

## MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS

**1 7 January 1870**

### **Manchester City Assizes**

THREE MONTHS IMPRISONMENT **John Walton**, 30, boatman, for stealing a rug, value 15s, the property of Philip Hart.

**2 11 January 1870**

### **Salford Hundred Quarter Sessions**

EIGHTEEN MONTHS IMPRISONMENT **John Firth**, 33, boatman, for inflicting grievous body harm on one John Grady at Ashton-under-Lyne.

**3 19 January 1870**

FATAL OCCURRENCE ON THE DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER'S CANAL At the City Coroner's Court, this morning, an inquest was held on the body of **John Lamb**, late of Moor, near Warrington, boatman. On the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1869, the deceased, with his nephew, were working a boat on the Duke of Bridgewater's canal, and whilst under the Oxford Road bridge, another boat passed them, and the horse way being narrow, the two horses were jammed and they consequently became restive. The horse belonging to the other boat commenced kicking, and while so doing, kicked the deceased in the belly, and he died from the effects at the Royal Infirmary this morning. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death", and strongly censured the driver of the second boat. They also recommended that the particulars of the case should be sent to the Duke of Bridgewater's Trustees, in order that proceedings might be taken against him. The deceased leaves a wife and nine children.

**4 18 April 1870**

### **This day's Police News**

CRUELTY TO A BOAT HORSE At the City Police Court before Mr Headlam, a boatman named **Thomas Bridge** was charged with having worked a horse while in an unfit state, at nine o'clock, on the Rochdale Canal. The offence was proved by Inspector Hargreaves of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The defendant consented to have the horse destroyed, and a fine of 10s 6d only was imposed.

**5 13 May 1870**

### **This day's Police News**

ALLEGED THEFT IN A PUBLIC HOUSE At the Salford Borough Police Court, before Sir J I Mantell and the Mayor, a man named **Thomas Herring** was brought up on remand, charged with stealing £10 from a boatman named **Milne** in a public house in Regent Road. The prisoner was committed for trial at the sessions.

{Note names in article following}

**6 31 May 1870**

### **Salford Hundred Quarter Sessions**

FOUR MONTHS IMPRISONMENT **Thomas Heron**, 41, boatman, for stealing, in Salford on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, £10 10s 4d, the property of **Kelita Milnes**.

**7 17 June 1870**

BODY FOUND IN THE IRWELL Shortly before four o'clock yesterday afternoon, a boatman named **Thomas Harper**, while proceeding along the river Irwell with his boat and horse, discovered the body of a man in the water near Regent Road bridge. He succeeded in getting it out and, on having it conveyed to the Bridge Inn, Regent Road, the body was identified as being that of Edward Clarke, a commercial traveller in the employ of a firm in Red Bank, Manchester. Mr Price, county coroner, will hold an inquest on the body this afternoon.

**8 15 July 1870**

**This day's Police News**

CRUELTY TO A HORSE At the City Police Court, **James Hall**, boatman, was charged, on the information of Inspector Hargreaves, with having cruelly ill treated a horse, and was fined 50s.

**9 22 August 1870**

On Saturday afternoon, as a boatman named **James Walker** was passing along the river Irwell near Barton in his boat, he saw the body of a woman floating in the water. He obtained assistance and got it out. It was removed to the King's Head Inn to await an inquest.

**10 25 August 1870**

An inquest has been held by the city coroner on the body of a youth aged 15 years named **Thomas William Hall**, a boatman, who was found drowned on Tuesday in the Rochdale Canal. It is supposed that the deceased, while crossing the gates of the Blue Pass Lock at Gaythorne, for the purpose of raising one of the sluices to enable a boat of which he was in charge to proceed, fell into the water, where his body was found about five minutes afterwards. The jury returned an open verdict of "Found drowned" and recommended the canal company to erect rails on the gates of all their locks.

