

WARRINGTON GUARDIAN (Document 2)

1 20 January 1877

RUNCORN POLICE COURT

ROBBERY FROM A BOAT **James Dickenson**, a boatman, was charged with having, on the 26th of December, stolen one jacket, one waistcoat, one pair of trousers, one shirt, one muffler, one pair of boots and one hat, the property of a boatman named **William Newman**. Prosecutor said he was the hand of two canal boats called the *Tom* and *Jim*, now lying at Runcorn. The waistcoat, trousers and hat produced were his property, and were safe with other things in a drawer in the cabin of the boat *Jim* on Tuesday the 26th December about nine o'clock at night. He also left a pair of boots on the cabin floor, and the other things in the drawer were a jacket, a shirt and a muffler. He last saw the boots on Thursday the 26th December about eight o'clock at night. The prisoner joined the boats as hand on Wednesday morning, and remained on board until Thursday night, when they went to the captain's to tea. They returned to the boat *Jim* about half past six that night, and the prisoner went into the cabin and said he should go to bed. He (prosecutor) said he would go and see how the other boat was, and did so, and did not return until half past nine. He went into the cabin and found that the prisoner had gone, and on opening the drawer, found the things he had mentioned gone. The boots were also missing, and he gave information to the police. On Wednesday night the 17th of January, he met the prisoner by the Derby Arms at the Top Locks, and caught him by the collar, and asked him where the things were that he took out of the cabin. The prisoner said if he would loose him he would pay him for the things, and when he refused to do so he said he would cut his fingers off, and put his hand in his pocket ; but he caught his hand and pulled it out. A policeman came up, and he gave the prisoner in charge. He was wearing the trousers, waistcoat and hat produced when he collared him ; and the clothes he now had on were those he was wearing on the evening of the 26th December. PC Ardern said he received the prisoner into custody on the previous evening from the prosecutor, who said he had stolen some of his clothes. He took him to the police station, and on searching him, found he was wearing the hat, waistcoat and trousers which the prosecutor identified as his property. He had also 2s 1d in his pocket. He charged him with stealing from a boat at Runcorn on the 26th December last, a hat, a jacket, a waistcoat, a pair of trousers, a shirt, a muffler and a pair of shoes, the property of William Newman. He said, "Yes ; and I will steal another pair". The prisoner made no defence, and was committed for trial. It is believed that the clothes which he was wearing when apprehended, and which were taken from him at the Runcorn Police Station, have been stolen. They consist of a sleeved coat with strong blue cloth front, and moleskin back and sleeves, a plaid printed cotton shirt, nearly new, and a pair of boatman's boots with round toes, and may be seen on application at the Runcorn Police Station.

2 20 January 1877

A DRUNKEN MAN RESCUED FROM DROWNING AT LYMM **John Sharpe**, a boatman from Manchester, was charged at Lymm Police Court on Tuesday, before Mr Norris, with drunkenness. It was stated that the defendant fell into the canal at Lymm whilst in a state of intoxication, and would have been drowned had not assistance been at hand. He was fined 5s and costs 9s.

3 17 February 1877

DEATH IN KNUTSFORD PRISON On Tuesday last, Mr Dunstan held an inquest at the Sessions House, Knutsford, touching the death of **Thomas Jones**, who died in the prison. From the evidence it appeared that the deceased, who was 65 years old and a canal boatman with no settled residence, was received at the prison on the 13th January, having been committed for trial at the ensuing sessions for alleged felony at Lymm. He was attended by the surgeon (Mr Woodcock) on his admission, and daily on and after the 17th, when he was removed to the hospital, suffering from chronic inflammation of the bladder. He died on Monday last. The jury found a verdict to the effect that the deceased had died from exhaustion owing to advanced age and disease of the bladder.

4 17 February 1877

RESCUE OF A WOMAN AND CHILD BY A LYMM BOATMAN At the Salford Borough Police Court on Thursday before Sir J L Mantell, Mary Ann Woods (32?), a married woman living at 1 Flax Street, Salford, was charged with attempting to drown her female child, aged 4 months, and with attempting to drown herself. **Peter Woods**, a boatman in the employ of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, living at Newfield, Lymm, Cheshire, said that about two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon he was on board a boat on the river Irwell, near Prince's Bridge, Salford, when his attention was called to the prisoner, who was standing in the river holding a child in her hands under the water. Witness could reach her from the towing-path, and he took the child, which was nearly dead, from her, giving it to his wife, who was also on the boat. The child was insensible, but after it had been undressed and rubbed, and brandy and water administered, it recovered consciousness. He also pulled the prisoner out of the water. Detective Quick said he apprehended the prisoner on Wednesday and preferred the above charges against her. Prisoner was committed for trial at the assizes.

5 14 March 1877

STARVING A CHILD AT SANKEY BRIDGE At the Liverpool Assizes on Tuesday, **Martha Ellen Birkenhead**, 28 years of age, was indicted for having, at Little Sankey, near Warrington, on the 28th October last, feloniously caused the death of her daughter, Margaret Birkenhead. Mr Watson and Mr Preston prosecuted, and the prisoner was defended by Dr Commins.

At the Assizes in December last, the prisoner was tried before Mr Justice Lindley for the same offence ; but the jury, after being locked up for several hours, were unable to agree to a verdict, and were accordingly discharged, the prisoner being put back for trial at the present gaol delivery.

It was now stated by Mr Watson that in October last, the prisoner was taken before the magistrates in petty sessions for having neglected her child, which was ten months old, when she was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. In the meantime, the child died in consequence of neglect, and the prisoner was then committed for trial on a charge of manslaughter. She was the wife of a boatman living at Sankey, and was a person of drunken and dissipated habits. Her husband was in good work ; and the prisoner, although provided with money by him to get what was requisite to keep the family comfortable, always neglected her children when she was tipsy. The grandmother of the child said that prior to its death it was in a "fearful condition". When her son came home and saw the child, he cried and took it to the doctor. The prisoner frequently left the child three or four hours at a time, and occasionally longer. In cross-examination by Dr Commins, witness said the prisoner had had two children within a year. She never heard her say that she was left without a shilling to buy food. Mary Lee, a neighbour, said that on one occasion she heard the prisoner say to the baby, "I will not be harassed to death by you ; I will knock your brains out against the jamb!" A police-sergeant said he had frequently seen the prisoner wandering about the field in the (????), and had had to send a couple of constables to take her home. Mr Henry Fogg, the relieving officer, said that when the child was brought to him, it weighed 5 lb 4 oz, and was a complete skeleton. It was born on the 17th December 1875, and died on the 28th of October last. Dr Spinks of Warrington said that, when the child was taken to him, it was emaciated to the very last degree. In his opinion, death was caused by starvation. It took milk greedily, but the stomach rejected it, because of debility. The child, after death, weighed 6 lbs 13 1/2 ozs, without its clothes. The average weight of a child at birth was between 7 lbs and 8 lbs. Evidence having been given to show that the prisoner had the means of procuring food on credit, Dr Commins addressed the jury for the prisoner, urging that death did not arise from starvation but from non-assimilation of food. The child was extremely weak from its birth ; and, though he admitted that the prisoner occasionally indulged in drink, he denied that she did so to the extent deposed to by the witnesses, and asserted that the woman had been neglected by her husband, and that if the child was emaciated, it was through the fault of the husband in not furnishing proper means of subsistence. He then called witnesses, who gave evidence to the effect that the prisoner was not so dissipated as represented, and her sister stated that the prisoner's husband sometimes gave her 10s, £1 or £1 10s for his "trip", which lasted a fortnight

or three weeks. Sometimes he left her without any money at all. The child was a very puny one from birth, and was born eleven months after the previous one. In summing up, his lordship said that in this country there was no excuse for starvation, and that drink was the cause of nearly every case which would come before them. Alluding to the evidence of some of the witnesses for the defence, he remarked that it was most strange to see how elastic were the consciences of some of the people, who themselves had an inclination to drunkenness, in excusing the propensity in others. After a short consultation, the jury found the prisoner guilty, but recommended her to mercy on the ground that the child was probably weakly from its birth, and that she had attended to her other children.

His lordship, addressing Mr Watson, the leading counsel for the prosecution, said : Why was this prosecution? You know the magistrates have really decided the question of the culpability of this woman, because they have sentenced her to six months' imprisonment for neglect of the child. How is her crime aggravated by the fact that the child died? The neglect is the same.

Mr Watson : My lord, the coroner's jury found a verdict of manslaughter.

His Lordship : But the magistrates have already treated with the question of negligence.

Mr Watson : She was sentenced the very day the child died.

His Lordship : But the magistrates convicted her of the gravamen of the offence. What I want to see is, how the offence of which she is now found guilty is different to that for which the magistrates sentenced her.

Mr Watson : It having happened that the child died, it was impossible for the coroner's jury to overlook it.

His Lordship : When does her present sentence expire?

Mr Watson : On the 28th of April. Her imprisonment was without hard labour.

His Lordship : I don't for a moment say that the magistrates did not exercise a wise discretion in the punishment they awarded, and if I were to alter that sentence, it would appear as if I desired to reflect upon that discretion.

Mr Watson : My lord, once it assumed the form of manslaughter, it was impossible for the authorities to ignore it. They were helpless.

His Lordship, addressing the prisoner, said he was very much afraid that she had given way to the fatal propensity of drinking, and that her guilt was attributable to that rather than to inhumanity. He hoped she was not utterly irreclaimable, and implored her to recollect that drink in a man was a curse, but in the case of a woman it was much greater. It had been brought to his knowledge that she was far advanced in pregnancy, and being of the opinion that the magistrates had exercised a wise discretion in the sentence they had passed, he felt that he should be casting a reflection upon them if he were to increase that sentence, because he saw no aggravation of her conduct, although the result had been so disastrous. He then sentenced her to be kept in prison until the 28th of April.

6 28 April 1877

THE LATE SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF A BOATMAN AT WAVERTON

THE ADJOURNED INQUEST The adjourned inquest touching the death of **Charles Mostyn**, aged 21, a boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, who was found lying on the canal bank near Waverton in a dying state early on the morning of Monday the 16th April, under suspicious circumstances already reported, was resumed on Friday morning before Mr Henry Churton, county coroner, at the Black Dog Inn, Waverton. The deceased was connected with the canal boat *Usk*, the master of which, whose name is **Probert**, is in custody on suspicion of causing his death.

Margaret Jones, a sharp and intelligent girl, daughter of **Thomas Jones**, boatman, was the first witness. She stated in answer to the Coroner that she was 13 years of age, that she had never been to school, could neither read nor write, and had never heard of the Bible.

The Coroner : An awful state of things! This is an example of boat life. The Coroner then administered the oath, telling the girl that she must speak the truth.

