

STAFFORDSHIRE ADVERTISER

1 13 September 1800

Yesterday an inquest was taken at Stone before J Dekenson, gent, on the body of **John Robinson**, a boatman, who was found in his cabin. Verdict, "Died by the visitation of God".

2 February 7 1801

WHEREAS a Horse belonging to **Francis Gasby**, fly boatman for Pickford, was left some time ago at the Antelope Inn in Stone; and Notice is therefore given that if the said horse is not taken away before Saturday the 21st instant, it will be sold to defray, in part, the debt owing to Mr John Thomas of the said inn, and an Action at Law will be instituted for the recovery of the remainder.

3 18 May 1805

Last week, in the city of Lichfield, an inquest was held on the body of **William Marshall**, a boatman, an entire stranger in that neighbourhood, who had accidentally fallen into a lock in the Wyrley and Essington canal as he was raising a paddle.

4 14 August 1830

Inquisitions have been held before Mr H Smith Esq, coroner :-

In Wolverhampton, on **Thomas Williams**, between six and seven years of age, the son of a boatman, who was drowned in the canal near Horseley Field.

5 30 October 1830

On Thursday se'nnight, an inquisition was held at Dudley, before Mr W Robinson, on the body of **William Stretton**, a boatman, who had been found lying in a state of insensibility a few nights previously at a colliery at Woodside, with marks of violence on his person. It appeared, however, in evidence, that the deceased had been frequently in the habit of sleeping by the side of the boiler at the same colliery; and the medical testimony adduced proved that the deceased's death was not owing to any act of violence, and the jury returned a verdict of "Died by the visitation of God".

6 29 January 1831

Inquisitions have been taken before Henry Smith Esq, coroner :-

In Wolverhampton, on **Mary Yardley**, about 30 years of age, who early on Thursday morning was left alone in the house of her husband, a boatman, on whose return at night, he found her lying dead under the grate, with her body dreadfully burnt; she was subject to fits, and it is supposed that she met her miserable death whilst suffering under the visitation of one.

7 21 May 1831

SHOCKING AFFAIR Early on Tuesday morning se'nnight, a shocking circumstance occurred at the second lock from Worcester on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. A man named **Wm Duffield** had arrived at the lock with a boat on his way to Birmingham; while waiting to go into the lock, another boatman named **Robert Shirley** arrived at the other end, and after some words as to who should go first into the lock, the latter cut Duffield's strap, and hit him several times; some fighting appears to have taken place, during which Shirley stabbed Duffield with a knife, in the left breast just below the heart. He seems to have been immediately aware of the serious consequences which this shocking act might bring upon himself; he assisted in conveying the wounded man to Worcester. Upon Duffield's arrival there, he was taken to the Infirmary, where he now lies in a precarious state. It is to be regretted that Shirley was not immediately taken into custody; persons are now in pursuit of him; he is a Staffordshire man; Duffield is from Gloucestershire.

8 2 July 1831

THE COURT FOR THE RELIEF OF INSOLVENT DEBTORS **Joseph Kerry**, late of Barton

under Needwood in the county of Stafford, Coal Dealer and Boatman.

9 30 July 1831

Staffordshire Summer Assizes

Thomas Smith, a boatman, was acquitted of stealing hay at Acton Trussell. The Judge told Smith that he went home with a very good character; as good a one as though the charge against him had never been made, and he hoped he would preserve it.

10 8 October 1831

Inquests before Mr Harding, coroner, at Longport, on the 3rd instant, on **Elizabeth Sims**, the wife of a boatman in the employ of Messrs Davenport, who was suddenly seized with a fit of apoplexy on the night of the preceding Saturday, and instantly expired. Verdict accordingly.

11 8 October 1831

Inquisitions have been taken during the past week before H Smith Esq, coroner :-

At Oxley, on the body of a boy whose name was unknown; he was about 14 years of age, and had been employed for a few days in boating, and on Friday night fell into the Birmingham canal at the Junction lock house, and was drowned. Verdict, "Accidental death".

At Bilston, on **John Moore**, a boatman, upwards of 30 years of age, who was found dead in bed in the cabin of a boat on the canal at Bradley. Verdict, "Died by the visitation of God".

12 5 November 1831

An inquest was held before Mr Harding, coroner, at Norton in the Moors on the 2nd instant, on **George Barnett**, a boatman, who unfortunately fell into the canal and was drowned. Verdict, "Accidental death".

13 5 November 1831

INQUESTS Inquisitions have been held before H Smith, coroner :-

On **James Whitehouse**, a boatman, who was accidentally drowned at Wednesbury.

14 7 July 1832

Staffordshire Midsummer Sessions

William Fallows was charged with stealing a quantity of oats and beans, the property of Thomas Bache, at Audley.

Mr Whateley was for the prosecution, It appeared the corn was stolen in the night time out of a stable near Harecastle Tunnel, belonging to Mr Bache of Coventry. The prisoner (a boatman) was seen to take the corn out of the stables and put it in his own boat.

Mr Lee (for the prisoner) stated that the evidence was incomplete without that of the prosecutor, but the objection was overruled. Guilty. To be kept to hard labour for two months.

15 18 August 1832

On Thursday afternoon, about six o'clock, a boat on its passage along the canal stopped at Sandon with the corpse of a man on board, who had just died of cholera. He was a boatman, and had come from the neighbourhood of Coventry. He had been attacked before he reached Rugeley, at which place he had medical assistance. The body (with quick lime in the coffin) was interred in a deep grave in Sandon churchyard, between twelve and one o'clock the same night.

16 8 December 1832

SUICIDE An inquisition was held before Mr H Smith Esq on Friday week, on the body of Mrs Brindley, landlady of the King's Head, Wolverhampton. It appeared in evidence that the poor woman had been labouring under great depression of mind for some time, and that she often said that her head was so painful that it would drive her mad. On Monday week, she left her house under pretence of going to her washerwoman's, and did not return. The body of the unfortunate woman was discovered on Thursday morning by **John Thacker**, a boatman, in the Birmingham

Canal near Wolverhampton. Verdict, "Lunacy".

17 24 January 1835

CORONER'S INQUESTS BEFORE HENRY SMITH ESQ Another inquest was held on Tuesday on view of the body of **Bridgman Sambrook**, at Smethwick. The deceased was a boatman, residing at Oldbury, and it appears that he had come up the canal with an intention of drawing off the water for his boat to pass, and the morning being very dark, it is supposed he must have fallen into the lock by accident, and the body was not discovered and got out till about twenty minutes, when it was quite dead. The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

18 31 October 1835 Staffordshire Quarter Sessions

Thomas Clewes, aged 64, was charged with stealing a tarpauling from a boat at Kingswinford, the property of James Foster and Co.

George Cartrick, a boatman in the employ of Messrs Foster and Co, left his boat at six o'clock on Saturday night with three tarpaulings on the cabin. He returned to it at six o'clock on Monday morning, and one was gone. Suspecting the prisoner, whose boat was proceeding up the canal at no great distance from his own, he took a constable and searched his boat, and in the foredeck found the tarpauling which he had lost.

Joseph Panock, a constable, had searched the prisoner's boat in company with the last witness, and found the tarpauling concealed in the fore deck, which was built up with bricks.

The prisoner in his defence said he knew nothing of the tarpauling. It was quite possible for any person to secrete things in his fore deck unknown to him while the boat was standing in the canal. It was usual for bricks to be piled up as those were in his boat. He could have no interest in stealing such an article, as his employers found all his tarpaulings.

Guilty. Two months imprisonment and hard labour.

19 5 December 1835

CORONER'S INQUESTS BEFORE HENRY SMITH ESQ On the 24th ult, at Kingswinford, on **Thomas Poteney**, a young man, a boatman, who about half past six on Sunday evening se'nnight fell into the Stourbridge Canal, near Brockmore, as he was pushing his boat from one side to the other, and was drowned.

20 4 June 1836 County Police Intelligence

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE Mr Pope of Handsworth charged **Joseph Tompson**, a boatman, with trespassing on his grass.

Defendant pleaded guilty, and was ordered to pay the damage and expenses.

Richard Royston charged the last named defendant, Tompson, with committing damage and spoil on certain underwood and fences belonging to the Earl of Dartmouth, on the 15th of November.

Mr Briscoe enquired why defendant had not been brought up sooner, and was answered that "he could not be taken before".

Defendant again pleaded guilty, and was ordered to pay 40s and costs, or be committed for two months.

21 2 July 1836 Staffordshire Midsummer Sessions

John Wilday was found guilty of stealing from the person of **William Wilkes**, a boatman, two sovereigns, a shilling and a sixpence. On the 15th of May, the parties met at the Vine at West Bromwich, and after drinking some time, the prosecutor fell asleep. The prisoner took that opportunity of robbing him and leaving the house. In a short time afterwards, Wilkes awoke, missed the prisoner, and his money. He went in quest of him, and at length found him at another beer shop, and charged him with the robbery. The prisoner, after denying it some time, took Wilkes to the place where he had concealed it under a clod. To be imprisoned six months; four days solitary.

22 8 October 1836

INQUESTS The following inquisitions have been held before H Smith Esq, coroner :-

On the 29th ult at Bilston on **John Allmark**, a lad about fifteen years old, who was found drowned in the Birmingham Canal at Rough Hills; it was supposed that he had fallen in by accident from a boat in which he was employed.

On the 1st inst, at Bushbury, on **Wm Cooke**, a boatman who lived at Ombersley in Worcestershire, and who fell into a lock of the Birmingham Canal, to which he had gone to draw the paddles.

Verdict in both cases, "Accidental death".

23 22 October 1836

INQUESTS The following inquisitions have been held before H Smith Esq, coroner :-

On the 12th instant, at West Bromwich, on **George Allen**, a boatman, whose horse took fright while he was fastening on a nose bag, and crushed him between the wheel of the cart the horse was drawing and the wall of a bridge. Verdict, "Accidental death".

24 10 December 1836

INQUESTS The following inquisitions have been taken before H Smith, Esq, coroner :-

At Smethwick, on **Alfred Stokes**, a youth employed to drive a boat horse, who accidentally fell into the Birmingham Canal at the New Summit.

On the 29th ult, at Bushbury, on **James Tane**, a boatman, who was drowned by one of the locks of the Birmingham Canal near to Gorsbrook.

On the 2nd instant, on **William Rowley**, a boat lad, who was found drowned in the canal near Coseley.

Verdict in each case, "Accidental death".

25 7 January 1837

Lichfield Epiphany Sessions

William Hicklin and Henry Shemmonds were indicted for stealing a coat, value 5s and a handkerchief, value 6d, the property of Henry Nall.

The prisoner Shemmonds was defended by Mr Passman; Mr Stevens of Tamworth appeared for Hicklin.

It appeared that on the 8th December last, the prosecutor, who is a fishmonger, staid with his horse and cart along with two other persons at the Duke of Wellington Inn, on the Birmingham road, about half a mile from this city. The cart was left at the door with the coat and handkerchief in it. The prisoner Hicklin was a boatman, and he had a boat lying in the canal close by. He had that day come from Fazeley, and the prisoner Shemmonds had come with him in the same boat as a passenger. They were both strangers to each other. A man named **Woolley** assisted Hicklin in his boat. All three were drinking together at the Wellington Inn, where the prosecutor was, when some dispute arose between the two prisoners on the one side, and Woolley on the other, the latter was charged with having taken a sixpence belonging to the former; some quarrelling ensued, and the parties went out. Shortly afterwards, the coat and handkerchief were missed out of the cart; suspicion fell on the prisoners. The boat was searched, and the stolen property was found in the cabin under the bed. The man Woolley underwent a rigid cross-examination. He stated that he left the prisoners on the same day, and started back for Fazeley between four and five o'clock but did not get there till nine o'clock, although it was only seven miles – he admitted the disputes between the prisoners and himself.

Mr Passman and Mr Stevens severally addressed the jury, and argued on the possibility of the witness Woolley, having placed the coat and handkerchief in the boat cabin, for the purpose of revenging himself on the prisoners. The prisoners were men bearing unexceptionable characters, and it was not likely that they would steal a paltry coat, worth no more than 5d instead of 5s, when it was proved that Hicklin had between four and five pounds in his possession when he was apprehended.

Several witnesses gave the prisoners good characters.

The Recorder summed up at great length, and ultimately the prisoners were acquitted.

26 21 January 1837

George Littler, a boatman, found guilty with others, at our late sessions of stealing a large quantity of silk from a boat on the canal near Stone, and sentenced to be transported for seven years, died in gaol on Sunday last. He was seized with an epileptic fit on the 10th instant, and lingered in a state of insensibility until the 15th.

27 4 February 1837 Potteries Police Intelligence

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE John Dark was charged with stealing a watch, the property of WnMason of Tettenhall. It appeared from the evidence of a woman named Riddall, who lodged at Mason's, that the prisoner and another man came into the house on Saturday evening, and remained about ten minutes; and that immediately after they had gone, the watch, which hung up at the time they came in, was missed. Wurr, the constable, being informed of the robbery, apprehended the prisoner at the house of a boatman named **Dyass**. He at first denied all knowledge of the watch, but afterwards produced it, and several times told the prosecutor he would give him anything to settle it with him. Committed to the sessions.

28 18 March 1837 Staffordshire Assizes

BURGLARY AT SMETHWICK James Barton was convicted of a burglary and robbery in the house of **Thomas Green** at Smethwick in this county.

Mr Kempson appeared for the prosecution, The prisoner had no counsel.

The prosecutor is a boatman. On the night of the 27th ult, he went to bed about half past ten, leaving the lower part of his house in perfect security. At half past five o'clock the next morning, he came downstairs, and found the front door wide open. The door was not broken, nor any windows forced, so that the burglar must have entered by means of a false key. On looking round, he missed a smock frock, a great coat, two cloaks belonging to his wife, four loaves of bread, violin and bag, and a pair of glass salts. About eleven o'clock in the morning, as James Spittle, a police officer of Birmingham, was going his rounds, he met the prisoner with his booty. Spittle very unceremoniously introduced himself by enquiring,

What have you got there? Why, some things I am going to pawn.

I must look at them and see what you have got. The prisoner reluctantly delivered up the bundle.

Whose frock is this? My brother's.

Whose cloak is this? My sister's.

Why do you pawn them? To raise money.

What for? I don't know.

After this disagreeable colloquy, the officer took the prisoner into custody.

The articles were identified by the prosecutor, and the jury found the prisoner guilty. Death recorded.

29 8 April 1837 Staffordshire Quarter Sessions

James Jones was found guilty of stealing a quantity of wearing apparel from a boat which he had been employed to drive, the property of **Thomas Davis**. On the 31st ult, the prisoner availed himself of the temporary absence of his employer, to break open a cupboard in the cabin, and steal a flannel frock, a shirt, a waistcoat, a pair of shoes, and a pair of trowsers, and having equipped himself in the stolen articles, set off to Eccleshall. On missing his property, he gave information to a constable, who traced him to Eccleshall, and overtook him near to the house of R Beech Esq, the magistrate. In his defence, he said he was to have five shillings a week or clothes, and as he had been with him three weeks and had no money, he took the clothes to pay himself. After he was found guilty, he was called to answer to the record of a former conviction, and he pleaded not guilty. Thomas Brutton Esq proved that at the Michaelmas sessions in 1835, he was convicted of

stealing a number of similar articles. To be imprisoned for twelve calendar months.

Samuel Wood, a boatman, was found guilty of stealing about 5 cwt of iron railing and sleepers, the property of Messrs Bate and Robbins, at Tipton. The iron lay exposed, and the prisoner passing with his boat, put it on board in the night of the 8th March, and proceeded on his voyage to Wolverhampton. The next morning it was missed, and ultimately traced to the prisoner, who had broken it into short lengths. To be imprisoned three calendar months.

30 13 May 1837

INQUESTS The following inquisitions have been held before H Smith Esq, coroner :-

On the 6th instant, at Rowley Regis, on **Charles Brunsten**, a boy between six and seven years of age, the son of a boatman, who, having been sent to fetch the boat horse, was found drowned in the Netherton Canal, near the Lion Colliery, into which it is supposed that he had accidentally fallen. Verdict, "Accidental death".

31 1 July 1837

Staffordshire Quarter Sessions

Thomas Banks and William Goldstraw were charged with stealing from a boat in the parish of Stoke upon Trent, a quantity of hay, the property of Earl Granville. Banks, who was the captain of a boat, in the employ of Lord Granville, pleaded guilty to the indictment. Goldstraw was a labourer, also in the employ of the Noble Lord, and pleaded not guilty.

Mr Godson appeared for the prosecution, Mr Allen for the defence.

The case was very short. The prisoners, with several others, had been sent by Mr Forrester, Earl Granville's agent, to fetch a boat load of hay from a meadow in the parish of Trentham. When they brought the boat to Shelton Wharf, Michael Kelly, another labourer in the same employ, saw each of the prisoners take a truss of hay out of the boat, and secrete it in a blacksmith's shop.

John Davies, another labourer who was with the boat, spoke to seeing Banks, but not Goldstraw, taking hay.

Mr Allen, in addressing the jury in behalf of the prisoners, was proceeding to state the circumstances under which he professed to have removed the hay from the boat to Mr Smith's shop, under the sanction and control of Banks, the captain of the boat, when

Mr Godson took objection to the course pursued by the learned gentleman. He said he was not justified under the regulation laid down by the judges for pleadings under the Prisoners' Counsel Bill, which had but recently come into operation, in pursuing the course he was doing. The Judges had ruled that the Counsel for the prisoner in his address to the jury cannot make, or read, a statement of facts real, or assumed, which have not come out in the case; on which he does not intend to call witnesses to prove, without entitling the counsel for the prosecution to make a speech to the jury in reply.

The Court concurred in the correctness of Mr Godson's opinion; and Mr Allen bowed, and proceeded to address the jury by supposing the prisoner to have been in certain circumstances, and under the authority of a certain person, when he had done a certain thing, then would they find him guilty?

Not guilty.

Another indictment was immediately preferred against the same parties for stealing hay from Earl Granville's boat on a subsequent occasion. To this indictment, Banks pleaded guilty; and Goldstraw was found guilty. Banks was sentenced under the first indictment, to one calendar month, hard labour; under the second 14 days to commence from the expiration of the first. Goldstraw to six weeks hard labour in the House of Correction.

32 14 July 1837

Staffordshire Sessions

SYSTEMATIC IRON STEALING **Charles Lloyd, Sarah Lloyd and Louisa Beards** (aged 14) were charged with stealing divers pieces of cast and refined iron, the property of Messrs John Bagnall and Co at Tipton, and Mr Edward Blakemore of Wednesbury with receiving the same, knowing it to be stolen.

Mr Whateley and Mr Lee appeared for the prosecution; and Mr Godson, with whom was Mr Whitmore, defended Mr Blakemore.

Mr Whateley, in stating the case to the jury, said he should not offer any evidence against Sarah Lloyd, the wife of the other prisoner, or against Louisa Beards, his niece, as the law supposed the wife to be under the control of her husband, when in his presence; and it might be fairly assumed that the girl acted under the direction of Lloyd, her uncle, without a guilty knowledge of the transaction. Lloyd was undefended. The case excited considerable attention from the respectability of Mr Edward Blakemore, the person charged with receiving the stolen property.

The facts of the case, as they came out in evidence, were that Lloyd, the prisoner, was employed to convey iron by the canal from Gospel Oak to Toll End, at which places the prosecutor had two iron works. Information being given on the 16th November, to Newbold, Mr Bagnall's foreman, of some wrong practices being carried on by the prisoner, he and another person watched him one day, when he was taking back from Toll End to Gospel Oak what ought to have been the empty boat. The boat was stopped at Barebone Bridge, when Lloyd took out a quantity of iron, and put it in two baskets, placing one on the head of his niece, and the other on the head of his wife. They took the iron across the fields to Blakemore's works. The witnesses followed them and came up *just as the iron was put in the scales to be weighed*. Mr Blakemore was not present, but was sent for. He was told that the iron belonged to Mr Bagnall, and asked if he had bought any from the woman before. He said he had bought 309 lbs from her that morning, but had not paid for it. Newbold asked to see the iron, and on being shown it, said it was his master's, and he would fetch it away the next day.