**11 29 September 1870**

**This day's Police News**

THE THEFT OF A WATCH FROM A BOAT At the City Police Court, before Mr Rickards and Mr Walker, **Richard Hadley** was charged on remand with having stolen a watch of the value of £4 from a boat in Castlefield, the property of **John Rey**, boatman. On the 12<sup>th</sup> August 1869, prosecutor missed the watch from a boat on which he was employed at Castlefield. At that time, the prisoner helped to work the same boat, and when prosecutor asked him if he knew anything about it, he replied in the negative. Subsequently it was discovered that the prisoner had sold the watch for 30s, and he was apprehended by Detective Rowbottom at Huddersfield. The prisoner, who pleaded guilty to the charge, received an excellent character from his former employer. He was committed to gaol for one month.

**12 27 October 1870**

FATAL ACCIDENT AT A POWDER MILL Yesterday forenoon, an explosion took place at the Ewell Gunpowder Mills near Epsom. These mills, which have been established more than a hundred years, belong to Messrs Sharpe and Co, and have been long free from any serious accident. The explosion took place in one of the granulating houses, which is now a perfect wreck. A man of the name of **Benjamin Osbourne** had just unloaded nine or ten barrels of powder from a boat, which was received by his brother, Layton Osbourne, and another man named Raymond Mitchell. The explosion took place almost immediately after, Layton Osbourne being so seriously injured that he only survived a couple of hours. Mitchell lies in a precarious state, but the boatman, Benjamin Osbourne, is likely to recover.

**13 18 November 1870**

A boy nine years of age named **William Haddock**, son of **Richard Haddock**, boatman, was drowned in the Bridgewater Canal at Barton on Wednesday evening. He accidentally walked into the water during the fog.

**14 21 November 1870**

**This day's Police News**

UNLAWFUL POSSESSION At the City Police Court, before Mr Headlam, a man named **William Moffatt**, described as a boatman, was charged on remand with having a quantity

of "tares", used for packing purposes, and also a quantity of cotton, for which he could not give a satisfactory account. Detective McClellan saw the prisoner on Tuesday morning last take the property into a marine store dealer's shop near Woodward Street, and offer it for sale. When questioned by witness, he said that he had received the "tares" that morning from a man whose name he did not know, in Phillips Park Road, and the cotton he had picked from the bottom of a boat when he was employed by a Mr Bird. In reply to the magistrate, the prisoner said he had been out of work for a month, and that he had bought the property. He was fined 20s 6d, with the alternative of one months imprisonment.

**15 29 November 1870**

**This day's Police News**

**CRUELTY TO A HORSE** At the City Police Court, before Mr Headlam, **Moses Appleton**, a boatman, was charged by Inspector Hargreaves with having worked a horse whilst in an unfit condition. He was fined 40s with the alternative of one months imprisonment.

**16 13 December 1870**

Yesterday, at Aspull, an inquest was held by Mr J B Edge, coroner, respecting the death of a child named **Mary Gill**, daughter of **Henry Gill**, boatman. The deceased was taken to bed by its mother in the boat cabin at Top Lock on Thursday evening, and when she awoke next morning, according to her statement, the child lay at her side, dead. The post mortem examination showed that the child had died from suffocation, and the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter against the mother.

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**17 3 January 1914**

**A FATAL ATTRACTION** At the inquest at Dukinfield, last night, on Edward Harrison, a Manchester schoolboy of 96 Mill Street, Bradford, who was drowned in the canal at Dukinfield on New Year's Day, the mother stated that since the boy was six, he had run away every holiday time and gone on the canal boats. During the last holiday, he had been away with a Dukinfield boatman, coming home at the weekends. **Charles Edwards** stated that the boy had been with him for ten days. On Thursday, when tying the boat up, he missed the lad. The body was found about ten minutes later, and artificial respiration was resorted to until the arrival of a doctor.

A verdict of "Accidental drowning" was returned.

**18 12 January 1914**

**MISSING MAN'S BODY FOUND AT BROADHEATH** This morning the body of Michael Egan, about 40 years of age, bricksetter's labourer of 20 Davenport Road, Broadheath, Altrincham, was found floating in the Bridgewater Canal at Broadheath, near the Linotype Works.

A boatman named **Thomas Hulse** made the discovery, and he reported the matter to the police.

The deceased, who was a widower with four children, had been missing since December 27, and his body was in a very decomposed condition.