She said : My father is master of a canal boat called *The Stag*. Last Monday week we started from a

place called the Brockhole. I was steering my father's boat. It was about five o'clock in the morning when we left the Brockhole. One boat was empty. We intended going to Ellesmere Port. I remember passing along the canal between the Golden Hook and Crow Nest Bridge. I saw a man lying on the tow path there, but did not know whether he was dead or drunk. It is not an uncommon thing to see a drunken man on the tow path. His head and shoulders were resting on the Cop, and the rest of his body was on the tow path. I saw his face, and I knew him. I had known him for about six months. He belonged to the *Usk*. I saw him on it on the Thursday evening previous about five o'clock at Tilstons Mill beyond Beeston. His boat was travelling, and he was driving the horse. I saw **Jane Probert** with the boat. She was steering, but I did not see her husband. My father stopped the boat when we saw this man, for me to get off and tell another boatman to put him in his boat. I got off and went back and told **Joseph Boden**. This was at about a quarter past six o'clock. I did not speak to him at all. Boden spoke to him, and deceased groaned in reply. His clothes were all over slutch. He did not appear sensible. Boden took hold of his hands and raised his head, and said, "Charley, come my man, and get on the boat. What are you doing lying here?" but he got no answer. Boden said, "Let the donkey go on, Maggie", and I did so, and both us and Boden went on and left him where we found him. We saw no boat in front of us, but we met the Brummagem Flyer. We saw nothing of the *Usk*. Did not see anything of the Proberts at Ellesmere Port. I thought the man was drunk. I noticed nothing particular. Deceased was a quiet steady man. I never saw him quarrel with anyone. I told the Brummagem Flyer what we had seen. We stopped with deceased about 20 minutes. I did not notice that he breathed with difficulty. There was a good bit of blood about the face. I saw no hat. The proper name of the Brummagem Flyer is the *Severn*. The name of the master of that boat is **Benjamin Foster**. My father took no part in the matter at all. It was me and my mother.

The Coroner (to witness) : Are you the eldest?

Witness : No, sir, the youngest.

The Coroner : Well, you are a very intelligent girl, and it is a pity you could not have the advantage of education. You have given your evidence very well.

William Williams was then called, and said that on the day in question he was on board the boat *Ceres*, and at about a quarter to six he came up to where the deceased lay. I got out of the boat, and saw Boden, who said, "Never mind, start the donkeys and go on". Boden took hold of his arm, and put his hand to the back of his head before he said this. I did not touch the deceased myself. I did not go very near him. Deceased did not speak, but he made a groaning noise. I was not there more than a minute or so. My boat was empty. We went on, and did not stop till we got to Chester. I saw the *Usk* on Sunday night, and we met it on Monday below Chester, coming back from Ellesmere Port. It would be about half past eleven on Monday morning when we met him. Deceased was a very steady man.

By Mr Cartwright : I did not tell Probert what I had seen when I met him on Monday morning.

Charles Bowden (*sic*), master of the boat *Ceres*, gave corroborative evidence, and in answer to the Coroner, said his impression was that when he saw deceased he had been in a skirmish. He seemed in a sort of sleep. He was not accustomed to take drink. Witness saw no blood, but there were two slight scratches on his face. I did not touch the deceased. I noticed that he breathed. I did not raise the body up. I remained there about two and a half minutes.

The Coroner : Noticing the man lay there, would it not have been humane, and part of your duty, in fact, to assist him?

Witness : Perhaps it would ; but I have wakened many drunken men.

The Coroner : You are trying to get out of the difficulty, but you can't. You said just now you thought he had been in a skirmish, and we know what that means.

Witness : There were the scars.

The Coroner : If he had been a dog, you could not have treated him with greater indifference. You are sure you did not raise him up?

Witness : Yes.

The Coroner : Or speak to him?

Witness : No.

The Coroner : Or offer to take him to your boat?

Witness : No.

The Coroner : Not even touched him?

Witness : No.

The Coroner : Did you overtake the *Usk*?

Witness : No. I saw her at Ellesmere Port.

Witness, continuing : I went to Ellesmere Port and stayed there about an hour.

Police-sergeant John Palin, Waverton, deposed : On Monday morning the 16th of this month, **Edward Parry** came to my house. From what he said to me, I went to the Bone Works Bridge on the canal. I there found a man dead in his boat. Parry told me his name was Mostyn. I got a cart, and conveyed him to the Black Dog, Waverton. I noticed bruises and blood all over his face. I searched the deceased at the Inn, in the presence of several persons, and found on him a purse containing 6s 9d in silver and 1s 8 1/2d in coppers. There was also a tobacco box and a pipe. I afterwards stripped and washed him. His clothes were covered with dirt and slutch. (Clothes produced). He was wet up to the middle ; the upper part of his clothes were dry, except that they were covered with dirt. His trousers were saturated with wet. I noticed deceased's cap. It was wet. I did not go to the spot until Thursday. I did not think it necessary at first. I then found marks of his trousers where a person appeared to have been. I saw marks to correspond with the corduroy trousers. The marks were quite distinct. I also saw three finger prints and thumb mark on the left hand in the mud. I saw similar impressions near the same spot. I also saw the impressions of a man's foot on the cop, where there was no grass. It seemed to be the footmark of a boatman ; their shoes are made different to ours – rather narrow at the toe. About three yards from this spot, I saw a lot of cinders and ashes, as if they had been thrown out of a boat, and about six yards further on the towing-path, there were some crushed oats and beans, as if a horse had been feeding there, and they had dropped out of the nose bag. The cop is two and a half or three yards from the canal. The depth of the canal near the side is about three feet six inches. I saw Probert, the man now in custody at Chester, on Monday night, and warned him to attend the inquest on the following Wednesday. He did so attend at the commencement of the inquiry.

At this stage the Court adjourned for luncheon ; and on returning.

Edward Parry, senior, deposed : I am master of the *Woodcock* boat belonging to the Shropshire Union Company. I knew the deceased, having become acquainted with him about three months ago. I was with my son Edward Parry (a previous witness) when our boat came up to the place where we found deceased ; it was between six and seven in the morning. I was steering, and I got on the tow path and went to the deceased. When I got to him, I said, "Poor fellow!", being under the impression that he had been kicked by a horse, and that he had been lying there all night. I also said, "He's starved to death ; let us take him into our cabin". He seemed as if he had no use in his arms or legs, but he was not stiff. The minute we got him on the boat, I ran to a farmhouse close by to beg a drop of brandy. I got some brandy and mixed it with hot water, lifted him up, and tried to make him take some in a teaspoon, but I could not perceive that he swallowed any. I asked a boatman named **Morris** to listen if he heard any breathing, and he said he heard a gurgling sound, but deceased expired a moment or two after. This would be about a quarter of an hour after we first saw him.

John Owen said : I am a boatman and master of the boat *Dart*. I knew deceased, and last saw him on Sunday night, the 15th inst, at Bate's Mill. He jumped on the *Usk* as she was on the move from that point. **John Probert** was driving the *Usk*, and his wife was steering. Deceased appeared to be sober and steady. I don't work on Sundays, and our boat remained there till between six o'clock on Monday, when we proceeded towards Ellesmere Port. The next I saw of deceased was when John Morris was standing beside him on the tow path between Golden Nook and Nixon's Bridge. I got out of my boat and went to the deceased, in company with Edward Parry, the last witness.

Important evidence was subsequently given, after which John Probert and his wife both made statements in explanation of the affair.

The Jury, after a short deliberation, returned a verdict of “Wilful Murder” against both John Probert and his wife. The prisoners were removed in custody. The inquiry lasted eight hours.

7 June 2 1877

A WHIT WEEK CRUISE Bowden, Cheadle, Sale and Lymm each contributed members to the party of eight gentlemen who spent the Whitsun holidays in rowing to Beeston and back from the last named picturesque little village, whose beauties are so thoroughly appreciated by that irrepressible class the “cheap trippers”, all very well in their way, no doubt ; but, as was once observed by the suffering proprietor of a fine orchard, a confounded nuisance out of it. At seven o'clock on the Tuesday evening, Lymm quay presented an animated scene, that being the hour chosen for setting off on the first stage of the course, which ran by the Bridgewater Canal as far as Preston Brook, a distance of about twelve miles. Two pair oared boats and a couple of canoes, all built by Antley of Broughton, lay in the water in readiness to be manned, while various hampers, in addition to the travelling bags, betokened a thoughtful consideration for the welfare of the inner organisation, which hampers received a full measure of justice a day or two later on. The evening was fine, although cold, and punctually at 7.15 the little fleet put off from the quay, with luggage aboard and flags flying, and were soon speeding over the water at the full speed of six or seven miles in the hour. Opposite the house of Mr Peter Rylands at Thelwell, a slight mishap occurred, for in unshipping an oar to make room for a passing barge, one of the iron rowlocks of the leading gig was drawn out of its socket and fell into the water, and had it not been for the presence of an extra one in view of such a contingency, serious delay and inconvenience must have ensued. As it was , Stroke stripped and plunged after the lost article, but owing to the drifting of the boat and the impossibility of hitting upon the exact spot, no success attended his well directed efforts. Grappenhall, Stockton Bridge, Acton Grange were all passed in due course, and at 9.30 the lantern was lit and placed in the bow of the foremost boat, for it was becoming dark ; and flats and barges are better avoided than run against, henceforth the lantern boat piloted the way for the others. At 10.15, Preston Brook lights were sighted, and this being the halting place, an extra spurt was put on, the bugle sounded to inform the neighbourhood of the approach of distinguished travellers, and at full speed the boats shot under the bridge and pulled up besides a small plot of grass on the bank, where they were left for the night ; the properties &c being carried to the hotel and stored there ; for bargemen have their weaknesses like other people, and especially when rugs, cushions and cashmere dusters are left lying about. A telegram had previously directed the hotel authorities to be in readiness ; and the crews, with appetites sharpened by the keen night air, left little remaining of the ample supper which they found awaiting there. A mild game of speculation, in which nobody lost or won anything, finished the evening ; and by twelve o'clock all were wrapped in a slumber which, if the nasal organ is a reliable indicator, must have been exceedingly profound. 8.15 the following morning saw the voyagers on the point of starting for Beeston, and the loudly expressed admiration of various labourers, farm boys and loafers generally, whom the unusual spectacle had congregated en masse on the bridge, from which vantage point they criticised the proceedings to their heart's content, and it must be added, with the usual shrewd simplicity and mingled truth and ignorance of the rustic. The Bridgewater Canal branching off to the right of Preston Brook, the boats were now on the Trent and Mersey system, which is connected to the Chester Canal on the one side and the North Staffordshire on the other at Barr Bridge, some half dozen miles beyond Minshull Vernon, a village nearly twenty miles distant from the first junction at Preston Brook. A quarter of an hour's row brought the boats to the entrance of the great Preston Brook tunnel, a bore three quarters of a mile long, and ventilated by means of (???) air shafts at stated intervals. Being pitch dark inside, far too narrow to allow for any rowing, and with the unpleasant possibility of meeting the steamer towing a string of flats through, in which case none of the crews would have seen daylight again, for no sounds can be heard above the roar and echo of the little monster's machinery when once she has entered, it was determined to give the boats over to the charge of two resident watermen, who expressed their readiness to take them to the other end, leaving it to the

