" I gave Captain Jonah to understand I quite saw that; but I said that I should like to have a few figures from him, if he would not mind giving them, in reference to this subject of wages. I ascertained from him that at present the boatmen calculate to make from five to seven pounds for the round "voyage" from London to Birmingham and back, which, including stoppages, occupys about fourteen days. Out of this sum they have to find the cost of a horse, provender, stabling and so forth, and the money for ropes, lines and straps used in drawing the boat. Pressing the skipper closely, I found that he considered £2 5s a week was but a fair wage for the labour of himself, the wife and Joe. At the very least £2 clear ought to be earned, and if they took the children away, this sum would have to be raised to meet the additional expenses of rent for a cottage for the wife, and schooling for the children. Such, in brief, were Captain Jonah's views with regard to the Canal Boats Act. A "mate" of his being in charge of a barge in our wake, I took occasion to have a few words of conversation with him also. He had heard considerable talk of the "larnin'" question. He thought it was a good job. Many, however, didn't – many of the boatmen were so ignorant that nothing you could do for them, however good, would make them satisfied. The women, this boatman thought, ought to be taken out of the boat. It was no place for a woman. Parenthetically I may here remark that I have an impression that the cap'en had a personal and purely selfish reason for advancing this opinion. His wife and he were constantly at high words, and doubtless if the authorities were by chance to take his wife out of the boat he would be only too glad. And I, moreover, surmise that, the wife once on shore, the husband would do everything in

his power to remove from his own shoulders the responsibility of supporting her. The wife's keep would fall upon the parish. I am satisfied that the local authorities interested in carrying out the provisions of the Act will have to exercise extreme caution in dealing with any clause affecting the women. When I say "women" I am alluding more particularly to the mothers of the children who next year will come under the cognisance of various local school boards. I was talking yesterday to the clergyman of a parish abutting on a certain section of the Grand Junction Canal. He gave me instances of the great difficulty that had been experienced by the guardians of the poor in his district in reaching cases of wife desertion by the canal boatmen. He mentioned the case of a boatman's wife with six children, and all she received from her husband's wages was ten shillings a week. "He stays away up in London," said the clergyman, "and we can't get hold of him." The rev gentleman, whose words I am quoting, had had some experience of the canal boatmen, their habits and mode of life. "I think you may say as a rule," he remarked in the course of conversation, "that their whole idea of life is eating, drinking and smoking. They are utterly selfish. They spend all they earn upon themselves. We got up a special Sunday afternoon service in the parish for a time; but they wouldn't attend it. They had no coats, they pleaded, and didn't like coming to the church in their sleeves – the boatmen generally wear a sort of fustian jacket, with brown cotton-stuff sleeves – and the service was perforce dropped". The clergyman considered the average wage they earned ample to keep the men, their wives and children in fair comfort, if the boatmen would only keep out of the beershop.

But to return to my companion of this canal voyage. The captain of the barge that had kept us company from Paddington Basin was distinctly of opinion that the women should be kept out of the boats. "Why shouldn't they be kept out. We could do without 'em. The Bridgewater Trustees had 'em out," said the man, "but they sneaked in again. Not that it was the women's fault. Some of the cap'ens asked leave to take their wife from sich a place to sich a place, and then they was aboard ag'in. And once aboard they stuck there". I have already said that I am disposed to take this man's statement for what it is worth. I mention it because it happens to lead up to one of the main difficulties to be contended with in carrying the Act into operation. This difficulty, however, is not one affecting the political bearings of the measure, but is purely of a social character. "If," continued the boatman, "they takes away the children, why the mother must live ashore to look after 'em. And don't yer see", - here Captain Jonah's friend followed the reasoning of Captain Jonah himself - "when the mother goes off with the child'n they's got to rise our wages." I said to the man, "Now what do you consider is the actual amount in hard money you put into your pocket weekly – I mean for the labour of yourself, your wife, and the two lads?" I was particularly desirous that my question should not be misunderstood, and I repeated it, because I had become more and more convinced during my journey down the canal that there was no difficulty whatever in carrying the Act into operation as far as the authorities were concerned; the matter resolved itself purely into a question of labour and wages. The boatman replied, and I was careful to take down his words, "We reckon to get two pound ten". "Those are excellent wages," I replied, "hundreds of clerks in London make less, and a few artisans more. You ought to be able to educate the children yourself, even now, on those wages". Captain Jonah's mate opined that they might be considered good wages "by anyone as didn't know all the expenses the boatmen were at". Continued the skipper, "I've lost two 'orses only lately, and I gave eleven pounds for that there 'orse. Where's I to get another eleven pounds from if I loses that 'un?" I felt compelled to agree with bargee that eleven pounds sterling were not to be scraped together nowadays without some forethought and thrift. As this wages question will bye and bye, when the Act comes into operation, become – unless I am greatly mistaken – a point of debate between the barge owners and the men, I have been especially particular in collecting information on this point; and I may add, from a variety of sources, from the canal superintendents, barge owners, bargemen and their wives, and the lads tending the horses. A gentleman who is a partner in a large firm of lime and cement merchants was good enough to give me the following particulars. His firm owned about twelve or thirteen boats working as "lime" boats, and six or seven as "coal" boats, on one of our principal canals. There was not a boat of these, so far as he could call to mind, that was not worked by a man, his wife and a lad. "I believe",

said this gentleman, “that the boatmen in our employ have made, and are making, on the average £2 5s a week, and this with no rent and taxes to pay”. I understood him to mean that this sum was earned by the joint labour of the three. I have yet to ascertain, however, whether this rate of earnings is common throughout the trade and steady throughout the year. If it be so, it seems to me that the boatmen have nothing to complain of now, and will have little to complain of by and by when out of this forty five shillings per week they have to set aside a few shillings for the rent of a cottage and for school pence for the children. With one exception all the bargemen I have talked with on my journey down the Grand Junction Canal look at the Act as simply a master's question. One man and his wife, who had reared thirteen children, and only one out of the boat, were against the Act; but this formed the solitary exception. I am inclined to agree with the clergyman whose opinion of the bargemen I have already quoted, that the men as a rule eat well, drink well and smoke well. The first night I was on board the barge I threw an eye across the captain's supper table. I noticed a tempting boiled knuckle of ham, a shapely piece of corned beef, fat and lean admirably blended, a crusty loaf of fresh baked bread, a dish of pickled onions and cucumber, and a goodly can of ale. In the morning there was an unlimited supply of milk, fresh from the cow, for the children, tea and bread for the skipper, his wife and guest. I may say that my own supper, from lack of forethought, was considerably in rear of the skipper's, and I was trusting that I might receive an invitation to the cabin. I may be permitted, perhaps, to express the hope that I shall never partake of a worse meal than that which graced the little cabin table of my friend the bargee, who thinks that things could not be worse than they are with him at present. Probably many who read this may consider their own lot at times a degree less desirable than that of Captain Jonah, of the good barge Mary Jane. I reserve the consideration of barge accommodation and the question of how the Act is to be carried out for another letter, which I will write after visiting the Potteries, where, I am told, the condition of the barge people is less favourable than that which I have been describing.

216 September 15 1877

Correspondence

OUR CANAL POPULATION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHESHIRE OBSERVER

Sir – I cannot refrain from writing a line in reply to your correspondent's letter in Saturday's *Observer* on our canal population. I quite agree with him as to the improvement that will in time take place when the Canal Boats Act comes into force, but I am certain from all I hear the wages will have to be raised above the present standard, viz 7d per mile, before the boatman will be able to become a householder. Allowing they make £2 5s a week, as stated by your correspondent, he does not remember, or may not know, the heavy expenses a boatman has to bear. 1st there is the keep of his horse, which costs him £1 a week; 2nd stabling for the same at 4d a night – 2s 4d, working seven days to the week; 3rd the cost of a new line every other journey for his boat. Deduct nine hours, allowing 5s for the line, £1 7s 4d expenses, leaving him the large sum of 17s 8d to keep himself, wife, and sometimes a family of four or six young children for week; and if he keeps a hand to assist him in working his boat, there is the man's keep, board and wages. This does not read much like the present rate of labourer's wages. The above information is quite correct, and after having eight years experience myself on the canals, and from what I have seen in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Chester, I am certain it will take more time to improve the boatmen of the present day than either Government or anyone else is aware of, except those who are connected with canal companies. I can only trust the Act will improve them, and that your correspondent's wishes as to the welfare of our canal population may become true; but I am afraid he will be much “older and wiser” before that event does take place. Our own experience of boatmen has taught many of us lessons, when trying to improve their condition in life, that it has been time thrown away. I trust we may be more successful with the floating population. I remain, yours truly.
C H WHITTAKER, Chester.

THE CANAL BOATS ACT AND THE BARGEMEN The special commissioner of a London contemporary, who is inquiring into the condition of the canal population, writes as follows from Runcorn on Thursday, the 6th inst:-

Yesterday I took leave of Captain Jonah and the crew of his barge, Mary Jane. Joe was fast asleep on the gangway of one of the lock gates. The sick relative had taken possession of my nest among the sugar bags, and was likewise asleep. Ellen, with baby tucked under her left arm like a bag of old linen, was leading the horse, on whose back Sam was astride. Jack, the lurcher, was scampering about in the fields, a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. The skipper was alone with me clearing up matters. "You talks about that 'ere 'orse. I tell yer 'er won't lay down. Once let un git used to a stable and 'er'll lay down fast enough. But not all us can do will get in to lay down, leastwise 'cept in Birmingham". This was in reply to an observation from me that Captain Jonah's horse seemed a trifle tired, and needed rest. "When us get to Birmingham 'er makes up for it. You see, 'er's used to the stable there, and the other 'orses, and 'er lays down like a lamb. But you might jist as well try to 'oist that boat across your shoulders as try to git that 'ere 'orse to lay down 'cept in Birmingham. Keep her belly full, says I to Joe, keep her belly allays full, Joe, and then 'er goes 'long like a steam ingin". I may say that I am able to speak with some authority myself concerning this same animal's idiosyncrasies. I was walking on the towing-path with Joe in the early morning of Saturday, about the hour that the working man of Rickmansworth were astir, and going their various ways to their labour, when Joe turned upon me unawares. "Jist walk arter the oss a bit while I runs on to the lock". I took Joe's whip and walked after the horse. For two long hours I walked after the horse (Joe, taking every available opportunity to rest, was found dead asleep on his ordinary bed, the gangway of a lock gate far on ahead) until fairly exhausted by curses loud and deep from boatmen passing in the opposite direction to ourselves, whose drawing ropes I fell foul of. The skipper, his wife and the sick relative enjoyed my discomfiture. "Er's a darned sight too cunnin' for yer, guvnor," said Captain Jonah, alluding to the horse, and coming to my rescue when a bridge stood straight in the way, and I had brought half a dozen barges to a standstill. "Er's drea'ful cunnin' if 'er once catches sight that it aint Joe as is walkin' arter her. Yer see it was 'cause 'er caught sight of yer. Yer should never let that 'ere 'orse see yer. Keep behind 'er, I all'ays says to Ellen, and then there's no stoppin' the boat". Captain Jonah and I took a friendly farewell of each other at a village ale house in the company of a few brother bargees invited for the occasion, the skipper's parting words to me being, "It's all a owner's question. Don't forget that, guvnor".

While at Braunston I had the advantage of having an hour's conversation with the gentleman to whom I alluded in my last letter. He is an owner of barges and a builder of barges; moreover, he has had many years' experience of the people working the boats on different canals. His pocket, in common with the pockets of most owners, will in all probability be touched by the "accommodation" clause of the Act. "I think there has been a great deal of fuss made about this matter of cabin accommodation," said he to me, "when really there is no necessity for it. Though the space is small, how long are they (meaning the boatman and his family) in the cabin? I could take you to places in London that are fifty thousand times worse in regard to space and cleanliness than the boat cabins are. Look down Limehouse, and about there. I quite agree that we want something done for the barge people. The children are terribly ignorant; we want something done, and something must be done for them. The education of the younger children is what is peremptorily needed. The boatmen and women must, as far as their condition is concerned, go as they are – let us look after the rising generation, and that as soon as can be". With this we went to a covered dock where a recently built barge was being painted, and stepped into the cabin. I took the dimensions down as follows:- 8ft 6in long, 6ft 6in in the widest part and 5ft high. I am bound to say and without hesitation that here the sleeping accommodation for two was ample in point of space as that which was reserved for married couples in the after-cabin of a 1680 ton ship in which I once sailed to New York. There was no obstacle to efficient ventilation, and there was a good side bed for children. Altogether I should have felt no difficulty whatever in passing this boat cabin as sufficient accommodation for a man, his wife, and two children. Absence of furniture, mess traps,

curtains, bedding, and the like, no doubt made a slight difference in the appearance of available space; but even with these additions I should still have been quite content to occupy the cabin myself with the number mentioned. Fresh air is after all what is most needed for children, and with all proper precautions such as is made on board ship to prevent people falling overboard, I should consider a child's life on board a barge infinitely preferable to a child's life in a London alley. A sort of painted rope netting rigged around the cabin deck would no doubt answer all the purposes of a proper protection for the children. It must be borne in mind that I am referring more particularly now to barge life on the Grand Junction Canal. I shall presently have something to say of barge life elsewhere.

Returning to the subject of the Act, the gentleman whose conversation I have been reporting considered that there was such prejudice against the canals now (I take it that he meant in point of competition with the railroads), and the depression in trade was at present so great that, really, unless matters mended, it would become a very serious question with the owners what was to be done when the Act came into operation. "It all resolves itself into a question of wages", said he. "There will be no difficulty at all in getting hold of the children if the men are paid sufficiently to keep a home for the mothers. That is, I think, what will have to be done. The women will, of course, belong to some parish, and the parish authorities will have to see that the children are properly educated". I asked him how he would guard against the possible evil of boatmen shirking the responsibility of contributing to their wives' support. "They are constantly travelling from place to place," said I, "and what is to prevent a man residing at Braunston, for instance, spending all his wages in London, and vice versa?" "You will, I am afraid, have that difficulty occasionally to contend against," was the reply, "but with a rise in the rate of wages, we shall get a better class of boatmen, and the thing will right itself. It is impossible to take the wife's labour out of the boat without offering compensation to the husband in some kind. We are all agreed upon this; the men see it, and the owners see it. We look forward to having a better class of boatmen and a better state of things on the canal generally. Understand this clearly," said the gentleman, in bringing our conversation to a close, "we owners are distinctly in favour of the Act, and consider it an excellent measure, though it must affect our pockets considerably".

I altered my plans, and instead of writing this from Burslem, as I promised, took the train to Runcorn, in order to make note of the condition of things on the Bridgewater Canal, which at this point joins with the River Mersey. I walked on to the canal bank, and jumped on to the first barge alongside the wharf. Its cabin accommodation was very bad indeed. There was a woman on board, and I asked her how many children she had. "One of her own, and one giv to her." "Given to you?" said I; "What do you mean?" "Well, this 'ere lad," said the woman, pointing to a boy of about twelve years of age, "he was giv to me". Later in the day I happened to mention this incident to a gentleman, whose knowledge of the barge people is as extensive as that of any person whom I have yet met with on my journey – he had laboured as a missionary among them, preached every Sunday at a mission chapel near the canal bank to the boatmen, and was in every way qualified to give me trustworthy information - "It's a very common thing for them to be lending their children from one boat to another," said he to me, "boys and girls both. For instance we had a little girl who used to attend our Sunday school here. She was about seven years of age. She had been attending school for eight consecutive Sundays, and had gained eight good conduct tickets. The child was looking forward with great hope and pleasure to gaining a ninth ticket, which she would have secured by her attendance at the school on the ninth Sunday. During the week she was lent by her parents to another boat. The poor child fell off into the cut and was drowned. We never saw anything of her after she left the school". "Good Heaven!" said I, "do you mean to say such things have been permitted amongst these people?" "How was it to be prevented?" he replied. "Up to the present time no one has taken the slightest interest in the condition of the boatmen but here and there. George Smith, of Coalville, has been the man who has been mainly instrumental in drawing public attention to the matter, and, thank God, we have got the Act. Now we shall see what's to be done?" The state of the barges on the Grand Junction Canal struck me as being Paradise compared with the state of many of the barges that came under my observation on the canal side in the

neighbourhood of Runcorn. They were filthy to a degree, and in many cases utterly unfit for human habitation. I ascertained casually that of all the boats plying on the Bridgewater canal the Wigan "flats" are out and out the very worst, and the Wigan boat-people the most depraved. As was said to me, "They are more immoral, more dirty – and that would be quite mild to say of some of their boats – and the most difficult to labour amongst. Other barge-people are bad; but the Wiganers are more depraved in every way, shape and form". I am merely reporting word for word what I was told me by a gentleman of great experience among the boat people on the Bridgewater Canal, and I had this statement confirmed by several.

I made some inquiries during my stay at Runcorn concerning the rate of wages paid to the boatmen, and ascertained that two men working on one of the "broad" boats earned between them 50s a week. No women are allowed to live on board this description of barge, which is worked by skipper and mate. The skipper earns on an average 27s, the mate 23s a week. The accommodation provided seems to be ample, and the ventilation, with a little improvement, might be made all that is to be desired. I took occasion to ask a man who had served first as a boatman on the canal, then as an able seaman in the merchant service, and afterwards in the same capacity in the Royal Navy – a man therefore of wide practical acquaintance with shipboard accommodation – I asked him what hands, in his opinion, the barges might reasonably be allowed to carry. He thought on board the "broad" boats two, and on the "flats" three; the narrow boats might likewise be permitted to carry three persons. The space in the cabin of the "broad" boats I found to be as follows:- About 5ft 6in high, 9ft long and from side to side 9ft. The sleeping berth was about 9ft by 3ft.

While walking on the canal bank at Runcorn a man came up to me, and said he would like me to come over to his barge. Accordingly over I went. Presently I stood on the barge dock, the centre of a circle of brawny armed women, shaggy haired children and very frouzy clothed men. An Amazon with tanned face and goodly beard put her arms akimbo, and stood forth the champion of the party, and what she had to say was received with bargee cheers, thus:- "Ers right" "Sal knows on't" "Leave her alone for knowin' about us" "It's right what she's a-saying, master" "Listen to her, master", and so on. The Amazon was very clear and decided in her manner. She looked around now and again upon the circle about her much as a great speaker looks upon an audience around and before him, and gave an appropriate shrug of her shoulders here, and a nudge of the head there, and a lusty bang with her fist at that portion of her speech which was very telling in point of oratorical action. "Master", she began, "they's got to recompense us. They's got to gi us more money. They'll 'ave to do som'at for us when they taks the children out of the boats, or us can never live. The masters w'll have to find the 'orses to pull the boats, and they'll have to pay the boatmen regular weekly wages. That's what they's got to do. We w'd like to be ashore and 'ave the childr'n to school; but us can't live shore without more wages". I asked the woman what she considered fair wages for the husband to earn, and she replied, "Thirty two shillin' a week, and to find nothin'". Then she went off on another tack. "Look you, master, I wants to know what's to come o' the poor women as works the boats?" The Amazon gave a nod of the head sideways, and an inquiring look round, as much s to say, "Now, friends, I have him", and continued, "You go to'ards Wigan and what do you see? You'll see lots of poor women, captains, and they works the boats to maintain their children. What's to 'come o' them?" "Why work us to be sure," exclaimed a sinewy sister of the barge, "What else?" "Four out o' six boats as comes from Wigan is worked by the women who've lost their 'usbands. Wat'll become to them poor craters?" asked the spokesman of the assembly. "Who's to support the childr'n as the mothers 's took away out of their boats?" "It is not intended," I said, "to prevent the woman working in the boats if the accommodation is sufficient; and things would be better for them all, they would find this time next year." "We 'opes so, I'm sure, master," was the chorus in reply, and with that I took my departure, distributing largess by way of compensation for the time during which I had occupied their attention.

218 October 20 1877

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS – TUESDAY **Enoch Rollinson**, boatman, for stealing £3 5s and some wearing apparel from Edwin Tuckey, of Marston, on the 14th March, was sentenced (there being no

fewer than ten previous convictions recorded against him) to seven years penal servitude.

Timothy Bailey, 43, boatman, for stealing £2, the moneys of Thomas Bricknall, of Preston Brook, on the 1st of August; a silver watch and guard, the property of Thomas Sherwin; and £1 10s the moneys of Thos Poxon at Wheelock, Sandbach, on the 4th August, was sentenced to six months imprisonment on the first indictment, and one day on the second.

219 October 27 1877

THE LATE CASE OF DROWNING IN THE CANAL AT CHESTER Mr J Tatlock, City Coroner, held an adjourned inquest on Monday afternoon at the Town Hall, on the body of a young woman found under somewhat mysterious circumstances at the bottom of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company's wet dock near the Tower Wharf, on Sunday week. The inquest was adjourned to allow of a post mortem examination being made, and to enable the police to communicate with the captain of the "Vixen" on which boat the deceased was employed, and also with her supposed relatives.

Dr Haining was called, and he said he had made a *post mortem* examination of the deceased, and found the body of a well-nourished young woman, about 5 feet 6 inches in height, and apparently about 20 years of age. There were no external marks of violence; all the internal organs were healthy, and there was no evidence of the cause of death. In the chest there was no evidence of death from suffocation. The evidence suggested shock. He found a bruise on the right side of the head, after cutting through the scalp, a little above and behind the right ear, just under the hair. There was an effusion of blood, to the extent of about half a teaspoonful, between the scalp and the bone. The brain was not affected except from the state of the body. There was no fracture of the skull. The bruise might have been caused either by a blow or a fall, and it could not have existed more than a few hours before death, and it might have been only a minute before death. Falling on a flat surface would not have procured it; the bruise was so situated that if the deceased had fallen on a flat surface her ear would have been injured. The bruise he saw was not sufficient to account for death. His opinion was that the deceased did not die by drowning – that was suffocation in the water. She died from shock, which might have been caused by a blow or a fall from a height into the water.

By the Jury: She never breathed after being in the water. Striking on the edge of the dock and falling into the water would account for the bruise.

By the Chief Constable: Striking on a convex surface such as the edge of the graving dock might account for the bruise he saw.

The Coroner: The bruise might have been covered by the surface of half a crown, but there were no external signs of the bruise.

By the Chief Constable: The bruise is behind the right ear.

By the Coroner: In the stomach was found a considerable quantity of undigested food, consisting of meat, bread and apples.

Johanna Smith, wife of a boatman residing in Bilston Street, Wolverhampton, said she knew the deceased, whose name was **Johanna Banks**. She was 24 years of age last May. She came from Kidderminster, and while there worked at a carpet factory as a weaver. She did not know when she left there, but the deceased had been "messing" about Wolverhampton and "the country" during the last three and a half years. She last saw the deceased about three weeks ago in Wolverhampton, when she brought her a bundle of clothes to wash, and on asking her when she would be back, she said the following week. She also said that she was going to Nantwich to fetch a load of stone to the "bat holes" near Bilston. When asked who she was with, she said "with Samuel Walker". The deceased was her niece.

Mrs Clarke, widow, captain of the boat "Vixen", on the Shropshire Union Canal, said the deceased joined her on the 3rd October at Wolverhampton. The boat was then going to Chester, which they reached on the following Friday. They did not go to Chester in the "Vixen", but in the boat "Turn". The "Vixen" was in the dry dock, Chester, under repair; but the repairs were finished on the Friday they arrived in Chester, and they went into her that day. On the following Tuesday morning the

deceased went with her in the "Vixen" to Ellesmere Port, and they returned the same night. The deceased left the boat in the bottom lock for the purpose of seeing if the top lock were ready. She did not return, and witness never saw her alive afterwards. The deceased was to be paid after every voyage, and there was nothing due to her until she got back to Wolverhampton, and then she would be entitled to 4s. The boat was going to Wolverhampton when the deceased left. They had had no quarrel, and she did not understand why she left. The deceased had meat about a quarter of an hour before she went away. She was entitled to it in addition to the 4s she would receive. The deceased was not off the boat five minutes from the time she was engaged until she left altogether.

By a Juror: Knew the man who said he recognised the bonnet; it was her (witness's) bonnet. She gave it to the deceased the night before she left, and she put it on. Made enquiries about the deceased at the Christleton lock as she did not turn up, and she asked the man in the boat before her, and he said there was no use asking about her as she must have gone back/

John Morris, 18, boatman, Orchard Street, Chester, said he first saw deceased last May races at Chester, and she was then "messaging" about the canal not seeming to care where she went. Saw the deceased with Mrs Clarke's boat about a fortnight ago, and last saw her alive at a quarter to nine last Saturday night week. She was then going down Northgate Street in the direction of the Cross. He did not speak to her. Saw her pulled out of the Shropshire Union Canal Company's wet dock on the following day. His mate, **John Jones**, was with him when he saw her in the street. He had seen her before on the same day, between five and six o'clock, while on board his boat working it down the lock. She asked him for a piece of meat, and he gave her some meat and bread. Saw her at the "Brown Cow" the same night between eight and nine o'clock, but did not speak to her. He saw her have a glass of ale, for which she paid, tendering either sixpence or a shilling. The deceased left the "Brown Cow" before they did. He and his mate went into Charles Williams, the barber's, and she went on, and that was the last he saw of her alive.

Mary Jane McWaters, living at Canal-side, by the Tower Wharf, said she saw the deceased first last Saturday fortnight, when she came with Mrs Clarke and the boat into the dock. She saw her frequently afterwards passing her father's house, but never spoke to her. Saw her last on Saturday night, between eight and half past eight o'clock. She was then passing the house in the direction of the bridge over the canal, nearly opposite her father's house. Her father's house was about ten yards distant from where the body was found. Was up until after twelve o'clock that night, but heard neither screams nor noise. There was a flat in the dock where the deceased fell in, and there were two other boats in the canal close by.

Eliza Morris, 18, Orchard Street, said she knew the deceased by sight, but had never spoken to her. She last saw her alive on last Saturday night week, about twenty minutes past nine, going up Northgate Street in the direction of the Northgate. She appeared to be quite sober.

This concluded the evidence, and the Coroner, in briefly summing up, said there was no evidence to show how the deceased got into the dock, and how she sustained the injury on her head: the only evidence they had went to show that she did not meet her death by drowning, but probably by shock, and the best thing therefore they could do was to return a verdict that the deceased was found dead in the graving dock, and died from a shock.