**19 13 January 1914**

**CLAYTON WOMAN'S DEATH**

**SINGULAR CIRCUMSTANCES IN DROWNING CASE** The death of a woman named Mary Ellen Travis, married, of Cooper Street, Clayton, was mentioned in the course of the hearing of a charge under the Offences against the Persons Act at the City Police Court today.

The accused, **John Kelly**, a boatman of Eccleshall Street, Clayton, had been detained last

night by the police on suspicion, after he had given information to Inspector Liggett to the effect that the woman had fallen in the canal.

The prisoner, in his statement to the police, had said that he met the woman in a beerhouse in Clayton, and then went with her on the canal bank. She walked away from him, and then he heard a splash and saw her in the water. Not being able to swim, he ran and told another boatman, but on their return they could not see the woman.

The body was afterwards recovered by the police, who dragged the canal at the spot indicated.

In the witness box, Inspector Liggett stated that a remand was asked for until Thursday, pending the Coroner's inquiry. The witness added that he had made inquiries about the woman, and from what he had heard of her habits, he did not think there would be much evidence against the prisoner. At any rate, the police had no objection to bail.

The accused, who was in a state of collapse in the dock, was remanded until Thursday, the magistrates directing that he be kept in custody as the best course in view of his condition.

## **20 13 January 1914**

**COMPENSATION POINTS** Several interesting points under the Workmen's Compensation Act were raised before Judge Mellor in the Manchester County Court today. In one case, the National Amalgamated Approved Society under the Insurance Act had taken steps to obtain for a workman a larger amount of compensation than that agreed between the parties.

Mr H Levi, who appeared for the employers, the Bridgewater Collieries and Ellesmere Estates Limited, said the workman concerned was a boatman named **Thomas White**, who was injured in July last. A mast of his boat gave way, and his collar bone was broken. The employers admitted liability, and it was agreed on both sides that the man's wages for the previous twelve months was 16s 4d. Compensation was therefore payable at 8s 2d a week, and the usual memorandum for settlement was filed.

**LIABILITY OF A FRIENDLY SOCIETY** Then the approved society – registered under the National Insurance Act – of which White was a member, made inquiries. They were in the position that in all cases where the members of their society received less than 10s a week compensation, they were liable to make the sum up to 10s a week. Therefore they had, in this case, to pay 1s 10d a week, or otherwise to prove that the man was entitled to 1s 10d more than he was offered, and his solicitors had agreed to accept a proper payment.

The society came to the conclusion that 8s 2d was a totally inadequate sum. They imagined that in acting for the workman, he (Mr Levi) had not taken into account certain cabin accommodation and coal which the man received, but this had actually been taken into account, and the society found that their opposition was groundless. In the meantime, however, they had lodged an objection to the recording of the agreement for 8s 2d a week.

**AN OBJECTION WITHDRAWN** The Registrar held an inquiry at which – owing, he understood, to some shortness of the notice – the society were not represented, and the Registrar found that the man was receiving what he ought to receive. Two days later, the society withdrew its objection, and the question now at issue was whether the society should pay the costs now involved in bringing the matter before the court.

Mr Garner, solicitor for the approved society, said they received information that the man had cabin accommodation, coal and oil, and that this had not been taken into account. When they found out that it had been taken into account, they withdrew their objection. He contended that the withdrawing of the notice would have enabled the Registrar to deal with it. As interested parties, they were entitled under the Act to take the course they did for their own protection, and he contended that they ought not to be charged with the costs.

The Judge said the matter was bound to come before the court when an objection was raised. The society did not appear before the Registrar, who had to refer it to the judge. In

these circumstances, they ought to pay the costs involved. Undoubtedly, Judge Mellor added, the society made a mistake in raising an objection on insufficient inquiries. Costs would therefore be awarded against them.

## **21 14 January 1914**

### **A SHOCKING END**

**CLAYTON WOMAN FALLS INTO THE CANAL** A sad story of the death of a married woman by drowning was told at the City Coroner's Court today at an inquest of Margaret Ellen Bate Travis, 40 years old, of Cooper Street, Clayton.