discretion of the crews to proceed overland, or to sit perfectly still until this was reached. The boats being all fastened together, the two pilots took up a position in the bows of the foremost, and by means of iron tipped poles, which they alternately planted against the moist brick walls, the operation of punting through was completed in about twenty minutes. The sensations produced by this novel journey were not altogether of the pleasantest description, and it was a relief when the situation of perfect helplessness in the interior of a long bore with water beneath and tons of earth above, was exchanged for one of freedom in the open air. A sharp curve midway rendered the opposite end invisible for some time after entering. This, when first apparent, closely resembles the indistinct glimmer of a distant star, owing to the distance, and to the smoke and steam from which the tunnel is never quite free. Four miles further on, a second tunnel was encountered, but this being much less formidable in every respect, a couple of sculls, manipulated by stroke and bow, carried the fleet safely through in a few minutes, coxswain aiding the work by means of the lantern and an energetic performance on the bugle for the (sake?) of the surprising reverberation as the sound rolled along the vaulted roof. Shortly afterwards the boats were transferred over a field to the river Weaver, running close by ; and a mile beyond Northwich, the first halt was made for lunch, it being then a little past one o'clock. The al fresco entertainment concluded, as well as half an hour's repose to facilitate digestion, rowing was again resumed, and after passing "The Plashes", where the river widens out into lakes of considerable depth and extent, well stocked with heron, teal and other wild fowl, a re-transfer was made to the canal, which parallels the river for some little way at the point where the latter becomes impractical for rowing. It was a work of considerable labour, conveying the pair oars up the hilly ascent which lay between the river and the canal, for they were heavy, and required all the muscle which the eight bearers possessed to get them to the top. At five o'clock the romantic village of Minshull Vernon was reached, and after an hour's rest for tea, the crews, with renewed energies, set to work for Beeston. Ten o'clock saw them at Barr Bridge, where the junction takes place, the Chester Canal branching off to the right and the North Staffordshire to the left ; and here the lantern was lit and somewhat more cautiously the journey resumed, all following in the rear of the leading boat, better known to the company as "the captain's gig". Countless stars spotted the heavens by this time, the moon shimmered over the smooth surface of the water, reflecting its silvery light on the wavelets and ripples left by the passing fleet ; and dancing about the white jerseys and straw hats of the rowers, an occasional bat whirled alone in eccentric flight and, altogether, the scene was as enchanting and unusual as could be desired by the most ardent lover of nature under the canopy of night. But for the many locks between Barr Bridge and Beeston, the distance would have been traversed in far less time than it really occupied ; as it was, the delay caused by rousing sleepy lock-keepers, waiting for the sluices to empty the (....) and steering clear of moored craft, saw twelve o'clock pass without bringing with it any signs of the now ardently longed for haven of rest. The bugle, it may be mentioned, performed many a dulcet serenade before the windows of these lock-keepers' cottages, being in some instances followed by an immediate opening of the same and the terribly couched inquiry, "What's that row about?", sometimes producing no effect whatsoever and necessitating a violent hammering against the door, which lasted until the desired result was obtained. At 12.45 the fleet drew up before the entrance to (.....) Lock, dispatched one of their number to secure rooms at the Inn, distant about a quarter of a mile and, while awaiting his return, kept themselves warm by trotting round the lock wall speculating on the astonishment of the hostelry at so late an arrival, and anticipating in no small degree the luxury of a good night's rest. Alas for the vanity of human hopes! Back came the scout with the dispiriting information that every room was occupied, that beds were quite out of the question, but that such chairs and sofas as the bar parlour contained were at the disposal of the travellers, if they were too done up to proceed farther on to Tarporley with the same possibilities awaiting them there. A unanimous vote declared that, however alluring the moonlight might be, no more rowing was to be done that night ; and in picturesque if somewhat extended (....) before a roaring fire good naturedly lit for their comfort, the company dozed soundly until the entrance of broom and dust pan at six o'clock rendered suffocation or the fresh air outside as the only alternative. Those of the crews who had brought hammocks with them slung them up in the kitchen

upon such ceiling hooks as happened to be free from dependent hams ; but a tap at the window at the arrival of a distinguished visitor in the person of a chimney sweep effectually roused them a couple of hours before the appearance of the servants in the parlour ; thus of the two, the occupants of the sofa were the better off and felt themselves justified in looking upon the circumstance as compensation for the anticipated fun of hearing the wrenched out hooks lowering the sleepers noisily to the ground the instant they attempted a change of position. Beeston Castle afforded relaxation until midday, and amid these renowned relics of a departed age, the elder and more sedate of the party occupied themselves in an animated game of leapfrog, until fatigue and the banter of their younger brethren compelled them to resume the dignified bearing natural to the cultivators of beards and moustaches. The afternoon and evening were spent in the grand old historic city of Chester – easily reached by rail from Beeston – of whose countless beauties perhaps the noble cathedral is the most striking and impressive. By good fortune, its singularly fine peal of bells were in the full swing of change ringing between the hours of six and eight ; and thus an opportunity was afforded of hearing the great brazen throats sonorously heralding the birthday of our gracious lady, Queen Victoria. Well might Longfellow, rambling along similar grey ivy grown cloisters, and listening to the clear sweet music overhead, write :-

Then most musical and mournful, bringing back the olden times
With their strange unearthly changes, rung the melancholy chimes
'Twas as the singing of a psalm, when the nuns sit in the choir,
And the great bell tolled among them, like the chanting of a friar.

Returning to Beeston by the first train next morning, the crews were well on their way to Runcorn by half past nine, a postcard sent the previous evening ensuring all necessary accommodation upon their arrival there. The route was precisely the same as that traversed a couple of days previously, with the exception that the canal received preference over the river, in consequence of the unavoidable delay in effecting the transfer. There were numerous locks about the neighbourhood of Middlewich, and many were the arguments with the captains of such flats as were on the point of passing through them concerning the important question of precedence, for there being insufficient room for both parties at the same time, diplomacy in the substantial form of a pint of beer was invariably necessary to obtain the right of way for the less sturdy rowing boats and canoes. The return through the Preston Brook tunnel occupied exactly one hour and five minutes, owing to arriving at the entrance immediately after the steamer and a long string of fourteen flats had set off for the further end ; consequently, there was no help for it but to tail on to the stern of the last flat, and proceed at the rate of a mile in about an hour and a half through the dark noisome bore. Two only of the party accompanied the boats in this return passage, and they sensibly went to sleep while the others awaited their tardy arrival at the exit, having made the journey overland. One of the first proceedings of the steamer, on emerging into daylight, was to run hard aground by the left bank of the canal ; and this contretemps had the effect of detaining the entire procession in the interior of the tunnel, until by means of poles and oaths she was pushed off into deep water. Thus it was past ten o'clock when the crews re-embarked for Runcorn, at which town they safely landed after a steady pull of fifty minutes – the fastest time during the voyage, averaging as it did a mile to every ten minutes. It is worthwhile here to record a word of recommendation in favour of Wilson's Hotel where, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, the most substantial preparations had been made to ensure the comfort of the travellers. That they were thoroughly tired was an indisputable fact, seeing that the distance traversed since morning came nearer forty than thirty miles, and little time elapsed after supper before all had turned in for the night. Saturday was spent in leisurely rowing to the original starting place, where the boats were housed and the crews returned to their respective homes. Norton Priory, whose charming grounds and splendid beeches are visible from the canal, which in fact runs beneath the latter, afforded a shady resting place for over an hour, and with a sense of keen enjoyment the crews stretched themselves under the overhanging branches and discussed the events of the past three days. Lunch, to supply which half the shops in Runcorn had

been visited, was partaken of at Daresbury, and a further halt made at Grappenhall, owing to the open church doors impressing several of the party with a strong desire to see the interior of the sacred edifice. Close upon 7.30, the fleet well together and the canoe leading, drew up before Lymm Quay, having covered since Tuesday evening a distance of nearly one hundred miles. In England, the success of any outdoor undertaking depends so largely upon the weather that it is a matter for congratulation that the Whit week of 1877 proved exceptionally fine ; and this and the courtesy and kindness of Mr Smith, the traffic manager, in granting passes through the various systems and locks, whereby all trouble and risk of stoppages was avoided, left nothing further to be desired in the way of facilitating the route chosen for the cruise.

UNDINE

8 July 14 1877

RUNCORN COUNTY COURT

A DEMURRAGE CASE

HURST v H C FALK Mr Day appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr Fletcher of Northwich for the defendant. Mr Day, in opening the case for the plaintiff, said his client was the owner of the registered flat *James*, 100 tons burden, and the action was brought to recover the sum of £13 15s as demurrage from the defendant, who is a salt merchant and flat owner at Northwich, for the detention of the plaintiff's flat at Weston Point for 13 days when discharging a cargo of salt. He then detailed the facts of the case as he intended to prove them by evidence, and called **John Hurst**, who said he was owner of the registered flat *James*, 100 tons burden, and that on the 24th April had orders from **Richard Cousens**, the banksman at Winsford, to load his flat with a cargo of salt belonging to the defendant. He began to load that day, and finished two days afterwards, on the 26th April, and set sail for Weston Point, where he arrived the same evening about eight o'clock. The next morning, he went to the dock before six o'clock for the purpose of having his cargo discharged into a vessel called the *Volent*, which was lying there to load, and was going under the crane in order to be so discharged ; but was told by **William Turner**, the foreman of the river Weaver dock, that the *David*, belonging to the defendant, was to discharge her cargo before him ; and she was so discharged. When he left Winsford the previous night, the *David* was there loading, and he arrived at Weston Point before her. When he arrived at Weston Point, he was told by the assistant gate man, **Edward Miller**, to go to bed and come at half past five the next morning. He did so, and when he got to the dock, the *David* was put to unload before him. The men commenced to discharge the *David* about half past six o'clock, and finished at half past two the same afternoon. He then took his vessel under the crane and they commenced to unload her, and when they left off work at half past five o'clock, they had discharged about 51 tons. The next morning, the 28th April, the men resumed the discharging of the vessel at six o'clock, and left off about ten o'clock the same morning, leaving ten tons of salt on board, as the vessel the *Volent* would not hold any more than what had been put on board her. The ten tons of salt left in his vessel was not discharged until the 12th May. He was paid freight 11d per ton upon the 97 tons discharged, by Mr Rosenberg, at Weston Point, and he got him to send a message to Mr Falk, the defendant. He was paid freight by Mr Rosenberg for Mr Falk on 97 tons, and he told him to write to Mr Falk and say that, if the remainder of the cargo was not out of his vessel by Monday, he should come upon him for demurrage. He had done so, and had charged him a guinea a day for 13 days, and that was a reasonable charge. By Mr Fletcher : He had had a case like that at the Northwich County Court for lying at Weston Point 27 days. He had carried salt on the river all his life, and had been paid for the detention of his flat both with slack and salt cargoes. He had been paid by Mr Joseph Davies for the detention of his flat with a cargo of salt. He did not know that it was a custom on the Weaver for the captains of flats to run the risk of discharging, and was never before, during the 33years he had been a captain, put out of his turn. He received a post card from Mr Falk telling him to come up light, and reload with another cargo ; but that was not often done, and then only when the Weaver was going to be let off. Re-examined by Mr Day : The post card was in reply to a message, and Mr Rosenberg had suggested to him on the 1st of May that it would be better for him to go to the works at Winsford to reload, and he repeated

