

WOLVERHAMPTON CHRONICLE 1830 to 1849

1 20 January 1830

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS Fourteen years transportation : **Bartholomew Bridgford**, a boatman, for stealing at Stourbridge wearing apparel &c.

2 11 August 1830

Inquisitions have been held, since our last, before H Smith, coroner. In this town, on **Thomas Williams**, between six and seven years of age, the son of a boatman, who was drowned in the canal near Horseley Field. Verdict, "Accidental death.

3 27 October 1830

On Thursday last, 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".

4 26 January 1831

Inquisitions have been taken since our last, before Henry Smith Esq, coroner. In this town, 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 she met her miserable death while suffering under the visitation of one.

5 3 August 1831

At the Bury Assizes, **A Flack** pleaded guilty to the indictment charging him with the wilful murder of Mr E Osborn, tide surveyor, by deliberately shooting him through the head with a pistol ball ; and on Monday he was executed. He requested that a few lines might be published after his execution, as an "awful warning" to his associates in drunkenness, and to men of revengeful spirit, attributing the commission of his dreadful crime to those demoralising habits of feeling. The malefactor was a boatman, and Mr Osborn having threatened to suspend him, he, from motives of revenge, shot him on the 10th ult.

6 5 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 is 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. At Wednesbury on **Charlotte Whitehouse**, a girl about 12 years of age, who was drowned in an arm of the Birmingham Canal, into which it is supposed she fell in consequence of the darkness of the night, and the dazzling of light from the Eagle furnaces. 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 on John Moore, "Died by the visitation of God" ; on each of the others, "Accidental death".

7 2 November 1831

Inquisitions have been held since our last, before H Smith Esq, coroner. On **James Whitehouse**, a boatman, who was accidentally drowned at Wednesbury.

8 21 March 1832

STAFFORDSHIRE LENT ASSIZES **John Venables** was indicted for wilfully and maliciously

stabbing **Samuel Wall** with a knife at Tettenhall, on the 18th of January, with intent to murder or maim, or otherwise injure him. Samuel Wall is a boatman, and the prisoner follows a similar occupation. The prisoner was going before Wall with his boat, who would not permit him to pass. After some altercation regarding one boat being opposed to the other in going through the lock, Wall seized the bridle of Venables's horse, and Venables exclaimed to his boat boy, "Fetch a knife, I'll stick him" ; upon receiving the knife, he plunged it into the prisoner's neck and Wall, bleeding profusely, entered a neighbouring house, where a girl bound the wound. He then went into his boat and fainted from loss of blood. The surgeon who was called in to attend the prosecutor described the nature of the wound, which was above three inches in length and appeared to have been made by a sharp instrument. The prisoner, on being apprehended by Sparrow, the constable of Wolverhampton, confessed the crime, and expressed his contrition. The prisoner said he had a quarrel with the prosecutor, and in the struggle both fell ; but the accident which befell Wall was totally unpremeditated by him, and attributable to accident alone. The prisoner's father was present during the trial, and his grief while the Judge charged the Jury was truly affecting. The Learned Judge addressed the prisoner and said his conduct exhibited the fatal effects of ungovernable passion. Owing to God's providence, the wound he inflicted upon Samuel Wall did not murder him, otherwise it would have been his painful duty to pass the last sentence of the law upon him, and no earthly power could have possibly rescued him. The Jury had recommended him to mercy, and that recommendation would undoubtedly speak loudly on his behalf. They were induced to recommend him to mercy on the supposition that he had entertained no previous malice towards the prosecutor, but had acted from the momentary influence of passion. Sentence of death had been recorded against him, but his life would be spared, although under what conditions he was at present unable to determine.

9 11 July 1832

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS The following sentences were recorded :-

James Bennett, aged 26, waterman, of stealing at Kidderminster, a rope, the property of **William** and **Benjamin Devey** of Bewdley, barge owners. Six months imprisonment, last fourteen days in solitary confinement.

Warwick Plant aged 15, boatman, charged with stealing from a colliery belonging to Messrs Badger at Dudley a quantity of coal. Not guilty.

10 5 December 1832

SUICIDE An inquisition was held before H Smith Esq on Friday last, on the body of Mrs Brindley, landlady of the King's Head in this town. 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 this town. Verdict, "Lunacy".

11 8 January 1834

Inquisitions were last week taken before H Smith Esq, coroner. At Kingswinford, on **Joseph Leech**, a boatman, who kept a public house at Mill Lane ; on Wednesday morning, his body was found in the Stourbridge Canal with a wound in the throat, which he had inflicted with a knife, having been for some time in a deranged state of mind.

12 19 March 1834

STAFFORDSHIRE LENT ASSIZES Joseph Webb was indicted for horse stealing.

Thomas Beckett, the prosecutor, is a boatman, and said he layed his horse in a field at Radford, near Stafford. On the 26th of August last, the horse was missing, and ultimately traced to a public house at Great Bridge, where it was taken by a person named Sheldon ; but whilst there the prisoner

directed the horse to be fed, and went with the landlord of the public house to the stable, and appeared to take an interest in the welfare of the animal, and he and Sheldon were drinking together at the same house. About six o'clock at night Sheldon left the house, and did not take the horse with him. When the prisoner was charged with stealing the mare, he said it was Sheldon's mare, who had bought it at Penkridge from Thomas Beckett ; and that Sheldon said it ought to have been his own, as Beckett owed him £1 15s.

The prisoner employed no counsel, but defended himself. He said, having known Sheldon before, he went with him at his request to Great Bridge, but that he was at Penkridge at the time the horse was taken, and knew nothing about it. Sheldon wanted him to go with him a boating, which brought him in his company ; but he denied knowing anything of the horse being stolen. He received a very good character ; and his Lordship said it was for the Jury to be satisfied that he took the animal, otherwise the allegation in the indictment could not be supported ; it was not for them to inquire whether he had received it from any one else.

The Jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty.

13 7 May 1834

On Sunday morning, **Joseph Piddock**, a lock-keeper on the Birmingham Canal near the Cannock Road bridge in this town, was called up about four o'clock by a boatman, who had discovered something floating in the water, which appeared like a human being. On dragging it to the side with a rake, it was discovered to be the body of a young woman, and was recognised to be that of Elizabeth Underhill, about 16 or 17 years of age, who left her service on the previous Wednesday, and had not been seen since. There were no marks of violence on the body when discovered, and it is not known whether she fell in by accident or had thrown herself in intentionally. The body appeared to have been in the water several days. An inquest was held on the body on Monday before Henry Smith Esq, coroner, and evidence having been received as to the above facts, the jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

14 11 June 1834

MURDER OF CHARLES WILLIAMS

THREE PERSONS COMMITTED The coroner's inquest which we in our last announced as sitting at the Gifford's Arms in this town, at the time of our going to press, was adjourned the same evening (Tuesday) until last Monday afternoon, in order to collect further evidence, and for the apprehension of other persons who appeared to be criminated. Three men were in the interval apprehended, in addition to the man and woman already in custody. The inquest accordingly proceeded on the afternoon of Monday last, and at the close of the inquiry, a verdict of wilful murder was returned against two men and one woman, viz **William Cartwright**, John Tart and Emma Albert, who were forthwith committed to Stafford County Gaol by the coroner, Henry Smith Esq. The following extracts from the evidence given before the coroner give the chief facts of the case.

William Marshall, a locksmith of this town, on being sworn, said he knew the deceased, who was about thirty years of age, a wood turner and a married man. He also knew **William Jackman** (but whose real name is William Cartwright), the prisoner present, who lived in Boblake in this town, and keeps a house of ill fame. Between one and two o'clock on Sunday morning, the 1st of June, witness was passing along Boblake to go home, and between the Queen's Head and Barrel public houses met with five or six men who work with Mr Nicholls, the wood turner, one of whom was the deceased. Witness stopped and began to talk with the deceased and some of the other workmen, and at this time no disturbance had taken place and he had not seen the prisoner ; but while they were talking, the prisoner and twelve or fourteen other persons, men and women, came down the entry leading to prisoner's house, and without speaking a word to deceased, prisoner struck him a blow on the head which knocked him down. Deceased had not spoken to the prisoner, or given him any provocation, but was merely talking to witness and fellow workmen. As soon as deceased was knocked down, two young women, who came down the entry with prisoner, came up and one of

them said to prisoner, "D—n your eyes, Billy, go it"; upon which he turned round and struck witness with his fist on the back part of his head, when witness ran away and went home. Witness left deceased on the ground from the effects of the blow, and was afraid to return. Witness was quite sober at the time, and had been to the Seven Stars in John Street, to fetch his brother home.

John Neesham, a wood turner, and fellow workman of the deceased, gave similar evidence as to the commencement of the affray, but did not know any of the party rushing down the entry, except one woman known by the name of "Big Emma", the female prisoner. The men were armed with tongs, pokers and other weapons, and witness was struck on his arm with some weapon, but did not see deceased struck, but on picking him up perceived a bruise on his head near the left ear, and it was bleeding very fast. As soon as witness picked up the deceased, the latter said, "John, I am very ill", and did not speak afterwards until he arrived at witness's house, where he was put to bed with his clothes on, as he would not be undressed, and witness lay on the same bed. Deceased slept soundly until half past six o'clock, when witness washed the blood from his head, and perceived an open wound in the situation before described. Deceased again complained of being very ill, and afterwards walked home, accompanied by witness. Witness did not again see him alive.

Richard Knight, aged 18, was passing along Boblake on his return from an errand for his master, and saw the prisoner William Cartwright and Big Emma, and several other men and women rush down the entry, and prisoner immediately knocked a man down with either a hammer or a staff. The blow was upon some part of the head, and the man immediately fell down, and Big Emma said to prisoner, "D—n your eyes, Billy, go the rider". The prisoner then ran after witness and another person, but could not overtake them, and returned. Witness did not know whether deceased was the man knocked down, as he was not acquainted with him, but no provocation was previously given. Witness spoke to prisoner when he was following them, and asked him what he was going to do at them, to which he replied, "D—n your eyes, I'll let you know". Witness had spoken to him before, and can swear to his voice.

Richard Diggory apprehended the prisoner, who is a boatman, but has not followed that or any other business for the last twelve months. On his apprehension, the prisoner denied having struck anyone, and was taken to his own house where, on searching, the hammer, three sticks and a rough towel stained with blood, and all now produced, were discovered. The stains on the towel resemble finger marks, as if someone had been wiping bloody fingers upon it. The poker now produced was delivered to witness this day by John Sparrow, another constable, and has also blood upon it. The prisoners on Monday morning (the day before the first sitting of the inquest), of his own accord, and without being asked any question, admitted to witness that he had struck some man because he (the prisoner) had received a kick on the shins.

Thomas Nicholls, son of the deceased's employer, was with the party attacked, and after having deposed to the commencement of the affray, as already stated, added that Emma Albert laid hold of his coat while he was stooping to assist one of the men to get up, and tore it as it now appears, and at the same time said, "D—n his eyes, this is the b----r who has been breaking our windows". The party were headed and encouraged by the woman, who was cursing and swearing all the time, saying, "D—n their eyes, Billy or Noddy, go it, and lay it into them", which she repeated several times. We were followed as far as the Free School, and I lost my hat in the affray, and went into the prisoner's house to ask after my hat, when I saw the prisoner and Emma Albert there, and while I was there a stout man came in and pulled from his frock the hammer now produced, which I can swear to from the stale having bark upon it. When he brought out the hammer, he said, "D—n their eyes, I've laid it into some of them with this"; and upon this the woman wrenched the hammer out of his hand, saying at the same time to the man, "Noddy, do you know what you are doing?" and then threw the hammer into a hole or lumber place. I do not remember seeing any weapon in the prisoner Jackman's hand, but he might have one and me not see it, there was such confusion.

Joseph Browne, assistant surgeon to Mr Gill of this town, was called in to attend the deceased, Charles Williams, at his house in Little Lane, near Stafford Street, on Sunday afternoon about four o'clock. He was lying upon a bed upstairs in a state of stupor, and unable to understand or answer any questions put to him. Witness examined his head and bled him. There was a slight incision on

the head just above the left ear, on the anterior part, but no fracture was then discovered. Witness remained with him between half an hour and three quarters, during which time deceased appeared to rally ; ordered witness medicine, and requested to be informed in a short time how he went on, and in about two hours a person was sent to say he was dead, and therefore witness did not go again until Monday afternoon, when he went with Mr Gatis, the House Surgeon at the Dispensary, to make a *post mortem* examination. Witness then proceeded to describe the appearances presented. The body was perfectly healthy, but there was great contusion on the left side of the head. A portion of the bone underneath the incision, about an inch long and three quarters of an inch wide, was found compressed upon the brain. Witness had no doubt the death of the deceased had been caused by the fracture in his head, which must have been occasioned by a violent blow, and given with a heavy instrument ; a stick, unless a very heavy one, could not produce it, and it was most probably done with the blunt end of a hammer, such as the one produced. The size of the bone and the blunt end of the hammer head correspond in size as nearly as can be.

On the resumption of the proceedings on Monday last, Richard Diggory presented the three prisoners taken since the adjournment, viz, John Tart, Edward Hughes and Edward Dickin. The last named prisoner came to Diggory and surrendered himself on Saturday night last.

Thomas Nicholls recognised John Tart as being the man who went into the prisoner Cartwright's house after the affray and pulled the hammer from under his frock. Hughes was in the house at the time, and witness was asking him about the hat which he had lost when Tart went in. Witness knew nothing of Dickin, and could not say whether he was in the affray or not.

15 19 November 1834

PURSUANT TO THE ACT FOR THE RELIEF OF INSOLVENT DEBTORS IN ENGLAND

THE COURT FOR RELIEF OF INSOLVENT DEBTORS The matter of the petition and schedule of the Prisoner hereinafter named (the name having been filed in the court) is appointed to be heard at the Court House at Chester, in the county of Chester, on the 9th day of December 1834, at ten o'clock in the forenoon.

THOMAS COPE, formerly of Kidsgrove in the parish of Wolstanton in the county of Stafford, Publican and labourer, afterwards of Kidsgrove aforesaid, Publican and boatman.

16 19 November 1834

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next Session, for an Act to repeal and to consolidate, extend, amend and render more effectual, the powers and provisions contained in the several Acts of Parliament hereinafter mentioned, that is to say

An Act passed in the 8th year of the reign of King George the Third, intituled “an Act for making and maintaining a Navigable Cut or Canal from Birmingham to Bilston, and from thence to Autherley, there to communicate with the Canal now making between the rivers Severn and Trent, and for making collateral Cuts up to several coal mines”. Also another Act passed in the 9th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act to rectify a mistake in an Act passed in the 8th year of his present Majesty, intituled “an Act for making and maintaining a Navigable Cut or Canal from Birmingham to Bilston, and from thence to Autherley, there to communicate with the Canal now making between the rivers Severn and Trent, and for making collateral Cuts up to several coal mines” ; and to explain and amend the said Act”.

Also another Act passed in the 11th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act to oblige the Company of Proprietors of the Birmingham Canal Navigation to complete the said Canal to a field called Newhall Ring, adjoining to the town of Birmingham, in the county of Warwick, within a limited time, and to maintain and keep the same free and open for the passage of Boats, Barges and other vessels.

Also another Act passed in the 23rd year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for making and maintaining a Navigable Canal from a place near Rider's Green in the county of Stafford, to Broadwater Fire Engine, and six collateral cuts from the same to several Coal Mines ; and also a

Navigable Canal from or near the town of Birmingham to join the Coventry Canal at or near Fazeley in the parish of Tamworth in the said county of Stafford, with a collateral Cut to the lower part of the said town of Birmingham.

Also another Act passed in the 24th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for incorporating the Company of Proprietors of a Canal Navigation, authorised by an act passed in the 8th year of the reign of his present Majesty King George the Third, to be made from Birmingham to Bilston and Autherley, with the Company of Proprietors of a Canal Navigation, authorised by an act passed in the 23rd year of the reign of his present Majesty to be made from Birmingham to Fazeley ; and for consolidating their Shares and amending the said last mentioned Act”.

Also another Act passed in the 25th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act to enable the Company of Proprietors of the Navigation from the Trent to the Mersey, and the Company of Proprietors of the Navigation from Birmingham to Fazeley, to make a Navigable Canal from the said Trent and Mersey Navigation on Fradley Heath in the county of Stafford, to Fazeley in the said county ; and for confirming certain Articles of Agreement entered into between the said Trent and Mersey, the Oxford and the Coventry Canal Navigation Companies” so far as the same Act relates to that part of the said last mentioned Canal as lies between Fazeley aforesaid and Whittington Brook, in the said county of Stafford.

Also another Act passed in the 34th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for extending and improving the Birmingham Canal Navigations”.

Also another Act passed in the 46th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for improving the Birmingham Canal Navigations”.

Also another Act passed in the 51st year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for enlarging the powers of several Acts of his present Majesty for making and maintaining the Birmingham Canal Navigations, and for further extending and improving the same”.

Also another Act passed in the 55th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for establishing a navigable communication between the Birmingham Canal Navigations and the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, and amending certain Acts passed relative thereto”.

And also another Act passed in the 58th year of the reign of his said Majesty, intituled “an Act for altering, explaining and amending the several Acts of Parliament passed relating to the Birmingham Canal Navigations, and for improving the said Canal Navigations”.

And also to make a Navigable Cut or Canal from part of the said Birmingham Canal, at or near to a Branch of Canal called the Gower Branch, in the parish of West Bromwich in the county of Stafford, to communicate with another part of the said Birmingham Canal at or near to Puppy Green Lane in the parish of Tipton otherwise Tibbington in the said county of Stafford ; which said Cut or Canal is intended to pass from, through, or into the several parishes, parochial chapelries, townships, hamlets or places of Tipton otherwise Tibbington, Rowley Regis and West Bromwich, or some of them, all in the said county of Stafford. And also to make another Navigable Cut or Canal from other part of the said Birmingham Canal, commencing at or near to a certain Branch Canal in the said parish of Tipton otherwise Tibbington, leading to the Tipton Three Furnace Ironworks, to communicate with another part of the said Birmingham Canal near a certain bridge called Soap Factory Bridge, in the said parish of Tipton otherwise Tibbington aforesaid ; which said last mentioned Cut or Canal is intended to pass from, through or into the said parish of Tipton otherwise Tibbington in the said county of Stafford. And also to make another Navigable Cut or Canal from other part of the said Birmingham Canal, commencing at or near to Wallbrook Bridge, in the township, hamlet or place of Coseley in the parish of Sedgley in the said county of Stafford, to communicate with another part of the said Birmingham Canal at the Ivy House Lane, in the several townships, hamlets or places of Coseley and Ettingshall in the said parish of Sedgley ; which said last mentioned Cut or Canal is intended to pass from, through or into the parishes, parochial chapelries, townships, hamlets or places of Sedgley, Coseley and Ettingshall, or some of them, in the said county of Stafford. And also to make another navigable cut or Canal from other part of the said Birmingham Canal, commencing at a point between the Anchor Bridge and Stoney Lane Bridge in the township of Oldbury in the county of Salop, and terminating in a field of land called

Minley's Piece, the property of the Trustees of William Eagles Johnson, in the occupation of William Jarvis Hodgetts, in the said township of Oldbury ; which last said mentioned Cut or Canal is intended to pass from, through or into the several parishes, parochial chapelries, townships, hamlets or places of Oldbury, Langley, Warley Wigorn, Warley Salop, Titford, Cakemore, The Portway, Rowley Regis and Hales Owen, or some of them, in the several counties of Salop, Worcester and Stafford. And also to make another Navigable Cut or Canal from and out of the last mentioned cut or canal, commencing at or near to the Titford Reservoir, and terminating in a piece of land belonging to John Beete, in the occupation of Sarah Brinton, in the hamlet or township of Warley Wigorn in that part of the said parish of Hales Owen as lies in the county of Worcester ; which said last mentioned cut or canal is intended to pass from, through or into the said several parishes, parochial chapelries, townships, hamlets or places of Oldbury, Langley, Warley Wigorn, Warley Salop, Titford, Cakemore, The Portway, Rowley Regis and Hales Owen, or some of them. And also to make another Navigable Cut or Canal from other part of the said Birmingham Canal at a point between the Stoney Lane Bridge and the Seven Stars Bridge, in the said township of Oldbury, and terminating in the said field of land called Minley's Piece, the property of the Trustees of William Eagles Johnson, in the occupation of William Jarvis Hodgetts, in the said township of Oldbury ; which last said mentioned Cut or Canal is intended to pass from, through or into the several parishes, parochial chapelries, townships, hamlets or places of Oldbury, Langley, Warley Wigorn, Warley Salop, Titford, Cakemore, The Portway, Rowley Regis and Hales Owen, or some of them. And also to make another Cut or Canal from and out of the last mentioned cut or canal, commencing in a piece or land called Long Meadow, the property of John Jarvis, in his occupation, and terminating in the said piece of land belonging to the said John Beete, in the occupation of the said Sarah Brinton, in the said hamlet or township of Warley Wigorn ; which said last mentioned cut or canal is intended to pass from, through or into the said property of the Trustees of William Eagles Johnson, in the occupation of William Jarvis Hodgetts, in the said township of Oldbury ; which last said mentioned Cut or Canal is intended to pass from, through or into the several parishes, parochial chapelries, townships, hamlets or places of Oldbury, Langley, Warley Wigorn, Warley Salop, Titford, Cakemore, The Portway, Rowley Regis and Hales Owen, or some of them.

And in the said Act it is intended to insert powers and provisions for managing, maintaining, improving, repairing, supporting and supplying with water the said Birmingham Canal Navigations, and the several cuts, branches, canals and works connected and to be connected therewith, and belonging to or to belong to the said Company of Proprietors.

And it is also intended by the said Act to impose certain tolls, rates and duties on or in respect of all goods, wares, merchandise and articles navigated or conveyed on the said Canal Navigations, and the several cuts, branches and canals connected and to be connected therewith, and belonging or to belong to the said Company of Proprietors.

CLEMENT INGLEBY

Solicitor to the Company of Proprietors of the Birmingham Canal Navigations.

Birmingham, November 1 1834

17 21 January 1835

Coroner's inquests have been held in the course of last week before Henry Smith Esq. 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 the intention of drawing off the water for his boat to pass, and the morning being very dark, it is supposed that he must have fallen into the lock by accident, and the body was not discovered and got out until about twenty minutes, when it was quite dead. The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

18 16 September 1835

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9 **James Jones** was charged with stealing a flannel frock, a pair of shoes and a barragon jacket, the property of **Charles Collins**. The prosecutor is a boatman living at

Ettingshall, and on the 2nd instant hired the prisoner to assist in the boat. Next day the prisoner decamped, taking the articles with him, and leaving his own shoes in the place of those he took away. Committed to the Sessions.

19 11 November 1835

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 4 **William Hough**, a boatman in the employ of Messrs Shipton and Co, carriers, was charged with neglect of service. The defendant, it appeared, received his money for a voyage and started, but afterwards left his boat about ten miles from Wolverhampton and got drunk, in consequence of which the delivery of her lading would be materially delayed. Mr Shipton said the practice was so frequent among boatmen that the firm considered it necessary, to insure the due performance of their engagements, that an example should be made. The defendant admitted the impropriety of his conduct, and begged hard to be allowed to return to his work, promising not to be guilty of similar neglect in future. After some hesitation, Mr Shipton acceded to his request, and the warrant was ordered to stand over.

20 25 November 1835

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 21

IRON STEALING ON THE BIRMINGHAM CANAL John Jones, Samuel Aston and Thomas Witts were charged with stealing several pigs of iron from a boat in the Birmingham Canal. **Joseph Kirk**, a boatman living at Cannock Bridge, stated that he was in the employ of Messrs Greensill of Stourport, and that last Wednesday morning he missed from his boat, which was in the third pound of the Birmingham Canal, eight or nine pigs of iron ; when the iron was delivered to him it was weighed, and was twenty tons long weight ; when it was delivered at Mr Addenbroke's, Moor Croft, it was seven hundred weight two quarters short, as he was informed. The iron was marked "A Lightmoor" and the pig produced he knew by the marks and letters, though he could not read, to be one of his lading. **Joseph Collins**, lock-keeper on the Birmingham canal, stated that some pig iron belonging to the Level Furnace Company having been stolen from a boat, he searched for it, and found fifteen pigs in the water ; he gave information to Fenn, and they determined to watch it ; while doing so, on Wednesday morning, between two and three o'clock, they heard a rumbling in a hedge, and Fenn went up, and in a few minutes called to witness to come up ; on doing so, he found the prisoner Jones in Fenn's custody and some pigs of iron close to them. Jones begged hard to be let go, and said they would soon see who would fetch the iron. Fenn corroborated this statement, and added that, on going towards the noise, he saw a person coming up the field who put down his load and went back again ; he was met by another who left something near a rail and went back. He took Jones, and found the iron reared against some rails ; the pig produced was taken in Jones's possession ; he then took a person who came with a horse and cart ; and after that took Witts at his lodgings, where he found him sitting before the fire and drying his trousers ; he knew him, from his dress, to be the person who got away ; he had also seen the three prisoners together drinking on Thursday night, at the Queen in Stafford Street. When asked if they had anything to say to the charge, Witts declared that he was never out of the house that night, and said two women present knew it. Jones said he had horses to look to in Mr Marshall's field, and that brought him there. Aston said nothing. Jones and Witts were committed to the sessions. The evidence given against Aston being only that he was drinking with the other prisoners, no commitment was made out against him on the present charge ; but he already stands committed for stealing a horse and cart on Wednesday.

21 2 December 1835

CORONER'S INQUESTS BEFORE H 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. Verdict, "Accidental death".

22 10 January 1838

STAFFORDSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS **George Hill**, a boatman, was indicted for stealing a purse, containing four sovereigns and nine shillings, from the person of **Charles Cummings**, his master, at Bilston. The prisoner had helped himself to the purse of his master whilst asleep in a public house. Guilty – six months imprisonment.

23 21 March 1838

NISI PRIUS COURT – **BUDD v ASHLEY** Mr Serjeant 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. Mr Lee addressed the Jury for the defendant, and observed 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 damage having been proved, the Jury returned a verdict for plaintiff, with damages one farthing.

24 27 June 1838

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

MONDAY JUNE 25 **Benjamin Reeves**, a boatman, was committed to the sessions, to take his trial for a misdemeanour, in committing an indecent assault upon Eliza Ward, a fine child about nine years old. The case was one of a very aggravated description.

25 18 July 1838

The following inquisitions have been held before H Smith Esq, coroner :- On the 12th inst, at Bilston, on **John Swift**, a boatman, whose death was occasioned by his going to sleep on a heap of calcined lime near to Mr Banks's furnace. Verdict, "Accidental death".

26 8 August 1838

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY AUGUST 3 **James Holmes**, a boatman, was charged by **Robert Bromley** of Wombourne, also a boatman, with assaulting him and biting off his under lip. It appeared from the evidence of a third man (for the prosecutor was unable to articulate distinctly) that the prosecutor, defendant and witness had been drinking together for two or three days, and that in a drunken quarrel, the night before, the defendant had committed the outrage complained of. The lip was produced in a tin box by the superintendent of the police. The Magistrates expressed their indignation at the disgusting and brutal conduct of the defendant, and fined him £5, the highest penalty allowed by law, and in default of payment, sentenced him to the treadmill for two months.

27 8 January 1840

STAFFORDSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS **John Forrester** (on bail) was charged with stealing on the 6th of December two bundles of wrought iron, the property of the Chillington Iron Company. William Jevons, stock keeper at the Chillington Iron Works, deposed that the prisoner is a boatman, and was engaged to carry a quantity of iron for the company ; his boat was accordingly loaded with 190 bundles of iron ; another boatman also had a load of the same article but of a different size. Two bundles were afterwards missed, one of which was found in the prisoner's boat and another of a different size in the canal. Mr Allen contended that there was no proof of the prisoner having taken the iron but, on the contrary, it was very probable that it had been delivered from the warehouse through mistake. The Jury consulted for a short time, and found the prisoner Not Guilty.

28 18 March 1840

STAFFORDSHIRE SPRING ASSIZES

LARCENY **John Lucas** was found guilty of stealing an earthenware jug and some ladles, the property of Joseph Handley, at Amblecote, and sentenced to three months imprisonment. The prisoner was a boatman, and had stolen the goods from a crate.

29 18 March 1840

STAFFORDSHIRE SPRING ASSIZES **Francis Lewis**, boatman, charged with felony, inasmuch as he had absconded from the employment of Mr John Harrison of Dudley, carrying off with him 30s with which he had been entrusted to pay the canal dues of a boat load of straw. The prisoner was found drunk in a public house, and had spent all the money ; but the judge held that there had been no proof of the conversion of the money to his own use proved, and that this was indispensable. The want of this evidence arose from the refusal of the landlord of the public house to attend although subpoenaed. His lordship ordered him to be called on his subpoena, and not appearing, was fined £5.

30 18 March 1840

STAFFORDSHIRE SPRING ASSIZES - MONDAY

THE MURDER OF CHRISTINA COLLINS – CONVICTION OF THE MURDERERS **James Owen**, aged 39, **George Thomas alias Dobell**, aged 27, and **William Ellis, alias Lambert**, were placed at the bar, charged with the wilful murder of Christina Collins on the 17th day of June 1839, at the parish of Rugeley. The prisoners were rather rough looking men, and their dress and appearance completely indicated the class to which they belonged. They took their places at the bar with some degree of readiness, and manifested great composure during the trial.

Mr Serjeant Ludlow and Mr Lee appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Godson and Mr Yardley for the prisoners.

Mr Serjeant Ludlow, after a few observations on the importance of the case, gave a minute detail of the whole transaction, as developed by the testimony of the witnesses, after which he said there were only three ways of accounting for the deceased's death – she might have fallen into the water accidentally ; she might have thrown herself in ; or she was thrown in by the wilful act of the prisoners, or some of them. After expressing his reliance on the discrimination of the jury, and on their wish to do justice, the learned counsel concluded by calling

William Brooks, who did not for some minutes answer, when his Lordship said that if the attorney did not bring his witnesses more promptly, he would not allow his bill. The witness said he lived in June last at Stoke-upon-Trent, and was porter to Pickford and Co. On Sunday the 16th of June, he saw a woman passenger in one of the boats. Owen had the command of that boat, and Thomas and Lambert were two of the crew, and a boy named **Musson** was with them, Heard the woman say to Thomas, "Leave me alone, I will have nothing to say to you".

Hugh Cordwell, check clerk to the Trent and Mersey Canal Company at Stone, saw the body of a woman at Rugeley on Tuesday the 18th of June. Had seen her alive on Sunday the 16th at Stone, five minutes before eight in the evening. He gauged the boat, and when he had done so, she got out. She remarked on the condition of the men ; they were all in liquor, Owen in particular. She walked against the battlements of the bridge, and Owen went to her, and asked why she did not follow him through the town. Witness did not hear the reply. She then walked under the canal bridge which was going away from him. The two other prisoners were there. The boat left at ten minutes past eight. No other boat came through until half past eleven.

Thomas Brewer was captain of a boat called the *Emma*, and was passing on the Trent and Mersey canal on the 16th of June. He met Owen's boat nearer Sandon than Aston lock ; it was then getting dusk, near nine o'clock. Asked Owen to get on to his boat to have a glass of ale. Instead of Owen, Thomas got on. There was a woman in the boat. Witness said to the woman, "How do you do?" Owen said to him, pointing to the woman, "Will you have any of this?" Witness said, "No". Thomas said, "Jemmy had concerns with her, and he would that night, or they'd burk her". Thomas

went on board his own boat.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : Was examined at last assizes and thought he told about the burking expression ; was sure he did.

Robert Walker had the command of a boat, and on the 18th of June met a woman on the towing-path, near Salt Bridge, and afterwards met one of Pickford's boats. Some person in it said, "Did you meet a passenger of ours?" He replied, "Yes". One of the men in the boat said he wanted to have to do with her. Can't say which of them it was.

Ann Mills, keeper at Hoo Mill lock, said that about twelve o'clock on Sunday night, the 18th of June, she heard a cry. Got up and saw a woman on the top of a boat in the lock. It was one of Pickford's boats, and there were three men with it ; the woman got off the boat. She cried for her shoes ; and after she got her shoes she sat outside the cabin, with her legs hanging down. She said to the men, "Don't attempt me ; I'll not go into the cabin, I'll not go down there". Witness asked one of the men "who they had got there", and he said a passenger. She asked if anyone was with her, and he said her husband.

By the Court : It is nine miles from witness's lock to Stone.

James Mills, the husband of the last witness, heard the screams – they were cries as of a person in distress. Saw a woman on the top of the cabin. Heard his wife inquire respecting the woman. [His account of the questions and answers were the same as hers].

William Hatton in June last belonged to a boat of Messrs Bach and Co. Knew Brindley's Bank ; there was a watering place between it and Rugeley. Met Owen and Dobell between the watering place and the stop place. Dobell and Owen were on the bank, they said, "Have you seen a woman?" He replied, "No, I have not". They then had some talk together which he did not hear. He passed through Hoo Mill lock between twelve and one o'clock. His boat was going the same way, but had not then come up with their boat. He came up with it about a mile after.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : The canal in some places between Brindley's Bank and Rugeley wharf is about forty feet wide, but shallow at the sides. Owen's boat, when he met Owen and Dobell, would at the ordinary rate of travelling be about a mile in advance, that is near Rugeley. Owen and Dobell were coming away from it.

William Lowe on Monday the 17th June was engaged in steering a boat near Rugeley. In going towards Stoke, he met a boat of Pickford's about two o'clock. There was no driver with the boat. He saw also Bach's boat, and one man talking to Bach's driver, two men following. One of the men was without a coat.

James Wilday was captain of one of Bach's boats on the 17th of June. When near Hansacre he got up between three and four o'clock, and then saw one of Pickford's boats, and James Owen jump off and stand upon the middle plank of the boat, and wait for the stern end of the boat to come to him. Saw the boy Musson steering, and said to him, "Hulloa boy, tell your master to look out". The boy closed the cabin door ; if he had not done so, witness could have seen into the cabin.

Cross-examined by Mr Godson : There is a sharp turn at Brindley Bank, and a person unused to a boat might, if the horse jerked, be thrown off ; the boat is about thirty feet long, and the canal about forty feet wide. The witness was then examined at considerable length respecting the different locks in the neighbourhood.

By the Court : In turning the corner at Brindley Bank, had found a difficulty in keeping their standing themselves ; it required care and attention in managing the boat.

William Musson was one of the crew of the boat with the prisoners. Got out at Colwich lock to go to the horse ; the woman was then in the cabin in the boat, with her shoes and bonnet off. When they got to Brindley Bank, she was not there. Owen was steering. At that time, they had got round the turn ; they went round the turn as usual. When he went into the boat at the stop place, he asked where the woman was. Owen said he believed she was drowned, and asked for some silver to pay Dobell. A little time after that, went over the cabin and saw Owen in the hold, and a box opened ; the two boxes had been corded with light coloured cord. Remembered Bach's man calling out, and Owen telling him to shut the cabin door. He was confined to gaol with the prisoners, but did not hear Dobell and Lambert say anything about the woman in the boat, nor when not in prison.

Cross-examined : When witness went on board at Brindley Bank, Ellis was asleep ; heard him snore. Last saw the woman on the cross bed in the cabin at Colwich lock ; was with Thomas at Aston lock. Thomas then said “he wished the woman had been at hell, or somewhere else ; for he hated the sight of her”. When they passed Hoo Mill lock he was asleep, and did not hear any screams.