The Jury returned a verdict to that effect.

220 December 1 1877

Local Intelligence

THE CASE OF THE PROBERTS Mr J C Stevens, of Abbey Street, has asked us to draw the attention of the public to the case of the **Proberts**. It will be remembered that at the last assizes but one Probert, who is a boatman, and his wife, were indicted for the murder of another boatman near Chester. There was practically no evidence against them, and the Grand Jury ignored the bill. To say nothing of the anguish suffered by the accused, Probert had to sell his horses, which were the means of his livelihood, and other property, to pay the costs of their defence upon their trial for their lives for a murder which, in the opinion of Lord Justice Branwell, had never been committed. The sum of £20 is required to put Probert and his wife in their former position. The manager of the Shropshire Union Canal has considerably found employment for them and has promised a donation

in aid of this object, and further subscriptions will be received by Mr Stevens, in Abbey Street, for the Proberts.

221 February 8 1878

ACCIDENTS John Evans, canal boatman, aged 55, and belonging to Whitchurch, was admitted to the Infirmary on Wednesday night, suffering from a broken thigh. It appears that while stepping into a train in motion he was knocked down, and in addition to the broken thigh, suffered other severe injuries in various parts of his body. He died about twelve hours after his admission to the Infirmary.

222 February 23 1878

Cheshire Adjourned Sessions

SENTENCES Richard Whitehead, 57, boatman, stealing a rug and blanket from the flat Trusty at Birkenhead, on the 26th January, four months hard labour.

223 April 6 1878

Cheshire Spring Assizes

BURGLARY AT ALTRINCHAM – AN EXTRAORDINARY VERDICT Thomas Bragg(35), boatman, Runcorn, was charged with burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling house of Charles Henry Scott, and stealing a writing desk and other articles, at Altrincham, on the 12th March. Mr Ignatius Williams prosecuted, and the prisoner was undefended. The facts of the case are that a servant of the prosecutor's was awakened about two o'clock on the morning of the 12th March by finding a man, whom she swore to as the prisoner, standing by her bedside and searching the pockets of her dress. He had opened her purse, but on her calling out he dropped it and ran out of the room, taking a 6d and some coppers. She then alarmed the household, and a neighbour, a gentleman named Mr Gobels, came out of his house, and seeing a man running down the road, gave chase to him. He overtook him after "running" him for some distance across some gardens. Mr Williams: What did you do when you caught him? Witness: Knocked him down. [Laughter] Mr Williams: But had you not a struggle with him? Witness: Not then. Mr Williams: Well I sat on him. [Loud laughter] The witness went on to say that after a struggle the prisoner got away, and was again pursued by the witness, who again overtook him by a hedge. He pushed the man against this hedge thinking he would thus better secure him, but it was weak, and the man's head and shoulders went through it, and he commenced kicking witness, and threatened to shoot him, and afterwards slipped into a ditch on the other side and got away. [Laughter] He was soon afterwards found by a policeman concealed in a neighbouring shrubbery, and he struck the officer in getting up to him. In his possession were found a 6d, some coppers, and a quantity of Brazil nuts, which were missed from the prosecutor's house, and a small writing desk was found in one of the gardens in the route in which the prisoner took in the chase. Not only did Mr Gobels swear positively to his being the man he chased, but the policeman did also; yet the jury, after deliberating about a quarter of an hour upon evidence which proved the case against the prisoner as clearly as the above narrative does, found a verdict of not guilty. The verdict caused no little astonishment in court. The prisoner was directed to stand back.

224 May 11 1878

THE BOATMEN'S BETHEL In a letter to *The Christian*, the Rev P W Darnton gives an interesting account of the recently opened "Boatman's Bethel". We extract the following:- The Bethel was completed by the end of 1877, and early in the present year was opened by the Mayor of the city, ministers of various denominations taking part in the opening meeting. The first Sunday afternoon a free tea was provided for all the boat people who could be found. They were a little shy at first, but a goodly number came, and an interesting service was held. We felt quite uncertain whether the numbers which were attracted by the "tea" could be maintained without such an attraction but to our intense gratitude we find that those numbers have been considerably increased. The attendance fluctuates according to the number of boats at the station, and, while it has risen to seventy, it has fallen as low as twenty four. The average for the three months just ended

has been of children in the afternoon, nineteen; and of all classes at the evening service, forty eight. About ninety four children have passed under the teachers' notice during the three months, for it seldom happens that the same persons are present on two consecutive Sundays. It is one of the chief difficulties of the work that with the exception of a few who have houses on shore, the congregation does not repeat itself for some five or six weeks.

That the boat people appreciate the effort made for their welfare is quite evident from the fact that when they come back to Chester they almost invariably come to the Bethel of their own accord. On the Sunday previous to the day on which I am writing, fifty seven people came to the evening service, *not one of whom had been solicited to attend*. Other indications from time to time appear of the interest felt by many of the people themselves in the services. Conversations have been overheard which give the key to the character and condition of the speakers, and indicate how they look upon the work we are doing. "How should we know anything", said a man, the other day, to a companion after the evening service, "when we never go to any place to hear it – no chapel, nor anywhere else. We know nothing but eating and drinking, and cursing and swearing, and steering and driving". "Good bye, and God bless you for the words I have heard tonight", said another, on taking leave of the leader of the meeting. "Well how do you like it?" said a boatman to his wife as they were going back to their boat. "I haven't spent such a happy hour in all my life, as I can remember," was her reply. "Well," said the man, "I've worked harder on Sunday than any day of the week for a many years, but this has been a happy day; and I tell thee what – if thou'llt stick to it, I will".

Notwithstanding that so few of the men can read, the little lending library we provided has proved too small for the demand. No less than fifty two persons have borrowed books – some several times; and if they cannot read themselves there is generally someone at hand who can manage to make sense out of a book, and the art of acquiring knowledge is almost as new and delightful to many of these people as to the inhabitants of the Fiji Islands.

It will be seen, I think, that there is an extremely important and most interesting sphere of labour open to those who dwell near any of the stopping stations upon our canals. When we consider the isolation of the boat people from our ordinary shore life, and the utter absence among them of "Sunday clothes" or indeed of any clothes except the roughest and rudest garments, we cannot expect them to enter our churches and mingle with well dressed congregations. The Gospel must be taken to them; and there are no people known to me who are so accessible and ready to receive instruction, and withal so grateful, as those known as the canal population.

In conclusion, I should like to point out one or two features of our work to which, I think, we owe – under the blessing of God – the encouraging success which has hitherto attended it.

In the first place, then, the Bethel is a *floating* structure. No one who has had anything to do with sailors or persons accustomed to the water will fail to see the value of this. Then, secondly, the Bethel is *exclusively* for the canal people. With the exception of those who conduct the meetings, no one but persons engaged on the canal is permitted to enter. Again and again refusals have to be made to persons belonging to other classes who wish to attend the meetings. Even the wives and friends of those who are engaged in the work are dissuaded from attending. The boat people have been told that the Bethel belongs to them. Whenever it is open they are welcome to enter, either to attend a school or service, or to sit and read, or look at the books and pictures. So long as they can find no one there but persons of their own class, many of whom they know well, there is no fear of their deserting the Bethel.

And once more, the services are conducted by the right class of men, in the freest and least formal manner – addresses short, simple, even "rough and ready", delivered by man who can talk the language and refer to the life of those they address.

The workers in connection with the Bethel meet every Sunday morning "on board" for special prayer; and as their prayers *are* always "special", they obtain answers to their petitions, and the blessing of God is manifestly resting upon their labours. The good seed is being sown in new and unusual places, in soil which seems unpropitious, but already we see that we dare not judge by appearances, and there are signs of a blessed harvest.

225 June 29 1878

Runcorn

AMUSING CHASE AFTER A BOATMAN At Runcorn, on Saturday, **William Williams**, captain of two narrow boats, was charged with fighting on the canal bank and assaulting Police-constable Hibbert. On the previous day, Dr McDougall, medical officer of the Runcorn Union, saw the defendant and another man stripped to their trousers and fighting on the canal bank at the back of his house. He went to them and warned them to desist, but they would not, and he then went for Sergeant Rhodes and three police officers. As soon as the captain saw the policemen he jumped on his boat, and he managed by running across the various boats close by to keep the officers at bay for above an hour. A great crowd collected to see the chase. At last the prisoner took refuge in the cabin of his boat, where he was secured. Whilst they were securing him he kicked Police-constables Quinn and Hibbert, the former so seriously that he is now off duty. Defendant was fined 40s and costs for the assault, and bound over to keep the peace for six months.

226 July 6 1878

Cheshire General Assizes

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **Harry Perkins**, 15 years of age, boatman, charged with stealing a silver watch, the property of Thomas Scragg, at Newton, on the 22nd of June, was acquitted.

227 July 20 1878

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS At these sessions, on Tuesday, **Daniel Aspey**, boatman, Northwich, was fined, with costs, 20s 6d or 14 days imprisonment, for assaulting Eliza Ogden on the canal near Acton Bridge. **Peter Worthington**, boatman, was sent to gaol for one month for stealing a rope belonging to the Bridgewater Navigation Company.

228 October 5 1878

Runcorn

POLICE COURT At Runcorn Police Court on Saturday, **William Jones**, a boatman, was charged with stealing four ducks, the property of Henry Crowther, tanner, Halton Road. The evidence showed that on the night of the 27th ult the prosecutor had twenty nine ducks and three geese in a cote in the yard of his house. The prisoner broke into the cote, and was traced by means of the feathers of the birds to a boat called the William, belonging to Mr Taylor, of Halton Road, which was lying about two hundred yards off. Police-constable Bossins searched the vessel and found the ducks in a coal scuttle. The prisoner, who threatened to knock out the officer's brains with a hatchet, was committed to Knutsford Sessions for trial.

229 October 19 1878

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **William Jones**, 26, boatman, for stealing four ducks at Runcorn, two months hard labour.

230 November 16 1878

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **Henry Malpass**, of Moston, boatman, and John Elsby, farmer, were summoned by Mr J C Acton of the Railway Hotel, Elton, for being drunk and refusing to leave his licensed premises when requested by P C Williams, on the 21st ult.

231 December 21 1878

County Petty Sessions

THEFT OF ROPE **John Badley**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of rope, the property of the Shropshire Union Canal Company. It appears that the rope – about six yards in length – was taken from the flat “John” while lying at Ellesmere Port on the 6th inst. The evidence showed that the boat drifted from its moorings by the rope being cut and taken away, and the same night the missing rope was found on the defendant's boat. He was now committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions.

232 January 4 1879

Cheshire Epiphany Quarter Sessions

TUESDAY **John Baddeley**, 27, boatman, The Canals, nine months imprisonment for stealing a quantity of rope, the property of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, at Ellesmere Port, on the 6th December last.

233 January 25 1879

County Petty Sessions

A CANAL BOATMAN IN TROUBLE **Edward Parry**, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, was charged with being drunk and riotous at Ellesmere Port on the 7th December last. P C Wilkinson said that about half past seven o'clock in the evening of the day in question, he saw the defendant drunk in the streets and stripped for fighting, and challenging any person round to fight him. After some difficulty his friends managed to get him to his boat. The defendant had been previously in the Dock Hotel, and refused to quit when the landlord requested him to leave. The defendant was fined 10s and 12s 8d costs, or in default seven days imprisonment with hard labour.

234 February 22 1879

Cheshire Adjourned Sessions

WEDNESDAY **George Worrall**, boatman, for stealing 627 lbs of iron, the property of John Simpson and Gabriel Davis, of Runcorn, three and six months imprisonment respectively.

235 May 24 1879

Lymm

EXTRAORDINARY SHOOTING CASE At the Lymm Petty Sessions, on Friday the 16th inst, **Thomas Hilton**, a boatman in the employ of Messrs Carver and Co, Manchester, was charged before Colonel Legh with feloniously shooting a boy named Michael Mannion, at Lymm, on Wednesday the 9th inst. It appears that Mannion, who resides at Warrington, was on the canal bank at Lymm, on the 9th inst, with another boy, when they saw a tug towing three flats. When the second flat got opposite them Mannion called out to the man that was steering, "Who clogged your hat?" and the other boy shouted, "It is Charles Peace's coat you have". The man, who the lads identified as Hilton, picked up a gun, but put it down again. Mannion then dared Hilton to shoot, and he fired, the shots entering Mannion's arms and legs. The boy was taken to the Warrington Infirmary, and the prisoner went on towards Runcorn with his boat. He was, however, apprehended at Grappenhall, and taken back to Lymm, where he said a poacher from Hollins Green had shot the boy. He gave a minute description of the poacher, whom he said he took on board at Cornbrook Bridge, Manchester. As the other boy failed to identify Hilton as the man who fired, he was allowed to go. Inquiries were made, which proved the statement about the poacher to be false, and the prisoner was again apprehended on Saturday last, near the scene of the occurrence, on board the boat Betsy. He was taken to the Lymm Police station, and after being locked up about an hour, he made a statement that the lads were throwing stones at him; that he got the gun and fired it over their heads to frighten them. The prisoner, who appeared to be very ill, and was accommodated with a chair in court, now stated he was very sorry, but did not know the gun was loaded. He was committed to Chester for trial.

236 May 31 1879

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **John Wood**, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, was summoned for cruelty to a horse on the 29th April, at the Bunbury Locks. P C Latham said that while the defendant and his horse were going through Bunbury locks he noticed that the animal was somewhat uneasy, and on going up to it and examining it he found two large wounds on the left shoulder under the collar which appeared to be rubbing them. The defendant said the animal was "over-corned" and this caused the lumps, but he did not intend to work it after he got to Chester. The Bench imposed a penalty of 5s and costs.

237 June 7 1879

A MYSTERY SOLVED On Sunday last a man named Bennett, a bricklayer's labourer, gave

information to the police that he saw a woman drown herself in the Dee, close to the Suspension Bridge, on the previous night. The river was at once dragged, but no trace of any body could be found up to Tuesday, but on Wednesday a boatman named **Frith** discovered the body of a Mrs Kelly, who resided in Staven Street, and who had been missing since Saturday night. An inquest on the body was held by Mr Tatlock, at the Bars Hotel on Thursday, and a verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned. The deceased was the sister of Thomas Moran.

238 June 14 1879 Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS **William Frowley**, a boatman, for resisting Police-constables Hibbert and Green whilst the latter were trying to apprehend two disorderly women, was fined 20s and costs, or in default one months imprisonment.

239 June 14 1879 Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY **Wm Johnson**, of Odd Rode, boatman, was fined 20s and costs for assaulting Annie Maria Cotton, of Wheelock, at Odd Rode on the 20th ult.

240 July 5 1879

KNUTSFORD SESSIONS **William Smith**, aged 19, boatman, stealing 40lbs of rope, the property of Joseph Shallcross, at Runcorn, four months.

241 July 12 1879 Runcorn

A WOMAN'S ADVENTURE WITH A BURGLAR At the Runcorn Police Court, on Friday the 4th inst, Wm Poxon, alias Spikey, from Nottingham, was charged with burglariously entering the house of a **Mrs Carter**, the wife of a boatman. The prosecutrix stated that on the night of the 1st instant, her husband being away, she went home about half past eleven with her daughter, age 14, who was to sleep with her. On getting near the door she saw a man run up the street, She tried the door but it would not unlock and on pushing it, it flew open. She found the works of the lock upon the floor, and that the door had been burst open. She started to go upstairs, and when she had got up four or five steps she heard someone move in the bedroom. She felt startled, but plucked up her spirits and went upstairs. She said, "Who's there?" but received no answer. She then said, "You had better come out because I am not here by myself. Caroline, fetch that policeman from the top of the street". The prisoner then got up from the foot of the bed and showed himself. She asked him what brought him there, but his only reply was, "I don't know". She went downstairs and put her back against the door, being determined that the man should not leave the house. Prisoner shortly afterwards came down the stairs, and heard her tell her daughter to fetch a policeman. Prisoner offered to give her 10s for the lock, but she refused to take it. He begged to be allowed to go, but she refused to let him. He then said, "I will soon make a road out," and went to the window for the purpose of making his way through it, but just at that moment the policeman arrived on the scene, and took him into custody. The prisoner was committed to the Chester Assizes for trial.

242 July 26 1879 Cheshire Summer Assizes

A CANAL BOATMAN DOING "CHARLES PEACE" **Thomas Hilton**, 36, boatman, Manchester, was indicted for unlawfully wounding Michael Mannion, at Lymm, on the 7th May last, the Grand Jury having thrown out the bill sent up to them charging the prisoner with shooting with intent to do grievous bodily harm.

Mr Burke-Wood prosecuted and Mr Jeffreys defended the prisoner.

The case was that on the day in question the prosecutor and some other boys were on the canal bank at Lymm, when a steam tug drawing three barges came alongside. The prisoner was steering one of the barges. He wore a black coat with yellow bands and a long white hat. The boys commenced to chaff him, the prosecutor asking him, "Who clogged his hat?" Prisoner replied to the boys that he was wearing Charles Peace's dress, and they continued their annoyance of him. He then seized a gun and pointing it at them, fired it off. The shots struck the boy Mannion and wounded him in the

arms and legs, but the injuries were very slight. The question at first was one of identity, but Mr Jeffreys, on behalf of the prisoner, admitted that it was the prisoner who had fired the gun, but said he did not know it was loaded, and that he merely pointed it at the boys to frighten them when it went off. Mr Jeffreys called evidence that the prisoner was a quiet and humane man, and that he had received medals from the Humane Society for saving life.

The Jury found him guilty, but strongly recommended him to mercy.

The Judge said the prisoner had given way to a burst of unmanly temper, but he should take the facts of his humane service, and of his having been ten weeks already in prison, and he should give him only a fortnight more.

243 August 16 1879 Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **John Archer**, a boatman, was fined 40s and costs for being drunk and threatening P C Wright with a knife near the Broughton Arms on Saturday night last.

244 August 23 1879 County Petty Sessions

DRUNKENNESS AND DISORDER **Joseph Ashley**, boatman, Staffordshire, was charged with being drunk and incapable in George Street on the previous night. P C Stokes proved the case, and the defendant was fined 10s and costs, or seven days hard labour.

245 August 23 1879 County Petty Sessions

A DRUNK AND DISORDERLY BOATMAN **John Taylor**, boatman, Ellesmere Port, was charged with being drunk and riotous on the night of the 9th July. P C Wilkinson said the defendant behaved in a very disorderly manner, and when near the Canal Tavern he took off his coat and threatened to fight any man on the "cut". He was fined 5s and 11s costs, or in default to be imprisoned for seven days with hard labour.

246 October 11 1879 County Petty Sessions

CATTLE STRAYING **Joseph Boden**, canal boatman, was summoned for allowing two donkeys to stray on the highway at Christleton, and the charge having been proved by Police-sergeant Proudlove, the defendant was fined 1s and costs.

247 November 15 1879 County Petty Sessions

CHARGE OF SELLING WITHIN PROHIBITED HOURS Mrs Sarah Pritchard, landlady of the Grosvenor Arms Inn, Canal Side, was charged with keeping her house open during prohibited hours on Sunday morning last. Mr J Tatlock defended. D S Nixon stated that while he and P C Murphy were engaged on other business about a quarter past twelve on Sunday morning, he heard some whispering and footsteps in the defendant's yard. He then told Murphy to knock at the front door while he went to the side door, and as soon as Murphy knocked and got into the house a man named Thomas Jacks opened the side door and came out with a gallon jar. Witness brought him back to the house, uncorked the jar, and found that it contained beer. Jacks was in the employ of the Cheshire Lines Committee, and lived in Evans Court, close to the house. He had no hat or jacket on. He asked Mrs Pritchard how she accounted for the beer and the presence of Jacks at that hour, and she said the beer had been purchased before eleven o'clock, and as he was going out she added, "I hope you'll say nothing about it", but he told her he would have to report the case. P C Murphy gave corroborative evidence. Mrs Pritchard said that she closed her house at eleven o'clock on the Saturday night. Before that the man Jacks had bought a gallon of ale which was put in a jar, and he took both with him. There were only two men in the house then, **Isaac Jones**, a boatman, who lodged with her, and **Captain Thomas Jones**, who is captain of a flyboat, and was lodging there that night. No drink was supplied to any person between the time the house was closed and when the police officers arrived. When the house was closed she commenced to clean the place, and Isaac Jones several times fetched her water through the back door. When the police entered the house and went into the yard she saw Jacks in the yard, and the gallon of beer on the table, and she

asked him how it was that he and the jar were there, but he made no answer. Isaac Jones and Thomas Jones stated that no beer or anything else was sold in the house after it was cleared at eleven o'clock, nor was anybody allowed into the house, and Thomas Jacks said he had purchased the beer before eleven o'clock and did not buy any more that night, nor did he see Mrs Pritchard until the police appeared on the scene. The Magistrates dismissed the case, but cautioned Mrs Pritchard as to her future conduct, stating that they had given her the benefit of a doubt they entertained.

248 January 1 1881

A CANAL BOAT BESEIGED At the Wolverhampton Police Court, on Wednesday, **Edward Evans**, a Welsh boatman, was sent to gaol for six months on no less than nine charges, five of them being assaults, three on policemen and two on civilians. On Tuesday night he was mad drunk in a public house, and the police were called in to eject him. He violently assaulted them, and made his escape to the canal, where, getting into his boat, he with the assistance of other boatmen effectually kept the police at bay for a considerable time. The police finding themselves overmatched, obtained the assistance of some civilians and got the prisoner to the police station. Another boatman, named **Howells**, who had assisted Evans in resisting the police, was sentenced to four months hard labour.

249 March 12 1881 Sandbach

INQUEST On Thursday Mr H Churton, the county coroner, held an inquest at the Red Lion Inn, Hassall Green, on the body of **James Brooks**, a boatman. From the evidence it appeared the deceased went to arrange the Longcroft lock, about 2,30 a m on the 9th inst, and when his companion arrived at the lock the deceased was not to be seen. The other boatman got a hook and found the body. A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

250 March 19 1881

EXTRAORDINARY FATALITY AT MIDDLEWICH On Thursday a shocking fatality happened to the wife of a boatman, named **Walter Chatwell**, near Middlewich. Several men were engaged in felling trees close to the towing-path of the canal, and whilst the woman, who was driving the horse, was in the act of passing, one of the trees (a very large one) fell, knocking both her and the horse down. In order to extricate the woman, several of the larger branches of the tree had to be cut off. Her husband proceeded in all haste for a surgeon, but although Dr Swindells, of Middlewich, promptly arrived, the poor woman only lived a few minutes, death being attributed to a fracture of the vertebrae.

251 April 2 1881 County Petty Sessions

KEEPING A DOG WITHOUT A LICENSE **William Holland**, boatman, was ordered to pay 3s 6d costs for keeping a dog without a license, at Whitby, on the 12th March.

252 May 7 1881 County Petty Sessions

KEEPING A DOG WITHOUT A LICENSE **John Hill**, boatman, of Ellesmere Port, was summoned for keeping a dog without a license, on the 24th March. The defendant did not deny the charge, and was ordered to pay 8s costs, and told he would have to pay for a license.

253 June 11 1881 City Police Court

DRUNK AND DISORDERLY **William Partington**, boatman, of 7 Crane Street, was also charged with being drunk and riotous in Watergate Street, about half past eight on the same (Saturday) night. P C Ceathorpe proved the charge and the defendant was fined 10s and costs.

254 June 11 1881

FATAL AFFRAY At Preston Police Court, on Monday, **George Bateman**, 22, and **John**

Isherwood, 28, were charged with causing the death of **Henry Kellett**. The prisoners, deceased, and another canal boatman were on Saturday afternoon drinking in the Jolly Tars Inn, when deceased said to Isherwood that he had once thrashed him, but that he (Kellett) would now fight him. He kicked Isherwood, who knocked deceased down on a form. Deceased then squared up, and Bateman slapped his face, knocking him down. Kellett's skull was fractured, and he died. The prisoners were remanded.

255 July 16 1881

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS At these sessions on Monday, a boatman named **William Evans**, employed by Messrs Simpson, Davis and Co, salt, coal and slate merchants, was fined £3 for refusing to comply with an order issued by the firm, whereby they were serious losers.

256 August 13 1881

Runcorn

BITING A DONKEY'S NOSE – A DISGUSTING OUTRAGE At the Runcorn Police Court, on Monday, before Messrs Chadwick and Haslehurst, a boatman named **John Smithom**, about forty five years of age, was charged with cruelly ill-treating and torturing a donkey by biting it upon the nose. James Buckingham, a dealer in hot potatoes, said that on Saturday evening he was in Nelson Street with his potato cart, which was drawn by a donkey. Defendant bought a pennyworth of potatoes, and then commenced to tease the donkey. He said, "This is the last one, thou wilt have to give me a kiss for this", after which he got hold of the animal's nose with his teeth. He went up to defendant, but he kept hold of the donkey's nose sufficiently long for it to swing him round. He found that the donkey's nose had been bitten quite through, so that he had to take it to a farrier. He believed defendant was drunk. Defendant, in reply to the Bench, said he was so drunk at the time that he had not the slightest recollection of what took place. Mr Chadwick said defendant's conduct had been of a most disgusting and revolting character, and he would be committed to gaol for one month, with hard labour, without the option of a fine.

257 August 20 1881

Chester

SUDDEN DEATH **John Twiss**, aged 32, of No 7 Gee's Court, Tarvin Road, died somewhat suddenly on Sunday morning last. It appears the deceased worked as a boatman at the Groves, and on Saturday after partaking of a glass of beer and eating one or two apples he complained of being ill. After a short time he went home, where he was attended by Dr Walsh, assistant to Mr Haining. Towards night the deceased said he felt better, and went to bed as usual. On his wife, however, awaking about five o'clock in the morning, she found he was dead. Dr Walsh was at once sent for, and he certified that the deceased suffered from several complaints. No inquest was held.

258 September 24 1881

County Petty Sessions

STEALING TURNIPS **Robert Evans**, a boatman, of the Shropshire Union Canals Company, was charged with stealing turnips, the property of Mr Richard Prescott, farmer, Stoke. Sergeant Wilkinson said he was on duty at Stoke, on the morning of the 16th inst, and heard somebody in a field of turnips close to the canal bank. He went up and found the defendant with the turnips in his arms just getting ready to throw them into his float. Mr R Prescott said he had lost a good deal in this way, and the damage done was considerable. Nearly every night something was taken. The defendant, who had nothing to say, was fined 20s and 14s costs, as the bench were determined to make an example.

