

June 5 1874

BOY DROWNED IN THE CANAL Yesterday afternoon, shortly after one o'clock, a boy named George Edwards, aged thirteen, residing with his parents in Bradford Road, was drowned in the canal opposite the yard of Mr James Brooke, marble mason and ironmonger, Leeds Road. It appears that Edwards, who was in the employ of Mr Brooke, was in the habit of bathing in the canal with other lads, and yesterday afternoon he went into the water with two of his companions. He appears to have got amongst the mud, and not being able to swim, he was unable to reach the side. One of the workmen was proceeding to his assistance, when a canal boat dragged by horses came up, and refused to hold back although requested, when some distance off, to do so. As we are informed, the boatmen were told that a body was being got out of the water, but for some unexplained reason they maintained their course, and the workman who had so bravely gone to the rescue was obliged to put back, to save himself. About ten minutes elapsed before the body was got out, and before Mr Knagg's assistant arrived some 20 minutes more were wasted. A galvanic battery was then applied, but without effect, and the body was thereafter conveyed to the boy's home in Bradford Road, to await an inquest.

June 9 1874

BOY DROWNED AND INQUEST – SHOCKING INHUMANITY OF A BOATMAN Yesterday morning, an enquiry was held before Mr William Bairstow, coroner, and a jury of which Mr George Rayner was foreman, touching the death of George Edwards, aged thirteen years, who was drowned while bathing in the Huddersfield Canal on Thursday in last week, under circumstances that were stated in Saturday's *Chronicle*. The jury having viewed the body on Friday evening to allow of its interment the following day, evidence was addressed yesterday, an epitome of which is appended.

Jane Hughes, Hebble Terrace, aunt of the deceased, identified the body as that of her nephew, who had no parents, his father, Richard Edwards, and mother being both dead. The deceased was 13 years of age, and was an errand boy for Mr Brooke, marble mason &c.

John Coney, thirteen years of age, of Leeds Road, was bathing with the deceased and James Henry Sykes, another boy, on Thursday afternoon. The deceased was walking out into the water and suddenly dropped over head, and caught at the witness, who was able to swim, to save himself. The deceased could not swim, and seized hold of witness, pulling him down under water twice. A man named Edward Salthouse, who works for Mr Brooke, went into the water to get deceased out. A boat was coming past, and Ned had to get out of the water to save himself. The man with the boat stopped the horse when witness and others shouted to him, and in a short time drove the horse on again. After the boat passed, Salthouse got the deceased out of the water.

At this point Mr Greenwood, canal engineer, informed the jury that the boat belonged to the Aire and Calder Navigation, was a narrow one, and loaded with corn, but the driver was a hired man, and it was possible **Swift** was not steering.

James Henry Sykes corroborated the evidence of Coney.

Edward Salthouse said he worked for Mr Brooke, marble mason, and was at the top of the yard about one o'clock on Thursday afternoon last, when Isaac Hammond, who works at the same place, told him the boy was drowning in the canal. He immediately ran down, undressing as he went, and plunged into the water. He dived three times in search of the body, and seeing a boat coming up the canal, he shouted out twice, and lifted both hands to signal the boat to stop. The driver did stop the horse, but a voice from the boat called out "Go on", and the driver went on with the horse. The witness again shouted out, "Stop, stop, there is a lad in the water drowning". The man in charge of the horse again stopped, when the voice from the boat again called out, "Go on", and accompanied it with swearing. When the boat was within a yard and a half from the witness, the latter was forced to get out of the way of it to save his own life, before which the witness had felt the deceased "click" at his leg. As the boat passed over where the deceased was found, the man on the boat called out, "He's drowned now; he's dead enough now". Immediately after the boat had passed, witness found the body, and on getting it out he took it in his arms and carried it to Brooke's side of the canal, and gave it to Wm McDuff and Jim Crowther, but he did not see what means were adopted to restore him.

In reply to the Coroner, the witness said it was Isaac Hammond that gave him the first alarm of the boy being in the water.

In reply to Mr Greenwood, the witness said he went under water three times to search for the body before he saw the boat, which was then below Heppenstall's dyeworks, near the gasworks.

The Foreman of the Jury thought this evidence ought not to be taken unless Swift, the captain of the boat, was present.