The constable of Tipton went the next day to fetch the iron, and enquired of Mr Blakemore what quantity of iron he had bought of the woman. He acknowledged to have bought at different times, from the 26th of September to the 16th of November, 2 ton 1 cwt 1 qr 8lb; that he had paid £5 13s 8d and had given 3s per cwt. He gave from his own book an account of the different quantities received, and the dates when they were received. Two quantities of iron were produced in court; that found in the scales, and that which Mr Blakemore said he had bought on the morning of the 16th. That bought in the morning consisted exclusively of broken pigs, and that found in the scales of broken pigs and other small pieces.

Mr G B Thornicroft of Wolverhampton said he considered such iron as that produced in court worth, for ready money, from 5s 9d to 6s per ton. The smallest pieces were never picked up on the cinder heaps and sold for scraps; they were pure iron and as good as the largest pieces of pig.

Mr Ward was selling Mr Bagnall such iron as that produced in October and November last. It was them worth 6s per cwt 3 months and 3 months, or 5s 10d cash. It was clear iron and free from cinders; such iron was not sold for scraps.

Mr Godson contended that there was no case to go to the Jury as far as his client was concerned. The indictment charged the prisoner Lloyd with stealing a quantity of iron – his client with receiving “the same”, knowing it to be stolen. The only question was about the iron which the witnesses saw taken from the boat and put into the scales by the wife and niece of the prisoner, and which had been identified as Mr Bagnall's iron. He contended that Mr Blakemore did not “receive” that iron. It might have been in the act of being transferred, but no transfer was made from the vendor to the vendee; nor had it been shown that his client had exercised any act of ownership over it.

The Court decided that the objection was a valid one, and Mr Blakemore was acquitted.

The prisoner Lloyd said he was to have the “scraps” as his perquisite, over and above his wages. Guilty. Seven years transportation.

STEALING A LARGE QUANTITY OF SILK FROM A CANAL BOAT **George Potts**, George Marlow and John Henry Appleford were placed at the bar, charged with stealing a quantity of silk, of the value of £700 and upwards, the property of John Kenworthy and Co, at the parish of Barlaston; and Thomas Devereux with receiving the same knowing it to be stolen.

This case excited great interest, and occupied the Court the whole of Saturday. The evidence adduced to prove this felonious transaction was very circumstantial, clear and conclusive.

Mr Lee, with Mr Yardley, appeared on behalf of the prosecution. Mr Godson defended Marlow;

Mr Allen defended Marlow jointly with Mr Godson; and Potts and Devereux singly.

George Potts was captain of the boat from which the silk was stolen; Appleford was described as a young comedian, and a passenger in the boat; Marlow kept a beer shop at Barlaston; and Devereux managed a farm belonging to his wife's mother, adjoining Tittensor Heath.

Seventeen witnesses appeared for the prosecution.

Lovell and Jefferson, the first two witnesses, the one a clerk and the other a porter in the East India Company's warehouse in London, spoke to the packaging and numbering the four bales stolen, 55, 56, 57, 58, weighing 3cwt 2 qrs 17lbs and valued at from five to six hundred pounds.

James Powner, a clerk to Messrs Kenworthy and Co, proved the loading of the four bales in Potts's boat at Paddington. The boat was bound for Manchester, and the silk directed to G and I Smith of that town.

George Hilliard confirmed the testimony of Powner. He travelled with the boat part way from London; but left it "two days before the job happened". In reply to Mr Allen's question, he said he had never heard of Potts being out of his mind.

William Cooper was a servant to Potts, the captain, and went with the boat from London to Manchester. At Stone Wharf they took some casks of ale on board, and he saw the ale then. While they were loading the ale, Potts was away near three quarters of an hour, but returned just before the boat was starting. He knew Marlow's house; it was about a quarter of a mile from Stone to it. After the boat left Stone, it was his turn to rest; and being in the night, he went to bed and slept.

In answer to Mr Allen's cross-examination, he said he "never know'd nothing to be the matter with Potts". Never saw him in epileptic fits.

Joseph Bailey, another boatman, confirmed the testimony of the former witness, and said they had both gone to bed after leaving Stone.

George Potts, a little boy, nephew to the prisoner Potts was desired by Mr Lee to speak loud "like he did when driving the horse" and certainly the little fellow did speak up, and gave his evidence with a clearness, precision and straightforwardness, not always to be met with in the depositions of witnesses much his seniors. He spoke to seeing the four bales of silk in the boat at Stone, and to his uncle's absence from the boat nearly the whole of the time they were putting in the "strong beer". Bailey and Cooper went to bed on leaving Stone. He went to bed, but got up again in a very short time. He saw Marlow and another man come with the boat. Saw four bales of silk taken out. His Uncle Marlow and Appleford were there at the time. Marlow fell into the canal, and cried out lustily, "I shall be drowned". He did not know where the bales were taken to; but he saw them, "put thro' a little wicket across the towing-path". His Uncle and Appleford stopped behind and overtook the boat again near a lock. The horse went on itself slowly, and he steered. Appleford left the boat at Stoke, and he did not see him after. His Uncle left it at the end of the tunnel.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : He did not know if Marlow assisted in carrying the bales out of the boat. Did not know that he was drunk. He got a good sousing. Fell into the canal lengthways, and was soon overhead. Did not know anything about their going to Smith's house.

Daniel Smith, who had been committed on the charge of receiving the silk, knowing it to be stolen, was brought from the Gaol to give evidence. He stated that Marlow's wife called him about three in the morning on the 25th of November (Friday). Shortly after, he heard a cry that Marlow was in the canal. After he had got out, he came into his house; he kept a beer shop. Potts, Appleford and two other persons, Powner and Wilson, were with Marlow. He gave Marlow a change of clothes. He saw him with a purse; it had gold, silver and bills in. Marlow's wife counted out £40. Powner gave the money to Potts. Powner and Wilson had bolted. Mrs Marlow and Potts wished him to let them put four bales of silk in his warehouse; he said they might. About half past three o'clock on Saturday morning, Powner came to his house and asked him to remove the silk for him. He took his horse and cart, and removed it to Tittensor Common. Powner took it from the cart and concealed it somewhere. Powner broke open one of the bales; he had a carpet bag with him. The same day Marlow asked him to take some stuff to Leek for him.

In answer to Mr Godson's cross-examination, Smith said Marlow was about "half and half" - a little in liquor, but not past his guard; he knew what he was doing.

Mr Allen endeavoured, in his cross-examination, to elicit an acknowledgement that he had been induced to tell the story he had just done, from the promise that if he did so he should not be prosecuted.

Smith said he had told no story; he had told the truth. He was told, when he went before the magistrates, that he must tell the whole truth, and he had done so.

Sarah Smith confirmed the testimony of her husband.

In reply to Mr Godson, she said Marlow appeared to have had a little liquor; he smelt of spirits, but he was not tipsy. She knew nothing about what they called "half and half", tho' she had kept a beer shop.

James Degg remembered Potts coming to Stoke on the morning after the robbery. He told them he had had a bad misfortune; he had lost four bales of silk; five men had met the boat in Appleton valley, stopped it, pulled it to the side, and took out what they had a mind; he had been drinking with the parties at Paddington, and got drunk; the robbers threatened to blow the men's brains out if they made any noise or alarm.

Sampson Finney met Daniel Smith about half past three on the morning of the robbery with a horse and cart. He saw some bundles in, which appeared to be covered with a light coloured wrapping.

Mr Richard Beswick, a police officer from Manchester, took Potts into custody on the 25th of November. Potts was in Messrs Kenworthy's warehouse in Manchester; he told him the boat had been robbed between Stone and Stoke, near Barlaston; four men drew the boat to the side, and he jumped upon land; they presented a pistol at him and said that if he attempted to stop them from robbing the boat, they would shoot him; three of the men left him, and one stopped with him with the pistol; the three men took four bales of silk out of the boat and put them in a cart; when he saw that, he knocked the man down that was left with him, and beat him so that he was scarcely able to walk, and then he went to the other three and served them the same – [laughter] – he nearly killed them all. The witness then spoke to a conversation which took place in Manchester between Potts, Marlow and Appleford, in which Potts said he had received £45 from Marlow for the silk, and had given Appleford £5.

Cross-examined by Mr Allen : He thought his tale a very absurd one, and did not believe it; did not believe he was out of his mind.

Mr Allen : How many men had he killed in Kendal Green? [Laughter]

Mr Beswick : He said there were four.

Mr Allen : Oh, I thought there were five – two first and three after. Did he talk very ramblingly and absurd? Was he very loquacious?

Mr Beswick : Sometimes he talked very foolish and absurd and sometimes not.

Mr Lee : Did he talk as fast as my learned friend, Mr Allen?

Mr Beswick : Not quite so fast! [Laughter]

Mr Saddler Thomas, superintendent of the Manchester police, said Appleford, when apprehended, asked what he was taken up for? And on being told, he said, "Lord bless you, Sir, I know nothing about it Sir. I am as innocent as you are". But afterwards he confessed he did know, but would not tell unless the reward of £50 was made sure for him.

Mr George Rhodes, head constable of Hanley, had searched Mrs Ann Powner's farm, on information that a quantity of silk was concealed there. He found Devereux, the prisoner, thrashing in the barn.. He asked him to assist in the search – which he did. In the rickyard there was a quantity of loose soil, as if recently disturbed, covered with two or three loads of turnips, as if spread over it to conceal it. After removing the turnips, and digging about four feet below the surface, they found four bags (one a carpet bag) containing raw silk, weighing 215 3/4 lb. Rhodes produced it in court, with a slip of paper on No 6903, which John Jefferson, the second witness, swore to having written when the silk was in the East India Company's Warehouse. There were about two or three cart loads of turnips, quite fresh and green, though Devereux said they had been there four or five days.

Mr W C Davis, constable of Stoke, had also searched Mrs Powner's farm. Devereux was thrashing in the barn. In a field near the house, one part of which had been ploughed for some time, and

another part in a different place in the field, very recently ploughed, he found about a yard deep in the soil a quantity of raw silk, weighing 98 lbs. The silk was found under the part just ploughed. Devereux said he had ploughed it, but knew nothing of the silk.

Mr John Wilson, agent to Messrs Kenworthy and Co at Shelton, spoke to the fact of Mr Kenworthy having partners.

Mr Williams, solicitor, Stoke, was in the barn with Devereux while Rhodes and Davis were searching the premises. Devereux said Enoch Jackson put the turnips there. Mr Williams said Who? Devereux, as tho' recollecting himself, said, Jacob Salt. He appeared much agitated, and said, "If there is anything there, I know nothing about it".

This was the case for the prosecution.

No witnesses were produced for the defence, except to the character of Devereux, who (as the Chairman observed) appeared to have connived at the transaction to screen his brother in law, Powner.

Appleford, the strolling comedian, made a long address to the jury, about Potts and himself. "Potts, he verily believed, was not right in his head betimes"; and as for himself, he was quite innocent. He told a strange incoherent tale, full of absurdity.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty against all the prisoners.

Potts, Appleford and Marlow to be transported for seven years. Devereux to be imprisoned 12 calendar months, hard labour.

33 15 July 1837

Grand Jury Room, Shire Hall, Stafford

Joseph Parkes, a boatman, appeared to answer a charge preferred by Mr Ward, Agent to Lord Hatherton, of stealing herbage out of a plantation belonging to his Lordship.

He was ordered to pay sixpence as a compensation for damage, and sixteen shillings costs; or in default to be imprisoned fourteen days to hard labour in the house of correction.

34 19 August 1837

INQUESTS The following inquisitions have been held before H Smith Esq, coroner :-

On the 14th instant, on **James Pickering**, a boatman, who was found drowned in the Stourbridge Canal.

35 30 September 1837

The annual general meeting of the members and friends of the Institution for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children held in the Town Hall, Birmingham, at the end of which, six additional pupils were admitted, including:-

Emma Betts, aged 10 years, mother married to a boatman, with five children; Smethwick, Staffordshire.

36 21 October 1837

Edward Moorcroft and Isaac Walters were severally indicted for stealing twelve ducks, the property of Thomas Cox of Burton upon Trent.

Mr Ferard appeared for the prosecution and Mr Lee for the defence.

The ducks were stolen on the night of the 11th of August, or early on the following morning, from a saddle house at the back of the Vine Inn, in which they had been locked up by Mr Cox before he retired to rest. One of the prisoners, who is a butcher, had a slaughterhouse near the place, and was observed to be there at a late hour. On the following day, the prisoners took a couple of ducks to a beer shop kept by a boatman named **Lake**, and they asked his wife whether her husband had told her anything about a couple of ducks they were to bring. She replied they had not, they then told her he had desired them to bring a couple, and after some conversation about the price, it was agreed she should give them eighteen pence and a quart of ale. Whilst they were there, Mr Cox discovered his loss, and having given information to Roe, the constable, whom Mr Lee, somewhat facetiously described "as a large body of evidence", he (Roe) sent an assistant named Walker on a

tour of discovery, who succeeded in tracing the prisoners to the house of Lake, and the subsequent sale of the stolen property.

Mr Lee, in cross-examining Mrs Lake, endeavoured to shake the credit of her testimony, by throwing out a number of insinuations affecting her general reputation. Her temperament rose to boiling point, and thrice she indignantly refused to answer any more "such questions" as were put to her by the learned counsel.

The skins of the two ducks were produced and identified by the prosecutor.

Mr Lee with his usual ingenuity made the most of a lame defence. The prisoners were however found guilty, and severally sentenced to be imprisoned for the space of twelve calendar months, one month of each period at different intervals to be spent in solitary confinement.

After the sentence had been passed, Mr Ferard said that every kind of intimidation, threat and menace had been employed to defeat the ends of justice in this case, and Roe said that George Moorcroft, a brother of the prisoner, who appeared in court under no very reputable circumstances, had told him that if he (Roe) had not been an old man, he would have knocked his bloody head off.

37 4 November 1837

The Court for relief of Insolvent Debtors

LEVI WANTLING late of Stoke upon Trent in the county of Stafford; first following the business of a Boatman; then of a Boatman and Licensed Brewer and Retailer of Beer and Tobacco; afterwards following no business; and lately following the business of a boatman.

38 6 January 1838

Staffordshire Quarter Sessions

George Hill, a boatman with a countenance of peculiar ferocity, which would not have given the lie to a more serious charge, was indicted for stealing a purse containing four sovereigns and nine shillings, from the person of Charles Cummins, his master, at Bilston.

Mr Kempson appeared for the prosecution.

The prisoner, who received a very bad character, had helped himself to the purse of his master, whilst asleep in a public house.

Guilty. Six calendar months hard labour.

39 17 March 1838

Staffordshire Lent Assizes

HIGHWAY ROBBERY AT STOKE Fazeley Will, alias William Cooper, was indicted at the last assizes with a person of the name of Ostler Will, alias William Peake, then transported, for assaulting **Jonathan Reed**, on the 30th day of June 1837, at the parish of Stoke upon Trent, putting him in bodily fear and danger of his life, and stealing from his person and against his will, a watch and three shillings, his property.

Mr Godson conducted the prosecution.

Jonathan Reed, the prosecutor, stated that he was a boatman. On the evening of the 30th of June last, he was at a beer shop at Stoke upon Trent aforesaid, kept by a person named Smith. Fazeley Will and Ostler Will were there. About ten o'clock, he left the house to go to his boat, about a quarter of a mile from the house. He had not proceeded far when he was overtaken by the prisoner and his companion, who knocked him down, and the prisoner said, "We must have his watch". The prisoner grasped his throat to prevent him from crying out, and he thrust his hand into his side pocket and took out two shillings in silver. One of them seized his watch chain, he (the prosecutor) grasped the chain, and in the struggle it broke, he (the prosecutor) retaining part of it with the seal and key, and they taking the watch away.

Wm C Davis, constable of Stoke, apprehended Peake, who was tried and convicted at the last assizes; Fazeley Will absconded at the time, and therefore was not tried with his confederate. He apprehended Fazeley Will on a Bench warrant in November last. On being told the charge, he said he had the watch, and that he had pawned it for nine shillings. Guilty. To be transported for fifteen years.

His Lordship ordered ten pounds to be given to Davis, the constable, part to discharge the additional expenses he had incurred, and the remainder as a reward for his vigilance and activity.

40 17 March 1838

Nisi Prius Court

BUDD V ASHLEY – SLANDER Mr Sergeant Ludlow (with whom was Mr Allen), for the plaintiff, stated the case to the jury. The plaintiff is a boatman, and the defendant the owner of canal boats at Stoke upon Trent. The slanderous words imputed to the plaintiff were that he (Budd) and nobody else had robbed the defendant's boat. Special damage was sought by the plaintiff.

John Meadon, bricklayer of Stoke, was the first witness. He said he knew Mr Ashley; he was a dealer in hay and corn, and was the owner of canal boats. In the autumn of last year, he was at John Brassington's wharf bank, when he heard Mr Ashley abusing John Budd. He said, "Budd, what are you come for? Are you come to rob the boat again?" Budd replied, "No, I never did rob the boat". Ashley added, "Budd, you've no occasion to say another word; you robbed the boat, and no other man". He repeated that many times.

Cross-examined : He did not say, "You know the man who robbed the boat".

Mr John Brittain, partner in a firm at Burton on Trent, was about to give evidence to show that their house had been influenced by the report emanating from Mr Ashley respecting Budd, but

Mr Lee having ascertained that Mr Brittain had not heard the words from Mr Ashley's own lips, objected that that evidence could not be received, and cited the case of *Ward v Weekes* in support of his objection.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow contended that the defendant was liable for the consequences of his slanderous words, and their propagation, as the newspaper publisher was for the consequences of libels which he circulated by means of the press.

Mr Baron Alderson looked to the case quoted by Mr Lee, and decided in favour of the objection.

Mr Gibson, another witness, then deposed to having heard the defendant say to Budd "he was sorry for the words he had spoken against him (Budd), about his having robbed the boat."

Cross-examined : Budd did not express himself satisfied with that explanation, but said he should go to his attorney.

Mr Lee addressed the jury for the defendant, and observed that the declaration admitted that a box which had been placed in the plaintiff's boat by defendant had been stolen by someone; and under exasperated feelings, the defendant might have used some strong language, but the jury must be satisfied that he meant to charge the plaintiff with a distinct felony or they could not give even a farthing damages.

No special damages having been proved, the jury returned a verdict for plaintiff, with damages one farthing.

41 14 April 1838

Wolverhampton Public Office

WEDNESDAY APRIL 11 Mr John Maddox of Bilston, farmer and boatman, charged **Geo Wells** with having neglected his service and embezzled £4.

Wells was servant to complainant, and was recently sent with a boat, a voyage which would detain him from home five days. Wells, however, loaded the boat with a quantity of timber belonging to Mr Maddox, which he disposed of at Preston for £4, and did not return home for 12 days. On his return, he replied that Maddox might think himself fortunate that he (Wells) had brought back the horse and boat at all!

Mr Clare observed that there was not sufficient evidence to commit Wells for the embezzlement, but he committed him for neglect of service, for three months.

42 5 May 1838

Manchester Guardian

ONE OF THE "RECREATIONS OF THE PEOPLE" One of the most savage and brutal fights of which we have ever heard took place on Monday morning last in this county, between **William Thornley** of Gorton, boatman, and James Rayner, a bleacher of Harpurhey (*sic*) for 25/- a side. Both savages were to have full liberty to kick each other, and for this express purpose wore strong shoes, or quarter boots, about two inches broad at the toe, where they were bound round with iron. The soles were studded near the toe and heel with nails, having sharp jagged or, as one informant

states, pointed heads. For 28 minutes they kicked with a ferocity which their armed feet prevented from being impotent, even when their physical strength was almost exhausted. According to one informant, they literally made the flesh fly from the legs and bodies of each other at every blow, and it is stated that the last kick inflicted by the human brute who conquered in this savage contest, his shoe was half embedded in his victim.

43 23 June 1838

County Police Intelligence

GRAND JURY ROOM, SHIRE HALL, STAFFORD.

POACHING Richard Blackband, Thomas alias Muzzle Hodson and James Yeomans of this borough, were summoned by Mr Hazledine of Baswich for unlawfully trespassing upon his grounds and taking and destroying the fish found in certain water therein.

Mr Passman appeared in support of the information.