the suggestion on the 2nd May. He did not go, for there was no encouragement for him to do so, as the post card said, "I have two or three boats to load, and if you like to come up and take your chance, you can do so". William Turner said he was outdoor foreman at Weston Point Dock, and on the 27th April saw John Hurst, the defendant (*sic*), at the dock, but did not remember his coming to him and asking to be discharged. He saw him about six o'clock in the morning, and there was not then any vessel being unloaded. After that the men commenced to discharge the *David*, finishing doing so about half past two o'clock the same afternoon, and they then commenced to unload Hurst, who could have gone under the crane to unload before the *David*. They that day took some 50 or 60 tons out of his vessel, resumed work at six o'clock the next morning, and ceased about ten o'clock, leaving about ten tons in the flat. By Mr Fletcher : From the 29th April to the 12th May, there was no vessel in the dock to load salt for Mr Falk. Both flats were at Weston Point on the 27th April, and it was optional with the merchant which should unload the first. By His Honour : He ordered the *David* to unload the first, as he had orders to do so from Mr Rosenberg, the manager of the dock. Louis Rosenberg said he was dock agent at Weston Point Dock, under the Weaver Navigation ; he did not give orders to anyone to unload the *David* before the *James*. The order he gave to Turner was to load the *Volent* with Falk's salt in the morning ; after the plaintiff Hurst was left with ten tons of salt on board, he suggested to them to send a telegram to Mr Falk's works at Winsford, asking if they would load him if he came up, and he wrote out a copy for a telegram and gave it to him. It said, "Will you load me with common salt for Weston Point if I come up?" Mr Falk's vessel would be in Weston on Saturday. He paid the freight to Hurst on behalf of the lad who was in Mr Falk's office at Weston Point, and he (witness) did not in any way act at Weston Point as agent for Mr Falk. By Mr Fletcher : Before he went to Weston Point, he was ten years in the employment of Mr Hayes, coal and salt merchant, and he had been seven years at Weston Point. He had not heard since he had been at Weston Point of such a claim as the present one, and at Weston Point there was no custom as to the discharging of flats laden with salt. The merchants said such and such a flat was to discharge, and there was one under the crane partly unloaded. It would have to come from under if the merchant wished it. He had known flats to be so removed, and as a rule the merchants gave preference to their own flats. It was the practice of merchants and salt proprietors to send cargoes on speculation, and the captains of flats knew that ; and he had never heard of any charge for detention. The freight paid to the defendant (*sic*), 11d per ton from Winsford to Weston Point, was rather high, and he should think must have been given in consideration of probable detention. By His Honour : It was perfectly well understood by the captains of flats that they were liable to be detained with cargoes of salt. If several flats were in the dock laden with Falk's salt, and he were to give the order that Falk's salt was to be discharged, it would be left to the judgement of the foreman which should be discharged first. The first down should be the first discharged, but that rule was not always adhered to. The discharge of the vessels was entirely in the discretion of the foreman. **William Bate** said he was a coal and salt merchant at Runcorn, and had for twelve years carried salt for salt proprietors. He had done so for Mr William Hayes. The rule was to put in a claim for a guinea a day for detention ; but he had often compromised it for 10s a day, to avoid legal proceedings. By His Honour : It was the custom for the owners of flats to claim a guinea a day for detention, after the lapse of 48 hours. His boats had often carried salt to Weston Point, and were always discharged in that time ; the first to arrive at the place when the horse was taken off was the first to unload, whether the merchant had any of his own flats there or not, and that was the custom whether the flat was loaded with salt or anything else. By Mr Fletcher : He had carried salt for Mr Falk, but his flats had not often been detained. He had never claimed detention from him, as his flats had not been detained much beyond 48 hours. He had between 30 and 40 boats and flats, which carried from 40 to 139 tons. He had been the owner of five flats for between eight and nine years, and in that time had never been paid demurrage for salt in flats, but had been paid for it in boats. Mr Day said that was his case. His Honour said : Irrespective of the question of custom, the case for the plaintiff had failed, as he had not proved that the detention of the flat took place in consequence of the orders of the defendant. He had failed to prove that orders were received from him to unload the *David* first. Mr Day said it was very unfortunate that from some cause or other

he could not get direct evidence from the dockmen at Weston Point. The witness Turner said that he got orders from Mr Rosenberg to discharge the *David* first, and Mr Rosenberg said he only gave orders that Falk's salt was to be discharged the first. His Honour said that the plaintiff had failed to prove that the detention of his vessel was in consequence of any orders given by the defendant, and the evidence of custom could not be relied on, for that of the witness Bate upon that point was completely broken down. He must therefore, without calling upon Mr Fletcher for his defence, give a verdict for the defendant.

There were no other cases of public importance.

9 August 1 1877

MAN DROWNED AT LYMM Mr Ridgway, Coroner, held an inquest at the Bull's Head, Lymm, on Monday, on the body of **John Rea**, 30 years of age, who was captain of the flat *Safety*. Mary Jackson stated that she lived at the Bridgewater Arms Inn, Lymm. About ten minutes to twelve o'clock on Saturday night, she heard a horse galloping along the canal bank. Hearing a splash, she looked through her bedroom window, and found that the horse and a man, whom she subsequently ascertained was the deceased, were in the water. She at once came downstairs and told a man she met in the street what had happened, and he managed to rescue the horse, but the deceased was drowned, his body not being recovered till the following day. James Eccles of Broadheath said the deceased called at his house on Saturday night and asked for a drink of ginger beer, which he gave him. The deceased, who was a little inebriated, told him he was going to Preston Brook on his horse. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

10 August 4 1877

SUSPECTED ROBBERY OF DRAPERY GOODS At the Runcorn Police Court on Thursday before Mr William Bankes, **Thomas Potter**, a waterman, was brought up on remand charged with having, on or about the 9th July 1877, stolen and taken away four pieces of print and four pieces of "dhoties", the property of Mr Graham and others of Manchester ; and James Robinson, **Thomas Gibbons** and Mary Robinson were also brought up on remand, the latter having been on bail charged with having at the same time received the said goods, well knowing them to have been stolen. Mr Cobbett of Manchester prosecuted, and Mr H S Bent of Manchester defended Gibbons, and the two Robinsons and Potter were undefended. Mr Cobbett stated the case for the prosecution, and said the goods which the prisoner Potter was charged with having stolen, and the other prisoners with having received, were of the value of £50. He proposed to deal with the present case singly to a certain extent, and then ask for a remand, as there were two other charges which he should be prepared to proceed with another day. He then called John Burke, who said he lived at 30 Preston Street, Hulme, Manchester, and was manager at the print room of Messrs William Graham and Co, shippers, at 86 Mayer Street, Manchester. They shipped prints and other manufactured goods to Calcutta and other foreign markets, which were frequently sent by Messrs Thompson, McKay and other carriers. It was part of his duty as manager of the print room to examine the goods when they came in, and give directions for their packing. Those directions were given to a man of the name of William Conway. A mark of a cross C.G. was put on goods for Calcutta, and each was numbered consecutively. On 28th June last, he received 5,000 pieces of print, of the ten patterns which he now produced. They had not shipped any of these patterns for two or three years. Goods of these patterns were not to be bought in the market, the pattern being specially made for William Graham and Co, who do not sell any goods of those patterns in England. After he had received the 5,000 pieces of goods, he examined them, and then gave instructions to Mr Conway to pack them. The numbers he put on the cases were 74, 71, 73, 20 both inclusive, on the outside of the cases. Two tickets were also put on each piece of print before putting them into the cases. The four pieces of print produced, numbered 5,6,7 and 8, were of the same pattern as the goods in the 50 cases, and he found that the oval ticket had been taken off, and the square ticket taken off numbers five six and seven and a part of the square ticket off number eight, but enough of it left to enable him to say that the goods were those of Messrs William Graham and Co. Cross-examined by Mr

Bent : The whole of the 5,000 pieces were shipped at the same time, and he had no doubt that those produced proved a portion of the shipment. William Conway said he resided at 15 Smith Street, Higher Harvey(?), Manchester, and was the packer for all the prints for Messrs William Graham and Co. On the 2nd July, he received instructions from the previous witness to pack 50 cases of prints of the ten patterns produced. He put 100 pieces in each case, being ten pieces of each pattern, on the 3rd July, and on the outside of the GXC case he put the mark XGC and numbers 74, 71, to 75, 20 inclusive. He delivered them on the 4th July to John Calderbank, who was a carter in the employ of Messrs Thompson, McKay and Company, and he made his mark in the delivery book produced, which he (witness) witnessed. He also gave him the note produced. John Calderbank said he resided at 9 Wood Street, East Rusholme Road, Manchester, and was a carrier in the employ of Messrs Thompson, McKay and Company, carriers, Manchester. On the 4th July he went to the warehouse of Messrs Graham and Co with a lurry, and there saw William Conway, the previous witness, and got from him 50 cases with marks and numbers on them, but did not recollect what they were. He could not read, but received with the goods a note like the one produced, and put his cross at the end of his name in the delivery book produced. He took the goods to what is called Grocers' Warehouse in Castle Field, belonging to Messrs Thompson, McKay and Co, and delivered them to the foreman, Daniel Gilgrass, and also gave him the note. It was then about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. Edward Glanville Cranswick said he resided at St Paul's Vicarage, Staleybridge, and was a clerk in the employ of Messrs Graham and Co at their warehouse. It was part of his duty to give the necessary instructions for the making up and packing of such goods as came into his room, and were intended for foreign markets. On the 30th June he gave instructions in writing, which he produced, and which were marked B ; and on the 4th July he gave further written instructions, produced, marked C. He gave the papers to George Williamson. In the instructions marked B, there was only one quality of goods, but with two patterns mentioned. They were white "dhoties". The instructions on note C related precisely to similar goods. He instructed Williamson to place upon the outside of the cases in which the goods mentioned in note were to be packed the following mark, W D Elph C, and to be numbered 15, 13 to 15. 18, both inclusive, in all six cases. In the case of the cases mentioned in note C, the mark to be placed upon them was W D P Hurse, the numbers were to be 5, 35 to 5, 42, in all eight cases. Before giving directions to Williamson, he had taken patterns of the goods and now produced them. Before the goods were packed, a ticket was placed on the outside lap, and on the inside a private circular stamp was impressed. It was the duty of the bleacher to put on the ticket and impress the stamp. He had examined the pieces of material numbered 1 to 4 inclusive, and found them to be "dhoties". There were no tickets upon them, but the private impressed stamp of Messrs W Graham and Co in the inside. From the appearance of the four pieces, a ticket had been taken off each of them. He also said the same with reference to the pieces number 9 and 10. The whole of them were the property of William Graham and Co, and so far as he knew, they did not sell any of these goods in England. By Mr Bent : They were a common class of goods sent out to India. They were not manufactured by Graham and Co, and other houses sold similar goods. He could not say that the goods produced formed a portion of the shipment mentioned in the notes B and C, but he recognised them by the private mark as having passed through their house, as they only put this mark on the goods they sold or shipped. By Mr Cobbett : The pieces 9 and 10 and 1 to 4 were all the same and similar to the pattern produced, which Williamson was ordered to pack. John Williamson said he resided at 8 Stanley Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester, and was a warehouseman in the employ of Messrs Graham and Co. It was part of his duty to examine, make up, pack and deliver to the carrier white "dhoties" when instructed. On the 30th June and 4th July, he received from the last witness the two notes B and C, and on the 3rd July examined, made up and packed six cases of white "dhoties" as mentioned in note B. Before packing them, he saw that the bleacher had put on the ticket and impressed the stamp, and he marked and numbered the cases in accordance with note B, and delivered them to R Venables, a carter in the employ of Messrs Thompson, McKay and Co, gave him the note produced marked D, and signed the delivery book produced. He afterwards packed the eight cases mentioned in note C. He numbered and worked the cases in accordance with note. On the 4th July, he

delivered seven cases to T Lomas with the note C, and delivered the cases marked F to Joseph Young. On the 6th, Lomas signed the book, and Young put his mark. Robert Venables said he resided at 28 Grey Street, Ancoats, Manchester, and was a carter in the employ of Messrs Thompson, McKay and Co, and received from the last witness the goods and note named by him. The Court then adjourned for an hour.