The woman's husband said that Travis was a strong healthy woman. She was not a woman likely to commit suicide. In fact, she had ridiculed the idea of people committing suicide, saying that "the water was too wet". She had been addicted to drink, and had been drunk almost every day since January 1. She was under the influence of drink on Monday night, but had cooked his dinner. At about nine o'clock, he noticed that she had left the house by the back door. He went to bed later, and did not hear of her death till early the next morning. Witness added that when sober there was no better woman in the world, and apart from the drink he had nothing to say against her.

The landlord of the Grove Inn beerhouse, Ashton New Road, Clayton, spoke to seeing Travis in the house for about an hour on Monday night, and said he saw her towards eleven talking in the lobby with a man named Kelly, who paid for a drink for her.

**ON THE CANAL BANK** A Police Officer proved seeing Kelly and Travis together at about 11 o'clock. They parted company, but met again later and went on to the canal towing path together. Later, he heard that a woman had been drowned, and along with Kelly, made an examination of the spot where, as Kelly said, the woman had fallen in.

Evidence having been given by a boatman named **Fred Barratt** as to the recovery of the woman's body from the canal, and by Inspector Legatt,

A boatman named **John Kelly**, of Eccleshall Street, Clayton, described how he met Travis in the beerhouse and had a drink with her. He had never spoken to the woman before, though he had seen her in his mother's house. They went on to the towing path together by arrangement. When they had separated, and he was about twenty five yards away from her, he heard a splash but no scream. On going to the spot, he saw her arm held out of the water, but could not reach her and, being unable to swim, he went along the bank to find someone else.

**NO EFFORT AT RECOVERY** Barratt, recalled by the Deputy Coroner (Mr Arnold), said he could swim a little, but he did not go with Kelly to the spot where the woman fell in because he thought it was too late. He recovered the body later with a boat hook.

The Coroner remarked that it might have been better if he had gone at once to see if the woman could be got out soon enough to allow of animation being restored.

The mother of Kelly stated that she knew Travis, who had been in her house once or twice. She did not think, however, that Travis had been acquainted with her son.

An open verdict of "Death by drowning" was returned.

## **22 15 January 1914**

**DISCHARGED** At the Manchester City Police Court today, **John Kelly**, a boatman, was brought up on remand charged under the Offences Against the Persons Act, in connection with the death of a married woman. Mary Ellen Travis, Cooper Street, Clayton. No evidence was offered, and Kelly was immediately discharged.

## **23 17 February 1914**

**DRUNK ON THE RAILWAY** **John Shaw**, whose employment it is to "leg" canal boats through Harecastle Tunnel, appeared at Sandbach Sessions today, in answer to the charge of being helplessly drunk on the railway line at Alsager. Defendant was badly



disfigured by cuts. Evidence given against him was to the effect that he was one mass of mud, wet to the skin, and lying across the railway lines helplessly drunk. He was fined 5s and 5s costs.

#### **24 6 March 1914**

**BRAVERY REWARDED AT NORTHWICH** This morning, framed diplomas of the Liverpool Shipwreck Humane Society were awarded **William Mills** and **Abraham Barker** of the Weaver boat *Triumph* ; John Wickens, P Halpin and J W Lamb, three Northwich Chemical Workers, for bravery associated with the rescue of **George Morris**, a hand on the Salt Union canal boat *Anderton*, on New Year's Eve. Morris, while propelling the boat, fell into the river Weaver. Mills and Barker rescued him nearly dead, and the others applied life saving methods.

#### **25 7 March 1914**

**CHORLEY BOY DROWNED** The body of a boy named **James Marsh** (9), son of **Samuel Marsh** of Adlington, Chorley, boatman, who had been missing from home for several days, has been recovered from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Chorley. The boy left home on Wednesday after having tea to play with a companion.

#### **26 18 March 1914**

**PENDLEBURY MYSTERY – YOUTH FOUND DROWNED IN A CANAL**

**A CURIOUS NOTE** The mystery surrounding the death of a boy, John Walker (15) of Energy Street, Pendleton, who disappeared on February 23, and whose dead body was found in the Bury and Bolton Canal at Agecroft on Monday, was not cleared up at the inquest which was held by the County Coroner (Mr W Sellers) at Pendlebury today.