The defendants pleaded a justification, by virtue of an assumed right vested in them as burgesses of Stafford, by a charter granted in the reign of King John. On the 25th March 1837, Hodson and a person named Lewis Spilsbury appeared to answer a summons for unlawfully fishing in the same water, when some doubt being entertained by the magistrates before whom the case was heard whether the allegation was satisfactorily made out in proof, they dismissed it. This seems to have been construed by the defendants as affording proof that the right they claimed and exercised was beyond magisterial jurisdiction, and therefore they have trespassed upon Mr Hazledine with impunity. The case was one of some interest to both parties, and ended in the conviction of the defendants.

Joseph Bartram, a boatman residing at Weston upon Trent, was on a canal bridge near the spot, on the 6th instant. Saw Blackband pull a net out of his pocket. In a short time afterwards, he saw the other defendants strip themselves and take the net into a field belonging to Mr Hazledine, which adjoins the river. Hodson got into the water and Yeomans gave him the net, and they dragged the river. Blackband was on the canal bridge to look out. He (the witness) saw Mr Tavernor's man coming towards them, when Blackband went to the other defendants, and on his information, they came out of the river and threw the net among some nettles, and hid themselves under a hedge. Tavernor's man went away, and they resumed their employment, and Blackband reoccupied his look-out station. They had not been in long the second time before he (the witness) saw Mr Tavernor coming towards them. Blackband shouted to them three times, and afterwards ran to them. Hodson left the water and gave the net to Blackband, who took it away, and they all ran off. Hodson afterwards offered him a bellyfull of drink not to tell.

Mr Tavernor and Richard Middleton, gamekeeper to Earl Talbot, confirmed the last witness, and Mr Hazledine proved his exclusive right to the fishery.

The Magistrates thought it was a case which ought to be visited with some severity. It was a most flagrant outrage upon private rights, and if not checked, no vested privileges would be safe from the lawless aggressions of such offenders. Was it to be endured that persons were to have their lands trespassed upon – their crops destroyed – their property taken by parties, who chose to set up an illegal right, in defiance of the laws? Such proceedings must be put down, and persons taught that such acts are not to be tolerated. They should record such an adjudication as they hoped would have the effect of preventing a repetition of the offence. The defendants were then severally ordered to pay a fine of £4 10s and 9s costs, making the whole the sum of £14 17s; and in default of payment to be imprisoned, each in the House of Correction, and kept to hard labour for the space of two calendar months.

44 25 August 1838

INQUISITIONS BEFORE HENRY SMITH ESQ, CORONER On the 15th at Wednesfield, on **Thomas Gutteridge**, a boatman aged 60 years, who was drowned in the canal. Verdict “Accidental death”.

45 1 September 1838

STONE UNION Whereas the undermentioned persons have absconded and left their families chargeable to the poor rates of certain parishes in this union, viz

ROBERT WILCOX, belonging to the parish of Stone, by trade a boatman, about 40 years of age, 5ft 4in in height, dark brown hair, and long thin visage. Wife dead; one child chargeable.

46 1 December 1838

INQUESTS BEFORE MR HARDING, CORONER On Monday last, an inquest was held at Longport before William Harding Esq on the body of a man named **William Wilday**, a boatman, who was found burned to death by the side of a lime kiln at Longport. A man was standing near the deceased when he was discovered by two men named James Davenport and Joseph Clarke, who were accidentally passing at the time. The man stated that he went up to the lime kiln to light his pipe, when he found the unfortunate deceased quite dead. It was at first suspected that the man had had some hand in his death, but there being no evidence to confirm that suspicion, he was liberated. After hearing all the circumstances adduced, a verdict was returned "that the deceased died from being severely burnt, but by what means, no evidence appeared".

47 15 December 1838

DROWNING AT HANLEY On Sunday evening last, about seven o'clock, a boatman named **Benjamin Hyde**, about 20 years of age, lost his life in the lock at Etruria Wharf, in the following manner. A boat ascending the canal, he was sent forward by his companion to let off the water in the lock to prepare for the boat to pass. He had raised the sluices, and was running in the dark to the other end of the lock, when his foot caught against a stone and he was precipitated into the lock; it being probable, from a mark on the right side of the lower jaw, that his head struck the wall as he fell into the water, so as in all probability to stun him. In a short time, the other man in the boat came up, and not perceiving Hyde, procured a light, when he saw his cap floating in the water. He immediately made an alarm, and the body was got out. But although he had only been from ten to fifteen minutes in the water, the efforts used to restore him were unavailing.

48 29 December 1838

SUSPICION OF MURDER A few days ago, the body of a boy recently drowned was found in the canal at Barton under Needwood who, it has since been ascertained, had been employed in a boat which had passed along the canal a short time previously. Suspicion attaches to a boatman, for whose apprehension a warrant has been issued. Yesterday an inquest was held on the body by Mr Harding (for Mr Seckerson, who is indisposed), but we have not heard the result of the enquiry.

49 16 March 1839

Staffordshire Lent Assizes

STEALING SILK FROM A BOAT **Daniel Lines** and **William Fox** were charged with stealing 4 lbs weight of silk, the property of Thomas Pickford and another.

Mr Lee and Mr Yardley conducted the prosecution. Mr Allen defended the prisoners.

Mr Lee gave an outline of the case previously to calling his witnesses. The facts were as follows :- Six bales of silk were consigned to the care of Messrs Pickford on the 12th of February last, by Messrs Wakeman and Holden, silk brokers of London, for the purpose of being conveyed by canal to Messrs Thompson of Silverdale silk mill, near Newcastle. On the 18th of February, the silk reached the hands of Messrs Thompson who, having weighed it and perceived a deficiency, proceeded to examine the bales more closely, when they found that what is called a "moss" of silk had been extracted from each bale, the weight of which was about 4lbs and the value £4. The charge against the prisoners for stealing the silk rested principally on the evidence of a man named **Horobin**, who assisted in working the boat, and who positively swore that he saw the prisoners commit the theft. The case required a great number of witnesses, it being requisite to adduce evidence, with proof of weight etc, tracing the silk from the East India House in London to its destination in Staffordshire. The following is the statement sworn to by:-

Matthew Horobin, a boatman. On the 12th of February was in London with a boat, of which the prisoner Lines was captain. The other prisoner, Fox, a man named **Humphry**, and witness were employed, under Lines, in working the boat. The boat left the city basin about twelve o'clock on the 12th of February. On coming to a part of the canal called the Eleven Locks, near Birmingham, witness saw the two prisoners undo the bags which contained the bales of silk, and take silk from three or four bales. Both the prisoners were engaged in the work. When they had done, they fastened the bales and bags up again, and threw water upon them with a brush. They were engaged for three or four hours in doing that. They put the silk into a check bag and took it into the cabin. On arriving at Stoke, the two prisoners took the bag away, and did not return till about ten o'clock at night. Witness went with the boat to Preston Brook, and on arriving at Stoke again, he gave information to a policeman of what he had seen. That was on the 21st.

The witness was closely cross-examined by Mr Allen, in order to show that the story was very improbable, and much stress was laid upon the fact of his having gone to Runcorn and returned again to Stoke before giving information. The witness acknowledged that there had been a slight quarrel between him and Lines, about some wages which were owing to him. The character of witness was strictly scrutinised, but nothing unfavourable was elicited.

An important observation was sworn to by the Police Officer who conveyed Lines to prison, and which to a certain extent was corroborative of Horobin's evidence. The officer having said, "This is a bad job", Lines replied, "if he had paid the 18s coming to Horobin, he would not have split".

Mr Allen, on behalf of the prisoners, spoke at some length on the evidence that had been brought forward, and argued that it was most improbable that they could have committed a serious theft in the presence of a man who was to have no interest in the spoil; and it was absurd to think that Lines would quarrel with a man who had it in his power to send him to gaol at any moment.

The jury, after a consultation of about ten minutes, found both the prisoners guilty.

His Lordship then sentenced Daniel Lines to be transported for ten years, and William Fox to be imprisoned for 12 calendar months.

50 30 March 1839

BOATMAN IN CUSTODY ON SUSPICION On Sunday morning as one of Messrs Pickford's boats was on its way from Preston Brook to Shardlow, and whilst stopping at Stoke Wharf, Mr Neville, agent at that place, was induced, from information he had received, to enquire from the Captain of the boat if he had not a spirit pump on board, when he replied, "I will go and see". Mr N followed him into the cabin where, without any remark, he broke against the fireplace a stone bottle containing about half a gallon of some kind of spirits, which instantly ignited, and set the place in a blaze. Mr N was glad to make his escape, which he did, but not before he had received slight injury. The police were soon on the spot, but before their arrival, the individual in question had taken the precaution to break several other stone bottles, supposed to contain spirits, against the side of the boat, and their contents were lost in the canal. There were several casks of whiskey, brandy and wine on board the boat. He was taken on Monday last before R Adderley Esq at Barleston, and was remanded till Thursday, when he was again remanded until Saturday (this day).

51 22 June 1839

CHARGE OF THE MURDER OF A FEMALE BY BOATMEN AT RUGELEY

Considerable excitement has been created at Rugeley and the neighbourhood, in consequence of the dead body of a female being found on Monday morning last, at five o'clock, in the Trent and Mersey Canal at a place called Brindley's Bank near the aqueduct at Colton, supposed to have been murdered by some part of the crew of one of Pickford's boats, by which she was travelling as a passenger from Preston Brook to London, or to have drowned herself, in a moment of desperation. The unfortunate deceased was about thirty years of age, of small stature, active habits, and not of unprepossessing appearance. There is some reason to suppose that she was connected with the stage, but whether she had been to Manchester to fulfil any engagement does not appear. From letters which have been found in her trunks, it seems that she was married to a person named

Collins, residing at No 10 Edgware Road ; and in the course of conversation during the voyage, it was ascertained that she was on her way to join her husband in London when the melancholy occurrence transpired. From the expressive manner in which she was heard to utter the name of her husband several times during the voyage, it might be inferred that she was passionately attached to him. It would seem that her voyage to London by canal conveyance was an alternative to which she had been driven in consequence of the very low state of her funds.

The captain of the boat, **James Owen** ; two boatmen, **George Thomas alias Dobell** and **William Ellis alias Lambert**, and a boy, **William Muston** (these four forming the crew of the boat) were taken into custody on suspicion.

On Tuesday last, an inquest was held on the body at the Talbot Inn, Rugeley, before Robert Fowke Esq, Coroner, and a very respectable jury.

The first witness examined was **John Johnson** of Bellamour Wharf, wharfinger, who stated that about a quarter past five o'clock on Monday morning, as he was going along the side of the canal near the Colton aqueduct, **Thomas Grant**, who was steering a boat along the canal, called to him, and said there was a woman drowned. He went to the place ; and Grant, who had stopped his boat, pushed the body to the towing-path side of the canal, and he drew it out ; she was quite dead, but warm. It was at one of the stops of the canal where the body was found, about two miles and a half from Colwich lock.

Charles Robotham of Fradley Junction, clerk to Messrs Pickford, said that about six o'clock on Monday morning, the prisoner Owen arrived at the Fradley Junction. Whilst they were changing horses, Owen said he had had a passenger put on board at Preston Brook, and he feared she had drowned herself. She had attempted it once, and he had pulled her out. He said she got out at Colwich lock, and left her shoes and bonnet in the cabin. He (witness) asked how he came to permit her to leave the cabin after she had made an attempt on her life. And he replied, he believed she was off her head, as she kept calling out, "Collins, Collins". Owen wished him to take her things out of the boat ; on which Dobell, one of the prisoners, said it was useless taking her things out of the boat, as the woman would follow them presently. He took the things out of the boat, but thinking there were some suspicious circumstances about the case, he followed the boat to Fazeley, and informed Pickford's agent there, who obtained the police, and had the party taken into custody.

George Neville, of Stoke upon Trent, another of Messrs Pickford's clerks, said that on Sunday afternoon, about two o'clock, the boat of which Owen was captain stopped at Stoke Wharf to unload goods and to take other lading on board. He recollected seeing the deceased in the boat reading a book.

Samuel Wood, another clerk of Messrs Pickford's at Stoke, saw the deceased at that place; she appeared very sleepy, and he asked her to go into the office and sit down, which she did, and slept a short time. She had a book without a cover.

Hugh Cordwell, one of the clerks of the Trent and Mersey Canal, residing at Walton near Stone, recollected the boat passing through Stone Lock on Sunday evening about eight o'clock. She was then in the middle of the boat. He gauged the boat, and she was then in the place assigned to passengers. She seemed very much put about, and said she thought the men were getting drunk, and she was afraid they would meddle with her ; and he told her if they did, she must report them when she got to her journey's end. The men were evidently in liquor, and allowed the boat to run with violence against the gates ; and on his remonstrating with them, they were very abusive. After he had gauged the boat, the woman got out and walked on, and Owen and a man named Grocott followed.

Catherine, wife of **James Tansley** of Aston lock, lock-keeper, recollected the woman walking there about half past eight o'clock on Sunday evening. She sat down on the steps, and remained there until the boat came up. Whilst she sat there, she sharpened a pen knife on the steps. One of the men said he wished the woman was in hell flames, for he hated the sight of her. She got in the cabin, and as she was going out of the lock, the captain gave her something to drink.

Mr Saml Barnett of Rugeley, surgeon, had made a post mortem examination of the body of the deceased. There were two slight external bruises, of no consequence ; and he was of opinion that

death was occasioned by suffocation from drowning. The viscera was healthy, but the heart and lungs were gorged with blood. There was about a pint of water in the stomach, without colour or smell. On examination of other parts of the body. Mr Barnett was of opinion that no improper connection had taken place.

John Tansley, son of Catherine Tansley of Aston lock, was examined, but his evidence was very similar to that given by his mother.

At this stage of the inquest, it was thought proper to adjourn the inquest until the following day, and the usual formalities having been gone through, the coroner and jury retired.

WEDNESDAY

At ten o'clock this morning, the jury reassembled at the same place. The first witness called was:- **Ann**, the wife of **James Mills** of Hoo Mill lock, in the parish of Colwich, who stated that about twelve o'clock on Sunday night she heard a cry, and got out of bed and opened the window. She saw a woman on the top of the boat, and asked what was amiss. One of the men answered they had been in the canal. The woman was crying ; and she got off the boat and asked for her shoes, and she stooped down as if putting them on. She got into the boat again, with her legs hanging down by the side of the boat. She could see the woman, who was a short person in a dark gown. The woman never spoke to her. There was a man in the hatches ; and the woman said, "Don't attempt me ; I'll not go down, I'll not go into it". The man on the towing-path said, "Take care of her legs". While the boat was in the lock, she asked the man on the towing-path who the woman was, and he replied a passenger. She then enquired if she had anybody with her, and she understood him to say, "Yes, her husband". The screaming of the woman awoke her. She saw a boat coming in the opposite direction, and waited until it came up, and asked the men if the woman was on the boat, and one of them said, "No, they are all inside, and there is a pretty cackling". She did not know whose boat it was.

Ann, the wife of **Jonathan Sleigh** of Woodend, near Kings Bromley, lock-keeper, described the state of the captain (Owen) when he arrived at the lock. She said the boat came to the Woodend lock about six o'clock on the Monday morning. The captain came to the door, and appeared greatly confused, and said, "I doubt we have had a passenger drowned". She enquired where? He said he did not know ; she had been in the canal once and he had fetched her out and put her in the cabin. His manner attracted her notice, and she observed that he trembled very much. She thought he was not sober. On her making some further enquiries, he said she seemed deranged, and all he could understand her to say was "Collins, Collins".

Thomas Grant, a boatman, was on his way to Shardlow with a boat on Monday morning, when he got to a place called Brindley's Bank about five o'clock in the morning, he saw something floating in the water, which on inspection proved to be the body of a female. She lay about 2 yards from the shore on the side opposite the towing-path. He stopped his boat and drew the body to the side with his shaft, and a man named Johnson, who was near him, drew her out. She was dressed in a blue spotted gown and black stockings, but was without either bonnet or shoes. Her dress was not torn, and her face was towards the bottom of the canal, She appeared quite dead. He saw no footmarks on the bank near the place where the body was found. He could not tell how far a body might float along the canal.

William Harrison, constable of Fazeley, was called to apprehend the prisoners at Fazeley between nine and ten o'clock on Monday morning. He received information from Mr Kirk, an agent in the service of Messrs Pickford at Fazeley, and he waited until the boat came up, when he took them into custody. Before a single question was put to them respecting the case on which they were apprehended, one of the men said, "D---n and b---t the woman, what do I know about her; if she had a mind to drown herself she might". He sent for the police, and the prisoners were handcuffed two and two. They seemed all tipsy except the boy. He was present when a conversation was held between Mr Kirk and the prisoners, and he heard the captain (Owen) say she jumped out of the boat, and he laid hold of her, and he (Harrison) asked him why he did not secure her, on which he said he went back to look for her but could not see anything of her ; she had attempted it before, and he had got her out, on which occasion she said she would drown herself before she got to London.

The other two men were very noisy, and swore they would not have gone with him if they had not been handcuffed. They were then put in the lock up. A short time afterwards, he went into the lock up, and the boy had slipped his handcuffs. He secured him and put him in another room. He asked the captain what kind of person she was, and he said, "She was a little fierce talking woman, and had got a mark down the face". He said he thought she was not right. He (the constable) searched the cabin and found a bonnet, a pair of shoes tied together, a pair of clogs and an apron. The captain said the apron was his wife's, but the other things belonged to the passenger. The bonnet was very much crushed. He said if he was hanged for it he should go to heaven, for he was innocent. He found two boxes and a band box in the middle of the boat which had belonged to the deceased.

At the close of the examination, the constable who had the charge of the younger prisoner said he was desirous of being examined, and he was ordered to be brought in. After being shown the body, he said his name was William Muston, and that he came from Chilvers Coton in Warwickshire. He stated that the deceased got on board at Preston Brook, and was booked for London. She did not ride in that part of the boat set apart for passengers, but was in the cabin most of the way. The boat left Preston Brook at seven o'clock on the Saturday evening ; the crew consisted of the captain, a man they called William and another who was called George, or Dobell, and himself. He and the captain worked together, and the other men did the same. They arrived at Stoke wharf about twelve o'clock the following day, and his evidence between those places only went to show the lengths they respectively worked, and that the woman was sometimes in, and at other times on, the cabin during that part of the passage. When they arrived at Pickford's wharf, Stoke, they unloaded a part of their cargo and took other goods on board ; and whilst they remained there, the three men and the woman went to a public house, where they remained some time. When they left Stoke, a woman, whom he called the ostler's wife, went with them a short distance, and then left the boat. When the boat arrived at the limekiln lock at Stoke, the deceased got out and walked, and did not get on board again until the boat arrived at Aston lock, where she sharpened a penknife which she put in her pocket. (There is a palpable discrepancy in this part of the case, as Mr Cordwell stated that when he gauged the boat at Stone lock, the woman was in it). She had then a small bundle, containing some hard biscuits, in a blue handkerchief. He (the witness) went to bed at Aston lock, and slept until he was awoken by Dobell at Colwich, when he got up. The captain and the woman were in the same bed ; the captain was undressed, but the woman had her clothes on. They both got up, and he (the witness) went out on the towing-path, and the woman came out and went towards the hedge. The captain had to steer, and he (witness) went to the horse to drive, and he never saw the woman again alive. He drove from Colwich lock to Brindley's Bank near the aqueduct, and a little further on he asked where the woman was, and somebody said she was drowned, and we stopped the boat, and the captain and Dobell went back to search for her. It was just breaking daylight. He took the boat to Rugeley wharf, and fastened it up until they came back without having found her. He saw no boots with the woman. He heard no noise, as he was fast asleep. He never heard her make any complaint during the voyage of having been ill treated. He was quite sure she was not in the boat at Stone when it was gauged. A man they called Gayley got on at Stone and rode to Aston lock, where he met a boat and returned. He heard Dobell say to her, when they came out of Aston lock, "I wish you had been in hell before I had seen you". He did not see that she had ever been in the water. He heard Dobell say that she had attempted to drown herself. He saw no clothes drying. He never heard the captain use improper language to her, and never heard her call out "Collins, Collins". The men were sober.