On the re-assembling of the Court after luncheon,

Joseph Young was the first witness called. He said he resided at 29 Wainwright Street, Manchester, and was a carter in the employ of Mr Slack, who worked for Messrs Thompson, McKay and Co. He received 23 cases of goods from Graham and Co, and a note similar to that marked F, produced. He took the cases to the Grocers' Warehouse, Castlefield, and delivered them to Daniel Gilgrass, on the 5th July. Daniel Gilgrass said he resided at 17 Southern Street, Chester Road, Manchester, and had charge of the Grocers' Warehouse belonging to Thompson, McKay and Co, Manchester, and his duty was to receive all goods that were brought there, and to see that they were properly shipped on board the flats. For that purpose, he kept check and weigh books. In the weigh books he entered the particulars on the goods and the weight of them ; and the check book contained a list of goods to be put on board each flat, and he ticked them off as they were put on board. On the 3rd July, he received the note D from Venables, and the six cases mentioned in it, and gave the note to the clerk. Referring to his check book, he saw that the cases were shipped in the *Tom* flat, and he saw them so shipped. A man named **William Clare** was the captain. On the 4th July, he received the note marked A from Calderbank, and the 50 cases named in it. A portion were shipped on the 4th July in the *Earnest*, viz 21, of which **Peter Lowe** was the captain ; and 29 were shipped in the *Rudolph*, of which the prisoner was the captain. He saw the captain, Potter, on board, and he believed he also saw the hand on board. On the 5th July, seven cases of goods marked "WD, Flying Horse, C", numbered 535 to 541 inclusive, were put on board ; and he also received the note C, and the case named, from the witness Young. All the cases were put on board in good order and condition. Peter Buckley said he was Inspector of Police at Runcorn, and from information he received, he went, late in the evening on the 19th July, in company with Sergeant Handford, to the neighbourhood of the beerhouse of the prisoner Robinson in Halton Road, which is divided from the Bridgewater Canal by the highway. He and his wife and several sons and daughters reside there. The prisoner Gibbons lived in a house on the opposite side of the canal, close to the towing-path, and nearly opposite to Robinson's house. The prisoner Gibbons was captain of the flat *Mary Jane*, which was owned by the prisoner Robinson, and was his son-in-law. The flat *Mary Jane* was tied up in the canal – tied to the wall on the same side as Robinson's house. He and Sergeant Handford remained there until 20 to three o'clock the following morning, when they went away ; but in about twenty minutes he sent Handford back again. He saw him again about ten o'clock the same morning, and from what he said he made a report to Superintendent Steen, and went to the prisoner Robinson's house about half past eleven o'clock, and there saw Mrs Robinson and Mrs Gibbons. He (witness) asked where the master was, and Mrs Robinson said he had gone out a bit since to take a walk down by the locks. Superintendent Steen then said they had come to search the house, and asked if she had anything there that did not belong to them, and Mrs Robinson said, "No". He (witness) went upstairs to search one of the bedrooms, and Mrs Robinson followed him. In one corner, on a box, he saw a bundle of five pieces of light print (produced) ; and as he was lifting them, and two pieces of plain winsey (produced), she said, "You don't need to take all these. I bought some of them at the Public Hall, and the others were left me by my uncle". He said, "Mrs Robinson, don't you criminate yourself ; I shall take them, and see about them afterwards". In the box he found two pieces of print, and the bundle, handkerchief and two pieces of cloth (produced) ; also a bundle of towels. He found in another bedroom the piece of new rope (produced) ; in another bedroom the piece of new rope and the horse-cloth (produced) under the bed. He went downstairs, and in a side room found the large piece of striped winsey, piece of calico (produced) and some pieces of red print. He took what he found to the Police Station, and then returned to Gibbons's house and assisted Superintendent Steen to remove a quantity of goods which he had found there. The same afternoon, he and Handford went to Agden, and met the flat of which Gibbons was captain, in

charge of his brother. With what was said, he went in the direction of Lymm, and there met the prisoner Gibbons. He told him that they had searched his house and his father-in-law's house, and had found a large quantity of drapery and other goods, which they had taken on suspicion of having been stolen, and asked him what account he could give of them. He said, "I own they are all wrongfully come by. I have bought them from different boatmen". He (witness) said, "Who are they?" and he said, "I don't know them". He (witness) said it was a strange transaction to have to do with men he did not know ; and he replied the men changed so often now. He took him into custody, conveyed him to Runcorn and locked him up. On 27th July, he went with the Superintendent to Birkenhead, where he (witness) apprehended Slater and the Superintendent apprehended Potter, and brought them together to Runcorn, where they confronted them with Gibbons, and the Superintendent told them in the presence of Gibbons that they were charged on suspicion of having stolen the property, then lying on the table, from the cargoes between Liverpool and Manchester. The prisoner Gibbons said, "I received the prints and calico found in my house and now shown to me from Potter. I don't remember how much I paid him for them. I got them at different times. Part of the calico he left at our house last Sunday night week. I mean Mrs Robinson's. I got one part of the calico and that long piece of print (pointing to the piece No 11 now produced) from a house on the right hand side in Brook Street one night during the week before that Sunday. I got it from a young woman who had told me she was his wife. The first lot I fetched from his flat at Astmoor about a month since. He came and asked me if I would buy some. It is like the light print there (pointing to the pieces of print which he (witness) had found on the box). I paid a sovereign for it. Once his wife brought some to my mother-in-law's. I was there. The piece of print produced (pointing to some of the red ones), he said I paid her 40s for them, and paid 20s for a piece from his house. I bought three pieces of winsey from Slater and paid two sovereigns for it, and got it from him at the dock in Liverpool. He brought it to my flat from his, and my brother James was there. I paid him 10s then, and the other 30s at the beerhouse. My mother-in-law was there, and I got the money from her. I also bought the plain winsey from him at Runcorn locks, and paid him (?30s) for it. The winsey was cut into two pieces ; and I took one to my mother-in-law's and the other to my house. Potter asked me first to buy the goods, and then Slater." In reply Potter was very wrath, said it was not true, and made use of bad words. He also said that he was not right, and ought to be examined by a doctor. Slater also said it was not true what Gibbons had said. When he and Superintendent Steen and Sergeant Handforth were searching the room downstairs, he had in his hand the small piece of striped winsey produced. He said it was left by a man. He asked him what man. At first, he said he did not know, and then said it was by a man named Potter, but he did not know his Christian name. By Mr Bent : Was told by him a week ago that the horse-cloth was bought at Lymm. He had not made any inquiries as to the horse-cloth and other articles, but Mr Steen had. Joseph Handford said he was sergeant of police at Runcorn, and about ten o'clock at night on the 19th July, went with Inspector Buckley to watch the flat *Mary Jane*, and left about three o'clock. He returned at 3.50, and it was then quite light. He watched the flat, and in about five minutes after saw two men come from Robinson's beerhouse and go on board the flat. The prisoner Gibbons was one, but he did not know the other. Gibbons went down into the after cabin, and he immediately came up again with a bundle across his shoulders wrapped up in a dark wrapper, and took it into Robinson's beerhouse. He immediately came out again with a woman, and went on board the flat. The woman stood leaning against a wall, and Gibbons went into the cabin, came out again with a bundle which he dropped over the wall where the woman was, and in a short time picked it up and took it into Robinson's beerhouse. Gibbons pushed the flat across the canal opposite his own house. He saw the flat depart, and then went to the police office, and the same morning reported what he had seen to Inspector Buckley. He afterwards went, about eleven o'clock, in company with Superintendent Steen and Inspector Buckley, and in the sitting room upstairs found the nine pieces of print produced. When he pulled the bed hangings produced out of the drawer, Mrs Robinson came into the room and said, "You don't need to take them, for they have not come from where the others have", pointing to the pieces number eleven and nine. The same afternoon, he went to Agden with Inspector Buckley, and there Gibbons was taken into

custody. The same night, at a quarter past eleven, he went to Robinson's house, and charged him on suspicion of stealing a large quantity of prints found in his house that day. He said, "You don't need to talk to me about them, for I don't know anything about them".

James Steen said he was superintendent of the police at Runcorn, and from information he received on the morning of the 30th July, he obtained a search warrant to search the house of the prisoner Robinson. He went there with the two last witnesses. Shortly after they had got there, he told the wife of Gibbons to remain in the kitchen where she was. He went away for a few minutes, and on his return found the woman had gone. He saw her going home and followed her, and on searching the house, found over 20 of the pieces of the drapery produced, including numbers one to four inclusive, which have been identified. They also include Nos 5.6.7 and 8, which have also been identified. On the 25th July, he apprehended the prisoner Mary Robinson, and charged her with receiving calico prints found in her house on the 20th July, well knowing them to have been stolen. She said, "I think it is a trap that has been set for me. A man did leave, early one morning, some of the things in the house on the table, and after he had gone I removed them away. I don't know the man". On the 27th July, in company with Inspector Buckley, he arrested Potter and Slater ; and in the Runcorn Police Station, in consequence of what Gibbons had said, he confronted him in the Petty Sessions Room with them, and he said he wanted to give a full account of the whole of the goods, how he came in possession of them, and who he bought them from. He (witness) directed Inspector Buckley to get a piece of paper and write down all that he said, and he did so ; and the report he had read was what he then took down and what Gibbons said. Mr Cobbett asked for a remand for a week, and it was granted. Mr Bent asked for the prisoners to be admitted to bail, but it was refused, except in the case of Mrs Robinson, who was admitted to bail in the sum of £200 ; and the four male prisoners were committed for safe keeping to Chester Castle.

The Court rose shortly after five o'clock.