John Walker, the boy's father, said his son left home at 5.45 on the morning of February 23 to go to his work at Messrs Horsfall's wire works, Pendleton, where he had been employed about six months. He appeared in his usual health. Witness did not see his son alive again and, fearing something might have happened to him, he caused a description to be published in the Manchester evening papers. The lad was bright and sensitive, and was also a good boy. As far as he (the father) knew, he had no trouble of any kind.

**Fred Toplis**, a boatman, said he was going along the canal in the direction of Bolton with his boats, and when near to Robinson's Bridge, Agecroft, he saw a body floating in the water. He got it out, and knowing the missing boy, he stopped his boats and informed the lad's father of his discovery.

The witness was commended by the Coroner for his action.

**YOUTH AND A NOTE** William Stephen Davies, a youth, said that on February 26 he was walking along the towing path of the canal, and when near Messrs Horsfall's works, he saw a piece of paper lying on the ground. There was no envelope, and on picking up the paper he saw there was something written on it.

The Coroner : Do you remember what it was? - I could only make out a line or two as the paper was very dirty. On the top there was the word Walker and the words "You call me a thief". At the bottom there was written "Good bye mother".

The Coroner : Didn't you suspect there was something wrong when you found a note on the canal side about somebody being called a thief and good bye, mother? Didn't you suspect there was somebody in the canal? - No.

You took it into the lock house and burned it ; why didn't you give it to the police? - I showed it to my friends, and they all thought it was a joke.

The Coroner : You seem an intelligent lad, and no doubt you have heard of youths being missing.

Witness added that he did not know the lad Walker and did not know that a boy was missing.

Frederick Jones Coachley, a wire temperer at Messrs Horsfall's, said that about 7.15 on February 23, Walker was sent out to get various things for the men's breakfast, as was the custom. He asked Walker to bring him some beer, and the lad said he would, and took a bottle for that purpose. He did not return, however. Walker would not have to go along the canal bank to get any of the things required.

"A VERY SINGULAR CASE" The coroner, addressing the jury, said it was a quite singular case. The lad was apparently quite well and had nothing to bother him. What happened after he went out on errands for the men on the morning of February 23, nobody knew. The only thing the jury had to help them, if it really did help them, was the evidence of the youth Davies, who found the note. The name Walker was on the note and from the contents that could be deciphered, it seemed as though he had something on his mind and intended to commit suicide. Unfortunately the note had been destroyed, and there was nobody who could say whether it was in the handwriting of the lad Walker. If Davies had had the sense to hand the note over to the police, it could have been shown to the father, and he could have said whether or no it had been written by his son. The jury could then have come to the conclusion whether it was a suicide or not. As there was some uncertainty about it, the safest was to return a verdict of "Found drowned".

This verdict was returned.

## **27 22 June 1914**

**PERMITS ON THE CANAL** **Charles Martin**, a boatman of Smith Street, Dukinfield, was ordered to pay 7s 6d costs at Ashton this morning, for refusing to show a permit whilst in charge of a boat on the Peak Forest Canal. He admitted that he did not show the permit, and explained that there was no one in the canal office when he applied for the permit. "We can come from London to Manchester, and no one interferes with us but that fellow," he explained, amid laughter, to the canal agent.

**Charles Burton**, boat proprietor, complained of the laxity, and said it was a test case, and an exhibition of nastiness on the part of the company. "'I've a couple of ducks that can touch the bottom of the canal with their beaks,'" he observed. The boat, he said, had stuck in the mud, and it was probable that the defendant might have used a certain expression when asked for his permit.

The presiding magistrate said the members of the bench seemed to think there had been some laxity, and that there was room for improvement.

## **28 25 June 1914**

**SERVANT DROWNED - STRANGE AFFAIR AT SALE - VERDICT OF SUICIDE - A MISSING WITNESS** The sensational drowning case at Sale on Tuesday midnight was inquired into by Mr H C Yates (the Cheshire County Coroner) at Sale this afternoon.

The body of the woman recovered from the canal after it had been seen to disappear by a man who gave the name of Frederick Cookson, labourer of 13 Oswald Lane, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, who was walking along the towing path of the Bridgewater Canal at Sale and heard a cry for help, was identified as that of Miss Blodwin Griffiths (20), domestic servant to Mr Owen, Gorsefield, Ashton-on-Mersey.