George Thomas alias Dobell, was next examined. He stated that he came from Wombourne, and had been in the employ of Messrs Pickford for several weeks. He was with the boat during its voyage from Preston Brook to Rugeley. He affected much indifference throughout the examination, and gave his answers flippantly. This witness described the voyage to Stone without any substantial variation from the last witness. He confirmed the boy in that part of the testimony which stated that the woman was not in the boat when it was gauged at Stone, and that she walked on to Aston lock, when he and Lambert, his butty, got up to work the boat. She got outside the cabin at Aston lock, because he and Lambert had objected to her being in the cabin, and said they would not have her

there. When they got to Hoo Mill lock, she screamed and made a great noise, and wanted to go into the cabin, and the captain, who was in bed, got up and asked what was the matter, and when they told him, he asked her to go into the cabin, and they went to bed together. He was steering, and by the light of the fire, could see them in bed together. He called the captain and boy at Colwich lock, and they, with the woman, got up ; and he and Lambert went to bed. The woman went into the hatchway while he and Lambert undressed and got into bed, and then went into the cabin again. He was quite sure she never left the boat at Colwich lock. (The boy had distinctly stated in his evidence that she had got out here). She was in the boat when it left the lock, but they could not tell how long, as they soon fell asleep. The captain was then at the helm at the cabin door, and she sat on the side bed. He never saw her alive afterwards. When they had got some distance, he was called up, and the captain said the woman was missing, and asked him to go with him in search. They went together for some distance back, until he (Dobell) said he would go no further. He never told the captain at Colwich lock, nor anywhere else, that he had fetched her out of the water. The deceased had told him that she was a married woman, and she kept calling out Collins, and said her husband lived at London. When she came on board, she said that if anyone "misled" her, she would make herself away. She was in the boat when it left Colwich lock, and she could not have got into the canal without the captain seeing her – without he had shut his eyes. On being asked by a gentleman of the jury how he came by a scratch which appeared on the side of his nose, he gave an impertinent and very unsatisfactory reply.

James Mills, keeper of the Hoo Mill lock near Colwich :- About twelve o'clock on Sunday night, he was awakened by his wife, who was at the window. He heard a cry of distress from a female voice under the window. He got up and looked out, and he saw a woman jump off the cabin of a boat then in the lock ; and she asked for her shoes, and she seemed to stoop as though putting them on. He saw three men, but did not know any one of them ; one of the men was drawing the paddles and the other two were in the stern. His wife asked them who the woman was ; and one of them replied, "It is a passenger". His wife asked if she had nobody belonging her, and the same voice replied, "Yes, she has got a husband". He thought they were fresh and were falling out. When the boat was sinking in the lock, he heard one of the men say, "Take care of her legs". It was quite dark. He knew the boat was Pickford's as he could see the "name plate", which was quite different from other boats. He then got into bed again ; but his wife kept looking after them, and in a few minutes a boat came in a contrary direction, and she asked if the woman was in the boat they had passed, and they said No; they did not see her ; but all the men were in the boat, and the horse was without a driver, and they heard a noise in the cabin. He did not know whose boat it was from which they received that information.

Catherine Tansley, daughter of the lock-keeper of Aston lock, stated that about ten o'clock, one of Pickford's boats passed the lock. Two of the men were quarrelling respecting a passenger who was on board. The man called Dobell said "he would not work the boat any longer if she were allowed to be in the cabin". The Captain said, "Take no notice of it ; there is plenty of room". Dobell said if he would pay him his wages, he would leave the boat if she were to be there, and said 10s were owing to him ; and she heard something about 14s being due to the other man. Dobell went to the door and asked for a light, which they gave him. She saw a woman walking on the towing-path, and she went under the bridge.

William Ellis, alias Lambert, another of the prisoners, was then examined. He said he came from Brinklow, near Rugby, and had been in the employment of Owen for about five weeks. Although he appeared to treat the matter with great lightness, yet he gave his answers with more decency than his associate Dobell. His evidence throughout was, in substance, an echo of Dobell's. He stated that after the boat left Stoke, he was called up to fill Meaford lock ; and while he was sitting on the gates at Stone, the deceased came up, and walked on to Aston lock. He was quite certain she was not in the boat when it was gauged at Stone. He heard no noise at Hoo Mill lock; if there had been any noise he must have heard it. He met no boat after they left Hoo Mill lock. (It was distinctly stated by Mills and his wife that a boat came up almost immediately). He believed the woman did not get off the boat then. He did not hear her ask for her shoes. He never heard the captain say she

had been in the water. He never heard her cry out. He had heard her mention the name of her Collins, and said she would not go to London. She did not leave the boat at Colwich lock. He thought that she and the captain appeared "uncommonly united". He had not the least thought of her making away with herself.

James Owen, captain of the boat, a bluff middle aged man, was next examined. He gave his answers with much caution. He was taken to see the body of the deceased, with a view to its recognition, and afterwards he entered upon an examination very similar in its outline to the account given by the other witnesses until they arrived at Stoke wharf. Dobell, Lambert and the captain all spoke to having porter at a beer shop kept by John Mackey, but they all differed as to the quantity they had. Dobell fixed it at two or three quarts ; Lambert at two quarts ; and the captain at three quarts and a pint ; but all agreed that the deceased had none with them. On arriving at Stone, he said at first that he believed she was in the boat at and through Stone, but on that question being repeated by the coroner, he evidently fenced and said he did not know, as he went to buy some bread. He went to bed at Aston lock, being "muddled", and was awaked at Haywood lock, and found the deceased in the cabin crying. He asked her what was the matter, as he suspected that Dobell had been pulling her about, and she replied, "O captain, O my Collins, I will drown myself before I get to London". He asked her what they had done to her, but she made no reply but kept crying and sobbing. When he spoke to the men, they were very saucy and abusive, and he borrowed 6s of the boy to pay Dobell and discharge him ; when they got to Colwich lock, they changed, and Dobell and Lambert went to bed. He came out to steer at Colwich Church. The boy drove the horse. He did not know where the woman was when he began to steer ; she was in the cabin when he had the words with the men, and she got up and attempted to drown herself, and he pulled her out. That was at Haywood pound. The men saw her, but made no remark. She said she was determined to drown herself before she got to London. Lambert and Dobell were both in liquor, and he durst not say much to them lest they should dash his brains out. She would not stop in the cabin after they had pulled her about, but she got on the top of the cabin ; she got out of the boat at Colwich lock (This was expressly denied by Dobell and Lambert). The men were drunk. They had two hampers of wine for Atherstone, but he could not say whether they were all right. He saw the deceased get out at Colwich lock, and stand on the towing-path. And he never saw her afterwards alive. He supposed she got into the middle of the boat. After they left Middlewich, she was in the hatchway with him, and said if he would assist her on the voyage she would recompense him when they got to London. She began to talk of plays, and asked him if he had ever attended any, and on his saying he had attended three, she asked him if he had ever been at Covent Garden Theatre. He replied no, on which she replied that she belonged to Covent Garden Theatre, and when she got to London she would give him a ticket of admission. She said she was married to her second husband, but that he was not on the stage. She said that he lived in Edgware Road. (One of Messrs Pickford's agents said that some of her letters had been opened, which bore the address "No 10 Edgware Road"). He saw no ring on her finger. When they arrived near Rugeley, he missed her, and he called Dobell up, and they went as far as Brindley's Bank to look for her, but not meeting with her, they returned.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when the examination closed, and there being no other witnesses at hand, the inquest was adjourned until ten o'clock on Monday morning next, to allow time to procure other witnesses, who may throw some light on this lamentable occurrence.

The prisoners were ordered to be kept separately, and not to be allowed to have any communication with each other.

Although the case seems to be surrounded with considerable suspicion, yet it is involved in great mystery.

52 29 June 1839

CHARGE OF THE MURDER OF A FEMALE BY BOATMEN NEAR RUGELEY ADJOURNED INQUEST

On Monday morning at ten o'clock, the Coroner and Jury reassembled at the Talbot Inn, Rugeley,

and resumed the investigation of this melancholy and mysterious affair.

The first witness examined was Robert Collins, the husband of the unfortunate deceased. He stated that he resided at No 10 Edgware Road, London, and was an ostler. He had examined the boxes and their contents, which had belonged to his wife. About three weeks ago, he left Liverpool for London to obtain a situation, and his wife was then employed by a Mrs Grice, of No 3 Cross Hall Street, Liverpool as a sempstress. About the 9th June, he sent her a sovereign to take her to London : her name was Christina, and she was thirty six years of age. He had seen the body, and was certain it was that of his late wife.

Mr Barnett, surgeon, attended, and explained that the newspapers were wrong in attributing to him a positive assertion that the appearance of the body of the deceased satisfied him that there had been no illicit connection : he stated that, from the appearances, he was of opinion that there had been no *recent* connection.

Robert Walker, the younger, of Shardlow in the county of Derby, stated that he was captain of a boat belonging to Messrs Sowersby. About ten o'clock on Sunday night, the 16th instant, he saw a woman on the hauling path near Salt Bridge, a short distance from Sandon lock. He spoke to her, but she gave him no answer. He afterwards met one of Pickford's boats, about four hundred yards from the woman. There were three men with the boat; one on the cabin, one steering, and one in the hold. He did not see anyone with the horse. One of the men asked if he had met their passenger? And he told them she was not far before the boat. The man who spoke to him said they wanted to have intimacy with her ; he should know the man who said so, if he saw him ; and on being shown the men, he pointed out Owen, the captain, as having uttered the words.

George Thomas, alias Dobell, one of the prisoners, was again examined. He stated that at Colwich lock he called up the master, as it was his turn to work. The boy left the cabin first, and went to the horse. The captain and the woman afterwards came out of the cabin, and the captain used abusive language, and charged them with having had intimacy with the woman. Afterwards he and Lambert had some talk about it, and went to sleep. In a short time, they were disturbed by hearing words between the captain and the woman, and he (Dobell) heard the woman say, "I'll jump. I'll jump"; and he heard the captain reply, "You b---r, if you don't, I'll throw you off". When they got to the stop place, he asked the captain if he was not ashamed to turn the woman out? That was halfway between the turn and the stop place. The captain told him he might get out if he liked, and called the lad back to borrow some money to pay him (Dobell). They were wrangling about it till they got close to Rugeley, when he (the captain) said the deceased was lost – she was drowned. The boy was present. The captain and he went back to look for the woman. Lambert was in the cabin and did not go. It was about three o'clock in the morning when they got to Rugeley. At Fradley, he (Dobell) told Robotham there was a passenger missing, and on the way to Fazeley, he (the captain) wanted him and Lambert to swear that the deceased got out at Colwich lock.

William Hatton, alias Moucher, of Manchester, boatman, was next examined. He said he knew Owen. On Monday morning last, he met him and Dobell on the towing-path between the watering place near Rugeley and Brindley's Bank; they asked him if he had seen a woman, and he replied he had not; they then turned back and went after their boat.

William Brookes, a porter at Stoke Wharf, remembered the boat coming there; the deceased asked him if the boat passed through Birmingham, and complained of the improper treatment she had received from the crew. He heard her say to Dobell, "Leave me alone"; and he also heard Dobell use very indecent language to her.

William Kirk, an agent to Messrs Pickford at Fazeley, stated that on Monday morning last, he received information from Robotham that a passenger had been lost from one of their boats in the neighbourhood of Colwich lock; he thought an enquiry ought to be made, and he therefore sent for a constable to await the arrival of the boat, which got into Fazeley about half past ten o'clock in the morning. Lambert was the first man who came on shore, and he asked him for his papers; he (Kirk) told him to follow him into the office and bring his papers ; on which he said, "D—n and b-r the woman, if she has drowned herself, I cannot help it". He (Kirk) told him he was drunk, and gave him in charge. He then asked Owen where his passenger was, and he replied he was afraid she

was drowned ; she had made an attempt, and he had pulled her out ; he thought she was out of her mind. When Dobell came into the office, he began to swear, and wished the woman was in hell flames. The captain and the boy said she had been in the cabin most of the way from Preston Brook, and the other men said she would have ridden in the cabin, but they would not let her. Her bonnet was very much crushed ; her shoes were dry.

Ann, wife of Robert Brookes of Stoke, ostler, rode with the deceased about a mile in the boat ; the woman seemed in trouble, but not at all out of her mind ; she was very sensible ; she was not tipsy, indeed she did not think she had had anything to drink ; she said the men had wished her to go into the cabin, but she had refused, because she did not think it was proper.

Joseph Robinson of Armitage, labourer, knew Owen ; on Monday afternoon, he saw him in a public house, and he asked him about the woman, and he (Owen) said she got out at Colwich lock, and he never saw her afterwards. He was not sent on a message by Owen to Dobell.

Francis Jackson of Drayton, labourer, stated that Owen was handcuffed to him, and whilst he was in his custody, he whispered something to the last witness, and the only part of the conversation that he heard was, that he was to tell Dobell and Lambert, who were in the hole, that they were to say that the woman got out at Colwich lock; on the following morning, he saw the last witness again, and Owen said, "Did you tell the men what I told you?" and he replied, "Yes" ; on which he (Owen) said, "Tell them again and be sure".

William Ellis, alias Lambert, another of the prisoners, said that Owen asked him and Dobell, at Fazeley pound, to say that the woman got out at Colwich lock.

James Owen, captain of the boat, was further examined. He said that about twelve o'clock on Sunday night, when the boat was below Haywood pound, he was awoke by the noise of the woman. He saw the woman in bed, and Thomas upon her. He (Owen) jawed him about her, and he replied that Lambert had had connection with her at the Hoo Mill lock. He (Owen) was fast asleep at Hoo Mill lock, and did not hear any noise. When they came below Colwich lock, Lambert wanted to take the woman into the cabin, but he (Owen) would not let him. Dobell and he (Owen) kept quarrelling about a mile. At Bellamour Crane he (Owen) told the woman to get on the cabin, and go to her compartment, which she did. The last time he saw her alive was in the middle of the boat at Turnover Bridge. He did not get out of the boat until they came to the watering place near Rugeley, when he missed the woman for the first time. When they got to Fazeley pound, he went to the hold and saw Lambert and Dobell with one of the passenger's boxes open. He told them he would not go any farther than Fazeley ; and they said, "Go to hell with you, you are frightened about the woman; tell them she got out at Colwich lock".

There being several other witnesses to examine, the inquest was further adjourned until the following day.

FOURTH DAY

John Barston of Bedworth in the county of Warwick, boatman, said that he met one of Pickford's boats on Sunday night at Haywood. His evidence went to the effect of denying having said to a person named Thomas Neale that when he met the boat, one of the men told him, in a conversation, that they had tied a handkerchief about the woman's mouth to stop her screams, and that when they untied it again, she was dead.

John Aston of Rugeley Wharf, porter, stated that Barston had told him on the previous day that he (Barston) had had a conversation with Neale respecting the woman ; but he (Barston) said, "You do not think that I am such a d---d fool as to mention it".

John Boston, of Rode in the county of Chester, boatman, met Owen's boat at the stop between Brindley's Bank and Rugeley, where Owen and Dobell returned to look for the woman.

James Owen, the captain, was again examined. After he had prevented Lambert from taking the deceased to bed, he (Owen) took her in his arms and put her on top of the cabin. Lambert was in bed, and Thomas (Dobell) was sitting on the side bench. The boy was driving, and he (Owen) was steering. About seven or eight minutes after he had put the woman on the cabin, Thomas said to him, "Come in, d—n your eyes, and pay me". He went into the cabin to his cupboard to look for money to pay him, and Thomas went to the helm. He found he was six shillings short, and put his

head out of the cabin to call the boy. Thomas was then at the helm, but the woman was missing. He heard a noise whilst he was in the cabin, as if a woman had jumped on it. It was impossible for anyone to jump on the cabin if they were in the boat.

The Coroner then went through the whole of the examinations, and made such observations on the case as he deemed necessary, after which the jury consulted for a short time, and returned a verdict of "Wilful murder" against all the persons accused, who were subsequently committed for trial at the approaching assizes, and the several witnesses bound over to prosecute.

Before the Jury left the room, the Foreman (Mr Turner) handed to the Coroner a paper, of which the following is a copy.

Mr Coroner

Now that this long and painful investigation has closed, we, the undersigned jurors, who have attended your inquest on the body of Christina Collins, beg to state that we are not satisfied to separate without first strongly expressing our decided conviction of the great impropriety of the carrying business, both by land and water, being carried out upon the Sunday, in the same manner as on other days.

The evidence that has been before us has brought under our observation much of what appears to be the usual conversation and demeanour of boatmen, and we conceive that the narration will not only excite the abhorrence of all respectable persons, but that it is highly disgraceful to the community at large, so long as that community has not done its utmost to stay the evil.

By this violation of the Sabbath, not only boatmen but great numbers of other persons who are engaged in the conveyance of goods, and also employed as clerks and porters, are entirely prevented from paying attention to religious duties on the day expressly set apart for that purpose, and their children are deprived of those instructions which are afforded to other children in their rank of life.

We beg further to state that we cannot but attribute the great demoralisation that is proved to exist among boatmen principally to these causes, and we think it more than probable that had the unfortunate men who have been the subjects of this investigation been compelled to "Keep holy the Sabbath day", so far as human laws can be available to this end, the late deplorable event might not have occurred.

With these conclusions, Sir, we feel that we should be failing in our duty were we not to remonstrate, as strongly as we can, against the continuance of the present system, and we beg of you, Sir, to make known these sentiments in the proper quarter.

53 6 July 1839

Staffordshire Midsummer Sessions

STEALING EARTHENWARE AT STOKE WHARF **Benjamin Roper** was indicted for stealing six earthenware basins, the property of the Trent and Mersey Navigation proprietors,

Mr Kynnersley conducted the prosecution.

George Turner, watchman at the Canal Company's wharf at Stoke, proved that on the 23rd of May, in the night, he discovered the prisoner amongst the crates; he said he had nowhere else to sleep; witness found that straw had been pulled out from some of the crates, and half a dozen basins had been taken out of one of them. The prisoner offered him 5s to let him go. He afterwards found that he was a boatman, and that his boat was about 100 yards off.

Mr Henry Copson, agent for the Company, having been examined, the prisoner was found guilty and sentenced to be imprisoned two calendar months, one week in solitude.

STEALING A GREATCOAT **John Lockwood**, charged with stealing a great coat, the property of Thomas Day, at Cheddleton.

Mr Meteyard appeared for the prosecution.

Thomas Day, farmer and butcher of Cheddleton. On the 24th April, he went to Leek, and on returning, he slept at Miss Mollatt's door, the Red Lion, Cheddleton, and left his horse and cart at the door; he afterwards received information that his coat was gone. It was about nine o'clock at night when he received information that it was gone. The next day he saw the coat in the

possession of George Wilshaw.

George Wilshaw : On the night in question, he went to a boat on the canal; he found the prisoner on the bed in the cabin; there was a great coat under the bed; he took it and gave it to the prosecutor Day, in the presence of the constable Mills.

Edward Birch, servant to Miss Mollatt, recollected the prosecutor coming to the Red Lion on the 24th April, between nine and ten o'clock. When Mr Day came into the house, the prisoner was there, and he left the house before Mr Day. He (the witness) went out and missed the great coat, which he had previously put on the horse's back. When he missed the coat, the prisoner was gone.

The coat was produced and identified.

Guilty. To be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for six calendar months.

54 27 July 1839

Crown Court

ROBBERY BY A CLERK William Robotham, a young man of respectable appearance, was indicted for stealing twelve pairs of stockings, the property of **James Shipton**, wharfinger, at Wolverhampton.

Mr Corbett appeared for the prosecution and Mr John Leigh for the prisoner.

John Fincham stated that he was in the employ of Messrs Brettell and Co, wholesale hosiers of Wood Street, Cheapside, and that in June last they received an order for eighteen parcels of stockings from Messrs Pritchard and Son, of Chester. He gave out the goods and the packer sent them off.

William Davis, packer to Messrs Brettell, said that on the 27th of June, he packed eighteen papers of stockings to be sent to Messrs Pritchard and Son of Chester. He directed the parcel himself, and sent it to Shipton's receiving place, for goods for conveyance by canal and railway.