259 October 15 1881

County Petty Sessions

CHARGE OF DRUNKENNESS **Thomas Bowen**, canal boatman, was charged with being drunk and riotous at Whitby on the 20th of September. Defendant did not appear. P C Wilkinson proved the charge. Mr Percival, landlord of the Canal Tavern at Whitby, was also called, and defendant was fined 20s and 17s 6d costs.

260 November 5 1881

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS A boatman named **Abel Jones** was convicted of having stolen a jug and one quart of ale, the property of Charles Herinshaw, of the Albion Inn, Nelson Street, and was committed for one month.

261 December 3 1881

City Police Court

AN OLD MAN IN TROUBLE **John Atkins**, boatman, aged 74, who said he resided in Queen Street, was charged with begging in Boughton about three o'clock on the previous afternoon. P C Stokes said he saw the defendant begging from house to house. The defendant admitted the offence, and said he had applied to Mr Brittain for an order for the workhouse, but he told him he could only give him a casual order. The Magistrate now said he would give him a letter to the Board of Guardians, so that he might be allowed to stay permanently in the workhouse.

262 December 10 1881

Sandbach

PAINFUL CASE OF DROWNING IN THE CANAL An accident of a singular and painful nature occurred on Friday morning last, at the canal lock, at Betchton, near Sandbach. It appears that a boatman named **James Taylor**, with his wife, was proceeding along the canal, managing the boat between them, the wife, who by the way was only 17 years of age, was steering. The lock had been filled with water, and the boat was about to be lowered, when the husband, who was on the bank, turned round, and found that his wife was missing from her place at the steerage. He also saw her bonnet floating in the water, and at once called out for assistance. The lock tender, an old man, came with a rake, and in about a quarter of an hour the body was recovered, and every means were used to restore animation, but without success, for life was found to be extinct. An inquest was held on Monday morning, before H Churton, Esq, county coroner, at the Red Lion Inn, Betchton, where the facts above related were adduced, and a verdict of "accidental death" was returned.

263 March 4 1882

INQUEST An inquest was held on Tuesday at the Red Bull Inn, Lawton, before Mr H C Yates, coroner, touching the death of **Alice Scragg**, daughter of a boatman living at Middlewich, aged 10 years, who was drowned on the previous Friday at Church Lawton. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

264 March 11 1882

County Petty Sessions

CHARGE OF STEALING ROPE **James Bushell**, boatman, who was remanded from last Saturday on the charge of stealing a quantity of rope, the property of Messrs Sutton, Pearson and Co, at Ellesmere Port, on the 21st February, was again placed in the dock. **Samuel Nash**, Liverpool, captain of the flat "Earl" said he left his boat lying at Weston Point and asked a man named Carter to look after the boat, but shortly after witness left he also came ashore. Witness went on Tuesday night to look for the flat, and found she was gone. The rope produced was safe on board the flat when he left her; its value was about 4s. The prisoner was not employed on witness's boat. James Dickens and Sarah Parker gave evidence with the effect of showing that the prisoner behaved in an extraordinary way in relation to the flat. Dickens, with three other men, was engaged to fill the boat with sand, but before the work commenced prisoner seemed to forget all about it and left the men as if he had never seen them. He asked Mrs Parker to purchase the rope, but as she refused he said he would not sell it if he could get something to eat. Witness gave him a shilling, some bread and cheese, and a pint of new milk, and told him to take the rope away as soon as his "mates" came down. Prisoner then asked her if she had any eggs, and she brought out eleven, whereupon the prisoner gave her the shilling back again. P C Wilkinson said that in consequence of information received he went to the flat which was lying on the beach below Ellesmere Port. The complainant showed him where some ropes had been taken away. Witness found the two pieces of rope produced at the house of Parker. On the 24th ult he apprehended the prisoner at Ellesmere Port at four o'clock in the morning. He charged him with stealing the rope. He made no reply about the

rope, but said the flat belonged to his mother, and that he had papers in his pocket which would support his statement. The papers were not forthcoming. Prisoner took two fowls from the house where he left the rope. The defence set up on behalf of the prisoner was that he was suffering from a species of incipient delirium, brought on by drink, and believed himself to be captain of the flat. Prisoner was committed for trial at the next sessions.

265 March 18 1882 Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS **William Williams**, a boatman, was fined £1 and costs for stealing 200 lbs of coal from the Wheelick Iron and Salt Company.

266 April 29 1882 Chester County Court

DISPUTE ABOUT A HORSE Thomas Wild, Chester, sued a boatman named **John Evans** for the sum of £4 12s 0d on the alleged sale of a horse to defendant. Mr W H Churton appeared for the plaintiff, and stated that the defendant had bought the horse at £12 10s 0d one evening, and paid a deposit upon it, but a day or two afterwards denied the purchase. The animal was placed in the hands of Mr Cunnah, and sold for £9 9s 0d, and the plaintiff now sought to recover the difference between that sum and the amount for which it was alleged the horse was sold to the defendant; the expense connected with the sale; and £1 2s 0d keep of the animal for eleven days. Defendant denied purchasing the horse, but His Honour, after hearing both sides, gave judgement for plaintiff.

267 May 20 1882

KNUTSFORD QUARTER SESSIONS Michael Riley, 21, labourer, and **William Greenwood**, 27, boatman, to stealing a windlass handle, the property of Messrs Jesse and Wright, at Hyde, on the 19th May, four months each,

268 May 27 1882 County Petty Sessions

KNOCKING HIM DOWN STRAIGHT Wm Evans, a powerful looking man, labourer, of Ellesmere Port, was charged with assaulting **Thomas Minshull**, boatman, of Whitby, on the 12th May. Complainant stated that about six o'clock in the evening defendant and himself and others had been drinking. Defendant and complainant's son began to fight, and on witness asking defendant what he was going to do, defendant "knocked him down straight". Witness got up, and he was knocked down again three times. Defendant admitted the assault, but pleaded that complainant was the aggressor and commenced the quarrel, and therefore he was obliged to do the best he could for himself. The Chairman: You see what a mess you have made of his face. You will have to pay 20s including costs.

269 June 10 1882 County Petty Sessions

A DISHONEST PAIR John Bull of Victor Street, miller, and **John Morris**, boatman, were charged with stealing a sack of flour of the value of 33s, the property of Mr John Wiseman, miller of Canal Side. Edward Hughes, foreman to the complainant, said that the prisoner Bull had been in Mr Wiseman's employ as miller and stone dresser for five or six years. The other prisoner belonged to the canal boat "Start" which he saw made fast opposite the mill about half past nine o'clock on Saturday night. On going into the mill he saw the prisoner Bull at work. Morris was standing in the doorway, sheltering from the rain. Witness subsequently watched the mill and saw Morris carrying a sack from the inside and throw it into the boat. He afterwards ran into the mill and asked the prisoner Bull what had gone in the boat, and he replied, "You will not do me any injury will you?" and witness said not if he told the truth. The prisoner then admitted that it was a sack of flour, and he was afterwards given into custody to Police-sergeant Price. They subsequently found the sack of flour in the boat with the prisoner's initials upon it. This was a customary practice in the mill in case there might be any complaints as to the quality of the material. Herbert Stoddard, tripe dresser, who watched the mill at the request of the last witness, said he saw Bull bring out a sack of flour, and Morris took it from him and put it into the boat. P C Price deposed to arresting Bull, and

on charging him with stealing the sack of flour he said nothing. P C Dunne said he was left in charge of the boat "Start" on Saturday night, and on Morris returning to it he charged him with stealing the sack of flour, when he said he knew nothing about it. The prisoners pleaded guilty, and were each sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour.

270 July 8 1882

Runcorn

POLICE COURT On Monday a boatman named **Peter Leather** was charged with being disorderly and refusing to quit the Vine Hotel; with breaking a pane of glass in the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel, and with assaulting Frederick Bowles, the landlord; and also with assaulting P C Mellor. The Bench imposed fines amounting, with costs, to £5 16s 4d, or in default three months hard labour.

271 July 15 1882

County Petty Sessions

CHARGE OF ASSAULT **John Tasker**, boatman, Chester, was charged with assaulting **Edward Bailiff**, at Eccleston, on the 6th July. Mr Brassey appeared for the defendant. The complainant stated that he was a boatman in the employ of Mrs Dodd, at the Groves. On the 5th July, he and three more men rowed at boat to Eccleston, and soon after they landed the defendant came up and said there should have been four men in his boat as well. Words ensued, and the defendant struck him, rendering him insensible. The defendant afterwards offered him a sovereign to settle the matter. The defence was to the effect that great provocation had been given, and a cross summons for assault on the part of the complainant was taken out, in support of which John Tasker said he was a boatman in the employ of Messrs Cook and Arthur. Mrs Dodd had hired the barge belonging to his employers, with himself and another man, to take a party up the river. It was very heavy work, and he was much exhausted. When the other boat came up he did complain to Bailiff of not having another man to help them. Bailiff told him not to make a bother there, and threatened that "the river should be his doom" at the same time tapping him on the chest. Tasker returned the push and blows passed, but afterwards they became friends, and mutually expressed regret at what had happened. The black eye which Bailiff had was occasioned by his head coming into contact with the seat of the boat. They were all playing cards and smoking together afterwards. He denied offering the other man a sovereign to "make it up". Evidence was called in corroboration, but the Bench thought there had been a squabble, and that each was as bad as the other. The cases were both dismissed.

272 July 22 1882

Sandbach

PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY **Benjamin Fradley**, boatman, summoned for allowing two mules to stray upon the road at Rode Heath, was fined 5s and costs.

273 July 29 1882

Cheshire Summer Assizes

CHARGE OF MANSLAUGHTER Thomas Edwards, 31, farmer, surrendered to his bail on the charge of killing and slaying **Richard Biddle**, at Buglawton, on the 23rd of February 1882. Mr Bankes appeared in support of the prosecution, and the prisoner was undefended. It appeared that in the month of February last an arrangement was made between Biddle, a boatman, and Mr Dale, a farmer, that Biddle was to bring a boat load of manure along the canal to Mr Dale's farm, and was to take back a boat load of Mr Dale's hay, the difference in value to be adjusted between them, and paid one to the other as the case may be. Biddle went with his boat load of manure to Backstone Bridge Wharf, near Buglawton, and having unloaded it and taken the hay on board, which was brought down by the prisoner, who was a relative of Mr Dale's, a dispute rose as to the hay. Mr Dale wanted 24s difference between the value of the hay and manure. Biddle refused to give it, and Mr Dale said he would take some of the hay off the boat again. Prisoner went on the the boat to take off some of the hay, and pushed Biddle, either intentionally or accidentally, with the result that he sustained a severe injury to his back which resulted in death. The prisoner was found not guilty. A SHOCKING OFFENCE **George Sumner**, 19, boatman, was found guilty of an unnatural crime at Church Lawton, on the 7th June. His Lordship sentenced the prisoner to ten years penal servitude,

remarking that was the lowest penalty the law permitted him to impose for such a crime.

274 August 19 1882 Sandbach

A CANAL BOATMAN DROWNED On Tuesday an inquest was held at Betchton, before Mr H Churton, on the body of **William Skerratt**, a canal boatman, aged 47 years. It appeared from the evidence that a few evenings ago deceased, who had had a little drink, was conducting his boat on the canal, and whilst it was being lowered into a lock he made an attempt to fix the tiller to the rudder. Unfortunately, whilst doing this, he fell into the water. Deceased was a good swimmer, but owing to the boat occupying the best part of the space in the lock, his sons, who were on board, were unable to reach his body, and the poor fellow was drowned. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

275 September 9 1882 County Petty Sessions

KEEPING A DOG WITHOUT A LICENCE **John Probert**, boatman, Whitby, was fined 5s and 17s 6d costs for keeping a dog without a license.

276 November 11 1882 Birkenhead

THE MASTER OF A FLAT DROWNED AT BIRKENHEAD On Sunday night, an unfortunate casualty occurred at Birkenhead to **Richard Poole**, master of the flat "Evening Star". Whilst the boat was being moved out of the Alfred Dock into the rover, Poole was struck by a sail, and he fell into the water. Every exertion was made to rescue him, but he sank and was drowned. The body, which was recovered in about half an hour after the accident, was removed to the deadhouse. At the inquest, held before Mr Churton, coroner, on Monday, a verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

277 November 25 1882 Cheshire Adjourned Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **James Taylor**, aged 33, boatman, indicted for stealing £4 0s 2d and one bag from the person of Joseph Guy, two months hard labour.

278 December 2 1882 County Petty Sessions

THEFT **John Morris**, boatman, was charged with stealing a cow's heart on the 15th ult from the vessel "Burns and Bessie" at Ellesmere Port. **John Partington**, who was engaged in unloading the vessel, deposed to seeing prisoner take the heart from the boom of the vessel and throw it into his own boat, which was alongside. Prisoner, who said he was drunk at the time, was ordered to pay a fine of 20s and costs, or one months hard labour.

279 December 9 1882 County Petty Sessions

CHARGE OF THEFT AGAINST A BOATMAN **Robert Evans**, a middle-aged man of respectable appearance, whose home is in Bootle, was charged with stealing four spruce planks (about 61 feet), values at 16s, the property of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, on the 27th October.

Detective-inspector White appeared to prosecute on behalf of the company, and said that the prisoner had been in the employ of the company as a flatman for many years. The timber was stolen from the company's wharf, at Ellesmere Port, and was brought by the prisoner to Chester. The first witness called was

Wm Dunne, foreman over the discharging department of the company at Ellesmere Port, who said he remembered the flat "Hawk" arriving there on October 31st. He unloaded 278 spruce deals from the flat. He placed them on the wharves at Ellesmere Port. He had that morning seen four planks at the Tower Wharf, Chester, which corresponded with the timber stolen.

Thomas Griffiths, a young man also in the service of the company, said he worked with the prisoner as assistant on the flat "Ellen". He remembered proceeding from Liverpool to Ellesmere Port. They arrived at Ellesmere Port on Friday, the 27th October. They there tied the flat alongside

the Flint Wharf. Witness there saw some new deal planks lying alongside the wharf. After tying up their flat witness went to his home, which was in Ellesmere Port, leaving prisoner on the boat. The same night they left Ellesmere Port for Chester, on the "Ellen" with a cargo of red pine. The red pine was for Mr Dixon. On arriving at Chester their boat was tied up alongside Mr Dixon's wharf. Witness then went on to the flat, and saw there four spruce planks. The prisoner went away for a few minutes to speak to Mr Harrison. When he came back he untied the flat, and removed it alongside Mr Harrison's wharf, and the four spruce deals were taken from the flat and placed on the wharf. Witness assisted to carry them on to the wharf. There would be about 61 feet of timber in the four planks.

Prisoner, upon the usual question being put, pleaded guilty to the charge and elected to be summarily dealt with.

Detective White said the company had no wish to press the charge unduly, but the company had such a quantity of timber lying about the wharves, and the boatmen had such great facilities for stealing it, that they wished to protect themselves and prevent the practice. Prisoner was a married man with four children.

The Bench then retired to consider the case, and on returning the Chairman (addressing Detective Inspector White) asked: Have these boatmen ever any timber of their own to dispose of?

Detective White: No sir.

The Chairman: They haven't? Then I think it is a very serious case. People buying from these men must know they are buying stolen property?

Detective White said he could not exactly go as far as to say that, but in this instance the timber was bought off the flat.

A Magistrate: Do you know how much the prisoner received for this timber?

Detective White: About 7s 6d.

A Magistrate: Then I should like it to go forth from this court that the Bench think it most reprehensible for people to buy timber in this manner from these flatmen.

Detective White: The purchaser is here, sir.

The Chairman: I don't care who the purchaser is, or where he is, but if you can prove that these men never have timber to sell I think the purchaser ought to be prosecuted. It's high time the practice was stopped. Look at the temptation it has been to that poor fellow. You come here and tell us that this timber is worth 15s, and yet a man calling himself a respectable timber merchant buys it for 7s 6d. We think it most reprehensible.

Prisoner was ordered to pay a penalty of 20s and costs, amounting in all to £2 19s 6d, or go to prison for a month. His wife then came forward with an infant in her arms, and tearfully informed the Bench that it was impossible for them to find the money, and the prisoner was accordingly committed.

280 December 23 1882 County Petty Sessions

INEBRIATES **Thomas Roach**, boatman, Canal Side, was charged by P C Evans with being helplessly drunk in Frodsham Street, along with a woman named Emma Dickson, a dressmaker, of Boughton. They said they had had their drink at the Britannia Inn. They were each fined 5s and costs, or five days hard labour.

281 January 6 1883

ADJOURNED QUARTER SESSIONS Charles Eyes, aged 19, labourer, for stealing a quantity of lead, sugar, &c, the property of **Wm Cawley**, a boatman at Weston, near Runcorn, three months hard labour.

282 February 3 1883 Ellesmere Port

INQUESTS Another inquest took place at the Bull's Head Inn, on Wednesday, on the body of a baby, a months old, named Eliza Grant. The mother Elizabeth Grant, wife of **Thomas Grant**, boatman, stated that from its birth the baby enjoyed good health, and had never been ailing. On

Tuesday morning about six o'clock she fed the child and let it in bed. About seven she heard it cry. An hour after this, on looking at it she fancied that its face was discoloured, and on taking it in her arms, she saw that it was dead. Her husband was immediately called and the doctor sent for. She could not account for its death. Dr Roberts, who was present, thought the death was caused by suffocation. The jury returned a verdict to that effect.

283 February 10 1883 Runcorn

A MAN STABBED BY A WOMAN On Monday, at the Runcorn Police Court, Sarah Ellen Jackson, a young woman, was charged with unlawfully and maliciously wounding a boatman named **John Davies**, with intent to do him Grievous bodily harm. It appeared that for a period of four years Davies and Jackson had lived together, but in consequence of a quarrel a fortnight ago separated. On Saturday night, about half past eleven, Davies was standing in High Street with a young woman, when the prisoner came up and seized his arm. In her right hand she held a penknife, which she raised and struck him in the back near the spinal column. The prisoner, who now expressed sorrow for her act, was committed for trial.

284 February 24 1883 Knutsford Quarter Sessions

WEDNESDAY **Alfred Harrison**, boatman, for stealing 140lbs weight of rope, the property of Robert Hickson, of Winnington, two months hard labour.

285 April 21 1883 City Police Court

DISGRACEFUL ASSAULT BY A MILITIAMAN James Darcy, 55, William Street, a ruffianly looking militiaman, was brought up in custody on a charge of assaulting **Thomas Packe**, described as of the canal boat "Harold". Complainant, who had his head enveloped in surgical bandages, and who stated he belonged to Welsh Franklin, said that just after eleven the previous night, having only then arrived with his boat from Oswestry, the prisoner accosted him near the canal at the corner of the Oddfellow's Arms, Frodsham Street, and asked for some tobacco. Witness told him he did not use it, when prisoner asked him if he could fight, and if he "ever heard a band play?" and without more ado he pulled off his belt and hit him twice on the side of the head with it, causing two severe wounds. Witness went in search of a policeman, by whom he was taken to the Infirmary and had his wounds dressed. Prisoner was drunk. His testimony was confirmed by another boatman, a companion, who added that the prisoner threatened to run his knife into someone before the night was out. Both boatmen, it should be stated, seemed to be singularly inoffensive youths for their station in life, about nineteen or twenty years of age. Prisoner, who had nothing to say in defence, was sent to gaol for one month with hard labour, without the option of a fine, the Chairman telling him that he had rendered himself liable to two months for what was nothing else than a brutal assault on a poor innocent fellow.

286 June 16 1883 City Police Court

DRUNKENNESS **Peter Hughes**, boatman, of no fixed residence, was charged by the same constable (P C David Jones) with a similar offence (helplessly inebriated), and had to pay 5s and costs, or be imprisoned for three days.

287 July 28 1883 Cheshire Summer Assizes

ROBBING A BOATMAN IN A TUNNEL **William Carroll** (20) and **Joseph Yates** (30), boatmen, were indicted for having feloniously robbed one **Richard Hurtle**, and stolen from his person the sum of £1 7s 6d; and that they did, at the time of the robbery, use personal violence toward the said Richard Hurtle; and **Joseph Bowden** (30), also a boatman, was indicted for receiving a portion of the money knowing it to have been stolen, at Romily, on the 28th June. The two first named prisoners pleaded guilty to the robbery, but denied the beating, on which count this case went to the jury. Mr E H Lloyd prosecuted; prisoners were undefended. This was rather a novel style of robbery. It appeared that the prosecutor was working a flat along the canal from Fairfield to

Bugworth, and as he had to pass through a tunnel at Hatherlow – a very low tunnel, through which a boat has to be worked by the men lying on their backs and pushing with their feet against the roof of the tunnel, Carroll and Yates offered to help him, and got on the flat, ostensibly for that purpose. But when they were in the tunnel Yates asked the prosecutor where he kept his money. He told them, “In the cabin”, but Carroll said, “You have got it in your pocket, and we mean to have it”. The pair accordingly fell upon him, beat and robbed him of the money stated, and, lashing him to the mast of the boat, they set it adrift. Prisoners were afterwards seen and heard dividing the money with themselves and Bowden. The facts having been proved by evidence, all three prisoners were found guilty and each was sentenced to a months hard labour.

288 July 28 1883

City Police Court

THE DRUNKEN LIST **Wm Hughes**, a boatman, of Connah's Quay, for being found drunk at the Cross and refusing to go away when requested, was fined 10s and costs.

289 August 25 1993

Birkenhead

THE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AT HILBRE ISLAND At the Birkenhead County Magistrates Court, on Saturday, before Mr T Russell Lee, a boatman named **Robert Halton**, of Bank Quay, Warrington, was brought up on remand charged with attempting to drown himself at Hilbre Island, on the previous Thursday morning. The prisoner was found in the water, and on being brought ashore he refused food, and kept constantly praying in an incoherent manner. Dr Main, of Bebington, was of opinion that the unfortunate man was a lunatic, but if placed under restraint he thought he would recover. Supt Egerton said that whilst in Bridewell the prisoner refused food, saying he had made a covenant with the Almighty to abstain. He had, however, taken a little food that morning. It was further stated that some time ago the prisoner joined the Salvation Army, and that his mind had since then become affected. It was not known how he got into the water. The magistrates ordered him to be sent to the County Asylum at Chester.

290 September 1 1883

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

CRUELTY TO A DONKEY **Samuel Allcock**, a boatman, of Over, was charged with unlawfully abusing and treating a donkey, by not giving it sufficient food. Inspector Harper, RSPCA, who also prosecuted in this case, said the defendant was a boatman living at Over, and on Sunday, the 22nd of July, a neighbour visiting the defendant's premises found a donkey tied up in a shed in a very bad condition. The shed was visited several times, and the defendant neglected it, and the animal ultimately died. Mr Amos Hitchen, a broker living at Over, said he lived near the defendant. On Sunday the 22nd July he visited the premises known as the “Old Poorhouse”. He saw the animal, almost starved to death. He saw it again at night, about half past ten, and it was still in the same condition. On the following Wednesday he saw it again tied under some “swings” on a piece of open ground. The donkey was in an emaciated condition, and famished for want of food. It had nothing to eat; and on Thursday the 26th (about dinner time) the donkey was lying on the ground dead. Witness acquainted the police of the fact. Sergeant Leather stated that on Sunday, the 33rd July, his attention was called to the state of the donkey by the last witness. He was nothing but skin and bone. He turned it out by the side of the road to get something to eat. Witness had afterwards seen the carcass opened by the veterinary surgeon, and there was no food at all in the stomach. Mr Darbyshire, veterinary surgeon, of Over, said he made a *post mortem* examination of the animal, and on opening the stomach found not one particle of food. The body was almost a skeleton; and he came to the conclusion that it had had no food for four or five days. The animal would be about fifteen years of age. For the defence, Mr Dixon of Northwich appeared, and said he was instructed that the animal in question had not been doing any work for some time prior to the occurrence. He would prove that the animal was fed by the defendant with grass whilst it was in the building referred to. He called a man named James Reuben Hulse, who said the donkey in question really belonged to him. On the Sunday in question he found it had strayed, and in company with his father went to look for it, and on Monday found it in a field. They had plenty of grass for it, and

they took it home. They gave it some fresh grass, of which it eat a little. The donkey had not been working more than ten days in two months. William Lownds, sexton of St John's Church, Over, said he lived near to defendant, and saw him bring a bag full of grass to the animal on the Wednesday. The donkey eat a little of the grass, and witness remarked that if it eat that it would take no harm. The Bench considered the case proved, and defendant was fined 10s and the costs, which amounted to £1 16s.

291 October 13 1883 Chester County Court

A CANAL BOATMAN'S ACTION Mr Ellis appeared on behalf of plaintiff in an action brought by **John Pritchard**, boatman, in the employment of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, against Thomas Wild to recover 23s. The circumstances, Mr Ellis said, were very peculiar. Plaintiff owed defendant a sum of about £10, and judgement for the amount was granted in his absence at the County Court; and to his utter astonishment he found his horse had been seized by a bailiff. Plaintiff went to defendant for his horse, and found that a quantity of other articles constituting part of the harness of his horse had also been taken. On account of this proceeding plaintiff was deprived of the use of his horse for two days. He went to Mrs Wild, defendant's wife, complaining of their conduct, and she said they would make it all right for him. But they had not made it all right, and hence the present action. Evidence was given by plaintiff and his wife to the same effect as the statement made by Mr Ellis. Defendant's wife, however, and other witnesses deposed that the harness alleged to have been wrongfully taken away was not on the horse at the time of its seizure, and the judge said that after what had been said for the defence he could not say that the articles had ever been taken away. Verdict would therefore be given for defendant, and costs would follow the verdict.

292 November 24 1883

SHOCKING DEATH OF A BOY THROUGH DRINK An inquest was held on Monday, at Newtown, on the body of **Richard Jones**, aged 15, son of a boatman on the Shropshire Union Canal, who was drowned in the canal. It appeared that the father sent the boy on Saturday morning for a pint of rum to a public house two miles away, and as the deceased did not return the father went to look for him, and found his hat and the rum bottle in the canal. On dragging the canal the boy was found drowned. The bottle was corked, but half of the contents had gone, and it seemed the deceased had drunk more than half a pint of rum, and, becoming intoxicated, had fallen into the canal. A verdict was returned of "Found drowned, caused by taking too much drink".