She was a native of Ffreeth near Wrexham, and the daughter of Mr Edmond Griffiths, a licensee.

**UNDER NOTICE TO LEAVE** Miss Ada Street, nurse at Gorsefield, said deceased was under notice to leave her situation, and was upset in consequence. She had only been there a short time. She was engaged to be married to a Mr Mark Tudor. At times, she had appeared to be very depressed. The girl had shown her two letters from Mr Tudor, one of which witness had not since been able to find.

The Coroner read one of the letters, in which an appointment was made to meet the girl at Stretford on a Sunday afternoon. It was, the Coroner said, a kind letter and contained

nothing to upset her.

Witness said that on Tuesday afternoon when she was returning to Gorsefield, she met the girl, who was walking from the house, and she said she was going to Liverpool and not coming back. She agreed that deceased was very nervous. Some little time ago, deceased broke some crockery, and that was how she had come to leave. Tuesday night was her night out, but it was not the day on which her notice expired.

Witness, in answer to a further question, said deceased had told her she loved two men, one named Mark and the other George.

**Edward Spencer**, a boatman, stated that Cookson shouted to him that a woman was in the water at his side of the canal. Witness put his boat hook in the canal and brought the body to the surface.

Previously, Cookson, who had divested himself of his clothing, had made an attempt to recover the body.

The Coroner said the police had been unable to trace the man who had given the name of Cookson, and they believed it to have been a wrong name.

**A MEETING WITH HER LOVER** Mark Tudor of Partington Avenue, Irlam, stated that deceased came to see him on Tuesday night, and they had some words as to why they had not seen each other recently. He saw her off at Partington Station at 9.40 and they parted on good terms. When they parted, she refused to make a further appointment with him.

The Coroner : Do you know why? - No, I can't say why.

You loved her, and was prepared to marry her? - Yes.

Did she in conversation with you say her life was not worth living? - Yes. I asked her why, but she would not say.

Did you find her a highly strung girl? - Yes. Very excitable and very depressed. She was accustomed to being depressed.

Witness said they had an intention of marrying in the near future.

**THE VERDICT** A verdict of suicide during insanity was returned.

The Coroner said the man who gave the name of Cookson was deserving of a high compliment for his courage in having attempted a rescue.

### **29 4 August 1914**

**FOUND DROWNED AT BARTON** An inquest was held at the Grapes Hotel, Peel Green, this morning, on the body of an unknown man, which was found in the Bridgewater Canal on Saturday. **Joseph Merrishaw**, boatman, 156 Ellesmere Street, recovered the body and brought it in his boat to Patricroft Bridge, from where it was removed to the mortuary.

The body is that of a man about 40 years of age, 5ft 6in in height, dark hair and moustache turning grey, nose slightly twisted. Dressed in blue cloth coat and waistcoat, and striped trousers.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

### **30 23 November 1914**

**HULME BOATMAN DROWNED** The body of **Luke Speed**, a boatman of Queen Street, Hulme, Manchester, was recovered from the Bridgewater Canal at Runcorn today. His boat, the Lily, was lying in the tidal dock. He went to the town on Saturday and was reported missing yesterday. The canal constables recovered his body this morning.

### **31 11 December 1914**

**David Daniels**, a boatman of Taylor Street, Dukinfield, was committed to prison for six months by the Dukinfield magistrates today for neglecting his four children.



### **32 5 January 1915**

ANOTHER HARTLEPOOL VICTIM **William Chapple** (15), boatman's apprentice, who was struck by a fragment of shell during the bombardment of West Hartlepool, died today from his injuries. He is the 110<sup>th</sup> victim.

### **33 1 March 1915**

CANAL TRAGEDIES Evidence was given at the City Coroner's Court today regarding the death of Ellen Fitzpatrick (55), widow of Whalley Street, Ancoats, to the effect that the woman went to the canal side in Union Street on Saturday night twice within a short time, but she was induced to go back home. Later she was missed from her bedroom, and was found early the next morning in the canal at the same spot.

It was also stated that the woman was in the habit of taking drink at weekends, and she had had some on Saturday.

A verdict of *felo de se* was returned.