John Bladon was wharfinger at Rugeley wharf. On Monday morning the 17th of June, none of the prisoners came to him to give him information of the occurrence. Went with a person named Johnson to Brindley Bank ; opposite the towing-path there is a steep bank from ten to eighteen feet above the water level ; the canal is about thirty four feet wide, and the water is from three feet nine to three feet ten in the deepest part.

Ann Lee is wife of Jonathan Lee, who keeps the Wood End. On the 17th of June about half past one, Owen came to her and said he was afraid they had a woman drowned. He could not think what had become of her ; she was like one deranged ; she had been once in the canal up to her knees, and he had great trouble in getting her out. Owen appeared a little intoxicated, confused from liquor.

By the Court : He appeared to tremble ; but witness did not know whether from drink or not. He said he thought the woman had gone a little walk. She had said, “Collins, Collins, Collins”.

Charles Rowbotham lived at Fradley, and was clerk to Pickford and Company. On Monday morning the 17th of June, about six o'clock, Owen came and said a bad job had happened. A woman passenger, he said, he believed had drowned herself ; she had attempted it once before. Witness told him that was a reason for taking greater care of her. Owen added that he thought her off her head, for she kept crying out, “Collins, Collins”. Owen spoke about the boxes, and witness wanted to keep them, as they would by them find out who the woman was. Dobell said it was no use keeping the boxes. Witness wished Owen to go back and look for the woman, and he was not willing. Witness went on to Mr Kirk at Fazeley, and got there before the boat. Mr Kirk and witness were on the wharf side when the boat came in, and told the men to come in and bring the load note. Owen said the last he saw of the woman was when she got out at Colwich lock.

By the Court : Went with the constable and searched the cabin, and found the woman's bonnet and shoes there. Witness told Owen the cabin was no place for passengers ; Owen said she had been in the cabin the greatest part of the way. Both the other prisoners said she had not – they would not have her in the cabin.

By Mr Serjeant Ludlow : The boxes when witness saw them were both corded, one with dark cord. The bonnet when he found it was crushed up.

By Mr Godson : In the evening, Owen, when in the lock up, said he was innocent and burst out a crying. Owen said the other men had quarrelled with him for letting the woman be in the cabin.

By the Court : Owen said if witness was not called up at the inquest he should have him up. When at Fradley, Owen said he was out of time because he turned back to look for the woman.

William Kirk said he was Pickford's agent at Fazeley. He remembered the arrival of Mr Rowbotham and of the boat at Fazeley. He told Lambert to bring the papers into the office, he wanted to speak to him. He said, “D—n and ---- the woman ; if she has drowned herself, I cannot help it”. According to witness's recollection Rowbotham was not then present, and witness had not said anything about the woman. Owen was in the cabin, and witness told him to come in the office with the papers ; Owen said he had lost a passenger, and was sorry for it. Witness then went to search for the boxes. Owen said he last saw the woman at Colwich lock, and thought she was off her head. She had left the boat at Colwich lock, and would go no further. Dobell, on coming into the office, said he hoped the woman, using a very coarse expression, was burning in hell.

By the Court : Had he seen Rowbotham?

Witness : I can't say ; he had been in a public house near.

By Mr Godson : Dobell was very drunk when he used this language ; and such persons, when drunk, often use very coarse language.

William Harrison, headborough of Fazeley, was at the canal when the boat arrived. Lambert said, “D—n and b--- the woman, what do we know about the woman. If she had a mind to drown herself she might”. This was before anything had been said to them. Owen said he believed she had

drowned herself. (The witness then produced the deceased's bonnet, which seemed to be made of faded blue silk, and was much crushed). Owen told witness, at Rugeley, "Her wanted very little drowning". Witness had been to see the place where the body was found. Witness replied, "I should think none at all, from the place where she was drowned". The water at the place was shallow, about eighteen or nineteen inches deep ; this was about a week afterwards.

By the Court : Was sure he mentioned this conversation at the former trial.

Francis Jackson said that Owen was left in his care at Fazeley. Owen was handcuffed to witness. A man came to Owen, and Owen said to him, "Do you go and tell the two men in the hold to be sure and swear we left the woman at Colwich lock". The man came again next day and said he had done so. Owen said then do it again and be sure.

Mr Serjeant Ludlow then wished to put in the examinations of the prisoners taken before the coroner ; but after some discussion, his Lordship decided that, as they were taken on oath, they could not be received.

Thomas Grant, a boatman, was on Brindley Bank on the morning of the 17th of June last, about five o'clock, and found the body of a woman, about eighty yards below the turn ; the water was about eighteen or nineteen inches deep ; the woman had no bonnet or shoes on ; her face was downwards. **John Johnson** was with him.

John Johnson made a similar statement ; the body was about four feet from the side ; there was a high bank above it ; the body was warm, the water was warm. It is a regular turn from the Brindley Bank to the stop place, from thence to where the body was found it is straight.

Hannah Phillips remembered the inquest at Rugeley ; saw the body of the woman ; she had on a gown and handkerchief, and a white petticoat and pair of drawers. The body of the gown on the left arm was a little torn by the sleeve being ripped from it ; the body of it was torn also ; the neckerchief too was torn on the left side.

Elizabeth Matthews assisted in taking off the clothes of deceased ; took off the drawers ; they were in the same state now, except where she cut them to get them off ; the fork part appeared to be torn.

Elizabeth Price lived in Liverpool. Remembered the deceased leaving on the 15th of June. She was very neat in her person, and a dressmaker by business.

Robert Collins said Christina Collins was his wife. He left her at Liverpool at the latter end of May 1839 ; but afterwards sent her a sovereign to come to London. Saw the body at Rugeley, and it was the body of his wife.

Joseph Orgill was convicted of bigamy, and had received a pardon. While he was in gaol at Stafford, Owen had a conversation with him on a Sunday night during the assizes. The witness proceeded – After we were locked up in our cell, I said, "Mine is a bad job". He said, "So is mine. I can't think why they have taken the boy away from the other two men. Perhaps he's going to be a witness against us ; but it cannot be about the woman ; it must be something else, for he does not know anything about her. The other two men committed a rape upon her, and mauled her to death. I am free. I'm afraid they will be a hanging job." I said, "I cannot tell". He then said to me they had a woman passenger in the boat, who was going to London. They had some whiskey in the boat, and they all got drunk except the woman. When they were drunk, they began to be rough with her. She got off the boat, and they met another boat. They asked them if they had met a woman. They told him, "Yes". He asked, "How far off?" He said he would (using a coarse word) have her. He went on till he came to the lock house, where she was talking to the woman. She was afraid to go with them, but did go. Dobell and Lambert went on with mauling her all the way, and they committed a rape or rapes. One of them cut the trousers before they could do it. The woman screamed out. He (Owen) tried to have to do with the woman, but couldn't. She said, "Oh captain, what are you doing? Oh! My Collins, Collins. I wish he was here". He remained in the boat till they got to Colwich lock, where he was called up ; he was drunk with whiskey, and loath to get up. The other two men came into the boat, and the boy went out. The woman also got out ; she got over the side, and her legs were halfway over. They (Dobell and Lambert) got her in the cabin again, where they committed a rape again. Witness asked if she was dead. Owen said, "She was completely mauled to death. I tell you she was dead". He said what made them do it was they

knew what they had done. [In reply to a question from the learned Judge, the witness said Owen did not state what he meant by "doing it".] They were afraid the woman would tell. They had a quarrel amongst them about it. Dobell came in to steer the boat, and took the woman out of the cabin and laid her on the top. Whether she was pushed off or rolled off going round the turn, he could not tell. Dobell saw the last of her. He said they had made a bad job of it, for they left her shoes and bonnet in the cabin. Nothing then occurred till they came to Fradley Junction, where he wished to leave the things. Dobell, he said, went to the box, and took a piece of calico print. He remonstrated, when Dobell said they should be all right if he'd hold his noise, and as to the boxes, she'd come no more after them. Owen then said to witness, "Did you take notice of the chapter read by the chaplain? It was on purpose for us". Witness said, "Why so?" Owen replied, "Because there was so much about hanging in it ; but I hope they will not hang us, but we shall get off with transportation, and then I don't care. We have made a bad job of it altogether. If we had made an alarm at Rugeley nobody would have known, or if we had put her in the hold, and then Pickford would have been fined for not having the straw. Had Dobell and Thomas left the woman alone at Colwich lock she'd have been alive and well enough".

Mr Godson cross-examined the witness at considerable length. The principal point established in favour of the prisoners was that Owen said the woman was dead before she was put in the water.

Mr Barnett, surgeon of Rugeley, stated that he examined the body ; he found two small bruises on the right arm below the elbow. The cavities on the right side of the heart were gorged with blood ; the other viscera were all healthy ; there was a frothy mucus about the mouth and throat, and water in the stomach. Applying his judgement and experience, and he had been in the profession twenty years, he should say death was caused by suffocation through drowning.

In cross-examination, Mr Barnett admitted that the symptoms were not decisive of death by drowning, but they were generally as he had stated.

Mr Godson, in an excellent speech, addressed the jury for the prisoners, contending that they were substantially tried twice for the same offence. The charge made was that deceased met her death by drowning, and this he maintained was negatived by the evidence of Orgill, who said Owen declared to him she was dead before she was in the water. If they took his evidence as true, it negatived the indictment ; if they disbelieved it, the case was no further advanced than it stood at the last assizes, when his learned friend did not choose to proceed with the case. The learned counsel then spoke to the evidence, after which he argued that a woman in the condition in which the deceased might be supposed to be was likely to be thrown off by the boat's lurching at the bend, and also that she might, in the distress of mind arising from the ill treatment she had suffered, throw herself into the canal rather than meet her husband. The current of the canal and boats passing might convey the body to the place where it was found. Could they, from the evidence, on their oaths, declare that the woman was drowned? Could they affirm that all the three prisoners drowned her? Could they say that Owen drowned her? Could they say that Thomas drowned her? Could they say that Ellis drowned her? They must affirm that some one or all three of the prisoners drowned her before they could find them all three or any one of them guilty. The learned counsel concluded by urging the jury that if the points he had stated were sufficient to raise a reasonable doubt, and he thought they were, they ought, as Serjeant Ludlow had stated in opening the case, to give the prisoners the benefit of it.

The learned Judge, in summing up, went through the evidence, and pointed out its bearings with great perspicuity. In conclusion, he said the first object of the law was not the conviction of the guilty but the protection of the innocent. They would take the whole into their consideration, and consider if one, or two, or three, were concerned, and did commit a murder. If they had a fair and rational doubt of the guilt of the prisoners, or any one of them, they would give him the benefit of it. However disgusting the case might be, they ought rather to take care that the disgust did not lead them to take less evidence of the fact, as it ought rather to induce them to require more.

The jury wished to retire to consider the verdict. They did so. In about half an hour they returned, and in reply to separate questions from Mr Bellamy, the clerk of the arraigns, said that James Owen was *guilty* ; that George Thomas was *guilty* ; and that William Ellis was *guilty*.

The prisoners, when asked why sentence of death should not be passed upon them according to law, made no answer, nor did they evince any particular emotion while the verdict was given.

The customary proclamation for silence was made, and the learned judge proceeded to pronounce the sentence of the law.

The learned Judge said, "James Owen, George Thomas and William Ellis, after a long and patient hearing, a jury of your country have felt themselves constrained to pronounce you guilty of a foul murder – of murder committed on an unoffending woman placed in your charge, and whom you were bound to protect. There is also too much reason to believe that she was the object of your lust, and that you committed murder to prevent the punishment due to that offence. Look not for pardon in this world. Look only to Him who has promised to extend pardon to all penitent sinners. Prepare for an ignominious death. The case is one most painful and disgusting. It only remains for me to pronounce the sentence of the law, which is, that you be taken to the place from whence you came, and thence to a place of execution, and there be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may the Lord have mercy on you".

The prisoners heard the sentence with the same stolid composure as they had evinced during the trial. They left the bar without saying a word. Owen's countenance slightly changed – in the others, there was no perceptible difference, except that Ellis slightly smiled.

31 **1 April 1840**

THE CONDEMNED BOATMEN (from the *Staffordshire Advertiser*) The three boatmen, **James Owen, George Thomas alias Dobell** and **William Ellis alias Lambert**, convicted of the murder of Christina Collins at our late assizes, are still lying under sentence of death in the county prison. We are not aware that any efforts are being made to obtain their reprieve, except that Mr Passman, the solicitor for the prisoners on their trial, has addressed a communication to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, directing Lord Normanby's attention to several points tending to show the doubtful nature of the evidence *as to the prisoners having actually drowned the deceased* and, indeed, as to them having occasioned her death ; and dwelling more particularly on the favourable bearings of the case as against Ellis, and likewise as against Thomas. Mr Passman has not at present received any reply from the Home Officer. Mr Baron Gurney, the judge who tried the prisoners, considers the case, we believe, to be one in which he would not be justified in interfering to prevent the law from taking its course.

These wretched men have, since their condemnation, persisted in maintaining their innocence of the crime of which they were found guilty. Owen, the captain of the boat, who is a married man about forty years of age, was visited by his wife on the day after his condemnation. The poor woman was dreadfully agitated and distressed during the interview ; indeed she was so completely overwhelmed by grief as to be thrown into a fit. She had a second interview with him two days after the first, when she was somewhat less affected. Owen himself betrayed some sensibility on these occasions, as he also had done on seeing his father, who has visited him twice since he received sentence of death. Owen was born at Brinklow, near Rugby, where his father and mother are both now living, and where his wife is living with them. Owen has been a boatman all his life. His mother has been accustomed regularly to go with boats. Owen can read and write tolerably well. Ellis is a single man, twenty eight years of age, and he also was born at Brinklow, and has always been a boatman. Ellis's mother and his brother-in-law visited him a few days after his condemnation. The interview was very distressing, Ellis himself being very much subdued. Ellis can scarcely read at all. Thomas comes from Wombourn, where his father is a labourer, and is a respectable man in his situation in life. Thomas is a single man, twenty seven years of age. He left home eleven years ago, and has only been once during that period to see his friends. His father has visited him in gaol, and seems grieved beyond measure at the situation of his wretched son. The Rev R Buckeridge, the chaplain of the prison, has been most assiduous in his endeavours to bring these men to a proper sense of their awful condition ; and to convince them of the necessity, by true repentance and unfeigned faith, of preparing for the awful doom which awaits them. The chaplain generally visits them twice a day, and by an arrangement of the worthy governor of the prison, persons are with them to read

the scriptures and religious books to them during the intervals between the chaplain's visits. Owen is in a cell apart from the other two, and they will likewise be separated at the beginning of next week. They are deplorably ignorant on religious subjects, and Owen and Thomas seem to be in a state of callousness which is, considering their circumstances, truly awful. As we have already stated, they continue to affirm their innocence of the crime of murder, and have at present made no new disclosure.

It would be understood from Orgill's statement on the trial that the three men and the boy Musson were confined together when first brought to the gaol. We have the best authority for stating that that was not the fact. They were kept in separate yards, and never had opportunities of speaking together.

The execution will take place on Saturday morning next at eight o'clock, as we announced last week, should no reprieve arrive in the interim.

We cannot refrain from expressing a hope that this melancholy case, whether these men suffer the extreme penalty of the law or not, may have a beneficial effect. During the progress of their trial, Baron Gurney emphatically remarked upon the moral and religious destitution of the class to which they belong. "They have no Sabbath", observed his Lordship. We are glad to find that the Bishop of the Diocese has already expressed his intention of adopting some means of providing religious instruction for this neglected body of men. We trust that his lordship's attempts will meet with the friendly cooperation of the canal proprietors, the carriers on the canals, and the public at large ; in which case the happiest results may be anticipated.

32 15 April 1840

EXECUTION OF OWEN AND THOMAS FOR THE MURDER OF CHRISTINA COLLINS The apparently uncertain fate of the murderers of Christina Collins, occasioned by the postponement of their execution coupled with the atrocity of the offences laid to their charge, and the doubts expressed by some persons whether the evidence fully warranted the verdict that the deceased was drowned by the criminals had, we scarcely need to inform our readers in this vicinity, given to this dreadful case a most unusual degree of notoriety, and created corresponding excitement.

The fate of these wretched men is now determined ; two of them have paid the full penalty of the law by the forfeiture of their lives upon the public scaffold ; that of the third (apparently the least guilty) being mercifully spared, from a belief that, notwithstanding his brutal and acknowledged violence towards the devoted victim of their lust, he was free from the guilt of her murder.

The respite, as we have previously stated, was for a week, to afford time for inquiry into some favourable statements made on behalf of the prisoners. Nothing, however, seemed at first sufficiently strong to induce Lord Normanby to think that, consistently with his duty, he could advise a mitigation of the sentence of death with respect to any one of them, and the order for the execution of all three, at the expiration of the respite, was peremptory. Subsequently his Lordship, it would appear, thought more favourably of the case with respect to Ellis, and for him a respite was dispatched which arrived in Stafford between one and two o'clock on Saturday morning, and in the course of the day it became known that the efforts on his behalf, mentioned in the account we have extracted from the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, were so far successful as to exempt him from the dreadful punishment previously awarded.

From the tenor of our statement, it will be perceived that, after Thursday, the day on which Lord Normanby's answer to the general application on behalf of the criminals was received, scarcely the slightest hope of rescuing even one of them from their impending fate could be entertained. Under these circumstances, all the culprits were especially admonished not to indulge any hope of mercy in this world, but diligently to seek for pardon from God alone.

These admonitions, up to even a late hour, there is reason to fear, fell on stony ground. Almost throughout, notwithstanding the persevering and incessant efforts of the Chaplain, the unfortunate men never evinced any lively perception of religious truths, nor appeared to repent the dreadful crime they had committed further than as it affected their present situation. A stolid spirit of endurance characterised their behaviour; they did not pusillanimously fear death, though they

desired to live, but with any notion of future punishment they were by no means duly impressed.

The *Staffordshire Advertiser*, in giving an account of the conduct of the criminals on Saturday, the day of execution, says :-

This morning, at an early hour, the Rev Chaplain visited the men in their cells, giving them advice suitable to their awful situation, and offering up fervent prayers in their presence, and on their behalf. The Rev gentleman was assisted in his solemn duties by the Rev Edward Rathbone, the Governor likewise occasionally giving them a word of advice. Thomas was much more firm than he was yesterday, and denied any knowledge of what happened to the woman after the boat had got a little beyond Colwich lock. He repeated what he had said before, that he was very drunk, and was unconscious of the manner in which she came to her end. If he was steering at the time, he said, "it was unknown to him". He most solemnly affirmed that he had nothing more to confess. Ellis, likewise, persisted in his former statements, and denied most positively any knowledge of the manner in which the woman was drowned. Owen, also, declared he had no further disclosure to make, having told the whole truth on the subject of the death of the woman. The time at which criminals are usually executed at Stafford is 8 in the morning, and although in consequence of its having transpired that further efforts were being made on behalf of Ellis, it was partially known in Stafford and its immediate vicinity on Friday afternoon that the custom would be departed from, and the execution delayed till midday, yet, till the following morning, the information scarcely seemed to have extended to neighbouring places. Many persons arrived in the town on Friday evening, and from three o'clock on Saturday morning up to a much later hour, gig and spring carts, and humbler vehicles, filled with men and women, were continually arriving. The railway trains also brought hundreds of individuals, and the road from the station to the town, whenever a train arrived, presented a living stream pushing on, and we fear we may say, eager to witness the scene of death. The gallows had been placed in front of the prison lodge during the preceding night, and barricades were erected at each of the three approaches, which kept the crowd at about twenty yards distance. Two halters hung from the beam of the gallows – a circumstance which the populace considered a plain indication that the life of one of the wretched criminals would be spared. The crowd began to gather in the vicinity as early as six or seven o'clock, but most of them, on finding that one o'clock was the hour appointed, went away; still, however, there was constantly from that time many hundreds on the spot. As the hour of execution drew near, the multitude increased amazingly, and before twelve o'clock it was with difficulty that access to the prison, even by authorised persons, could be obtained. The streets leading to it were crowded to the farthest extremities, and on the road leading to Stone, thousands had assembled. Walls, trees, windows and gardens and, in fact, almost every spot from which a view of the dreadful event could be anticipated, were occupied. The solemn quietness of the prison, where scarcely a sound was heard except the buzzing of the multitude beyond its walls, presented a striking contrast to the turmoil and confusion prevailing among the crowd – but it was the stillness of death, and the heart sank.

About twelve o'clock, the unhappy culprits were summoned from their cells to the chapel of the prison, to receive the Holy Sacrament. Owen entered first and with rather an unsteady step; Thomas followed; his look was vacant and he seemed scarcely to understand the nature of the solemn rite in which he was about to participate. Ellis came in last, and evinced a similar want of knowledge. Prayer books were given to Owen and Thomas, and they were placed on the left hand side of the communion table, which stood in front of the pulpit. The Governor and Ellis occupied the right side, and the Rev H Buckeridge, the chaplain, took his station at the upper end, his associate in his pious labours, the Rev E Rathbone, being at the lower one. No book was given to Ellis, as he could not read. Previous to the administration of the solemn rite, the chaplain most affectionately and earnestly addressed the culprits, imploring them as men standing in the immediate presence of Almighty God, and as sinners within an hour to be ushered into eternity, to confess the whole truth and not to venture into the presence of their Creator with a lie in their mouths. Owen, who stood nearest to the Rev gentleman, was the first to reply to this solemn appeal and said, "I have no more to say than I have said"; but showed a desire to repeat some former statement, when the Rev gentleman told him if he had nothing to communicate beyond what he had

already stated, he had better, perhaps, forbear repeating it; he replied he had nothing more to say. Thomas answered, "I have told all". Ellis made no reply. The criminals then, with the governor, knelt at the table, and the Chaplain and his reverend associate proceeded with the sacramental service. The conduct of the prisoners was firm and decorous and, although not exhibiting any visible sign of contrition, they appeared quite sensible of the solemn situation in which they were placed. Owen and Thomas held their prayer books with a steady hand, and made the necessary responses with an unfaltering voice. The utterance of Owen was remarkably clear and distinct, and occasionally fervid. During the pauses in the ceremony, he appeared to be engaged in private prayer; he covered his eyes with his hand, and a slight movement to and fro indicated his distressed state of mind. Thomas was not so much moved, but Ellis was evidently wretched. The Chaplain and his reverend coadjutor went through the service in a manner the most impressive and affecting. At its conclusion, Ellis left the chapel first, followed by Thomas and Owen. In a minute or two, Ellis was recalled, and the Governor, in a feeling manner, informed him, for the first time, that her Majesty had been pleased to respite his execution; he could not, he assured the unhappy man, assure him that his life would be spared, but he thought it probable. Ellis burst into tears, and received the information with evident thankfulness. The Rev Chaplain then admonished him, in a most impressive manner, to give constant thanks to God for his deliverance from immediate death, and to beg for pardon for his offences. Ellis, who wept bitterly, replied, "I have begged; I have begged: I will: I will." He then expressed his wish to take leave of Owen and Thomas, and was conducted to the press room, to which they, in the interval, had proceeded. He was accompanied by the Governor, who announced to them that a further respite had been received for their companion, and that he would not be executed with them. Both Owen and Thomas expressed their satisfaction at this intelligence, and Ellis, who had partially recovered from the emotion he experienced in the chapel, again burst into tears. Owen and Thomas also wept freely. Ellis, taking each of his former associates by the hand, kissed them affectionately, repeatedly exclaiming, "God bless you; God bless you". The interview was most affecting, and the painful effect of its prolongation on Owen and Thomas becoming apparent, Ellis, at the suggestion of the Governor, bid a final farewell to his wretched friends. Thomas, addressing him as he left the cell, said, "Bill, if you get off, let this be a warning to you forever". Ellis, as he retired, continued to exclaim, "God bless you". The scene was indescribably affecting; none present could restrain their feelings, and every person, except those whose duty it was to attend upon the unhappy men, quitted the room.

The executioner, says the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, then proceeded to pinion the arms of Owen and Thomas, and while that was proceeding, R W Hand Esq, the Deputy Sherriff, arrived, and announced that Mr Gaunt had returned with a communication from Lord Normanby, confirming the respite of Ellis. His Lordship had expressed his satisfaction to Mr Gaunt that he had received the certificate on behalf of Ellis, since it corresponded with his own view of the case. With regard to the other two, the law must take its course.

Owen and Thomas, we ought to have stated, had become perfectly reconciled, and shook hands most cordially.

In a few minutes, the solemn tolling of the prison bell announced that the time for the execution had arrived, and the culprits, accompanied by the Chaplain, the Under Sherriff, the Governor, and other officers of the prison, with the executioner, quitted their cell. The mournful procession passed in solemn silence through the vaulted passages of the prison. On its arrival at the door, the Chaplain, who walked first and immediately before the prisoners, commenced reading the burial service of the Church of England. Both the prisoners, beside each of whom was an attendant, walked with a firm and steady step to the prison lodge, and through it to the foot of the gallows. Owen first ascended the platform, which he did without assistance, and took his place under the further end of the fatal beam, at which he looked up for a moment. The executioner quickly placed the rope round his neck and made the other preparations. Thomas then went up the steps, in doing which his foot caught the top step, which occasioned a slight stumble. The rope was speedily placed around his neck, and the executioner shook hands with both the culprits. The Chaplain recommenced reading the funeral service, and at the conclusion of the words "in the midst of life we are in death", the bolt was

withdrawn, and the dismal sound of the falling platform instantly told that the wretched criminals had, it is to be hoped, expiated their offences by their miserable and ignominious end. Being robust men, both for a few seconds were much convulsed; and Owen two or three times slightly elevated one of his hands.

Neither of them made any remark on the scaffold, and they both appeared to be in the act of prayer when they were turned off. After hanging an hour, their bodies were cut down, and buried within the precincts of the prison. No particular feeling was exhibited by the multitude on the appearance of the criminals on the drop; though when it fell a slight cry arose, particularly from the females, who were numerous.

The *Staffordshire Advertiser* closes its account with the accompanying notice of the preparations made by the Magistrates of the town, and expressions of thanks to the Chaplain and Governor of the county prison, in which we beg to join :-

In consequence of the vast influx of persons, several influential individuals applied to the borough magistrates to have a body of special constables sworn in. Accordingly, T Stevenson Esq, Mayor, and J Rogers Esq, Justice, appointed a number of special constables to act in case of need. Happily, their services were not required. The crowd behaved with decorum, and began quietly to disperse soon after the conclusion of the tragic scene. We cannot close our account of this melancholy event without expressing our thanks to the Governor and Chaplain of the county prison, for the courtesy with which they have, on our application, supplied us with information respecting these unfortunate men, which they thought it was proper to communicate to the public.

The same paper, advertizing to the communications made by the prisoners, says :-

Thomas and likewise Ellis confessed that their general habits had been of the most depraved and profligate character; though not differing much from the class of men to which they belonged. We understand that it was most painful to hear their account of the scenes which are of daily occurrence amongst boatmen. Thieving, it appears, is reckoned an accomplishment, and those men are most sought after by the captains of boats, who can pilfer the cargoes most adroitly and to the greatest extent. They say there is no difficulty in disposing of the stolen goods, receivers being at hand at all points of the canals. It is an invariable practice to abstract ale, spirits, &c from the casks by means of syphon pumps, which are in common use in the boats. Drunkenness is consequently habitual amongst the boatmen to a dreadful extent; and, as intemperance is the fruitful parent of crime, they are generally found prepared for the perpetration of the worst offences. Fornication and adultery are commonly prevalent. As to religion, they pay no regard whatever to even its forms; Thomas and Ellis having acknowledged that they do not remember having ever been in a church or any other place of worship. They made statements to this effect, and to a much greater extent, to the Rev Chaplain, respecting their own criminal courses, and those of their fellow boatmen generally.

It is much to be hoped that measures will be speedily taken to ameliorate the conditions of this uninformed and erring class of men.

33 17 June 1840

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE **John Blagg**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a loaf of bread and other articles from a cabin where he had been permitted to sleep. **Joseph Cope**, a boatman, deposed that he resided at Bilston. He had been drinking with the prisoner at Collins's beer shop, and afterwards gave him permission to sleep in his boat. On awaking about four o'clock in the morning, he found that the prisoner had decamped, taking with him prosecutor's watch, six pounds and a half of beef, one pound of cheese, a sixpenny loaf, two padlocks and keys and a cotton neckerchief. The prosecutor gave information to the police, who soon apprehended the prisoner, who when taken into custody was wearing the stolen neckerchief. The prisoner said it was the first time he had committed a crime, and he hoped they would have mercy on him. **Enoch Shaw** charged the same prisoner with robbing a boat near Shipton's wharf, and stealing a pair of trousers. This morning, the prosecutor stated, he saw the prisoner in the custody of the police, and he was wearing the stolen trousers. Mary Fellows, washerwoman, stated that the prisoner brought the

stockings (which Shaw identified) to her house to be washed. The prisoner was committed on both charges.

34 8 July 1840

STAFFORDSHIRE MIDSUMMER SESSIONS Aaron Harrison and Richard Knight were charged with stealing a quantity of wearing apparel, the property of **Timothy Johns**, at Wolverhampton. Timothy Johns, the prosecutor, the captain of a canal boat, stated that on the night of Saturday the 29th of May, he went to bed in the cabin of his boat about half past eleven o'clock. When he got up the next morning, a little before five o'clock, his shirt, trousers, stockings, shoes, hat and other articles were missing. The cabin door was not fastened. Two other men slept in the cabin ; Knight, when apprehended, had on a pair of his stockings and shoes. Richard Morris, a police officer, apprehended the prisoners at three o'clock on Sunday morning in a house in Rolleston's Yard, and found on them a number of articles of wearing apparel. He took them to the crib, and on going to the canal lock house to give information, he met the prosecutor and his companions on their way to the station to give information of the robbery. They were found guilty. Knight had been convicted of felony at the Spring Assizes of 1835, and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, three weeks in solitude. He had also been in gaol several times as a disorderly person. Harrison had been twice in gaol as a rogue and a vagabond, and once as a disorderly person. Knight was sentenced to be transported for fourteen and Harrison for seven years.

Thomas Underhill was indicted for stealing, on the 13th of May, from a boat, a pair of trousers, the property of **Peter Johnson**, a boatman. Guilty. To be imprisoned three months.

35 9 September 1840

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2 Elizabeth Keslet, an "unfortunate", was placed at the bar, charged with felony. **Joseph Downs**, the prosecutor, stated that he was a boatman residing in Wolverhampton. On the 27th of August, he was at the Blue Bell in North Street, the prisoner and two other women were there. He remained at the Blue Bell an hour and a half, and then went down the road, intending to go to his boat, but being rather tipsy, he lay down against a bank by the road side. The prisoner and the other two women came to him, and he felt the woman's hand in his pocket, and saw her take his purse. He asked her to return it, and after some delay she did so, and he put it into his pocket. Two men then came to him, and asked him to see if his money was correct; he examined his purse, and found it minus three sovereigns, and the prisoner had taken her departure too. The other women remained. Prosecutor obtained a warrant and John Fenn apprehended the prisoner. Fenn said when he took the prisoner into custody, she had some copper money in her hand (9 1/2d) ; she also had in her hand a piece of brown pipe, which she threw away and Fenn caught it. Fenn asked her if the paper contained anything, to which she replied, "No". On examination, it was found to contain a sovereign. Fenn then searched the prisoner, who said she had no more money than the copper, and found upon her two half crowns, 7s and 14d. Other evidence tending to implicate the prisoner was adduced, and she was committed.

36 28 October 1840

STAFFORDSHIRE MICHAELMAS SESSIONS Elizabeth Keslett, a nymph of the pave, was charged with stealing from the person of **John Downs** at Wolverhampton, three sovereigns in gold coin, his property. Mr Kempson appeared for the prosecution ; the prisoner was undefended. The prosecutor, a boatman residing at Wolverhampton, stated that on the 27th of August, about five o'clock in the afternoon, he was at the Blue Bell public house in North Street, Wolverhampton, where he was joined by the prisoner and two other women. He left the house in about half an hour, and being rather tipsy he lay down on a bank on the way to the canal. Whilst there, the prisoner and the other women came up and endeavoured to rouse him, and the prisoner said, "We had better take him to our house". The prisoner put her hand into his pocket and took out his purse. He saw her

take his purse, and said to her, "Let that alone". She did not return it for two or three minutes, when he put it into his pocket. In a short time, two men came up and asked him if his money was right. He examined his purse, which had contained three sovereigns and sixteen shillings in silver, and discovered that the three sovereigns were gone. Fenn, constable of Wolverhampton, was standing in North Street about six o'clock and saw the prisoner running towards him, and suspecting she had been doing something she ought not, he caught her in his arms. She had 10 1/2d in copper in her hand, and 19s in silver in her pocket. She attempted to throw away a piece of brown paper, which he caught, and which contained a sovereign. Joseph Brown was at the house of a woman named Jones in North Street, about six o'clock. The prisoner came in, and said, "I have *prigged* two sovereigns from a man ; will you hold it for me a short time, as I'll go back and get some more of him". Mrs Jones refused, and she left the house. Imprisoned six months.

Thomas Bennett was indicted for stealing, on the 14th of August at Wolverhampton, one coat and waistcoat, with other articles, the property of **Nathan Buckler**. The prosecutor stated that he was with his boat at Wolverhampton on the 13th of August, and on the evening of that day slept in the cabin of the boat. Previous to going to bed, he saw his clothes safe in the cupboard, and on the following morning he discovered they were gone. William Chapman, police officer, said that, in consequence of information, he took the prisoner into custody a few days afterwards, and found the articles in his possession which the prosecutor identified as those stolen from the boat and which were his property. Guilty. The prisoner, having been previously convicted of felony, was sentenced to be transported for seven years.

37 4 November 1840

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY OCTOBER 30 Maria alias Mary Barlow was charged with stealing four sovereigns from the person of **Joseph Round**, a boatman living at Tipton. The prisoner is a prostitute and, it appeared, on the preceding night accosted the prosecutor, who went with her. In a short time, he found he had paid for his folly by being robbed of three sovereigns. He resorted to the police, and the prisoner was taken into custody with the money, which she at first denied having, in her bosom. Committed.

38 4 November 1840

SHROPSHIRE SESSIONS **Thomas Bonner** and **James Bevan**, canal boatmen, were charged with stealing a quantity of coal from the wharf of William Hazeldine Esq at Berwick. Bonner pleaded guilty and was sentenced to be imprisoned three months. Bevan was acquitted.

Not Guilty : **Daniel Simpson**, boatman on the Ellesmere and Chester Canal, charged with stealing a quantity of porter from casks on board a boat called the *Endeavour*, the property of Mr S E Walker. The prisoner and another boatman named **Thompson**, who has absconded, were proved to have tapped several casks between Chester and Nantwich, which were afterwards filled up with water from the canal ; but although part of the porter was proved to have been consumed in this county, there was no evidence to show that the casks had been tapped after the boat left Nantwich, and Simpson was acquitted. He was, however, immediately taken into custody by Mr Superintendent Baxter, for the purpose of his being tried at Chester.

39 13 January 1841

STAFFORDSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS Maria alias Mary Barlow, a prostitute, was indicted for stealing at Wolverhampton, from the person of **Joseph Round**, a boatman, three sovereigns, his property. The prisoner, who was undefended, alleged that the prosecutor gave her the three sovereigns to remain with her all night, but afterwards wanted her to give him back the money. The man denied this statement. Guilty. Six months hard labour.