293 January 5 1884

INQUEST An inquest was held at Little Leigh on Wednesday on the body of **Alice Beach**, ten years of age, who was drowned in the River Weaver at Acton Bridge. The deceased was the daughter of a boatman, and was sent by her mother on New Year's Day to get some water. She overbalanced herself and fell from the boat into the water. Her father, hearing her cries, jumped in, but being seized with cramp, was unable to render assistance. A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

294 February 9 1884 Cheshire Assizes

A DISHONEST BOATMAN **Moses Littlemore**, (38), boatman, was indicted for stealing a horse, the property of **William Yarnall**, his master, at Altrincham. Mr Burke Wood prosecuted; the prisoner was undefended. Prosecutor and prisoner were respectively master and mate of a canal flat, and the former having purchased an old horse near Runcorn, and finding it unfitted for the work, repented him of his bargain, and forwarded it in care of the prisoner to the person of whom he had purchased. Prisoner, however, appeared to have sold the horse for 24s, but told prosecutor that it had dropped dead under him, and he sold it to a knacker for half a sovereign, which he tended to the prosecutor. The horse was afterwards discovered in Runcorn, having been resold for £2 17s 6d. He was found guilty, and sentenced to six months hard labour.

295 February 9 1884

City Police Court

INTOXICATION **Samuel Jones**, boatman, Queen's Ferry, was charged on the information of P C Hill with being helplessly drunk on the City Road on Friday afternoon, and he had to pay 5s and costs or be imprisoned for a week.

296 March 8 1884

Runcorn

POLICE COURT **Daniel Gregory**, a boatman, was summoned on three separate charges of using profane language in High Street and assaulting **Henry Twigg** and **Joseph Carter**. On the 23rd February the defendant entered Walker's vaults, where the prosecutors were, and, calling them "knobsticks" for the Bridgewater Navigation Company, struck them on the face and body. He then went into the street and created a disturbance. The Bench fined the defendant in the total sum of £2 8s 6d, or in default fourteen days hard labour.

297 May 3 1884

Chester County Court

ACTION AGAINST A BOATMAN Mrs R Watson, administratrix of the late Joseph Jones, Tilston Locks, hay and straw dealer, raised an action against **William Johnson**, jun, canal boatman, for £13 15s 2d, being the balance of an account due to the late Joseph Jones, for goods supplied. Mr Churton appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr Brassey for the defence. Defendant complained of the irregularity with which plaintiff's books were kept, and contended that he had paid several sums with which he was not credited. Judgement was given for £12.

298 May 31 1884

Chester County Court

ADMINISTRATION ORDER NOT AVAILABLE Mr Seller, solicitor, applied on behalf of **John Griffiths**, boatman, Queen Street, Chester, for an administration order in his affairs. The debtor's liabilities, he said, were £49 2s 9d, and he was in receipt of £4 10s a week, out of which he had to pay the wages of three men. That pay continued only as long as work was steady, but the employment was very liable to stoppages. An objection was taken to the application on the ground that there was a judgement standing against the debtor for £80. His Honour pointed out that the judgement referred to placed the applicant beyond the relief afforded by administration orders, as they were available only for debtors of less than £50, and the application therefore could not be entertained.

299 June 28 1884

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

DRUNKENNESS **Herbert Hodkinson**, boatman, was summoned by P C Pearson for being drunk and incapable on the 11th June in Church Lane, Over, at one o'clock in the morning. Defendant, who had nothing to urge in extenuation further than that he had been "teetotal" for twelve months, was fined 5s and costs.

300 July 5 1884

Runcorn

SHOCKING CASE OF CRUELTY At the Manchester County Police Court, on Friday, the 27th ult, a boatman named **Richard Draper**, of Runcorn, was brought up on a charge of working a horse while in an unfit state, on the canal bank at Barton, about five o'clock that morning. Police-constable Bannister stated that about the time mentioned he was on duty on the canal bank, at Barton, when he saw the prisoner working a horse, which was drawing a barge with 50 tons of "slack". He had the horse examined by a veterinary surgeon, who stated that the horse was in very poor and weak condition, and totally unfit to work. The Bench remarked that it was a most brutal case of inhumanity to work the animal in such a condition; and as cases of a similar character repeatedly came before them, they had determined to send them to prison without the option of a fine. The prisoner would have to go to prison for one month with hard labour.

301 July 19 1884

City Police Court

DRUNKENNESS **Edward Roberts**, an old boatman from Ellesmere Port, was brought up in custody charged with being drunk on the City walls at a quarter past four o'clock on the previous day, and he was fined 5s and costs.

302 July 26 1884

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

A BOISTEROUS BOATMAN **William Evans**, a boatman, appeared in custody on a charge of being drunk and assaulting P C Eaton while in the execution of his duty; also with damaging his uniform at Barbridge on the 25th June. The officer stated that at 10 p m on the day in question, whilst on duty at Wardle, he observed a fracas in front of the Jolly Tar Inn. The defendant was there openly proclaiming his eagerness to fight. Eventually he hit a man, and on witness's interference defendant became even more violent, dealing him several blows on the head and one on the jaw. Witness fell in the struggle, and his uniform was damaged. In order to properly secure the prisoner he required to procure assistance. Defendant did not deny the truth of the charge, explaining that in his intoxication he was unaware of what he had done. The magistrates inflicted a fine of 20s and costs. John Evans, a nephew of the last defendant, was accused of being drunk in the township of Wardle on the same day. P C Eaton deposed that defendant aided William Evans in his assault on him. A similar penalty to that imposed on the uncle was inflicted.

303 September 6 1884

BOATMAN KILLED ON THE WEAVER An inquest was held yesterday (Friday) by Mr H Churton, county coroner, on the body of a man named **Richard Leach**, 40 years of age, who was accidentally killed on Thursday, at Dutton Locks, Acton Bridge, on the River Weaver. The deceased was in an empty lock from which he ascended to assist another boatman. While he was engaged in turning the handle which opens the lock, it slipped from his grasp, owing to the weight on one side of the cylinder giving way. The rapidly revolving handle struck his forehead, and killed him instantly.

304 September 13 1884

Runcorn

POLICE COURT Frank Allman, a youth, was charged with stealing a black mare, the property of **Thomas Bricknall**, boatman, Middlewich, and a bridle value about 4s, the property of **Joseph Brown**, boatman, Runcorn. The prisoner had been employed by Bricknall for about three weeks. On Friday the mare was placed in Williams's stables, Percival's Lane, and on Saturday morning the prisoner was sent to give it a feed of corn. Instead of doing so, however, he took the animal away, and in the afternoon he was arrested by Police-constable Johnson, in Warrington. He had left the animal on the canal bank near Walton, where it was found by Police-constable Bennett. He alleged that he was only giving the horse a feed of grass along the canal side. The prisoner asked the magistrates to commit him to an industrial school where he said he had a brother. He was sent to Knutsford Sessions for trial.

305 December 6 1884

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS **Joseph Twigg**, a boatman, was fined 10s and costs 9s 6d for furiously riding a horse through Church Street.

306 January 17 1885

CANAL BOATMAN KICKED BY HIS HORSE **Henry Green**, boatman, of the canal boat "Rising Sun" belonging to the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Company, was admitted to Chester Infirmary on Thursday suffering from a fracture of the skull and concussion of the brain. It appears he was attending to his work at Ellesmere Port, and his horse suddenly turning round kicked him, rendering him insensible. He now lies at the Infirmary in an improving state.

307 April 11 1885

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS Frederick Whittaker, aged 10, indicted for stealing a mare, the property of **William Wignall**, a boatman, at Marston, Northwich, was acquitted.

308 July 18 1885

Runcorn

FURIOUS RIDING At Runcorn Police Court, on Monday last, **Robert Spencer**, boatman belonging to the flat "Mabel" of Liverpool, was fined 10s and costs for furiously riding a horse in Bridge Street on Sunday morning, the 5th inst. Constable Smith saw him galloping the horse at the top of its speed down High Street and up Bridge Street and mercilessly lashing it all the while with a thick heavy rope. The magistrates, Messrs Hazlehurst and Rigby, considered the case one of gross cruelty.

309 July 25 1885

Runcorn

THROWING A WIFE INTO THE CANAL At Runcorn Police Court, on Wednesday, **Edward Littler**, captain of the flat "Java" belonging to Messrs Vardin of Northwich, was charged with assaulting his wife **Margaret**. The evidence of Constables Breeze and Harper was to the effect that at half past eleven on Tuesday night they were at Top Locks, Runcorn, when they heard screams coming from the direction of the canal. They went to prisoner's boat, and found his wife bleeding very much from the face, and found prisoner had assaulted her. In their presence he threw her on the hatches of the boat, caught her by the legs, and threw her into the water. Harper tried to get her out, but prisoner prevented him. Ultimately another boatman named **Forster** jumped into the canal and rescued her. The wife now said she wished to excuse her husband, as she was first to strike, and that it was by accident she tumbled into the canal. The Bench declined to believe her, and committed her husband for 14 days hard labour, without the option of a fine.

310 August 15 1885

Runcorn

WOMAN DROWNED On Monday last, Mr T J Ridgway, coroner, held an inquest at Runcorn on the body of Martha Acton, a woman of loose character, who was drowned in the tidal dock at Runcorn on Friday week. Ellen Jackson, a single woman, residing in Penketh Lane, said shortly after midnight on Friday, witness, the deceased and a boatman named **Fozzard** went in the direction of a flat which was lying in the tidal basin between two vessels. Witness left them at Mr Marshall's, and saw them go off together. The deceased had had a good deal of drink, but Fozzard was sober. Deceased seemed quite satisfied to go with Fozzard. Half an hour after leaving deceased, witness heard of her death. She did not think deceased met with any foul play. In cross-examination, witness said that deceased "had had only half a pint of whisky". Davis Price, a seaman on board the Guiding Star, now lying at Runcorn, said that between twelve and one o'clock on Saturday morning he heard the cries of a woman. He ran on deck, but could see nothing. He saw Fozzard looking over the vessel's rail, and asked him what was the matter. Fozzard replied that a woman had fallen overboard. George Fozzard was called into the room and cautioned. He said he had known deceased about three years. She was a single woman, about 25 years of age. While he was trying to get a plank she attempted to jump on board the flat, and fell into the water between the Guiding Star and the quay. He tried to rescue her, but he could not, and he gave information to the police. He told her to stand on the quay while he got a plank, but she jumped before he could get one. Police-constable Fryer said he recovered the body of the deceased from the dock. There were no marks of violence on her. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

311 October 3 1885

County Petty Sessions

AN UNGRATEFUL THIEF A young tramping fellow 18 years of age, giving the name of George Smith, and stating that he came from Tipton, in Staffordshire, was charged in custody with stealing a purse containing £3 19s 6d, a pair of trousers, and a strap, the property of **Alfred Bourne**, from a boat called the "Nancy" at Ellesmere Port, on the 20th September. P C Wilkinson stationed at Ellesmere Port, said he received information of the robbery on Sunday morning and went to

Tattenhall, where he received the prisoner in custody, and on charging him prisoner said he was very sorry for what he had done; he was out of work and, seeing the opportunity, he took the money, thinking he should be short of food. The prisoner, in replying to the usual charge, now pleaded guilty. Bourne, an intelligent, good-natured looking young boatman stated the facts to the Bench, from which it appeared that the prisoner applied to him in a destitute condition to be allowed to sleep in the cabin of the boat, and he not only granted his request but gave him food, and prisoner repaid him by bolting with the articles and money, and was only captured after a smart chase. Prosecutor could not exactly say what money he had, but he believed very little of it was missing. Detective-inspector Downes said the prisoner had given a wrong address, and evidently was not known at Tipton. The Chairman, who characterised the prisoner as a most ungrateful fellow, sentenced him to two months hard labour.

312 October 31 1885

CITY POLICE COURT YESTERDAY (FRIDAY) **John Owen**, a boatman, of 45 Fosbrook Street, was brought up in custody charged with being drunk and doing wilful damage at the Red Lion public house in Frodsham Street. Thomas Maund, the landlord, said the prisoner came there the previous night with four or five others, who were the worse for drink, and because he would not draw them any drink prisoner broke a pane of glass in the door worth about 8s. Prisoner was arrested by Police-sergeant Price. He said he had no recollection of the circumstances, and was fined 5s and costs, or seven days hard labour for being drunk, and to pay the cost of the damages.

313 November 21 1885

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS On Monday, before Captain Hazlehurst and Mr Davies, John Mullern, labourer, was charged with assaulting a woman named Mary Ann Warburton. On Saturday the prisoner followed complainant home, and assaulted a man named Bate, with whom she lives. Warburton went for a policeman, and on her return prisoner struck her in the face. He was fined 5s and 9s 6d costs. **E Dorman**, boatman, was fined 5s and 9s 6d costs for keeping a dog without a licence.

314 February 20 1886

Ellesmere Port

DROWNING FATALITY On Thursday evening **James Palin**, 16 years of age, a native of Sandbach, and employed on board a canal boat belonging to **John Crewe**, Stoke on Trent, met his death by drowning. The boat was lying in Ellesmere Port Dock at the time. No one saw the accident, but a boatman named Ledsham heard a voice calling, "Father", and on searching in the water with a long pole he found a body. Grappling irons were procured, and the corpse recovered, but all attempts to restore animation proved futile. Mr Churton, county coroner, held an inquiry on the body yesterday (Friday), at the Bull's Head Inn, and a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

315 March 6 1886

Over

PECULIAR DROWNING ACCIDENT An inquest was held on Wednesday, at Over, by Mr H Churton, county coroner, concerning the death under rather peculiar circumstances of **William Thomas Phillips**, 17 years old, the son of a boatman from Runcorn. It appeared that while the boat was lying in the River Weaver, near Over, on Tuesday evening, the lad, at his mother's call, emerged from the cabin in a half sleeping state and fell overboard. He was drowned before assistance could reach him. P C Hunt recovered the body. A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

316 April 24 1886

City Police Court

AN INTOXICATED BOATMAN P C Stokes gave evidence against **Robert Turton**, canal boatman, who was charged in custody with being drunk and riotous on Tuesday afternoon on Cow Lane Bridge. The prisoner was fighting with another man less intoxicated than himself, and the only way of effectually separating them was to arrest the prisoner. He pleaded guilty, and was fined

5s and costs, with the option of seven days imprisonment.

317 June 5 1886

Runcorn

STRANGE CONDUCT OF A BOATMAN On Tuesday, Mr Ridgway held an inquiry at Runcorn as to the death of a child named **William Silas Wood**, boatman, of Vine Yard off Lowlands Road. On Monday evening deceased fell into the canal whilst at play, and was taken out by a man named William Hichells, but the efforts to restore animation were not successful. **James Sumner**, boatman, Acton Bridge, admitted seeing the child in the water before its grandmother observed it. He remarked that he did not pull it out because to make such an attempt would have made him light headed and giddy. The Coroner severely censured Sumner for not making an effort to rescue the deceased before going for a constable, and said the child had very likely lost his life through his conduct. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death", and agreed to present 13s to the parents of the deceased, as they are sick in bed, and in destitute circumstances.

318 August 28 1886

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS **Henry Twigg**, boatman, was charged with obtaining 10s from his master, Mr Richard Evans, and also with stealing a bridle belonging to his employer. Both cases were dismissed.

319 September 18 1886

Runcorn

SAD DEATH An inquest was held at the Navigation Inn, Canal Street, on Monday afternoon, before Mr E F Worsley, coroner, touching the death of a woman named Sarah Hayes, aged 37 years, wife of a boatman named **Thomas Hayes**. Ellen Brown said she was the wife of Thomas Brown, and lived at 45 Mason Street. She had known deceased for several months. She was often in low spirits, and used to tell her that she was poorer than ever she had been in her life, as the boat had not been doing well, and she could not pay anyone to go into her place. On Thursday the 9th last, a policeman served deceased with a summons against her husband for alleged cruelty to a horse. She said the summons had upset her, adding that she had no means to pay, and there was nothing but money attending it. Deceased did not eat any food until Saturday, and only drank a cup of tea. On Saturday morning she gave birth to a female child, and was attended by Mrs Barrow, who performed her duties in a most satisfactory manner. Later on in the afternoon deceased was taken ill, and witness sent for Mrs Barrow. On her arrival she sent for Dr Robinson, but Mrs Hayes died before he got there, at about four o'clock. Mrs Barrow then gave evidence that the deceased appeared to be very weak. She sent for Dr Robinson, but the woman died before he came. Deceased had complained to her about being served with the summons. Sarah Houghton gave corroborative evidence. The Deputy Coroner said he might have called the inspector of police as to the service of the summons, but that had been spoken to by independent witnesses. He had also requested the attendance of Dr Robinson, but he had unfortunately been called away; but a note from him was quite satisfactory. It was the probable consequence of the summons which caused the shock which had operated upon a weak constitution. The Deputy Coroner complimented the neighbours for the care they had bestowed on deceased during her illness. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that death resulted from the anxiety caused to the deceased from the probable consequences of the summons, such anxiety operating upon a weak constitution.

320 March 26 1887

City Police Court

ALLEGED ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON Maria Matthews, Chapel Street, was charged by **William Clutton**, canal boatman, in the employ of the Shropshire Union Canal Company with stealing a purse containing £2 from his possession on the previous evening. Prosecutor stated that he saw prisoner a little after ten o'clock in Frodsham Street on the previous evening, while waiting for his son. When the latter arrived, they visited two public houses, after which his son went away with a companion of prisoner's. He (prosecutor) paid for drink with some loose money which he had in an under waistcoat pocket, but the purse containing the £2 was in the pocket of another

waistcoat which he wore over the other. Prisoner made him accompany her to her house in Chapel Street, where they arrived about half past eleven. She enquired if he had any money, and on his replying that he had two sovereigns, she went upstairs to ask the landlady for change, but failed to procure any. He kept the money in his pocket and prisoner then asked him to accompany her and she would try to get the required change. They accordingly went to two houses but with no better result. When rounding a corner she took hold of his arm and, happening to feel in his waistcoat pocket, he found the money had disappeared. At that moment, prisoner ran off as hard as she could, and his efforts to catch her were fruitless. He then returned to prisoner's house, but not finding her proceeded towards his son's boat at the Northgate. On his way, however, he met prisoner and accused her of stealing his purse, which she denied. He then shouted for the police, and an officer coming up, he gave prisoner into custody. The Chief Constable said at this point it would be as well to have a remand for the purpose of thoroughly investigating the affair. Prisoner was accordingly remanded till Monday next.

321 April 2 1887

City Police Court

ROBBING A CANAL BOATMAN Maria Matthews, 10 Chapel Street, was brought up on remand charged by **William Clutton**, canal boatman, with stealing a purse containing two sovereigns from his possession on Wednesday last. Prosecutor added to his evidence, given at the former hearing of the case, that he felt prisoner's hand in his pocket when she took the money. Elizabeth Ennion, Lower Bridge Street, deposed to visiting several public houses with prosecutor and prisoner on the night in question. She left them together at eleven o'clock near Cow Lane Bridge. Bertha Hancock, 28 Steam Mill Street, said that prisoner, in company with Clutton, called at her house on Wednesday night and asked for lodgings, but witness refused. Prisoner said prosecutor had plenty of money but no change. They then left, but prosecutor returned in about ten minutes and asked if "She had come" and on being answered in the negative he again departed. Arthur Hall, Raven's Arms, Frodsham Street, said prosecutor paid for some drink for prisoner and Ennion with a sixpence on Wednesday evening. P C Griffiths deposed that at twenty minutes to eleven on the evening in question he heard a noise in Steam Mill Street, and on proceeding in that direction found prosecutor and prisoner together. Clutton had hold of her arm, and she said, "This man has lost some money, and he says I have robbed him". Prosecutor wanted her to be locked up for putting her hand into his pocket and extracting a purse containing two sovereigns, but prisoner said she had not seen him before, as she had been in the theatre till half past ten. Witness brought her to the police station and 5 1/2d was found in her possession. In answer to the usual charge, prisoner pleaded not guilty. The magistrates retired, and on their return into court, the Mayor said prisoner would have to go to prison for three months with hard labour.

322 July 30 1887

Cheshire Summer Assizes

THE BOYS AND THE BOATMAN **Reuben Roberts alias Naylor** (on bail), a boatman in the employment of the Shropshire Union Company, surrendered to an indictment charging him with maliciously inflicting upon Thomas Dentith grievous bodily harm, at Chester on the 11th April. Mr D A V Colt-Williams prosecuted, and Mr Simpson, at the request of the learned judge, defended the accused, who appeared in the dock with his face bound up, and looking very ill, having, it was stated, just come from the Chester Infirmary. He was allowed a seat in the dock. According to the learned counsel for the prosecution the prisoner with other men of his class were drinking in a public house, the Queen's Arms, at the canal end of Queen Street, Chester, on the date named, when the prosecutor and other boys peeped through the window and jeered at them. Whereupon prisoner ran out and chased the boys, knocking down the prosecutor, and, it was alleged, kicking him on the shoulder and breaking his collar bone. Evidence for the prosecution was given to that effect, including that of the prosecutor, who resides in Parkes Court, Foregate Street. Dr Lees, house surgeon at the Infirmary, who proved the injury, in reply to the learned judge, said a large number of broken collar bones resulted from the person falling suddenly forward. The latter was the theory for the defence and that the boys, who had been throwing stones at the prisoner and his companions,

were running away from them and on looking round the lad stumbled and fell, breaking his collar bone. The jury found the prisoner guilty of a common assault only, and he was sentenced to a months hard labour.

323 September 17 1887

Runcorn

THEFT BY A MATE AT RUNCORN At Runcorn Police Court, on Wednesday, before Messrs Henry Reynolds and James Handley, **Abraham Carrington**, mate of the flat "Egypt" of Red Bull, Staffordshire was charged with having on the previous day stolen two Turks' heads (coils of rope), one stern fender and one tiller rope, value altogether 8s, the property of **Charles Swindells**, a boatman of Leigh, Lancashire. The goods were missed by prosecutor from his boat, which is in dock at Runcorn, on Tuesday evening, and he gave information to Sergeant Woolley. The officer, from what he learnt then, visited the flat "Egypt" which was also lying in dock, and found the articles in the cabin. The captain of this vessel was on shore. The prisoner, who was on board, was apprehended on suspicion of having stolen the goods, and on being charged he replied that he had stolen them. He now pleaded guilty, and was committed to gaol for fourteen days with hard labour.

324 November 5 1887

Chester Winter Assizes

THE NORTHWICH BIGAMY CASE **Alfred Haddock** (24), boatman, pleaded guilty to feloniously marrying Hannah Bond, at Moulton, on the 6th September 1886, during the lifetime of his former wife Martha Haddock. Mr Burke Wood, who prosecuted, having briefly stated the facts to the court, the prisoner was sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

325 December 10 1887

Runcorn

FRACAS AT THE SALVATION ARMY BARRACKS At the Runcorn Petty Sessions, on Monday last, a case was heard in which Peter Jones, who described himself as a farm labourer, and also held the position of orderly officer in the Runcorn Branch of the Salvation Army, summoned a boatman named **Ralph Bate** for assaulting him in the Citadel, and on a second information with behaving in a riotous, violent and indecent manner in the Citadel on Sunday the 27th November. Mr Knowles of Widnes appeared for the defence. Jones said that on the Sunday afternoon in question he was on duty in the Citadel when his attention was called to Bate, who was sitting down with his hat on and commenced calling out loudly during divine service. He went and asked Bate to behave himself. A man named Malcolm Jones went and tried to persuade Bate to pull his hat off, and went and stroked his hair down. He afterwards put his hat on again. He (witness) went down the aisle and heard defendant say, "Wait till the old ---- comes up again, and I'll give him a smack in the teeth". On his return defendant asked him if he was a fighting man, and on being told that was not the place for that sort of work he struck him a violent blow in the face. In cross-examination witness said he was an officer of order. At the time this affair took place defendant was not a yard off the door. They did not make all the people pay as they went in. Defendant did not say he wanted to go out, but he afterwards made his escape. He did not get hold of defendant's clothes or knock him over a form, nor did he try to keep him till a police officer came. He did make an attempt to stop him. Two other witnesses were called, who to a certain extent corroborated the statement made by Jones. In defence Mr Knowles called two witnesses, who swore that defendant wanted to go out, but complainant refused to let him. Two of his friends had gone out before. Jones pushed Bate on the breast over a form. Bate then got up and pushed Jones away from the door, and went out. He did not use any violent language. Their worships said they had decided to convict. For the assault he was fined 10s and 8s 6d costs, and in the case of riotous behaviour 10s and 13s 6d costs.

326 March 10 1888

Cheshire Winter Assizes

EXTENSIVE THEFT OF ROPE AT RUNCORN **George Seymour** (40), boatman, James Crank (37), labourer, and George Meek (37), labourer were indicted for stealing 336lb of rope, the property of Charles Whiteway Hazlehurst, at Runcorn on the 31st December, or receiving it with the knowledge that it was stolen. Mr Yeates prosecuted, and Mr E Burke-Wood defended Seymour, Mr

E H Lloyd defended Crank, and Meek was undefended. The latter was acquitted, and Seymour and Crank were sentenced to six months hard labour.

327 June 9 1888

Runcorn

PETTY SESSIONS At the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday last, before Messrs Alfred Thomas and James Handley, Thomas Evans (Ship Canal labourer), William Findlay (Cooper) and **Henry Price** (boatman) were each fined 1s and costs for allowing their dogs to be at large unmuzzled.

328 July 7 1888

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

THEFT OF TIMBER **John Muir** (49), boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing a piece of timber, the property of George Austin, at Poulton-cum-Seacombe, on the 16th April. Mr Kent prosecuted, and prisoner, who had been four times previously convicted, was sent to gaol for three months with hard labour.