11 29 August 1877

THE CANAL BOATS ACT This Act comes into operation on the 1st of January next, but will not be enforced before January 1879. All canal boats, barges or flats must then be registered, and numbered in a prominent place by their owners, stating to which place the boat is registered as belonging to, before they can be used as dwellings. Certificates of registration, fixing the number of persons allowed to dwell in a canal boat, barge or flat, will be obtainable of the officer of registration, for which a small fee will be charged. The boats will not be allowed to carry about infectious diseases, and provision will have to be made by the owner for proper ventilation and the separation of the sexes, and the boats will have frequently to be thoroughly cleaned, painted and rendered habitable. Any person duly authorised by the proper authorities will have power to enter these boats and detain them until all the law requires is carried out, and the master of the boat shall, if requested by the officer, produce to him the certificate of his registry. Children living in a canal boat, barge or flat are to be subject to the compulsory clauses of the Education Act, which are in force at the place in which the boat is registered as belonging to, and they will be treated in every respect as children of other working classes are, and not thrust into a corner without questions being put to them, as has been the case in some instances hitherto. Power has been given to canal companies or associations to appropriate any portions of their funds for the establishment or maintenance of schools wherein the children living in canal boats may be lodged, maintained and educated. The master and also the owner of a canal boat, barge or flat shall each be liable to a fine of 20s for each time the boat is used as a dwelling, contrary to what the Act requires. Any person obstructing an officer in the performance of his duty shall be liable to a fine of 40s. The master of any canal boat, barge or flat shall be liable to a fine of 40s if he illegally detains the certificate of registry of such boats, part of such fine may be paid to the person injured by the detention of such certificate. The Act does not extend to Ireland or Scotland.

12 12 September 1877

FATAL FALL NEAR WEDNESBURY An accident of a shocking nature occurred at Wyrley near

Wednesbury on Saturday to a boatman named **Palmer**. Whilst crossing some fields in the evening, he missed his way and fell into a deep clay pit. A companion made search for him, but he was not found until the following morning. He was shockingly injured, and shortly afterwards expired.

13 15 September 1877

THE RECENT DEATH BY DROWNING IN THE DEE

EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE The adjourned inquest touching the circumstances attending the death of George Spruce, cattle dealer, 56 years of age, residing at Alvaney, was held on Wednesday evening, before Mr Tatlock, Coroner for the city of Chester. It will be remembered that on the former occasion, Thomas Spruce, butcher, Kingsley near Frodsham, son of deceased, identified the remains as those of his father, and last saw him alive in Chester cattle fair, where he had bought 8 or 10 cows and sold them again, but did not know how much he had received for them. When he last saw him, he was bargaining with a man named Thomas Hart for a pony. He (deceased) had £3 10s on him. He had either a purse or a pocket book and a knife. He believed deceased was sober at that time. William Warburton, butcher, Kingsley, also deposed that he and deceased were in partnership, and that they sold eleven cattle. At first, each received a portion of the money, but eventually deceased handed his over to witness, keeping £3 10s and a few coppers. Witness tried to persuade deceased not to buy the pony of Hart, as he knew it to be a "kicker". He and Hart went away together. Robert Woodfin, miller, Dee Mills, deposed to finding the body near the grating of the Dee Mills ; and a boatman named **Ainsworth** got the body out and took it to the Workhouse. The Chief Constable here applied for a remand in order that a *post mortem* examination might be made, and the case was accordingly adjourned until Wednesday.

WEDNESDAY'S PROCEEDINGS Dr Haining was the first witness, and deposed that he made the *post mortem* examination, and discovered no external marks of violence. Upon examining the chest, he found the passages filled with fluid. The lungs were very much congested. The left cartilages of the heart were empty, but the right were filled with a coloured fluid. The stomach was much distended, but there was no solid matter in it. The brain was very much congested, but no marks of extravasation upon it. There was not more than the usual amount of fluid in the ventricles. Undoubtedly deceased died from drowning, and there was nothing to lead him (witness) to suppose that any violence had been used towards him. He had breathed after he had been in the water. His stomach smelt strongly of whisky.

Thomas Hart, Stockton Heath, near Warrington, horse dealer, said : I knew the deceased, George Spruce, very well. I was at Chester fair on Thursday last, and sold deceased a horse for £6. He gave me 30s on account, and I was to take the horse to a public house next day and receive the balance. I received the 30s from him in a public house. I saw him again at about eight o'clock at night, going down to the pig market. I spoke to him, and we went (five of us) together to a public house to have a drop of beer. I was going to Flookersbrook. A man named Bold was with us, and he had 17 colts of his own. Spruce left us and went the other way up the street. We had only a quart of beer, and Spruce might have had a couple of "tots". Our party slept in the colt carts. When we left the public house door (somewhere near the pig market) was the last time I saw deceased. Deceased was then flush in drink. I saw Thomas Spruce at Bromley's on the following day, when he paid me for a horse. He asked me if I had seen anything of his father, and I told him I had sold him a grey pony. He told me he was going to Chester, and would look for his father. By Thomas Spruce : You asked me where I had left your father. I said I did not know where I had left him. I wanted to sell him a grey pony. I did not ask him £5 for it. I did ask you £14 for a pony I afterwards sold for £6. I told you I had sold one to your father. By the Chief Constable : I paid for the quart of ale at the last place we went to. Deceased paid for nothing there. I have known George Spruce (deceased) 10 or 12 years. I have met him, and he has been at our house at Stockton Heath, where we were on the spree together for about a week.

Samuel Thomas, 8 Liver Street, said that on the day in question he was going towards the bowling green, and met deceased on Cow Lane Bridge. He said, "That glass of beer is a long time in coming". He said, "Well go and have one", and he gave me three half pence to pay for it. He did

not go with me to the public house, as he wanted to go into the market. Saw him again at about half past nine o'clock on Cow Lane Bridge, and said, "It is time you were at home". He was in company with a woman, and they were talking together. Witness thought he was fresh in drink.

George Henshall, Sproston Green near Middlewich, said that on the evening in question, deceased came to him in the fair and asked him if he had seen a certain horse. Witness said he had seen Hart and the horse going down Foregate Street. Spruce said, "I have bought a pony from him, and he has gone away with the pony and the money". Spruce then left witness. He was sober then. After that, witness met Thomas Hart in Foregate Street in a liquor vaults, and heard him make a remark to the effect that he would "have it in" for someone.

Joseph Johnson, carter, said that at about seven o'clock on Thursday evening, he met deceased in Foregate Street. He appeared to witness as if he had had a glass or two to drink, but he could keep up with witness. He said, "Have you seen Tom Hart?" Witness said, "Yes, he is gone down yonder". He said he had bought a pony from him, and he wanted it. They met the last witness, who told them Hart and his horse were on the road before. They went down Foregate Street and overtook them in about 200 yards. Tom Hart senior was there as well as Tom Hart junior. Spruce said to Tom Hart, "Give us that horse which I bought of you". Hart made no answer, and the same words were repeated. Witness then said to young Hart, "What is this all between you?" Hart said, "He bought of me an old rough grey pony, and wants to have this". Hart and his father then went away. Witness and Spruce followed them and overtook them again about the corner of City Road. Witness left Spruce in their company, and he went to the railway station.

It will be remembered that when deceased was last seen he had a coat on, and when he was found in the river he had neither coat, purse nor money, neither of which has been traced.

The Coroner thought there was sufficient evidence to justify another remand, and the enquiry was accordingly adjourned for a fortnight, at the Town Hall at three o'clock.

14 19 September 1877

TEA PARTY AND PRESENTATION AT RUNCORN On Friday evening last, the teachers and a few of their friends connected with the Runcorn Branch of the Mersey Mission to Seamen were entertained to an excellent tea in the Mission Room, Runcorn, by Mr Beddows, the local resident agent of the Bridgewater Navigation Company. The room was tastefully decorated for the occasion, with flags, banners and Scripture notices. After tea had been partaken of and the tables cleared, a meeting was held under the presidency of Mr Beddows. The proceedings commenced with the singing of the hymn "I will guide thee with mine eye", after which the Rev A Anderson engaged in prayer.

The Chairman said it gave him great pleasure to be present on that interesting occasion. With regard to the teachers and kind friends who had assisted in the work of the mission, a debt was due to them which they were unable to pay. He said that, not only in his official capacity as agent of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, but as the representative of the boatmen and seamen who frequented that port. Two years ago, two or three gentlemen asked the Board at Liverpool to send a reader to Runcorn. At the same time, Mr E L Williams, the general manager of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, and the Directors being consulted, they offered the room in which they then met, free of charge, for the purpose of the mission. A gentleman also said to him they would not be able to carry on the work without certain expenses which would have to be met, and he offered to give him £10 for that purpose. (Applause). He (Mr Beddows) said he would not take that sum from him, but would take £5, which the gentleman gave him, and said if more was wanted he must come to him again and he should have it. A reader or missionary, in the person of Mr Shaw, was appointed. He had, as they all knew, worked hard and well, and the work had gone on prosperously under him ; and it had been proposed, as a recognition of his services, that they should present him with the books which lay on the table before him, and as a token of their esteem and regard. He concluded by calling upon Miss F Cropper to make the presentation. (Applause).

Miss F Cropper said in the name of the teachers and friends of the school, she had great pleasure in asking Mr Shaw, the head of the mission, to accept their present of books, as a small token of the

regard entertained towards him by all the subscribers ; and in their name she also begged to express very sincerely the hope that he might be long spared to carry on and superintend the work amongst seamen and boatmen, in which they found it a pleasure to be engaged with him.

The books were then handed to Mr Shaw. They were Canon Farrar's "Life of Christ" in two volumes, Cassell's "Biblical Educator" in two volumes, and "The Land and the Book". Each of the books bore a suitable inscription, and on the flyleaf of the latter was the following inscription, beautifully illustrated : "Presented to Mr William Shaw by the teachers and friends interested in the Runcorn Branch of the Mersey Mission, as an expression of esteem and regard for his devoted services among the seafaring and boat people, and in the cause of Christ at large. Runcorn, September 1877".

Mr Shaw said the gift was totally unexpected by him, and he thanked the teachers and friends most heartily for it. He also begged to tender them his sincere thanks for the kind assistance which they had from time to time given him in carrying on the work of the mission. And he also felt deeply gratified to their Chairman for his kindness in various ways. Mr Beddows had always been ready to help him in the work he had in hand, and his assistance both pecuniary and otherwise had been most valuable. He then gave some interesting details of the work in which he had, during the past two years, been engaged in Runcorn, and the happy results which had in many instances accrued therefrom. He concluded by again thanking the teachers and friends for the valuable aid which they had rendered him. (Applause).

Addresses were subsequently delivered by the Rev A Anderson, Messrs C Garrard, Timothy Simister, W Quail and B Kniveton, after which a vote of thanks on the motion of Mr W Shaw, junior, seconded by Mr West, was accorded to the Chairman for the kindly manner in which he had entertained them to tea and also presided over the meeting.

The Chairman briefly acknowledged the compliment, after which the hymn "What a friend we have in Jesus!" was sung ; and the offering of prayer by Mr Simister brought the proceedings to a close.