40 17 February 1841

John Lee was committed for trial at the adjourned sessions, charged with stealing about half a hundredweight of coal, the property of Benjamin Johnson. The prisoner is a boatman, and had landed on the prosecutor's wharf for the purpose of taking the coal, which the watchman detected his conveying to his boat. The prisoner alleged that the watchman said he might take a little, and he took it.

41 10 March 1841

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **John Walton**, a boatman, was found guilty of stealing two hundredweight of coal, the property of Benjamin Johnson, from his wharf near Sedgley. The prisoner was seen to take the coal and put it into his boat by a man named Evans, whose duty it was to watch the wharf. He challenged the prisoner, whom he knew, with the theft, but did not take the coal from him nor secure him, the prisoner threatening to break his head if he did. Mr Allen for the defence very closely cross examined the witness Evans who, it turned out, had been convicted of what he called "raking the canal" five years ago, and imprisoned three months ; other imputations were endeavoured to be fastened upon him, but without effect. He had, since his conviction, been three years in one place, and nothing affecting his character had occurred since the "raking". Mr Allen addressed the jury at considerable length, and with much force, in favour of the prisoner, contending that the evidence of Evans was unworthy of credit. The learned Chairman, in summing up, went somewhat minutely into the question of Evans's credibility, observing that it was too much to assert that because a man had once been convicted of an offence, he was henceforth to be entirely disbelieved, particularly when it appeared that he had for five years afterwards conducted himself with propriety. He also strongly censured the throwing out imputations when no evidence was called, nor intended to be called, to support them. It was for the jury to determine whether they believed the witness or not. Verdict Guilty. The learned Chairman, in passing sentence, told the prisoner his case had been made much worse by the defence he adopted, and sentenced him to three months imprisonment.

Joseph Evans pleaded guilty to stealing at Tipton a brass valve weighing 69lbs, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company, by whom he was employed. To be imprisoned six months, the first and last three days in solitude.

42 10 March 1841

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY MARCH 5 **Thomas Bayliss**, a boatman, was convicted in the penalty of 20s and costs, for negligently suffering a boat under his care to strike against Wightwick lock gates, on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal navigation, thereby damaging the same.

43 24 March 1841

STAFFORDSHIRE LENT ASSIZES

ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON **William Bele**, alias Finebones and Richard Plant were indicted for assaulting Joseph Hand on the 15th of October last, and stealing from his person a 10/- Bank of England note, seven sovereigns, and some silver coin, his property.

The prosecutor, an old man between sixty and seventy years of age, stated that he lived at Barlaston, and on the 15th of October last took a load of beans to Thomas Lees and employed the prisoners to unload the waggon. He mentioned before them that he should receive the money for the beans. He received a 10/- Bank of England note and seven sovereigns. After receiving the money, he was going along the towing-path of the Trent and Mersey canal – this was about a quarter past five o'clock – and two men followed him ; they were the prisoners ; they seized hold of him, and one of them put his hand over witness's mouth, and he was robbed of his 10/- note, his sovereigns, and some silver. He asked some boatmen to assist him, but they refused ; he then went to the Stoke police.

Several other witnesses spoke to circumstances clearly proving the guilt of the prisoners. Guilty. Bele, it appeared, was a boatman, and Plant had been employed as a railway labourer. His Lordship, in passing sentence, said no one could entertain a doubt of their guilt. It was shameful to see two able bodied men, able to get an honest living, attacking and plundering an old man, who had given them employ. The legislature had remitted the punishment of death for such offences, but it had only done so that a certain and severe punishment might be applied. His Lordship then sentenced both of the prisoners to be transported for fifteen years.

44 2 June 1841

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

MONDAY MAY 31 **William Vicars**, charged with stealing a pair of shoes, the property of John Hampton at Compton, was committed for trial. The prosecutor keeps a beer shop, and the prisoner, who is a boatman, had taken the opportunity when he came out of the house, into which he had gone to look after his master, to carry off the shoes.

45 21 July 1841

INSOLVENT DEBTORS To be heard at the Court House at Oldbury, in the county of Salop, on the 13th day of August 1841, at ten o'clock in the morning.

BENJAMIN JOHNSON late of Spon Lane in the parish of West Bromwich, Staffordshire, higgler, greengrocer and boatman.

46 4 August 1841

FATAL ACCIDENT On Saturday last, as a boatman named **William Stone** was proceeding along Sams Lane near Tividale, he saw a brown horse and a cart lying in a ditch ; the horse was lying on his back and the cart on its body, one side of the edge of the cart resting on the neck of the man who had been driving it, and who was a blacksmith named Stephen Timmis, and lived at Bilston. Stone immediately made an alarm, and several persons coming to his assistance, the body of Timmis was speedily released from the cart, but he had apparently been dead for some time. Stone had previously seen the deceased, who was in liquor, driving the cart at a very rapid rate, and it is supposed he had driven the cart over an old stump of wood which was about six yards distant from the spot where he was found ; the stump overturned it, and the edge of it having unfortunately fallen on his neck, occasioned instantaneous death.

47 15 September 1841

SUNDAY TRAFFIC ON CANALS A report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the expediency of restraining the practice of carrying goods and merchandise on canals, navigable rivers and railways on Sundays, has just been printed. The report, which occupies about one hundred folio pages, contains a body of important evidence given by a number of gentlemen of great practical experience, most of whom are, or have been, officially connected with canals or railways, and therefore the most competent persons to speak to the facts they have severally detailed. The following is a summary of portions of their evidence.

Sir George Chetwynd, Bart, of Grandon Hall in the county of Warwick, an extensive proprietor in the Trent and Mersey Canal, and who had been one of the managing committee of that canal for five and twenty years, supplied the Lords' Committee with much important information. He observed that his attention had been a good deal turned to the subject of Sunday traffic, in consequence of petitions very numerous signed having been presented to him as Chairman of the Trent and Mersey Company, as well by boatmen as others, praying that a stop might be put to Sunday traffic. The following extract from the examination of Sir George Chetwynd will require no comment :-

Have you any reason to believe that the boatmen generally desire a discontinuance of Sunday traffic? I think decidedly they do.

On what ground do they desire it? I think they would be very glad to have one day in seven as a

day of rest. I may state with respect to *Ellis in the first place that he is twenty five years of age ; that he was never in any place of worship whatever until he was committed on a capital charge of rape and murder. He is quite uneducated, not having the least idea of God, a Saviour or a future state ; in short having no idea of religion whatever until he came to Stafford gaol. I believe there are a great number of boatmen in a similar situation.

Can you inform us whether they are not in general an extremely illiterate and uninstructed class? They are extremely illiterate, uninstructed and depraved.

More so than any class you are acquainted with? Yes. The last time I went on the survey of the Trent and Mersey Canal, from Shardlow to Preston Brook, I went on to Liverpool. I was about three weeks in New Brighton in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, and particularly attended the Mariners' Chapel, in order to observe the negroes. I conversed as I went down with many boatmen, and compared them with the state of the negroes ; and I was decidedly of opinion that the negroes were much more tractable, and I should say better informed. Nothing could exceed the attention these poor men paid when I saw them at the Mariners' Chapel.

In a subsequent part of Sir George Chetwynd's examination, speaking of the nature and extent of the depredations committed on canals, he observed :-

Ellis told me that during the twenty five years he had been a boatmen, there was scarcely a single cargo of liquors, wines or spirits that had not been more or less plundered. He described to me where I might purchase the different implements : hammers, in the handles of which were turn-screws, and everything requisite for breaking open casks. There are syphons, and different sized pumps, some made of tin ; the best are made of copper, and screw together, so that if you found it in a boatman's pocket, you would not know what it was. These being inserted into one of the casks, you may thereby draw off a large quantity of liquor in a very short space of time.

In a later stage of his examination, Sir George Chetwynd stated with reference to the question of discontinuing Sunday traffic :-

I have communicated with Mr Baxendale of the firm of Pickford and Co, and other carriers, who seem to be desirous of putting a stop to Sunday traffic, and I have no doubt that by an arrangement with the carriers and canal companies, Sunday traffic might be put a stop to. Then the next question arises, when you put a stop to Sunday traffic, what will you do with the boatmen? I will put a case in Staffordshire. Take Stone, for instance ; suppose half a dozen boats were to stop on the Saturday night at Stone, there would be eighteen men, three being the number to each boat. You must have a police to attend to them, and someone must watch the cargo, because many of these boats have valuable cargoes on board, silks, wines, spirits, linen and merchandise ; the cargoes must be protected. In the next place, unless there is some place of worship to which these boatmen can have access, and to which they are invited to come, what will they do on Sunday? Wherever the stoppages have been accidental, the boatmen have been found trespassing and plundering, and the greatest possible nuisance to the neighbourhood. In short, when a stoppage happened near a town, we were obliged to swear in special constables, and the farmers had to watch their property, in consequence of the boatmen being stopped, and not going to any place of worship.

Alexander Hordern Esq of Banbury in the county of Stafford, an extensive shareholder in four canals, and connected with the managing bodies of two of them, described the boatmen as a degraded class of society, and attributed that state of degradation to the want of proper moral and religious training, of which he believed there was a total neglect. He was decidedly of opinion that the discontinuance of Sunday traffic would confer a great benefit, not only on boatmen but on clerks, agents and all other persons employed on the canals. He was of opinion that Sunday traffic could only be put down by compulsory measures and which, to be equitable, should extend to carriers of every description.

Mr Josiah Anthony Hayes, general agent and receiving clerk to the Worcestershire Canal Company, and John Wheeler Lea Esq of Worcester, gave evidence to a similar effect.

T Bagnall Esq, an extensive coal and iron master residing at West Bromwich in Staffordshire, and who employed a number of boats to carry material along the canal, had for a considerable period discontinued Sunday traffic along the canal, and had also allowed the furnaces of the firm to stop on

a Sunday. In reply to a question as to what had been the effect of that stoppage, he stated, "We have made rather more iron since we stopped on Sundays than we did before. I have stated it at public meetings, and said any gentleman may come and refer to our accounts. We thought we should have great difficulty in getting our men into the arrangement, instead of which they were all prepared for it, and we had no difficulty whatever.

Francis Twemlow Esq, Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for the county of Stafford, and a shareholder in the Trent and Mersey Canal, confirmed the opinions of other gentlemen as to the demoralised state of the boatmen, and the necessity that existed for some remedial measure.

Mr John Crowley, of the firm of Crowley, Hicklin and Company, extensive canal carriers at Wolverhampton, Birmingham and London, R Heath, of the firm of Heath and Sons, canal carriers, residing at Stourport, and several other gentlemen connected with canal navigation, were examined, and gave it as their concurrent opinion that the suspension of Sunday traffic would confer a great blessing on the boatmen, not only as giving them a day of rest, but as affording them opportunities of attending to religious duties.

The Rev J Davies, rector of St Clement's, Worcester, had for many years paid considerable attention to the moral condition of the boatmen on the Severn and the Birmingham and Worcester canals. His pastoral duties had led him much into connection with them, and he had had many opportunities of tracing the sources of their demoralised state. He thought that they were capable of improvement, and many of them were desirous of obtaining religious instruction, and of having their children religiously educated.

The Hon P P Bouverie, a member of the select committee for conducting the affairs of the Grand Junction Canal Company, entertained opinions somewhat at variance with those who had been previously examined, as to the practicability of stopping the trade on canals on Sundays. He had been chairman of the select committee a great part of twenty years, and as the traffic on the Grand Junction Canal was perhaps greater than that of any other in the kingdom, the subject had frequently been brought under consideration.

R C Sale Esq, solicitor to the Grand Junction Canal Company, was of opinion that no general law would answer the purpose intended ; the evil could only be met by a law prescribing the hours during which the stoppage should take place ; but full powers should be given to canal companies to make bye laws and appoint stations, and make the regulations requisite to enforce the observance of the law.

Mr Joseph Baxendale, manager of the firm of Messrs Pickford and Co, who had been connected with the carrying trade of the canal for upwards of twenty five years, considered the plan for stopping the Sunday traffic on canals an impracticable one, unless there were a legislative prohibition of traffic as regarded the carriage of luggage both on railways and canals. Such a prohibition would produce advantage to the railway traffic, though as a trader he should not object to it. He described the state of the boatmen generally much as the other gentlemen had done ; but was of opinion that if churches were to be built at proper distances, and the clergy with the public to give their attention to it, there could be no doubt but that good would result.

The committee, of which the Marquis of Normanby and Lord Hatherton were respectively chairmen, ordered to report, "That the committee have met and examined several witnesses upon the subject, and have directed the evidence taken before them, together with an index thereto, to be laid before your lordships".

**Ellis, it will be recalled, was one of the men concerned in the murder of Christina Collins.*

48 27 October 1841

STAFFORDSHIRE MICHAELMAS SESSIONS

ELLIS, THE BOATMAN Major Chetwynd said that, in pursuance of a request made to him, as one of the visiting magistrates of the county gaol, he rose to bring before the court a subject of very considerable importance, and one which he regretted his inability to do justice to. By the 4th of George the 4th, chap 64, sec 16, it was enacted that the visiting magistrates of the county prison should have a power of recommending to the court of quarter sessions any prisoner who should be

confined in gaol, under sentence, for the merciful consideration of the crown ; but it was necessary before the committee could do that, that they should have a recommendation from the chaplain and governor, and likewise a statement of the manner in which the prisoner had conducted himself during his confinement. It was likewise desirable before the court sanctioned the recommendations that they should be put in possession of the particulars of the case. [Major Chetwynd here proceeded to read a statement of the particulars of the case of Ellis, with which our readers are already acquainted. It concluded by remarking that Ellis had been confined from the time of his commitment upwards of two years and four months.] As a recommendation so strongly worded both from the chaplain and the governor had been presented to the committee, they thought that this was a just and fair case in which they could exercise their power of recommending this man as a fit and proper object of clemency to the crown. The recommendation must go through this court, and it would then be presented to the home secretary. [Major Chetwynd here read the testimonials of the Rev R Buckeridge, the chaplain, and T Brutton Esq, the governor. The chaplain expressed his unqualified approbation of Ellis's conduct, stating that he had behaved with the greatest decorum, and seemed deeply impressed with his situation, and was in his (the chaplain's) opinion, a fit and proper object for the royal clemency. The governor stated that it was upwards of two years and a half since Ellis was committed for trial, at which period he was an ignorant man, not capable of reading and writing, but since his conviction he had, of his own accord, applied himself to instruction, that for some time past he had been able to read well and to write tolerably, and his general conduct was most exemplary. The governor's testimonial concluded by expressing his opinion that Ellis was a reformed man, and deserving the royal clemency.] He (Major Chetwynd) stated that after having read testimonials from two persons so well qualified to judge as the governor and chaplain, it was quite unnecessary for him to further occupy the time of the court in stating the views and wishes of the gaol committee.

The Honourable and Rev Arthur Talbot seconded the recommendation of the committee, which was adopted.

Thomas Mullett, the captain of a boat on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, was indicted for stealing a plank from a wharf near Tettenhall, belonging to the trustees of the turnpike roads, at Wolverhampton on the 4th of June. Mr Corbett conducted the prosecution and Mr Allen the defence. The charge was supported chiefly by the evidence of **George Brooks**, a boatman, who swore that early on the morning of the 4th of June, he saw Mullett take up the plank and convey it in his boat, and that on arrival at the Sixteen Locks, the prisoner asked him to carry it up to his (prisoner's) mother's house. He refused to do so. He afterwards saw it by the garden hedge, near the house of the prisoner's mother. It appeared from the cross-examination of Brooks that about two years ago the prisoner's brother brought a charge of embezzlement against him, and that he was convicted and sentenced to two months hard labour. He (witness) had since been committed, charged by prisoner's brother with having stolen a bridle and crupper. The constable who apprehended the prisoner deposed that Mullett told him if he would say to the Grand Jury that he did not know the plank, he would give him 5/-, and after he was committed he offered him 20/-. For the defence, it was contended that the witness Brooks was influenced by spite ; and a man named James Dark swore that he saw Brooks put a plank on the prisoner's boat on the morning in question. John Dark, son of the last witness, swore that he had a conversation with Brooks at Stourbridge, when he told him (Dark) that he was very sorry to put the plank on board Thomas Mullett's boat to spite him instead of his brother, **William Mullett**. Several respectable looking witnesses gave the prisoner a very good character. This very contradictory evidence went to the jury, who returned a verdict of "Guilty". Sentence deferred.

George Brooks, the principal witness in the last case, was then indicted for stealing a bridle and crupper, the property of **William Mullett**, the brother of the last prisoner. Mr Munk appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Corbett gratuitously undertook the defence of the prisoner. It appeared on the cross-examination of the prosecutor that the charge had been trumped up against the prisoner merely because he had given evidence against the prisoner's brother. Mr Munk threw up his brief,

and the Chairman observed that as there was no case against the prisoner, they must acquit him. He strongly expressed the indignation and disgust with which the court had witnessed the conduct of the prosecutor. A (?liberal?) collection was voluntarily made by several of the jury and other gentlemen in court, and handed to the prisoner, who was discharged.

James Dutton and **John Hanks** were indicted for stealing eight cwt of coal, the property of George Jones, at Bilston. It appeared from the evidence that Dutton is the captain of a boat, and the other prisoner is assistant to him. On the night of the 24th of August a watchman at Mr Jones's colliery at Bilston, being about at ten o'clock, saw Dutton in his boat in the basin of the canal near the works. Hanks was on the wharf handing the coal to Dutton. The coal, eight or ten cwt, was covered with the boat cloth. For the defence, evidence was called to show that boats could not pass from the basin under the bridge without having something to weigh them down. This was admitted to be the cause of the prisoners putting the coal into the boat, and that it was their intention to return it when they had passed under the bridge. Not Guilty.

49 10 November 1841

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

At Kingswinford, on **James Turner**, a child between four and five years old, son of **Henry Turner**, a boatman of Wordsley Junction, whose death was occasioned by his clothes catching fire.

50 24 November 1841

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 20 **Samuel Downs**, the person remanded on Wednesday, was put to the bar, charged with stealing a shawl, a pair of trousers, a shirt, and other articles, the property of **Thomas Wood**, a boatman living in Walsall Street. It appeared from the evidence of **Sarah Wood**, the wife of the prosecutor, that the prisoner, being out of work, was engaged on the prosecutor's boat, and that on the 25th of October she left him in the boat after having given him his supper. When she returned about an hour afterwards, she found that the prisoner was gone, and many articles stolen from the boat. She knew the shirt now on the prisoner's back to be her husband's property, but she had not seen the other articles since. Fenn, the constable, stated that he apprehended the prisoner on another charge, and that he then had on the shirt he now wore. Committed.

51 1 December 1841

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 24 John Woodham and Thomas Jones were charged with stealing two half crowns, two shillings, and three handkerchiefs from the person of **John Fox**. The prosecutor stated that he was a boatman and lived at Parkfields. Last Monday, he was in company with the prisoners for some hours, at the Peacock beer shop in Sedgley parish. About six o'clock he (witness) fell asleep, and was awoke by the prisoner Woodhouse(*sic*) attempting to get his hand out of his (witness's) pocket. Witness said to him, "Don't take my money, Jack ; call for a quart of ale and I'll pay for it". Witness got up and missed his money, namely, two half crowns, two shillings and three pence halfpenny. He asked Woodham for it, and he said he had not got it. Witness then saw Jones with one of his handkerchiefs, and then discovered he had lost three handkerchiefs, namely a cotton one and two silk ones. Jones admitted having one of his (prosecutor's) handkerchiefs. Corroborative testimony was given by Samuel Cartwright, Mary Smart and Fenn, the constable, and the prisoners, who said nothing to reply to the charge, were committed.

52 12 January 1842

STAFFORDSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS **William Ellis** was indicted for stealing four cheeses, the property of William Barrow and another, at Wolverhampton. The prosecutors are cheese factors at Wolverhampton, and the prisoner was in their employ as a boatman. In the month of December

last, the prisoner was sent by his masters to Horninglow for a boat load of cheese ; and the charge against him was that he had stolen four large cheeses from the cargo delivered to him, and substituted four small ones. He was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation.

53 26 February 1842

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 23 **Thomas Waldron**, a boatman, was charged with stealing about half a ton of hay, the property of **Francis Holland**, his master. William Holland, agent to his father, Francis Holland, who lives at Worcester, stated that on Saturday morning, he left the prisoner in charge of a boat, containing about five tons of hay, near Mr Shelton's wharf in Wolverhampton. On passing by the boat last Tuesday, he observed that some of the hay had been taken away. He went in search of the prisoner, and asked him who had been selling the hay ; the prisoner replied that he had not sold any. Witness also asked him if he had received money for any, and he answered, "No". Witness then obtained a warrant. The prisoner, he said, had no authority from him to sell any hay, or to receive money. John Noake proved that the prisoner had sold him two five hundredweights of hay from the boat, at about four shillings per cwt, and that he (Noake) had paid him the money. Job Bray, a policeman, proved apprehending the prisoner in a house of ill fame in Stafford Street. He admitted selling the hay, and said he had spent the money. He added that he had a large family, and was very sorry. Committed.

54 16 March 1842

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **William Machin**, a boatman, who had been three times committed in 1840 and 1841 for refusing to maintain his wife, chargeable to the parish of Wolstanton, and who had been since committed under the 5th George IV as an incorrigible rogue and vagabond, to be further dealt with according to law, was brought up to receive further punishment under the Act of Parliament. The several convictions were proved, and it appeared that the court had the power to order that such an offender be further imprisoned for any time not exceeding one year, and to be whipped. He was sentenced to six months hard labour.

55 23 March 1842

STAFFORDSHIRE LENT ASSIZES **Allan Goode**, a boatman, indicted for having, at the parish of Kingswinford, being the servant of **William Mullett**, feloniously stolen a sovereign, the property of the said William Mullett, was acquitted.

56 13 April 1842

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **Benjamin Hill**, a boatman, aged 50, was charged with stealing 6 cwt of coal from a boat belonging to the British Iron Company at Dudley, on the 18th of January last. It appeared that two boats, one laden with coal, the other with iron, were lying alongside the company's wharf at Dudley, and prisoner was in the company's employment, having charge of the boat of iron which he was to navigate to Birmingham, ten miles off. Before he started, he was seen to remove some coal from the other boat into his own, and it was proved that about 6 cwt was found in the boat. Mr Lee, in a very humorous speech, ridiculed the prosecution as a great departure from the custom of ironmasters at Dudley who, he alleged, were in the habit of allowing their men to help themselves to coal, and especially so in a case of this kind, where the coal had been taken to be consumed in the prosecutors' boat, during a period of most intense cold weather. The jury seemed to take the same view of the case, and acquitted the prisoner.

57 6 July 1842

STAFFORDSHIRE MIDSUMMER SESSIONS **William Hodson** and **James Hodson** were indicted for stealing 6 cwt of coal at West Bromwich, the property of Thomas Davies. The prisoners are boatmen, and brothers. On the 20th of June, they took an empty boat belonging to Messrs Shipton into the basin at West Bromwich. The prosecutor had a boat lying there, laden with

coals. The following morning, **Daniel Thompson**, in the employ of the prosecutor, missed a quantity of coals from his master's boat, which were subsequently found in the boat of the prisoners. Guilty. William Hodson to be imprisoned four months, and James Hodson two months.

Isaiah Godfrey was indicted for stealing a quantity of clover hay at the parish of Wombourne, the property of James Beddard jun. The prisoner, who is a boat lad, was seen by the prosecutor's servant man in his master's field on the 15th of June, filling a bag with clover, which he was carrying away on his back when he was stopped. The prisoner inquired, "What harm is there in taking a bit of clover?" Guilty. To be imprisoned six months.

Nathaniel Stubbs, aged 26, pleaded guilty to two indictments, one charging him with stealing two trusses of hay, and the other with stealing 12s, the property of **George Salter**, at Tipton. The Chairman caused the prosecutor to be placed in the witness box, and inquired into the circumstances of the case, and whether he had taken the prisoner without a character. The answers of the prosecutor showed the prisoner's conduct to be characterised by the basest ingratitude towards his employer, who had taken both himself and wife and lodged them in his house, in consequence of their apparent destitute condition. The prisoner, who is a boatman, was subsequently entrusted with a boat by the prosecutor, and went on his first voyage. A sum of money was given to him to pay the tonnage, and when in the middle of the journey he left the horse and boat on the banks of the canal, decamping with the property. The Court marked their view of the case by sentencing the prisoner to transportation for seven years.

John Cutler and **Thomas Wenlock** were indicted for stealing a quantity of porter at Horninglow, the property of Thomas Pickford and Co. William Forbrook was indicted for receiving the same, knowing it to have been stolen. William Taylor stated that he was an agent to Messrs Pickford at Shardlow, on the 14th of April. Forty kilderkins of porter, which weighed on that day 86 cwt, 1 qr 19 lbs were put on board a boat of which **John Curry** was the captain. The prisoners Cutler and Wenlock were also employed to work the boat. The porter was consigned to Mr William Usherwood of Ashby. On the night of the 14th, the prisoners left the basin for Horninglow, which is fifteen miles distant, and it would take about six hours to accomplish the voyage. The barrels when taken on board did not leak. Mr Bakewell, agent to the prosecutor at Horninglow, said, in consequence of information, he ordered the boat of Curry to be searched by Thomas Stenson, who found in the cabin a large black jug which contained from four to six quarts of porter. This corresponded in quality with the porter in the casks. Many of the casks, on being examined, appeared to have been plugged with new plugs. The weight of the casks, on being re-weighed, was 85 cwt 2 qrs 14 lbs, leaving a deficiency of 3 qrs 5 lbs. (This deficiency, it was explained, would amount in measure to forty two quarts). The prisoners Cutler and Wenlock appeared to be quite drunk. Joseph (*sic*) Curry, captain of the boat, absconded, and has not yet been heard of. The jury found the prisoners Cutler and Wenlock guilty, and acquitted the prisoner Forbrook. The learned Chairman, after remarking on the nature of the crime proved against the prisoners, and the necessity there was of protecting property against such depredations, sentenced the prisoners to transportation for seven years.

58 **27 July 1842**

WORCESTERSHIRE ASSIZES **William Bevan**, a boatman, and **Henry Trivis**, a boatman, were charged with stealing a teapot, jugs, meat, bread and other articles, the property of **Daniel Darley**, at Dudley on the 29th of June. The articles had been locked up in a boat lying at Dudley Wood Wharf, and the prosecutor and **John Slater**, his boatman, spent the greater part of the night carousing at a beer house with the prisoners, who belonged to boats lying near to that of the prosecutor. They left the beer house before the prosecutor and his man, and Trivis was subsequently seen by Darley to come out from the boat in which he had deposited the articles, which articles were afterwards found hid in the prisoners' boat ; whereupon they offered to settle it,

and pay the constable for his trouble. His Lordship having summed up favourably to the prisoners, the jury found a verdict of Not Guilty.

59 3 August 1842

STAFFORDSHIRE SUMMER ASSIZES

HAY STEALING BY A BOATMAN **Emanuel Goddard**, a boatman, was indicted for stealing hay at the parish of Brewood on the 16th of July, the property of James Glover.

Mr Huddleston conducted the case for the prosecution ; and by the evidence of James Glover, who is a victualler at Slade Heath, and his manservant Thomas Garbett, brought the case clearly home to the prisoner ; in fact, at half past four on the day in question, Garbett saw him in the act of taking the hay, which had been newly made. Verdict, "Guilty".

The prisoner pleaded that he had a large family.

The Judge : You should teach them by your example to be honest. Your children will be none the better for your roguery.

To be imprisoned one week to hard labour.

60 3 August 1842

NISI PRIUS COURT

MACKEY v STONIER This was an action brought by the plaintiff, a boatman and keeper of a beer shop near Stoke, to recover from the defendant, superintendent of the police there, compensation in damages for a false imprisonment. It appeared that the plaintiff went on the 27th of September last to the station house at Stoke, at the request of a policeman ; and that on his arrival there the defendant, on the ground that there was some charge against him with reference to the taking of some timber from a barge, locked him up in a very offensive and unwholesome place, chained him by the leg to two other prisoners, and confined him there for three days without taking him before a magistrate.

His Lordship said the plaintiff was clearly entitled to some damages. He ought at the earliest moment to have been taken before a magistrate. The commissioners had neglected their duty by not taking care to have a better place in which to confine persons who, till found guilty, must be presumed to be innocent. Damages 20/-.

61 3 August 1842

STAFFORDSHIRE SUMMER ASSIZES

HORSE STEALING AT WEST BROMWICH **William Hobson**, a boatman, was indicted for stealing a gelding at West Bromwich, the property of **John Whitehouse**, another boatman.

The prosecutor proved that he missed the gelding from his stable between nine and ten months ago ; the lock and staple of the door had been removed. Some time afterwards he discovered the horse drawing a boat along the canal at Ryder's Green ; and about eight weeks ago he saw the prisoner for the first time since he missed the horse. The prisoner admitted having sold the animal to Mr Cole, a farmer, for £2 7s 6d. He then started off, and he (prosecutor) went about his business. Some time afterwards he saw the prisoner at Birmingham, when he told him that if there was a man near, he would have him taken into custody. Prisoner then ran down an entry through a house. He saw a policeman, to whom he gave information, and he was apprehended.

Mr William Cole, farmer at Rowley Regis, stated that about eleven months ago he purchased a brown gelding of the prisoner, who was in company with the prosecutor's nephew, for £2 7s 6d. In cross-examination by the prisoner, witness stated that the boy told him at the time that the uncle gave the prisoner permission to sell the horse, and all he got above 50s he was to have for himself.

Lydia Hay, niece of the prosecutor, stated that the prisoner came to her uncle's house about ten or eleven months ago, and asked to borrow the horse, which her uncle refused to lend.

The prisoner's defence was that the prosecutor gave him permission to sell the horse. (This was denied by the prosecutor).

Thomas Sheldon stated that he saw young Barton, the nephew of the prosecutor, take the horse out

of the stable and ride off.

The jury, after some consideration, returned a verdict of Not Guilty.

62 10 August 1842

POACHING **William Ratcliff**, a boatman, was convicted in the penalty of 5s and costs, for unlawfully using a gin to catch game in the parish of Bushbury.

63 8 February 1843

MANSLAUGHTER AT THE BROWN BEAR, LICHFIELD STREET On Wednesday, and by adjournment on Monday last, an inquest was held before T M Phillips Esq, coroner, at the Noah's Ark in this town, on the body of Charles Green, a well known individual, who obtained a livelihood by selling fish, oranges, etc.

Edward Dillow, a boatman living in Wolverhampton, stated that he had known the deceased about six months, and saw him at the Brown Bear public house, Lichfield Street, on Monday the 30th of January, about twelve o'clock in the day ; and again about five o'clock on the following day, when they had a pint of beer together. He left the deceased quite sober, and they had no conversation either about Thomas Robinson (in custody) or his brother. On returning between eight and nine o'clock at night, he found several men and women drinking together. The deceased came in with a basket of oranges, placed it on the table, and sold some to the company. Witness went out, and on his return the deceased was leaning over his basket talking to the prisoner (Thomas Robinson). They were quarrelling, but witness did not know what about, as they were on one side of the room and he on the other. He heard the prisoner say he would strike the deceased if he did not keep his mouth shut and sit down. Deceased said he should not for him, and that he would not fight, for he was not well enough. Robinson then clenched his fist at him ; they had a few more words, and Robinson got up and struck the deceased with his fist. Witness thought he struck deceased about the chest, but did not distinctly see. The deceased said he would not fight, and did not put himself in a defensive attitude. The prisoner struck him again, and then the deceased struck the prisoner ; they had one round and then the deceased fell on his back ; the prisoner knocked him down. He then went to the deceased and tried to heave him up, saying they would be good friends again. Deceased, with the assistance of the prisoner, got up, and Thomas Baker said that he would pay for a quart of ale if they would shake hands and be friends, which they did, and deceased and prisoner both drank of the ale, which Baker paid for. Witness did not think deceased much hurt, but he complained of being out of wind. The deceased went out of the room and sat on the step at the bottom of the stairs. He appeared to be in pain, and went out at the back door. Maria Hill, the daughter of the landlady of the house, called witness to go to assistance of the deceased, which he did, and found him lying on his belly in the back kitchen, near the cellar door. He said, "Oh Lord, let me lie, for I am dying". In a few minutes, a chair was brought, and the prisoner assisted witness to get the deceased into it, and take him into the air. Mrs Hill sent for a surgeon, and Mr Cooper came in a few minutes. The deceased died soon after. The prisoner then ran out of the house. Witness took the deceased upstairs, undressed him, but did not examine the body.

Thomas Baker, a locksmith, who corroborated a large portion of the testimony of the preceding witness, said he heard the deceased and the prisoner quarrelling ; the deceased made towards the fireplace, and the prisoner jumped up from the screen, saying, "Let is not have pothooks or pokers ; if we are to have it, let us have it with our fists"; and upon that they began to fight. They both fell down together, deceased undermost ; it did not last a minute. Witness paid for a quart of ale, and they then shook hands. Witness did not think the deceased was hurt, and he did not complain of pain. In about ten minutes afterwards witness saw the deceased in the passage ; several people were with him, and he was afterwards taken upstairs. The prisoner was in liquor, but the deceased was not.

James Brooks gave evidence similar, though not quite so circumstantial in its details, to that given by the preceding witnesses. He added, however, that he heard the prisoner and the deceased call each other a liar.

Mr G T Cooper, surgeon, said he found the deceased sitting in a chair in the brewhouse of the Brown Bear. He said, "I am dying". Witness called for some brandy for him, but he could not swallow it. Witness bled him in the arm, and took about half an ounce of blood ; he could not get more. He opened the temporal artery, but it did not bleed. The deceased died in about a minute and a half after witness had bled him. In making a *post mortem* examination, about thirty eight hours after death, witness found externally a slight bruise over the forehead and another over the right ear ; they were recent bruises, and a blow from a man's fist, or a fall against a blunt instrument, would occasion such bruises. Upon removing the skull cap bone, witness found about five ounces of extravasated blood between the bone and the *dura mater*. The brain and viscera were perfectly healthy, and witness did not discover any marks of violence except those described. He believed the deceased died from extravasated blood over the right ear on the brain.

John Wood said he sold fish for the deceased, and knew the prisoner, who had a brother-in-law in gaol for robbery. Witness met the prisoner the day after his brother-in-law was committed, which was about a fortnight ago, and the prisoner said to him, "Tell Charles Green, the next time I meet him, I'll drop upon him, and lay him a corpse at my feet". Witness told Green within an hour afterwards, and he said he had been threatened in a similar manner before.

Ellen Sansom said she had cohabited with the deceased about four months. On the evening of Tuesday last she went to the Brown Bear, and found the deceased just coming out of the kitchen. He sat upon the stairs, called witness to him, and said, "Twigg has done it at last". Robinson, the prisoner, who is called "Twigg", was in the tap room. Witness went for assistance, and when she returned Green was dead. This day three weeks, Robinson's brother-in-law was taken up for a robbery, and on the following day deceased and witness were in the Brown Bear, when Robinson said he would have his revenge on Green, because he had share of the money ; that his brother-in-law had been taken up for him (Green). Eight days ago, the deceased and witness were again at the Brown Bear, when Robinson said to the deceased, "Green, you must make sure of it, if it is twelve months".