In the case of **Fred Teale** (34), boatman of Sowerby Bridge, which was inquired into at the same court, it was stated that when working a boat along the Rochdale Canal on Friday night last, he was suddenly missed near Varley Street Bridge. It was found that by some means or other, he had slipped into the canal, probably owing to the darkness.

The verdict was "Accidental death".

### **34 2 June 1915**

CANAL FATALITY AT MIDDLEWICH This morning, the body of a child named **Richard Hickson**, aged seven, son of **William Hickson**, boatman, was recovered from the North Stafford Canal. Deceased went out to play after tea yesterday and was not seen again alive. Diligent search was made when he failed to turn up, but without result. This morning, he was found forty yards from Wright's Bridge. It is surmised he was playing on the bridge, slipped over, and was washed down.

### **35 23 August 1915**

MANCHESTER WOMAN DROWNED AT ROCHDALE This morning, the Rochdale coroner held an inquest on the body of **Elizabeth Ellen Mitchell** (41) of Jersey Street Dwellings, Ancoats, Manchester, wife of a canal boatman, who was found drowned in the canal yesterday.

**Reuben Mitchell**, deceased's husband, said they arrived at Rochdale on Saturday evening. The mate, a man named **Doughty**, and his wife were also on the boat, and they all went to the Bridge Inn together. They stayed there a short time. Afterwards, Doughty and his wife went part of the way home with deceased. When witness got to the boat, his wife was not there, but he did not trouble, as he thought she had gone to stay the night with some friends.

**Peter Jinks**, the lock-keeper, said the body was found in the lock gates.

The Coroner said there was no evidence as to how deceased got into the canal, and on his suggestion, the jury returned an open verdict of "Found drowned".

### **36 12 October 1915**

ASHTON CHILD'S STRANGE ACCIDENT **Samuel Edge**, the three year old son of **James Edge**, a canal boatman of 157 Park Street, died last night at Ashton District Infirmary from injuries sustained in an unusual manner. On October 2, the child was playing in the kitchen, and whilst the mother's back was turned, he fell to the ground. When Mrs Edge picked him up, she found that a wooden knitting needle, which had been lying about the house for some time, had penetrated the left eye.

### **37 29 November 1915**

#### **CANAL DANGERS – FOG AND FROST FATALITIES IN MANCHESTER**

**REMARKABLE ACCIDENT AT HULME LOCKS** The dangers of canal life in severe weather were exemplified at the Manchester City Coroner's Court today.

An inquest was held on **John Hyde**, 58, a boatman of the barge *Snaefell*, which was during this weekend moored at Hulme locks on the Bridgewater Canal. Hyde and his wife went out shopping on Saturday night, and after calling at a public house, where they had three drinks, they returned to the canal. A lock-keeper showed them the way with a lamp, the night being very dark, and Hyde, in crossing a foot plank attached to some lock gates, slipped on the frosty surface and fell into the water. He was wearing clogs at the time.

The lock-keeper made a gallant attempt to rescue the man, but unfortunately the coat which he threw to Hyde gave way under the strain.

Two witnesses, including a constable, said the place was badly lighted, but the lock-keeper considered the lighting arrangements sufficient, and in this instance, the man had the benefit of his lamp.

**BUMPED AGAINST COG WHEELS** It was also stated that the foot plank did not meet in the centre, and that the hand rail also did not join in the middle. The lock-keeper said, however, that the man bumped against some cog wheels, and as he had a parcel in one hand, he was unable to save himself.

The Acting Coroner (Mr Surridge) promised to call the attention of the Bridgewater Department of the Ship Canal Company to the accident, and ask if something could not be done to avoid similar accidents in future.

The jury thereupon returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

**AFTER SHOPPING** Another drowning case of a similar kind was inquired into when an inquest was held on **Mrs Emily Cheetham**, wife of a canal boatman of Elliott Street, Ancoats. During a dense fog on Thursday evening, she met her death at Dale Street Wharf whither she had gone with the object of joining her husband. It was stated that Mrs Cheetham had only been married twelve months. She went to do some shopping on Thursday night, and it was surmised that on her return she lost her way in the fog and fell into the canal.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

### **38 2 March 1916**

#### **SHIP CANAL AFIRE**

#### **OIL STEAMER STILL BURNING – REMARKABLE SCENES**

The *Spiraea*, the large steamer which caught fire in the Manchester Ship Canal on Tuesday afternoon as she was discharging her cargo of oil at the wharf of her owners, the Anglo American Oil Company, Trafford Park, continues to blaze fiercely.