329 July 7 1888

City Police Court

DAMAGING A FENCE A young boatman named **William Roberts**, in custody, was charged with damaging a fence, the property of Mr Alfred Tennyson, builder, 135 Garden Lane. Mr Wynn Parry, who appeared for complainant, stated that his client had been subjected to great annoyance by persons going on his land and damaging the fence. On Saturday night about twenty yards of the fence was broken, in consequence of which Mr Tennyson laid wait on Sunday night, and about ten o'clock saw prisoner and another man coming across the field, he then heard the rail crack and break, and on going there found it lying on the ground. He caught prisoner and brought him to the police office. The value of the damage was 6d. Mr Tennyson, in corroborating, remarked that he was continually treated in that manner. The fence enclosed some mowing grass, and if it was knocked down the cows could get in and eat the grass. Prisoner, who said he did not wilfully break the fence, was fined 5s, including costs, and 6d for damage, or in default seven days hard labour.

330 August 4 1888

Cheshire Summer Assizes

THEFT OF A BOATMAN'S WATCH **Thomas Trelfall**, a boatman, 20 years of age, was indicted for stealing, at Runcorn, on the 26th June, a watch, the property of **George Griffin**, an old man similarly employed on a North Staffordshire canal boat. Mr Burke-Wood prosecuted, and Mr Colt Williams defended. The prisoner took dinner in the prosecutor's boat on the 25th June, and on the following day the watch was missed off a shelf where it was deposited at night. Prisoner subsequently sold the watch in his own name to a carter for 5s. The defence was that the prisoner was not entirely responsible for his actions, and might have been made the tool of the real thief. Prisoner was found guilty, and having been previously convicted several times, was sentenced to six months hard labour.

331 October 6 1888

City Police Court

THEFT BY AN OLD BOATMAN An old boatman named **Wm Catherall** (75), living at Gamon's Court, Duke Street, was summoned for stealing 23 wooden rails valued at 5s 9d, from a fence in Queens Park on the land of Charles Blythe. P C Kenyon deposed to finding the missing property in the defendant's house, hidden under some bags. The rails had been newly pulled from the fence which was previously in good condition. Defendant, who said that he found the rails "loose" and took them to sell as firewood, was fined 20s and costs, or 14 days imprisonment.

332 December 8 1888

Cheshire Winter Assizes

LARCENIES A basketmaker, 19 years of age, named George Aldis, pleaded guilty to stealing at Cholmondeston, on the 23rd October, a mare, neck strap and bridle, also a watch and 13s 6d, belonging to **Richard Walters**, canal boatman. Mr Starkey was for the prosecution. Although only 19 years of age, prisoner had been many times already convicted at Stafford Assizes, Wolverhampton and elsewhere, and was now sentenced to ten months imprisonment. His Lordship

described the present case as a most impudent robbery, the animal, articles and money being stolen on a journey to Ellesmere Port, and he threatened the prisoner with penal servitude if he ever appeared in a court of justice again.

333 January 5 1889

Calveley

SAD DROWNING ACCIDENT Yesterday (Friday) Mr H Churton, county coroner, held an inquest at the Davenport Arms, Calveley on the body of **Thomas Carman**, 14 years of age, a canal boat boy, who was drowned in the canal on Thursday. The canal boatman **Samuel Willday** and his wife **Emma** saw the unfortunate boy fall from the boat into the water, and he could not be recovered till life was extinct.

334 February 23 1889

Calveley

FATALITY TO A CANAL BOATMAN Mr H Churton, county coroner, held an inquest at the Davenport Arms, Calveley, on Monday, touching the death of **John Hankinson** (66), a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Company. On the 27th December Hankinson broke a rib by falling from his boat at Audlem locks and since then he had been confined to bed, being attended by Dr Kirkpatrick. On Thursday week he rose, walked across his bedroom floor, returned to bed, and died almost immediately.

335 March 2 1889

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

CHARGES OF ILL TREATMENT Thomas Ford, officer of the RSPCA, charged **Samuel Jackson** with ill-treating a horse at Tiverton on the 8th February; and Alfred Hicks with causing the horse to be so ill-treated. From the evidence of Ford it seemed that Jackson was working a canal boat for the Shropshire Union Canal Company, and was at Bates's Mill, near Bunbury, about 2 15 on the day in question. The inspector found the animal, a mare, which was drawing the boat, had several sores on its shoulder, and was evidently working in pain. He told Jackson the horse was unfit for use, but notwithstanding that he continued to work it to Bunbury – three miles off. P C Bates said the animal had two sores about the size of sixpence on the left shoulder, and a cut on the other shoulder underneath the collar. He considered the horse was working in pain. Mr White, Chief Inspector for the Shropshire Union, who appeared for the company, called George Talbot, traffic inspector at Chester, who was responsible for the horse being turned out that day, and James Wilson, veterinary surgeon, of Nantwich, whose evidence went to show that the animal was suffering only from a slight heat sore or boil, which had been rubbed, and subsequently, on complaint by Ford, was set to work in a "breast collar". There was nothing to hinder the mare working. Both cases were dismissed.

George Woodcock, another boatman, was summoned by the same officer for ill-treating a horse by working it in an unfit state at Tiverton on the 13th February. The horse in this case belonged to the defendant, and not to the company. P C Bates described it as a bad case. An aunt of the defendant said the horse had been regularly worked for twelve years, and this was the first occasion on which he had been summoned for any such offence. Fined 2s 6d and costs 11s.

336 March 30 1889

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

DANGER ON THE CANAL **Joseph Breedon**, a canal boatman, was charged with failing to display the requisite light on his boat, which was laden with dynamite on the Shropshire Union Canal at Beeston. The offence was admitted, and the defendant pleaded in excuse of the fact that the boat was not lying in the proper siding, that his horse had become exhausted, and for the absence of a lamp that by accident it had been knocked overboard and was being dried and cleaned when the officers appeared on the scene. Fined 40s and 10s 6d costs.

337 April 20 1889

Altrincham

SAVAGE ATTACK ON A BROTHER At the Altrincham Petty Sessions on Monday, **Job Taberner**, boatman, Altrincham, was charged with unlawfully wounding **Thomas Taberner**, his

brother, on Saturday. The prosecutor said that shortly before midnight he heard the prisoner threatening his mother, and requested him to be quiet. The prisoner immediately attacked him, striking him on the head with a large stone so savagely that he became unconscious. Dr Golland deposed that he found the prosecutor suffering from three contused wounds on the head, two extending to the bone. Such wounds might have been caused by the stone produced, on which there appeared to have been blood. William Drinkwater, joiner, stated that he saw the prisoner strike his brother three times. They carried the prosecutor into the house unconscious, and he remained in that condition for over an hour. The prisoner was committed for trial, bail being granted, himself in £200 and another surety in £100.

338 April 20 1889

Runcorn

SHOCKING FATALITY AT WESTON A shocking occurrence has taken place at Weston, near Runcorn. Two young men named **Henry Shaw** of Leftwich and **Thomas Alcock**, a boatman, were engaged loading cinders on the flat "Onesimus". The supposition is that the sulphur and smoke from the cinders were blowing into the cabin where the men were, the result being that both were overcome. Information was at once sent to the Runcorn Police Office, and Inspector O'Donnell, who is a fully certified member of the St John Ambulance Association, and Mr Fox, assistant to Dr McDougall of Runcorn, hastened to the place. On their arrival they discovered that Shaw was dead, and Alcock was in a very precarious condition. He was at once removed, and means were adopted to restore respiration, which resulted successfully, Alcock being restored to consciousness within two hours. The body of Shaw was removed to the mortuary, where it awaits the coroner's inquest.

339 May 11 1889

City Police Court

AT THE TRIPE STALL **William Carter**, canal boatman in the employment of the Shropshire Union Company, was charged on the information of P S Culliford with being drunk and using obscene language at the tripe stall in Northgate Row about two o'clock on Tuesday afternoon. Fined 5s and costs or seven days hard labour.

340 June 29 1889

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

ALLEGED CRUELTY TO A HORSE **Samuel Boaz**, a canal boatman, was summoned by Thomas Ford, an officer of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for cruelty to a horse at Tiverton, on the 3rd June, but the Bench having heard the evidence dismissed the summons.

341 July 6 1889

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **Thomas Morris** (19), boatman, stealing a watch and chain from the person of Frank Hitchenough, at Stockport, twelve months hard labour.

342 August 10 1889

Nantwich

PECULIAR DEATH OF A SWIMMER Mr Churton, county coroner, held an inquest at Nantwich on Thursday into the cause of the death of **George Lowe**, 56 years of age, a boatman in the employment of the Shropshire Union Canal Company. From the evidence it appeared that while pushing off his boat at Wolverhampton the other day he fell into the water, which was polluted with a large quantity of gas-tar. Being a good swimmer, Lowe, although he fell under a couple of boats, managed to save himself, but in a very exhausted condition, and, worst of all, completely saturated, both inside and out, with the gas-tar. Of this it was found impossible to rid him, and after lying a few days at the Wolverhampton Hospital he insisted on proceeding on his journey. He reached Nantwich in a weakly state and died soon after. Not only had his stomach been disordered, but his lungs were affected, and the jury found that he died from the affects of his immersion in the canal and contact with the gas-tar, caused by an accidental fall into the water,

343 August 17 1889

Birkenhead

FLAT SUNK OFF EGREMONT On Tuesday morning the crew of the "George Stanton", a small

screw steamer, reported that on passing Egremont early that morning they observed the mast of a sunken flat. On receipt of the intelligence Lieutenant Simpson, R N, the water bailiff, went off to the spot on the Dock Board tender "Alert". The vessel turned out to be the "Welcome" of Winsford. She was owned by Mr Samuel Bradshaw, and was bound inward with a cargo of gravel consigned to the Liverpool Corporation. She sank about two o'clock, after collision with another vessel, and her master, **Edward Atherton**, and crew, were saved by a boatman named Emmanuel Rodriguez, who was at the time on the look out for incoming vessels.

344 November 9 1889

County Petty Sessions

STEALING GEESE AT GREAT STANNEY **Thomas Maddocks**, a young boatman in custody, was charged with stealing and receiving nine geese, value £1 7s, at Great Stanney, between the 11th and 18th August last. P C Proctor, stationed at Whitby, said from information received on the 26th of last month he went to the docks at Ellesmere Port, and on searching for about an hour found prisoner hiding in the cabin of a canal boat anchored in the docks. He was covered with clothes, and was evidently hiding. When witness roused him up prisoner said, "What do you want here?" Witness answered, "You know what I want", and for fear he should deny the charge witness intended to make against him, he took Maddocks to the police station, and charged him in the presence of P S Mackay. In reply he said, "I didn't steal the nine; I only stole three, which I took to Chedgroy and Donaldson". Henry Chedgroy, labourer, Ellesmere Port, said he was working at Burnell's galvanised ironworks on Sunday, the 18th August, and on coming out went to the Canal Tavern, about a quarter of a mile off, with a fellow workman named Donaldson. While they were there – a blacksmith named Leatham being also present – about eight o'clock prisoner came in and asked witness to buy a goose. He wanted 2s for it, and witness agreed to buy it. Prisoner also spoke to Leatham and Donaldson to whom he also sold a goose each. They all went outside together and prisoner went towards the locks. He was away about five minutes, when he returned with a bag on his shoulders. Prisoner said, "There you are", at the same time throwing the open bag, which contained old rope. Prisoner then observing that he had got the wrong bag, went out and fetched another which contained three geese. Witness then gave prisoner a shilling, and on Monday night was to give him another shilling, but prisoner had then left. Witness took one of the geese, Donaldson the other, and one was retained in the house for Leatham. Donaldson gave corroborative evidence. Mr Parker, the prosecutor, said on the 18th August he missed nine geese from a field adjoining the canal. He last saw them safe on the 11th August. Subsequently witness was sent for to the police station, where he was shown three geese similar to the ones he lost. He had given 3s a piece for a lot about a month before. He could not, of course, identify them, further than that they were Irish geese similar to those he had lost. Prisoner, who denied the theft, was sent to a months hard labour.

345 November 16 1889

City Police Court

THE FREQUENCY OF BLASPHEMY AT CHESTER Thos Powell, labourer, 1 Evans Court (for whom Mr Brassey appeared), was summoned by a canal boatman named **Thomas Berry** for assault. From the evidence of the complainant, it appeared that on the night of the 2nd last, while he and two women named Ledsham and Jones were standing at the top of an entry leading off Queen Street, defendant, coming from a public house, approached and remarked with rather strong language that he was allowed to pass, and that the woman Ledsham had no right in the yard. Defendant afterwards pulled his jacket off and went into the house for a poker. Complainant and his companions then proceeded down the entry, and defendant followed them with an uplifted poker in his hand. Complainant attempting to seize his wrist, received a blow from the fire iron which felled him to the floor, and he did not remember anything else until he found himself in a chair in his house. He subsequently went to the Infirmary. One of the women referred to in corroborating, said defendant made use of a strong adjective. Mr Gilbert: Was that word used as you state? Witness: Yes. Mr Gilbert: It is very disgusting but very common. You cannot walk along the street without hearing it, even from the mouths of mere boys. The Chairman: I too think it is very

disgusting, There was a cross summons against Berry and the woman Elizabeth Ledsham, and Mr Brassey admitting that his client struck the blow with the poker, as stated, contended that the two defendants had previously assaulted Powell. In proof of this he called a boatman named **Richard Rowlands**, who deposed to seeing the female defendant strike Powell on the head with a belt. They got him on the ground in the entry, and then while Berry was on the top of him, the woman kicked him. Other witnesses having been called, the magistrates after a brief retirement considered the cases proved, and fined each of the parties 10s and costs, or in default 14 days imprisonment.

346 November 30 1889 Altrincham

ROBBERY FROM A RUNCORN BOATMAN At the Altrincham Petty Sessions on Monday, Henry Ffoulkes, labourer, Hulme, was charged with stealing a horse and harness, value £11, the property of **William Wood**, boatman, Runcorn. On Sunday afternoon, September 17th, the horse, a big black one, which formerly acted the part of "Black Bess" at Sanger's circus, was placed in the stable at Dr White's bridge, Sale. About a quarter past six the same evening prisoner was seen by Police-constable Hargreaves leading the horse through Stretford village. As he had had some drink, and could give no satisfactory account, he was locked up on the charge of drunkenness. Afterwards he was handed over to Inspector McDonald of the Cheshire Constabulary. In reply to the charge he said he found the horse. He was committed to Chester Assizes.

347 March 1 1890 Audlem

LOST IN A LOCK An inquest was held on Monday evening at Audlem by Mr H Churton, county coroner, on the body of **Esther Annie Withy**, aged 28, the wife of a boatman, who met with her death the previous night. It appeared from the evidence that it was the custom of the deceased, although the mother of three children, the youngest only a few months old, to go forward when nearing a lock and open it for the boat to pass. On Sunday night it was intensely dark, and she, her husband, and children had left Wolverhampton intending to go to Ellesmere Port. On approaching the lock at Audlem she went forward as usual to open the gates, but on her husband getting there with the boat, he found the lock empty and his wife gone. She had slipped in the darkness, and had drowned. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned" and added as a rider their opinion that a woman having charge of three young children should not be permitted to perform such dangerous duties, and recommended that on dark nights there should be a light at every lock.

348 April 12 1890 City Police Court

A NUISANCE TO HIS NEIGHBOURS **Edward Bailey**, boatman, 35 Duke Street, was charged with being drunk and riotous in Duke Street on Friday evening. P C Salmon, in proving the case, said defendant had an axe in his hand and was wielding it about. Witness told him to go in the house and he did so, but coming out with a stick in his hand threatened to strike him. Defendant lived in one of the alms houses in Duke Street, and was a regular nuisance to the people who lived there. Corroborative evidence having been given, defendant was fined 10s and costs, with the alternative of 14 days hard labour.

349 August 2 1890 Cheshire Summer Assizes

THE SEDUCTIVE PIE **John Hillyer** (35), boatman, admitted having burglariously broken into the house of George Davidson, at Runcorn, on the 15th May, and carried off six pork pies. His Lordship observed that prisoner was in the act of eating the pies when found out. He had been previously convicted, and appeared to be on the high road to penal servitude, but it was to be hoped he would stop short of that. His punishment would be twelve months hard labour.

350 January 21 1891 City Police Court

A VIOLENT BOATMAN **William Hooper**, a canal boatman, was charged in custody on the information of P C Smith, with committing a breach of the peace, and also with issuing threats towards an old woman named Fanny Wildig (sic). Evidence having been given by the woman, and

the depositions of the officer heard, the Magistrates bound the defendant over to keep the peace for three months, himself in £20 and two sureties of £10 each, or 21 days imprisonment, to pay the costs, or suffer a further term of seven days hard labour.

351 February 2 1891 Crewe

A BOATMAN DROWNED Yesterday (Friday) Mr H Churton, county coroner, held and inquest at Hassall Green concerning the death of **Samuel Green**, 18 years of age, who was immersed in the canal. The evidence showed that the deceased was attending to his ordinary duties as a boatman when from some cause or another he got into the water. He was taken out by his father, but he never recovered consciousness, and died before assistance could be procured. A verdict according to the evidence given was returned.

352 February 21 1891

PERILOUS ADVENTURE ON THE MERSEY Three men named **Julian Goss**, boatman, Frank Mills, quartermaster of the "Adriatic" and James Bingham, baker, all residents of New Brighton, had a perilous adventure during the night of Monday. They left New Brighton together about eleven o'clock in a small punt in order to cross to Bootle, and some alarm was occasioned amongst their friends next morning on finding that their boat had not returned, and that an oar belonging to it had been picked up in the river. Inquiries showed that the boat was struck the ground at low water off the Langton Dock, and capsized. **Captain Cross**, of the flat "Hope" of Northwich, heard the cries of the occupants, and in company with his mate went to their aid in a small boat and succeeded in landing them safely, though in an exhausted condition. The men were taken to the Bootle Borough Hospital, and Bingham and Goss were ordered to bed, but Mills was able to rejoin his ship in the course of the day.

353 February 28 1891 Chester Castle Petty Sessions

ROBBERY AND ASSAULT ON THE POLICE **Thomas Maddox alias Turner**, who pleaded not guilty, was charged in custody with stealing 17s, the money of **John Wood**, boatman, employed by the Shropshire Union Canal Company. Complainant stated that on the night of the 19th instant he was sleeping in the cabin of the boat of which he had charge. Prisoner was on the same boat, but complainant told him not to enter the cabin. About three o'clock in the morning complainant missed the money in question from the pocket of his trousers. Suspecting that prisoner had robbed him, he subsequently went to the nearest police station and gave information. **Henry Davis**, a workman in the employ of the complainant, in corroborating his master's evidence, said he told prisoner that there was no room for him in the cabin. The man, however, would go in, and about eleven o'clock witness saw prisoner take the money out of his master's pockets. P C Mitchell having given evidence, prisoner was further charged with assaulting the police in the execution of their duty. P C Mitchell stated that when he was removing prisoner to the police station the man struck him on the chest with his fists, and tried to trip him into the canal, Witness got assistance and handcuffed him. Corroborative evidence having been given, the Chairman characterised the offence as a very serious one, and sentenced prisoner to two months hard labour for the robbery, and two months hard labour for the assault, the two terms to run concurrently.

354 March 7 1891 Northwich

A BOATMAN DROWNED An inquest was held by Mr H Churton, county coroner, at the Boat Inn, Crowton, on Thursday, touching the death of **Edwin Mountford**, 18 years of age, residing at 76 Liverpool Road, Stoke-on-Trent. Deceased was working a canal boat on the River Weaver on the 2nd February, and while in the act of pulling a rope attached to the boat, it broke, and he fell into the water and was drowned. The body was found floating in the river on Wednesday, by a man named Hulse, who conveyed it to Pickering's Wharf. A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

355 April 4 1891

Rhyl

THE POISONING MYSTERY An adjourned inquest was held at Rhyl on Thursday in reference to the death of a boatman named **Bithel**, who died on the 28th February. A few days before his death his child died suddenly, and the two deaths following each other aroused suspicion. Dr Thomas, who was called in, refused to give a certificate, and the police were communicated with. The Coroner for Flintshire ordered a *post mortem* examination, which was conducted by Drs Thomas and Lloyd. The doctors were of opinion that death was not caused by natural causes. The contents of the stomach and other portions of the body were sent for analysis, and the analyst telegraphed that he had discovered sulphate of lead in the stomach. The inquest was adjourned for a week, in order that the analyst may attend to give evidence.

356 April 11 1891

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **Thomas Newton** (59), boatman, for unlawfully wounding John Banks, at Church Lawton, four months hard labour.

357 May 16 1891

MYSTERIOUS SUICIDE AT CHESTER Late on Friday evening week it was discovered that a labourer named William Stafford alias Goodhall alias Woodhall, had committed suicide in a lodging house in White Horse Yard, Foregate Street, Chester. The city coroner (Mr J Tatlock) held an inquest on the body at the Town Hall, on Monday afternoon. Mary McGrath, 46, White Horse Yard, Foregate Street, stated that she lived with her mother who kept a lodging house. Deceased had lived with them for about two years, and witness knew him by the name of William Goodhall. He was drinking last week and was drunk on Thursday night when he came home. On Friday morning deceased went out about half past eight, returning between six and seven in the evening when he had a little drink. He would not have anything to eat then, but went up to his room, and witness thought he had gone to bed. Shortly before eleven o'clock, while going to the room next to the one in which deceased slept, witness saw him through the open door hanging from a gas bracket by a handkerchief tied round his neck. She then obtained assistance. Witness had often noticed that deceased was very strange. He would take a book from a drawer and read from it, shouting as if he were preaching. **John Kelly**, a boatman, residing at the lodging house in question, stated that he had often thought that deceased was a curious sort of man, and that he was "off his head". The previous witness called his attention to deceased when he was hanging from the gas bracket. Witness did not cut the man down, but went for the police. P S Roe deposed to finding deceased suspended from the bracket as described. The man's toes were just touching the floor. Witness took the body down and sent for Dr Harding, who, on arriving, gave it as his opinion that deceased had been dead about four hours. Witness searched the pockets of deceased's clothes and found two purses, three pawn tickets, a knife, and a pair of spectacles. Detective Crewe said the witness McGrath had handed him a bass belonging to deceased, which contained three letters addressed to William Woodhall, bearing the postmark of West Bromwich. The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity".

358 June 6 1891

DEATH FROM CONVULSIONS – THE MOTHER CENSURED Mr J Tatlock (city coroner) held an enquiry at the Grosvenor Tavern, Canal Bank, on Thursday, relative to the death through convulsions of Alice Woolley, a month old, daughter of **John Woolley**, a canal boatman on the vessel "James". The mother having given evidence to the effect that no medical assistance was called in, she was severely censured for not having done so. The jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes".

359 June 13 1891

City Police Court

GROSS CRUELTY TO A MARE **Henry Rowlands**, Wolverhampton, a canal boatman, was charged in custody at the instance of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, with ill-treating a mare

on Sunday the 31st May. William Johnson, in the employment of the company, stated that on the day in question the prisoner came to the stables by the Northgate, and struck the animal a heavy blow with a large stave on the side, and said she ought to be dead. He had no right in the stables, and the mare he struck was not in his charge. Inspector White said the prisoner was working as an assistant on one of the company's boats plying between Birmingham and Ellesmere Port, and that when he served the summons upon him he would not have it, and said, "You will have to fetch me" and admitted striking the mare. Prisoner said he struck the mare only once, and that it was through passion, as it had nearly killed a man. Prisoner was fined 20s and costs, with the option of 14 days hard labour.

360 July 11 1891

Ellesmere Port

DROWNED IN THE SHIP CANAL On Saturday a sad accident befel a youth named Charles Mist, eighteen years of age, a labourer employed at Pool Hall, Ellesmere Port. **John Nicholls**, a boatman in the employment of the Ship Canal Company, saw the deceased, along with his brother and two other boys, on a raft on the Ship Canal. They were taken in tow by the steamer "Fanny" and when opposite Boostom Wood the boys leaned on one side of the raft causing it to capsize. Mist sank, and was not seen again until recovered by the canal diver. His brother had a narrow escape, while the two other lads, who came from Liverpool, swam ashore. This is the first case of drowning that has occurred on the canal. An enquiry was held by Mr H Churton, county coroner yesterday (Friday), at the Grosvenor Arms, Ellesmere Port, when a verdict in accordance with the evidence was returned.

361 July 18 1891

City Police Court

RIVAL BOATMEN **James King**, boatman, Claremont Walk, was summoned by **Charles Bithell**, another boatman, for using threatening language towards him. Mr Churton defended. Complainant's story was to the effect that on the 9th inst he engaged a party of people as they were coming down the lane to go in his father's boats, and defendant tried to get the party away from him. King subsequently used threatening language towards him, saying that he would dash the complainant's head against the boats and throw him into the river. Mr Churton said he thought it would be a very good thing indeed if the boating committee of the Town Hall could take some means to prevent boatmen from annoying people by asking for their custom. The Mayor said he quite agreed with Mr Churton. Continuing, Mr Churton submitted that the case was a very trumpety one, and he denied, on behalf of his client, that the threatening language was made use of. Fined 5s and costs, or in default seven days imprisonment.

362 August 29 1891

City Police Court

A BOATMAN AND HIS MONEY Mary Garston was charged with stealing 14s 4d, the property of **John Clowes**, boatman on the Shropshire Union Canal, and hailing from Stoke. It appears that on the previous night Clowes was in Foregate Street with a man named Hollis, and while there a woman came up to them and asked Clowes to stand her a drink. They adjourned to the Queen's Head, and witness called for drinks. He put down a sovereign and received the change. They then went out for a walk, and while in Grosvenor Park Road the money fell out of his pocket. He found 4s, and his friend and himself went for a candle in order to look for the remainder, leaving the woman there. When they returned the prisoner had decamped. They could not find any of the money, and at once gave information to the police. Inspector Farrell, P C Clubbe, prosecutor and Hollis proceeded to Steven Street, where they found the woman in the yard of the house where she was lodging, and prosecutor and his friend immediately recognised her as the person who had been with them. P C Clubbe then charged her with stealing the money, and she handed the officer 10s in the presence of the others. The police then took her to the police station. In answer to the Magistrates Clerk, prisoner now said that as the men were not there she took the money. The Bench sentenced her to one months imprisonment with hard labour.