The jury, after having had the bearing of the different parts of the evidence pointed out to them by the coroner, and after some deliberation, returned a verdict of manslaughter against Thomas Robinson, who was forthwith committed by the coroner to take his trial at the next assizes.

64 8 February 1843

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3 **John Hodson** was charged with stealing coal, the property of Messrs R and W F Fryer. George Bradley, a constable of Wednesfield, stated that he was employed to watch some boats loaded with coal, and between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning of Wednesday last, he saw the prisoner bringing a boat load of coal on the canal through Wednesfield. Witness followed him for about a mile, and he left the boat to go towards a house, from which he soon returned with a woman. He then got into the boat, and threw four lumps of coal into the canal, after which he went off with his boat. Witness procured a rake and got the coal, which weighed about two hundredweight, out of the canal. Mr John Lloyd, agent for Messrs Fryer, stated that the prisoner was employed to take a boat load of coal from Wednesfield Heath to Pelsall iron works. As they had lost a great quantity of coal, he gave the last witness instructions to watch the boats. The prisoner in his defence said that he left the boat to buy a pennyworth of apples from a woman, and he told her to bring them to the boat. He jumped on the boat to get some corn for the horse, and he stepped on some coal, and two lumps dropped into the canal. Committed.

65 22 February 1843

CAUTION TO BOATMEN On Monday week, **John Goode**, a boatman, was brought up before Edward Grove Esq and William Harwood Esq at Shenstone, on a charge of assaulting **Thomas Oldham**, a police-constable of the Trent and Mersey canal company, whilst in the execution of his duty ; and likewise for having a gun on board his boat, contrary to the said company's Act of Parliament. It appeared that on Saturday the 11th instant, the constable was on duty on the banks of

the canal, when he had reason to suspect that all was not right on board the prisoner's boat. On the boat arriving at Rugeley (from Shardlow) he was proceeding to search her, when the prisoner resisted his attempt in the most violent manner, and threatened to be the death of him if he attempted to go on board, and at the same time held a knife in his hand. The constable then proceeded towards another part of the boat from that in which the prisoner was standing, and attempted to go on board, but was met by the prisoner, who ran along the top of the boat with the tiller in his hand to strike the constable, which prevented him from going on board ; however, with some assistance, the boat was eventually searched, and a gun (which the law does not allow a boatman to carry unless a bona fide part of his cargo) was found in the prisoner's cabin. Two witnesses appeared in support of the charge, and two witnesses were called by the prisoner on his behalf, but on examination their evidence only tended to strengthen the case against him. The magistrates considered the case clearly proved ; but the charge not being pressed against the prisoner, he was fined in the mitigated penalties of 50s for the assault on the constable and 20s for having the gun on board, with 40s expenses.

66 12 April 1843

STEALING ALE BY A BOATMAN **Thomas Fisher**, aged 40, and **William Jackson**, aged 13, were indicted for stealing a gallon of ale, the property of Messrs Pickford and Co, at Sandon. **Thomas Oldham**, a police officer in the service of the Trent and Mersey Canal Company, stated that on the 25th of March last he was watching in a meadow at Weston, when a boat belonging to Messrs Pickford and Co passed in the direction of Sandon. Whilst the boat was passing along, he saw the prisoner Fisher leave the hatches and get into the body of the boat, and he put his hand up and the other prisoner took him something. He continued some time, and then returned to the cabin with a vessel apparently filled with something from the cargo. He (witness) proceeded, unobserved by the prisoners, to Sandon lock, and as soon as the boat entered the empty lock, he pounced on the prisoner Fisher, who jumped down on the boat followed by him. On searching the cabin, he found a large tin teapot about three parts full of new ale, and on proceeding to the body of the boat, he perceived that one of the casks had been recently plugged, and some of the ale, which was in a fermented state, had escaped through the plug hole. He took them into custody. Fisher was found guilty and sentenced to be transported for seven years ; the boy was acquitted.

67 24 May 1843

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE **Richard Cope**, a boatman lately of Tettenhall, was convicted, on the information of George Cain, gamekeeper, in the penalty of 10s and costs, for trespassing in search of game upon land in the occupation of Lord Wrottesley.

68 7 June 1843

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY MAY 31 Samuel Aston was charged with stealing a loaf of bread and other articles from a canal boat. **Charles Gallimore** the younger, boatman, and his uncle **Richard Gallimore** stated that they were proceeding on Monday last with a boat near Wednesfield, when the prisoner met them and, without saying a word, knocked down Charles Gallimore, who was driving, unfastened the mare and turned her adrift, and then went into the boat, declaring he would either have money or drink. Richard Gallimore ran for the constable while Charles Gallimore, at a distance, kept watch upon the prisoner, and presently saw him come from the boat with a bundle and a basket. The prisoner was pursued across a field, and apprehended with the things in his possession, namely, a basket, a loaf of bread, some bacon, sugar, coffee, butter &c.

69 5 July 1843

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **Liney Cope**, 30, boatman, was charged with stealing a log and a piece of chain, the property of Messrs Bramah and Cochrane, at Dudley on the 20th of June. The evidence against the prisoner was that the property was seen on the prosecutor's wharf on the day of

the robbery, and the day after, it was discovered in a boat of which the prisoner was captain. But as there were several other persons on the wharf at the time of the robbery, and no evidence being given to fix it on the prisoner, the Court directed the case to be stopped, and the jury immediately found the prisoner Not Guilty. Discharged.

70 23 August 1843

An extraordinary verdict was on Thursday returned by a coroner's jury at North Petherton, Somers, relative to the death of one **Richard Hall**, a boatman, who recently lost his life in consequence of his boat striking against the timber work of a bridge belonging to the Bristol and Exeter railway. A verdict was returned of "manslaughter against the chairman, vice chairman and directors of the Bristol and Exeter railway company" alleging that the deceased came by his death owing to the criminal neglect of the company in not removing the woodwork. The chairman is Frederick Rickets Esq and the vice chairman the worshipful the mayor of Bristol, both of whom, with Mr Divett MP, W P King and Charles Morgan Esqrs, are included in this strange verdict. Should the coroner have issued his warrant, these gentlemen (some of whom are probably unconscious of the accident up to this moment) must be committed until bail has been received for them. The verdict seems to be the result of a great local excitement.

71 20 December 1843

On Tuesday (yesterday) morning at Bradley in the parish of Sedgley, **Sarah Dolman** (the wife of **Frederick Dolman**, a boatman in the employ of Mr James Fellowes) gave birth to three sons who, together with the mother, are at present doing well. A subscription has been entered into for the relief of the poor parents of the children.

72 3 January 1844

THE CASE OF SARAH DOLMAN

To the Editor of the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*

Sir,

The poor woman (**Sarah Dolman**) mentioned in your paper this week as having given birth on Tuesday morning last to three sons, being a near neighbour of mine, I have had the curiosity of going today (Saturday) to see them, and they are certainly as fine, healthy looking children as most that I have ever seen. In going to see them, I was actuated not only by curiosity, but by a wish to make some inquiries of the mother and neighbours as to the circumstances of the family ; and I find that the woman (who is in her forty first year) has had fourteen children (on one occasion twins), ten of whom are living, and the eldest, a daughter about nineteen years of age, is such a cripple that she cannot move at all without a crutch. Of the rest, not one is able to do anything towards supporting the family, except a little girl about twelve years of age, who occasionally assists her father (a boatman) when her mother is not able to accompany him, which she has been in the habit of doing to nearly the time of her late confinement. As the man's earnings are very small for such a family, I think it would be a great act of charity if the public would contribute something in such a case of emergency. As to the subscription referred to in your paper, I have not heard of any except among the neighbours which, although it will be very useful as a present relief, which seems to me to be much needed, will, I fear, be very limited in amount. It has occurred to me that, if aided by the contributions of the more affluent of the surrounding neighbourhood, sufficient funds might be obtained to purchase the poor man a boat (if not a new one, at least a good second hand one) which would be a permanent source of profit to him during the time that his children are too young to work for their own living. And I have only to add that I shall be most happy to receive and apply to that purpose (if sufficient, and if not, they shall be applied for the benefit of the family in some other way) any subscriptions with which I may be entrusted ; and Mrs G B Thorneycroft of Chapel House has also very kindly agreed to receive subscriptions, a list of which will, from time to time, be published in this paper. Not doubting but you will readily forward so charitable a cause, by publishing this letter,

I remain, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

JOHN DUNNING

Bradley, near Bilston, December 23 1843

Subscriptions in aid of the above object are also received by Mr W Parke, book seller, 18 High Street, Wolverhampton.

73 24 January 1844

DECLARATIONS OF INSOLVENCY **G Salter**, Tipton, Staffordshire, boatman.

74 17 April 1844

THE NEW MODEL PRISON On Thursday, an inquest was held before Mr Wakley MP at the New Model Prison, Pentonville, respecting the death of a prisoner named **Robert Patmore**, aged twenty three, who had been a canal boatman, and in the early part of August 1843 had been convicted of a burglary and sentenced to ten years transportation. He became an inmate of the above prison on the 7th of August, at which time, according to the medical books, he was described as robust and of powerful make, but from November he had been continually under medical treatment until his death. Dr G O Rees and Mr Bradley, the medical officers, concurred in their opinion that the seeds of the disease (pulmonary consumption) which was the cause of his death had existed before his admission to the Model Prison, and that had deceased continued at liberty the effect of the complaint must have been the same. There was not the slightest grounds for supposing that the development of the disease had been accelerated by confinement. Every attention was paid to him, but he gradually got worse, and died on Sunday week. The coroner suggested the propriety of examining some of the prisoners as to the kind of treatment they experienced. An inmate occupying a cell adjoining the one in which deceased died was examined, and subsequently three others, who declared that there was nothing that could be found fault with. They had quite a sufficient quantity of food, warm clothing, and warm sleeping places. They had greatly improved in reading &c and were instructed in trades, which they anticipated would be of incalculable benefit to them when the eighteen months probation expires, and they go abroad. All the four prisoners were under sentence of seven years transportation. Mr Wakley remarked upon the healthy state of the prison, as shown by the medical books. While bronchitis and influenza had been so prevalent elsewhere, the cases here had been very rare. It was only fair to assume, after the evidence that had been heard, that every attention had been paid to deceased, and every kindness shown him by the officers of the prison, and it was due to them to say so, and the only verdict they could return would be one of natural death. Verdict accordingly.

75 22 May 1844

ANOTHER MURDER AT COVENTRY Another most brutal murder, evincing unusual depravity, took place at Coventry last week. It appears that the unfortunate deceased, Henry Clewley, a weaver, owed a man named **George Skelsey**, a canal boatman residing at Coleshill, a sovereign, and through lack of employment had been unable to pay. As the deceased was passing down at Ebburn's bridge, the prisoner was heard to call to someone in the boat on the canal, "Have you heard me talk to you about the man who owes me a sovereign?" To which the boatman having replied, "Yes, George", he said, "Now I'll go and pay the rascal", and he then ran after the deceased, knocked him down, and followed him to his own door, and again struck him to the earth, kicked and jumped on him, and the deceased shortly after expired, when the prisoner exultingly said to the deceased's sister, "I've done for your brother, and I'll do for you before night" At the inquest, a verdict of "wilful murder" was returned against Skelsey, and he was committed to take his trial.

76 10 July 1844

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **John Smallman**, 25, boatman, pleaded guilty to having stolen a sovereign from **Francis Reeling**, his master, at Dudley on the 27th of April last. Three months

imprisonment, last week solitary.

77 25 July 1844

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

MONDAY JULY 22 H Holloway, charged by a boatman in his employ named **Kimberley**, with an assault, was fined 10s and costs.

78 7 August 1844

STAFFORDSHIRE SUMMER ASSIZES **Samuel Clifton**, aged 51, a boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing, on the 21st of July 1844 at Branston, 28lbs of hay, the property of William Higgott. Having received a good character, he was sentenced to be imprisoned one month.

79 11 September 1844

FATAL PRIZE FIGHT Another of those brutal exhibitions, a prize fight, which took place at Newark last week, has terminated fatally. A boatman named **John Toder** and Thomas Jackson, for the trifling wager of £5 aside, fought for an hour and ten minutes, during which there were fifty six rounds. Toder at last received a death blow on the head. The coroner's jury have returned a verdict of manslaughter against Jackson, the seconds and the bottle holders.

80 27 November 1844

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 22 **Levi Wanklin**, a boatman, was charged with stealing an iron pump and a boot strap, the property of the Birmingham and Liverpool Canal Company. Thomas Bishton, a contractor to the canal company, stated that he searched the prisoner's boat, under a warrant, on Sunday last at Tipton, and found the pump under some cast iron. He charged the prisoner with stealing the pump from the Oak Farm Works. He said he did not steal it ; and that a man named James Green put it into the boat. On further search, the strap, which had the company's mark upon it, was found under the bed place in the cabin. This also, the prisoner said, was brought by a man to the boat. Green denied ever having been given or lent any pump to the prisoner, who was committed.

81 19 February 1845

FATAL ACCIDENT At about twelve o'clock on Monday night last, the body of a man named **William Tolly** , a boatman of Newport, and about 25 years of age, was found in the twentieth lock of the Birmingham Canal. It is supposed that he fell into the lock while pulling up the flood gate. Police inspector Casey and Police-constable Few, upon hearing the circumstance, gave information to Mr Dehane, surgeon, who promptly attended, but medical aid was unavailing, as life was extinct.

82 9 April 1845

BILSTON POLICE – TUESDAY APRIL 1 **George Green**, a boatman, was charged with stealing coal from a boat laden with coal (from the Coseley Colliery) to be delivered at the Stafford gas company's works. The prosecutor, however, not being present to go into the case, the defendant was set at liberty, on providing bail for his future appearance when called upon.

83 2 July 1845

BILSTON POLICE – TUESDAY JUNE 24

HORSE STEALING **Daniel Harper**, a boatman of Cinderhill, Sedgley, was charged with stealing a mare belonging to **Job Langston**, on the 18th instant at Wolverhampton.

The prosecutor said he was a boatman, and resided at Saredon. The prisoner had been in his employment several weeks. He (prosecutor) was at Wolverhampton market on Wednesday the 18th instant, with the prisoner, to sell a horse, but ultimately exchanged it for a mare. About seven o'clock in the evening, the prisoner got upon the mare and rode off, saying he should be only a few

minutes away, but he never came back. He (prosecutor) wandered about Wolverhampton streets all the night, but never saw the prisoner again until Saturday morning, when he was in the custody of the police. He (prosecutor) went the same day with the police to Mr Josiah Morris, to whom the prisoner said he had sold the mare. Mr Morris took them to the field where she was, and at once gave up the mare.

Mr Josiah Morris said he was a timber dealer, and resided in the township of Wolverhampton. In the evening of Wednesday last he was at a beer shop kept by William Walters, when the prisoner came in and said he had been exchanging horses in the market and showed him a mare, which he represented as his own, and asked fifty shillings for it. Witness offered thirty shillings for it, and told him he would not give more ; this sum the prisoner ultimately accepted. Witness took away the mare, and sent her to pasture. Mr Swatman (the witness stated) was present at the time he bought the mare, and he had since offered to sell it for five shillings profit ; she was very old, and had improved very much during the few days she had been out at pasture. The prosecutor would not have known the mare again when in the field had not witness pointed her out to him.

Francis Eagar stated that he was a sub inspector of police in Sedgley, and from information given by the prosecutor, apprehended the prisoner on Friday night, the 20th instant, in the Sedgley poorhouse. On charging him with the felony, and asking him what he had done with the horse, he said, "I know nothing about any horse" ; but soon afterwards told witness that the prosecutor being indebted to him for wages, he directed him to take the horse and do what he liked with it, which he accordingly did, and sold it to a person he did not know for thirty shillings. The prisoner had subsequently told him he offered to sell the mare to Mr Morris for two pounds and five shillings, but he would only give thirty shillings, which he took and came away, leaving the mare there.

Henry Sanders said he was a police-constable of Sedgley, and went with the prosecutor and the last witness to Mr Josiah Morris's on the 21st instant. Mr Morris said he had purchased the mare, and that she was out at pasture ; he then took them to Wednesfield Heath, and they found her there amongst other cattle. Mr Morris told them they had better take the mare, and said he wished he had had nothing to do with it, as it was getting him into trouble.

The prisoner was committed to the assizes.

84 30 July 1845

STAFFORDSHIRE SUMMER ASSIZES

CHARGE OF EMBEZZLEMENT **George Brookes**, a boatman, was charged with embezzling the sum of £4 2s 6d at Wolverhampton on the 16th of July 1845, the property of William Lewis and another, his masters.

Mr W Lewis stated that on the 14th of July, he sent the prisoner, who was captain of a boat, for a load of timber, and gave him £4 10s to pay tonnage. He never returned, but the horse was brought back by another person.

The prisoner's defence was that he went to a public house at Wolverhampton, and in the course of the evening he fell asleep, and whilst asleep his pocket was picked of its contents. The jury acquitted him.

85 27 August 1845

DEATH OF A BOATMAN On the morning of Thursday week, a case of sudden death occurred to a boatman named **William Gittins**, belonging to Worcester. It appeared that on the Tuesday previous the deceased arrived in Tipton from Worcester, for a load of coal, and on the following day he took the boat to Messrs Haines pits. He was engaged in the boat all day, and he retired to rest in the cabin about eight o'clock in the evening, apparently well in health. Next morning, however, on getting up, he began to throw up blood, and a doctor was immediately sent for, but before his arrival, the unfortunate man had breathed his last. Mr Underhill, the medical officer who attended him, made a post mortem examination of the body, and was of opinion that the deceased died from a rupture of a vessel in the lungs, produced by natural causes and not from any violence. An inquest was held on the body before G Hinchcliffe Esq, coroner, at the Prince Regent, Tipton, the following

day, and a verdict in accordance with the evidence returned.

86 3 September 1845

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 27 Jabez Tolley and Thomas Lakin were charged with stealing from the dwelling house of **Thomas Marlow**, two pledge tickets, his property. The prosecutor stated that he was a boatman and lived in Berry Street. On Friday night, he put two pawn tickets into a pocket book, and gave the book to Elizabeth Holmes, who lives in his house, to take upstairs. Next day a police-constable asked him if he had the pawn tickets, one being a ticket for a shawl pledged for 2s 7d, and the other for a watch pledged for 8s, and he then discovered they were missing. The prisoners (two boys) had slept in the room on the Friday night and left on Saturday morning. The prosecutor went after them to Stourbridge races, and found them on the race course, where they were apprehended. Lakin said he picked up the ticket of the watch from the floor of the room, and that the other boy (Tolley) could say the same. Amelia Williams, assistant in the shop of Mr Langman, pawnbroker, stated that the prisoner Tolley redeemed the watch for 9s 4d ; he presented the pledge ticket, and Lakin paid 9s and Tolley 4d. The watch, which was produced, had been exchanged with a woman named Elizabeth Gritton, who lives at Brierley Hill, for another watch and 10s. The prisoners were committed.

87 3 September 1845

PROPOSED BOATMEN'S CHAPEL A public meeting of the Wolverhampton branch of the Inland Navigation Mission, which was instituted in 1837, was held at the Wesleyan School Room, Darlington Street, in this town, on Tuesday evening. C L Browning Esq was called to the chair, and opened the proceedings of the evening in a brief speech. The Rev J T Jeffery of London, the secretary of the Parent Society, read the report of the Wolverhampton branch. The report observed that it was now acknowledged by ministers of the Gospel, and other persons competent to judge, that canal boatmen and river bargemen stood pre-eminently in need of Christian instruction. They had become a peculiarly immoral and lawless class. Until of late years it might be said that "no man cared for their souls" ; but it was now a subject of gratitude to Almighty God that in several districts of the country, clergymen of the Church of England, and ministers and members of other religious denominations, were seeking to do them good. Since the formation of the Wolverhampton branch in 1839, more than 5,000 visits had been made by the Bible readers and tract distributors under the direction of members of the Wesleyan connexion ; 250 boats at Wolverhampton had been supplied with the Holy Scriptures, and more than 20,000 tracts, school books, &c had been put into circulation. The report, after acknowledging the services of the Rev B John, the secretary of the auxiliary, and the Rev J Godden, proceeded to state that the committee proposed placing a boat, as a chapel and schoolroom, on the Wolverhampton canal, to be suitably fitted up for the purpose. In addition to watermen, properly so called, there was a considerable body of wharf labourers engaged in loading and unloading vessels, and some of these persons had large families in the vicinity of the line of navigation. Every exertion would be made to induce them to attend Divine worship in the Boatmen's Ark, and the churches and chapels in the vicinity, especially on the Lord's day. The report concluded with an earnest appeal to the public on behalf of the contemplated object. The meeting was suitably addressed by the Rev B John ; and by Mr Adams and Mr Grimes, two of the visitors. The Rev J T Jeffery also advocated the claims of boatmen and bargemen to the sympathy of the Christian public, in an earnest and interesting address ; in the course of which he adverted to the success which had attended the laborious exertions of the friend of boatmen – the Rev John Davies, a clergyman residing at Worcester, who had succeeded in establishing a floating chapel in that vicinity. Great good had resulted from the labours of the rev gentleman. In the name of the Parent Society, Mr Jeffery presented a Bible to each of the visitors of the Wolverhampton branch, Messrs S Grimes, C Lloyd, A Adams and T Williams, in testimony of the gratitude of the directors of the Parent Society for their exertions. The rev gentleman concluded by announcing that the committee of the Parent Society had promised 10 guineas towards the building of the proposed

floating chapel at Wolverhampton. The Rev S Shore moved the thanks of the meeting to the chairman, who acknowledged the vote, observing that he had employed a number of boatmen for many years. He had never received an insult from any of them, but he was aware that the character of that class of men was bad. Perhaps this arose from their being so much employed on the Sabbath Day. There were difficulties connected with the question which boat owners at present could not remove or control ; but he did hope that the time would come when the men would be released from Sunday labour. A collection having been made in behalf of the object, the meeting broke up.

88 8 October 1845

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

MONDAY OCTOBER 6 **Thomas Fox**, boatman, was fined 20s and costs for assaulting George Burton, one of the county police.

89 12 November 1845

DREADFUL DEATH FROM BURNING An inquest was held before G Hinchcliffe Esq at Mr Joseph Warr's, the Crown and Cushion Inn, Ocker Hill, Tipton, on Wednesday last, on view of the body of **Thomas Watson**, a boatman, aged thirty years. It appeared from the evidence that some children had made a bonfire the evening before in a field near Ocker Hill, not far from the canal where the boat of which the deceased had the management was lying. About seven o'clock the same evening, a Mrs Chester was going across the field near the bonfire, and saw a man lying near it, apparently asleep. About eight o'clock the same evening, as a woman named Harriet Jones was passing through the same field, she saw something lying on the ground between the canal and the bonfire (about forty yards from the latter) all in flames, but at the moment she could not tell what it was. In a moment she heard a man cry out as if in dreadful agony, and on giving an alarm assistance was procured, the fire put out, and the deceased was found lying on the ground with all his clothes burnt entirely from his body, except his shoes and gaiters. The poor man was immediately removed to the Crown and Cushion, a surgeon sent for, and every assistance rendered ; but he lingered in great agony till two o'clock the next morning, when he expired. He said that he had four sovereigns in his pocket when lying by the fire, which were afterwards found in a leathern purse partly burnt, close to the bonfire. It seemed that the deceased had three half crowns in his pocket, which were found among the ashes where he was found lying, which had the appearance of having been heated. There is little doubt that the deceased, when he found his clothes on fire, ran towards the canal to put it out, but fell before he could reach the water. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

90 3 December 1845

PUBLIC OFFICE, BILSTON – TUESDAY NOVEMBER 25 **James Green**, a boatman of Sedgley, was fined ten shillings and costs for ill treating and beating his horse on the 14th instant.

91 28 January 1846

At the Public Office on Monday last, Walter Peace was charged with stealing a gun, the property of **Edwin Nurse**. The prosecutor is a boatman, and the gun was stolen from his boat. He went to the shop of Mr Lee, pawnbroker, in Bilston Street, and found his gun there. Subsequently the prisoner, who had sold the ticket, came with the man he had sold it to to redeem it, and was taken into custody. On Friday, a companion of the prisoner, named Banks, was committed on a charge of stealing a pair of trousers from a boat.

92 18 February 1846

KINGSWINFORD POLICE – MONDAY FEBRUARY 9 **William Millard**, a boatman employed by Joseph Corbett, canal carrier, living at Kingswinford, was charged with embezzling the sum of £1 0s 6d, the property of his master. Joseph Corbett, son of the prosecutor, stated that he was book keeper to his father, by whom the prisoner was employed. The prisoner was in the habit of

receiving money for witness's father, and accounting for it. In November last, he took a boat to London, and on his return witness asked him for the money he had received for carriage during his voyage. He said he had received only fifteen shillings. He shortly afterwards went another voyage, and while he was away witness had reason to believe he had received some money at Leighton Buzzard, during his last voyage, which he had not accounted for. On his return on the 16th of January, witness accused him of receiving some money at Leighton Buzzard, for the carriage of goods. He said he had received £3 7s from Messrs Lawford and Co. He accounted for that sum, and positively denied having received any more. Witness ascertained that he had received £4 7s 6d. John Markwell Davis said he lived at Leighton Buzzard and was book keeper to Messrs Lawford and Co, timber merchants, in that town. On the 24th of November the prisoner delivered to them twenty eight tons of Wall's End coal, which he had brought from Brentford in Mr Corbett's boat. He reloaded with bark, and witness paid him £4 7s 6d for the carriage of the coal and bark. He took the prisoner's receipt for the money in the boat book, which he now produced. The prisoner had frequently received money from Messrs Lawford and Co for goods brought by Mr Corbett's boat. Mr Corbett, son, spoke to employing the prisoner, who was committed for trial.

Thomas Macklow, also a boatman employed by Mr Corbett, was charged with embezzling £7 10s, his property. It appeared that on the 24th of January last, the prisoner received from Mr Corbett and his son David Corbett, the amount named, to pay tonnage for a boat with which he was to go to Manchester. On Monday the 26th of January, Mr Corbett saw the prisoner in Dudley, quite tipsy ; and on inquiry, he said that the boat was at Stourbridge Junction. Mr Corbett sent his son, Henry Corbett, the same evening to look after the boat, which was loaded with goods, and should have been near Manchester by that time. On the next day, he sent another person to take the boat to Manchester. The prisoner never returned to his employ, or accounted to him for the money. George Earp spoke to the conduct of the prisoner while with the boat. The prisoner left the boat on Saturday and Sunday, and on returning on Monday night he took his things away, saying he would not come again, as he could not make a living at it. The prisoner, in answer to the charge, said he got quite drunk and lost the money. Committed.

93 18 February 1846

CAUTION TO BOATMEN Some interest was excited at Dudley police office on Monday se'nnight by a charge which was preferred against a boatman named **Thomas Cresswell**, by **William Stevenson**. It appeared that the complainant was employed by the Swift Packet Company as captain or skipper of their boat "*Victory*", which plies between Birmingham and Wolverhampton. On Wednesday the 23rd of January, the boat was proceeding to the former place, and on getting near the top of Tipton locks it passed the boat which Cresswell was steering, but he refused to allow the packet to go in first, and forced his boat so as to prevent it. The complainant and others pulled the boat back, and the defendant coiled his rope around the paddle start and said he would, on the first opportunity, run into the boat and sink her. Stevenson said he was afraid of the defendant, and from his violent manner he apprehended that he would run into the boat and cause some serious accident. A witness corroborated the testimony of the complainant, adding that he asked the defendant several times to go away. The Bench ordered Cresswell to find two sureties for good behaviour. There was a second charge against him for obstructing the packet boat but, on his consenting to apologise, it was not pressed.

94 4 March 1846

BILSTON PUBLIC OFFICE – TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24 **James Turton**, a boatman, was charged with stealing coal and a rope from a boat belonging to **Mr John Ellis** of Sedgley, on the 25th instant (*sic*). **Thomas Beddow** proved that on the day in question he was unloading a boat of timber in Mr Ellis's wharf, at Catchem's Corner near Bilston, which the prisoner had brought into the wharf. Mr Ellis had a boat laden with coal lying side by side with it, from whence the prisoner fetched coal many times as opportunity offered, and placed it in the cabin of his own boat. Witness told what was going on to Mr Joseph Tipper, an agent to Mr Ellis, who found the coal and also a

rope belonging to Mr Ellis in the cabin of the prisoner's boat. The prisoner confessed his guilt and hoped to be forgiven. Committed to the sessions.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 25 **Abraham Wootton**, boatman, was charged by Charles Perry of Bilston with breaking into his stable there, on the 10th of December last, and stealing a gelding and some gearing. The prosecutor stated the fact of his having lost his horse in the evening of the above named day, and that he never saw it again till Thursday last, when he found it on the towing path at Millfields near Bilston, drawing a boat. He owned the animal, and one **Levi Clifton**, the captain, came out of the cabin and declared it to be his horse, and endeavoured to take it out of prosecutor's hand. The police were sent for, and Clifton and the horse secured. When in custody, Clifton gave a straightforward account of how he came by the animal, which caused one Elijah Wood, who resides at Tunstall, to be taken into custody. Wood admitted that he had sold the horse to Clifton, but further stated that the prisoner had exchanged it with him only two days before for a grey pony, which he (Wood) had purchased from Messrs Hines and Allcock of Tunstall, saddlers, and 10s in money. The witness also stated that the prisoner had had possession of the stolen horse between two and three months, which carried it back to the period when the animal was stolen. Mr Hogg, the inspector of police at Bilston, stated that when he took the prisoner into custody, he could not say from whom he purchased the horse, or where ; whether it was three, four or six months since, nor whether before or after Christmas. The prisoner stated before the magistrates that he exchanged a black mare for the horse in question, and paid half a sovereign besides, but he did not know the man whom he dealt with. Committed to the sessions.

95 11 March 1846

FORGERY ON MESSRS MOLLIETT'S BANK (from the *Birmingham Journal*) On Tuesday, four men, Richard Hewson, button maker, Reece's Buildings, Unett Street, William Harrop, chaser, Unett Street, **Joseph Evans**, boatman, Nelson Street West, and George Rudge, labourer, Holland Street, were brought up at the Public Office charged with forgery. Mr Ryland appeared for the prosecution, and Messrs Harding and Powell for the defence. Inspector Glossop stated that the prisoners had been guilty of forging a cheque for £9, which they had got cashed at Messrs Molliett's bank. They had only been apprehended that morning, and he applied for a remand, as he was not at present prepared with the whole case. Mr Harding objected on the ground that there was no evidence to justify this ; and it was necessary at least that a *prima facie* case should be made out before the Magistrates could grant such a request. Mr Powell took a similar objection ; but the Magistrates, after a declaration by Mr Glossop that the prisoners had been given into his custody on the charge, and that, in his opinion, the accusation could be substantiated, complied with his request, and the prisoners were remanded to the following day. The case accordingly came on the next morning, before C Shaw and J B Melson Esqs, when the four prisoners, along with another man named William Hill, jeweller, Lionel Street, who had been apprehended as concerned in the case, were placed at the bar. From the evidence, it appeared that the prisoners Evans and Rudge had been in Mr Sturland's employment some years, and he had been in the habit of paying them by cheque on Mr Molliett's bank. On the 10th of December 1845, he gave Evans a cheque for £9 and during the present week he discovered a blank counterfeit in his cheque book, the cheque belonging to which had evidently been torn off with the one he had paid to Evans on the 10th of December, and given to him unintentionally, as the blank counterfeit was next to Evans's, and the tear of the paper exactly corresponded with his. Evans paid the cheque for £9 to Mr John Ridyard, a dealer in hay and corn, of whom Evans had been in the habit of buying, who discovered the blank cheque sticking to the other, and advised him to take it back to Mr Sturland, as it had evidently been given him by mistake. On the 9th of January, Mr Sturland gave Evans another cheque for the same amount, the only one he drew for that amount that day, and on the same day as this latter cheque was presented at the bank for payment, another of exactly similar appearance, and for the same amount, was presented by a different party, and paid, no suspicion being excited at the bank as they were both made payable to Mr Sturland's order. Mr Sturland said that this third cheque, though very well forged, was not in his writing. He supposed it must be the blank cheque he had

accidentally torn off and given to Evans on the 10th of December, and that the writing had been traced on a window from the other which he had filled in. The prisoners were again remanded till the following day (Thursday), when Hill stated that he had been applied to on the 9th of January by Rudge to fill up a blank cheque. He told Rudge he could not write, and referred him to Hewson. Rudge desired him to fetch Hewson, which he did, and they then went together to the Crown Tavern in Summer Row, where they met Evans, who produced a cheque for £9 signed by Mr Sturland, and dated the 9th of January 1846, which Hewson traced upon the blank cheque at a window, while Evans held it up for him. Evans then asked Hewson and him how much they should expect for their trouble, and agreed to give them £1 each. The following morning, Hewson gave the forged cheque to Harrop, with a promise of 5s if he would take it to the bank and get it cashed, which he did. Hewson then gave Harrop the 5s he had promised, and after paying Hill £1 and keeping £1 himself, according to agreement, made over the balance to Evans and Rudge to be divided between them. The magistrates committed Evans, Hewson and Hill to take their trial at the next Warwick assizes, and discharged Harrop and Rudge.

96 11 March 1846

CORONER'S INQUESTS The following inquests have been held during the past week before Thomas Moss Phillips Esq, coroner for this district. The undermentioned were declared to have died from natural causes :- **John Gilbert**, a boatman, about 46 years of age, who died suddenly in the cabin of his boat at Kingswinford.

97 25 March 1846

STEALING COAL On Monday last, **Samuel Pountney**, a boatman in the employ of the Chillington Iron Company, was committed by Henry Hill Esq and John Dehane Esq for stealing coal from the boat with which he was entrusted by his employers. The prisoner had been fetching the coal from Catchem Colliery, and about three hundred yards from the basin belonging to the Chillington works was observed to throw the coal on the towing-path. The offence was committed on Saturday evening, on his return home. **Thomas Nightingale**, also a boatman, was committed on the same day for a similar offence on Friday night last, at the wharf at Catchem's Corner.

98 29 April 1846

On Friday night £1 10s 6d and a quantity of wearing apparel were stolen from a boat belonging to Mr Shipton, near the Railway bridge. A boatman about 26 years old, who has absconded, is suspected of the theft.

99 6 May 1846

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

WEDNESDAY APRIL 29 **Edward Doddicote**, a boatman, was charged by his master, **Daniel Walters**, the captain of a boat residing in Workhouse Lane, Wolverhampton, with stealing £1 10s 6d in silver, a handkerchief, and a pocket knife. It appeared from the evidence that on Saturday last the prosecutor's boat was lying on the canal at Slade Heath, in this county. About four o'clock in the morning of that day, he missed £1 10s 6d from the cabin of his boat. The prisoner was absent from the boat at the time, and the prosecutor suspected that he had stolen the money. Information was given to the police, and the prisoner was apprehended by sub inspector Stuart, who found upon him 16s 6d in silver, a knife, two handkerchiefs and other articles. The knife and one of the handkerchiefs were subsequently identified by the prosecutor as having been taken from the boat at the same time as the money ; they had been left in his care by another servant, who had gone on a voyage. The prisoner told the police officer that he and the prosecutor were drunk at the time the affair happened. The prosecutor stated in his evidence that he had told the prisoner before Saturday last not to touch the handkerchief or knife. The prisoner, who did not say anything in answer to the charge, was committed for trial at the next sessions.