Wrapped in volumes of smoke and flame, she presents a truly remarkable spectacle, and has attracted thousands of sightseers. The vessel is alight from fore to aft, and the fire is slowly but surely burning itself out. It was feared that when the flames reached the fourth hatch, where there is a tank containing some hundreds of tons of oil, an explosion would occur, but fortunately this did not happen. There was also a possibility yesterday of the ship heeling over into the canal and blocking up the waterway, but happily this has not taken place, and the view is now expressed that she will keep her present position. At least two more days must elapse, however, before the 16,000 barrels of oil which formed her cargo when the fire occurred are finally burned.

The *Spiraea* was a fine looking vessel when she came down the canal on Monday but now, with her plates burned out and her interior a mass of wreckage, she looks a pitiful object.

#### **THREE BRIGADES IN ATTENDANCE**

The fire was still raging at two o'clock this afternoon, and the Manchester Fire Brigade, the

fireboat *Firefly* and the Eccles Brigade were still playing on the blaze.

The oil burst out of the ship during the day, and blazed as it flowed along the canal. The boat had moved a little in the morning, but had not heeled over. The oil ablaze in the canal was a source of danger, and efforts were made to prevent it igniting any other vessels.

About 11.30, the Salford Fire Brigade, who had attended on Tuesday when the fire broke out, but later withdrew, were again called to the scene to protect the Salford side of the canal from the dangers of the floating oil.

The combined efforts of the three brigades were directed to keeping the fire within a limited area, though one bank caught fire, but practically no damage was done. The blazing oil, which flowed for about a quarter of a mile down the canal, made the work of the brigades most difficult. Powerful jets were got to work, and the firemen's efforts to keep the fire confined to a certain area were successful.

#### CLEVER NAVIGATION

Large quantities of burning oil continued to pour out of the aft, and some little danger was apprehended during the progress of a large vessel past the burning wreck between it and the bank on which the firemen were stationed.

The operations of the brigades had for a minute or two to be suspended, and in the meantime the blazing liquid flowed some yards on the surface of the water.

One side of the passing vessel was licked by the flames, but the outgoing ship was navigated through the danger zone so quickly that she was not damaged.

As soon as she had passed, the firemen directed their efforts to forcing back the burning oil, and after about five minutes accomplished their object.

Shortly after four o'clock, the burning oil ceased to pour from the sides of the vessel, and as all immediate danger from this source was removed, the firemen stopped playing on the water.

#### **39** 27 December 1916

**CANAL TRAGEDY – CAPTAIN ON THE WAY TO HIS BOAT** A canal tragedy was enquired into today at the Manchester City Coroner's Court. The deceased, **Thomas Hague** (32), captain of the canal boat *Pansy*, fell into the water in Upper Stanley Street on Christmas Eve, whilst on his way to his boat.

James Murphy, night watchman on the Rochdale Canal, Thornton Street, Collyhurst, said that hearing on Sunday night at 9.30 that a man had fallen into the canal, he ran to the spot, jumped in, and succeeded in seizing Hague, but owing to the man's weight was forced to leave go. Witness had previously seen Hague going through the canal yard, and he appeared to be very drunk.

Ethel Robinson, single woman, stated that she had lived with deceased for about four years. She met him on Sunday night by accident, when he was very drunk. She went with him to see him safe on the boat. His cap fell off on the footpath, and whilst witness turned to look for it, Hague fell into the water.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned, and at the request of the jury, a representative of the Canal Company intimated that they would make a gratuity to Murphy.

#### **40** 26 November 1917

**BOATMAN'S DISPUTE OVER** The strike of canal workers on the Bridgewater section of the Manchester Ship Canal is over. Bargemen, porters and warehousemen came out in dissatisfaction with the war bonus, but are resuming work pending redress of their grievance.