363 Saturday September 12th 1891

BOATMAN DROWNED AT CHESTER

About half past eleven on Saturday night a boatman in the employment of the Shropshire Union Canal Company, named **William Griffiths**, aged 45 years, was drowned in the canal at the Cow-Lane Bridge. It appears from the evidence that the deceased and a friend during the night went to various public houses, and at eleven o'clock he was seen by the landlord of the Grosvenor Tavern to be in an intoxicated state. He then proceeded to his boat, "Moscow", moored at the Cow-Lane Bridge. By some means, deceased got in the water, and was drowned before any assistance could be rendered. About a quarter of an hour afterwards the body was recovered, but all efforts to restore animation were of no avail. Mr J Tatlock, City Coroner, held an inquest on the body at the Bull and Stirrup Hotel on Monday. **Thomas Brinknall**, 15, Charles-Street, Chester, canal boatman, stated that he met deceased about seven o'clock at the Oddfellows' Arms, and proceeded thence to the Grosvenor Tavern. There they had several drinks, and remained til 9 o'clock, when they adjourned to The Three Tuns, Frodsham-Street. Deceased left about ten o'clock, and witness did not see him again alive. Deceased told him that he would have to get on board his boat so as to leave Chester about two o'clock the following morning. Joseph Wilson, landlord of the Grosvenor Tavern, saw Griffiths about eleven o'clock the worse for drink. Charles Henry Shaw, Coach Builder, Gloucester Street, stated that he was going home accompanied by some friends on the night in question, and when walking up Frodsham Street, near Mr Robinson's, heard a splash from the direction of the canal. They did not take much notice, but on hearing a cry for help, ran to the top of the bridge, and saw something in the water. After dropping onto a boat and throwing a rope towards the object, witness went in search of a police officer. When he returned he saw a man lying on the bank with a few people trying to restore animation. PC Pryce Wynn deposed that he was on duty near Queen-Street, when Shaw gave him information that a man was drowned in the canal. When witness arrived some boatmen had got him on the bank. He then examined him. No doctor was sent for, as he thought the man was too far gone. The body was taken to the mortuary, and upon being searched it was found that he had in his possession 2s 9 1/2d and a few buttons.

A Juror – Is there no life saving apparatus near? - No -

The jury, after a few minutes deliberation, returned a verdict of "Found drowned, no evidence being given as to how the deceased got in the water".

364 October 17 1891

Northwich

STABBING CASE At Northwich Police Court on Saturday, **John Bradshaw**, boatman, Barnton, was charged with stabbing Frederick Woodward on the previous night. The prisoner was the worse for liquor, and was requested to leave the Navigation Inn, Barnton. Woodward took him to the door, when it is alleged that the prisoner rushed at him, aiming at his stomach. When in the act of striking he stumbled, and the blade of the penknife entered his thigh. He then stabbed Woodward on the other thigh. A wound two inches long and more than an inch deep was inflicted on each leg. Dr Gough stated that Woodward will be unable to leave his house for many days. A remand for a week was granted.

365 October 24 1891

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **John Bradshaw**, boatman, of Northwich, for unlawfully wounding Frederick Woodward, alkali labourer, with a knife, six weeks hard labour.

366 November 21 1891

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

ALLEGED WOUNDING OF A CANAL BOATMAN **William Clews, sen** and **William Clews jun** were charged on remand with unlawfully and maliciously wounding **Walter Thomas**, a canal boatman at Ellesmere Port, on Monday 9th November. Complainant is captain of the boat "Mentor" and lives at Prince's End, Tipton Staffordshire. He was going up the canal towing-path near the Tavern public house about 10 pm in the direction of his boat. Previous to that he had been in the public house with the prisoners, where some words had taken place between the young prisoner and

his stepmother about family matters. There was no quarrel between prosecutor and prisoners. Prosecutor left the house, and when he was on the opposite side of the canal the elder prisoner came up to him and struck him on the forehead with a small quart beer bottle, inflicting serious wounds. He put his hand on his head to stop the bleeding, when the younger prisoner struck him three or four times with his fists, and knocked him down. Prosecutor was shortly afterwards conveyed to the Ship Canal Hospital, where his injuries were attended to by Dr Bennett. In cross-examination, Thomas denied that he was drunk at the time. Dr Bennett described the wounds as an inch and a half long across the nose, going down to the bone, a smaller one over the left eye, one on the right side of the forehead three quarters of an inch long going down to the bone. Witness considered the wounds serious, and caused by different blows. When he first saw the prosecutor he was under the influence of drink. Mr Brassey reserved the defence, and the case was committed to the quarter sessions. Bail was allowed, themselves in £20 and two sureties of £10 each.

367 January 19 1892

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SEQUEL TO THE ELLESMERE PORT AFFRAY – SENTENCE REVOKED The Chairman, before the criminal trials commenced, had before him **William Clews, the younger** (38), who as will be seen by reference to our report of the Quarter Sessions at Chester, on Monday, was sentenced to two months imprisonment for common assault at Ellesmere Port. Addressing the prisoner his Honour said: You were convicted of assault at Chester, and the other prisoner (your father) was convicted of unlawful wounding. Undoubtedly he was the principal aggressor, he was the man who struck the first blow, and the evidence was this – that you were walking a yard and a half in front and presumably did not see the serious blow struck, but you turned round, struck prosecutor, knocked him down, and, as he said, kicked him. The Magistrates who heard the case thought that that was a very serious matter, kicking a man when he was down, and they inflicted upon you a sentence of two months imprisonment. It turns out that the prosecutor was drunk (although we knew that at the time), and was not very capable of giving an accurate description of what took place: but I myself entertained some doubt as to whether you had really kicked that man. I have since looked at the depositions, and I find that in the original statement and in his cross-examination, although he was closely questioned on the subject, he never once mentioned that you kicked him, he simply stated that you knocked him down. As far as I can see I do not believe that you did kick him, and the result is that the Court are desirous of revoking the sentence passed upon you, and instead of the two months imprisonment imposed upon you, asking you to enter into your own recognisances to come up for judgement if called upon. We do so for this reason also, that a very high character was given to you from the Shropshire Union Railway Company, in whose employment you have been for 15 years, and we sincerely hope they may take you back again. Prisoner was then liberated on entering into his own recognisances of £10.

368 February 13 1892

SUPPOSED MURDER OF A BOY On Saturday night, two boatmen named **Jeremiah Edwards** of Oldbury, and **Thomas Williams** of Tividale were arrested at Oldbury on the charge of causing the death of John Willie Barrett, aged nine years, who was found drowned in the Birmingham Canal, Deepfields, on January 30th last. Deceased took his father's breakfast to Spring Vale Works, near Bilston, on January 6th, and he was then wearing an overcoat, and a hat which bore a particular mark upon it. At the inquest it transpired that the boy had been robbed by a boatman, and the body was found minus the overcoat. Since then the overcoat and hat worn by the deceased had been traced to the possession of the prisoners, and when arrested witness admitted having had them in his possession.

369 February 27 1892

A "ROW" AT LLANDUDNO At the Llandudno Police Court, on Monday, **James Hughes**, boatman, was charged with being drunk and disorderly at the recent fancy dress ball held at the Pier Pavilion, and also with assaulting P C Nelson. Mr Chamberlain prosecuted and Mr Bone defended.

The case for the prosecution was that the defendant “kicked up a row” soon after midnight, the result being that several policemen were called upon to expel him from the gallery. The Bench fined the defendant 10s and costs for his drunken and disorderly conduct, and 20s and costs for the assault upon the police officer.

370 March 19 1892

Runcorn

DISTRESSING DROWNING CASE On Saturday evening **Mary Redmond**, aged 77 years, wife of **John Redmond**, boatman, trading between Staffordshire and Runcorn, was drowned under sad circumstances at Runcorn. She was seen to go ashore between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, and two hours later she was found in the canal. Every effort was made to restore animation, but ultimately Dr McDougall's assistant was obliged to pronounce life to be extinct. How she got in the water is not known.

371 July 2 1892

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES Enoch Rollinson (42), boatman, for stealing a pair of boots and sealskin cap, the property of Joseph Guy, at Runcorn, fourteen days hard labour.

372 July 9 1892

City Police Court

ASSAULTING THE POLICE Thomas Flood, a young boatman, was sentenced to one months imprisonment for kicking PCs Wynne and Wakelin, and for being drunk and disorderly in Queen Street on Friday evening. He attempted to bite the officers. A gentleman who saw the affray wrote in gratifying terms of the gallant conduct of the policemen.

373 September 3 1892

Ellesmere Port

INQUEST On Wednesday morning an enquiry respecting the death of **Wm Wickston** was held by Mr Churton at the Grosvenor Hotel. A witness named **Joseph Hawker**, boatman, in the employ of Mr Thomas Jones, Wolverhampton, stated that the deceased was employed by him to assist in the working of his boat, which arrived at Ellesmere Port on Tuesday week, and had been since then laid in the dock. He last saw the deceased alive about eight o'clock on Monday night, when they had tea together. About two o'clock on Tuesday morning he heard a peculiar noise in the cabin occupied by Wickston, and on going there found him in an unconscious condition. Failing to arouse him, he called his wife, and went for the doctor. Police-sergeant Jackson said he went to the boat, where he saw the deceased, and discovered that life was extinct. There were no marks of violence on the body, and nothing to indicate the cause of death. The jury returned a verdict of “Death from natural causes”.

374 November 19 1892

FATAL FIGHT AT TARVIN WORKHOUSE

Charge of Manslaughter

On Wednesday morning the County Coroner (Mr H Churton) held an enquiry at the Tarvin Union Workhouse into the circumstances attending the death of an inmate named **Thomas Beech**, who fell down dead after fighting an elderly man named Davenport. The latter was present in the custody of the county police.

George Woodward, the first witness, an elderly inmate of the Workhouse, had known the deceased in the Northwich Hospital. On Tuesday morning Davenport was kindling a fire in the men's day room, when they quarrelled about a tobacco pipe. Beech said, “Is this your pipe?” and Davenport said, “No”. Beech struck Davenport first on the side of the head and Davenport returned the blow. Several heavy blows were exchanged, and both men fell on the floor. Beech immediately rose and walked out of the room, and witness saw no more of him. Davenport remained in the house. When they rose, which they did without assistance, both men seemed none the worse for their encounter. About an hour afterwards witness heard of Beech's death.

Edward Shepherd, another inmate, found Beech's dead body lying in the men's yard at half past

seven o'clock on Tuesday morning. It lay stretched on its back, and there was no sign of animation. He could see no external wounds, and there was no blood near the spot.

Hugh Atkinson, master of the workhouse, said the deceased, who was 65 years of age, had been an inmate for five or six years, and hailed from Northwich. In early life he had been a canal boatman. Since his admission to that workhouse he had always been an active and well conducted man.

About twenty minutes past seven o'clock in the morning, witness heard deceased speaking in the passage beneath his room asking for witness, and complaining loudly that the man had broken his pipe. A few minutes afterwards a little girl brought the information that Beech was lying dead in the yard. Running downstairs, witness found the body as described, pulseless and motionless. The medical officer (Dr Watson) was sent for immediately. Deceased had enjoyed wonderfully good health, and never required so much as a dose of cough mixture. He was also a quiet inoffensive man.

A Juror asked what character Davenport bore.

Witness: He has a very good character; I have no complaint to make against him.

The Coroner: I think we have no right to ask such questions here.

Dr Watson, medical officer of the Tarvin Union, said he examined the body of the deceased after death, and found no appearance of injury likely to have caused death. That (Wednesday) morning he had made a *post mortem* examination. The brain was quite healthy, but he found the heart empty, and extensive disease of the valves. The immediate cause of death was simply failure of the heart's action, through a general obstruction of the circulation of the blood through the heart, in consequence of the vessels being ossified. It was, in fact, wonderful how respiration had gone on at all.

The Coroner: I suppose his death might have taken place independently of any excitement.

Witness: He might have died at any time with a heart like that.

The Coroner: He might have died at any moment from natural causes?

Witness: Yes. He added that he saw no indication of anything resulting from a blow or fall.

The Coroner did not think he need go further. The cause of death had been clearly ascertained by the doctor in the course of his post mortem examination, and he found such an amount of disease of the arteries and valves in connection with the heart itself that his surprise was the man went on living as long as he did. That his death resulted from natural causes there could be no doubt – whether under excitement or otherwise made in this case no difference. The case reminded him of that of the late Duke of Marlborough, whose death was equally sudden, and in whose case the post mortem examination revealed the very same indications, rendering life uncertain and precarious.

A Juror asked whether the quarrel would have accelerated the man's death?

Dr Watson: Any excitement would, of course, embarrass the action of the heart.

The Coroner: But excitement was not the cause of death, and all connected with this institution must feel perfectly satisfied that no other than a natural cause had resulted in the deceased's death.

The Jury unanimously returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes" and Davenport was then removed in custody. During the afternoon he was brought up before Sir T G Frost at the offices of the County Magistrates' Clerk (Mr W H Churton) on the charge of manslaughter.

The only witness called was Henry Barton, an inmate of the Tarvin Union, who stated that on the previous morning, about 7.30, he was in the day room. Prisoner lost his tobacco pipe, and went to search for it in the coalhouse. He found it and then returned with the pipe. Beech said, "Is this thy pipe?" offering him another. Davenport said, "No". Then Beech struck Davenport, while he had the pipe in his hand. Davenport slipped and fell on the floor. Beech sat down on a form, and while he was in that position Davenport struck him somewhere on the left side of the head. Beech then ran out of the tea room as far as the kitchen door, and witness did not see him again alive. A few minutes afterwards Ralph, the man who looked after the inmates, called witness into the yard, where he found Beech lying along the wall, dead. He assisted to carry the deceased to the deadhouse.

The police officer, who had charge of the prisoner, added, in reply to Mr Churton, that the inquest had been held, and that the jury, after hearing the results of the *post mortem* examination, had

returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes".

Mr Churton said the only question was whether what had happened would have the effect of accelerating death, but whether that was so or not, the only course open was to remand the prisoner until Saturday.

Sir Thomas Frost accordingly formally remanded the prisoner till Saturday morning, when he will be again brought up at Chester Castle.

375 December 10 1892

A RORKES DRIFT HERO COMMITTED FOR TRIAL At the Lichfield City Police Court, on Friday, the 2nd instant, John McNulty, a corporal in the North Staffordshire Regiment, stationed at Whittington Barracks, was charged with assaulting **Margaret Cotterill**, wife of **William Cotterill**, boatman, 13 Warwick Street, Wolverhampton, and also with stealing from her a purse containing £2. Lieut L B Scott and Lieut C C W Troughton represented the military authorities. On Thursday prisoner was sent to Chester to escort a soldier from the military prisoner there to Lichfield. At Chester he got into the same compartment as the prosecutrix and a woman named Amelia Smith, who were travelling to Crewe. The soldier recognised Smith as a former acquaintance at Lichfield. At Crewe all four got out and went into the town, where the prisoner pawned his watch and chain. The soldiers then persuaded the two women to proceed to Lichfield, which they did. Shortly after their arrival the woman Smith was arrested on a commitment. The prisoner and the prosecutrix were seen in Backcester Lane about seven o'clock in the evening. The woman was on the ground, and the prisoner kicked her. She accused the prisoner of taking her purse and money, and a woman, in passing, saw the prisoner throw away a purse, which the prosecutrix identified as her property. The prosecutrix was so drunk that the police detained her in custody. Lieutenant Scott gave the prisoner an excellent character, and said that he had been 13 years in the service. He formerly belonged to the 24th Regiment, and served at Rorkes Drift. The Bench imposed a fine of 5s and costs in the first case, and committed the prisoner for trial at the quarter sessions on the second charge.

376 January 14 1893

Rhyl

STEALING WRECKAGE On Monday, at Rhyl Police Court, **John Dennis**, ship's mate, residing at Bagillt, was summoned by the Board of Trade Authorities for stealing wreckage from the coast at the Point of Ayr on the 10th ult. Mr Paxton, Liverpool, prosecuted on behalf of the Board of Trade. Thomas Gorrington, Officer of Customs and Deputy Receiver of Wrecks, said from information received he visited defendant's flat, lying close to the Point of Ayr, and discovered on deck a piece of manila hawser about 24 fathoms long. Witness asked defendant why he had not reported the case, and he replied that he was just about to go to the Custom House. In reply to further questions, defendant said he had taken nothing more, but on searching an adjoining flat the officer found another piece of hawser, to which was attached some metal bolts. **Thomas Jones**, boatman, Mostyn, having corroborated, two previous convictions were proved against defendant, who was fined £2 and costs.

377 January 28 1893

NEWS OF THE WORLD On Saturday at Wolverhampton, a boatman named **Pemberton** was committed for trial for the attempted murder of his wife. The parties were living apart owing to the prisoner's cruelty, and because the woman refused to again live with him he made a desperate attempt to cut her throat, injuring her severely.

378 January 29 1893

Runcorn

EXTRAORDINARY DEATH OF A BOATMAN – INQUEST AND VERDICT On Saturday morning, Mr Worsley, district coroner, held an inquiry at the Seamen's Institute, Runcorn, into the death of **James Kershaw**, a boatman 47 years of age, of Patricroft, which occurred under extraordinary circumstances on the Thursday previous. Superintendent Atherton was present at the

inquiry on behalf of the police. Emma Kershaw stated that her husband had suffered from inflammation of the lungs. On Thursday afternoon he was under the influence of drink. Police-constable Proctor said on Thursday he had a summons for the deceased for being drunk and refusing to quit licensed premises on the previous night. About a quarter to four on Thursday afternoon he saw deceased at the top locks of the Bridgewater canal. Deceased was on the towpath, inside the rails of the canal. Witness served the summons on him, and then turned round and walked away. When he had got a few yards he heard a splash in the water. He ran back, and someone shouted out, "He's in the canal". Witness and some bystanders pulled Kershaw out after he had sunk once. Deceased was not in the water a minute, and witness did not think he was dead when taken out of the water. He was carried to the cabin of his boat, and witness tried artificial respiration for nearly half an hour. The deceased was only out of the water for five minutes before he was taken to the fire in the cabin. He was under the influence of drink. By Superintendent Atherton: Kershaw refused to take the summons at first, and witness stuck it in his vest. Kershaw then said, "I shall not appear to it". **Richard Walker**, a boatman, deposed to seeing the deceased stagger back after Proctor had served the summons on him, and fall into the canal. Ten minutes elapsed before they got him to the fire in his cabin after he was rescued. Other corroborative evidence having been given, the coroner said that the only verdict they could return, to his mind, was that the deceased died from shock after accidentally falling into the canal. The jury returned a verdict to that effect.

379 February 28 1893

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **Wm Hinnett**, a boatman, was summoned by Inspector H E Osbourn, for cruelly ill-treating a gelding at Mostyn Hill, Barbridge, on the 18th January. Defendant pleaded "not guilty". The inspector stated that from information received on the 20th of January, he went to Mostyn Hill and made enquiries respecting a horse, the property of defendant, which, while on a journey with a canal boat from Ellesmere Port, fell exhausted on the road. He traced the defendant from Barbridge to a village called Audlem, where defendant was told a report had been made to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals respecting his treatment of the gelding. It had travelled 24 miles in an unfit condition, drawing a boat. The horse was nothing but skin and bone. P C Ratcliffe corroborated this statement, adding that he saw the horse lying on the canal side, but it was too exhausted to rise up, it being left on the roadside all night. A witness named Walters, horse slaughterer, who killed the animal, stated that it was in a very weak condition and poorly fed. The Magistrates thought the case – a painful one – proved, and fined the defendant 20s and costs, or 14 days imprisonment with hard labour.

380 March 18 1893

City Police Court

MISCELLANEOUS **Edward Bailiff**, boatman, a native of this city, was fined 10s and costs, or 14 days imprisonment for being drunk and disorderly in Foregate Street on Friday morning. P C Lloyd laid the information.

381 March 25 1893

Runcorn

DROWNING FATALITY Mr J E Worsley, coroner, held an inquest at Weston Point on Tuesday, touching the death of Richard Sandbach, of Castel, Northwich, who was employed as a watchman on a dredger on the Weaver Canal. **Thomas Hough**, boatman, residing at Weston Point, stated that on Saturday night deceased asked him if he would take him across the canal as he could not scull. Witness rowed him across, and put him on the dredger. While returning he heard a splash, and saw Sandbach's hat floating on the water. Fifteen minutes later he recovered the body. In his opinion deceased fell into the water when he was stepping from his dredger on to a small boat on order to reach the opposite bank. A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

382 April 8 1893

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **Joseph Copson** (21), boatman, for stealing a spade and jacket at Dukinfield, three

months imprisonment.

383 May 20 1893

City Police Court

TAKING UNCLEAN SALMON **John Kelly**, boatman, 57 Lower Bridge Street, was summoned at the instance of the Dee Fishery Board for taking an unclean salmon from the river on the 16th inst. Mr Joliffe prosecuted on behalf of the Board. Richard Green, a water bailiff, stated that he saw defendant go to a boat moored near the landing stage at the bottom of Soutar's Lane, and take therefrom a bag. He placed the sack on his shoulder and proceeded up the lane. Witness followed, and questioned Kelly as to the nature of the contents, which on examination proved to be an unclean salmon, having two or three marks of violence on it, while it bled from the gills. It was not quite dead when witness first saw it. For his defence, Kelly urged that he saw the salmon lying in the boat, and having procured a bag he placed it inside, and was taking it to the river superintendent's office, when Green intercepted him. He was fined 20s and costs, or one months imprisonment with hard labour, and to pay the advocate's fee, 10s.

384 July 23 1893

Runcorn

SHOPLIFTING BY A BOATMAN At the Police Court, on Monday, a boatman named **Thomas Hilyer** was charged in custody with stealing two pairs of boots, value 15s, from the shop of William Henry Lightfoot, pawnbroker and outfitter, High Street, Runcorn. From the evidence adduced by Thomas Brown, an assistant in the employ of the prosecutor, it appears that about eight o'clock on Saturday night prisoner went into Mr Lightfoot's shop, and on being asked what he wanted he said, "Nothing". The assistant was called into a room behind the shop, and while he was away he heard a noise. On returning he saw prisoner on the towing-path of the canal opposite with something under his arm. He followed him, and found the boots produced concealed under his coat. Prisoner having been several times previously convicted for felony, was now committed to the Assizes for trial.

385 July 29 1893

Cheshire Summer Assizes

AN IMPUDENT HORSE THIEF **John Hulse** (36), boatman, who had been previously convicted of a similar offence in Staffordshire, was sent to gaol for nine months for stealing a horse at Weston, the Judge characterising it as an impudent theft of a serious character.

GUILTY BUT DRUNK **John Hilyer** (39), boatman, when charged with stealing two pairs of boots, at Runcorn, created a laugh by replying, "Guilty, sir, but very drunk". Sentence four months hard labour.

386 August 5 1893

Runcorn

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A FLATMAN At the Petty Sessions, on Monday, before Messrs J Brundritt and J Handley, a young man named Samuel Walker Rogerson was charged with assaulting a married woman named **Sarah Jane Nuttall**, wife of **John Nuttall**, boatman of Hulme, near Manchester, on the canal bank, on Friday night last. The prisoner was committed for trial.

387 October 7 1893

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

THEFT BY CANAL BOATMEN **George Fox** and **William Roberts**, canal boatmen, were charged with stealing a quantity of potatoes, value fourpence, the property of Gavin Hamilton, farmer, Canal Side, Great Mollington. On the 24th December, complainant saw defendants carrying a bag, which they placed on their boat, which was drawn up alongside his field. He gave chase, but they got away. He procured a trap and drove to Ellesmere Port, when he and P S Bowyer met them. Witness then identified the potatoes as similar to those growing in his field. Mr Brassey said that his clients did not steal a halfpenny worth of the complainant's potatoes. There must have been some confusion with the boats. A boatman, who employed the defendants said they did not bring any potatoes to his boat on the day in question. Defendants were fined 20s and costs each, and ordered to pay for the potatoes.

388 **October 21 1893**

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

TRIALS OF PRISONERS **John Wenlock** (25), boatman, for an unlawful assault on Eliza Wenlock, at Newton, six months.

389 **November 18 1893**

A BOATMAN DROWNED Mr H Churton on Wednesday held an inquest on the body of **John Rowley**, 28 years of age, boatman of Stoke, who was drowned in one of the canal locks at Matkins Bank, Betchton, early on Tuesday morning. **Hugh Rowley**, boatman, a mate of the deceased's, and two other boatmen, stated that at 11.30 on Monday evening, as they were nearing Betchton with the boat deceased walked on in advance, for the purpose of getting the locks ready, but on arriving there the gates were closed and deceased could not be seen anywhere. Someone suggested he had slipped off the gate into the water, and after dragging the locks deceased's body was found at the bottom. A verdict of accidentally drowned was returned.

390 **December 9 1893**

Nantwich

DROWNING OF AN ARMY RESERVE MAN On Wednesday afternoon **Edward Fox** was drowned in the canal at Nantwich. Fox, who was an Army Reserve man, having served in India, was subject to fits, the result of sunstroke during military service. He fell into a fire during an attack of fits, and was severely burned about the head. He was surgically attended, and at the time of the accident was following his employment of boatman on the canal, when he was seen to throw up his arms as if in a fit and roll into the canal.

391 **December 9 1893**

SHOCKING CRUELTY TO CHILDREN AT RUNCORN
VERDICT OF MANSLAUGHTER AGAINST THE PARENTS

Mr J E Worsley, district coroner, held an inquiry at Runcorn on Tuesday into the circumstances attending the death of **John Thomas Corker**, aged ten months, the infant son of **John Thomas Corker**, boatman, and **Susannah Corker**, his wife, who lodged at 15 Vicars Street. Corker and his wife, who were at the Police Court on Monday charged with neglecting the deceased and their other two children, and were remanded pending the inquest, were present in custody. Mr F W Lloyd, solicitor, of Chester, appeared on behalf of the National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Ann Farrell, widow, 15 Vicars Street, said the Corkers had lodged with her about two months. The three children lived with them during that period. The eldest child was ten years of age, the second five, and the youngest – the deceased – ten months old. The state of health of the deceased was generally good when first the Corkers went to live with her, but subsequently the child began to waste, and Mrs Corker took it to Dr McDougall. Subsequently the deceased was given medicine, and the mother suckled it. The child was given isinglass, milk and wine.

Mary Ellen Farrell, granddaughter of the previous witness, gave corroborative evidence, and Mary Monaghan, who lived next door to the Corkers, spoke of a conversation she had with the mother of the deceased, who told her she spent every penny she had to provide nourishment for the deceased, which she had been advised to procure.