Richard Law said that he was a boatman employed by Mr Shipton. On the 3rd of July, he came in with a boat from Birmingham to the wharf at Wolverhampton, about four o'clock in the morning. The prisoner was a clerk at the wharf, and he sent to call him up. His (prisoner's) business was to see to the loading and unloading of the boat, and to send them on again. Some parcels were thrown out of the boat. There were two parcels, the biggest for Chester; and the prisoner told witness to give it him up, as he wanted to weigh it. He gave it to him; and the prisoner went with it to the far end of the warehouse. He was gone about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. When he came back, witness asked if he had weighed it. He said, "Yes, it is all right". Witness put the parcel in the boat again, and took it to Chester. It was a brown paper parcel.

Thomas Pritchard stated that he was a draper at Chester, in partnership with his father. That in the latter end of June they sent an order to Messrs Brettell; the packet came to hand about the 4th of July. Witness thought it had been opened, it looked as if it had. It should have contained eighteen parcels of stocking, but it contained only seventeen; it was minus one paper. The invoice ran from No 1 to 18, and the parcels were numbered, but No 10 was missing. He gave information to Messrs Brettell.

John Tomlinson stated that he was a porter employed by Mr Shipton, and that while sweeping the warehouse on the morning of Wednesday the 3rd of July, he found a parcel of white cotton stockings hidden behind an old scale bottom. It was open at the ends, and wrapped in blue and white paper. He replaced it, and gave information. He went to dinner at one o'clock, and returned in about three quarters of an hour. When he returned, Mr William (the prisoner) was there, and then he (the prisoner) went to his dinner. Witness went to look for the parcel; the paper was there, but the stockings were gone. The witness produced the blue and white papers. The outer paper was marked No 10.

James Shipton stated that the prisoner was a confidential servant in his employ; he was invoicing clerk. It was one of his particular duties to attend to the boats that came in at four o'clock in the morning. The prisoner lived at no great distance at Horseley Fields. In consequence of what had happened, he went with Castle, the superintendent of the police, to the prisoner's house, between ten and twelve o'clock on the Thursday afterwards. The prisoner was in bed, but came down and let them in. They told him they had come to look for some cotton stockings. He was not dressed, and

went upstairs to fetch a candle, Whilst he was upstairs, witness heard a sort of scuffle, and witness heard the prisoner mention "stockings". Prisoner's wife was upstairs. When he came down the candle was lit, and they searched the house but found nothing. In the yard, however, and under a window in the prisoner's house, which was open, they found three pair and a half of cotton stockings, and in an adjoining yard, over a wall, seven pair and a half.

Richard Castle, superintendent of the Wolverhampton police, found the stockings as described by Mr Shipton.

Mr Leigh, in his address to the Jury, contended that the case amounted to no more than one of strong suspicion against the prisoner.

Two witnesses were called, who spoke to the good character of the prisoner.

The Jury found him guilty.

The learned Judge, after an address expressing his regret at seeing a person in the prisoner's position in life in his present situation, said it was impossible to come to any other conclusion than the Jury had done, and sentenced the prisoner to be imprisoned twelve months, and kept to hard labour.

55 27 July 1839

ALLEGED VIOLATION AND MURDER OF A FEMALE ON THE CANAL BY BOATMEN

James Owen, George Thomas alias Dobell, and Wm Ellis alias Lambert, were then placed at the bar. There were four indictments against them, The first charged them with the wilful murder of Christina Collins, by throwing her into the canal. [By the Coroner's inquisition, they were likewise charged with the same murder]. By the second indictment, they were charged with a rape upon the same Christina Collins; different counts charging the different prisoners with being principals in the commission of the offence, and the others as aiders and abettors. Another indictment charged them with common assault. And a fourth, with stealing certain articles, the property of the husband of the unfortunate woman.

The prisoners pleaded Not Guilty to all the charges. **Musson**, the boy, who was originally charged with them, was not named in the indictment, and it was understood that he would appear as a witness for the Crown.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow and Mr F V Lee appeared for the prosecution. Mr Godson appeared as counsel for Owen; Mr Yardley for Thomas; and Mr Beadon for Ellis.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow said he should first proceed on the charge of rape, and it was his intention not to offer any evidence against Owen, whom he was willing to admit as a witness for the Crown.

Mr Godson said this was done without Owen's consent.

Mr Yardley and Mr Beadon contended that this was a most extraordinary proceeding, and very unfair towards the prisoners whom they defended; for this would be evidence for which they were altogether unprepared.

Mr Godson understood that this course was being taken by means of a threat held out to Owen.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow thought that Mr Godson's observation was uncalled for and improper. If the counsel for the prosecution, in their discretion, considered it would further the ends of justice to admit an accused party as a witness, they had the perfect right to do so.

After some further discussion on this point amongst the learned counsel,

Mr Justice Williams said he did not feel much difficulty on this point ; but as the case was one of extreme importance, he would take the opinion of his learned brother, Mr Baron Alderson, on the subject. His Lordship then left the court, and on his return stated that, as he before observed, there was very little doubt as to the proper course to be taken in this case. He had known instances, not once, but perhaps one hundred times, wherein the Court had allowed counsel for prosecutions to withhold evidence against one of the accused parties that they might give evidence on behalf of the Crown. He looked upon it to be a matter of course, and he should leave it to the discretion of the learned counsel to do that which he thought would best promote the interests of public justice in this case.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow then proceeded to open the case, which he described as one of the highest importance involving, as it did, the life or death of the prisoners. For the purpose of assisting the

Jury in a proper understanding of the case, he would give a brief general outline of the facts which would be stated in evidence. The unfortunate woman, Christina Collins, into the particulars of whose treatment and death they had to inquire, was a married woman. She had been obtaining her own livelihood for some time as a sempstress in Liverpool. Her husband had left her in Liverpool in order to obtain employment in London ; and she, a short time before this unhappy occurrence, started from Liverpool in order to go to London to join her husband. In the early part of June, her husband wrote a letter to her, enclosing a sovereign, and desiring her to come. On Saturday morning, the 15th of June, having packed up her clothes &c, she took her place in one of Pickford and Company's boats, leaving Liverpool that morning in a barge for Preston Brook. At that place she entered, as a passenger, the canal boat of which James Owen was the captain, and on board of which the two other prisoners, Thomas and Ellis, were employed to assist in navigating her. A boy of the name of Musson was likewise employed as a hand in the management of the boat. It would be shown by the evidence that on the voyage, the deceased appeared on several occasions to apprehend some violence from these men ; and at one place she was observed to sharpen a knife ; for which act, it was not for him (Mr Sergeant Ludlow) to offer a reason ; though he believed that one of the prisoners had a scar on his face and, extraordinarily enough, that knife was found in the interior of one of the deceased's trunks, which must have been uncorded and opened, or it would not have found its way thither. He should be able to prove not only apprehension and alarm on the part of the deceased, but also coarse and violent, and threatening language on the part of the prisoners ; and at one particular place, he should show that persons were alarmed by screams proceeding from the woman. The boat ought to have arrived at Fazeley at four o'clock on the Monday morning ; but it was two hours behind its time, and the unfortunate woman was missing. Her body was found in the canal, at a place called Brindley's Bank, near Rugeley ; and there was no doubt about the identity of the body. Whether she was thrown into the canal, or whether she threw herself in, were not questions for their present consideration ; but whether the crime charged upon the prisoners in this indictment had been perpetrated by them. There would be many facts, comparatively trifling taken separately, which together formed a strong body of evidence against them. It would be shown that she was a woman of very decent and tidy appearance, remarkable for attention to her clothes. When her body was found, her clothes were considerably rent and torn, and her drawers particularly were torn in such a way as to show that she had been used with great violence. He had already stated that he should endeavour to obtain the truth from one of the prisoners (Owen) by admitting him as a witness. Those who conducted this prosecution had no other object in adopting that course than to satisfy public justice ; and perhaps he might say that this prosecution would stand or fall in some degree by the statement which Owen might give.

Soon after Mr Sergeant Ludlow had concluded his opening, Owen, on being asked, said "he would not give evidence".

Mr Sergeant Ludlow observed that he was not surprised to hear him say so, as he had observed the attorney for the prisoners more than once in communication with him.

The witnesses were then called.

Robert Collins, husband to Christina Collins, the deceased, entered the witness box in a state of great excitement and distress. He wept aloud, and seemed as if he could scarcely bear the sight of the prisoners at the bar. He said that he was living in London on the 15th of June, having left his wife in Liverpool at the latter end of April, when he went to London to seek for work. He wrote for his wife to come up to London ; and sent her a sovereign, all the money he had, in order to enable her to accomplish the journey. In consequence of some information, he came into Staffordshire, and saw his wife's dead body at Rugeley at the time of her inquest. He could speak positively to the body. For although it was dreadfully disfigured (here the poor fellow could not at all restrain his feelings), yet he knew it by a mark on the ear. His wife's name was Christina Collins.

Elizabeth Grice stated that the wife of the last witness, Christina Collins, came to lodge with her at her house in Liverpool in May last. She was a dressmaker. She recollected her leaving for London on the 15th of June. She had not very good clothes ; but they were always neat and in a good state of repair. She had a dark coloured gown on ; a fawn coloured handkerchief over her neck; and a

figured blue silk bonnet, with a light ribbon. She left about ten o'clock in the morning. She had not observed that anything was the matter with her elbows. She had never heard her complain of anything of the kind. She wore long sleeves. She was a very delicate kind of person.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : Witness never heard her say anything about being on the stage, or being connected with Covent Garden Theatre.

William Brookes, a porter in the employ of Messrs Pickford at Stoke upon Trent, said that he was examined before the coroner. On Sunday the 16th of June, the three prisoners came to Stoke upon Trent, about twelve o'clock in the day, with one of Pickford's boats, containing a cargo of goods, part for London and part for Stoke. Owen was the captain of the boat, the two others were hands employed in navigating her. He also saw a female passenger, who had come by the same boat. Whilst the boat remained at Stoke to be unloaded, that female made a complaint to witness. Thomas, or Dobell, had said something to the woman, and witness heard her say, "Leave me alone ; I'll not have anything to do with you". After the woman made her complaint, Dobell used some disgraceful language. (The witness repeated the language, which was very obscene, and showed his intention to accomplish his desires upon her). When the boat started about four o'clock, the same woman passenger left in it. She had a dark coloured dress on.

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : He should think the woman was in the presence of the prisoners about the bank and wharf about three hours, whilst the boat remained at Stoke. He thought Dobell had had some drink. The prisoners went away from the wharf an hour at dinner time.

Ann Brookes, wife of the last witness, proved that she went about 3 1/2 miles in the boat from Stoke. A female passenger was on board, who seemed poorly. Witness was not much in her company, and she did not make any particular complaint to her.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : There was a place in the middle of the boat for passengers, called "the hole".

Hugh Cordwell, check clerk to the Trent and Mersey Canal Company at Stone, proved that the boat was at Stone at eight o'clock on Sunday evening the 16th of June last ; the three prisoners were with the boat. He saw a female in the boat ; she made a complaint to him, and he thought Dobell was near enough to hear it, She said "she was afraid the men were getting drunk and would meddle with her". Witness replied, "in case they did, when she got to her journey's end she must report them to their masters". The boat left Stone at eleven minutes past eight o'clock.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : They were not sober. Owen had walked through the town, and he came up with a man named Grocott. He asked the woman why she did not follow him through the town? She made no reply.

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : Grocott left Stone in the boat with them.

John Tansley, assistant clerk to the Trent and Mersey Canal at Aston lock, about a mile and a half from Stone, said that he saw the dead body of a female at the coroner's inquest at Rugeley : he had seen the same woman alive at half past eight o'clock on Sunday evening the 16th of June last ; she sat on the door of the lock house ; she was sharpening a knife. The three prisoners had charge of the boat. One of the hands, he did not know which, "cursed her eyes and wished she was in hell flames, for he hated the sight of her". He saw her get on the boat. Owen told her to get on the cabin, and she did so.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : He did not know whether the woman drank anything at Aston. He saw her put her cup to her mouth, but could not tell whether she drank.

By the Judge : Owen gave her the cup.

Thomas Blore said he was a boatman in the employ of Pickford and Company ; he passed along the canal with a boat on Sunday evening the 16th of June ; and between Burston and Sandon, he passed Owen's boat, between eight and nine o'clock. Owen and Dobell stood in the hatches. There were two women on board ; one sat on the cabin, and the other on the boat. As the boats passed, witness said to Owen, "How goes it?" and asked him to have a glass of ale. Instead of Owen, Dobell jumped on the boat for the ale. Owen pointed to the woman on the cabin and said something. (Witness gave the words of Owen, and his own reply, which we forbear to repeat.) Dobell said "He would ---- her that night or he would ---- her". (A sensation of horror throughout

the court). Owen was quite intoxicated, and Dobell was rather so. Witness did not see anything of Ellis.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson ; Witness was quite sober at the time, They were having some ale on their boat. They had taken a gallon on board at Haywood, it being the wakes, and there were six of them to drink it.

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : Dobell was not drunk.

Robert Walker, boatman of Shardlow, said that on Sunday night, the 16th of June, he was steering a boat about half a mile before Sandon lock about ten o'clock at night. He met a boat, and about 4 or 500 yards before the boat, he had seen a woman walking on the towing path. He could not swear to anyone with the boat to be confident. There was an enquiry made of him by some person on board that boat.

Mr Godson, Mr Yardley and Mr Beadon objected to this line of examination. There was no proof that this was the boat on board of which the prisoners were. Considerable discussion took place, and

Mr Justice Williams thought the counsel for the prosecution ought to carry the point of the identification of the boat farther.

In the examination of several succeeding witnesses, therefore, this point was particularly referred to ; and his Lordship at length said that the hour and the place corresponded so exactly that he should admit the further evidence of Robert Walker. Hugh Cordwell, the check clerk at the lock at Stone, being recalled, proved that the next boat of Pickford's which left Stone after Owen's, left at half past eleven at night, and he saw no female passenger on board.

Robert Walker then said someone on board the boat in question asked him "where he met that female passenger of theirs". Witness replied, "Not far before". "Because, " (the man said) "we want to ---- her".

Cross-examined : Did not know who made that enquiry.

Catherine Tansley, whose father keeps the lock at Sandon, proved that the boat to which the three prisoners belonged passed through their lock that night, about ten minutes to ten. She saw a woman at the side, who got into the boat before it left the lock.

James Mills, the keeper of the Hoo Mill Lock, proved that he and his wife were alarmed by a noise about 12 o'clock a night. Hoo Mill Lock is about five miles from Sandon lock. It was a cry of distress which they heard. Witness got up to the window. He saw three men by the lock side and a woman on the cabin of a boat which was in the lock. It was one of Pickford's ; he could tell by the name plate. The woman got off the boat, and asked for her shoes. One of the men got on board the boat. While the woman was on the cabin, her legs hung by the side, The woman said, "I'll not go in; don't attempt me". The man that stood aside the cabin said, "Mind her legs". He recollected his wife making enquiry at the window, and asking what woman they had got on board? One of the men said, "A passenger".

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : His wife asked if she had anyone belonging to her on board? The man replied, "Her husband".

Ann Mills, wife of the last witness, said she was part asleep and part awake on the night in question, when she heard what she at first thought was the cry of a child. It was a cry of distress, as if somebody was abusing a child. She got up to the window, and saw a boat of Pickford's in the lock ; it was going towards London. There was a woman sitting on the cabin. She was crying, She heard her crying. She saw three men about the boat. She asked the men what was amiss? One of the men said, "She's been in the cut". She got off the cabin, and cried out for her shoes. She appeared to have a dark gown on. There was a man in the hatches, where they stand to steer, She could not see whether the woman had her cap or her shoes on. Then she got on the outside of the cabin, with her legs hanging down. She said, "Don't tempt me ; I'll not go down ; I'll not go near you". A man on the side said, "Mind her legs". Witness called a man who was on the lock side to her, and asked him what woman they had got on board? He answered "A passenger". Witness asked him if there was anybody with her, and he said, "Her husband". Another boat came into the lock the other way as soon as Pickford's boat left.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : Pickfords have a great many boats on the canal. When the man said, "Mind her legs", she supposed he meant, lest they should be hurt by the boat going down in the lock.

Joseph Littlemore, a boatman in the employ of Messrs Worthington. He was going through the Hoo Mill Lock about twelve o'clock on the night in question, and met one of Pickford's boats just coming out. Two men got upon the boat below the lock. An enquiry was made by a female from Mills's house window.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : He should think Pickfords had one hundred boats on the canal. The boats occasionally pass each other. The average speed of travelling is about three miles an hour; sometimes it is less ; sometimes it is four miles.

James Wilday, captain of one of Bache and Co's boats, was going towards London on the night in question. Their boat passed the Hoo Mill Lock about twelve o'clock. He knew Owen, but did not see anything of him until about three o'clock in the morning, when they came to the bridge below Handsacre. Owen's was the first of Pickford's boats that he had overtaken that morning. He saw Owen jump off and go into the cabin. The cabin doors were closed immediately as he went in. Musson was steering the boat. Witness went on his way to London.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson ; He should think Handsacre was nine miles from the Hoo Mill Lock. They had passed by Rugeley.

William Hatton was driving the boat of which the last witness was captain on the morning in question. He drove from Colwich lock to Armitage Tunnel. They overtook Owen's boat at Rugeley wharf, between one and two o'clock in the morning. That is five or six miles from the Hoo Mill Lock. He met Owen on the towing-path ; Dobell was with him. Dobell had no jacket on nor waistcoat. One of them asked witness "if he had seen a woman" ; he said he had not. They asked him again if he had seen one anywhere ; he said no. They asked him a third time if he had seen one between there and the Turnover Bridge ; he said he had not seen one anywhere. That place was four or five hundred yards from Brindley's Bank. Witness's boat had passed Brindley's Bank. After they had made those enquiries, they went on after their own boat.

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : Their boat was not in sight when they made those enquiries ; they were coming away from it, but returned on his stating that he had seen nothing of the woman.

William Musson, the boy, who was originally charged with the other prisoners, was next placed in the witness box. He stated that he was on one of Pickford's boats on the 15th June, of which Owen was the captain. Dobell and Ellis were two men who assisted in working her. They four were the crew of the boat. They took a passenger from Preston Brook. Witness was there when the woman came on board. He was before the coroner, and saw the body of a woman. She was the same woman that they took on board at Preston Brook. She had two bundles with her, two boxes and a roll. The boxes were corded with light coloured cord. Witness saw the woman sharpening a penknife at Aston lock. When witness got up out of bed at half past one, he left Owen and the woman in the cabin, about a mile from Colwich lock. That is nearer Rugeley than Hoo Mill lock. When witness went to bed, nobody was in the cabin but himself. The woman was at the top of the cabin; Dobell was steering ; and the other two were at the top of the cabin. Witness woke about half a mile above Colwich lock. He got up and dressed himself and went to work. He was not awoke by anything at Hoo Mill lock. Witness missed the woman between three and four o'clock in the morning. He asked Owen where the woman was? He said, "he was afeared she was drowned". Witness drove from Colwich lock to Brindley's Bank. He missed the woman at Brindley's Bank. Ellis was then on the bed asleep ; Owen was steering ; and Dobell stood on the footboard. At Armitage Tunnel, he saw Owen in the "hole", and he saw the woman's big black box open. He knew Wilday. He passed them that morning, and he spoke to witness. Witness shut the cabin doors at that time by the captain's orders. That was near Handsacre, five or six miles from Colwich lock. Ellis and Dobell were in the cabin when the door was shut. They stopped at Rugeley wharf about half an hour. Witness was apprehended at Fazeley. When Ellis got up just before Fradley, Owen told him "he feared the woman was drowned". He had not heard Dobell say anything to Ellis since they had been in gaol, about this woman. He had never heard the woman call out the name of

“Collins”. At Aston lock, Dobell said, “He wished he had never seen her ; he hated the sight of her”.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : Witness drove from Colwich lock to Brindley's Bank. It was about one o'clock when he began to drive ; he last saw the woman alive at Colwich lock in the cabin. It was the Captain's turn to steer, and the turn of the other two men to go to bed. The place for the passengers is in the middle of the boat. A person at the steerage could not see a passenger in the “hole”. There were blankets and counterpanes for the use of the woman; he saw her in the “hole” at Stoke ; he frequently saw the woman in the cabin ; he saw her lying down in the cabin at Middlewich ; she had got her shoes, her bonnet and shawl off. The captain borrowed six shillings to pay Dobell his wages, they having had a few words.