15 22 September 1877

A MAN DROWNED AT RUNCORN On Tuesday last, an inquest was held before Mr Worsley, Deputy Coroner, at the Navigation Inn, on the body of George Shingler, a wheelwright aged 51 years, who was drowned in the Bridgewater Canal near Delf Bridge at noon on the previous day. It appeared from the evidence that the deceased was a very intemperate man, and on Saturday night and Sunday he was on the spree. He left his lodgings in Mason Street about nine o'clock on Monday morning, and shortly afterwards called at the Navigation Inn and asked for a glass of ale, which was supplied to him, and for which he did not pay. He also asked Mrs Jackson, the landlady, to lend him sixpence, as he said he was going into the town. She lent him the money, and he went out, and returned about half past ten, and was supplied with a pint of ale, for which he did not pay. He subsequently asked Mrs Jackson to lend him a shilling, but she refused and told him to go home, as he had had drink enough. He shortly afterwards went out, and stood for half an hour or so on Delf Bridge ; after which Mrs Jackson saw him going down the steps and turn on the Canal Bank, and she saw him no more. He was not sober, but he was not drunk. Directly afterwards, a boy named **Henry Dobson**, son of **George Dobson**, waterman of Brick Kiln Houses, who was going from the direction of Runcorn towards his own home, saw the hands and head of a man above the water in the Bridgewater Canal, and called out to some men who were discharging a flat at Mr Timmins's foundry. They turned to look at him, but did not come to his assistance, and he then ran home and told his father what he had seen ; and they returned together to Delf Bridge, where they obtained a boat hook and in a short time recovered the body. Mr Frith, manager of the Gas Works, happened to be passing at the time and he, having had experience in the means used to restore persons apparently drowned, with the assistance of the men who were discharging the flat, and who said they had not understood the lad when he shouted that a man was drowning, commenced to use every effort to bring the deceased round. Their efforts were, however, unavailing, as life was extinct. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

RUNCORN COUNTY COURT

WAGSTAFF v SIMPSON, DAVIES AND SONS Mr Moore appeared for the plaintiff and Mr Linaker for the defendants. Mr Moore, in opening the case, said this was an action to recover from the defendants, who were coal and salt merchants and boat owners in Runcorn, the sum of £9 4s 9d, which was made up as follows :- For horse hire £3 5s 0d, for freight on 42 tons of pig iron £2 17s 9d, for loading 7s, and for back freight on 60 tons of coal £2 15s, making a total of £9 4s 9d, the amount sued for. He then detailed the facts of the case as he intended to prove them by evidence, and called **Thomas Wagstaff**, who said he was a boatman and the plaintiff in the present action. In June last he was in the employ of the defendants, Messrs Simpson, Davies and Sons, and had charge of two canal boats named the *Hope* and the *Eleanor*. When they engaged him, they put a chestnut horse to his debit £10, for which he was to pay 10s a trip off his freight until he had paid £16 for the horse. He made three trips, but the animal kicked and would not work, and he complained of it, when the defendants exchanged it for another horse, for which they debited him £4 more. He had paid £3 5s towards the horse, and he claimed that amount back, as they had taken the horse from him. On the 29th June last, he discharged a cargo of slack from the *Eleanor* and received orders from William Ridge, who was in the employ of the defendants, to load both his boats with pig iron. He could not discharge the other boat, the *Hope*, that day, as she was above the locks, but he discharged her the following day, and loaded both boats with pig iron, putting 21 tons in each, for Hollinwood, and got the permit produced from the Bridgewater Tonnage Office. He then went to the defendants' office for his notes, and on the way called at Hayward's stables, where his horse was, and told the ostler to feed the horse and get it ready, as his boats were loaded. He then went to the office of the defendants and saw Mr Beckett, who asked him if he was ready to start, and he replied that he was. He asked him if he was sure, and he said he was. Mr Beckett then asked him where the horse was put up, and he told him at Hayward's stables. Mr Humphreys, who was in the office and was in the employ of the defendants, put his hat on and went out and returned in a short time, and told him that he must get either Ridge or Higgins to take the stores off the boat. He then asked Mr Beckett what he was to have for loading, and he said, "Not a halfpenny". He saw him again on the following Monday and again asked him what he was to have for loading the boats, and he said that he would not allow him anything, and that if he did not get his things out in an hour he would put them out for him. No notice had been given on either side, and the rule was to give or receive a trip's notice. A man named **William Meek** took charge of the boats and returned with 64 tons of slack, for which he (plaintiff) claimed the sum of £2 15s as back freight. After he was dismissed from defendants' boats, he was out of work for a fortnight, and his average earnings would be during that period £6. That was the amount he generally got for a trip, which occupied a fortnight. Cross-examined by Mr Linaker : He was to pay £16 for the horse by instalments of 10s, and signed a paper to that effect. The last trip he took before he was discharged was to Rochdale, and previous to going, he received £4 on account. When there, he wrote to the defendants for orders and more money, although no money was due to him. They sent him the orders, but no money, and as he could not move in consequence of what he owed for the keep of his horse, he wrote to the defendants a second time, and they sent him 25s on the 16th June to release him and enable him to get back. He lost two or three days there, and through that a turn at the colliery. On arriving at Runcorn, he engaged to load pig iron, and Mr Higgins told him he would not give him any freight until he had earned it. He was afterwards told by Rudge to load his boats. On the Monday after, he asked for what he had earned and not for his freight, and told Mr Higgins that he was out of the boats and he must take possession of them. The horse was at that time in Mr Hayward's stable, and there was some money owing for its keep, which he believed had been paid by the defendants. Jonathan Pugh said he was ostler for Mr Hayward, and on the 30th June was told by the plaintiff to get the horse ready. A short time afterwards, Mr Humphreys came and asked him where the plaintiff's horse was. He showed it to him, and told him it had had a feed of corn, and there was some money owing. **Elizabeth Wagstaff** said she was the wife of the plaintiff, and when she went to Mr Higgins about the boats, he said he would not have anything to do with the matter,

and that those who had begun ought to end it, and he did not know what the defendant had discharged her husband for. William Hayward said he was the landlord of the Waterloo Hotel, and on the 30th June the plaintiff had his horse in one of his stables. On that day he saw Mr Humphreys, who asked him what was owing on the horse, and he said £2 6s 5d. He asked Mr Humphreys why they were discharging the plaintiff, as he always appeared to be a steady man ; and Mr Humphreys replied, "He is too steady for us". Mr Moore said that was his case. His Honour : You have produced no evidence as to custom. Mr Moore : I have not, your Honour, except the evidence given by the plaintiff. His Honour : But that is no proof of custom. What has Mr Linaker to say? Mr Linaker said in his opinion the plaintiff must be non suited. His Honour said there was no evidence on the part of the plaintiff as to custom, and nothing to show that there had been wrongful dismissal. He should therefore non suit him.

17 20 October 1877

CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

ROBBERY BY BOATMEN AT RUNCORN **Thomas Potter**, 28, boatman, was charged with stealing four pieces of print and four pieces of dhoties, the property of William Graham and others, at Runcorn on the 9th July ; and Joseph Robinson, **William Gibbons** and Mary Robinson with feloniously receiving the same. **William Slater** was charged with stealing five pieces of brown winsey, the property of David Hamilton and others, at Runcorn on the 14th July ; and Joseph Robinson, Mary Robinson and William Gibbons with feloniously receiving the same. The three last named persons were also charged with stealing and receiving 80 pounds weight of rope, the property of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, at Runcorn on the 20th July. Mr Swetenham was for the prosecution ; Mr Marshall appeared for Potter ; and Mr Higgins for the Robinsons. Mr Burke, manager of department for Messrs William Graham and Company, Manchester, shipping merchants, spoke of the prints in the first part of the charge ; and Mr Edward Cranswick, also in the employ of the same firm, to the dhoties. The correct shipment at Manchester was deposed to by David Gilgrass, in the employ of Thompson, McKay and Company. William Gibbons, captain of the flat *Mary Jane*, belonging to Robinson, and who had pleaded guilty, was called, and stated that he lived on the opposite side of the canal bank to Robinson. He remembered the night of the 19th July. He was not aware Hansford was watching. He came out of a beerhouse along with his brother, and went on board the flat. They brought out of the after cabin a bundle of dirty clothes, which he gave to his wife. He went afterwards to Robinson's beerhouse and took a bundle of clean clothes. He came back and then started to push his boat across the canal to his own house. He was taken into custody that day by Inspector Buckley, and shown some things which had been found in his house. He bought the prints produced from Thomas Potter in Runcorn. Potter's wife brought them, and he gave 48s for them. He also had three other pieces (dhoties) from Potter, and for these and others he gave 20s. Potter also gave him some pieces of print. He put the pieces down in the parlour in Robinson's house, and left them there. He had been lodging at Robinson's. He saw the other things which were found in Robinson's house. In reply to Mr Marshall, he said he paid the 48s in two sovereigns, and 5s in silver. He paid it in the lobby of the beerhouse, but he could not say the day or the month. Mrs Potter brought the prints. She had them tied up in a bundle handkerchief. In answer to Mr Higgins, he said he took the things to Mr Robinson's and left them there, but Mrs Robinson knew nothing about them. He took the first lot there about a month before his apprehension. By the Court : He had no idea what he was going to do with them. He had no use for them. Thomas Reece, a checker for Thompson, McKay and Company, said on the 7th July the flat *Ernest* was discharging in Morpeth Dock. The *Rudolph*, the *Corn Miller* and other flats were lying close to the *Ernest*. He then gave the numbers and marks of the cases discharged from the flats, as spoken to by the witness Gilgrass. In answer to Mr Marshall, he said the cases all appeared perfect. They were wooden cases hooped with iron hoops. Sergeant Handford stated that on the night of the 9th July he watched the flat *Mary Jane*, of which Gibbons was the master. He saw two men come out of Robinson's beerhouse and get on the flat. Gibbons was one of the men, and he went into the after cabin of the flat and came out again with a bundle across his shoulder,

which he took into Robinson's house. In a few minutes, he came out with a woman. The woman leaned over the wall, and Gibbons went on board the flat and came out again with another bundle, which he dropped over the wall to the woman, who took it up and carried it into Robinson's house. He (the sergeant) afterwards went with the superintendent and inspector and searched Robinson's house. Mrs Robinson, during the search, picked up a piece of brown stuff and said, "You needn't take that ; it didn't come from where the other came from". He afterwards took Gibbons and Robinson into custody. Robinson, on being charged, said, "You needn't talk to me about it. I know nothing about it". Inspector Buckley corroborated the last witness, and in reply to Mr Higgins, said he had known prisoner Robinson for some years. Gibbons was a son-in-law of Robinson, and frequented the house. Robinson had never been charged with anything of the kind before. Superintendent Steen was also called, and said he knew nothing against the prisoner Robinson. Mr Marshall and Mr Higgins for the defence contended that there were no goods proved to be missing, and as there were several boat loads, the captains of these ought to have been called to show whether or not there had been a correct delivery from their boats. The jury, after some deliberation, found Potter not guilty ; Mary Robinson guilty of receiving goods knowing them to have been stolen. The charge against Slater was withdrawn, and on the third indictment no evidence was offered. Mary Robinson was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment on the first charge and one day on the second ; and William Gibbons, twelve months on the first and one day on the second.