Dr McDougall said the mother first took the child to his surgery a month ago. It was then in such a dirty condition that he ordered her to go home and wash it and herself. The odour from both the child and the mother was intolerable. He next saw the child on Wednesday last when it was very emaciated and dirty, the odour from it being most offensive. It had a large bed sore about the size of a shilling on the right hip, and had wasted away to a shadow. Death occurred on Saturday afternoon. He had made a *post mortem* examination, and found the weight of the deceased to be 8lb 11oz; the normal weight of a healthy child at that age would be 15lb to 16 lb. Internally he did not find a particle of fat on any part of the body. The organs were all healthy, so far as he could ascertain, with the exception of the lungs, which did not appear to have been sufficiently expanded at birth. There was evidence of lung disease of long standing. Probably the actual cause of death

was lung disease. The wasting away might have been going on for some considerable time, which would be caused to some extent by the lung disease but it would be materially affected by any form of neglect or from want of nutritious food. An examination showed that the stomach contained a quantity of food in a partially decomposed state, clearly pointing to the fact that the stomach was hardly capable of digesting the food.

Inspector Uphill, of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, stated that he first saw the deceased on Wednesday last. The child was very dirty and filthy, and wore but a nightdress, and the bed – which was a mass of rags- on which the child lay was also in a filthy condition, while the stench of the room was unbearable. The child's head was very dirty and sore. He took it on Saturday to see Dr McDougall and obtained some milk, which the child was too ill to take.

Other evidence having been given, and the Coroner having summed up, the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter against both prisoners.

392 December 30 1893

City Police Court

ASSAULTING A POLICEMAN **William Carter**, boatman, Newport, Shropshire, was charged by P C Thomas Betts with assault. At half past ten on Monday night prisoner was mixed up in a fight at the end of City Road, and after the crowd had been dispersed, followed Betts up City Road, and while on the canal bridge struck him a severe blow on the shoulder with a small thick canal boat poker. The blow pained the officer considerably for a time. Prisoner was very drunk, and created several scenes by being riotous. The Mayor thought the case a bad one, and prisoner was fined 20s and costs or fourteen days with hard labour for the assault and 5s and costs or seven days for being riotous.

393 December 30 1893

LOCAL AND DISTRICT NEWS On Tuesday the body of **John Probert**, a boatman from Pant, near Llan-y-mynech, was found in the canal near the Chirk Aqueduct. The deceased, who was about 54 years of age, had been missing for nearly three weeks, and the body was very much decomposed.

394 April 21 1894

Chester City Petty Sessions

A REVENGEFUL BOATMAN **John Woods**, an employee on the Shropshire Union Canal Company's boat "Minnie" was charged with cutting a rope, value 8s 11d. **Matthew Dawes**, of the tug "Dreadnought", stated that on March 28th he was on the Minnie, which was being towed by the tug Dreadnought, and the defendant stopped to obtain a drink. The tug started before he had finished, and in revenge for this he cut the rope. The Superintendent stated that if there had been any other boat there might have been a bad accident. Fined 20s and costs, and to pay the value of the rope, or to go to prison for one month.

395 June 30 1894

Eddisbury Petty Sessions

CRUELTY TO A CHILD AT KINGSLEY **Harriet Wakefield** (34), a married woman, living at Dark Lane, Kingsley, was charged at the instance of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with ill-treating her nephew, Ernest Wakefield, aged seven years and eleven months, in a manner likely to cause him unnecessary suffering. Mr A Fletcher (Northwich), who prosecuted on behalf of the Society, stated that the defendant's husband was a boatman, who was away from home about a week at a time, and she had charge of the boy. The lad was the son of her dead sister, and his father's address was at present unknown. Defendant was accused of thrashing the boy on many occasions. The neighbours were constantly hearing cries of distress from the boy, and they had several times interfered to prevent him from receiving punishment. On the 8th inst defendant was drunk, and on getting home between five and six o'clock she thrashed the little fellow, but what with the neighbours could not ascertain. Afterwards the neighbours saw that he had a very nasty bruise

about the size of a bantam's egg on his forehead, and it was obvious that he had been thrashed in a manner which was not justifiable. The woman was very kind to the boy except when she was drunk. Unfortunately her drinking habits were becoming more and more frequent, and the boy was getting treated worse. He was well nourished and pretty well cared for. Martha Duncalf and Louis Hughes, two neighbours, having given evidence, Inspector Maguire, an officer of the Society, stated that the lad had told him that the lump on his head was caused with a stick. P C Carter deposed to examining the lad on the 9th inst and finding a bruise on his forehead and on his neck. He told witness that his aunt had struck him twice with a poker. Defendant, in reply to the Bench, stated that the boy's father did not pay her anything, and she kept him herself. On the day in question she beat the lad because he had a number of boys in the house, and he fell with his head against the sofa. He would not go to school, and she did not know what to do with him. The Chairman pointed out that defendant had rendered herself liable to severe punishment, but they were disposed to be lenient with her this time, if she would promise to be kind to him in future. If she was not she would have to go to prison. She would be fined 5s including costs.

396 July 21 1894

City Police Court

WAS IT KLEPTOMANIA? Martha Williams, a respectably dressed woman, living at 14 Milton Street, and wife of a Shropshire Union boatman, was charged with stealing a pair of second hand boots, valued at 2s 3d, the property of Edwin Dutton, pawnbroker, Foregate Street. Thomas Williamson, assistant to the prosecutor, stated that on Saturday afternoon, about three o'clock, prisoner visited the shop in Foregate Street to buy out a sheet. While wrapping the sheet up for her, he noticed a pair of boots under her arm. He took them off her, and by way of explanation, prisoner said she did not know what made her steal them. The boots were safe on a shelf near the window just before prisoner came into the shop. P C Abbott deposed to arresting prisoner, who said she could not make out what told her to steal the boots. Mrs Williams, who is in a delicate state of health, in defence, said although her husband had plenty of work, and she had good money coming in, she did not know what came over her when she took the articles. Prisoner was bound over to come up for judgement when called upon, her husband going surety.

397 September 29 1894

City Police Court

EMBEZZLEMENT BY A BOATMAN Martin Dermody, Boughton, a boatman employed at the Groves, was summoned for embezzling the sum of 2s 3d, the property of John Moore Ainsworth, boat owner, the Groves. Mr Ainsworth employed Dermody as a boatman sometimes, and on the 7th instant Dermody hired out a boat to a man and received 2s 3d for it. Ainsworth questioned him about the hiring money and defendant swore he only got the price of a drink. Thomas Woodward, a hairdresser, on Friday fortnight paid Dermody 2s 3d for the hire of one of prosecutor's boats. Dermody, who pleaded not guilty and denied receipt of the money from Woodward, was fined 10s and costs or, in default of payment, fourteen days with hard labour.

398 October 13 1894

ALLEGED THEFT AT CHESTER STATION

A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER AND HIS PORTMANTEAU

At the City Police Court, on Thursday, **John Woods**, canal boatman, residing in Trafford Street, Newtown, was charged with stealing a brown leather portmanteau and parcel, valued at £3 10s, the property of Lewis Wilson Roberts, a commercial traveller, of 38 York Street, Manchester. The Chief Constable said that the prisoner travelled in the same compartment as the prosecutor, and at the station the latter left the train to look after his parcels in the guard's van. He left the portmanteau and parcel in the compartment, intending to return for them. Woods took the parcels out of the compartment, called at a public house, and left them there. Lewis Roberts, the traveller, stated that he was travelling from Birkenhead to Oswestry about five o'clock on Wednesday evening. Prisoner got into the same compartment as witness at Hooton, and at Chester witness got out of the compartment, as the Chief Constable had detailed. When he returned the parcels had

gone. George Hall, a cleaner on the station, saw the prisoner walking down the platform with the parcel under his arm, and the portmanteau in one hand. Detective Cockayne Wright, in the employment of the London and North Western and Great Western Railway Companies, arrested prisoner in Brook Street about five o'clock. He caught up with Woods in the middle of Brook Street, and told him that he was a detective. Woods immediately turned round and said, "Oh it is about the parcels, is it: I will show you where they are". Woods took Wright to the Angel Hotel, and found them in the snug there. Rose Challinor, barmaid at the Angel Hotel, served Woods with some beer. In his defence prisoner made a statement to the following effect:- "I am captain of the boat *Moscow*. I came by train to meet my boat at Chester. I fell asleep in the carriage, and when I awoke the compartment was empty. I saw the parcel and portmanteau inside and I took them away. I saw a railway porter and told him the parcels were not mine. He told me to go lower down the platform and I might find the owner. I took the parcels into the Angel public house, Brook Street, and left them there. I went up Brook Street to look for a policeman to give him the parcels and to tell him all about them, when the detective locked me up. I had no intention of stealing them. I have been living in Chester all my life, and everyone knows me on the station. I know the detective too, by sight". Mr Churton, who represented Woods, said although prisoner would have to go to the Sessions as the articles stolen were more than £2, his case was a very hard one, but his tale was quite true. He did not mean to steal the articles at all. When he saw them in the vacant compartment he spoke to a railway official, and he told him to go and look for the owner. He did not tamper with the articles at all. He simply left them in the Angel and walked away. When the detective stopped him he quickly said, "Is it about those parcels?" That showed he did not mean to steal them. He took the detective straight to the parcels. Prisoner was sent to the Sessions.

399 April 13 1895

ACCIDENT TO A CANAL BOATMAN On Monday afternoon **Francis Trow**, a boatman on the Shropshire Union Canal, was driving a horse along the towpath near Backford Bridge when the animal kicked him on the thigh, fracturing the bone. He was taken off the bank put in the boat, and brought to Chester, and again put on the bank. Superintendent Shone of the Chester Fire brigade Station, on going down to see the man, found that the thigh bone was severely fractured, and the ends of the broken bone were grating together. The poor fellow had thus been two and a half hours in extreme agony. Superintendent Shone laid splints along the injured part and bandaged it up, and afterwards dispatched the man to the Infirmary on the Fire Brigade ambulance cart.

400 April 20 1895

City Police Court

ASSAULTS & C For assaulting a boatman named **James Brooks**, **William Williams** was fined 5s and costs.

401 June 15 1895

THE REMARKABLE CHOICE OF A WIFE The extraordinary negotiations for a wife, in which the captain of a canal boat, plying between Chester and Ellesmere Port, engaged with the authorities at the Nantwich Workhouse about three weeks ago, had a gratifying sequel on Monday. The man, whose name is **Samuel Walker**, a native of Wolverhampton, had called at the workhouse and asked the authorities to recommend one of the female inmates for a wife, explaining that he had been six months a widower, and was desirous of remarrying. His application was conceded, and the banns having been published on three Sundays, the couple were married at Acton Church on Monday morning. The bridegroom attended in his boatman's attire, but the bride, who is 45, 15 years younger than the bridegroom, was rather smartly dressed in a print dress and a bonnet in which there were arranged a number of roses of a rather brilliant hue. The bride was given away by the clerk of the church (Mr Provost), while the relieving officer (Mr Pooley) officiated as best man. Several other workhouse officials also graced the ceremony with their presence. The vicar at the close of the ceremony delivered a long address on the subject of the marriage vows. As the captain and his wife left the church they were the recipients of a number of gifts, and they left the village

amid a shower of rice and old slippers.

402 July 27 1895

DROWNING FATALITY IN CHESTER A third drowning fatality in the city within a week was reported to the City Coroner (Mr E Brassey) on Monday. An Ellesmere Port boatman named **Joseph Pritchard**, and belonging to the Shropshire Union canal boat Cuba, who had been drinking in company with other boatmen at the Grosvenor Tavern, Queen Street, on Saturday night, after leaving the tavern fell into the canal at the Northgate and was drowned. It was supposed that Pritchard as he was feeling his way along the towing-path, by means of a railing which protects the water's edge, missed his footing when he came to the end of the rail and fell in. An alarm was quickly raised after Pritchard was missed, and the lock-keeper, **Edward Hughes**, and PCs Austin and Dryland commenced grappling operations. At a quarter past twelve the body was recovered and removed to the mortuary. An inquest was held at the Bull and Stirrup Inn, Northgate Street, on Monday afternoon, before Mr E Brassey (city coroner). John Henry Pritchard, 13 Diamond Street, Ellesmere Port, stated that the deceased, his brother, was a single man, and was 32 years of age. The boat Cuba was lying near the Northgate locks, deceased being in charge of it. The deceased was, as a rule, temperate, and was always on good terms with his men. He could not swim. Joseph Wilson, the landlord of the Grosvenor Tavern, Canal Side, Queen Street, stated that he had known deceased as a casual caller for the past eight years. Deceased called alone at his tavern about 10 o'clock on Saturday evening, had one pint of beer, and sat down alongside some more working companions in the bar. Witness saw deceased and all the other men go out together at closing time. They had no quarrel whatever inside the house, and deceased was perfectly sober. Mr James Bowers (one of the jurors): I should like to ask this witness if he is licensee or manager of the tavern? Witness: Licensee. Mr Bowers: What is your agreement? Witness: I pay my rent quarterly. This has nothing to do with the case. Mr Hanshaw (another juror): Nothing whatsoever to do with the case. **Samuel Lloyd**, an unemployed boatman met deceased outside the tavern on Saturday night. Witness was "half-and-half", he was not sober, but he knew perfectly well what he was doing. Deceased, witness and several other men stood talking against Mr Dobbin's wall for ten minutes after leaving the public house at eleven. As deceased began to tumble about, they asked him to go round the road instead of along the canal side, but he refused, saying, "No, I will go along the canal, because it is the nicer way". They tried to keep him from falling into the water as they proceeded to walk along the canal. When they reached the Northgate bridge deceased stopped, saying, "Go on, I will overtake you in a minute". They did not wait for him, and did not look back for him. They heard a splash, and immediately commenced to look about the water for him. They could not find him, and they then went to deceased's boat to fetch a lamp. After a quarter of an hour dragging they discovered his body. Two policemen arrived on the scene after the recovery, and tried to restore animation but failed. In answer to one of the jurors, witness denied that they were jolly and shouting as they were proceeding along the canal side. Witness could not account for wounds on the deceased's head. They might have been caused by coming in contact with the stones at the bottom of the canal. Witness would not have left the deceased alone if he had not expressed a wish for them to go in. Detective Crewe explained that the marks on deceased's face were caused by the grappling irons. **Charles Lloyd**, boatman on the Cuba, under deceased, said that deceased was drunk when he left the Grosvenor Tavern. Dr Parry said the marks on the deceased's left side were caused by the drag. P C Austin, at twelve o'clock on Saturday morning, was called to the Northgate. After grappling for half an hour, they recovered the body. The men with Lloyd were excited and crying, but were not very drunk. In deceased's pockets were £5 10s in gold, 14s in silver, some coppers, a watch and chain and knife. The Coroner, in reviewing the evidence, said he should submit the evidence of the case to the Chief Constable. If they looked at the records of the canal in Chester, they would find it was responsible for hundreds of deaths. There seemed no remedy for it. Mr Henshaw was of opinion that the rails should be extended from the Northgate bridge as far as the locks. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned", with no evidence to show how deceased got into the water.

403 September 14 1895

SEQUEL TO A CHESTER DROWNING CASE – A PUBLICAN SUMMONED On Tuesday morning, at the Chester City Police Court, Joseph Wilson, landlord of the Grosvenor Arms, was charged with permitting drunkenness on his licensed premises on July 20th. Mr E S Giles defended. The Chief Constable (Mr Fenwick) said the Grosvenor Arms was situated at the end of Queen Street, near the Canal Side, and in consequence of an inquest held on Monday, July 22nd, when it was alleged that a drunken man fell into the canal and was drowned, it was suggested by the Coroner that the case was one for enquiry by the police. As a result investigations were made, and a summons was taken out against Wilson. On Saturday night, July 20th, there were among other men in this house Joseph Pritchard, **Charles and Samuel Lloyd** and **James Morris**. The house was frequented by many boatmen, and after the men mentioned had been turned out they stood at the corner for a short time and then separated. Pritchard was in such a condition that his comrades asked him to go along the streets. He refused, and went along the towpath with the Lloyds, who at the Northgate bridge saw him holding on to a rail. Immediately after there was a splash, and the man's body was taken from the canal later on.

Samuel Lloyd, canal boatman, said he went into the Grosvenor Arms at about half past ten, where he saw James Morris and Pritchard. While there he noticed Pritchard have one pint of beer. They all left the place about eleven o'clock. Witness was then sober, but Pritchard was drunk, and staggering about. They proceeded along the towpath, and when they reached the Northgate bridge, Pritchard told the others to go on and he would overtake them. They went about 40 yards, and then a splash was heard and it was found that Pritchard had fallen into the canal.

Mr Fenwick: When is a man properly drunk? Witness: When he goes to the pump to light his pipe. [Laughter]

Charles Lloyd gave corroborative evidence, stating that they walked along the canal with Pritchard between him and his brother, but James Morris, in giving evidence, said Pritchard was sober. The two Lloyds had had drink, but were not properly drunk. PCs Austin and Dryland deposed to seeing the Lloyds during the dragging operations, and in the opinion of these witnesses both Charles and Samuel Lloyd were not sober, and besides were greatly excited.

Mr Giles, for the defence, said the question was whether the magistrates thought there was a *prima facie* case against Wilson, who for the last eight years had conducted the Grosvenor Arms without a complaint, and it would be hard if he were convicted, because of a pure accident or through the evidence of two drunken men who had been called to give an opinion as to whether the deceased was drunk or not.

James Stockton, cashier of the Shropshire Union Co, Ellesmere Port, deposed that deceased had been in the service of the company all his life, and witness had never seen him the worse for drink. On the day in question witness saw him at Ellesmere Port, whence he was leaving by the five minutes to nine train to Chester. In witness's opinion Pritchard was quite sober.

Edward Thomas Morris, 4 Evans Court, Queen Street, labourer in the employment of the Shropshire Union Company, said he was in the Grosvenor Arms when Pritchard came in. He was sober, and ordered a pint of beer. Witness had a drink out of the deceased's pot of beer, as did James Morris. Witness left at a quarter to eleven, and he did not see Pritchard have anything more to drink.

William Semmence, manager of the Chester Mineral Water Company, said three other men drank out of the pot before Pritchard. After witness left, he saw Pritchard and some other men standing by Dobbin's wall, Pritchard being sober.

Joseph Wilson, the defendant, stated that he served Pritchard, whom he considered quite sober. Witness talked to deceased before he left the house. He had been 8 1/2 years in the Grosvenor Arms, and if there had been time he would have felt quite justified in serving deceased again. The bench considered that the evidence failed to convince them that defendant had wilfully permitted drunkenness on his premises, and the case was dismissed.

404 Saturday December 7th 1895

A CANAL BOAT ROMANCE

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A BOATMAN

At the Cheshire County Police Court on Saturday morning, before Mr H Trelawney, Sir T G Frost, and Messrs J Thompson, R T Richardson, J Pover and J Davies, **James Powell**, a canal boatman, was charged with assaulting **Jane Salmon**, daughter of **William Salmon**, captain of a canal boat. - The prosecutrix, who is 22 years of age, stated that on Tuesday, about 10.30 pm, she was at the fore-end of the boat Moreton, putting up some hay. The boat was lying at Ellesmere Port. She saw prisoner come on to the end of her father's boat. Witness' father and mother were in the cabin at the time. Her father was blind and her mother was deaf. Prisoner spoke to her and threw her on to the hay. She shouted "Father", but prisoner placed his hand over her mouth and committed the offence complained of. He then let her free and walked on to his own boat which was lying near. She had never seen prisoner before. He came on the boat again, but her father ordered him off because he was drunk. She did not tell her parents what had taken place until the next morning. Cross-examined, witness said she was in a public house called The Boat House at Ellesmere Port with her father and mother the same night. She saw prisoner there, but she did not sit on his knee, nor did she drink with him. She spoke to him there, but denied that she proposed to marry him. She did not say that she would like him to get a canal boat and she would work it with him. She did not tell prisoner she was married, nor did she say that at the end of seven years she would leave her husband and live in a boat with him. Detective- Inspector Pearson arrested prisoner at ten o'clock the next evening, while he was on the boat Japan, lying on the canal side at Chester. Prisoner was taken to the County Police Office, Foregate-Street, where the warrant was read to him. He replied, "I never spoke to the girl before in my life. I led her father and mother to the boat. Her father and mother had had a drop of beer, and the daughter had as much as she could do with". The Chairman said the Bench were unanimous in discharging prisoner.

405 February 22 1896

City Police Court

THEFT OF BOOTS Thefts of goods left hanging outside shops in this city have been rather rife of late. **George Cheshire**, a canal boatman, who pleaded guilty to taking a pair of boots, value 6s 3d, from the outside of Messrs G and W Morton's shop, was arrested on Thursday afternoon by P C John Wynne, whose suspicions were aroused through seeing the prisoner with the boots in his hands. Prisoner was fined 10s and costs or 14 days.

406 July 4 1896

Beeston

SAD DROWNING ACCIDENT Last week a sad accident took place at Beeston, a little girl of eight years being drowned in the locks. The girl's name was **Mary Elizabeth Harding**, and she was the daughter of **William Harding** of the Beeston locks. Her father saw her leave the house at half past eight in the morning to go to school at Tilston. He did not see her again until her body was brought home in the evening. The body was discovered by a boatman who was passing through the locks, and noticed a basket and hat in the water. He instituted a search, and the body was discovered in the locks. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

407 August 1 1896

THE "KING OF CANAL BOATMEN" SENT TO PRISON – MURDEROUS ASSAULT ON A CHESHIRE POLICEMAN At Nantwich Police Court, last week, **John Sadler**, an army reserve man, captain of the canal boat Wren, and known as the "King of Canal Boatmen" was convicted of a murderous assault upon Sergeant Ratcliffe, at Barbridge, on Thursday evening. The evidence showed that the prisoner and other canal boatmen presented themselves at a public house in the neighbourhood. The landlord, perceiving that they were drunk, declined to serve them, and requested the officer to remove the prisoner. Ratcliffe assisted the prisoner along the road towards his boat, when he suddenly swung round and dealt the officer a terrific blow with his fist upon the jaw "spinning him round like a top", and flooring him. The prisoner then sprang upon the officer,

placing his knee upon his stomach and worrying him "like a dog". The publican and his brother pulled the prisoner off, but he again felled the officer. Eventually he was handcuffed, but even then he fought like a madman, butting the officer in the stomach with his head, and again dropping him. After about three quarters of an hour the prisoner was placed in a trap and was driven by a neighbouring farmer to Nantwich, the officer and the two civilians having to hold him in the bottom of the trap. Sergeant Ratcliffe said he still felt the effects of the prisoner's violence, and had been unwell since. Thomas Colley said the prisoner attempted to throttle the officer, and would have murdered him if he and his brother had not gone to his assistance. The prisoner was committed for a month with hard labour for the assault, and fined 32s 6d for being drunk. The Bench also directed the police to communicate with the commanding officer at Chester, calling attention to the extremely bad conduct of the prisoner. **William Thomas**, a boatman, for obstructing the police, and encouraging Sadler to resist apprehension, was sent to gaol for a month in default of paying a fine of 40s and costs.

408 Saturday October 3rd 1896

BOATMAN DROWNED IN THE DEE

A VICTIM TO FITS

It was reported to the County Coroner (Mr H Churton) on Wednesday evening that a man named **Walter Bird**, residing in Boughton, had been accidentally drowned in the Dee, almost opposite the Eaton Stud yards. It appears Bird was a boatman, and on Wednesday he was ordered to take a boat up to the Iron Bridge. Despite the strong current running down the river, Bird rowed as far as the Eaton Stud quite safely, but here he had a fit while in the boat, tumbled out, and was drowned. The body was recovered a short while afterwards, and taken to the farm. Mr Churton held the inquest on the body on Thursday, at the Grosvenor Arms, Aldford – Thomas Langham, residing at the Eaton Stud, and in the service of the Duke of Westminster, stated that at two o'clock on Wednesday he was fishing in the Dee, when deceased passed him in a boat. He had only the one boat under his charge. He was going in the direction of the Iron Bridge at a very steady pace. The river was rather rough at the time. Deceased had got 40yds past when Langham heard a moan coming from the boat, and saw deceased throw back his arms as though in a fit, and fall in the water. Witness went for assistance, and on returning saw Bird sink. He struggled as though in a fit, and witness heard a gurgling sound coming from deceased's throat. Deceased was more on the other side of the river than the Stud side. Witness was of opinion that he was in a fit. One of the sculls fell in the water. The body floated away towards the landing stage at Eccleston, where it was recovered about 20 minutes afterwards. Ellis Rowland, St Olaves-Street, Chester, stated that he saw deceased half an hour before the accident. He was in a very safe boat – to carry six. Deceased was an experienced boatman. He used to be a timekeeper at Messrs Frost's mills. He was a steady, sober fellow. Bird was floating in an upright position when he was dragged out. He did not sink altogether, and his hat was sticking out above the water. He was quite dead. The boat was drifting slowly down the river after him. Witness was acquainted of his accident by a young fellow who had ridden to the ferry from the Stud Yard on a bicycle. There were no marks of violence on the body at all. This witness had never seen deceased in a fit of any kind – The Coroner thought it was scarcely possible that a man working on the river could have been subject to fits. It was the most dangerous thing in the world. He might have had a fit at any moment, fallen into the water and lost his life. - Mrs Bird, widow of deceased, stated that he lost his last situation through the fits. He had hysterical fits, which would last for some time. He would throw his arms and legs about and become unconscious while under their influence. - The Coroner: Was it not astonishing to you that he should have gone to work on the river if he was subject to fits? Witness: I was not aware he did go up the river, for I always forbade him from going there. - She last saw him alive at twelve o'clock the same day as his death. He went out quite merry. He had had four fits in three years. They were epileptic fits. - The Coroner: How long has he been subject to fits? Witness: Three years now. - The Coroner said there was no doubt deceased was found drowned, and there was no doubt he was subject to fits. He probably was attacked when he was not aware. They had no direct evidence before them that he

fell into the river through the fit. - The Jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned". - The Coroner said that drowning cases in the Dee were very few. It was marvellous, seeing how inexperienced visitors so much used the river all through the year, that there were not more fatalities than there were.