100 20 May 1846

BILSTON PUBLIC OFFICE – SATURDAY MAY 9 **John Kenson** and **George Kenson**, two young men, were charged by **William Jones** with robbing his boat, on the 7th instant at the parish of Tipton, of various articles of wearing apparel. Maurice Costello, a police-constable of Sedgley, stated that between three and four o'clock in the morning of Friday last, as he was upon duty, he saw the two prisoners with another person not in custody running along the towing path of the canal, coming from the direction of Dudley Port, each of them carrying a bundle. Suspecting the prisoners, he secured them, but the other man made his escape. He asked them where they were going, and they replied to their mother's, in Berry Street, Wolverhampton ; that they had come from Longdon with a boat belonging to Mr Bissell of Tipton ; and that they knew Mr Sadler of the Stop. He took them to Mr Sadler, who knew nothing of them. On searching their bundles, he found a worsted waistcoat, a smockfrock, a woman's cotton gown, a silk handkerchief and four pairs of stockings. He then took them to the station house and made inquiry after their mother in Berry Street, Wolverhampton, but could not find any person who knew them. The prisoners told him that they had purchased all the articles at a rag fair in London the week before. William Jones, a boatman residing at Warwick, was with his boat at the Sunderland colliery, Dudley Port, Tipton, on the previous Thursday night. On that night, or early on the following morning, his boat was robbed of the articles found upon the prisoners. All was safe when he went to bed at about ten o'clock, but when he got up the next morning about six o'clock, the things were missing. The articles produced are a portion of the stolen property. **Elizabeth Jones**, his wife, corroborated his statement. The prisoners, who declined saying anything, were committed to the sessions, but ordered to be kept in custody at Bilston, to be brought up on another charge on Monday.

MONDAY MAY 11 **John Kenson** and **George Kenson** were charged with robbing another boat, in the parish of Tipton on the same night, of two flannel frocks. Maurice Costello repeated his former testimony, and added that each of the prisoners was carrying one of the frocks over his arm when he overtook them. **William Preston**, boatman of Tipton, stated that on the night of the previous Thursday, his boat was robbed of two flannel frocks, one belonging to himself and the other belonging to his brother, **Herbert Preston**. One of those produced was his property. Herbert Preston, brother of the last witness, identified the other frock as his property. **Caroline Preston**, sister of the last two witnesses, proved the frocks to belong to her brothers from certain marks which she had put on them herself. The prisoners, who declined saying anything, were then committed to the sessions upon this charge ; but, as a watch and other things upon them were supposed to have been stolen, they were ordered to be kept at Bilston, to allow time for further inquiry.

101 5 August 1846

WOLVERHAMPTON PUBLIC OFFICE

FRIDAY JULY 31 **Henry Taylor** was charged with stealing from the person of **James Bevans** a purse containing two sovereigns and fifteen shillings. The prosecutor is a boatman, and had engaged the prisoner to work for him on Wednesday last. Shortly afterwards, they were sitting together at the Cheshire Cheese, Canal Street, with some other men, when the prosecutor felt the prisoner's hand in his pocket, and instantly found that he had abstracted his purse, and as soon as it was taken the prisoner and the other men ran off. Next morning he (the prosecutor) found the prisoner asleep in the boat, and had him taken into custody. Sarah Hurlestone saw the prisoner and prosecutor drinking together, but added that when she asked the latter after he awoke (having gone to sleep) which of them had taken his purse, he said he did not know, but it was gone. William Porter and Thomas Lewis gave corroborative evidence, and the prisoner was committed.

102 28 October 1846

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **Samuel White**, aged 40, boatman and **Abraham Challiner**, aged 41, boatman, were charged with stealing four cwt of pig iron, the property of Messrs Blackwell of Dudley, on the 24th of July. Mr Huddleston called John Kenyon Blackwell, who

deposed that, in company with his brother, he carries on the Russell's Hall ironworks at Dudley. All their iron is marked "Russell's Hall" in full. On the 20th of July they dispatched a boat load, twenty tons five cwt of pig iron, to Messrs Kenrick of Spon Lane. The five cwt is the allowance to the trade on twenty tons as "sand weight". On the 24th of July he went to Halesowen, and there saw four pigs of the quality and mark of those sent to Messrs Kenrick, marked "Russell's Hall". The boat arrived at Spon Lane deficient 7 1/2 cwt. **Mr Nock**, wharfinger, deposed that the prisoners are boat loaders in his employ. Saw four pigs of iron in the possession of the prisoners, and asked them where they got them. They said that a man named Spooner had told them he had seen the iron pulled off a boat in the canal by a line, and that the steerer would not stop to get it up, and then they raked it out of the canal. Benjamin Glazebrooke, blacksmith, Oldbury, deposed that he saw the prisoners on the 24th of July raking the canal opposite his house. They came to his house on the 28th and offered him the iron for 15s. WCP Walden deposed that he apprehended Challiner on the 30th of July. Challiner said he had the iron in his possession at Shellard's dock, and he meant to keep it. Witness went there but could not find it. Witness and Graham afterwards raked it out of the canal. Challiner said he had never offered it for sale. George Graham, sergeant in the county police, from information given by Glazebrooke, went with Walden to the canal and raked up the iron. **Joseph Hingeley**, boat loader to Messrs Blackwell, recollects loading a boat on the 20th of July. The iron was stowed all right in the boat when it left. The iron was level in the boat. There were "gang planks" over the iron. Mr W Hayes jun, clerk to the magistrates at Oldbury, proved a statement made by the prisoners on their examination before the magistrates. The depositions were put in and read. White stated that Challiner told him there was some pig iron pulled off a boat into the canal, and they should rake it up. Tried the place pointed out but could find nothing, and thought the colliers were making a fool of him. Challiner afterwards told him that Spooner had pointed out the places where the pigs were ; they found them there, and agreed to put them into Shellard's dock. Guilty. Three months imprisonment.

103 13 January 1847

WORCESTERSHIRE ASSIZES **Alexander Cannon**, aged 15, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing a jacket at Dudley, and was sentenced to be imprisoned two months.

104 24 February 1847

THE "WHIPPING TOMS" (from the *Leicester Journal*)

Tuesday last, being Shrove Tuesday, a very large number of the lower orders of the town assembled in the Newarks for the purpose of carrying out that ancient and long accustomed sport of the "Whipping Toms" and other games, notwithstanding the previous caution which had been given them by the magistrates of the borough to the contrary. For some weeks past, notices have been placarded in different parts of the town, as well as being published in the local papers, to the effect that by an Act of Parliament passed on the 10th of June last, the custom or practice of "Whipping Toms" is declared unlawful ; and in case any person should be found on any Shrove Tuesday playing at Whipping Toms, Shindy, Football or any other game in the Newarks, he should forfeit and pay for every offence a sum not exceeding £5. At about seven o'clock on Tuesday morning, a small body of the police was dispatched to the Newarks, and soon after considerable crowds of people began to assemble, and for some time everyone appeared peaceable and orderly, but about two o'clock a boatman named **Burley** drew from under his smock frock a football, which he threw up into the air, and which was the signal for a disturbance. The police on duty immediately proceeded to the spot, and succeeded in taking the boatman into custody. The mob then became infuriated and immediately commenced throwing stones and brickbats at the police ; however, Burley was secured and placed in the guardhouse at the magazine. The police again took their station in the midst of the crowd, who again assailed them with showers of stones, so that they were compelled to retreat to the magazine for safety. The disturbance was now assuming a very serious aspect, and a dispatch was sent to the superintendent for an extra number of police, and shortly after, Mr Charters, accompanied by the mayor, arrived at the scene of confusion and riot, with an

extra number of police and about fifty special constables, who drew up into lines and formed two deep, and advanced into the centre of the Newarks, with the mayor and superintendent in front. The mayor attempted to address the mob and to advise them to disperse quietly, but all was in vain. The police then received instructions to advance upon the crowd, and in a short space of time they succeeded in clearing the Newarks, but not without being furiously assaulted with stones and brickbats. The ground having been cleared of the rabble, a body of constables was placed at each entrance, in order to prevent the admittance of any person of a suspicious character. Four of the police received considerable injury in the affray. During the afternoon, seventeen of the ringleaders were apprehended by the police.

On Wednesday morning, the seventeen prisoners underwent an examination before a full bench of magistrates at the Town Hall. Their names are James Bristow, Henry Greatorex, Henry Butler, Arthur Haywood, Jonathan Hurst, Henry Bull, Lewis Maybank, James Burley, William Breedon, Thomas Ratcliffe, J Hill (alias Moco), James Snow, Samuel Vines, Charles Green, Alfred Barrowcliffe, John Hall and Joseph Hurst.

About a dozen witnesses were examined, in the course of which all the prisoners were identified as parties who were present and took an active part in the affray.

The prisoners made a kind of rambling defence, after which the Bench convicted Burley in the penalty of 40s or, in default, 21 days imprisonment ; and Ratcliffe in the penalty of 20s or fourteen days imprisonment. Greatorex and Hall were bound over to keep the peace for two months, and the remaining thirteen prisoners were committed for trial.

105 17 March 1847

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED EPIPHANY SESSIONS

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.

It appeared that the prisoner had charge of a boat to convey ten tons of iron from Messrs Gibbons and Co, Corbyns Hall Ironworks, 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 the way to Birmingham, he saw his master take two pigs of iron and put them in his 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, for stealing an iron crow bar. He said the tunnel was two hundred 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 Colbourn, agent to Gibbons and Co, produced a measuring gauge, and measured the two pigs of iron, which were produced in court ; he stated that from their size he knew them to be the make of Gibbons and Co ; no other works produced pigs of these precise 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 now no Mr Pickford 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 whatever 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.

106 24 March 1847

One inquest was held on Saturday last, at the house of Mr James Corbett, the British Oak, Kingswinford, before T M Phillips Esq, coroner, on the body of **Elizabeth Price**, an infant about fourteen months old, who was accidentally killed on the previous Thursday by the slipping of some hoop iron in a warehouse belonging to the Oak Farm Company. The deceased was in the arms of her mother, the wife of a boatman from Chester, at the time of the accident, and they were both struck to the ground by the falling iron. It did not appear that anyone touched the iron, and Mr Roberts, surgeon of Dudley, attended the deceased, who died about half past seven o'clock the same evening from the injuries she received. Verdict, "Accidental death".

107 12 May 1847

ROBBERY OF A BOATMAN BY HIS WIFE In the latter end of last week, a boatman named **Charles Spragg**, residing at Hill Top, had received £20 on account of his employer for coal he had delivered, and not having an immediate opportunity of giving it to him, entrusted it in the meantime to the safe keeping of his wife. It appears, however, she had an admirer in the person of another boatman named **Thomas Drengard**, with whom her husband was on terms of intimacy, and it is supposed she had proposed to him the project of decamping together with the money, as on the evening after she had received the money she was nowhere to be found by her deceived husband, and it was discovered that Drengard had accompanied her. No tidings have been heard of them since.

108 2 June 1847

SUDDEN DEATH AT LONGPORT About five o'clock on Sunday morning last, **Thomas Colclough**, aged 55 years, a boatman, was found dead in a boat at Longport near Burslem. It appears that he came from the neighbourhood of Sandbach, Cheshire, and on Saturday brought a boat load of clay from Runcorn to Mr George Phillips's manufactory at Longport, and after unloading the clay he drank some liquor, subsequently to which he went to a boat worked by his nephew, **John Barlow**, and lay down on the side bed in the cabin, where he was seen by his nephew about one o'clock, apparently quite well. About five o'clock, on the nephew looking at his uncle, he found a change in his countenance, and upon further examination discovered that he was quite dead. Mr S Goddard, surgeon, was shortly afterwards in attendance, but surgical aid was of no avail. It was Mr Goddard's opinion that the deceased had died from suffocation.

109 23 June 1847

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY BY A BOATMAN At the Police Office on Monday, before H Hill Esq and W Tarrant Esq, **Richard Thomas** was charged under the 3rd and 4th Vic chap 50, an act relating to robberies on canals and navigable rivers, with unlawfully piercing a cask containing wine, in a warehouse belonging to Mr Shipton adjoining the Birmingham Canal, with intent feloniously to steal part of the contents of the said cask. Sub inspector Butler stated that having received information that wine had been stolen from the cask in question, he secreted himself in Mr Shipton's yard on the night of the 15th instant. After some time he saw the prisoner come into the yard and heard him go towards the cask. The prisoner was disturbed by a noise which was caused by the horses in the stable kicking, and on hearing this he ran away. He (witness) followed and apprehended him. The prisoner declared that he was not in the yard at the time mentioned by the officer ; but the magistrates convicted him and sentenced him to be imprisoned one month at hard labour.

110 7 July 1847

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **Charles Jones**, boatman, pleaded guilty to breaking into a cottage at Halesowen on the 10th of May, and stealing various articles therefrom. To be imprisoned twelve months.

111 14 July 1847

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE

FRIDAY JULY 9 **William Hipwood**, a boatman, and George Chapple, alias Gipsy George, were charged with stealing a purse containing £7 from the person of a man in a yard at the back of the Raven and Bell public house. There being no evidence against Hipwood, he was discharged. Chapple was remanded until Monday.

112 21 July 1847

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **John Tolley** was indicted for stealing several articles of wearing apparel, the property of **Robert Arundle** at Stoke-upon-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 prisoner belonged, when he availed himself of the opportunity afforded to commit the theft 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 be imprisoned six months.

113 28 July 1847

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE

FRIDAY JULY 23 **Henry Greenway** was committed for trial, charged with stealing £1 16s 4d, the property of **Joseph Bevan**. The prisoner, on the 16th of March, had been engaged to assist the prosecutor, a boatman, Next day he ran away, and the prosecutor missed the money from the pocket of his waistcoat, which was in the cabin, and there was no one else but him and the prisoner in the boat.

114 28 July 1847

At the Wednesbury Police Office on Tuesday (yesterday), **Samuel Clavering**, a boatman, was committed for trial, charged with stealing three trusses of hay.

115 25 August 1847

MANSLAUGHTER NEAR DUDLEY On the night of Saturday week an outrage, which has terminated fatally, was committed on the person of a boatman named **Leonard Thorpe**, belonging to Alferton, Derbyshire, while on his way from Dudley to Tipton. In the forenoon of the above day he had been at Handsworth Petty Sessions for the purpose of prosecuting a married woman named Sarah Parkes, whom he charged with stealing from his person a purse containing two sovereigns and some silver, while in the Swan Inn, Tipton, on the previous day, and the case having been satisfactorily proved, she was committed to take her trial. He then appears to have returned to his boat, which was getting a cargo of firebricks from the works of Messrs Harper and Morris of the Delph Works, where he remained till late in the afternoon, when he said he should go and get some money to enable him to proceed on his journey on the following morning. He afterwards went to the Angel Inn, Dudley, where he remained drinking until twelve o'clock, and on leaving the house to go to Tipton, he was attacked on the way, and received such injuries as terminated his existence on the day following.

The inquest was commenced on Wednesday, before George Hinchcliffe Esq and a respectable jury, at the Navigation Inn. Two Irish shoemakers named Patrick Grady and John Maloney had been taken into custody on suspicion of being the guilty parties in the affair, and were present at the investigation, but they exhibited the utmost indifference as to the result, whether from a sense of

their innocence or otherwise has yet to appear.

The witnesses examined were Anthony Ellis, Mary Ellis, Charles Lewis, **James Cotterill** and **John Guest**. From the evidence of the two former, it appeared that they were drinking with the deceased at the Angel Inn, Dudley, until nearly twelve o'clock on Saturday night, Thorpe being at that time quite sober. Anthony Ellis left before Thorpe, and had scarcely got a few yards from the inn before he was set upon by some Irishmen armed with bludgeons, who robbed him of his hat and handkerchief and beat him severely. 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, when he took the road by the Castle wall towards Tipton.

The witness Lewis was also in company with the deceased in the public house, and identified the prisoner Grady as one of a party who had attacked him on his leaving the house.

In the evidence it did not appear how the deceased had been found, but Cotterill and Guest, the former a companion and the latter a servant to him, described the circumstances of his death. At two o'clock on Sunday morning, he was brought to his companion's boat by the tunnel keeper at Tipton, when Cotterill perceived some blood on him, but on asking the deceased how it came there, he received no reply. Deceased slept in his boat, and on the following morning, on being called by Cotterill and asked if he was ready, he said he was, and began to tackle his horse for the journey. Cotterill's horse being ill, however, he put off the journey, and on hearing this, Thorpe said he would do the same. During the whole of this period the witness observed nothing particular in the deceased's manner ; and it was not till seven o'clock that a doctor was mentioned, but the deceased said, "Stop a bit". He then left Cotterill's boat and walked a space of one hundred yards to his own, where he remained dozing on the boat till about three o'clock, when he got up and asked his servant to get a little warm water to wash his head, which ached. The man did so, and in about an hour afterwards he found his master lying dead. He had taken nothing during all that period.

The Coroner, after animadverting upon the gross negligence displayed by these two men in not calling for medical assistance, said 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. No injury would accrue to the prisoners, who were under a remand for Saturday, and therefore, with the sanction of the jury, he should recommend the further consideration of this important case to be adjourned until three o'clock on Monday next. In this arrangement the jury acquiesced, and the proceedings then closed.

THE ADJOURNED INQUEST – MONDAY On Monday the examination was resumed at the above house, before Mr Hinchcliffe, when the following evidence was given :-

Martha Hinton stated that she had known the deceased for several months past. She (witness) occasionally served at the Angel public house in Dudley, and there saw deceased about twelve o'clock on the Saturday night in question. Shortly after that hour the two men then in custody came to the door of the Angel and asked for some ale ; she told them her master had given over selling ale, and the door was closed against them. Before one o'clock, the three men who were in the house left, and one of them was attacked by some persons who had just come up. When the two prisoners had been refused the drink, they said they would give it the ----- who were inside. When the parties who appeared to have been fighting had left the door, Thorpe, the deceased, went out. Between one and two o'clock she was engaged in cleaning the steps of the door, when she saw the two men in custody pass the door. One of them asked her if she would fill any more ale then, to which she replied, "Go on". The prisoner Grady then said to his companion, "Come on, we have given it the -----". She (witness) was quite sure the two men who came up at the time as stated were the parties who had asked for liquor after twelve o'clock.

John Page, police-constable, said that about one o'clock on the morning in question, his attention was attracted by hearing a cry of "Murder". He proceeded to the spot, when he saw the two prisoners standing in the street. There was a man wearing a straw hat squaring his fists at the two men, but he ceased doing so, and ran away very fast towards Tipton. Witness then told the two

prisoners to go away, upon which they went in the same direction as did the man with the straw hat. All three appeared sober.

Henry (?Ellice?) stated that he was a boatman. On Sunday morning week he was proceeding on horseback on the road from Tipton to Dudley, and when he arrived opposite the Castle wall, he saw three men dreadfully beating a man whom they had against the wall. When he reached the turn, a woman met him, and inquired whether there was a fight down the road. Witness told her there was ; upon which she remarked that she was afraid they would kill that poor fellow. The man who was being beat groaned very much, and cried out, "Oh, good Lord". He heard the men beating the unfortunate man for about twenty yards up the road. He could not tell the kind of dress worn by any of the men.

George Law stated on the morning of Sunday week last he was returning home from Dudley. When a short distance out of the town, he saw a man lying on the ground ; his head was in the gutter, and his body on the footpath. He went and took hold of his head, when the man groaned and said, "Oh Lord, let me lie". Witness then passed on. The man had a straw hat on at the time. A few yards from where the man lay is a street called Birmingham Street, round the corner of which a man was looking. His dress was dark. He (witness) saw the man walk, and he was sure he had a straw hat on ; one of his legs was shorter than the other. He believed the prisoner Grady to be the person he saw on the road near the man who was lying on the ground.

William Seagrave, a labourer, was next examined. On Sunday morning week he was attending to some bricks which were burning in a brickyard, when a man staggered into the place and slipped into a drain. He got out of the drain and went towards the kiln, when he commenced praying that God would have mercy on his soul, for he should die. He also cried out for a policeman or a doctor. His head was bleeding, and there was a cut across his forehead. He then got up and walked on towards Tipton. He had a straw hat on. He (witness) had seen the deceased lately, since his death, and he knew he was the same person who came into the brick yard.

Mary Ellice, re-examined, and deposed that on the morning in question she was in Dudley looking for her husband, when she met a man on horseback who told her some men were beating one man on the Tipton road.

Mr Hill, surgeon of Tipton, stated that on Sunday week he was sent for to attend deceased. He found him lying in the cabin of a boat, quite dead. There was a deep cut on his head. On the following morning, witness made a *post mortem* examination of the body, and in addition to the cut in the forehead, found various bruises under the scalp. He should think a blunt instrument was used to inflict the blow on the head. A fall would not cause such a fracture.

Thomas Hawthorn, labourer, stated that about two o'clock on the morning of Sunday week last, he saw deceased in the road. It was quite dark. He said he was very bad, and went towards the canal bridge, and asked him (witness) where his boat was ; witness then led him to a boat in which there was a fire.

William Mills, sub inspector of police, deposed that he apprehended the two prisoners on last Monday night week, at Dudley. He told them they were arrested on suspicion of being connected in the death of Leonard Thorpe. Maloney asked when was it, to which witness replied about half past twelve o'clock this morning. He then said : I went to my lodgings at eleven o'clock and never went out after. Patrick Grady said I was knocked down and kicked by two men last night, and wish I knew who they were.

The prisoners being asked if they wished to say anything in their defence, John Maloney said that he was at work after eleven o'clock finishing a pair of shoes for a Mr Dunn. After he had left Mr Dunn's house, he purchased a few things for the following week. He then went home, and he heard nothing of the affair. The prisoner Grady was then asked if he had anything to say in his defence, to which he replied that he did not wish to say anything. Maloney said he wished ten witnesses to be called who lived in Dudley.

The Coroner said he would send for the persons required by the prisoner, as he would give him every opportunity of proving his innocence.

The case was then adjourned until half past nine o'clock on Tuesday (yesterday), when the jury,

after hearing evidence, returned a verdict of “Manslaughter” against Patrick Grady, who was committed for trial. Maloney was directed to be taken before the Magistrates on Wednesday (this day).

116 22 September 1847

ROBBERY BY A BOATMAN AT TIPTON At Wednesbury petty sessions, yesterday (Tuesday), before John Leigh and W E Jones Esqrs, **Daniel Warr**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a pair of trousers, the property of **Thomas Lakin**, who stated that he was a boatman at Tipton. On Sunday last he missed a pair of trousers from the cabin of his boat, then lying in Hughes's dock, Tipton. The following morning he met the prisoner at Butcher's bridge in Tipton ; he had on his (prosecutor's) lost trousers. The prisoner said he had taken them out of the cabin. He had no right to go into the cabin for anything. Thomas Smith, police-constable of Tipton, deposed that on charging the prisoner with the theft, he said he had taken the trousers from the cabin to wear while his own were being mended. Committed for trial at the sessions.

117 27 October 1847

STAFFORDSHIRE SESSIONS William Owen was indicted for stealing on the 13th of August last at Wolverhampton one pair of trousers 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 trousers, which were in the cabin of his 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. Police sub inspector Butler apprehended the prisoner, and took the trousers from him, which were produced and identified by the prosecutor. Six months hard labour.

118 27 October 1847

STAFFORDSHIRE SESSIONS

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

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, the prosecutor took off his waistcoat, containing a sovereign and a half and six shillings and fourpence in silver, leaving it in the cabin whilst 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 for four months.

William Owen was indicted for stealing, on the 13th of August last at Wolverhampton, one pair of trousers 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 trousers, 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. Police sub inspector Butler apprehended the prisoner, and took the trousers from him, which were produced, and identified by the prosecutor. Guilty. Six months hard labour.

STEALING FROM THE PERSON AT TIPTON Sarah alias Mary Parker, aged 35, was indicted for stealing a purse, two sovereigns and one half sovereign in gold coin, and two shillings and sixpence in silver, the property of **Leonard Thorpe**, at Tipton on the 14th of August last. It may be recollected that the unfortunate man, Leonard Thorpe, came to his death shortly after the time when

the alleged robbery took place, and that two men are awaiting their trial on a charge of having wilfully murdered him. The depositions taken before the magistrate at Handsworth, and which were signed by the mark of the deceased, were put in on this occasion as evidence, upon which Mr Kettle raised an objection, contending that they were not taken in conformity with the statute, inasmuch as it did not appear upon the face of them whether the magistrates before whom they were taken were county magistrates, neither did it appear that the whole of them were taken in the presence of the prisoner. The learned gentleman also quoted an opinion of Lord Denman, in the case of the Queen v Wilshaw, where he held it necessary that where a mark was affixed to depositions, it was necessary to call the magistrate or his clerk to prove it.

The learned Chairman would take the opinion of the other Court upon the objection, and upon his return, said that objections were overruled. In reference to the case quoted, it was the mark of the prisoner and not that of the prosecutor which the magistrate or his clerk was required to prove.

William King, police officer, stated that he was present before the magistrates when the depositions produced were read over to Leonard Thorpe, to which he affixed his mark ; the prisoner being present at the time.

The depositions, which were then read, stated that he was robbed on the 14th of August of two sovereigns and a half in gold and some silver, and that a purse found on the person of the prisoner was his property.

The policeman produced the purse sworn to by the prosecutor, which had been found in the prisoner's pocket, containing a sovereign.

Eleanor Price, servant to Mr Whitehouse of the Navigation Inn, Tipton, saw Leonard Thorpe at her master's house, and whilst she was cleaning some windows, she saw the prisoner put her hand in Thorpe's pocket, but did not take any particular notice. The purse produced she found in the prisoner's pocket when she searched her.

Mr Kettle addressed the jury for the prisoner, and called Margaret Morris, who stated that she knew the prisoner, and that on Monday morning, the 9th of August, she paid her a sovereign, which she saw her put into a purse that was similar to the one now produced ; she could not swear it was the same, but it had that appearance. She had known the prisoner for a period of six years.

Mr Twemlow briefly addressed the jury, after which the learned Chairman summed up the case, and the jury returned a verdict of guilty.

A previous conviction was proved against the prisoner for a similar offence at the January Sessions of 1845, and for which she was sentenced to one months hard labour.

The learned Chairman sentenced the prisoner to be transported for the term of seven years.

CHARGE OF STEALING IRON AT TIPTON **John Payne** was indicted for stealing a piece of pig iron on the 20th of August, the property of William Henry Cope and others, at Tipton.

Samuel Wildman, stocktaker to the Parkfield Company, recollected weighing two boat loads of iron (40 tons) on the 27th of August last, for Mr Walter Williams of West Bromwich, which was delivered to **William Jones**, the steerer of the boat belonging to the company. The witness said that the piece of iron produced was similar to that weighed.

William Jones, a contractor, living in the parish of Bilston, stated that he worked for the Parkfield Company, and that he kept men. He recalled **Thomas Lewis**, one of his men, going with a boat load of iron on the 28th of August, from the wharf belonging to the Parkfield Company.

John Horton, agent to the Parkfield Company, stated that the company consisted of William Henry Cope and three or four others ; and upon being cross-examined, said that John Shaw, himself and another, with Mr Cope, formed the company. The order for the iron was given in the usual way ; it was not paid for upon delivery, but had been paid for since then.

Thomas Lewis, a boatman, deposed that he worked for William Jones, and on the 28th of August last he took a boat load of iron from the Parkfield Basin to Mr Walter Williams of West Bromwich, and left it in the new basin there.

Cross-examined : He had not been before the magistrates. The stock taker saw him come with the boat. The prisoner was sent to unload the boat on the following Monday. He had not seen the

prisoner since.

Isaac Whitehouse, stock taker to Mr Walter Williams, recollected seeing the prisoner in a boat belonging to the Parkfield Company, and whilst there he saw him move several pieces of iron and put them on the platform of the boat, after which he threw some haybands over them ; the prisoner also broke a piece of iron similar to that produced. After the boat was unloaded, the prisoner removed it out of the basin.

William Bill, clerk to Mr W Williams, stated that he went to search a boat on the 30th of August, which was in the Birmingham canal, and was going from the works of Mr Williams, and which was in the care of the prisoner. He told the prisoner that he understood he had a quantity of pig iron concealed, which he (the prisoner) said he knew nothing about. He found fifteen pieces under the platform of the boat ; there was no other iron in the boat. The boat was an iron one, and belonged to the Parkfield Company.

Cross-examined : He signed the book ticket.

By the Court : He delivered the fifteen pieces of iron to Clarke, the policeman.

This was corroborated by the police officer, who stated the weight to be above 2 1/2 cwt.

This closed the case for the prosecution ; when Mr Woolrych, at great length and with considerable energy, addressed the jury for the prisoner ; after which the learned Chairman summed up the evidence, and the jury returned a verdict of "Guilty".

The prisoner was then sentenced to four months imprisonment with hard labour.

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 of 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 feeling 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.

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.

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 the objections ; 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 hard labour.

119 27 October 1847

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **George Platt**, boatman, pleaded guilty to the charge of breaking open the cupboard in the cabin of a boat, and stealing a bank note for the payment of £5 and a sovereign, the property of **Samuel Baylis**, at Wolverhampton, on the 18th of August last. The prisoner also pleaded guilty to a previous conviction for felony, and was sentenced to be transported

for seven years.

120 27 October 1847

QUICK WORK At the Police Office on Wednesday last, **William Bennett**, seemingly a boatman, was charged before John Leigh Esq with stealing a pony, the property of James Beardmore of Etruria in the parish of Stoke on Trent. The prosecutor missed the pony from his stable, which is on the canal side, at about half past eleven o'clock on Tuesday night. The prisoner was seen early on Wednesday morning on the road near Brewood with the pony in his possession, by Mr George Harris, who asked him what he was going to do with it. He offered to sell it for £7 10s, but ultimately agreed to take £5 5s. Mr Harris, suspecting the pony to be stolen, gave information to the police, and the prisoner was taken into custody. Mr Beardmore, luckily, had directed his course to Wolverhampton, and on giving information at the police station, found the prisoner and the pony already there. The prisoner said he found the pony running along the towing-path of the canal near Tixall ; he stopped at Penkridge, and as he could not find an owner, he brought it on. He did not deny offering him for sale ; he was also, it appeared, well acquainted with Mr Beardmore's stable, having put up horses there. It would, he told the magistrate, "be a great loss of time" to him if he was committed ; but nevertheless his *millions* and himself were as promptly as possible dispatched to Stafford, and on Saturday he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to ten years transportation.

121 3 November 1847

INQUEST On Friday at the Raven and Bell public house in this town, on the body of **James Meredith**, twelve years of age, a boat boy, who had died on the previous Tuesday under the circumstances detailed in the following evidence :- **Rebecca Kershaw**, the wife of a boatman, deposed that the deceased had been employed as a boat boy by his uncle, **Richard Ready**, and lived with him on the canal side, near Mr Shelton's wharf. She believed he was an illegitimate child. Between twelve and one o'clock on Tuesday, she went into Ready's house in consequence of hearing reports about the boy's illness. She there saw the deceased lying upon a side bed or a bench, near the fire, with a night gown and blanket over him. There was no one in the kitchen at the time excepting three of Ready's children, the eldest of whom is not more than six or seven years old. The boy asked her for some water. She procured some, and had a little toasted bread put into it. On giving the boy the water, he snatched the bread out of the water and ate it. He complained of pain in his head. About half past three o'clock the same day, she was requested by Mrs Marlow to go again to Ready's house, as the child was dying. She went immediately, and found that he was dead, but warm. She observed several marks of violence on the right side and across his loins, together with several lumps and one wound on his head. The inquest was adjourned until yesterday (Tuesday) evening, in order to afford time for the performance of a *post mortem* examination of the body of the deceased. Elizabeth Meredith and Harriet Pearce, two relations of the deceased, are in custody on suspicion of having accelerated his death by neglect and ill usage. They were brought up before the Magistrates on Saturday, and remanded until this day (Wednesday).

122 24 November 1847

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE

THE LATE CHARGE OF MURDER NEAR DUDLEY Thomas Cavannah, who had been remanded from Wednesbury on the previous day, was again brought up, charged with being one of the men concerned in the death of a boatman named **Leonard Thorpe**, who was violently beaten by several Irishmen early on Sunday morning the 15th of August last, on the road leading from Dudley to Tipton, and shortly afterwards died from the injuries which he had received. The circumstances of this case were fully reported in our paper at the time. It will be remembered that the coroner's jury returned a verdict of manslaughter against Patrick Grady, and that John Maloney was subsequently committed by the magistrates sitting in this town on a charge of murder. On the death of Thorpe, Cavannah absconded, and was only heard of a day or two since, when he was apprehended at Liverpool by one of the police of that town. Evidence proving Cavannah to have

been present at the disturbance, and in company with Maloney shortly after Thorpe was beaten, was now given, and in addition Mr Leigh read in the prisoner Maloney's statement, attributing Thorpe's death to blows inflicted by him (Cavannah) with part of one of the market stalls. Mr Leigh explained to the prisoner that this statement was not now evidence against him, but it might possibly become so at the trial ; and therefore he might make any statement in reply if he thought proper, but he was not obliged to do so. It was perfectly optional. Cavannah replied that he had nothing to say until the assizes ; he supposed he should go there. The prisoner, who is apparently about thirty years of age, was then remanded until Wednesday, when the depositions in the case will be taken and read over to the witnesses.

123 12 January 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE SESSIONS **John Hill**, a boatman, indicted for stealing an iron chain from his boat, the property of Samuel Gough, at the parish of Kingswinford, on the 1st of November last, was acquitted.

124 23 February 1848

DUDLEY – ROBBERY FROM A BOAT On Monday, before J Roberts Esq, a boy named **John Williams** was charged with stealing a new boat line, a pair of gaiters, a shirt and a towel from the cabin of a boat lying at the Level Wharf, Brierley Hill, on the night of Thursday the 17th instant. A boatman named **James Jones** observed the prisoner, the following day, close to a bundle of kids near the Limekilns, Woodside, with a new boat line, which he walked off with. The boatman gave him into custody, and on searching the bundle of kids, the other articles were found concealed. **George Green** identified them, excepting the shirt, which belonged to him, as the property of his master, **Mr James Wood**, and the prisoner was committed.

125 8 March 1848

KINGSWINFORD – DEATH BY DROWNING An inquest was held on Tuesday, at the house of Mr Joseph Hingley, the Navigation Inn, Green's Forge, in this parish, before W W Ford Esq, Coroner, on the body of **Jacob Corbett**, about 23 years of age, a boatman, who had been employed in assisting to work a boat belonging to Messrs Crowley and Co, carriers of Wolverhampton. It appeared that the boat arrived at Green's Forge lock from Stourport between two and three o'clock on Friday morning. Corbett was driving the horse, but went on to open the bottom gates, immediately after which the steersman saw something fall into the canal, close to the gates. The dead body of the deceased was in a few minutes afterwards found against the bottom gates. Verdict, "Found drowned". The deceased is the fifth individual of his family who has been drowned.

126 8 March 1848

WORCESTERSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **John Williams**, aged 17, boatman, was found guilty of stealing a boat line, a towel, a shirt and a pair of gaiters, the property of **James Wood** and **George Green**. These articles were placed in the cabin of a boat moored at Dudley tunnel, and were stolen during the night of the 17th instant. A person named **Jones** saw him with the line in his possession the next day, and took it from him ; the other articles were also found in a place of concealment, which had no doubt been provided for them by the prisoner. Six weeks imprisonment.