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : Dobell said he wished “he had never seen the woman”. Owen wanted to admit the woman into the cabin, and the others objected to it. That was the occasion when Dobell made use of the words.

Cross-examined by Mr Beadon : Ellis was asleep at Brindley's Bank ; and when he awoke at Fradley, he would not believe that the woman was drowned; he went into the “hole” to look for her. John Bladon was in the employ of the Trent and Mersey Navigation Company. His station was at Rugeley ; it was so on the 17th June last. It was the duty of a captain who might lose a passenger or goods to report the loss at the next station he came to. There is a way bill with each boat ; and if anything is short or wrong, it is usual to make a memorandum on that way bill. When Owen's boat passed the wharf on Monday morning the 17th of June, no notice was given to him of any loss.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : He was the person to whom Owen had told something. He had been to the gaol to see Owen.

Re-examined by Mr Sergeant Ludlow : He took an account from Musson of what he had to say on the melancholy subject. Owen had said something that morning in his presence ; he had said he was willing to give evidence.

Charles Robotham was clerk to Pickford and Co at Fradley Junction. On the 17th June it was near six o'clock in the morning before Owen's boat came up. It ought to have been there at four o'clock. Owen came to witness and told him he had had a passenger at Preston Brook, and he believed she was drowned. Witness asked him Why? He said “he believed she was off her head ; and she attempted to do it once, and he had pulled her out”. Witness told him “if he thought she had been off her head, he ought to have taken better care of her, and kept her in the boat”. Witness asked him where he saw her last? He said “at Colwich lock”. He said she had left her bonnet and shoes in the cabin. Witness asked him “what brought her in the cabin?” He said “she had been in the cabin the greatest part of the way”. He then wished witness to take her luggage out of the boat. Witness said if he knew she was drowned, he would. In consequence of what the boy said, witness went to Fazeley to see Mr Kirk on the subject. They got the constables, and had them taken up. Between seven and eight o'clock the same evening, witness saw Dobell and Ellis, and he asked them where they saw the woman last. He believed they said at Brindley's Bank.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : Owen said he had been back looking for the woman. At Fazeley, he burst out crying and said, “I am innocent”.

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : Dobell and Ellis said they objected to having the woman in the cabin.

William Kirk, agent to Messrs Pickford at Fazeley, said that in consequence of information received from the last witness, he took an opportunity of seeing the prisoners. He saw Ellis first. He went out of the office to tell him to come in, he wanted to speak to him. Witness did not say anything about the woman. Ellis began to curse and swear, and said, “D—n and ---- the woman, if she is drowned, I cannot help it”. Witness afterwards saw Owen. He said, “Owen, you have had a female passenger from Preston Brook to London ; what has become of her?” He replied, “It is a very bad job ; I'm afraid she is drowned”. He asked him where her luggage was? And he said “in the boat”, and it was given up at Fazeley. Her bonnet, a pair of shoes, and clogs were brought out of the cabin. The bonnet appeared as if it had been pulled off a person's head by force. The strings were not untied, and the crown was forced in. Dobell came into the office ; he swore, and said “he hoped

the bloody w---e was in hell". Witness gave them into custody.

William Harrison, constable of Fazeley, recollected being sent for by Mr Kirk on the morning of the 17th ult. He took Ellis in charge. He began "to d---n and b---t the woman" and said, "What do I know about the woman ; if she had a mind to drown herself, she might". He was drunk. He asked the captain what kind of a person she was? He said she was " a little, fierce talking woman – a nice little woman", and that she had a mark on her forehead. Owen was in his custody at Rugeley, and he said "the woman wanted very little drowning". He said at the same time that Dobell "raped the woman, and murdered her".

Cross-examined by Mr Yardley : Owen said that repeatedly. He could not tell which part of the day it was. It was up in a room. He did not recollect that anyone was present except himself. He mentioned it very soon after. He did not know when he mentioned it, but it was to a brother officer.

Cross-examined by Mr Beadon : Boatmen swear a great deal, and make use of very coarse language.

[Harrison produced the bonnet and shoes of the deceased.]

Francis Jackson said he had the charge of Owen on the 17th June. He was handcuffed to him on the evening of that day. He saw a person of the name of Robinson. Owen said to Robinson, "You go and tell the prisoners in the hole to say that we left the woman at Colwich lock". Witness saw Robinson again in the morning. Owen asked him whether he had told them. Robinson said he had. Owen said, "Go and tell them again".

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : Witness did not know whether this was said in a whisper, but he heard it.

Harry Sketchley, a labourer of Rugeley, said that on the 22nd June, Dobell was handcuffed to him in an upper room at the Swan. He remembered standing at the window, when some noise was made by people in the street. Someone said, "The captain is coming out against Dobell". Dobell slept with witness that night. He asked witness whether the captain had come out with anything. Witness replied, "No". Dobell said "he had nothing to come out with ; that the captain had murdered the woman". He said "He (Dobell) and Ellis got into the cabin to lie down on this side Colwich lock; that Owen was steering and the boy was driving. He was awoke with a cry of, "Oh my Collins! I will jump. Give me my shoes." Owen said, "You bloody old cow, if you don't jump, I'll send you off". Dobell continued in witness's custody till the Monday following. On the Monday following, Dobell said, "The captain was a bloody rogue, for letting the boy take liberties with the woman".

John Wood, constable of Rugeley, said he was present at the inquest, and that two boxes were delivered to him. He searched the contents of one of the boxes and found a pen knife in it. The box appeared to have been broken open. [The pen knife was produced]

Thomas Brandt, a boatman, said that he was on the canal near Brindley's Bank a little after five o'clock in the morning of the 17th June. Sixty or seventy yards nearer to Rugeley than Brindley's Bank, he saw something in the water. He saw a gown. It was not on the towing path side, but on the other side. He stopped his boat, and with a boat hook towed it over to the towing-path. It was the body of a female. It had no bonnet nor shoes on. She had a cap on her head, and a dark gown on. Before he disturbed the body, the head was lying in the direction of Preston Brook. She was lying on her face, which was quite black. He did not think it possible for a woman to jump from a boat in the middle of the canal to the place where the body was found.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : The canal there might be wide enough for four boats to pass. A boat is about six feet wide. If a boat was passing along the middle of the canal, he thought a young man might jump to the place where the body was found, but not a female.

John Johnson of Bellamour wharf, said that he remembered the last witness calling his attention to the body of the woman in the canal on the 17th June. The water was about nine inches deep where the body was found, and it went gradually deeper into the middle from that place. Witness took the body out of the canal.

Hannah Phillips, of Rugeley, said that she was employed with the other two women to take the clothes off the body of the woman which was found in the canal ; her left sleeve was ripped out of

the gathers, and also at the back ; her cuff on one hand was also ripped ; a small chintz muslin handkerchief was also ripped on each shoulder. By ripped she meant torn.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : These rips were not as if a boat hook had done them.

Grant and Johnson were recalled, and they stated that they did not tear any of the clothes of the deceased with the boat hook, or in any other way, when they got her out of the water.

Elizabeth Matthews said she was engaged to assist in taking off the clothes of the deceased ; she particularly noticed the state of her drawers ; they were very much torn. (The drawers were produced in court, and in front they were torn from side to side).

Mr Lee said he must now trouble his Lordship for the original depositions, taken before the coroner. His Lordship handed them over to Mr Lee.

Mr Lee said he would first examine Mr Fowke, the coroner.

Robert Fowke Esq was then examined. He stated that he was an attorney, living at Stafford, and one of the coroners of the county. He held an inquest on the body of Christina Colins at Rugeley. He remembered the three prisoners making certain statements ; these statements were reduced to writing, and read over to the prisoners, who signed them ; Owen with his hand, and the others with their crosses ; they had been previously sworn.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : The three men were in custody at the time. They were not handcuffed ; they had been handcuffed, but they were not handcuffed whilst being examined.

Re examined by Mr Lee : The prisoners expressed their desire to be examined.

Mr Godson contended that the practice was to receive any voluntary statements which accused persons might choose to give. It might, indeed, happen that parties might be examined upon oath, who might afterwards turn out to be the perpetrators of the crime ; in which case there was some excuse for having them examined on oath ; but in the present instance, the men were in close custody, and yet were examined upon oath. He contended that their depositions taken under such circumstances were not legal evidence, and could not be read.

Mr Justice Williams said his own opinion was that they could be read, and he would allow them to be read ; but he would certainly reserve the point for the opinion of judges.

It will be remembered that at the inquest, the prisoners were examined several different times.

Mr Bellamy jun proceeded to read their depositions as follows :-

George Thomas alias Dobell of Wombourne, boatman, sworn. I have seen the body ; it is that of the woman who was passenger in our boat. James Owen, Wm Lambert, the boy and myself were the persons who worked the boat. Lambert and myself worked together, and the master and the boy worked together. I steered and Lambert drove the horse to the second bridge this side Barton Tunnel. The captain, the passenger and the boy were in the cabin. I legged through Barton Tunnel for the master, for which he paid me sixpence. The boy legged with me. Lambert drove and the captain steered. I steered to Change Bridge. The captain then took my place and I went to bed. It was about ten o'clock. The woman was in the cabin ; she went out while we undressed, but returned in a short time and lay down on the side bench. I was in bed about four hours. When I awoke, the deceased was sitting in the cabin. I drove to Wollert Pound, I then got on the boat and steered to the Mill Pound, and then drove to Tunstall Bridge. I then went on the boat ; the woman was sitting in the cabin ; she remained there till we came near Stoke, when she got out and walked about three quarters of a mile. She got on the boat again at the bottom lock at Stoke. I filled the locks at Stoke. The woman went into the warehouse while we unloaded the boat, and she went with us to a public house kept by John Machie. We took two or three quarts of porter. The woman did not drink anything. I got into the boat at Stoke and went to sleep. I don't know whether the woman got in or not. When the boat arrived at Stone she was sitting on it. She got off at Stone and walked to Aston lock. She was on the lock side when we got there. The lad was driving and he filled the lock. The deceased wanted to get into the cabin at Aston, but Lambert and I would not let her, and she sat on the top. Gailey left us at Aston lock. The deceased rode on the boat down the Western Pound, and I sat on the boat. I should have been driving, but the horse went of himself. The captain and the boy were then in the cabin in bed ; Lambert was steering. When we got to the Hoo Mill Lock, the woman wanted to get into the cabin, but I would not let her, and she screamed out. The captain

looked out and ordered her into the cabin ; she went into the cabin. About twenty minutes afterwards, I looked into the cabin and saw her in bed with the captain; both the captain and the woman were dressed ; the boy was undressed. The woman remained in the cabin with the captain from the Hoo Mill Lock till we arrived at Colwich lock. The captain then got up to steer and the boy to drive. Lambert and I went into the cabin and went to bed. The woman was then sitting in the cabin. We lay down with our clothes on and went to sleep. The master called me somewhere betwixt Rugeley and the Armitage Tunnel, and told me the woman was missing, and I went with him to look for her. We went to betwixt the watering place and the stop place at Sandhole Turn, when I told Owen I would go no further, and we both turned back. When we were at Hoo Mill Lock, I think the lock-keeper's wife called to us. I was fresh. I never told anyone the deceased had attempted to drown herself. She often shouted out, "Collins, Collins". When she came on board, she said, "If anyone mislsted(*sic*) her she would make herself away". I think the deceased could not have got into the water without the steerer seeing her. If she had gone into the boat and had straw like other passengers, ten to one this would not have happened. We passed several boats, but I don't know whose they were.

William Ellis (otherwise called William Lambert) of Brinklow near Coventry, upon his oath saith :- I am a boatman ; James Owen engaged me about five weeks ago in London, I went with him from London to Preston, and was returning from Preston to London again. The deceased took her passage at Preston Brook for London. I never saw the deceased before I saw her at Preston on Saturday evening at seven o'clock. Owen, Dobell, the boy and myself were the only persons with the boat ; we work by turns ; I worked with Dobell and the boy worked with Owen. She got into the cabin at Preston, and remained there till we got to Stoke. She got out at Stoke, where he boat stopped about two hours. The woman went into the office and remained there all the time we were at Stoke. I went to Machie's house at Stoke, and had about two quarts of ale. The woman went along with us. The woman did not drink anything ; she said she went for company. She did not remain in the place where we were, but went into the back place. She left the house with us. It was porter we drank, and not ale. We had not more than two quarts, It was Sunday, between twelve and one o'clock in the day. She got on the stern plank end near the cabin. Dobell and myself went into the cabin ; we both of us lay down and went to sleep. Owen was steering and the boy driving. I was called by Owen when we came to Meaford lock. I got up and left Dobell asleep, whilst I went to fill the lock. The woman was then on the boat. I walked on to Stone before the boat to get the locks ready. The woman passed me at the Stone lock against the office. We remained at Stone whilst the boat was gauged. I am certain the woman was not in the boat when it was gauged. I did not see the woman again till we came to Aston lock. I saw the woman standing on the lock side when we got there ; I was steering the boat. The boy went to fill the lock, and the horse was going by itself. Dobell was on the cabin, and so was the captain. Dobell and the captain both got off at the lock. Thomas Groucott came with us from Stone. He went to about two bridges beyond the lock, and then turned back with another boat. I gave the permit to the clerk at Stone. Groucott got it back before we left. The clerk gauged the boat. The captain did not get off at Aston lock. When we left Aston lock, I drove and Dobell steered. The woman, the captain and the boy went into the cabin. We went in this way to Sandon lock. We did not stop at Sandon lock longer than to go through it. At Sandon lock, Dobell and myself said the woman ought not to be in the cabin. The captain was then in the middle of the boat, and the woman on the cabin. The captain said the woman should go into the cabin, and we said it was not a place for her, and she should not go in. When we went to bed at Change Bridge, the woman was in the cabin; she went out whilst we undressed. Dobell and Owen were disputing about the woman being admitted into the cabin, and Dobell said he would leave, and Owen said he had not got money to pay him. The woman got off the boat at Sandon lock and walked on ; she got on the boat again a mile below. She sat on the cabin until we came to Hoo Mill lock, when she went into the cabin, and remained there till we came above Colwich lock, when Dobell called the captain. The woman went out on the hatches. The captain went to steer and the boy to drive ; and Dobell and I went to bed. The woman was in the hatches when we went to bed. She was there when the boat left Colwich lock. The captain was

driving and the boy steering through the lock. I should think it was an hour or an hour and a half after we were in bed that the captain called Dobell, and said the woman was gone. Dobell got up and went out of the cabin. When we got to Wood end lock, Owen told me that the woman was gone, and that they had been back to look for her, but could see nothing of her. I went forward to fill the locks at Hoo Mill lock, I did not hear any noise ; I drew the paddles ; if there had been any I must have heard it. I steered out of Hoo Mill lock, and Dobell drove. Owen, the woman and the boy were in the cabin. The woman was lying down by Owen. I don't think the woman got off the boat at Hoo Mill lock. I never saw her get off. She might have done so ; but I was filling the lock and drawing the paddles. The deceased said several times during the voyage that she would destroy herself. I never heard of her having been in the water. I never saw her with her clothes wet. If her clothes had been put to dry, I think I must have seen them. When she said she would not go to London, she said, "Oh, my Collins!" I never saw anyone ill treat her. Had I been steering, I think no person could have got out of the boat without my seeing them. I never saw her any more. She seemed very comfortable. She never took anything while she was on board that I know of , except that she had half a pint of rum with her when she came on board at Preston, and she gave some to us. I did not see her drink anything herself. I got in at Colwich lock, and before I went to sleep, I heard Owen call her "a whore and a cow".

James Owen of Brinklow, near Coventry, upon his oath saith :-

I have seen the body of the deceased ; it is that of the woman who was my passenger from Preston to London. I first missed her at Rugeley. She went into the cabin at Preston. She remained there till we got to Middlewich. Wm Lambert drove from Preston to Barton Tunnel and Thomas steered. I was in the cabin from the time we left Preston till we came to Barton Tunnel, and the boy was with me, and the woman was in her apartment in the middle of the boat. I gave Thomas sixpence to "leg" for me through Barton Tunnel, and I told the woman she might come in to the cabin. I was then steering, and Thomas and the boy were legging for me, and Lambert was driving. While they were legging for me through the tunnel, I told the woman she might come into the cabin. She said it was very hard for her to have paid sixteen shillings and to have no straw. She said she was very short of money, and that if I would find her victuals, she would satisfy me when we got to London. It was about nine o'clock. When we had passed the tunnel, Lambert and Thomas went to bed. The woman was in the cabin when they went in, and they made no objection to her being there. The woman came out of the cabin into the hatches whilst the men undressed. She went into the cabin when the men were in bed, and sat down on the side bed. I could see into it from where I stood. She remained there for some time, and then came out of the cabin and talked to me about plays. She said she belonged to Covent Garden Theatre, and that she would give me a ticket to go there when she got to London. She said she was married to a second husband, who was in London. She said he lived in Edgware Road, At Middlewich, Lambert and Thomas got up, and myself and boy went to bed. The woman was in the cabin sitting on the side bed. The boy and myself both undressed in the cabin where the woman was ; and when I was in bed, I told the woman she might come and lie down by me, which she did. The woman lay down with her clothes on. When we got to Harecastle Tunnel, it was my turn to leg, and I gave a man who was about a shilling to leg for me. It was about nine o'clock in the morning. I got up and had my breakfast with the woman. Lambert was lying in the cabin asleep on the side bed. He got in when we came to the tunnel. I steered to Stoke, and the lad drove. The woman was sitting on the cabin. She went there from the tunnel to Stoke lock, where she got off. She followed me down the locks to a public house kept by Thomas Lees. We had half a pint of ale apiece there. When we left the public house, she went and got on the middle of the boat, where she remained until we came to Stoke Wharf. She got out there and went and sat on the steps at the office door. Myself and the men were unloading the boat. At dinner time, between one and two o'clock, the clerks and the porters left the wharf, and we eat some bread and cheese, and then went to a public house kept by John Machie. We had three pots and a pint. The woman would not have any porter, and sat by the back door while we were in the public house. We were in the public house about an hour. We went to the wharf, loaded the boat, got the invoices, and started. The woman rode on the top of the cabin. The ostler's wife and her rode on

the boat from Stoke to the Flume of Feathers at Darleston, where the ostler's wife left. The deceased seemed low and out of spirits when we left Stoke; and soon after we had left, I told her to go to the hole to the woman and have some chat. She went into the hole. She remained in the hole until we got to Stone. At Stone, I left the boat for about a quarter of an hour ; I went to buy some bread. The woman was in the hole when I returned to the boat. I don't know whether the woman was in the boat or not when I returned from buying the bread. I was muddled when I came to Stone, I bought the bread at Samuel Gilbert's. I don't know whether the woman was on the boat when it left Stone or not. I steered to Stone ; the boy was in the hatches with me. Nobody could get out of the hatches without the person who steered knowing it by daylight ; but they might by night. When I came back with the bread I put the bread on the cabin. I don't know whether the woman was in the boat or not when the bread was put on the boat. I don't recollect seeing the woman after I had bought the bread until I came to Aston lock. She was then on the cabin. I don't know whether I walked or rode from Stone to Aston. I went to bed at the pound below Aston lock. When I went to bed, the woman was sitting on the cabin. I gave her two blankets and a counterpane, and some clothes to put under her head. I then went into the cabin and went to bed. I put the blankets and counterpane in the hole, and then went to bed. I told her I had put the things there as I went. I had been in bed about two hours and a half when I heard the woman crying in the cabin. Thomas was with her in the cabin, and Lambert was steering. I jumped out of bed and laid hold of her. She said, "Oh, captain! Oh, my Collins! I'll drown myself before I get to London". I asked her what for. I asked her if they had done anything to her ; but she kept crying and sobbing very much, and made no answer. Thomas was standing to her when I was awoke. Her dress did not appear disordered. I accused the men of having abused her ; and they said they had not, and were very saucy, and I threatened to dismiss Thomas. I borrowed six shillings from the boy to pay Thomas his wages. I owed him ten shillings and I had four myself. The boy was asleep along with me in the cabin. It was below Haywood lock. Whilst I was jawing the men and quieting the woman, the boy got up. The disturbance was between Haywood lock and Colwich lock ; and Lambert steered till we came to Colwich Churchyard, when I went to steer and Lambert went into the cabin to Thomas. It was at the stop at Brindley's Bank I borrowed the money from the boy. While I was quarrelling with the men, the woman attempted to jump from the hatches into the canal. I caught hold of her and pulled her into the boat. She said she would drown herself before she got to London. She was wet up to her knees. I told her to go into the cabin. Thomas was in the cabin and the other man was steering. Both Thomas and Lambert appeared to be in liquor. She went to the top of the cabin, and I remained in the hatches talking to her till we got to Colwich lock. I went in and put on my shoes and stockings, and then went and steered to Rugeley, and Lambert went into the cabin to Thomas; the boy was driving. We had two hampers of wine for Atherstone. When we got to Colwich lock, and before I went to put on my shoes and stockings, the woman got off the boat on the contrary side to the towing-path, and I thought she was going to ease herself, and so I made no remark. I was having words with the men and did not see anything of the woman again. I was jawing and differing with them and did not know she was missing. I met Bache's boat near Brindley's Bank. A man nicknamed "Moucher" was driving. I asked him if he had ever seen a woman, as I was looking for one. He said no, he had not. Thomas was with me. He came with me from Rugeley to look for the woman. We turned back when we met the boat. Thomas never refused to go further on to look for the woman. I woke Lambert at Rugeley wharf, and told him the woman was missing, but he would not come out.