409 November 7 1896

Cheshire Assizes

ALLEGED ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AT ELLESMERE PORT **Margaret Fitchford** (18) wife of a canal boatman, living at Ellesmere Port, was indicted for attempting to commit suicide on October 27th. The Grand Jury, however, threw out the bill, and prisoner was discharged.

410 April 3 1897

City Police Court

A BRUTAL HUSBAND **Annie Johnson** summoned her husband, **Wm Johnson**, for threatening her. Mr W H Churton, for complainant, stated that the man was a boatman, and for a long time past his wife had had a great deal of trouble with him. She refused to accompany defendant in the boat, and went to lodge at the Red Bull public house in Pitt Street. On Sunday night he came to the house, and on seeing his wife threatened to kill her with a knife, which he produced. He made a disturbance in the house, and they had a deal of trouble with him. The magistrates bound defendant over to keep the peace for six months in the sum of £10, and two sureties of £5, and ordered him to pay the costs, or in default to undergo fourteen days hard labour.

411 May 1 1897

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

A SUP OF BEER AND A GRIEVANCE **John Morgan**, a boatman, was charged with being disorderly and refusing to quit the Trooper Inn, Christleton, on April 2nd. There was another charge against him for breach of the peace. Thos Johnson, landlord of the Trooper, said that when he returned from Chester defendant and two other men in the house asked him what time there was a train for Beeston. He told them and they went outside, but shortly afterwards he heard a noise in the yard, and on going outside he saw Morgan and a man named Roberts fighting. They would not go away, and witness went to fetch a policeman. Ex-Constable Davies said he was going across the bridge which overlooked the yard. He saw two men fighting; one had his shirt off, and another was backing them up. P C Mullineaux, stationed at Christleton, went down to the yard where the defendants had been fighting, and took their names and addresses. Morgan said they had "had a sup of beer and a grievance, and got fighting". A fine of 5s and costs was inflicted for the disorderly conduct and refusal to quit, and defendant was bound over in the sum of £5 to keep the peace for six months on the other charge. In connection with this case, **William Lloyd**, another boatman, was summoned for aiding and abetting Morgan and Roberts fighting. Johnson, in giving evidence, said that when one of the men was knocked down by the other, Morgan would shout "Time". [Laughter] Five shillings and costs, and bound over to keep the peace.

412 August 7 1897

City Police Court

A BOATMAN'S QUARREL – SERIOUS RESULT **John Henry Hughes**, a boatman, was charged in custody with unlawfully wounding **George Parry** on Saturday. Prosecutor, whose head was bandaged, said he and the prisoner were boatmen, and they met on Cow-lane bridge on Saturday. They had some drink together, and afterwards quarrelled. He was knocked down, and remembered nothing more. Frederick Lomax stated that while passing Cow-lane bridge he saw prisoner strike the other man, knocking him down. He then knocked his head against the kerbstone. The blood flowed freely from the man's head. Neither man was sober. P C Griffiths deposed to appearing after the occurrence/ He took the injured man to the Infirmary, and then arrested prisoner, who said he was sorry for what he had done, but had been provoked to it. The Bench, who considered it a disgraceful assault, sent prisoner to gaol for a month.

413 December 18 1897

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

WOULDN'T SHOW HIS CERTIFICATE A canal boatman named **Thomas Hyde** was fined 5s

and costs for refusing to show his certificate of register of the canal boat Mail, at Tarvin Bridge Lock. Mr C J Owen, who proved the case, said this was becoming a common complaint.

414 February 18 1899

City Police Court

DRUNKENNESS AND ROWDYISM **William Ruscoe**, a canal boatman, and **Lydia Ruscoe**, his wife, who did not appear, were fined 5s and costs each for being drunk and disorderly on Seller Street bridge on the 6th inst.

415 22nd April 1899

CANAL BOATMAN'S SUDDEN DEATH

The County Coroner (Mr J C Bate) held an inquest at Tiverton on Monday, touching the death of **William Musson**, aged 65, a Canal Boatman. It appeared from the evidence that the deceased left Chester on Friday morning, in charge of the boat Cuto. He was accompanied by his son, and was then apparently in good health. On arriving at the canal wharf on Tattenhall-road the same evening, the son left the boat for about five minutes to see about something which had to be loaded, and on returning, he found the deceased lying on his back in the cabin, looking very ill. He did not speak, and only nodded to his son's questions. The next morning, Dr Fraser of Tarporley was sent for, but before he arrived, deceased expired. A post-mortem examination was afterwards made by Dr G H Ayes, which showed the cause of death to be chronic heart disease. The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

416 May 20 1899

City Police Court

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **John Owens**, a canal boatman, was charged with cruelly ill-treating a horse on the 22nd April. P C Wakelin said at ten o'clock on the night in question he was passing the Grosvenor Arms, when he saw a number of men dragging a horse out of one of the stables. It seemed to be in great pain. Inspector Channing, of the RSPCA, said he was called to see the mare by the Canal side, off Queen Street. He found it very weak. It had a sore shoulder and three large open wounds. One was as big as a five shilling piece. Owens admitted that the mare had been to Ellesmere Port and back, and was then going to Birmingham with the canal boat. Defendant was fined 10s and costs, or seven days.

417 July 1 1899

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

ALPRAHAM LICENSING APPEAL

NINE PINTS AND NONE THE WORSE

Hugh Challinor, the licensee of the Railway Inn, Alpraham, near Tarporley, appealed against a conviction by the Eddisbury Bench of magistrates for permitting drunkenness on his licensed premises. Mr F Marshall Q C and Mr H D Yates represented the appellant, and Mr Ralph Bankes appeared for the respondent justices.

In opening the case, Mr Bankes submitted that this was a really bad case. Police-sergeant Bourne, accompanied by Constable Turner, visited the Railway Inn on Sunday, the 19th February last, at 2.40 in the afternoon, and discovered two canal boatmen, named **William Owen** and **William Trow**, in an intoxicated condition. Owen was lying face downwards on the floor in the scullery, and Trow was standing with his back against the wall. The police conducted the two men to the canal, and saw them off on boats proceeding in the direction of Barbridge. The Eddisbury magistrates fined the men for drunkenness, and the landlord was mulcted in a penalty of £5 in addition to having his licence endorsed. An aggravated feature of the case was that on the arrival of closing time at 2.30 the landlord advised the men to wait a little and leave by the back door for fear the police saw them. P S Bourne, in his evidence, deposed that the licensee declared he had not supplied the men with drink. Witness asked them where they had obtained their liquor, and they replied "Here" to which the landlord retorted, "You are ---- liars". The constable picked up Owen, and assisted him by the arm as far as the canal. P C Turner corroborated. Mary Richards, formerly a servant at the Railway Inn, said Owen and Trow came to the house before 12.30, and she served them with two pints.

Afterwards the landlord served them, then his son who was twelve years old, and finally each had a fourth pint along with some other boatmen. The men were both drunk when the police came in. Cross-examined: The landlord did not go to Bunbury that morning in company with a man named Cookson. Challinor never went out at all in the morning, and Cookson did not arrive till the afternoon, by the three o'clock train. The behaviour of Owen and Trow was orderly, and she did not know they were drunk until she saw the former lying on the scullery floor. Wm Owen was also called by Mr Bankes, and denied that he was drunk. At half past two the landlord said, "It is time", and he and Trow were leaving by the back way in order to give another boatman named Beetle the slip, when he (witness) slipped down the step. Subsequently he lost his hat and tumbled into the canal. [Laughter] Further examined by Mr Bankes, the witness confirmed the statements made by counsel in his opening to the effect that Challinor said, "You had better go through the back; the police are on the road." Cross-examined by Mr Marshall: They had only one pint of beer before going back to the boats for dinner, returning afterwards completely sober. The officer did not have to help witness to rise from the floor, and the statement that they embarked on two canal boats was an untruth. Witness walked from Calveley to Barbridge.

For the defence, Mr Marshall called a number of witnesses to prove that the men were not drunk, while Trow himself on being placed in the box declared he had only two pints of beer, whereas he could drink nine pints and be none the worse. [Laughter] It was also contended that the landlord was under the impression that the men had left the premises, and did not know they were in the scullery until the police entered. Arthur Cookson, machinist, Crewe, said he stayed at the Railway Inn on the Saturday night, and on the Sunday morning the landlord and himself went to see Dr Jones of Bunbury, Mr Challinor having met with an accident. They started soon after nine o'clock, and returned a few minutes before 12.30.

Eventually, after a short retirement, the Chairman said the Bench were of opinion that the conviction must be confirmed, but the endorsement would be removed.

Mr Bankes: Then the appeal will be dismissed with costs?

The Chairman: Yes, except as regards the endorsement.

418 August 19 1899

MIRACULOUS ESCAPE OF A LIVERPOOL BOY A startling accident occurred to a Liverpool boy named Thomas McLaughlin, shortly after two o'clock on Thursday afternoon. It seems that the boy, who is spending his holidays with his sister at Chester, while playing on the City Walls, close to the Water Tower, by some means overbalanced himself, and fell with terrific force on to the metals of the Holyhead line below, a distance of about 30 feet. A canal boatman, belonging to the Shropshire Union, named **George Cheshire**, who was working his boat through the Northgate Locks at the time, happened to see him fall, and climbing up the embankment, lifted the boy, and just managed to drag him out of the way of the up express, which dashed past the spot a few seconds later. The boy, who was in a comotose condition, was instantly removed to the canal towing-path below, and strange to relate it was found that the lad had sustained no further injuries than a badly sprained foot and a severe shaking.

419 October 21 1899

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **Enoch Rollinson** (50), boatman, for stealing two pairs of boots at Runcorn, nine months.

420 Saturday November 4th 1899

RIVAL BOATMEN AT ELLESMERE PORT

At Chester Castle Petty Sessions on Saturday, before Mr H D Trelawny and other magistrates, **Robert Hayes**, a flatman on the Shropshire Union Canal, was summoned for assaulting **Samuel Ward**, a man of a similar occupation, at Ellesmere Port on October 23rd. Mr Brassey appeared for defendant. - Complainant alleged that he was about to move his flat through the lock in his turn, when defendant, whose flat was also waiting to go through, tried to intercept him, and to do what

was vulgarly known as “bouncing him out of his turn”. When complainant remonstrated Hayes came savagely up to him, and knocked him down, kicked him on the side of the head, and otherwise ill-used him while lying on the ground. He struggled with him, and managed to get on his legs, whereupon his assailant again knocked him down and belaboured him. Having then “had enough” he made his escape. - **John Griffiths**, complainant's nephew, deposed to witnessing the assault. - Mr Brassey, for the defence, contended that the defendant had orders to move his flat through the lock, as it was his turn. While he was waiting until another boat went through the complainant and his captain, seeing he was the only man on his boat, tried to “bounce him out of his turn”. A struggle followed between the rival boats to get through the lock first, but the complainant's captain said it was Hayes's turn. Ward, however, said to Hayes, “You will have to fight for it”, and after challenging him to fight they both had a scuffle, in which defendant nearly rolled into the canal. John Roberts, an independent witness, deposed to seeing Ward challenge Hayes and take his coat off and commence fighting with him. - Defendant, in giving evidence, said he only struck Ward twice. - The Bench ordered him to pay the costs.

421 November 4th 1899

EXTRAORDINARY BIGAMY CASE

TERRIBLE CHARGE AGAINST A WIFE

John Hickson, flatman in the employment of the Manchester Ship Canal, living at Northwich, was indicted for bigamy. Mr Lance Bentley prosecuted, and Mr Colt Williams defended. Mr Bentley said prisoner was married on July 7th 1861, at Little Budworth, and he and his wife lived together upwards of thirty years, six children being born. Five years ago, he left his wife, and had not done anything to maintain her since. In July last year prisoner went through the form of marriage with Catherine Barton Eckersley at Birkenhead, his first wife then being alive. = Among the witnesses called by the prosecution was Joseph Hickson, son of the prisoner, who said that his father had said to him that he wished he would leave his mother, and that he wished she was dead. They did not want any maintenance from their father, and had simply brought this case to clear themselves. - Prisoner went into the witness box and stated that he had been 40 years in the employment of the Bridgewater Navigation and the Manchester Ship Canal. Two or three years after he was first married he came home one Saturday night to find that his wife had broken up the home, sold the furniture and eloped with a man. She stopped away about two months, and he forgave her and took her back. When his son was 15 months old she eloped with another man, and on her return he forgave her. One night when he returned home he found a man in his wife's bedroom, and he threw him downstairs and beat him. His wife ran out of the house in her night attire. On another occasion he caught another man in the house, and said, “Now, James, you and I for it”. The man brought a chair down on the back of his neck, and then tried to get through the window, but witness caught him, and getting him on the floor jabbed him in the face with the door key. Witness took his wife back after this and lived with her for some years comfortably, and then she took to drink, and notwithstanding that there was plenty of money coming into the house pawned his clothes. One day she threatened that she would put some of Mrs Maybrick's white powders into him. The reason he stayed with her so long was that he was fond of his children. Simeon Fogg, brother-in-law of prisoner, corroborated. - Catherine B Eckersley, the second wife, said prisoner had been very good to her. She knew at the time of her marriage to him that he was a married man. Prisoner never smoked, drank or used bad language. - His Lordship: That is an extraordinary character (Laughter). - An agent to the Manchester Ship Canal named Arthan, gave prisoner an excellent character. - Mr Colt Williams urged that there were very strong mitigatory circumstances. - Mr Lance Bentley said that unfortunately the first wife could not give evidence else she would have denied the prisoner's statements. - Prisoner was found guilty. - His lordship deferred sentence.

SENTENCES OF BIGAMISTS

His lordship ordered the prisoners, who on the previous day were either found guilty of, or pleaded guilty to, bigamy to be brought up together, and he addressed them, pointing out the serious nature of the offence, remarking that by law the sentence of seven year's penal servitude or two year's hard

labour might be legally passed for it. He sentenced Thomas Johnson, of Disley, whose excuse was that he sold his first wife for 2s 6d, to six calendar months. In the case of William Edge, ex Railway Inspector, his lordship said he did not want to harrow his feelings, because he believed him to be a thoroughly respectable man. If he followed his own sentiment he should like to discharge him on his own recognizances, but he could not do it, because he must not do it. He hoped his words would reach the ears of those who paid his pension, for he hoped that they would not deprive him of his pension in consideration of his excellent character. He would not degrade him by sentencing him to hard labour, but would sentence him to three month's imprisonment as an offender in the second division. Referring to the case of John Hickson, flatman, of Northwich, his lordship said it was the most difficult of the three to deal with. He felt as sorry for prisoner as he did for Edge. He appeared to have had a tremendous amount of ground for leaving his wife, at all events, many years ago. He sentenced him to two month's as an offender in the second class.

422 November 25 1899

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

DISORDERLY BOATMAN AT ELLESMERE PORT **Charles Parry**, a boatman on the Shropshire Union Canal, was summoned for having been drunk and disorderly in Dock Street, Ellesmere Port, on the 4th inst. Defendant was using disgraceful language, and was divested of his coat and waistcoat, and challenging people to fight. He was fined 5s and costs, or seven days.

423 January 13 1900

Ellesmere Port

INQUEST ON A CANAL BOATMAN At the Canal Tavern, on Wednesday morning, Mr Bate held an inquiry touching the death of a canal boatman named **Helliwell**, aged 68 years, who suddenly died on Monday morning. From the evidence of his wife and daughter, the deceased had for a long time suffered from asthma, and his health as a result was not good. The Coroner commented on the fact that no doctor had been called. The jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes". For over forty years the deceased had been employed by one West Bromwich firm, and was captain of the canal boat "Charles".

424 June 2 1900

City Police Court

A QUARREL BETWEEN BOATMEN **Caleb Shepherd**, a boatman, of Deva Terrace, was summoned by Charles Ainsworth, a boat builder at the Groves, for using threatening language towards him. Mr F Lloyd defended, and the complainant said that on the 19th last a party of gentlemen went along the Groves. Witness asked them to have a barge, and they saw a steam boat starting and ran for it. The steamer would not wait for them, however, and the party returned and went into his barge. Defendant then swore at him because he (defendant) failed to get them for his boat. Alfred Edge, a cabman, corroborated. For the defence Mr Lloyd denied that his client used threatening language to complainant. The facts were these: When the party were too late for the steamer, complainant crossed over the next mooring limit to solicit for his boat, and defendant said he would inform Mr Bradbury of it. If anyone ought to have prosecuted Mr Bradbury was that one. The case was dismissed, each being ordered to pay costs.

425 June 16 1900

City Police Court

DISTURBANCE IN THE GROVES Joseph Holmes, of Handbridge, made his forty second appearance, this time being charged with using abusive language in the Groves, on the 8th June. **Joseph Ashford**, a boatman, and another witness gave evidence, showing that Holmes had made use of disgusting language. Fined 10s and costs.

426 July 7 1900

Cheshire Quarter Sessions

SENTENCES **Edwin Parkinson**, 34, boatman, pleaded guilty to inflicting bodily harm on **Leonard Sergeant**, at Runcorn on the 28th April. Prisoner and prosecutor are both in the employment of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, and a quarrel arose about a horse at Runcorn. Prisoner assaulted Sergeant, and it was stated that such was the violence used that the windpipe was

separated from its attachments. Dr Bethune informed the court that Sergeant was now out of danger. Prisoner pleaded in defence that he was drunk at the time. Sir Horatio Lloyd said that was no excuse. As he had been already imprisoned two months, they would take this into consideration, and sentence him to a further three months hard labour.

427 July 28 1900

Chester Assizes

CRUELTY TO A MARE AT NANTWICH – PECULIAR POINT OF LAW **John Parry** (35), boatman, was charged with maliciously wounding a mare, his own property, at Stoke, near Nantwich, on the 16th July. Mr Trevor Lloyd prosecuted, and Mr W B Yates defended. The case for the prosecution was that Mrs Royle, wife of a police sergeant, heard some children screaming, and went into a neighbour's back yard, from where she could see prisoner's stable. She saw prisoner, who was mad drunk, kicking the mare in a brutal manner, and the mare was covered in blood. Police-sergeant Royle said he found a pocket knife in prisoner's possession with blood and hair on it. Mr Yates, for the defence, contended that under the statute it was not an unlawful act for a man to injure his own property. His lordship: Not if that property consists of a living, breathing creature, and the act involves cruelty? Mr Yates having quoted the section, his lordship said he would ask the opinion of Mr Justice Grantham on the point. He thought very little of it. Mr Yates, addressing the jury, said no one saw the prisoner use the knife, and suggested the possibility of the wounds having been self inflicted against a nail in the manger. His lordship recalled the veterinary surgeon, and asked him if a nail in the manger would cause the wound. Witness replied he did not think so. His lordship: Would it be possible? Witness: No my lord. In summing up to the jury, his lordship said defending counsel's suggestion was not complimentary to their intelligence. The jury found prisoner guilty, and sentence was deferred till Wednesday, when his lordship said he had consulted with his brother judge, and they could not agree to the interpretation of the statute suggested by counsel for the defence. A man might burn his own house or his own stack, and not be guilty of any criminal offence; but in the case of animals, the Legislature had shown its earnest desire to protect them from cruelty even at the hands of their owners. Prisoner had been found guilty of atrocious cruelty (he had brutally kicked the horse and inflicted wounds with a knife), and he must be sentenced to four months hard labour.

428 August 11 1900

LIFE ON A CANAL BOAT – ANOTHER CASE OF FAMILY NEGLECT At Chester Castle Petty Sessions on Saturday, before Mr H D Trelawny and other magistrates, **Edward Moore** and **Annie Moore**, husband and wife, living on a Shropshire Union Canal boat, were summoned for wilfully neglecting their five children of ages ranging from twelve years to five months, between the 16th April and the 16th of July at Ellesmere Port. Defendants pleaded guilty. Mr E Brassey prosecuting on behalf of the NSPCC, reminded the Bench that two cases of a similar character in which the parents belonged to canal boats were brought before them last week. In this case Inspector Nichol inspected defendants' boat on the 16th July, and found that although the boat contained two cabins for the use of the inhabitants (fore and aft), only the aft one was used for habitation and sleeping. A number of dirty sacks, which formed part of the boat's cargo, did duty as beds, and on these the children were lying at the time, their bodies being in a state of filth that almost baffled description. They were poorly nourished, and their clothing was ragged and infested with vermin. Mr Brassey remarked that he believed that under the Canal Boats Act no canal boat could be used as a dwelling unless it was registered, but there seemed to be very little information as to the nature of the inspection made of the boats, authorised by the Local Government Board. Under the Act the regulations more affected the question of air space and cleanliness of the dwelling than the cleanliness of the inhabitants, and he understood the duty of inspecting these boats devolved upon the sanitary inspector of the district. It was desirable, however, that some official should be appointed whose exclusive duty it would be to inspect the boats at all times. Inspector Nichol, in giving evidence, said the cabin was in a filthy state. In the fore cabin there was absolutely no sign of habitation. Dr Finney, of Ellesmere Port, deposed to having examined the

children, and bore out the evidence of the inspector with regard to the children's condition, which, he said, was likely to cause injury to their health. Sergeant Marshall corroborated, and said he had heard previous complaints of the neglect of defendants' children, and of the insanitary state of the boat. Mr George Talbot, the general inspector of canal boats for the company, also gave evidence. In answer to the Chairman, he said it was not his usual practice to go into the cabins of boats he inspected unless on special occasions. The Chairman: Then you don't know whether they are clean or dirty? Oh, yes. We don't go and overhaul the beds. The Hon C T Parker: Do you ever go into the cabins? Yes. The Chairman: Don't you keep a record of boats you have inspected? No, sir. Mr J Thompson: What is your object in going to these cabins? I could not say exactly. The Chairman: Are you inspector of these cabins? I am a traffic inspector. I think the Bench understood that you were inspector of these boats. I suppose you inspect them as regards their safety, not with the object of seeing if they are sanitary? Not particularly. Do you know if anybody is appointed by the company to look after the sanitary condition of the boats? There are three inspectors appointed. Are their duties the same as yours? Yes, sir. If a case like this came under our notice we should call the authorities attention to it. Mr Brassey: Supposing the company were employing a man who had a family of twelve or fourteen children. What officer's duty is it to see that cruelty and neglect are not suffered by the children? We should see that he was provided with proper cabin accommodation. The Chairman: What are your duties? My duties are general. I am in charge of the haulage department, and with regard to the boats I have to see that they are not overcrowded. If I saw any filth I should call attention to it. The Chairman remarked it was an unsatisfactory arrangement that the officials of the company who inspected boats never inspected the cabins. Witness added that when boats were in dock it was the duty of the boatyard superintendent to see the boats were clean and fit for habitation. The magistrates' clerk (Mr Churton) read the following letter he had received from the solicitors to the Shropshire Union Canal Company: - We have submitted your letter of the 28th ult to Mr Hales, the manager of the Shropshire Union Company, and he desires me to say in reply, that it is the aim of the directors and officials of the company to promote the comfort and respectability of the occupants of their boats. The cabins are painted at least once in every three years, and in addition, the boats are sent into dock every six months to be inspected and thoroughly overhauled when cases of neglect on the part of the boatmen as regards sanitary matters or otherwise are reported and dealt with. Besides this, inspectors are employed to exercise a general supervision over the boats, but having regard to the fact that the cabin is in reality the boatman's home, these inspectors are instructed not to use their powers in an inquisitorial manner. The chief inspector of canal boats and the local inspectors have repeatedly expressed their satisfaction at the condition of the Shropshire Union Company's boats. In the majority of cases the boatmen's wives take a pride in keeping their cabins clean and tidy, but unfortunately some people were slovenly and neglectful like the steerer of the *Norah* and his wife, and it is astonishing how quickly a cabin becomes insanitary and over-run with vermin if not properly attended to. The Shropshire Union Company beg to thank the justices of the Chester Castle division for bringing to their notice the state of things revealed by the proceedings against the man **Slater** and his wife, and to assure them that in the future, as in the past, all reasonable precautions will be taken to ensure the cabins being kept in a wholesome condition. Our remarks apply equally to the steerer of the boat *Eleanor*. Both cases were exceptional and escaped the notice of the company's officials, which having regard to the number of boats belonging to the company is not to be wondered at. Further questioned, Mr Talbot stated that no record of canal boat inspections was kept by the company. Mr R T Richardson said the Bench, in making these enquiries, merely wished that information of cases of this kind should be brought to the notice of the local sanitary authorities. The Chairman said the case was an unfortunate one and they hoped it would do a great deal of good. The Bench thought a great company like the Shropshire Union ought to have an official whose inspection should include that of the cabins in order to ascertain if they were fit for human occupation. The defendants would have to defray the costs.

429 August 18 1900

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

LINGUISTS AT ELLESMERE PORT **William Lyth**, a boatman, was fined 5s and costs for using profane language. On Tuesday night Constable Marshall found defendant in Queen Street, Ellesmere Port, with his coat and vest off, wanting to fight another boatman and expressing himself in vigorous and profane language. **John Wood**, another boatman who was heard using bad language by Constable White in the same street, was mulcted in a similar penalty.

430 November 17 1900

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKE BY SOME For the offence of using profane language at Ellesmere Port on other dates, Thomas Youde, who did not heed a warning given to him by the police a little more than a night previously, and **George Beans**, a boatman, were also fined 5s and costs.

431 November 24 1900

City Police Court

THEFT OF A SHAWL **Florence Amblett**, who said she was the wife of a boatman on the Shropshire Union Canal flat "Hilda", was charged with stealing a shawl, value 16s, the property of Mrs Harriet Lloyd, Freemasons' Arms, Frodsham Street. Prisoner went into the Freemasons' Arms on the previous day and had some drink. During the landlady's absence from the kitchen she stole the shawl, which she afterwards pawned at Mr Dutton's shop, Foregate Street for 3s. Fined 10s and costs, or in default 14 days.

432 December 1 1900

Calveley

SUDDEN DEATH OF A CANAL BOATMAN Mr J C Bate (county coroner) held an inquest on Thursday, at the Jolly Tar Inn, Wardle, on the body of a canal boatman named **John Bennett**, 70 years of age, who died suddenly on the high road near the Wardle Bridge the previous Wednesday. Dr C Royds Jones said he had made a *post mortem* examination, and in his opinion death was due to bronchitis. Verdict accordingly.

433 December 1 1900

Chester Castle Petty Sessions

MISCELLANEOUS **George Ratcliffe**, boatman, was fined 10s and costs for being drunk and disorderly at Whitby.