127 8 March 1848

OLDBURY **Ralph Higgins** and **William White**, boatmen, were charged with stealing 3 cwt of beans, the property of the Midland Railway Company, on the 11th of January last. They were conveying the beans to Oldbury. Both prisoners were found guilty, and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment.

128 15 March 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **John Crofts** aged 23, boatman, was charged with

stealing a silver watch, the property of Benjamin Wood of Dudley, on the 8th ult. Wood was going to Sidmore on the evening of that day, when he was met by four or five persons and was twice knocked down by them. As he was getting up the second time, the prisoner, who was the only one of the party he knew, pulled his watch out of his pocket by the guard, and twisted it off the ring by which it was secured. The pawnbroker was called, and identified the prisoner as the person who had put the prosecutor's watch in pledge at his establishment. The prisoner had nothing to say, and was found guilty. Sentence : Ten years transportation.

129 15 March 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS

A CAUTION TO BOATMEN **Thomas Slater**, 27, was indicted for stealing three pieces of lawn, value £4 10s, the property of Messrs Pickford and Co, at Wolverhampton.

Mr Meteyard appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Kettle defended the prisoner.

Mr Meteyard, in opening the case, told the jury that this was a prosecution instituted by Messrs Pickford, carriers, with a view to prevent, if possible, the robberies they were continually sustaining at the hands of their servants. It was their wish to protect the enormous amount of public property committed to their charge, as well as themselves from the losses incident to the conduct of their servants, that induced them to press this charge against the prisoner. It appeared that a Mr Boothroyd had sent some drapery goods, which he had purchased at Dudley, being part of the stock of Mr Harper, a bankrupt, to Messrs Pickford's to be conveyed to Huddersfield. The goods were taken by waggon to Tipton, and thence by canal to Wolverhampton ; at the latter place they were unshipped from the boat and placed on the wharf, to be forwarded by the London and North Western Railway Company to Huddersfield. While the goods were lying on the wharf, the prisoner, who was in the employ of Messrs Pickford, came up with his boat and remained in the basin, by the side of the goods, all night. In the morning, when the packages came to be removed, one was found broken into, and upon the prisoner's boat being searched, three pieces of lawn were found under the tarpaulin in the hold of the boat, and near a hole communicating with the cabin. The learned counsel then called witnesses to prove fully the facts of the case ; but after an address by Mr Kettle on behalf of the prisoner, the jury, apparently to the astonishment of a crowded court, returned a verdict of not guilty.

The same prisoner was then indicted for stealing some plates and dishes, the property of John Lees, at Wolverhampton. It appeared from the evidence that on the 18th of February five crates of earthenware were lying at Messrs Pickford's wharf at Wolverhampton, consigned to John Lees of that town. On the morning in question, a hole was perceived in one of the crates, and on examination it was found that thirty six plates and some dishes had been taken out. A boat having been lying at the Wolverhampton wharf of which the prisoner was captain, he was suspected, and his boat was followed to Tipton, where it was searched, and the plates and dishes were found concealed in the boat. The prisoner was found guilty and sentenced to be imprisoned for six months to hard labour.

CHARGE OF EMBEZZLEMENT **William Anton** was indicted for embezzling the sum of £3 10s 3d from his employer, Samuel Yates of Great Wyrley. It appeared that the prisoner was a boatman in the service of the prosecutor, a coalmaster and farmer at Wyrley, and that on the 24th of June and on the 14th of July last, he received the sums of £2 19s 3d and £1 7s 9d from Mr Charles Haywood in consideration of tonnage dues, for his master, and which sums had not been paid to the clerk of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Company. The prisoner, upon being questioned by his master, first of all stated that he had paid the money to the clerk, but afterwards said he had lost it, and he was willing to work it out. He received a good character from the prosecutor, and was strongly recommended to mercy. He was sentenced to one months imprisonment.

(Before anybody asks, I can't make this add up to the right amount either!)

ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON AT BILSTON **Joseph Goodwin**, aged 28, a boatman, was indicted for stealing at Bilston, from the person of John Drake, an Irish pig dealer, one £5 note, ten

sovereigns and several pieces of silver. Mr Kynnersley conducted the prosecution and Mr Rupert Kettle the defence.

It appeared from the evidence for the prosecution that on the 10th of December last the prisoner met with the prosecutor in the neighbourhood of Tipton, and walked with him a distance of nine miles, after which they separated ; that a subsequent part of the day the prisoner looked into the tap windows at the Queen's Arms in Bilston, where the prosecutor was sitting, and that prosecutor called him into the tap room, when they both had some ale and beer together. In the course of conversation, the prisoner complained to the prosecutor that he was very poor. Prosecutor fell asleep, and remained in that state for some time. A female, with whom he cohabits, called at the house to see him, and on going into the tap room found the prosecutor asleep and alone. She examined his pockets, and finding that the money was gone she awoke him, and asked him where his money was. He replied in his pockets. She told him it was not there, and prosecutor, upon examination, found that he had been robbed of his purse, containing the £5 note, the ten sovereigns and silver. A portion of the money he had received in the course of the forenoon after he left home, and he had taken out his purse in the presence of the prisoner before he fell asleep. Prosecutor, on discovering his loss, immediately gave information to the police, and described the person and dress of the prisoner who, in the course of the night, was taken to the police station in consequence of being found drunk in the street. He was not at first recognised by Inspector Thompson to be the man who had been described by the prosecutor, as he then had on a new flannel boatman's shirt over his other clothes. It was, however, subsequently discovered that his under garments corresponded with the description given by the prosecutor. Thompson then told him that he was charged with robbing Drake, an Irish pig dealer. Prisoner replied that he had never robbed any man. Thompson made enquiries and ascertained that on the evening of the robbery the prisoner had bought a new flannel shirt, and also a silk handkerchief, at the shop of Mr Edward Maybury at Bilston, clothier. He offered a £5 note in payment for these articles. Mrs Maybury sent the note to be changed at the shop of Mr Howes, grocer, and afterwards gave the prisoner £4 7s 9d change, retaining 12s 3d for the articles which he had bought. It was also ascertained that on the same evening the prisoner purchased a flannel shirt and a waistcoat at the shop of Mr Thomas Jones at Bilston. He paid for them in silver, but took a purse (which contained sixteen sovereigns and a half) from his old waistcoat and put it into the new one, which he then put on. There was another man with him at the time. To prove the foregoing circumstances, the prosecutor, Mrs Maybury, Jane Morris, assistant to Mr Jones at Bilston, Diana Dudley of Tipton, Isabella Huffy, servant at the Queen's Head at Bilston, and Sarah Bailey of Ladymoor in the parish of Sedgley, were called. The prosecutor swore to the note produced by Inspector Thompson, who had received it from Mr Howes. He identified it by the letter "D" written in red ink. Mrs Maybury could not swear positively to the note, but recollected that the one she received from the prisoner was a note with the word Wolverhampton at the top, and that it was one issued by the Bilston Banking Company.

Mr Kettle addressed the jury at some length on behalf of the prisoner, animadverting on the fact that the female who was observed by the servant girl at the Queen's Head examining the pockets of the prosecutor had not been called to swear that she herself had not taken the money ; that there was no proof to show that the prisoner left the prosecutor after he had fallen asleep ; that there was no positive proof that the prisoner was the man who purchased the articles at the two shops mentioned by the witnesses (because they had never before that time seen him) ; and that there was no satisfactory evidence as to the identity of the note, especially as Mr Howes had not been called to prove that it was the same which he had received from Mrs Maybury. In support of these doubts, the learned counsel said he should call the mother of the prisoner, who would prove that on the day before the robbery she gave her son sixteen sovereigns and a half, which would at once account for the fact of his having been in possession of so much money.

The prisoner's mother was then examined. She first swore that she gave her son sixteen sovereigns and a half on the 16th of December, but afterwards corrected herself by saying that it was on the day before he was charged with robbing the prosecutor. In cross-examination, witness said that she was the wife of a day labourer. Her husband earned 10s a week and she 4s, and they only paid £5 a year

rent for their house. She gave her son the money at the Seven Stars at Bilston. In re-examination by Mr Kettle, witness said that her sister had died lately at Guildford in Surrey ; that she (witness) went down there to settle her affairs, and received £25 after paying all her debts ; that her sister left her nephew (the prisoner) £6 10s, and that she (witness) had some time since borrowed from him £10. These were her reasons for giving her son the sixteen sovereigns and a half.

Mr Kynnersley replied, remarking on the nature of the defence (which, he submitted, was a most improbable story, taking into consideration the position in life of the prisoner's mother) and contended that even supposing it was true, yet the £5 note, which had been stolen from the prosecutor, had been satisfactorily traced to the possession of the prisoner. He also contrasted the statement made by the mother of the prisoner, that she had given her son sixteen sovereigns and a half on the day before the robbery, with the complaint made by the prisoner to the prosecutor on the day of the robbery that he was very poor.

Major Chetwynd (before whom this case was tried) having summed up the evidence, the jury turned round, and after consulting together for about a minute, returned a verdict of guilty.

The learned Chairman, in passing sentence, told the prisoner that he did not appear before that Court with a very good character. Although he had not been previously convicted, yet that was not the first time he had been in the county prison. At a sessions in 1842, he was accused of stealing some articles at Pattingham, but he was not then convicted. The offence of which he had now been found guilty was very common, and was rather on the increase in this county ; it was one of a serious nature, and must be visited with an adequate punishment. It was necessary that the Court should make an example of him, in order that others might be deterred from the commission of similar offences. The sentence of the Court was that he be transported for seven years.

COAL STEALING AT KINGSWINFORD **James Hyatt**, aged 20, and **William Beaman**, aged 44, were indicted for stealing one ton weight of coal, the property of John Turton Newton and another, at Kingswinford. Mr Scotland appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Woolrych for Beaman. The two prisoners were boatmen, and on the 23rd of January last, they were detected by the manager of the prosecutor's lime works in the act of taking away from three to four hundredweight of his employer's coal from a wharf, which they carried to their boat. On the following morning, the manager asked Beaman if he had seen any person taking away coal. He (Beaman) replied, "Yes, seven or eight women". The manager then said that the coal was in his (Beaman's) boat, and he had better put it out. Beaman did not do so. He afterwards saw Beaman throw something into the canal. On Hyatt being apprehended, he said to the constable, "They won't give me more than seven years at the utmost".

Mr Woolrych addressed the jury for Beaman, and called a witness, who gave that prisoner an excellent character, stating that he had formerly been in his employ, and he should have no objection to employ him again.

The jury found both prisoners guilty, and the Chairman, Mr Hill, after a caution, sentenced each to two months hard labour.

130 15 March 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE LENT ASSIZES

STEALING FROM THE PERSON Charles Frederic Sheppard was charged with stealing a sovereign from the person of **Ambrose Sadler** at Burslem, on the 24th of January last. Mr Kynnersley appeared for the prosecution : the prisoner was undefended. The prosecutor, a boatman, got drunk on the day named, at Blake's liquor vaults ; and about seven or eight o'clock in the evening asked the prisoner, who was there also, to take him to his boat or to lodgings. The prisoner took him to his (the prisoner's) house, where he went to bed. He had, he said, "a comfortable sleep until ten o'clock next morning", when, on getting up, he found that the sovereign had been taken from his pocket, and that the prisoner was absent. The prisoner was taken into custody in the course of the day. It was proved that on the day on which he met with the prosecutor he was without money, and was treated by persons with ale at the liquor vaults ; he was also unable to give change

for a half crown, which the prosecutor gave him to pay for his lodging. He also slept in the same room as the prosecutor. Next morning, he was drinking at Blake's, paying for liquor for other persons, and about ten o'clock exhibited six or seven shillings, which he said was all he had left out of a pound that he had had at seven o'clock. The case was to have been tried at the sessions, but the prosecutor could not appear, and he had said to a fellow prisoner, "I'm glad the old devil did not appear ; if he had, I should have got lagged". He was then asked if he took the money, and he answered, "Yes". The prisoner cross-examined the witness with considerable acuteness, and with much vehemence declared the statement of the last witness was false and the effect of spite, in consequence of which one of the officers of the prison and two prisoners were examined, whose testimony negatived several assertions the prisoner had made. He was found guilty, and, as a previous conviction for felony at Bath having been proved, was sentenced to seven years transportation.

131 22 March 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE LENT ASSIZES

CROWN COURT, THURSDAY

CHARGE OF MANSLAUGHTER AT TIPTON John Maloney, Patrick Grady and Thomas Cavanagh were charged upon the coroner's inquisition with the manslaughter of **Leonard Thorp** at Tipton on the 15th of August 1847. Mr Meteyard and Mr Huddleston conducted the case for the prosecution, but the prisoners were undefended. There were no fewer than twenty witnesses, and the case occupied the greater part of the day.

The following may be taken as the main facts brought out in evidence :-

Leonard Thorp, the deceased, was a boatman belonging to Derbyshire, and on Saturday the 14th of August his boat was moored at a wharf near Tipton, taking in a cargo of firebricks. On the same night, he proceeded to Dudley, and went to the Angel public house there, where he remained drinking for some time in company of several other men, until about twelve o'clock when they left the house. Just as they were going out of the door, several Irishmen came up and went in for the purpose of drinking, but they were refused by the landlady, on the ground that they had done filling and were about to close the house. A quarrel then ensued amongst them, and they began to fight in the street, but the police being attracted to the spot, the crowd was dispersed in various directions. The prisoners were amongst the party of Irishmen, and after the row was over, they followed some of the other party along the road leading to Tipton by the wall of Dudley Castle, beating several of their opponents with sticks. A boatman named **Anthony Ellis** having been abused by them, he made over the castle wall in order to escape, and, being in terror, lay there for nearly half an hour. During this time he heard cries of murder, as if coming from the railway bridge on the Birmingham road, and about this period three men were observed by another witness beating with sticks against the wall one who was crying out, "O Lord, O Lord". Shortly afterwards the deceased was found lying in the gutter near this spot, but as the person who found him supposed he was drunk, he merely lifted his head on to the footpath and walked off. In passing a lane near, this person observed a man peeping round the corner, whom he afterwards recognised as the prisoner Grady. About half past two o'clock, Thorp was found leaning against the bridge by a lock-keeper named **Thomas Hawthorn**, and having been taken to a boat close by, it was discovered that he had several contused wounds about his head. He was put to bed, but he gradually got worse, and was at last found dead about four o'clock. On a *post mortem* examination of the body by Mr Henry Hill, surgeon of Tipton, it was found that death had ensued from the contusions alluded to, which appeared to have been inflicted by means of a stick, or some similar blunt instrument. After the death of Thorp had been made known to the authorities, inquiries were made, and it appeared that Cavanagh had returned to his lodgings on the same morning about one o'clock, in company with Maloney, each of them carrying a stick about two feet in length, which they immediately put into the cellar. Grady and another man came in in about half an hour. On the following day, they put the sticks upon the fire and burned them, and Maloney was heard to remark that "if the man had got no other blow than that which Cavanagh gave him, it was alone sufficient to kill him".

On the death of the boatman becoming known, and that Grady and Maloney were apprehended, it appeared to be generally known amongst Cavanagh's fellow lodgers that he was concerned in the affair, and having been advised to leave the neighbourhood, he did so the day after. He was afterwards apprehended in Liverpool. While Maloney was in the station at West Bromwich, he voluntarily made a statement to Major McKnight, the police superintendent, to the effect that he having been struck by some of the party, Cavanagh came to his assistance and produced two sticks, with which they belaboured a man, whom he believed to have been Thorp, from the dress worn by him being the same as that of deceased. A confession was also made to the same effect before the magistrates. Cavanagh cross-examined each of the witnesses with some tact and judgement, but he failed in eliciting any circumstance at all in his favour.

The prisoners having declined to say anything in defence, his Lordship proceeded to sum up, observing that the difference between the crimes of murder and manslaughter consisted in the presence or absence of malice aforethought in the commission of the offence, and he did not think they could detect anything of the malice in the present case. With reference to the confession made by the prisoner Maloney, it was evidently given as much in his own favour as he possibly could, and he might remark that no statement made by a prisoner was to be taken in evidence against an accomplice, but was only to be used against himself. After a short consultation, the jury returned a verdict, finding Cavanagh and Maloney guilty of manslaughter and Grady not guilty. His Lordship then sentenced the prisoners Maloney and Cavanagh to eighteen months imprisonment with hard labour, remarking that, if it had been proved that the sticks used had been fetched on purpose, they would most certainly have been transported.

There was also another indictment charging the prisoners with having stolen a hat, the property of a witness named Ellis, which was taken away during the course of the fight ; but on the recommendation of the Judge, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty without the case being entered in to.

132 19 April 1848

BREWOD

MELANCHOLY DEATH On Monday evening last, a fatal occurrence took place at the Sandbeds, near the canal, in this parish, to **John Hensmore**, a boatman belonging to Mr Ellis's boats, of Horseley Fields, Wolverhampton. He was in the act of loading the boat with sand by the side of the canal, when a shower of rain coming on, he went to the side of the Sandbeds for the purpose of shelter. Whilst there, a large quantity of sand suddenly fell from the top of the bank, and he was completely covered. Another man who was assisting him was near to the spot at the time, and succeeded in partly removing the sand from his body, but at that moment another quantity fell upon Hensmore, the other man having a narrow escape of his life. Twenty minutes elapsed before Hensmore could be got out. He was then removed to the Chequer Ball Inn in Brewood, a surgeon was sent for, and attempts were made to restore animation, but without success. The man died from suffocation. His wife was standing near to the spot when the accident occurred. We hear that four or five men have at different times been killed near to the same place by similar accidents. Yesterday (Tuesday) morning, a man, who had been assisting the deceased, got up early and robbed the boat of all the provisions belonging to Hensmore's widow, during her absence at the public house feeding the horse.

133 10 May 1848

DREADFUL ACCIDENT ON THE CANAL On Thursday evening last, a very serious accident occurred on the canal near this town to a young girl of the name of Harriet Jones, about fifteen years of age, whose parents reside in Piper's Row. She was carrying a child in her arms on the towing-path of the canal near the Shrubbery Works and, as the packet boat was passing near to another boat, one of the horses belonging either to the packet or to the other boat kicked the girl on her forehead, producing a wound of a very frightful nature, extending from one side of the forehead to the other, laying bare the skull, and fracturing it in several places. It is supposed that the legs of the

horse got entangled in one of the gearings of one of the boats, and thus occasioned the accident. The girl was soon after removed to the Dispensary, and was immediately attended by Mr Cartwright, under whose skilful treatment she is likely to recover.

134 10 May 1848

DIED Lately, **Mr John Stephens**, boatman, Netherton near Dudley ; an honest, upright man, who had been in the employ of Mr John Hardy, Stratford-on-Avon, nearly twenty years.

135 24 May 1848

An inquest was held on Friday last at the Three Tuns, Oakley, before Mr T M Phillips, coroner, on the body of **Jesse Brooks**. The deceased, who was a boatman, was engaged by another boatman named **Morris**, who worked a boat on the Old Birmingham Canal, to go forward, on Wednesday night last, and fill the locks for him. In discharging this duty at Aldersley, about nine o'clock, it is conjectured that he accidentally fell into the water. He was soon missed, and the canal being searched, in about three quarters of an hour he was found quite dead in the canal, a few yards below the bottom lock. He had a windlass across his shoulders when found, and it is the custom for men filling locks to carry the windlass from place to place in that manner. Verdict, "Accidental death".

136 5 July 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

FOWL STEALING **Henry Stokes** was indicted for stealing one fowl, the property of Peter Birch, at Hopwas. The prosecutor's son heard a noise in the night of the 26th of May last, when he got up, and saw the prisoner running away from his father's premises, and in pursuing him saw him throw the fowl into the canal, which was near. The fowl was afterwards found and identified as the property of the prosecutor. The prisoner, who was a boatman, denied the charge and called a companion, who stated that he (the prisoner) was with the boat at the time in question. The jury found the prisoner guilty, and he was sentenced to six months hard labour. Mr Rupert Kettle appeared for the prisoner.

137 26 July 1848

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **John Cooke** was indicted for stealing four sovereigns and 14s in silver, the property of **John James**, at Gorsty Hill on the 15th of July. The prisoner was a servant of the prosecutor, who is a boatman. On Saturday the 15th of July, the prisoner was with him in the boat. On that day he left the boat without leave, and soon after the prosecutor missed his money. The prisoner was apprehended with the money in his possession. Guilty. To be imprisoned six months with hard labour.

138 27 September 1848

THE LATE BRUTAL ATTACK IN CANAL STREET Yesterday (Tuesday) an inquest was commenced before T M Phillips Esq, coroner, at the Waggon and Horses, Bilston Street, in this town, on the body of **Joseph Higgins**, boatman, whose expected death at the Workhouse, from injuries received in Canal Street by blows inflicted on him on Sunday night the 10th instant, we mentioned in our last paper. It appeared from the evidence that he was found in the street lying upon his face under a wall, breathing with difficulty and unable to speak. He had a large cut at the back of his head, and another cut at the back of one of his ears, and was otherwise injured. He had been seen a short time previously going down the street, apparently in liquor, and shortly before he was found in the state described, a man was seen jumping upon his head and kicking him upon his neck and head in a dreadful manner. Some other evidence was adduced, and the inquiry was then adjourned until Tuesday next.

139 27 September 1848

DUDLEY

OBSTRUCTING THE CANAL On Monday, before John Roberts Esq, two boatmen named **Joseph Gatfield** and **Joseph Tomlinson** were charged by Mr Joseph Smith with obstructing the navigation of the canal at Tipton on the 13th instant, by which offence they had subjected themselves to a penalty not exceeding 20s nor less than 10s. The defendants pleaded guilty, and Mr Smith not being desirous to press for a fine, the cases were settled out of court by payment of the costs incurred.

ASSAULT ON A POLICE OFFICER A stout, able bodied boatman, who gave his name as **Edward Wheeler**, was charged by Police Sergeant Turner with assaulting him, in the execution of his duty, on the night of the 18th instant. The Bench decided on treating the case as one of a common assault and, on proof of the offence, convicted the defendant in the penalty of 20s and costs. In default of payment, the defendant was committed to prison for one month with hard labour.

140 4 October 1848

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, MONDAY OCTOBER 2 Timothy Burke, an Irishman, was brought up charged on suspicion of having been concerned in the attack on **Joseph Higgins**, the boatman, in Canal Street on Sunday evening the 10th of September, and who died in the workhouse on the 24th. He was remanded until Wednesday, the Magistrates refusing to take bail for his appearance.

141 11 October 1848

ALLEGED MURDER IN CANAL STREET On Tuesday the 26th ult and by adjournment on Friday last, an inquest was held before Mr T M Phillips Esq, coroner, at the Waggon and Horses on the Bilston Road, on the body of **Joseph Higgins**, a boatman living at Bloxwich, whose death had resulted from blows and kicks inflicted in a violent assault upon him by five or six persons in Canal Street, on the night of Sunday the 10th ult, and in which an Irishman named Timothy Burke was supposed to be implicated. The deceased, when discovered lying in the street, was insensible, and was taken to the police station, from whence he was removed to the union poor house, where, notwithstanding almost constant medical attendance, his death took place on the 24th ult. The following evidence was taken :-

Andrew Brookes, police-constable, said he was on duty in Canal Street on the night of Sunday the 11th of September about eleven o'clock, when a person named John Butler told him a man was lying opposite his (Butler's) house in Canal Street. He (Brookes) found the deceased lying on his face under a wall. He appeared to be in liquor ; breathed with difficulty and could not speak. Witness found a cut at the back of his head, large enough for the end of two of his fingers to enter ; there was also another cut at the back of the ear. Witness with assistance took the deceased to the station house, from whence he was removed to the Union poor house, where witness had seen his body since death.

John Butler, spectacle frame maker, said that on the night of Sunday the 11th of September, when in bed, he heard shouting in the street opposite his house. The only words he could distinguish were "Kelly and Patsey". He got up and looked through the window, and saw the deceased lying under a wall opposite. There was no one with him or near him. Almost immediately a man in a short blue jacket, wearing a white "billy-cocked" hat with a round top turned up all round, came down the street, went up to the deceased, and, without speaking to him, jumped upon his head and kicked him on the head and neck in a dreadful manner. Witness called him a thief, and asked if he meant to kill the man, when he left him and challenged anyone in the street to fight. Witness then dressed himself and went into the street, but could not find anyone except the deceased, whom he found lying as before described. He was insensible, his head was cut in several places and bleeding very badly ; his under lip also was dreadfully cut. Next morning about six o'clock, while looking from his bedroom, witness saw a man dressed like the one who kicked the deceased go and look at the

spot where the deceased had lain, some blood being there, and then immediately go away.

Richard Higgins, a brewer living at Ettingshall Lane, said the deceased was his brother, was a boatman, 26 years of age, and lived at Bloxwich. He visited his brother in the Union poor house, and was present when his deposition was taken by Mr Barker. He said he was passing by the Black Horse, Stafford Street, when someone knocked him down by a blow with his fist ; he rose again, was then knocked down with a stick, and someone jumped upon him. He said he should know the parties again, but could give no information about them.

Isaac Hobley said : I am a boatman and live in Canal Street in this town. I knew the deceased, Joseph Higgins, and saw him on the 10th of last month in Canal Street about eleven o'clock at night. He was then in good health, but a little intoxicated. I asked him where he was going, and he said to the bridge, meaning the public house. He was opposite to the Clog public house, and an Irishman came up and they began to quarrel ; they did not exchange any blows. I pulled the deceased away, and the Irishman said if he would stop a bit he would go and fetch six more. I remained with Higgins in the street, and a man named James Purchase, who had been with me before, also remained. The Irishman returned in the course of five minutes with five other men, who I believe were Irishmen. The man now present, Tim Burke, was one of them. I heard his name called out several times. As soon as the men came up to the deceased, one of them struck him with a stick and knocked him down, and while he was down Tim Burke kicked him several times about his body and head. I jumped off the bank of the foot road to assist the deceased, and was kicked and told by the men they would serve me the same if I interfered. The blow with the stick was on the temple. The blows appeared to be sufficient to kill a man. Burke was present as long as I was there. I was afraid to stop. I went to the bridge, and still heard the row. I went to the place in about half an hour, and found the deceased had been removed. I heard one of the men call out, "Burke, come away – he's nearly finished, and you'll quite finish him". It was a moonlight night, and after the deceased was removed I examined the place, and saw a quantity of blood where the deceased had been knocked down.

Cross-examined : There was only one Irishman at first. I can swear to Burke's face, but not to his clothes. As near as I could guess, it was between eleven and twelve o'clock. I did not see a woman there during the quarrel. The Irishman went in the direction of the Clog public house to fetch the men. I did not know Burke before ; I did not know any of the Irishmen, but I should know the two others who kicked the deceased.

James Purchase, miner, who said he lived in Canal Street, confirmed the evidence of Hobley, and said Burke was one of the men. Hobley, however, had said the night was moonlight ; this witness said it was dark, but sufficiently light to distinguish the face of Burke.

Martha Wadling, who lives in Canal Street, stated that she saw several persons about eight yards distant from the deceased while he was lying on the ground. They jumped about, and said they would fight every English man in the street. Two or three further off called out "Patsy", "Kelly" and "Burke". They said they must cut, for the man was killed, and they fled in a moment. She could only plainly see two men, a tall one and a short one ; the tall one had on a "billy-cocked" hat – (the kind of hat described by the first witness).

John Williams, brewer at the Lord John Russell, Dudley Street, said that on the night named the deceased had two pints of ale, and left about nine o'clock. He was sober, and left the house alone. A woman now present was there ; deceased called her "Irish Biddy". (Her name, she states, is Charlotte Peltehard). They wrestled about an umbrella, and the woman went out for the police ; as soon as the police were gone, she said she would get Higgins a thrashing. Witness saw her again at the Lord John on the following night. Some of the company accused her of getting Higgins beaten, and she said, "He did not have half enough".

Thomas Butler, inspector of police, said he took Tim Burke into custody on Monday at Spring Vale ironworks. When told he was taken for beating a boatman, he said, "I'm sure I never did ; I was in bed at the time". He was taken to the station, and there, when among other persons, identified by Isaac Hobley and James Purchase.

Mr G T Cooper, surgeon, described the state of the deceased when he was admitted into the Union

poor house. He made a *post mortem* examination of the body. The remains of two incised wounds at the back of the head, and a discolouration over the left eye were visible. The brain was much congested, and there was a quantity of matter between the interior and back part of the brain between the membranes. There was also an abscess on the substance of the cerebellum or posterior lobe of the brain, corresponding to the external injury. He was of opinion that the deceased died from abscess of the brain, the result of concussion from external injury.

Colonel Hogg said he was present on the 17th ult when the deceased made a deposition, which he (Colonel Hogg) took down in the presence of John Barker Esq, magistrate. The deposition was read, and narrated the circumstances of the attack nearly the same as above given, the chief point of difference being that the deceased stated he was twice struck with "a hedge stick". He had not been drinking, nor had he quarrelled with any person.

Thomas Yates spoke to being in company with Burke at the Clog public house in Canal Street, up to half past ten o'clock at night, when Burke and his wife quitted in company with a respectable well dressed Irishman.

The Coroner having explained the law affecting the case, the jury, after some deliberation, returned a verdict of "Wilful Murder against Timothy Burke and two other persons at present unknown". Burke, being in custody, was committed on the Coroner's warrant for trial at the forthcoming assizes.

142 25 October 1848

WORCESTERSHIRE SESSIONS **William Riley** aged 19, boatman, was charged with assaulting William Bould at Dudley on the 11th of September. The prisoner, meeting Bould late at night in Brandy Row, a narrow street in Dudley, demanded his money, but Bould expressed his intention of parting with his life rather than his money. He then struck him over the head, knocked him down, and put his hand into his pocket with a view to robbing him, but did not effect his purpose, inasmuch as the cries of the prosecutor brought him the assistance of the neighbours. The prisoner had been convicted of felony last February. Nine months imprisonment.

Thomas Jones, aged 26, boatman, pleaded guilty to embezzling several sums of money, the property of **William Hay**, his master, at Dudley in July last. He had received them from the customers of his master, and not accounted for them. Six months imprisonment.

143 1 November 1848

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, SATURDAY OCTOBER 28 **Joseph Tatton**, a boatman, was charged by **James Higgins**, captain of a boat, with using threats toward him at Mr Sparrow's basin near Millfield Bridge. After hearing evidence pro and con, the Magistrates dismissed the complaint.

144 1 November 1848

SUDDEN DEATH Yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon, at about half past four o'clock, Mr E F Dehane, surgeon, was sent for to attend to an unknown individual, seemingly a boatman, who had been seized with a fit of coughing and thrown up a large quantity of blood. Mr Dehane, who immediately repaired to the spot, an open court between Lichfield Street and Berry Street, found the poor fellow sitting on a chair, surrounded by a crowd of people, but unfortunately he was dead before Mr Dehane's arrival. The body was taken to the dead room at the Union poor house.

145 8 November 1848

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, FRIDAY NOVEMBER 3 **John Wilson**, a boatman, and a boy, were charged with stealing some potatoes from the shop of Joseph Bailey. The boy was seen by a little girl of the name of Martha Dunn taking the potatoes out of a basket and putting them into his pocket. The man was near to him looking into the shop. In answer to the charge, Wilson said that he did not know the boy before, and the boy had potatoes in his pocket when he came up. The

boy, however, told a different story, alleging that Wilson gave him the potatoes. It was stated that the boy had been sent to Stafford gaol some time ago. The prisoners were remanded until Wednesday.

146 15 November 1848

BURGLARY AT SAREDON On Monday last, at the Public Office, **Richard Francis** was charged with burglariously entering the dwelling house of **Job Langston** at Saredon, on the night of the first of March last, in company with other men, and stealing a gun, two loaves, some tobacco, &c. It appeared from the evidence of the prosecutor that he was a boatman and left home on the first of March on a voyage. When he arrived about eight miles from home, the prisoner and another man whom he had discharged from his service on the previous day, together with another person, came to the side of the canal where his boat was, and asked him for some meat. He told them he had no more than would carry him on the voyage. They then jumped upon the boat, and swore they would not leave until they had obtained some. He again refused to give them any. His late servant then took up the tiller and swore he would knock Langston's brains out, struck him on the chest, which made him stagger, and said he would have some meat by force, and beat him. They then all left without taking anything from the boat, excepting Langston's hat, but they carried away the whip used by the man who was driving the horse, and went away in the direction of Saredon. From the evidence of the prosecutor's wife, it appeared that she went to bed about twelve o'clock on the night of the first of March. She awoke about three o'clock the following morning, and saw the light of a candle below. She got out of bed and called the boy who was in the next room. At that moment she saw a man (who had been lately in her husband's employ) at the bottom of the stairs pointing a gun towards her. She believed there were two other men in the house besides the man who had the gun, but she only heard them walking about. She locked her bedroom door, opened the window, and cried "murder" for nearly an hour. She then went downstairs and found all the doors and the casement window open. She then discovered that a gun, two loaves of bread, part of a loaf, and an ounce of tobacco, which were the property of her husband, were missing. The prisoner was remanded until Monday next to afford time for the production of further evidence.

147 22 November 1848

At the Public Office in this town on Monday last, before H Hill, D Fereday and W Tarratt Esqrs, **Richard Francis**, who had been remanded from the previous Monday on a charge of breaking into the dwelling house of **Job Langston**, boatman, at Saredon on the night of the 1st of March, was discharged, no further evidence having been obtained, and that previously given being considered insufficient to warrant the further detention of the prisoner.

148 29 November 1848

TIPTON

CAUTION TO BOATMEN A boatman named **Richard Reading** was on Tuesday brought before the Wednesbury Bench of Magistrates and fined 10s and costs for obstructing the Birmingham Canal by taking his boat into the lock before it was his turn, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the lock-keeper. Two other boatmen named **Cope** were also fined 10s and costs for assaulting the lock-keeper on the same occasion. **Mr Nock**, one of the Canal Company's agents, was in attendance to prosecute, and the Bench expressed themselves gratified that he had taken the course he did.

149 6 December 1848

BILSTON

CAUTION TO BOATMEN At the Petty Sessions on Tuesday, a boatman named **Edward Jaradd** was charged with selling four quarts of cider out of his boat, he not having a licence for the sale of such liquor. The charge was preferred by Mr Davis Lawton, excise officer, and it appeared the offence was committed near the works of Mr George Jones, to whose workmen the cider was sold.

The defendant pleaded guilty, and the fine of £10 was mitigated to £2 10s and costs. It appeared that the practice was a very common one among the Worcestershire boatmen, and the Bench hoped the Excise would look strictly after offenders.

150 6 December 1848

DREADFUL ACCIDENT Yesterday (Tuesday) about twelve, **Thomas Mander**, a boatman about twenty years of age, was in the act of whipping a horse along the towing-path of the canal near this town, when the animal kicked him violently on the forehead, producing a dangerous wound of about nine or ten inches in length. The scalp was divided and the frontal bone fractured, the lower portion being driven into the brain, part of which protruded. The bones of his nose were also fractured. He was immediately taken to the Dispensary, where he has been attended by Mr Cartwright, surgeon, whose patient he is, and also by Dr Topham and Mr Dehane. The young man still remains sensible, but is not expected to recover, the injuries being of such a frightful character.