George Thomas alias Dobell :-

At Colwich lock I called the master, as it was his turn to work. The boy left the cabin first and went to the horse. The captain and the woman then came out of the cabin ; he was using abusive language to the woman, saying we had had connection with her. Afterwards Lambert and myself had some talk about it and then went to sleep. We were disturbed shortly afterwards by hearing words between the captain and the woman, and I heard the woman say, "I'll jump, I'll jump" ; and I heard the captain say, "You b—r, if you don't I'll throw you off". When we came to the stop place beyond the turn, I asked the captain if he was not ashamed to turn the woman out. It was half way

betwixt the turn and the stop place. He told me I might get out if I liked, and called the lad back to borrow some money to pay me. We were wrangling about it till we got close to Rugeley, when he began to say the deceased was lost ; she was drowned ; the boy was present. The captain and I went back to look for the woman. Lambert was in the cabin and did not go. It was about three o'clock in the morning when we were at Rugeley. At Fradley, he told Robotham there was a passenger missing, and on the way to Fazeley, he wanted me and Lambert to swear that the deceased got out at Colwich lock.

William Ellis alias Lambert sworn :- As we were coming along the Fazeley Pound, Owen asked us to say that the woman got out at Colwich lock. Dobell drove from Aston lock to Sandon lock ; he steered, and Owen was in the middle of the boat. The boy was on the cross bed ; the woman was walking.

James Owen sworn :- At about twelve o'clock on Sunday night, when the boat was below Haywood Pound, I was awoke by the noise of the woman. I saw the woman in bed, and Thomas upon her. I jawed him about her, and he said that Lambert had had connection with her at the Hoo Mill lock. I was fast asleep in bed at Hoo Mill lock, and did not hear any noise. When we came below Colwich lock, Lambert wanted to take the woman into the cabin, and I would not let him. Dobell and I kept quarrelling about a mile. At Bellamour Crane, I told the woman to get on the cabin and go to her compartment ; she did so. The last time I saw her alive was at Turnover Bridge in the middle of the boat. I called the boy into the cabin, and I did not get out till I came to the watering place near Rugeley, when I missed the woman for the first time. When I came to Fazeley Pound I went to the hole, and saw Lambert and Dobell with one of the passenger's boxes open. I told them I would not go any further than Fazeley; and they said, "Go to ---- with you ; you are frightened about the woman ; tell them she got out at Colwich lock".

James Owen sworn :- After I had prevented Lambert from taking the deceased to bed, I took her in my arms and put her on the top of the cabin. Lambert was in bed, and Thomas sitting on the side bench. The boy was driving and I was steering. About seven or eight or nine minutes after I had put the woman on the cabin, Thomas said, "Come in, d---n your eyes, and pay me". I went into the cabin to my cupboard to look for money to pay him, and Thomas went to the helm. I found I was six shillings short, and put my head out of the cabin to call for the boy. Thomas was then at the helm, but the woman was missing. I heard a noise while in the cabin as if someone had jumped on the cabin. It was impossible for anyone to jump on the cabin unless they were in the boat.

Mr Fowke was again asked whether the three prisoners were all present when those respective statements were made. He replied that they were not. They were brought in separately, and separately examined.

In reply to a question from Mr Godson,

Mr Fowke stated that Mr Barnett, surgeon, was examined at the inquest. He was the only surgeon who was examined.

In reply to Mr Sergeant Ludlow, Mr Fowke said he was not aware of anything being said of importance which he did not take down. He was not aware that he had refused to take anything down.

James Ruscoe, agent to the Trent and Mersey Canal Company at Stoke, was at Rugeley at the time of the inquest on the 20th of June. In consequence of a message from Owen, he went to him in a room at the public house. Owen requested witness to take down what he had to say, and he accordingly took it down, and afterwards read it over to him, when he signed his name to it. Witness had now the paper in his hand.

Mr Godson objected to the paper being read. It was a most irregular proceeding to make the attempt. If anyone could take depositions from persons, it would be idle in future to attempt to give solemn proofs of parties having been examined before magistrates, and signing their statements in the presence of the magistrates.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow said it was one of the first principles recognised in the criminal jurisprudence of the country, that what a person said might be given in evidence against himself ; and if this statement of the prisoner had been made in a letter to Mr Ruscoe, could anyone doubt that the letter

would have been evidence?

Mr Justice Williams should not direct the paper to be read by the officer of the court ; but if Mr Ruscoe chose to aid his memory by referring to the paper, he might do so.

Mr Ruscoe then stated that Owen told him that at Haywood lock, he heard the cries of the woman passenger, and Dobell was pulling her about. He said that Dobell and he had some words about her. Ellis and the woman were on the towing-path at Hoo Mill lock, and he could not help laughing at some conversation he heard there, between Ellis and Dobell, about cutting her trousers. He said the woman did get out at Colwich lock, but she got on again ; and that Ellis, at Colwich lock, got hold of her and wanted to take her to bed ; and he (Owen) would not let him. That the woman told him that they had been pulling her about ; that in consequence of that, he was falling out with them about the woman. He said that Ellis was asleep when the boat got to Rugeley ; that the woman got on the boat at Bellamore Crane ; that she then got into the middle of the boat ; that he then called the boy Musson on board, and borrowed 6s from him to pay Dobell his wages ; that he then saw the woman's shoes and bonnet ; that he then went to the middle of the boat to look for her ; that was by the stop place at Brindley's Bank ; that the woman at that time was not there ; in consequence of which he gave an alarm to his men; that Dobell, Ellis and he (the captain) returned to look for the woman till they came to a boat, driven by a man named Moucher ; they then turned back ; that Ellis would not believe it when he told him that she was missing ; that Ellis went to the middle of the boat to look for her ; that Ellis said to him that he (Owen) seemed very much frightened, but they must all say that she got out at Colwich lock, and they could say no more.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow ; That is my case, my Lord.

Mr Godson : Then I contend that it is no case at all.

Mr Justice Williams said he had forborne to say a single word until his brother Ludlow had declared that that was his case. He would, indeed, have sat till midnight, nay, till tomorrow night, and the next night, patiently to hear any evidence that might be adduced in support of this charge ; but how could he leave a case like this to go to the jury, when there was not one particle of evidence showing that any rape had been committed on the woman at all. That it was a case abounding with circumstances of suspicion was perfectly true ; but there was no more evidence of rape than of murder ; and it became his duty to say, that he thought there was not a case to go to the jury.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow said the case was certainly altered when he was interrupted in carrying out his intention of examining Owen. He believed it was his duty to bow to the decision of his Lordship.

Mr Justice Williams to the Jury : Gentlemen, I, in common with you, may suppose that foul play took place on board that boat, and about it, on that night. We may imagine that dreadful deeds were done that night with regard to this unhappy woman ; but in this realm of England, we do not go on mere suspicion ; we do not convict except the charge is supported by proofs applicable thereto. The charges in this case are that all three ravished this unhappy woman, the charges being laid in various forms ; but where is the evidence that this unhappy woman was ravished at all. You have not heard one word about the state of her person. There is no proof of any violence having been committed upon her. It is true that Owen is said to have stated that Dobell had “raped and murdered her”, but whatever suspicion that language may raise in your minds and mine, it is no evidence in law against Dobell ; nor is the statement of any one of the prisoners evidence against another, though it is evidence against himself. Supposing you had been trying them for the crime of murder, the evidence is as appropriate to convict them all of murder as of rape. Whatever we may suspect, and whatever may be at the bottom of the hearts of these men, to accompany them to their latest day in life, aye, and beyond it, I am bound to tell you that there is no proof of their having committed the crime of which they stand charged in this indictment.

Mr Sergeant Ludlow then submitted that there was abundant evidence of an assault ; the state of the clothes, and the declaration of the parties, despite the fact disclosed in the investigation – that “they were pulling her about”, would be sufficient evidence to prove an assault.

Mr Godson replied that the only evidence, even of an assault, would be from the declarations of the men against each other which, in fact, were not evidence.

The Judge decided against Mr Sergeant Ludlow ; and the Jury, under his Lordship's direction, found

a verdict of "Not Guilty".

56 31 August 1839

Town Hall, Burslem

ASSAULTS William Bambridge, collector of tonnage on the Newcastle Lower Canal, charged **Joseph Taylor**, a boatman, with assaulting him, on Monday at Stoke on Trent.

Mr Mousley appeared for the defendant, and Mr J P Mayer for the complainant.

The defendant admitted that he had "pitched it into him", but pleaded in extenuation that the complainant stopped his horse to gauge his boat a second time.

The complainant explained.

Mr Rose said that boatmen in general were disorderly fellows, and must be taught how to behave themselves.

Fined 10s with costs.

57 7 September 1839

Potteries Police Intelligence

TOWN HALL, BURSLEM Francis Wilder, a boatman, was charged with entering into a field by the canal side in the parish of Trentham, and cutting a quantity of vetches with a hook. He was observed by Povey, a constable of Trentham, and was secured with some difficulty, the officer losing his hat in the scuffle.

The defendant received a good character from an individual at Stoke.

The prosecutor not wishing him to be too severely punished, he was ordered to pay a fine of 10s with the costs, amounting in the whole to £1 9s 6d.

58 28 September 1839

Town Hall, Tunstall

William Shelly, a boatman, was brought up charged with having committed an assault on Joseph Salt, on the 14th of September, on the towing-path of the canal near Stoke. The complainant described the nature of the blow as such that it knocked the senses out of him. Fined 5s and costs, making it £1 2s 6d.

59 28 September 1839

Town Hall, Longton

ROBBERY FROM A BOAT BY A BOATMAN Richard Bell, a boatman, was charged with stealing from the cabin of a boat at Stoke on Trent on the 19th May, a plush waistcoat and a cap, belonging to **John Higgins**.

It appeared that the prisoner was employed by the complainant, who is also a boatman, and that on the day in question he was seen by a lad named **George Corns**, who was connected with another boat, selling the cap and waistcoat to one of Messrs Pickford's men. The articles were missed the same day, and in about a week after the lad told Higgins what he had witnessed, which led to the prisoner being discharged from the complainant's service; and since that time, the only answer the complainant could get from the prisoner when asking him about them was that he had "swallowed them". He was apprehended on Tuesday by Stonier.

ANOTHER CHARGE AGAINST THE PRISONER Richard Bell was charged with another serious offence.

George Corns, the lad mentioned in the former case, said that on the same day as the other robbery was committed, the prisoner came out of his boat towards him and knocked him down on the towing-path of the canal, and took from his pocket a shilling; he did not name it until a week or so afterwards, Bell having threatened to beat him if he did so.

In his defence, the prisoner said he had been playing at "pitch and toss" with the lad and won sixteen pence, and that he had received a shilling, and there was four pence owing.

Committed for trial at the sessions on both charges.

60 12 October 1839

Potteries Police Intelligence

TOWN HALL, BURSLEM Wm Appleton, a boatman, was brought up, charged with taking his horse along a footpath at Dale Hall. Fined 5s and costs.

61 12 October 1839

County Police Intelligence

William Smith was charged with stealing lime from a boat of which he had the care.

John Moore, agent to the executors of the late Richard Moore of Sedgeley, deposed that the prisoner was employed as boatman. On the 1st inst, witness gauged a boat load of lime which prisoner was conveying to Brickbridge in the parish of Wombourne, for Mr Cartwright of Himley. From information received, he followed the boat, and was present on Friday when it was unloaded. After it was unloaded and the line and horse attached to the boat, witness went into it and, heaving up the lid of the fore deck, found from 1 1/2cwt to 2 cwt of lime secreted. Told prisoner it had been put there that morning, but the latter declared with an oath that it had not.

Hannah Cartwright deposed that on Friday morning last, between six and seven o'clock, she saw the prisoner lift up the tar cloth which covered the lime, and hand several lumps to the boy, who had gone into the fore deck; she afterwards saw the prisoner put some in himself; she immediately gave notice to John Cartwright.

John Griffiths, the boy who had charge of the horse, deposed to putting the lime into the fore deck by prisoner's orders. It was intended for Mr Cartwright's man. Committed.

62 19 October 1839

Staffordshire Michaelmas Sessions

John Broadfield was indicted for stealing seventeen shillings and a half penny, the property of John Tipper of Wolverhampton.

The prisoner was a boatman in the employ of the prosecutor, and was sent by him with a boat to Brewood, and thence to Nantwich. At the same time the prosecutor gave the money in question, in a barragan purse, to his son, Joseph Tipper, who accompanied the prisoner, to pay tonnage for the boat. In consequence of what he heard, the prosecutor went to Nantwich, and found his boat had been sunk and was abandoned by the prisoner, whom he found at a public house. He asked the prisoner how the boat came in that condition, and he replied that he could not help it.

John Tipper proved that he put the money in a cupboard in the boat, and that prisoner knew it was there. The prisoner went into the cabin to take his meals. The boat was sunk at Nantwich, After it was raised, the money was missing.

A witness named **Joseph James**, a boatman, said he was at Nantwich on the 4th of July, when Mr Tipper's boat sank. Henry Swift and the prisoner came into witness's boat that night, and one of them, he could not say which, put a purse on the table; the prisoner asked witness to open it, which he did, and found in it seventeen shillings and a half penny. The prisoner said the money was his. The purse was wet, and the prisoner went away with it.

Mr Owen conducted the prosecution, the prisoner was undefended.

The Jury found the prisoner guilty. To be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for three calendar months.

63 26 October 1839

Staffordshire Michaelmas Sessions

William Smith was charged with stealing 2 cwt of lime, the property of Samuel Stone Briscoe Esq, at Wombourne.

Mr Godson appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Neale for the defence.

The prisoner was a boatman, and was entrusted with a boat load of lime, of which he took a portion and sold it.

He was found guilty, and sentenced to be imprisoned for three calendar months.

64 9 November 1839

Potteries Police Intelligence

HANLEY **John Rathbone**, a boatman, was brought up on a charge of drunkenness and fighting on Sunday evening at Hanley. The police stated that he was generally a disorderly character, having been previously convicted and imprisoned for disorderly conduct. Fined 10s and expenses. He said he had nothing to pay, and was consequently committed to the house of correction to hard labour for one month.

James Spilsbury, sexton of Hanley Church was brought up charged with being drunk, whilst exercising the duties of his calling at a funeral. In reply, he said he was only half drunk. Fined 5s and expenses.

65 **30 November 1839** **County Police Intelligence**

TOWN HALL, LONGTON **Joseph Collier**, a boatman, was brought up charged by John Grattan with stealing a bag and a measure of beans on Sunday night.

The prosecutor's son stated that he saw the bag containing the beans on the Sunday afternoon, and that they missed them on the following morning. Having some suspicion of the person who had stolen them, he gave information of the robbery to the Norton constable.

William Cartlidge stated that he apprehended the prisoner, and found the bag in his boat.

The prisoner denied the charge, and said that the bag was his own.

Committed for trial at the sessions.

TOWN HALL, TUNSTALL **Bryan Bennett**, a boatman, was charged with maliciously damaging a boat laden with limestone, tools and other articles, which was in the care of **John Carden**, the property of Messrs Dixon, Neave and Co.

It was stated by Carden that on the 25th instant between six and seven in the morning, he was driving his boat on the Trent and Mersey Canal, and was approaching the Etruria Lock, when the defendant, who had the charge of another boat, attempted to get it into the lock first, and in doing so drove it with such force against the complainant's boat as caused it to sink. A bill was handed to the Magistrates of £2 10s claimed damages, £2 of which had been paid for getting up the boat, and 10s as to the amount of loss for provisions that were in the cabin, and spoiled.

The Night Clerk of the Check Office saw the transaction, and said it was the complainant's turn to enter the lock first, and believing there would be some mischief, he cautioned Bennett, who ought on seeing that the other boat was first, to have stopped his horse, according to the rules of the canal, at the distance post which is ten yards from the lock.

The complainant admitted that his boat was not damaged, nor the articles in it, except the provisions.

Mr J P Mayer, who appeared for defendant, objected to that part of the information which charged him with damaging the boat.

The Magistrate ordered Bennett to pay 10s as compensation for the loss of the provisions which, with expenses, amounted to £1 7s 6d, and told the complainant he might recover the money paid for raising the boat by proceedings at law, but he would advise them to endeavour to compromise the matter.

66 **28 December 1839**

John Bailey, a boatman, was charged under one of the bye laws of the Trent and Mersey Canal Company with passing the Harecastle Tunnel having a fire in his boat, causing smoke.

Mr Fairam, agent to the Company, called :-

Elizabeth Rowley, who lives at the Tunnel mouth, and said that on the 4th of November last, she saw the defendant's boat come out of the south end of the tunnel; that "John Bailey, Stone, No 1" was on the boat; and that there was a large smoke coming out of the chimney of the boat.

Examined by Mr Williams, who appeared for the defendant. She spoke to a man in the "hatches" and told him he would have to answer for that another day; that Bailey was then driving; that she told her husband of it when he came home; that she could not tell when she told Mr Fairam of the circumstance; that Mr Fairam had given her directions to look out for smoke. Mr Williams then asked if she was paid for it.

Witness : Yes, I have my expenses paid.

Mr Williams : That is not what I mean; are you paid for the information?

The witness hesitated for some time, when

Mr Rose said, answer the question, there is no harm in it; only that if you have, you will not be a good witness.

Mr Williams : You have no right, Sir, to tell a witness the reason why questions are put to them.

Mr Rose : I only did it to save the time of the court.

Mr Williams : If you will leave her to me, I will not detain you long, as I flatter myself I can examine the witness; and again put the question, which she, after much hesitation, answered in the affirmative.

Mr Williams : It is no information, unless Mr Fairam has some other evidence.

Mr Fairam said he had none.

Case dismissed with costs £1 18s 6d. The defendant and a witness having come expressly by the "steamer" from Wolverhampton.

Mr Fairam paid the money, and said to his witness, Elizabeth Rowley, if you had told the truth it would not have come to this; and to Mr Rose, she never had a farthing from me in her life, except that when she comes before a magistrate and has some bread and cheese and ale, or anything of that kind, I pay for it.

Mr Rose : Is she a woman of bright intellect?

Mr Fairam : We have no fault to find in that respect.

67 9 January 1847

An adjourned inquest was held yesterday before W Webb Ward Esq in the case of **Ann Palin**; and evidence being given which exonerated the boatman in whose employ she was, a verdict was returned of "Found drowned". No doubt now exists that she accidentally fell into the canal.