The Coroner replied that that could only be done by adjourning the enquiry and having Swift, or the

steersman, present.

Mr Greenwood, in reply to the Coroner, said the name of the man that was steering could be ascertained by writing to the agent at Wakefield, Mr G B Atkinson, Aire and Calder Navigation.

The Witness continued : When he first saw the boat, he shouted out at the top of his voice, "Stop, stop, there's a lad in the water, drowning". The boat was then 100 yards off, and could easily have been stopped. Although the horse stopped twice, the boat never stopped at all, and it could have been brought to a stand in 30 yards. The witness could wade the canal at any part near that place. Witness believed the deceased was not dead when he was got out of the water.

William McDuff said he saw the last witness go into the water. He took the body from him after he had found it in the water. He believed the lad was alive at the time, because he noticed the hands of the deceased move. The witness held the deceased up by the heels while other persons rubbed the body down, and did all they could to bring the lad round. Both water and dirt flowed from the deceased's mouth. Brandy was given to the deceased, but he could not swallow it. A doctor was sent for about a quarter of an hour afterwards, but the boy was then dead. Several persons were on the canal bank, and shouted to a boat which was coming up the canal to stop, as a lad was drowning. The boat was then 100 yards below the place, but did not stop. The witness Salthouse called to the boat to stop twice, but the man on the boat took no notice of it. The man with the horse stopped twice, when the man who was steering cried out, "Go on". When the boat was passing over the place where the body was found, the steersman remarked, "He's drowned enough, he's dead enough now". If the boat had stopped when first called to, the witness had no doubt but that the lad would have been living now. Between the time of hailing the boat and the body being got out, two or three minutes had elapsed. Witness saw the deceased move his hands. Witness further believed that if proper appliances and assistance had been at hand when the lad was got out of the water, life would have been saved.

Mr Beevers, also in the employ of Mr Brooke, corroborated the foregoing evidence, and in reply to the foreman and jury stated that the boy Edwards and others were constantly in the habit of bathing in the canal, and had done so every day that week up to Thursday, notwithstanding the constant caution given to them not to do so. On Wednesday, the day before the accident, the boys were driven out of the water by the workmen at Mr Brooke's. He believed that but for the boat proceeding as it did, the lad would have been at his work that day (Monday).

The witness Salthouse was recalled, and reiterated his former statement, explaining that what he meant by diving was that he went under water with his head, and the lad was only a few yards from where he had "clicked" as his (Salthouse's) leg, before the passing of the boat over where the body was found.

A short conversation here ensued among the jury as to the necessity of having the captain of the boat present before any censure was passed upon him, at the conclusion of which the foreman enquired if there was anything so far that would criminally affect the captain of the boat.

The Coroner : Not at all. However inhuman the man may have acted, there was no criminality about it. The jury would have to be satisfied that this boatman had, by his "gross negligence" been guilty of the boy's death, and that there was sufficient and fair evidence to warrant a verdict of manslaughter. For his own part, taking all the circumstances into consideration, and putting the most stringent points in the case, if they brought in a verdict of manslaughter it would break down at the assizes.

The room was then cleared, and the jury, after deliberating for 20 minutes, the coroner was readmitted into the room, when he found that the jury considered they would not be doing their duty if the enquiry was now closed, and that it would be more satisfactory to them if the steersman of the boat were present to hear any remarks that might be made about his want of humanity. The enquiry was then adjourned till Monday afternoon next, at five o'clock.

June 16 1874

ALLEGED INHUMAN CONDUCT OF A BOATMAN Last night, the adjourned inquest was held at the Fitzwilliam Hotel, touching the death of George Edwards, a boy 13 years of age, who resided with his uncle and aunt in Edwards Buildings, Bradford Road, who met his death by drowning in the canal, near the gasworks, under circumstances detailed in last week's Chronicle.

Mr William Barstow, Coroner, presided, and Mr George Rayner was Foreman of the Jury. The first witness called was:

Isaac Hammond, Marble Mason, in the employ of Mr Brooks. After partaking of dinner on the day of the accident, he heard that a boy was in the water and went and told Salthouse of it, who stripped and went into the water for the deceased, but he did not see him in the water, as he stopped at the top of the yard and shut the gates to prevent the public rushing down the yard.