151 20 December 1848

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, SATURDAY DECEMBER 16

OBSTRUCTING THE CANAL **Daniel Smith**, a boatman, appeared to answer a summons charging him and **William Tolley**, another boatman, with placing their boats in such a position as to obstruct the free navigation of the canal. It appeared that Smith claimed the right to go first into the lock, which Tolley disputed, and the result was that in the struggle the two boats became jammed together at the mouth of the lock, and thus obstructed the navigation, preventing the passing of any other boat. Mr Charles Goslin, the agent of the company, requested them to move their boats, but they refused to do so. Parish constable Fenn was fetched to the spot, and after a threat from Fenn that if they did not remove their boats they would be taken into custody, the defendants consented to move them. Mr Baiscoz told Smith that the navigation of the canal was not to be stopped by disputes as to turns, and he should therefore fine them 10s. The Magistrate also ordered that Tolley should be brought up on the charge at the next sitting.

152 27 December 1848

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE CANAL On Wednesday last, an inquest was held before T M Phillips Esq at the Waggon and Horses, Bilston Road, on the body of **Thomas Berry**, a boatman, whose death by drowning on the previous Sunday we mentioned in our last paper. It appeared from the evidence that the deceased was about 42 years of age and a native of Brynstone, (Braunstone?) Northamptonshire. On Sunday morning about three o'clock, he was engaged, in conjunction with **Joseph Alcock**, another boatman, in navigating a fly boat on the Birmingham canal. Berry was steering, and on arriving at Monmore Green, accidentally ran the boat on to the shore. Whilst Alcock was engaged in tying the line to another boat near the spot to draw her off, he heard something fall into the water on the opposite side, but it being very dark he was unable to recognise what it was. The driver of the horse, however, told him that Berry had fallen into the canal. After a search of twenty minutes they succeeded in finding Berry's dead body. It appeared that Berry could not swim, and that the water at the spot where he fell in was about eight feet in depth. Verdict, "Accidental death".

153 17 January 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 10 **Ralph Higgins**, a boatman, applied through Mr Whitehouse, solicitor, for the restoration of a horse, then in the possession of the police, which had been taken to the station on suspicion of having been stolen. From the testimony of Mrs Cutler of Halesowen, it appeared that her husband had turned out the horse to graze on the canal side on the 30th of June 1847. About four o'clock the next morning, the horse was missed, and she had not seen it since until she saw it in the hands of the police. Mrs Evans, in favour of Higgins, stated that she bought the horse from Benjamin Bullock for £8 10s in the market, three years ago this Christmas. She sold it to James Bennett, and he sold it to Higgins.

She had since seen it constantly at work, and was certain it was the same horse. Richard Tildesley, on the adverse side, said he sold the horse to Cutler three or four years ago. He believed it to be the same horse "to a toucher". The Bench considered it a case of mistaken identity, and, if the parties chose to go to law, a fit subject for an action of trover.

154 24 January 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, FRIDAY JANUARY 19

CHARGE OF HORSE STEALING **James Jones**, a boatman, was charged by **Joseph Oliver**, another boatman, with stealing a horse, his property. It appeared that the horse had been stolen more than twelve months since, and it was proved on behalf of the prisoner by the wife of William Ellis, a puddler, that Jones had had the horse from her husband, who had bought the animal in the market. She also stated that her husband was not at home ; he only came home once a week. Upon hearing this evidence, the Bench adjourned the case until that day week to give time for the attendance of Ellis. The prisoner, who said his boat was now ten miles from Wolverhampton, said he would return by Friday next. He was liberated upon this promise.

155 7 February 1849

SEDGLEY

FATAL OCCURRENCE TO A BOAT BOY On Saturday week, a boy named **Thomas Cartwright**, about eleven years of age, fell into the canal from his boat at Wallbrook, in the parish of Sedgley, and before he could be got out life was extinct. At the adjourned inquest, which was held on Friday last before W Webb Ward Esq, evidence was given which implicated a boatman, **William Williams**, in having by his culpable negligence caused the accident, and a verdict of "Manslaughter" was returned against him by the jury. It appeared that the boats belonging to the accused and the deceased's master were passing one another, and Williams having thrown the tugrope across the boat in which the deceased was acting as steersman, it went under his tiller, and caught and dragged him overboard. From the evidence of Mr Ballenden, the surgeon who made the post mortem examination of the deceased's body, it would appear that the rope had bruised the boy's body in several parts, and it was probable that he was insensible when he went into the water.

156 14 February 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 7

STEALING PIG IRON **Richard Thomas alias Tucker** was charged with stealing several hundredweight of pig iron from the premises of Messrs Thorneycroft and Co on Monday morning last. Inspector Maddock stated that he was on duty at half past one o'clock on Monday morning near Messrs Thorneycroft's works, and saw the prisoner on the towing-path pulling a boat ; there was another man with him, one being at one end of the boat and one at the other. The boat had just turned out of Messrs Thorneycroft's basin, and the men were taking it towards Horseley Fields. Shotton, the police officer who was with him (Maddock) ran to the other man, but he jumped into the canal and got away. He (Maddock) took Tucker, and found in the boat sixteen pigs of cast iron. The pigs in the boat were marked "Ketley" and there were some of the same kind in a boat at the wharf. The weight of the iron was about 15 cwt. **Jonathan Sefton**, boatman, stated that he received a quantity of pig iron from the works of Messrs Jones and Oates, Kingswinford, to convey to Messrs Thorneycroft's works. He saw the iron, which was in four stacks, safe in the boat about three or four o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The iron had the mark of the Ketley ironworks. On Monday morning, he missed a quantity of the iron. He had seen the pigs in the possession of the police, and they were the same he had missed ; he had no doubt at all about it. The cargo in the boat was about twenty one tons ; the pigs in the possession of the police weighed 14 cwt 2 qrs 14 lbs ; the quantity remaining in the boat on Monday morning was 20 tons 4 cwt 50 lbs. The value of the iron deficient was about £2. Mr Underhill, solicitor, proved that the firm of Messrs Thorneycroft and Co consisted of George Benjamin Thorneycroft, John Hartley, Thomas Thorneycroft Kesteven and John Perks. The prisoner was committed for trial.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 9

STEALING COAL **Richard Slater**, a boatman, was committed for trial, but admitted to bail, charged with stealing coal, the property of Mr Joseph Beech, at the Hattons. The coal was left in a kind of shed near the canal, and Smalley, the policeman who, in consequence of repeated thefts from the premises, had been set to watch, saw the prisoner put out a plank from his boat to the canal bank, and go along it to the shed, where he picked up some coal and was going off with it, when he was taken into custody.

157 14 February 1849

THE SANITARY STATE OF THE WOLVERHAMPTON UNION In our last number we gave an ample report of the inquiry which took place on the previous Monday and Tuesday before Robert Rawlinson Esq with respect to the propriety of applying the powers of the Public Health Act to the several townships included in the Wolverhampton Union. The report embraced evidence as to the general efficiency of sewerage throughout Wolverhampton, the absence of all regulations to prevent overcrowding in buildings, and the prevalence of various forms of external nuisances calculated to prove detrimental to the public health. To make his report as complete as possible, Mr Rawlinson availed himself of the opportunity afforded him by Colonel Hogg, as chief constable of the borough, to inspect some of the numerous internal nuisances in the overcrowded lodging houses and other houses of reception which abound in Wolverhampton. The inspection of these localities took place after our publication on Tuesday night, and we now propose to present our readers with a description – imperfect though it must necessarily be – of some of the astounding scenes which were then witnessed ; our object being to draw attention to the existence of a state of things which unquestionably ought not to be permitted to continue within the pale of civilised society. In addition to Colonel Hogg and two police officers, the Inspector was accompanied by several respectable inhabitants of the town. The number of houses visited was between twenty and thirty, but we are informed that this is but a fraction of the total number existing throughout the town. We may state generally, before mentioning any particular cases, that the bedrooms were crowded with human beings of both sexes and all ages, there being in most instances three persons in each bed, two, three and even four beds in many of the rooms, and on some of the floors two or three rooms crowded together, separated only by a slight partition, with just sufficient room to get between the beds, and no means for ventilation. Upon entering most of the houses, the visitors were met with a warm, foetid, stinking atmosphere, which was not confined to one room, but extended itself throughout the house ; so offensive was the effluvia found in some of the rooms that several of the gentlemen soon made a rapid retreat. In one house in Salop Street were found on the uppermost floor four large beds, each being occupied ; in one of them, a man was smoking his pipe. The eye very naturally looked around this abode of misery to see from whence the poor people could get a supply of air, but only one small window was to be found, about two feet square, and this was closed, so that the only air which could reach the lodgers must come from the rooms below, the atmosphere of which was almost in as bad a state as in the upper apartment. Thus were these poor creatures compelled to breathe an atmosphere tending to engender various forms of human sickness and disease, and calculated to produce premature death. In contemplating such a scene as this, one could not fail to be struck with the elasticity of the human body, or rather the power which some human beings possess of accommodating themselves to circumstances, and resisting those serious influences which upon some constitutions would produce the most fatal results. Not only were the rooms found to be of a limited size, but the approaches to them were so cramped and narrow that it was with no little difficulty a person could find his way to the regions above. Many of the stairs, too, were in such a dilapidated condition as to render passing up and down dangerous ; and in some of the rooms holes were observed in the floors large enough for a grown up child to put his foot and leg through. In a house in Salop Street, there were discovered six or seven human beings in one small bed. In one direction, from the top of the bed, lay a man and a woman with an infant and a young girl, and in an opposite direction from the foot of the bed were three children, with their heads crowded together between the feet of those before mentioned – close to this bed, crouched up

in a corner on the floor, also lay another child upon some clothes provided for her accommodation. In the same room there was also another bed fully occupied. In one house in the neighbourhood of Carrabee Island lay near the bottom of the stairs, in a corner upon some coal, two children, with only a few rugs underneath them and a slight covering to keep them warm! In Carrabee Island, after going up a steep and winding staircase, the eye of the visitor, whilst on a level with the topmost stair close to a room, was suddenly arrested by the appearance of two heads, which proved to be those of a man and woman who were lying asleep on the floor with half of their bodies underneath a bedstead and their heads close to the bannister of the staircase. There were three beds in this room, which were fully occupied, and as there was only space to get between the beds, this was the only available spot in the room upon which the man and woman could rest their weary limbs. To this room also there was no door, the room being quite open to the staircase. We may go on to enumerate many similar scenes, but nothing excepting a personal inspection could convey any adequate idea of the wretchedness and misery to be found in these houses ; and the question naturally arises in what way the evil may be abated. We trust that some rules and regulations will ultimately be laid down for the government of all common lodging houses. The interests of society and the public health demand that some regulations should be introduced, giving the authorities power, from time to time, to inspect them. As a proof of the good which inspection and surveillance would do, we may mention that two or three nights subsequently to the above named inspection, a woman belonging to one of the houses, who on the first occasion objected to the inspection, upon the second visit rather courted it, and appeared serious to point out how clean her beds were ; in point of fact, it was evident that the previous visit had induced the adoption of some means for insuring greater comfort for her lodgers. Although a certain degree of blame attaches itself to the tenants of such houses, yet we think that a greater responsibility devolves upon the parties whose property they are, and who ought to place them in a proper state of repair, and afford means for the promotion of ventilation and the general comfort of their tenants, knowing as the landlords must or ought to do the purposes for which they are let. Probably much good would be derived from the establishment of model lodging houses which, with the introduction of certain regulations for bringing those and similar houses under a general controlling power, might ultimately remove an evil which at all times cannot but be regarded as one of enormous magnitude, but which it would be especially fearful to contemplate in the event of the cholera again visiting Wolverhampton. In concluding our notice of this inspection we may remark that the attention of the Inspector was directed to a stagnant gutter full of filth and refuse in Carrabee Island, with no means for drawing off the filth (it being obstructed by a party wall), so that it remains a constant nuisance to the inhabitants of the locality. We think that the nuisance ought to be forthwith removed under the powers contained in the Nuisance Removal Act. Mr Rawlinson did not conclude his nocturnal inspection until nearly three o'clock on Wednesday morning, having been fully occupied in his visits for nearly four hours.

BILSTON Pursuant to the announcement which appeared in our last paper, Mr Rawlinson held a court at the Public Office, King's Arms, Bilston, on Thursday last, for the purpose of receiving evidence and collecting information with respect to the propriety of applying the powers of the Public Health Act to that town. The inquiry appeared to excite considerable interest on the part of those who were present during the day.

The Inspector opened the inquiry with some explanatory remarks, referring to the previous investigation at Wolverhampton, as fully reported in the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, and also alluding to the unnecessary alarm which had been created in some parts of England with respect to the introduction of the measure, upon the assumption that it would be ruinously expensive. The Inspector remarked that, from what he had seen of Wolverhampton, he had no doubt that a complete system of sewerage and drainage could be carried out in that town, by which each cottage might have a separate water closet and a drain for carrying away all refuse, and that the annual expenses to the parish would not be one shilling per head.

A conversation took place as to the way in which the measure might be applied to Bilston, and the Inspector was asked whether it would be absolutely necessary that they should employ a salaried

surveyor after the completion of the works, or what would be the probable expense of such a surveyor on the township. The Inspector replied to the effect that the surveyor of highways might also be appointed the superintendent of the engineering works connected with the sewerage, and the probability was that, when the works were completed and consolidated, their superintendence would not entail an expense of more than £50 per annum upon the township ; that this would probably be the sum total of the annual expenditure in the superintendence of the works, and that the probability was that no medical superintendent would be required for so small a district.

The Rev H S Fletcher, incumbent of St Leonard's, stated that there were no local acts for the government of the town, and no general system of sewerage. There were burial grounds at St Mary's, St Leonard's, at the Wesleyan Chapel, and a small burial ground in connexion with the Baptist Chapel. St Mary's was full, but St Leonard's was not. A large portion of St Mary's was used in 1832 for the burial of cholera patients, and by the provisions of a certain Act of Parliament that portion could not be opened for 20 years. Mr Bew had informed him that the burial ground in connexion with the Wesleyan Chapel was quite full ; that there had been about 5,000 interments in it within 25 years. The Baptist burial ground was very small and crowded, and a school room had been built over a part of it. His opinion was that some new place of burial was necessary, and that immediately. In fact, if the cholera should again visit Bilston, and rage as it did in 1832, he did not know where they would inter the dead.

Mr Matthew Frost, surveyor of turnpike roads, stated that the outlet for the present drainage of the town was Bilston Brook. The brook was in very bad condition, as bad as it could be. There was plenty of fall in the brook if the brook could be kept clear, but at present the flow was impeded by the mud in the brook. At present the town made no profitable use of the brook refuse, but some of the farmers in the neighbourhood flooded their meadows with it for irrigation purposes. With reference to the value of such manure, Mr Frost stated that sixty or seventy acres of land near Wolverhampton had formerly been flooded by refuse from that town, but he had been informed that it had been recently cut off, and the tenant claimed £1 per annum per acre as compensation. He (Mr Frost) had no hesitation in saying that any land would be increased in value £1 per acre by liquid refuse. He did not think there would be any claim from the landowners if the sewerage were removed from Bilston Brook. He had looked at the town with an eye to its being drained, and he did not anticipate any serious difficulty in carrying out the object. The town of Bilston stood about thirty feet above the brook. The existing drains had been made by landowners, by the trustees of turnpike roads, by the surveyors of the highways, and by private subscription, but all were imperfectly constructed. The drainage from private premises was very bad. There were many houses erected in confined situations where the necessary conveniences could not be carried out. In Wolverhampton Street there were eight houses and no privy ; the tenants had to use one in a neighbouring street. He was about to purchase this property some years ago, but from its inconvenience and filthy state he declined the purchase. There were many such instances in the town. He considered that this state of things tended to depreciate the property so erected. He thought it would be of great advantage to the owners of property that they should in future be compelled if necessary to lay out streets and courts, and build their houses in such a way as to ensure ventilation and the requisite accommodation. If this power had been in existence some years ago much objectionable property now erected would not have been allowed to come into existence. The price of land for cottage building purposes varied from half a crown to five shillings per square yard. He thought that new cottages much better than those already in existence might be erected for £65 each ; he would provide a brewhouse to two cottages, and each house should consist of two bedrooms, a sitting room and a back kitchen, and for another £18 three bedrooms might be provided; one privy might be built for two houses. He would fix the rent of such houses at half a crown a week. In times of great prosperity houses of any kind would let, but when there was choice the best would be taken, except in the case of parties who had long occupied an old house, and then they did not like to leave it. Water was supplied to the town from the Dudley Water Works, which had been established between eight and nine years. Many of the owners of property, however, in Dudley Street would not take it in. There was a spring close to his house where many persons came

upon trespass for water.

Mr Bew remarked that he thought the town was very generally supplied by the Dudley Company, so much so that the directors were now able to pay a dividend.

Two gentlemen (whose names we were not acquainted with) said that the mains were laid in several streets, but there were a great many who would not take in the water.

Mr Best said he thought the fact might be stated thus – that the more respectable portion of the inhabitants who could afford it were supplied by the Dudley Water Works Company, but in those districts where the poor lived, the tenants would not take it, and the landlords would not provide it for their use.

It was also stated that the mains of the Company terminated in Old Meeting Street, and did not run up into the Bradley district ; there was very little local supply of water excepting from the canal.

Mr Frost, in reply to the Inspector, said he thought it would be worth the outlay if it were made compulsory on the whole community to pay 2d per week for each house for water supplied at the rate of not less than 80 gallons per day.

In reply to a question from the Inspector, as to whether it would be worthwhile for any individual to go to a distance for water when it could be obtained at their own doors for 2d per week. Mr Hawksford said that many would rather go a mile for water than pay 2d a week for it. He knew an instance of a landlord offering to the tenants of a plot of houses to provide them the Dudley water on their paying 3d per house weekly, and they refused the proposal.

Mr Price : That shows the necessity for a compulsory measure.

Mr Frost : I think it would be very beneficial for the poor people themselves.

The Inspector : They evidently have not the power of reasoning upon the advantages which they would derive from such a plan. If they were to reflect upon the wear of shoe leather in fetching the water a long distance, the chances of breaking their jars, and the necessity of storing up their water in an atmosphere which rapidly vitiates it, the poor people referred to would not reject the proposal ; and therefore I wish to know from gentlemen who are capable of reasoning on the subject whether it would not be an advantage to the poor themselves.

Several gentlemen replied that it would be a decided advantage, and this appeared to be the general opinion of all present.

The Inspector : If you look at the Act you will see that it is compulsory on the company to provide a constant supply of water as far as possible, and it must be supplied in quantities of not less than eighty gallons per day to each house, at the rate of 2d per week. Now at Nottingham and Carlisle the poor are supplied with water for one penny per week ; in many of the poorer districts the inhabitants are supplied gratuitously, and it is an advantage to the ratepayers to do this. You had better supply the poor with water to keep themselves clean than have to relieve them in consequence of sickness, engendered by a deficiency of cleanliness. When I speak of eight gallons a day I mean this – that the Board of Health would not sanction such a scheme unless the company were capable of supplying that quantity.

Mr Dimmack : Would you allow me to ask whether the Dudley Water Works Company would be compelled to lay their mains along the whole of the streets?

The Inspector : Most certainly. If they undertake to supply the town they must do so effectually, and that is one object of central control – to see that the Act is applied in its fullest sense.

Mr Bew asked whether the Public Health Act would override the Dudley Water Works Act.

The Inspector : Most certainly. If any portions of the Dudley Water Works Act were opposed to the general provisions of the Health of Towns' Act, those portions would be repealed.

In reply to questions from Mr Best, the Inspector said if he found that the water of the Dudley Company was either objectionable in quality or limited in quantity, then he would have to look out for some other source of supply.

Mr Dimmack : I think you will receive evidence to show that the Dudley Water Works Company cannot give the supply which you would wish.

The Inspector : That is a very important statement, as directing my attention to the question, because we must not merely provide for the wants of the present 20,000 inhabitants, but we must

endeavour to anticipate the requirements of the increased population in another century.

Mr Best remarked that there was no part of the inquiry more important than this. With reference to what had fallen from Mr Hawksford he might remark, from the experience which he (Mr Best) had had amongst poor people, that the reasons the parties referred to had refused to pay the additional 2d per week for an ample supply of water was because it was proposed to them in the shape of a tax, to which they were always opposed ; but if they were to consider their own interest they would be very glad of the accommodation.

In reply to the Inspector, Mr Bew said that the quality of the Dudley water was generally very good, but at some periods of the year it was not. He found it useful for all purposes.

Mr Frost, in reply to Mr Perry, said he thought that the Dudley Water Works Company could provide a sufficient supply of water for the town of Bilston by the adoption of some additional means.

Mr Bew observed that 280,000 gallons a day would be required for Bilston, and that quantity he thought the company could not engage to provide. (A voice - "Oh, no, certainly not") They had undertaken to supply Dudley, and were disappointed in their expectations. Since that period they had been obliged to enlarge their works, the demand being great ; and some few years ago application was made to the directors to supply Wednesbury, but they were obliged to decline the application, because they could hardly supply Bilston. Perhaps it would be as well for him to state that the Dudley Water Works Company pumped their water up from their large reservoir to a small one at Shaver's End near Dudley, and that the same pipes which were used to force up the water to Shaver's End were used to send the water back again to supply the town of Bilston. He had no idea how many of the 4,000 houses existing in Bilston were already supplied by the company.

Mr Holt, agent to the Company in Bilston (who had been sent for) was next examined. He stated that as some landlords in the town contracted for the supply of water to eight or nine houses, and he only entered the amount agreed upon in each case, he (witness) could not tell the exact number of houses supplied, but he thought that more than a fourth of the town had the water. He did not know the volume of water they were capable of lifting at the works – the diameter of the main was twelve feet. They could supply Bilston with eighty gallons per house per day. The power of their present engine was twenty horse ; but they were putting up another of forty horse power. The height of the lifting to the reservoir was something like seventy feet ; both engines would be used if required. He did not anticipate any difficulty in supplying the Bradley district. They gave a constant supply of water to Bilston from seven or eight in the morning until three or six in the evening, excepting on Saturdays, when there was extra consumption ; they then supplied the New Town in the first part of the day and the Old Town in the latter part. There was no serious difficulty encountered in collecting the rate.

Mr Dimmack, addressing the Inspector, remarked that there was a great dread in Bilston as to the probable expense of introducing the Public Health Act into that town ; and he would, therefore, beg to ask whether it would be possible to borrow the money required for carrying out the measure, and to pay it off, say, in twenty or thirty years.

The Inspector replied that that was imperative in the Act. They would have power to borrow the money, to pay their annual expenditure by an annual rate, and to carry forward a reserved sum from year to year so as to liquidate the debt in thirty years.

Mr Dimmack expressed himself satisfied, and added that the proposed improvement would be a benefit for the future generation.

Mr E Best, surgeon, was next examined. He said that in his opinion the Bilston Brook was decidedly detrimental to the health of the inhabitants. There had not been much fever of late, but it prevailed about two years ago, and chiefly in the low parts of the town. The cholera prevailed very much in 1832. It commenced in the neighbourhood of the brook, and he had no doubt that the brook was the immediate cause of its visiting Bilston. After lingering in the vicinity of the brook for a week, it travelled in those parts of the town that were worse drained. He did not anticipate any difficulty in removing the causes which generated disease in the town with the exception that it would be attended with considerable expense ; but if it could be accomplished in the manner

suggested and for the sum named, it would be by no means oppressive ; on the contrary it would be economical for the parish at large. It was well known to all respectable inhabitants of the town that the sickness which sometimes prevailed was owing to the want of drainage, and this was also well known to most of the lower orders. The same causes which induced typhus would generate cholera. They had had no cholera this year, but more diarrhoea than was usual at this period of the year. More than usual exertions had been made by the authorities to remove nuisances under the Diseases Prevention Act. This had had a good effect, but the relief had been very partial, and by no means approached the sanitary state in which the town ought to be placed. It had come within his observation that where the population was overcrowded, and where there was bad ventilation and bad drainage, there diseases most prevailed. Bilston was lighted with gas from works established in the town three or four years ago. Six shillings per thousand feet was the maximum sum paid for gas; the minimum depended on the amount of consumption.

Mr Baldwin, one of the directors of the gas company, said that the number of public lights in the town was very small, not more than six or seven. Mr Baldwin undertook to supply Mr Rawlinson in a few days with a written statement of the capability of the works.

Mr Frost stated they had complaints as to the manner in which the turnpike road was lighted ; there were ten out of seventeen lamps now lighted. None of the back streets or courts were supplied with public lamps.

The Inspector here remarked that it was a well known fact that plenty of light was a great preventative of immorality, particularly in back streets.

Mr Best and Mr Dimmack observed that it also tended to prevent crime. Mr Dimmack added that there were large townships in the neighbourhood – Wednesbury, Willenhall, &c – which remained in darkness, and each town had a population of from 9,000 to 13,000 inhabitants, who were prevented obtaining gas and water by the expense of applying for Acts of Parliament.

Mr Fairburn of Wednesbury here stated that the supply of water in that town was very imperfect, and that at present the inhabitants were paying one penny for five or six gallons. The water was brought a distance of a mile and a half – from Stone Cross in the parish of West Bromwich. It was good water, but the supply was very limited.

The Inspector : I think that if the inhabitants thoroughly understood the objects of the General Board of Health, that the Act in its general features is not oppressive, and that they can have powers granted them for sewerage, gas works, &c, they would not be deterred from making application to have the Act applied to their town.

Mr Fairburn : I have no doubt of it, but it is the ignorance which prevails on the question which makes them opposed to the measure.

The Inspector : Yes, and even respectable gentlemen – men of talent – lead the people astray, and raise up a great bugbear to frighten them against a measure by the introduction of which they might obtain many benefits.

Mr Johnson, relieving officer for Bilston, Willenhall and Wednesfield, was next examined. He stated that there were about 40,000 inhabitants in the three townships, and that about £30 per week were expended in outdoor relief. In the worst drained and most crowded districts, he found the greatest amount of poverty, and the greatest amount of distress. There were more Irish in Bilston than in Willenhall and Wednesfield ; in fact at the present time he had not an Irish person on the books for Willenhall and Wednesfield, and there were not any Irish receiving out relief in Bilston. He had himself experienced inconvenience from the impure state of the atmosphere of those houses which he visited, and he had occasionally found vermin upon his clothes on his return home. The refuse channels and privies in these neighbourhoods where the Irish live are the most filthy. The average number of the Irish in the whole district was about 4,000. There had not been so much fever as usual in the neighbourhood within the last eighteen months.

Mr Marrian, assistant overseer and collector of the rates, stated that there were about 4,400 good houses in Bilston, and about 200 in ruins from mining operations. Those in Ettingshall Lane were nearly all in ruins. He could bear testimony to the filthy state of many of the houses, to the unpleasantness he had experienced in going to them, and to the number of people crowded together

in such localities. There was no control over the public lodging houses.

Mr Fellows, the constable, in reply to a question, stated that the lodgers paid 3d per night.

Mr John Doleman, inspector of nuisances, stated that he found the district to be in a very bad condition. In Quarry Lane there were about eleven houses with no privy to any one of them. There were also sixteen houses at Priestfield with only one privy. The rent paid for these houses was from half a crown to 3s per week.

Mr Fellows : There are plenty of houses in this town the rent of which is 3s but they are not worth a shilling per week.

Mr Frost declared, in emphatic terms, that many persons were overcharged with rent, and therefore could not afford to pay for water. This he did not hesitate to say arose from avarice on the part of the landlords. There was no room left for conveniences, in consequence of so many houses being built on a small piece of ground. Were the public to be inconvenienced for the sake of gratifying such avarice?

The Rev J B Owen (who had just returned from Chester) here entered the room, and expressed his regret at not having been present at the early part of the proceedings, but remarked that his principal reason for wishing the Inspector to hold a Court at Bilston was that parties living on the spot might give evidence if they wished to do so.

The Inspector observed that he had received very valuable evidence upon the occasion on various points, but he should be happy to hear anything further which Mr Owen might wish to offer.

Mr Owen proceeded to make some general remarks on the prejudicial effects which the Bilston Brook had on the health of the inhabitants, and alluded to the fact mentioned in a work published by the Rev Mr Leigh, that the first four cases of cholera which occurred at Bilston in 1832 appeared in four houses which were situated within 200 yards of the brook, and that the cholera remained in the locality during the whole period (six or seven weeks) that the disease continued in Bilston. He also referred to the difficult question which had arisen as to removing the nuisance, and said he had heard that some doubt had been expressed as to whether the surveyors could legally carry out the proposed improvement, but it was one of those cases in which it would be better to run the risk of an appeal against a rate than endanger the public health. He could only say that if a clergyman could properly discharge the duties of a surveyor for the year coming, he should be quite prepared to take his share of the responsibility in carrying out the proposed plan.

Mr Bew made a similar offer.

Mr Owen remarked that as long as the nuisance was allowed to exist, it would continue to be a great disgrace to the town.

Mr Mew said he did not think there was any other town of such magnitude without controlling power.

Mr Dimmack agreed with Mr Bew, and added that out of the 4,000 houses in Bilston there were only from 300 to 700 of the value of £10 and upwards.

In the course of some desultory conversation which ensued, the Inspector suggested that the sewerage should be made quite independent of the brook. A remark having been made to the effect that manure was not so valuable now as it was forty years ago, the Inspector observed that that was because manure in England was not properly attended to. If the manure which was found at their own door was properly used, it was as fertilising as guano, and yet parties brought guano a distance of 10,000 miles, and carted it over their land at an enormous expenditure of capital when, by the adoption of other means, that expenditure might be saved.

After some further conversation the inquiry terminated, and it was arranged that the inspection of the town should commence at the expiration of three quarters of an hour.

INSPECTION OF THE TOWN At three o'clock the Inspector, accompanied by the Rev J B Owen, Mr Hawksford, Mr Frost and several other respectable inhabitants, proceeded to visit several parts of the town. The nuisance which has of late attracted much attention – the Brook – naturally formed the chief feature in the inspection. The Inspector found that the evidence which he had taken on this subject was fully confirmed by a personal inspection. He took notes of the general condition and position of the brook, and its connection with the stream of water belonging to Mr

Jones, traced the progress of the brook through Mr Jones's works to the other part of the town, and observed the various nuisances which it generated. He also visited "the Berry", and noticed the filthy and miserable state of the dwellings. Several nuisances in this and other localities were likewise pointed out – such as open drains, imperfect conveniences, collection of filth, &c. The Inspector, after thanking the gentlemen who had accompanied him on his personal inspection, left Bilston evidently impressed with a strong conviction of the absolute necessity of efficient means being adopted to remove the nuisances complained of.

PORTOBELLO On Friday morning, the Inspector visited this place en route to Willenhall. He was accompanied by the Rev T W Fletcher, incumbent of St Stephen's district, of which Portobello forms a part. Mr Rawlinson was informed in the course of his inspection that the population of Portobello was about 2,200, consisting principally of colliers, miners and their families, and that it was rapidly increasing. It was remarked that many of the houses appeared to have been erected for the sole object of realising a large rent for a small outlay, no regard being paid to the comfort of the tenants. The attention of the Inspector was directed to one lot of cottage property, consisting of twelve houses, which have only one common privy. Another lot of five cottages were pointed out which contained only a sitting room and a bedroom, the dimensions of which were about seven feet square. Mr Rawlinson also observed that the houses generally were in a crowded state, and that pig sties were numerous. The Inspector was informed that the length of Portobello was about 450 yards and its breadth about 300 yards ; that on this space there were now upwards of 400 houses ; and that there was no doubt that 100 more would soon be added. The place, it was stated, was entirely surrounded by mines and works. Stagnant ditches, stagnant pools, and dung heaps were numerous, and the consequence was that fever frequently prevailed. The Inspector visited one house, where he found in a small room, crowded together, a man and his wife and five children, who had all been recently ill of fever. Mr Rawlinson was informed by several of the poor people that in consequence of the mining operations water was very scarce. One landlord said he had gone to the expense of £100 in sinking for water, but could not find any. At the back of some houses, in an open court, a pump was pointed out, which was supplied with water brought through a pipe or drain from an open brook. It was stated by the poor people that this brook was occasionally filled with refuse and dead dogs. One woman said she was sure the water was not wholesome to drink. The Inspector, after examining the water and the means by which it was brought to the pump, told the people that it was totally unfit for use even for washing purposes, but he was informed that they sometimes drank it after letting it stand in a jar, as they had no other water to use, excepting in summer, when they fetched that necessary article from a considerable distance. In Bird's Buildings the Inspector observed a wide open foetid ditch, nearly three feet deep, stagnating in front and extending from one end to the other of the row of cottages. Several of the people complained of the smell and said they were never well ; it was also stated that they were always complaining and that they had no energy. The almost unbearable stench and the effluvia which proceeded from this ditch convinced the Inspector of the truth of this statement. In one small house, in another part of the village, the Inspector found crowded together in a very small room a man and his wife and children, together with a neighbour, sitting over a dying child, who was moaning most piteously. The atmosphere of the room, although the door was open, was of an impure kind, and the scene altogether was a most affecting one. The Inspector was much struck with the clean appearance of Rooker's Buildings, the cottages in which appeared to be comfortable, the surface of the yard being paved with blue bricks, which were quite clean, forming a striking contrast with similar cottages and yards in other parts of the village. He was informed that these buildings belonged to the Rev J Rooker, incumbent of Lower Gornall. In the course of his perambulations, the Inspector observed courts at the backs of houses unpaved, undrained, surrounded with heaps of ashes and other nuisances. In the course of his perambulation the attention of Mr Rawlinson was suddenly arrested by what might be termed a "monster" nuisance. It was an almost insurmountable barricade of cinders piled up to a height of several feet in an entry leading to three privies ; there being no other means of access to the privies excepting by climbing over the barricade of cinders. This nuisance was found in the corner of "Booth's new square". The women who live in the adjoining houses stated that if they were to put

the cinders in the open space in front of their houses, the dust would be blown into their rooms, and that they had no other place provided for their deposit but that in which they were found. Mr Rawlinson also inspected two large pools of stagnant water partly surrounded by houses, and expressed an opinion that they must be prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants.

WILLENHALL The Inspector next visited this town, where he was received by the Rev G H Fisher, incumbent of Willenhall, and Mr Jeavons, one of the churchwardens. He first visited the present burial ground in connection with the Church, which he was informed was full to repletion, and therefore a new burial ground was indispensably requisite. Two plots of ground were pointed out as eligible spots for the purpose. The most eligible spot was stated to be that on the opposite side of Tame Brook, close to the present burial ground, from which it is only separated by the brook. It was stated that there had been a long correspondence on the subject of a new burial ground with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, but no satisfactory result had been arrived at. Mr Fletcher stated that they always commenced grave digging in the present churchyard with fear and trembling. The Inspector was informed that there was also a burial ground in connection with the baptist chapel, but that this was nearly full. Mr Rawlinson stated that if the Public Health Act were introduced, power would be given to provide a new burial ground. The Inspector found that Tame Brook runs through the lower part of the town, creeps along through open stagnant ditches close to the houses, and passes under the churchyard wall. He was informed that there were 11,000 inhabitants in the township of Willenhall, that there were gas works but no public lights, that there were no water works, and that the supply of water was very deficient, as the mines had taken much of it away. At Little London end of the town the Inspector observed open stagnant ditches, full of soil, immediately in contact with the cottages. Middens, pigsties and other nuisances were found to be common throughout the town, and it was remarked that the courts generally were unpaved, undrained and dirty. The Inspector observed a wide open stagnant ditch at the back of Mr Clemson's house and garden. He also remarked on the general want of proper drainage throughout the town.