68 6 March 1847 Potteries Police Intelligence

TUNSTALL – CHARGE AGAINST A BOATMAN FOR STEALING ALE **William Bancroft**, a boatman, was brought up on a charge of stealing ale from a cask. The prisoner was employed in working a boat, of which a man named **Thomas Carnall** was captain. A portion of the cargo consisted of casks of ale from the brewery of Messrs Bass of Burton, and the prisoner had during the voyage been detected three times by the captain, in the act of boring holes into the casks with a gimblet. The prisoner, who was given into the custody of Police-constable Beardmore, in the neighbourhood of Kidsgrove, denied the charge in the most impudent manner. Mr Rose sent him to the House of Correction for 14 days, as a reputed thief.

69 13 March 1847

CHARGE OF STEALING IRON FROM A BOAT **Edward Law**, the captain of a canal boat, but more respectable in his appearance than such men generally are, and who had been out on bail, surrendered to take his trial on a charge of stealing two pigs of cast iron, the property of Baxendale and Co.

Mr Neale appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Woolrych for the defence.

It appeared that the prisoner had charge of a boat to convey 10 tons of iron from Messrs Gibbons and Co's Corbyns Hall Iron Works in this county. The principal witness against the prisoner was **William Parsons**, a boatman's boy, who had been apprehended on the same charge. He had accompanied the prisoner on the voyage; and stated that when the boat was passing through the tunnel on its way to Birmingham, he saw his master take two pigs of iron and put them in the cabin. He stated as a reason for observing this act of his master, that he walked backwards through the tunnel leading the horse in order to prevent his falling into the water. This witness was cross-examined by Mr Woolrych, and admitted, after first prevaricating, that he was in custody on another charge himself of stealing an iron crow bar. He said the tunnel was 200 yards long, but it was quite light all the way through, and he could see well everything that was done.

A singular feature in this case was that the parties in Birmingham to whom the iron was delivered never discovered their loss. Two pigs of iron were found by a policeman in the cabin of the boat, after the cargo had been discharged, and the boat was on its return.

Mr Colburn, agent to Gibbons and Co, produced a measuring gauge and measured the two pigs of iron which were produced in court; he stated from their size he knew them to be the make of

Gibbons and Co; no other works produced pigs of those dimensions. He could swear to them in France. [A laugh]

Charles Ketley, clerk and agent to Baxendale and Co, was called to speak to the parties who constituted that firm, which was commonly known as that of "Pickford and Co", although there was no Mr Pickford now in connection with it.

This being the case for the prosecution, Mr John Bradbury, tarpaulin manufacturer of Tipton; Mr John Sherwood, boat loader; and Mr William Williams, provision dealer of Kinver; were called to give a character to the prisoner, and they spoke most favourably of his honesty.

Mr Woolrych addressed the jury at great length, contending that there was no evidence whatsoever against the prisoner, except that of the boy Parsons, which being altogether uncorroborated, was unworthy of credit.

The Chairman having summed up, the jury returned, without hesitation, a verdict of "Not Guilty" and Law was discharged.

70 1 May 1847

Henry Franks, a boatman, was brought before the court on a charge of stealing five pipe staves, the property of Mr William Walford, timber merchant, but as he received a good character from his employers, and it appeared probable that the timber had been overlooked in unloading the boat, which the defendant said was done late at night by a man whom he employed, the charge was dismissed.

71 1 May 1847 Bilston

MONDAY **John Armstrong**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of coals, the property of Mr B Gibbons, iron-master, on Friday the 23rd inst at Bradley. The prisoner was observed throwing some coals from a boat (which he had charge of) on the canal, to the towing-path, which were carried away by two women. Upon being interrogated, the prisoner alleged that the coals he had thrown out of the boat were his own property, as he had them given to him at the "Jem Crow" Colliery. Committed for trial.

72 15 May 1847 Burslem

STEALING A PURSE AND MONEY **George Salt**, a boatman about 17 years of age, was committed for trial at the sessions, charged with stealing a purse containing about £6 in gold and silver coin, and a pair of earrings, the property of Mrs Elizabeth Phillips, shopkeeper of Burslem.

Mrs Phillips wishing to put the purse and its contents in a place of security, concealed it beneath a sack of sharps. On Thursday morning, the prisoner was employed to deliver some flour at her shop, from Riley and Fitton's mill, and she directed him to remove the sack of sharps, and put one of flour in its place. Shortly afterwards she left the shop, forgetful of the foundation of the sack, but her son Richard, a little boy, saw him slip a purse into his trowsers pocket. Mr Hutton, pawnbroker, deposed that he had redeemed articles from his shop to the amount of 22s, and also bought an accordion for 11s on Thursday or Friday. Other persons saw him in possession of money, and he had 11s on him when apprehended.

73 5 June 1847

FATAL ACCIDENT NEAR BURSLEM About noon yesterday week, the cargo of a boat consisting of bags of grain and barrel flour was being unloaded at the mill of Messrs Riley and Fitton, at Port Vale Wharf near Burslem, and just as one of the bags was hoisted part way to an upper storey of the building, the chain broke, and the bag fell upon **James Salt**, a lad nine years of age who was in the boat, and killed him on the spot. The lad's father, who worked the boat and was assisting to unload, witnessed the accident. It is a little remarkable that on the following day the same chain broke in another place, as a bag of corn was being lifted up, from which a person narrowly escaped injury, if not loss of life.

74 19 June 1847

Tunstall

STEALING EARTHENWARE FROM CRATES **Henry Harris**, a boatman, was brought up on two charges of stealing earthenware from crates at Burslem Wharf. In the first case, the property stolen consisted of fifteen jugs and four tea pots, which had been received from the manufactories of Messrs Cook and Edge, and Mr Joseph Harding. In the second charge, a number of tea pots had been taken from crates forwarded by Messrs Holdcroft. The property was found concealed under the bed in the prisoner's boat. He was committed for trial on both charges.

[Note : in another article in the same paper, under "Potteries Police Intelligence" the name is given as Henry HARRISON]

75 26 June 1847

Legal notices

In the matter of the petition of **John Onions**, late of Dudley in the county of Worcester, boatman, but now residing and assisting his father in law, William Hilton of Sedgely in the county of Stafford, butcher, and Insolvent Debtor. Notice is hereby given that Edmund Robert Daniell Esq, the Commissioner acting in the matter of this petition, will proceed to make a final order thereon at the Birmingham District Court of Bankruptcy at Birmingham, on the 15th day of July next, at twelve o'clock at noon precisely, unless cause be then and there shown to the contrary.

J W Dalby

Solicitor, West Bromwich

76 17 July 1847

Staffordshire Adjourned Sessions

John Tolley was indicted for stealing several articles of wearing apparel, the property of **Robert Arundle**, at Stoke on Trent on the 13th instant. The prosecutor is a boatman, and on the day in question, the several articles were taken away by the prisoner, who belonged to another boat, and had been allowed to sleep on board that to which the prosecutor belonged, when he availed himself of the opportunity afforded to commit the offence for which he was indicted. The prisoner made no defence, and the case was so distinctly proved, that the jury, without hesitation, returned a verdict of guilty, when the prisoner was sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour.

77 21 August 1847

Handsworth Petty Sessions

At these Sessions on Saturday last, Sarah Parkes, an elderly woman, was brought up before the Hon F Gough, H G Willett, and J E Piercey, Esqrs, charged with stealing a purse containing two sovereigns and some silver from the person of **Leonard Thorpe**, a boatman, residing at Alfreton, Derbyshire. It appeared from the evidence that the prosecutor, who had arrived with his boat at Tipton, was stopping at the Swan Inn, where he met with some neighbours, with whom he had some drink; whilst he was there, the prisoner and himself went and sat on a bench at the front of the house, and had some beer. Shortly afterwards, the prosecutor missed his purse, and upon the prisoner being searched, it was found in her pocket. In answer to a question from the Bench, Major McKnight said the prisoner had been previously convicted of a similar offence. She was then fully committed to Stafford to take her trial.

ALLEGED MURDER NEAR DUDLEY An inquest was commenced on Wednesday last before George Hinchliffe Esq, coroner, and a respectable jury, at the house of Mr Whitehouse junior, the Navigation Inn, Tipton, on the body of **Leonard Thorpe**, the prosecutor in the case given above who, on returning from Dudley to Tipton on the same night, was so severely beaten that he died on the following day. Two Irish shoemakers named Patrick Grady and John Maloney are in custody, on suspicion of being the guilty parties in this awful affair, and were present at the investigation. The witnesses examined were Anthony and Mary Ellis. These parties proved that the unfortunate deceased was drinking with them at the Angel Inn, Dudley, on the Saturday night until 12 o'clock, that he was sober and had some money about him, which was afterwards found on his person by the police. Anthony Ellis left before Thorpe, and had gone but a few yards from the inn when he was severely beaten by some Irishmen armed with bludgeons, who robbed him of his hat and handkerchief. To escape their fury, he climbed over the castle wall on the New Road, near the

Lower Church, and whilst concealed there, he heard three men threaten the English in a dreadful manner; and at the same time, he identified Grady as one of the party. Mary Ellis remained in company with Thorpe some time after her husband, and parted with him at the door of the inn, and he took the road by the castle wall towards Tipton.

Charles Lewis of Tipton, a boatman, was also in company with the deceased on the night in question, and he also identified Grady as one of the men on the road who had attacked Ellis.

James Cotterill and **John Guest**, the former a companion and the latter a servant to poor Thorpe, stated the circumstances attendant upon his death. At 2 o'clock on Sunday morning, he was brought by the tunnel keeper at Tipton to the boat of Cotterill, who noticed the blood on him, and enquired how it came, but received no reply. Deceased slept in this boat, and on the following morning, on being called by Cotterill and asked if he was ready, he said, "Yes", and tackled the horse for the purpose of commencing the journey. During the whole of this period, both the witnesses said they observed nothing particular in the deceased's manner; and it was not until about seven o'clock that a doctor was mentioned; but Thorpe said, "Stay a bit". Cotterill's horse being ill, he put off his journey, and on learning this, poor Thorpe said he should do the same. He then left Cotterill's boat and walked a space of one hundred yards on his own, where he remained dozing on the boat until three o'clock in the afternoon, when he got up and asked his servant to get a little warm water and wash his head, saying it ached. The man did so, and in one hour afterwards he was found by him, dead. He had taken nothing during all this period.

The Coroner, after animadverting upon the gross negligence displayed by these two men in not calling for medical assistance, said that he had received such information as led him to infer that a complete, (although circumstantial) chain of evidence implicating the prisoners would be obtained if an adjournment took place, and he should therefore recommend the further consideration of this important case to be adjourned until three o'clock on Monday next.

78 4 September 1847

Potteries Police Intelligence

HANLEY – CANAL OBSTRUCTIONS **George Tipper**, a boatman, was summoned for obstructing a boat at the Foundry Lock, Etruria, on the 19th of August. A fine of 20s with 13s 3d was inflicted.

George Wilshaw, another boatman, was likewise charged with a similar offence on the same morning, at the second Etruria lock. It appearing that more than one hour had been lost in the obstruction, the defendant was ordered to pay £5 for the time lost, together with a fine of 20s and 20s 6d costs. The whole amount, £7 0s 6d was immediately paid.

79 11 September 1847

Potteries Police Intelligence

HANLEY **Thomas Bebbington**, a boatman, was summoned under the bye laws of the canal company for wasting water when passing through the Coxhead lock on the 7th of August. He was fined 20s and 14s 6d costs.

80 18 September 1847

Burton on Trent

INQUESTS BEFORE JOSEPH RICHARDSON ESQ, DEPUTY CORONER On Wednesday the 25th ult, at Shobnall, on view of the body of **John Beighton**, a boatman aged 61 years. It appeared in evidence that on the preceding Monday, the deceased was in charge of a boat travelling along the Trent and Mersey Canal from Shardlow to Wolverhampton, and that when near Burton, he fell down on the towing-path and instantly expired. It was proved on a post-mortem examination that the heart of the deceased was in a state of ossification, the the jury found that to be the cause of death.

81 23 October 1847

IMPUDENT THEFT **Henry Greenway** was indicted for stealing £1 16s 4d at Tipton, the property of **Joseph Bevan**.

Mr Meteyard appeared for the prosecution; Mr Kettle defended the prisoner.

The facts are briefly these. The prosecutor is a boatman, and on the 16th of March, the prisoner came to him to obtain an engagement to assist him in working his boat. The prisoner remained with the prosecutor in the cabin of his boat during the night. The following morning, prosecutor took off his waistcoat, containing a sovereign and a half, and six shillings and fourpence in silver, leaving it in the cabin while he went to the stern of the boat to wash himself. In a minute or two afterwards, the prisoner, who was left in the cabin, came out and went away, and immediately the money was missed. The prosecutor did not see the prisoner again until the 17th of July, when he met him with a boat at Leamington. The prosecutor told him he would wait until he returned, to which the prisoner coolly replied, "I will be ready for you". He was then taken into custody.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty, and the Court sentenced him to be imprisoned four months.

82 23 October 1847

William Owen was indicted for stealing, on the 13th of August at Wolverhampton, one pair of trowsers and other articles, the property of **John Hughes**.

The prosecutor, a boatman, stated that he was in his boat on the evening in question, where he had some bread and cheese, and butter, and also a pair of trowsers, which were in the cabin of the boat when he retired to rest at ten o'clock at night, and when he awoke the next morning, between five and six, the whole of the articles were missing. He saw the prisoner in Wolverhampton the same day with the trowsers upon his person, when he accused him of stealing them, and of robbing the cabin of his boat, which the prisoner denied, stating that the trowsers had been given to him.

Police sub inspector Butler deposed to apprehending the prisoner and taking the trowsers from him, which were produced, and identified by the prosecutor.

The jury found the prisoner guilty, and he was sentenced to six calendar months hard labour.

83 23 October 1847

STEALING A PROMISSORY NOTE William Pope, a labouring man, was indicted for stealing a promissory note for the payment of £5, the property of **Thomas Dunn**, at the parish of Kingswinford.

Mr Kettle conducted the prosecution; Mr Woolrych defending the prisoner.

Thomas Dunn, the prosecutor, stated that he was a boatman living at Kingswinford. The prisoner lodged with him. On Saturday night the 24th July, he placed his clothes on a chair in the kitchen, the note being in the coat pocket. When he got up the following morning, the prisoner was downstairs, and complained of being unwell, when he went to bed. He shortly afterwards missed the note; it was a £5 note of the Stourbridge and Kidderminster bank. The prisoner knew he had the note, having seen his wife give it to him. The prisoner left his house on the following Tuesday and went to Broseley, where he found him. Prisoner asked him to make it up, and he would get the money from his (prisoner's) uncle. The note had been torn up the middle and pasted again.

Cross-examined : He generally kept his money in his pocket; it had been paid to him for wages. He could not read, but he made inquiries where he had the note, and they told him it was a Stourbridge and Kidderminster note. He did not tell the prisoner that he would take no more notice if he would tell him all about it.

Isaac Lowther, clothier of Ironbridge, stated that the prisoner came to his shop on the 27th of July, and bought a new hat, for which he tendered a £5 note of the Stourbridge and Kidderminster Bank, which had been joined in the middle.

Cross-examined : It was in the evening; he took many notes of the same bank; he had changed the note in question.

Police Officer John Dovey of Brierley Hill, said that he apprehended the prisoner, who told him that he did not know what a £5 note was; he had never seen one. When he was conveying the prisoner in a cart, in custody, he wanted to get out and go to the prosecutor, who was walking up a hill before them, and make it up. Prisoner jumped out of the cart, and went to Dunn.

Mr Woolrych, for the prisoner, urged an objection, that the indictment did not aver that the demand was "due and unsatisfied"; it might have been paid, and the value of the note might, in effect, be

nothing. The learned counsel strongly argued in support of this objection; when the learned Chairman consulted the other court upon the point. Upon returning, he said the court were of opinion that the indictment, being in the words of the act, was valid.

After the learned counsel had addressed the jury for the prisoner, they returned a verdict of guilty, and he was sentenced to two calendar months lard labour.

84 30 October 1847

HORSE STEALING AT ETRURIA – SPEEDY JUSTICE **William Bennett**, a boatman, was indicted for stealing a horse at Etruria, the property of James Beardsmore.

Mr Ings was for the prosecution; the prisoner was undefended.

The prosecutor is a corn dealer, and occupies premises by the canal side at Etruria. At half past eight o'clock on Tuesday evening last, his horse was safe in the stable, and in three hours afterwards it was missing. At an early hour on the following morning, George Harris, a butcher from Brewood, was on his way to Wolverhampton market when he met with the prisoner, who had a horse which he was riding without a saddle. Harris fell into conversation with the prisoner, and understanding that he had the horse to sell, enquired what he wanted for it, when he said the price was £8 10s. Harris offered him a £5 note, but it was ultimately agreed that he should have the horse for five guineas. To complete the bargain, they went to the New Inn, Horseley Fields, Wolverhampton, when the horse was put into the stable, and the prisoner accompanied Harris into the inn to receive the money. Harris, however, whose suspicions had become awakened, privately sent for a policeman. The prisoner's replies in accounting for his possession of the horse, were so vague that he was taken into custody, and in the course of the morning, it transpired that the horse had been stolen on the previous night, and was the property of the prosecutor, who came to Wolverhampton in search of it.

The prisoner, who had been with his boat at Etruria about the time of the robbery, made a most lame defence, which was to the effect that when he arrived at Tixhall lock on Tuesday, he quarrelled with his wife in the cabin, and went and got drunk and lay in a stable that night. On Wednesday morning, he was going to his boat when he met with the horse on the towing-path, and as it appeared to have no owner, he took it.

The jury immediately returned a verdict of guilty.

The prisoner having been convicted of felony at the Michaelmas sessions last year, and imprisoned for six months, was sentenced to be transported for ten years. On hearing the sentence he said, "I have a wife and three small children, and if you will please to forgive me this time, I will never come here again".

85 30 October 1847

West Bromwich Public Office

William Jones and Edwin Davis were charged by **Joseph Chambers**, a boatman, with stealing a piece of beef, a plum pudding, two cooked rabbits and 4lbs of cheese from his boat, on Sunday night, at Tipton. It appeared that the prosecutor had left the provisions in the boat, and the prisoners had broken the lock off and taken them out. When he discovered his loss, he instituted an enquiry, and found that the prisoners had been lurking about the stables near the White Horse Inn, and when the prosecutor went, he found them there. The prisoner Jones had something under his flannel frock, and he was seen shortly after to throw a bundle away, which was picked up and found to contain part of the provisions which were stolen. The prisoner Jones said he came from Worcester in search of work as a boatman, but could not get any; and having nothing to eat, they took it because they were hungry. The other prisoner said he came from Chester, and he also was in search of employment, but could obtain none. The Court treated the prisoners as rogues and vagabonds, and committed them for two months each with hard labour.

86 20 November 1847

THE LATE CHARGE OF MURDER AT DUDLEY Yesterday at the Wolverhampton Public Office, Thos Cavanagh was brought before J Leigh, Esq, as one of the parties implicated by the

evidence in being concerned with the death of a boatman named **Leonard Thorpe**, who was violently beaten by some Irishmen early on Sunday morning, the 15th of August last, and who died in consequence of the injuries sustained. The main features of the case have already appeared in our own paper, and Patrick Grady and John Maloney are now in the county prison awaiting their trial at the next spring assizes, the former charged on the coroner's inquisition with manslaughter, and the latter standing committed by the magistrates at Wolverhampton for murder. On the death of Thorpe, Cavanagh absconded, and was only heard of a day or two since, when he was apprehended by a Liverpool policeman. Evidence proving Cavanagh to have been present at the disturbance, and in company with Maloney shortly after Thorpe was beaten, was now given, and in addition, the Bench read to him Maloney's statement (remarking, however, that it was not evidence against him) attributing deceased's death to blows inflicted by Cavanagh with part of one of the market stalls. The Bench then inquired if Cavanagh wished to make any statement, to which he answered in the negative, observing that he should say nothing until the assizes, as he supposed he should go there. The prisoner, who is about thirty years of age, was then remanded till Wednesday, when the depositions in the case will be taken.

87 18 December 1847

Five men, William Harrison, Thomas Hopwood and William Davies as principals, and Reuben Clarke and James Smith as accessories (all "navvies") have been committed for trial at the next Shrewsbury Assizes on a charge of manslaughter. The deceased, **Thomas Hinton**, was a boatman, and his death resulted from having been beaten on the head in an affray between the "navvies" and boatmen, which caused concussion and inflammation of the brain.