Hiram Ellam, aged 16 years, employed at Brook's, stated that he saw the deceased in the water, and, after

seeing him go down for the third time, he ran for a straight edge to give to Coney: but, on getting back with it, Coney was out of the water. Witness then went to tell deceased's aunt, and when he came back he saw a boat coming up the canal and shouted, "Hey, stop the boat". The horse stopped a bit, and he heard a word which came from the direction of the boat, but could not tell what it was, and immediately the horse went on again. Just before the boat reached where the boy was found, Salthouse called out "He's here" and immediately afterwards had to get out of the way of the boat, and it passed up the canal.

Salthouse was again recalled, and in reply to the jury said that, to his knowledge, he never said, while in the water, before the boat passed, "He's here" or anything of that kind, until after he had got out of the water. As near as he could judge, he was in the water five or six minutes before he found the body of the deceased. He reiterated his former evidence as to his shouting out to the boatmen to stop, and the horse stopped on both occasions, and that a voice from the direction of the boat called out "Go on", the latter time accompanied with swearing. He had no doubt that if he could have got the deceased out of the water when he felt the boy "click" at his (the witness's leg) he would have been got out alive, and before the boat passed over him.

The Foreman said that, after consulting and weighing over all the circumstances, the jury said they could not see that there was any criminality on the part of the boatmen; but the jury would like to hear what they had to say.

The Coroner acquiesced, and

Jabez Marsden, driver of the horse drawing the boat in question, being called in, said – He remembered coming to Huddersfield on a Thursday week, but did not see any men in the water. He heard someone call out "There is a lad drowning in the cut". He slackened the horse for the boat to stop, but it did not stop at all. He (witness) stopped the boat a second time, but only slackened the line to clear the rings on the side of the canal.

In reply to the foreman, witness said the captain of the boat told him to "Go on" twice, and keep his line clear of the rings for fear of pulling the boat over. His intention was to stop when the captain ordered him to "Go on". Had there been any danger of the boat being drawn over, he could have turned his horse round and unhooked the rope from the horse. He did not see anyone put his hand in the water. Someone on the canal bank called out for him to stop the horse. The boat could have been stopped by the captain in about 20 yards, but he altered the course of the boat by keeping nearer to the towing path side.

John Swift, the captain of the boat driven by the last witness, said that he did not hear anyone call out to stop the boat on the afternoon in question. He did not hear anyone say a boy was drowning. He knew nothing about it until he got up to a man in the canal and thought he was bathing. No one said anything to him until he saw three women standing at the bottom of the yard, that said "a poor lad was drowned". In reply to the jury, he said the man stopped his horse and he told the man to "Go on". The driver did not tell him what he stopped for. He called out to the driver to go on, for fear of danger to the boat, or the line becoming foul of the bank. He could not see beyond the length of the boat, because he had a heavy top load on it. The witness was not aware that he said "If he's not dead before, he's dead enough now". In passing up the canal between Huddersfield and Wakefield, they met many scores of people bathing in the water, and they call out to them all sorts of remarks. At the speed the boat was going it was impossible to stop without danger.

At the conclusion of this evidence, the jury again requested the room to be cleared in order to consult as to their verdict. After a consultation of nearly half an hour, and being readmitted into the room, the Foreman said, the jury, after due consideration, had come to a unanimous verdict that George Edwards was "Accidentally drowned", But the jury wished to express an opinion that they could not exonerate the boatmen from blame, and they wished the Coroner to call them before the jury and to give them some caution as to their future conduct. The jury further unanimously concluded that Salthouse was highly commendable for his endeavours to save the life of the lad, and that he deserved the thanks of the jury for the manner in which he exerted himself on that occasion.

The two boatmen, Marsden and Swift, were then called into the room, when the Coroner informed them of the verdict of the jury, and the terms in which it was couched, adding that on the first occasion the case assumed a serious complexion for one or both of them, but from their own explanations that complexion had been somewhat altered. Still the jury did not think them free from blame, and thought it would have been much better if the boat had been stopped, and they (the boatmen) had waited the result of a search for the deceased before they had proceeded with the boat.

Salthouse was then called into the room and complimented by the Foreman, on behalf of the jury, for the manner in which he had tried to rescue the deceased boy.