WEDNESFIELD Mr Rawlinson concluded the inspection of the Wolverhampton Union by visiting this village. He was informed that the churchyard was very full, and it was stated that it had been remarked that if the sexton were to die, it would be difficult to find a spare place in which to bury him. The Inspector remarked that Wednesfield was a straggling village, that there were many new cottages, but that the streets were unpaved and unformed, that there were open privies, open middens, unpaved courts and unformed surface drains. He was informed that the population was about 5,500, and that it was on the increase. The Inspector observed that at present Wednesfield, Willenhall and Portobello could not be regarded as overcrowded but, as the cottage population was rapidly increasing in each place, it was of the utmost importance to the landowners and the owners of property that some general system should be adhered to in the formation of the streets, and in laying out new building sites, so that overcrowding might be prevented, and free ventilation and perfect drainage ensured. Mr Rawlinson was accompanied on his inspection in Wednesfield by Mr Grosvenor, one of the Guardians of the parish, and by Mr Johnson, relieving officer. The Inspector called at the residence of Mr Bealey, but found that that gentleman was not at home.

On Saturday the Inspector paid a visit to the Wolverhampton Water Works ; and after transacting some official business left Wolverhampton for Birmingham, with the intention of commencing his inquiry into the sanitary state of that town on Monday morning.

158 14 February 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE - WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 7

STEALING PIG IRON **Richard Thomas alias Tucker** was charged with stealing several hundredweight of pig iron from the premises of Messrs Thorneycroft and Co on Monday morning last. Inspector Maddock stated that he was on duty at half past one o'clock on Monday morning last near Messrs Thorneycroft's works, and saw the prisoner on the towing-path pulling a boat ; there was another man with him, one being at one end of the boat and one at the other. The boat had just turned out of Messrs Thorneycroft's basin, and the men were taking it towards Horseley Fields.

Shotton, the police officer who was with him (Maddock) ran to the other man, but he jumped into the canal and got away. He (Maddock) took Tucker, and found in the boat sixteen pigs of cast iron. The pigs in the boat were marked "Ketley" and there were some of the same kind in a boat at the wharf. The weight of the iron was about 15 cwt. **Jonathan Sefton**, boatman, stated that he received a quantity of pig iron from the works of Messrs Jones and Oates, Kingswinford, to convey to Messrs Thorneycroft's works. He saw the iron, which was in four stacks, safe in the boat about three or four o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The iron had the mark of the Ketley ironworks. On Monday morning, he missed a quantity of the iron. He had seen the pigs in the possession of the police, and they were the same he had missed ; he had no doubt at all about it. The cargo in the boat was about twenty one tons ; the pigs in the possession of the police weighed 14 cwt 2 qrs 14 lbs ; the quantity remaining in the boat on Monday morning was 20 tons 4 cwt 50 lbs. The value of the iron deficient was about £2. Mr Underhill, solicitor, proved that the firm of Messrs Thorneycroft and Co consisted of George Benjamin Thorneycroft, John Hartley, Thomas Thorneycroft Kesteven and John Perks. The prisoner was committed for trial.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 9

STEALING COAL **Richard Slater**, a boatman, was committed for trial, but admitted to bail, charged with stealing coal, the property of Mr Joseph Beech. The coal was left in a kind of shed near the canal, and Smalley, the policeman who, in consequence of repeated thefts from the premises, had been set to watch, saw the prisoner put out a plank from his boat to the canal bank and go along it to the shed, where he picked up some coal, and was going off with it when he was taken into custody.

159 7 March 1849

WORCESTERSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS **Richard Stubbs** aged 49, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing a cwt of coal, the property of Messrs Badger and Co of Dudley, on the 4th of January. Fourteen days imprisonment.

160 14 March 1849

STAFFORDSHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS

STEALING IRON AT WOLVERHAMPTON **Richard Thomas** was indicted for stealing 16 cwt of pig iron, the property of G B Thorneycroft Esq and others at Wolverhampton. It appeared that on the 2nd of February last, twenty one tons of pig iron were loaded at the Ketley Ironworks, and were consigned to the prosecutors. The boat reached Wolverhampton on the Saturday, and was moored in Mr Thorneycroft's new basin. On the return of the boatmen on Monday morning, they missed a quantity of iron. The principal evidence to connect the prisoner with stealing it was given by policeman Maddocks, who was on duty about two o'clock on Monday morning, and saw the prisoner and another man drawing a boat along the basin towards the canal. Suspecting something wrong, he took the prisoner into custody ; the other man jumped into the canal and escaped. On searching the boat, he found sixteen pieces of iron, which were identified as the property of prosecutors. The jury returned a verdict of "Guilty". A previous conviction was then proved against the prisoner, and he was sentenced to be transported for ten years.

Richard Slater (on bail) was indicted for stealing 60 lbs of coal, the property of Joseph Beech, at Brewood. It appeared that the prisoner was engaged as boatman by the Shropshire Union Canal Company, and that whilst proceeding along the canal on the night of Thursday the 8th of February, he stopped opposite the wharf of the prosecutor, where was a boat load of coal, and getting out of the boat, he placed a plank from the boat to the wharf and, after looking round, took up a piece of coal which he was conveying into his boat, when Smalley, a police officer who had been secreted behind the coal, apprehended him with it in his possession. For the defence, it was admitted that the prisoner had taken the coal but that, being a servant of the company and considering it to be their property, he had taken it for the purpose of boiling his kettle. Mr Woolrych energetically addressed

the jury on behalf of the prisoner, for the purpose of showing that he had no guilty object when taking the property ; and then called Mr Bishton, a respectable farmer of Dudley Wood, who gave the prisoner an excellent character. The jury found him guilty, but recommended him to mercy in consideration of his previous good character ; and he was sentenced to one months imprisonment.

161 18 April 1849

ASSAULTS John Davis was summoned for assaulting John Jones and his wife and a man named Mayo, near the Bilston Street Bridge on Tuesday the 19th instant. Mr H Underhill appeared for the complainants ; and Mr T M Whitehouse for the defence. It appeared that Jones, who is bailiff to Mr Samuel Frost, road contractor, had bought a load of hay of a boatman at the request of his master, and was in the act of loading his cart with the hay when the defendant Davis came up and had a quarrel with the boatman, alleging that he had previously bought the hay. The evidence for the complaint went to show that Davis commenced ill treating the boatman, who was a man upwards of fifty years of age, and that he removed part of the hay from the cart, when Jones remonstrated with him, upon which Davis immediately struck him a violent blow on his left eye and sent him reeling against the wheels of the cart, by which his right eye was also severely injured. Jones's wife came up and stood between Davis and her husband, when defendant struck her a violent blow on the side of her face, which knocked her down, and whilst she was on the ground he kicked her twice, she being at the time in an advanced state of pregnancy. Blood flowed from her nose and ears, and she had been suffering ever since. The only evidence against Mayo was that he had attempted to trip up the heels of Jones. The defence was that the boatman first struck Davis, that a fight ensued between them, that during the struggle Jones deliberately struck Davis first, that Jones's wife came up and seized Davis by his hair at the back of his head and also by his nose and lips, that the blow which she received from Davis was aimed at her husband, and that it was only with the assistance of the neighbours that Davis was rescued from Jones and his wife. The Magistrates, after hearing a great deal of evidence and argument on both sides, dismissed the complaint against Mayo, and also the complaint against Davis as to Jones, on the ground that the evidence with respect to the latter charge was very conflicting. For the assault on Jones's wife, however, they fined Davis 2s 6d and costs.

162 25 April 1849

DUDLEY

CHARGE OF COAL STEALING On Monday last, a youth named **Thomas Jones**, aged 16, was charged with stealing 60 lbs weight of coal, the property of Lord Ward, from Coneygreaves Colliery in the parish of Tipton, on the previous Friday morning. The prisoner, who was a boat boy in the employ of a person named **Williams**, was caught in the act of carrying the coal to his boat in that neighbourhood, by a boat loader named **Richard Morris**, in the noble prosecutor's employ. The prisoner had been before cautioned by him. The prisoner said he did not know he was doing wrong, that his master knew he took the coal and that it was for his burning. The Bench observed that the master should have been charged with the offence, as the coal had been stolen for his benefit, and discharged the prisoner with a reprimand.

STEALING FROM THE PERSON On Monday last, a married woman named Maria McAllister was charged, before T Badger, C Cartwright, J Roberts Esqrs and Captain Bennett, with stealing 1s 6d in silver from the pocket of **James Foster**, a boatman, early on the morning of the 22nd instant in King Street. The prosecutor stated that she took in the first instance 2s 10d from him, but he succeeded in getting 1s 4d back from her by biting her hand ; whereupon two men came up and pulled him away from the prisoner. On seeing a police officer about ten minutes afterwards, he gave the prisoner into custody. Police-constable Phillips apprehended the prisoner, and on charging her with robbing, she said she had done nothing ; he observed to her that she had something in her mouth, when she took from her mouth 1s 6d in silver, which the officer produced. The officer also noticed that the left hand of the prisoner appeared to have been bitten, and had blood upon it. The prisoner was committed to take her trial.

NEWPORT On Sunday se'nnight, the warehouse belonging to the Shropshire Union Canal Company, at Newport Wharf, was broken into and several packages, which had been landed from various boats, were opened, but it appears that the description of the goods did not suit the thieves, as only a few articles of inconsiderable value are missing ; two cheeses were taken away, and a bag of cocoa was found the next day floating in the canal basin, which was much damaged by wet. A man has been taken into custody on suspicion of being concerned in the robbery.

163 16 May 1849

TUNSTALL

SINGULAR AND FATAL ACCIDENT – A BOY BURIED ALIVE A singular accident, the consequence of mining operations, has occurred on the Woodshutts Colliery estate, belonging to R E Heathcote Esq, and within about 200 yards of the Harecastle Station of the North Staffordshire Railway. The mine at the Woodshutts Colliery being what is termed a “rearing” one, that is, the seams of coal, instead of lying horizontally, stand nearly perpendicular to the surface, which in some spots had naturally sunk the ground several yards, in consequence of the coal having been got underneath. On the afternoon of Thursday the 3rd instant, a lad of the name of **James Condliff**, about twelve years of age, was actually entombed alive through one of these places sinking in. The lad lived with his parents in the neighbourhood, and having carried dinner to his father, who is a boatman, he passed the colliery on his way home, and he went into one of the hollows referred to for the purpose of picking coal. Here he was joined by two other lads who, perceiving some tremulous motion of the earth, came out, and desired Condliff to do the same, but he replied that he would first get a piece of coal he was digging at. The two lads then left the place for a few minutes, and on their return they were alarmed by seeing an opening in the ground, and from which their unfortunate companion called out that he could see them, and that he had stopped himself from sinking. In a moment, however, he shouted, “I'm going again, Isaac : run and tell your father to bring a rope and get me out”. The lads ran to the adjoining engine house, about 120 yards distant, and James Stubbs, one of the men employed on the works, hastened to the spot, but was totally unable to extricate the lad from his frightful situation ; indeed, he was sunk too low to be even seen, and as his voice was not heard, it is supposed that he was drawn down and completely covered by the sinking earth. The ground surrounding the spot was still on the move towards the centre, until the gulph was so completely closed at a few yards depth as to destroy all hope of extricating the poor lad alive from the vortex ; but the most praiseworthy exertions were immediately used by Mr Rigby, the agent on the estate, and no expense was spared to recover the body. A number of men were set to work, and continued their labours night and day until Tuesday evening, when having sunk a shaft about sixteen yards without meeting with the body, and further search being attended with considerable personal risk to the men engaged, it was deemed advisable to desist. Some idea of the character of the casualty may be inferred from the fact that a portion of the adjacent hedge was met with down the recently sunk shaft at a depth of fourteen or fifteen yards, having been drawn down when the ground gave way. The coal was being got to the extent of a few feet in thickness at the depth of about 43 yards below the ground, and soon after the accident the miners were stopped by the irruption of the falling earth, which ran in upon them as through a funnel, and completely blocked up the level. The same seam was formerly worked at a much higher level, and it is supposed there is a chasm near the surface into which the earth has not fully settled. The weight of the falling material broke through the floor of the old working into the mine now in use, as already stated ; but a considerable quantity must have spread out laterally into the chasm, and there, it is probable, the body of the sufferer is entombed.

164 23 May 1849

BREWOD

CANAL BOAT ROBBERY – CHARGE OF RECEIVING STOLEN TOBACCO At the Public Office, Wolverhampton, on Wednesday, John Ashley, provision dealer and beershop keeper, at the canal side, Stretton, was charged with receiving 17 lbs of tobacco, knowing the same to have been

stolen. It appeared from the evidence of **William Wood**, captain of a canal boat belonging to Messrs Crowley, Hicklin and Co, that a cask of tobacco was stolen from his boat while moored at the Bratch, Wombourn, on Sunday night last. On Monday the cask, with only a few pounds of tobacco in it, was found in a field near the place. G Fleming, a police officer, stated that from information given by a prisoner in Stafford gaol to the effect that some tea which, not long ago, had been stolen from a canal boat, had been taken to the prisoner's house, he was induced to obtain a warrant to search the prisoner's premises. He saw Mrs Ashley, who denied having more tobacco in the house than was wrapped up. On searching the cellar he found, amongst other barrels, a butter tub full of tobacco. Mr Ashley said he had been confined to his bed six months ; he knew nothing about the tobacco, and believed it had been bought from Mr Anslow's at Wolverhampton. Mr Anslow said he thought the tobacco in the butter tub, which weighed about 17 lbs, was of the same description as that left in the cask, but it was somewhat lighter in colour, which might arise from it being much drier. Mr Ashley, he said, had been a customer to him for some years, and his weekly purchases had been from £2 to about £6. He had sometimes 2 lbs, 4 lbs, 6 lbs of tobacco ; he had no recollection of having sold him as much as 17 lbs. It might, however, have been done, as he sold larger quantities, and that without appearing in his book, as Mr Ashley's account, for a long time since, had been settled over the counter. John Lock, policeman, said he accompanied Fleming in the search at Ashley's. Upstairs, Mrs Ashley told him she had bought the tobacco from a boatman, whose name she did not know, and she often purchased things from them. Witness asked her to give a description of the man, when Mr Ashley sent her downstairs. Mr Turner of Brewood, who attended for Mr Ashley, observed that his client was doing a most extensive business, and dealt largely in tea, sugar, tobacco and other articles, with which he supplied boatmen and others. The Bench decided upon remanding the case for a fortnight, in order to allow time for the discovery of the thieves, and accepted Mr Ashley's own recognisance in £50 to appear at that time.

165 6 June 1849

BREWOOD

ROBBERY OF TOBACCO On Wednesday last, Mr Ashley, grocer and beershop keeper of Stretton, attended at the Wolverhampton Public Office, before Mr G B Thorneycroft Esq and J Leigh Esq to answer the charge of receiving a quantity of tobacco, stolen from one of the boats of Messrs Crowley and Co. The particulars of the case were given in our paper on the occasion of the first hearing of the charge, when it was adjourned for a fortnight. It was now stated by George Fleming, the police officer who searched the premises and gave evidence on the first occasion, that there was no additional evidence to offer. Mr Turner, solicitor, who appeared for the accused, observed there was not the least ground for suspecting his client guilty of the offence imputed. Mr Ashley had carried on a very extensive business for several years and, owing to the limited extent of his premises, every crevice of the house was filled with goods ; they were even placed under the beds, in the cellars and other unusual places. No suspicion therefore ought to arrive from the small quantity of tobacco, 17 lbs, found in the cellar, which was the most natural repository for it. The Bench here remarked there was some denial of having such a quantity of tobacco on the premises, and also that two stories were told respecting it, first that the tobacco was bought at Mr Anslow's in the town, and then Mrs Ashley said it was purchased from a boatman. Mr Turner replied that the answer given to the police on the first point was that that was all the tobacco in use in the house ; with respect to the second, Mrs Ashley most strongly denied having ever said anything of the kind. It was not at all an uncommon circumstance for his client to have 10 lbs or 17 lbs of tobacco in the house ; in fact, if it were necessary, he could prove that in one week he had purchased as much as 11 lbs of tobacco in Brewood alone. Mr Turner then remarked upon the small quantity found, arguing that if his client was guilty a much greater bulk of tobacco would have been discovered, and also observed that it was necessary for the prosecution to show that the tobacco found in his client's house formed a portion of that stolen, which had not been done. Mr Thorneycroft remarked there was nothing suspicious on the part of the tobacco being found amongst the barrels when the nature of the stock and premises was taken into consideration. Mr Leigh, concurring with Mr

Thorneycroft that no case had been established against Mr Ashley, the charge was dismissed.

166 13 June 1849

At the Police Office in this town on Monday last, before the sitting Magistrates, Thomas Ford and Thomas Gannon were brought up on suspicion of having been concerned in the murder of the boatman **Higgins** who, it will be remembered, died from the effects of the brutal treatment he received from some men in Canal Street, during the night time some months since. It will be recollected that a man of the name of Burke was tried at the last Assizes on the charge of having been implicated in the murder, but was acquitted on the ground of want of evidence. The two prisoners, Ford and Gannon, were now remanded until Wednesday, to afford time for the attendance of the witnesses.

167 20 June 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, WEDNESDAY JUNE 13

SUSPICION OF MURDER Thomas Ford and Thomas Gannon were charged on suspicion of being concerned in the murder of **Thomas Higgins** (*sic*) in Canal Street some months since. Higgins, it may be remembered, was so cruelly beaten by some men, rather late at night in Canal Street, that he died almost immediately afterwards, and a man named Burke, supposed to be one of the party, was tried for the offence at the last assizes and acquitted. No evidence against the prisoners being tendered, the Bench declined to make any order remanding them, but suggested that the police, on their own responsibility, might, if they thought proper, detain them until the next sitting. Inspector Butler said a witness had told him he could identify one of the prisoners, and also that he had taken out two summonses to compel the attendance of witnesses.

Joseph Drakeley, a boatman's lad, was convicted in the penalty of 2s and expenses for cutting down two small oak trees in a coppice belonging to Alexander Hordern Esq. The prisoner's defence was curious :- "I cut them down to make sprays to go behind the donkey. My master told me. I did not know better. I went according to orders".

THE MURDER OF THE BOATMAN IN CANAL STREET Thomas Ford and Thomas Gannon were brought up upon remand, charged on suspicion of having been concerned in the murder of **Joseph Higgins** in Canal Street on the 10th of September last. **Isaac Hobley** and John Davis, who had been examined on the trial of Burke, were also called as witnesses in this case, but they both said that they could not swear to the prisoners, Davis stated that he saw Burke strike Higgins, and he said so on the trial. Mr Fleetwood, who appeared for the prisoners, objected to any evidence being given as to Burke, on the ground that he had been tried and acquitted, but Mr Leigh decided that it was quite competent for the Magistrates to inquire into all the circumstances of the case on the charge made against the two prisoners. The witness Davis denied having made any statement to policeman Brookes as to Ford, and Mr Fleetwood submitted that such evidence was not admissible, as Ford was not present when the alleged conversation took place. Mr Leigh, however, decided on receiving the evidence of Brookes, who was then sworn, and stated that he was on duty in the Market Place on Wednesday last, and saw Davis there. In the course of some conversation, he (witness) told him that he would be required to give evidence against Ford. Davis said, "Well, I won't go if I can help it". He also said, "Well, I know Ford very well, and when he struck Higgins the blow was that heavy that I could not bear to stop. I went down to the Leather Bottle to have a pint of ale, and I could not drink it I was so much shocked". Davis was here recalled, and stated that he did say he was shocked on hearing the blow, but that he was fifty or sixty yards off, and that he told the policeman he had heard it was Ford ; he did not tell him that he knew it was Ford. He had heard several persons say that it was Ford, amongst others Edward Rorke, who worked in Mr Walker's nail manufactory. The Magistrates here sent for Rorke, but on his arrival he stated that he had only heard it was Ford who struck the blow ; he did not see the blow struck. Mr Leigh told the prisoners that as the witnesses seemed at present to be unable to swear positively to either of them,

they would be discharged, but they would be liable to be again apprehended if further evidence was obtained. One of the prisoners said that they were as innocent as the child unborn ; and the other said they would defy the world to prove that they were not the men who ill treated Higgins. They were then discharged.

168 20 June 1849

DUDLEY

CHARGE OF DRIVING FURIOUSLY On Monday last, Robert Browning, a driver of an omnibus and three horses from this town, through Oldbury to Birmingham, was charged on the information of John Mansell with driving furiously at Tividale on the 5th instant. **Joseph Bushell**, a boatman, was examined in support of the complaint, and deposed (to use the witness's own words) that the defendant was going faster than either a trot or a gallop ; for the defence, Mr Samuel Roose, a druggist, a passenger on the omnibus at the time, was called, and deposed that the defendant was not travelling faster than from eight to ten miles an hour, and he did not as such passenger consider himself in any danger. The Bench dismissed the complaint.

169 11 July 1849

STAFFORDSHIRE MIDSUMMER SESSIONS

Henry Roden and Edmund Phipps were indicted for stealing two tar cloths, the property of William Banks, at Wolverhampton. The cloths, which were used for covering boats, were stolen early on the morning of the 4th of February, and were traced to the possession of **Esther White**, a boatman's wife, who had purchased them from the prisoner Roden for 30s, giving him £1 in the morning, and in the evening of the same day, 10s when the prisoner Phipps was in his company. Both prisoners denied the charge of felony, affirming that they bought the cloths from a person for Esther White, at her request. The jury returned a verdict of guilty against Roden, but acquitted Phipps. A former conviction at the October sessions of 1848 was proved against Roden, and he was sentenced to be imprisoned to hard labour for six calendar months.

170 11 July 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, WEDNESDAY JULY 4 **Acton Fox** and **Edward Turner**, boatmen, were charged with stealing a plank, the property of Messrs Hoof and Hill, railway contractors. The prisoners had sold the plank to a man named **Thomas Andrews**, a boatman, at Stourport shortly after Christmas last. Fox said he found the plank in the canal near the summit level, and did not know who it belonged to. The prisoners were committed for trial at the Assizes.

171 18 July 1849

ACCIDENT IN THE HORSE FAIR Early on Wednesday morning last, **Edward Holloway** of Millfields, an elderly man, a boat builder, who had been attending a club feast at the Freemason's Arms, in the Horse Fair in this town, was leaving that house with the intention of returning home, when he slipped off the curbstone and fell down, by which he sustained a compound dislocation of the ankle of his right leg. The injury was of such a serious nature that it was found necessary on his removal to the South Staffordshire Hospital to amputate his leg – an operation which was successfully performed in the course of the day.

172 18 July 1849

STEALING A HORSE'S COLLAR At the Police Office on Monday, Thomas Williams was charged with stealing a horse's collar from the kitchen of **Joseph Smith**, a boatman living in this town. Edward Bebee, a little boy, saw the prisoner go into Smith's kitchen and take away the collar, between eleven and twelve o'clock on Saturday night. Prisoner had previously been to the house of the little boy's father, who is a saddler living near the boatman's house, and said he had a collar to sell. He afterwards went from Smith's house to the house of Bebee and showed him the collar, but said that he should not sell it then ; he would use it a little longer. Bebee saw that it was Smith's

collar, and sent for Smith, who recognised it as his property, and the prisoner then admitted having taken it. He was committed to the adjourned sessions for trial.

173 18 July 1849

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE CANAL An adjourned inquest was held on Saturday last at the New Market Inn, Cleveland Road, before T M Phillips Esq, coroner, on the body of **Thomas Pritchard**, a boy about fourteen years of age, who was killed under the following singular and melancholy circumstances. It appeared that the boy was leaning over the side of a boat laden with slack, close to a lock on the Birmingham canal near this town, when another boat was coming out of the lock, and a third (which was empty) was moving in an opposite direction towards the one coming from the lock. The man who was steering the latter called to the boy, but it is supposed that as his head was under water he did not hear the alarm, and in a moment the horse drawing the empty boat started off (whilst the driver was attending to the line), upon which the boat came violently in contact with the one that was coming out of the lock, and suddenly forced the latter against the boat in which the ill-fated boy was, coming in contact with his head and forcing him backwards into the boat, by which he sustained various severe injuries. There had been several reports in circulation as to the cause of the boy's death ; but it appeared from the evidence of W H Pope, house surgeon at the South Staffordshire General Hospital, that the scalp on the right side of the boy's head was completely torn from its connection with the bone, the bones, both on the right and the left side, being severely fractured, together with the bone at the base of the skull and those of the face. Mr Pope gave it as his opinion that the head of the boy must have been crushed between two hard substances. The Jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

174 18 July 1849

WOLVERHAMPTON POLICE OFFICE, SATURDAY JULY 14

AN UNFAITHFUL FRIEND David Townsend was charged with stealing, on Thursday afternoon, a purse containing two sovereigns and three half crowns from **John Bagnall**, a boatman living at Hallfields, Bilston. The prosecutor met the prisoner at Wolverhampton on Thursday, and they went to a public house, where they drank together. The prisoner afterwards took Bagnall to a public house in Berry Street, where they had two quarts of ale. Prosecutor stated that at this time he was neither drunk nor sober. He pulled his purse out, and put two sovereigns into it that were loose in his pocket. The prisoner sat by, and as he was going to pay for the ale, prisoner took hold of his purse and put it in his own pocket. Prosecutor told him to give him back the purse. Prisoner replied, "I will take care of it until morning". They remained there a short time after, and then the prisoner left the house and did not return. On the following morning, prosecutor found the prisoner asleep at the Brown Bear public house, and asked him for his money. Prisoner replied that he had not a halfpenny left. He was afterwards taken to the police station, where prosecutor's purse and some silver money were found upon him. He refused to tell the policeman where he had changed the sovereigns, adding, "If I had twice as much, I should spend it". The prisoner, on now being called upon for his defence, said that "Bagnall gave the purse into his hand, and told him to take care of it for him until morning. Two women were with him, and he (prisoner) was afraid they would steal it from him!" He was committed for trial at the adjourned sessions.

175 3 October 1849

With thankfulness to Divine Providence, we record that Cholera, in the course of the week, has considerably abated. The deaths in London on Tuesday week were 102 ; in England and Wales 336. The numbers stated yesterday (Tuesday) for the preceding two days were :- London, 67, England and Wales, 590. From the district of Wolverhampton and Seisdon the returns have been :- September 25th, 9 ; September 26th, 6 ; September 27th, 24 ; September 28th, 21 ; September 29th and 30th, 25.

Yesterday (Tuesday) morning, a woman, the widow of a boatman who died three weeks ago, was found dead in a hayloft over a stable belonging to **Richard Seamer**, near Albion Street, in this

town. She had been drinking freely for the last day or two, and there seems to be no doubt that she died from cholera. The clothes on which she was found lying have been ordered to be destroyed.

176 3 October 1849

THE PUBLIC HEALTH IN WOLVERHAMPTON UNION Although there has been considerable fluctuation in the state of the disease since our last publication, yet we are happy to find that upon the whole the medical return for Wolverhampton, up to Monday night, was favourable, and that the general health of the town continued to improve. On Wednesday night the disease broke out in Castle Yard, Market Street, where two or three persons died, and after considerable persuasion on the part of Dr Mannix, Colonel Hogg and others, the inmates of the houses on each side of the yard removed on Thursday to the tents on Graiseley Hill. The houses have since been whitewashed, and other means have been adopted to purify them. Some prejudices against the tents appeared to exist in the minds of the occupiers of these dwellings, owing to some absurd reports on the subject which have been prevalent among the working classes, but one of the tenants of the houses in question having visited the tents, and found that they were very comfortable, communicated the fact to his neighbours, who then consented to take up their temporary abode in the places of refuge provided for them. This timely removal has prevented the spread of the disease in the locality referred to, and we hope that the example set by the poor people in this case will be followed in other parts of the town, should the cholera make its appearance in any new district. A fresh supply of tents has been received from the Board of Ordnance. Amongst the deaths on Friday morning was that of Thomas Bateman Gould, hairdresser, Queen Street, who was attacked on Thursday evening, after having been in one of the houses in Castle Yard, where the inspectors were in the act of removing one or two of the dead bodies. He was attended by Mr Quinton, surgeon, and was also seen by Dr Dehane in the course of the evening, but such was the violence of the attack that no medicine could be retained on his stomach, and he died on the following morning at eight o'clock. The deceased was a man of intemperate habits, and consequently predisposed to the disease. It is said that he was almost forced out of the house in Castle Yard, having previously declared that he was not afraid of the cholera! The disease, we are informed, is now chiefly confined to two localities in Wolverhampton, namely part of St Mary's ward and the neighbourhood of Pountney Street. It has been observed in this town as elsewhere that there has been a marked increase in the number of new cases on Sundays and Mondays, which is attributed to the excesses of the working classes on the receipt of their wages. We are, however, happy to find by the return this week that such was not the case on Sunday and Monday last, and we trust that the more respectable portion of the operative classes will use their influence with their fellow men to induce them to avoid excesses at such a period as the present. Self interest ought to be a sufficient inducement to abstain from excessive drinking under existing circumstances, after the many fatal cases which have occurred through the adoption of an opposite course.

BILSTON In this town, as at Wolverhampton, since the appearance of our last paper, there has been considerable fluctuation in the state of the disease, the deaths having been somewhat on the increase. We are happy, however, to find that within the last few days the disease has again taken a favourable turn, though there does not appear to be very immediate prospect of its final disappearance. An urgent appeal from the clergy of the town, the Rev J H Owen, the Rev H S Fletcher, and the Rev R J Hasfield, on behalf of the widows and orphans and others left destitute by the ravages of the disease, appears in our advertising columns. The subscriptions already received are liberal, and when the appeal has been extensively read and disseminated, we do not doubt that it will be further responded to in a liberal manner by the wealthy and benevolent in all parts of the country.

WILLENHALL

THE CHOLERA This disease, which raged here with destructive and alarming violence from the latter end of August to the middle of September, has continued gradually to abate since the latter period. The disease, however, still lingers about the place, several deaths from cholera having occurred during the week. On Friday, a man residing in Monmore Lane. Little London, was carried

off in about 4 1/2 hours from the commencement of the attack, without the usual premonitory symptoms. On the day previously, a man had died of cholera in the same house as the man just referred to. Several deaths have occurred at Portobello during the week. The Dispensary established at this place has, however, been of very great service. The Health Committee sits daily at the vestry of Willenhall church. On Monday, Mr Harthill and Dr Pardi attended, and reported that cholera still existed in the place, and that cases of diarrhoea were numerous. Relief in kind to the destitute and needy continues to be afforded once a week at Willenhall, and about 240 families were relieved at the latter place alone on Thursday last. The relief consisted of 230 quartern loaves and 250 pounds of mutton. It has been the object of the committee to discover all who may require help under existing circumstances and to afford suitable relief. In order to effect this, the Town has been divided into districts, visitors have been appointed, and house to house visitation has taken place. When the cholera was at its height in this place, work of all kinds was suspended ; people were unfitted for their ordinary occupations either from sickness or mental anxiety. The consequence of this state of things might have been most disastrous had it not been for the timely aid afforded by those gentlemen who so benevolently subscribed to the relief fund, a fund raised principally by the factors and merchants of Wolverhampton and Birmingham, who are well acquainted with the trade of Willenhall, and who are fully sensible, from the depressed state of trade and the low price of goods, that the small masters and the laborious artisans were, at best, ill prepared to meet such a calamity as that which has befallen them. The subscription in aid of the widows and orphans remains open. Although the amount which has been already raised is liberal, yet it must be recollected that, owing to the number of families left entirely destitute, the claims on the Committee are numerous and urgent. Additional subscriptions are therefore greatly needed.

177 24 October 1849

STAFFORDSHIRE MICHAELMAS SESSIONS

STEALING IRON AT WOLVERHAMPTON **George Wood** was indicted for stealing 14 1/2 cwt of pig iron, the property of **Jonathan Seffton** at Wolverhampton. Joseph Bain, stocktaker at Messrs Jones and Oates of the Ketley ironworks, stated that on the 2nd of February last, he weighed and loaded a quantity of iron into a boat for Messrs Thorneycroft and Co, Wolverhampton ; the iron was marked "Ketleys" and weighed twenty one tons. The boat was then delivered into the possession of **James Smith**, who took it as far as Dudley tunnel, where it was transferred to Jonathan Seffton, and by him conveyed to the canal basin of Messrs Thorneycroft's works. On the following Monday, the 4th, when it was unloaded, sixteen pigs were missing, and the weight was deficient 14 1/2 cwt. About half past one in the morning of the 5th, the prisoner and two other men were seen by a policeman drawing a boat out of the canal basin at Messrs Thorneycroft and Co's works, one of whom, named **Tucker**, was captured, the other two escaping. Upon examining the boat, some pig iron answering in weight to that which was missing was found therein, and when produced was identified by Seffton. The prisoner was apprehended on the 3rd of March, when he positively denied being in Wolverhampton since the fifth of January. He was found guilty by the jury, and sentenced to be imprisoned twelve months.

Charles Limer, a very respectable innkeeper and wharfinger residing at Barton Turn, surrendered to take his trial on a charge of stealing five poles, the property of Charles Hallam, at Tatenhill. The prosecution was instituted by the Trent and Mersey Canal Company, and was conducted by Mr Huddleston. From the evidence, it appeared that in July last, Mr Hallam, a timber merchant of Longton, purchased a quantity of poles at Needwood Forest for the purpose of crate wood, and they were to be drawn to Limer's Wharf at Barton. On the 31st of July, whilst **Ralph Wright**, a boatman, was loading a boat with the poles for the purpose of conveying them to their destination, Mr Limer selected four or five of them from the rest, saying that he wanted them to fix on the racecourse at the races, and would return them by the next empty boat. They were accordingly used for that purpose, but instead of being returned, had been subsequently placed in a fence by a man in the service of Mr Limer. Mr Kettle, on behalf of the prisoner, severely cross-examined the several

witnesses ; and, in a very able address, argued that there was not the slightest proof of a felonious intent at the time of taking ; but that the case had been prosecuted by some of the witnesses from a spirit of revenge. He then called Mr Alfred Hitchcock of Holly Bank, Mr William Burnett, fellmonger, and Mr John White, farmer of Barton ; and Mr Charles Williams of the Trumpet Inn, Stafford, all of whom had known Mr Limer for upwards of twenty years and gave him an unexceptionable character for general integrity, after which the jury acquitted him, and he immediately left the court with his friends.

178 18 December 1849

DUDLEY

STEALING A HALF SOVEREIGN On Wednesday, **William Walker** was charged before J Roberts Esq with stealing a half sovereign and a fourpenny piece, the moneys of **Thomas Goddard**, boatman, on the 10th inst. The money was locked up in a cupboard in the cabin of the prosecutor's boat, which lay at Gosty Hill near Rowley, and on the prosecutor missing the money and charging the prisoner, who was in his employ, with the theft, he denied all knowledge of it, but subsequently stated that if the prosecutor would pay for a half crown's worth of drink, he would fetch the money. The prosecutor made no reply, and shortly afterwards the prisoner went away and returned with the money ; he was immediately given into custody. The prisoner was committed for trial.