THEFT OF POTATOES AT DUTTON **Samuel Boaz**, on bail, and **John Oakley**, 49, boatmen, pleaded not guilty to stealing one hamper and 72 pounds weight of potatoes, the property of Annie Reed, at Dutton, on the 15th August 1877 ; **James Kinson**, 34, and **Edward Jones**, 19, both boatmen, pleaded guilty to the same charge. Mr Burke Wood appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Marshall for the defence. The facts of the case were as follows. Mrs Reed, a farmer living near Dutton, had a field adjoining the canal and in which was a potato hogg, and this had been left all right, as it was stated, on the night of the 14th August. Her manager, Joseph Withenshaw, would depose that the peculiar sort of potatoes grown by Mrs Reed were Wrenbury. A number of hampers were left by the side of the hogg, and next morning it was found to have been disturbed, and one of the hampers gone. He gave information to the police, and Superintendent Saxton of Nantwich was communicated with. In company with Sergeant Atherton, he went to the prisoner's boat at the Shropshire Union Canal Company's basin, and on searching it, Atherton found in the stern of the boat, covered with tarpaulin, a hamper which was marked with Mrs Reed's initial, and the potatoes were similar to those grown by Mrs Reed. When Superintendent Saxton asked what account they gave of the potatoes, Boaz said, "I bought them off **John Beech**, who keeps the tunnel end at Barnton". Boaz and the other two men were taken into custody. Beech afterwards said that on the day alleged, no boatmen purchased potatoes from him. They were taken to Runcorn, and when charged by Inspector Buckley, Boaz said he usually bought potatoes from Beech, but that he knew nothing about either the potatoes or the hamper. Evidence having been given in support of the case by Withenshaw, Sergeant Atherton, Superintendent Saxton, PC Kelly, Inspector Buckley and John Beech, Mr Marshall for the defence submitted that there was no evidence to connect the prisoners Boaz and Oakley with the charge, and that there was nothing to show that either of these two men knew anything of it. He called Kinson with a view to showing that he put the hamper on the boat, and that he did it without the knowledge of Boaz, who was leading the horse. **Mr Dawes**, one of the Shropshire Union Canal Company's inspectors, living at Chester, said he had known Boaz for 17 or 18 years, during which time he had been in the employ of the Company, and had always borne a good character. The Chairman having summed up, the jury, after a long deliberation, found them guilty, with a strong recommendation to mercy. They were each sentenced to three months with hard labour.

18 **31 October 1877**

A SAILOR DROWNED AT RUNCORN

A FLATMAN COMMITTED FOR MANSLAUGHTER An inquest was held on Saturday in the

Petty Sessions Room, Runcorn, before Mr Ridgway, Coroner, on view of the body of Nicholas Martin Stevens, mate on board the *Annie of Preston*, lying at Runcorn.

Mr Meadowcroft watched the proceedings on behalf of the Bridgewater Navigation Company.

James Dart said he was a seaman on board the schooner *Lizzie of St Agnes*, and knew the deceased, who was mate on the schooner *Annie of Preston*, now lying at Runcorn. He was 26 years old. On Friday night, witness and his shipmates were in the Clarendon Arms Inn, Church Street, and left at 11 o'clock. They then went up Bridgewater Street in the direction of the docks, and when near the Swing Bridge at Bottom Locks, he (witness) saw the deceased, also the prisoner Hughes, his wife and a lock tender. The lock tender said to him, "There is a drunken captain here ; I wish you would take him on board". Witness said, "Skipper, what ship do you belong to?" but the deceased did not speak ; and witness went over the swing bridge and was followed by the deceased, who came to him and said, "Is that you, Jim, I have been looking for you everywhere?" They then heard a row on the side from which they had come, and the deceased and witness went back over the bridge and found the prisoner and his wife having a dispute. The prisoner said to the lock tender, "What is the row?" and the lock tender replied, "There is no row, this woman has been insulting these men, who were going to their vessels quietly". The prisoner then said to his wife, "You have served me this trick before", and walked over the bridge. His wife followed him and commenced kicking him. The prisoner said, "If you do not go away, I will give it you", and the deceased said, "You would not strike a woman, would you?" The prisoner's wife then kicked her husband again, and said, "You would not strike a man, would you?" The prisoner said, "Yes ; I would strike five men", and took off his coat. He and his wife then went in the direction of their flat, which was in one of the locks. Deceased and witness followed them to the flat, and the deceased jumped on board as the prisoner's wife was crying, "Murder". Deceased, the prisoner, his wife and the captain of the flat were all scuffling on the hatches, and one of witness's mates said, "Jim, you had better fetch Nicky away, or they'll turn on him". He (witness) jumped on board and got hold of the deceased's arm to take him away. The prisoner then came and said to the deceased, "I will serve you the same", and struck him, and both the deceased and witness were knocked into the water. He (witness) swam a little, and was rescued in a very exhausted condition. The deceased, when got out of the water, was carried into a hut and restoratives applied, but he was dead. The prisoner made no effort to rescue deceased, but went away. He (witness) heard William Morris, a sailor, say to the prisoner, "You have done a fine job now, you have drowned one man and nearly two", and the prisoner replied, "I should not care if the pair of them were drowned". Witness and his friends were sober, and the deceased seemed sober.

Joseph Deakin said he was a lock tender in the employ of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, and on the previous night he was on duty at No 9 and No 10 locks, just below the swing bridge. Some little after 11 o'clock, he saw the deceased scuffling along with some others on the hatches of the prisoner's flat, when the prisoner struck someone who was on board, and two men fell into the water. He saw the deceased taken out of the water in about 10 minutes afterwards, and he was taken into the lumper's hut and restoratives applied, but he was dead. He (witness) did not say, "There is a drunken captain here". There was another lock tender a little higher up the locks.

William Morris said he was a seaman on board the schooner *Mary of St Agnes*, lying in Runcorn. On the previous night, he was in company with the first witness, and was with him when they saw deceased standing between two women, one of whom was the prisoner's wife. The prisoner's wife spoke to a companion of his named Rogers and told him to go away. Rogers said he had as much right there as she had, and her husband came and said, "You have got me into many rows before", and laid hold of her. He took her half way across the swing bridge and let her go. The prisoner then went alongside his flat, called the *Dee*, and his wife followed him and commenced kicking him, and also took off his hat and threw it into the lock. She then ran away, but the prisoner followed her and caught her under the bridge, brought her to the flat and threw her on the deck, and said, "I will do for you tonight". The prisoner's wife called out, "Murder", and the deceased jumped on board. The prisoner then left his wife and turned on deceased, and said, "I will serve you the same". He (witness) then told James Dart to jump on board, and he did so and took the deceased by

the arm. The prisoner then took off his coat, and before the deceased and the first witness could get ashore, struck deceased twice somewhere about the head, who fell into the water along with Dart. He (witness) was the first that got hold of Dart and afterwards helped to restore him. When witness saw that the deceased was dead, he said to the prisoner, "You have done a fine thing now; you have drowned one poor fellow, and nearly two, by striking them into the water". He replied, "I don't care if the pair of them were drowned", and then went away. The prisoner did not assist in getting the deceased and Dart out of the water. The night was tolerably light, but cloudy. He was sure it was the prisoner who struck the deceased, as he was only six or seven feet away. Two other men followed Dart on to the flat, but he did not see them touch the prisoner before he struck the deceased.

Edward Lowrey said he was a seaman on board the *Lizzie of St Agnes*, lying at Runcorn. On the previous night, he was on the swing bridge at Bottom Locks, when he heard a splashing in the locks near to the bridge. He ran to the spot, got hold of a boat hook and put it into the water. The deceased got hold of it, and witness (handing the boat hook to another man) jumped on the flat and put out his hand to the deceased, who got hold of two of his fingers, but he let go his hold and sank before he could render further assistance. Witness then searched for him with a boat hook, but it was some 15 minutes before he was got out of the water. He heard the previous witness say to the prisoner, "You have done a fine job now, you have drowned one man and nearly two", and the prisoner said he did not care if both of them were drowned.

Stephen Lowrey, brother of the previous witness, and John Connolly, also gave corroborative evidence.

Thomas Harrison said he was a lock tender in the employ of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, and on the previous night he was on duty at the lock near to the swing bridge. The deceased was near to his hut and, as he thought he was drunk, he asked some sailors to take him down to his ship. He afterwards heard a scuffle and went over the bridge, and saw them endeavouring to get someone out of the water.

PC Arden said at half past twelve that morning, he went down to the locks in company with PC Kelly, to the hut where deceased was lying. He then went to the prisoner on his flat, which was in the Tidal Basin. He took the prisoner ashore, and again went to the hut, and the prisoner said, "Five men came on board our flat, and (putting himself in a fighting position), I let one have it and then another". The prisoner then struck the bench on which the deceased lay, and said, "I could do a dozen such men". He then took him to the Police Station.

PC Kelly corroborated this statement.

Finlay McDougall said he was a duly qualified medical practitioner residing at Runcorn. He had externally examined the body of the deceased, which was that of a well developed man. Rigidity after death was well marked, and there was a frothy mucus mixed with blood emanating from the mouth and nostrils. The left eyebrow and eyelid were much more swollen than the right, and appeared discoloured. This discolouration appeared to have been produced before death. There was a slight scratch on the left cheek, but, so far as he could see by candlelight, there were no other marks of violence on the body. He should say drowning was the cause of death.

James Rothwell, who was called on behalf of the prisoner, said he was the captain of the Bridgewater Navigation Company's flat *Dee*. On the previous night, he was in Marsh's public house along with the prisoner, his wife and the deceased, and they all conversed and were friendly together. He (witness), the prisoner and his wife left the house in consequence of a message which was brought to them respecting their flat, and was followed by the deceased, who accompanied them as they worked the flat down the locks. When they got to the bottom lock but one, Hughes and his wife had some words, which he (witness) did not hear. He started to draw the paddle of the lock, and five or six men got on board the flat. The prisoner's wife shouted, "Oh, Jim, they are killing him!" and he then got on board the flat and shoved two men sideways. He then heard that a man was overboard, and tried to get him out. He did not see the prisoner try to get the deceased out of the water. When the constable came to the hut, he (witness) said, "I know nothing about it; it was my mate that has done it".

The Coroner then addressed the jury, and said they had to consider how the deceased came by his death, whether it was the result of an accident, whether it was the act of the deceased, or whether it was the act of some other person. The evidence, though lengthy, was simple. A dispute had taken place between the prisoner and his wife, and the deceased and his companions heard the woman call out, "Murder". The deceased then appeared, along with another man, to have jumped on the flat to protect the woman from her husband, and certain others jumped on also. It was there that any discrepancy, if at all, arose in the evidence given by Rothwell and the other witnesses. The evidence seemed to prove that there was no provocation, but that Hughes, in a moment of passion, knocked the deceased into the water. It was for the jury to decide whether it was a case of murder or manslaughter, for it did not seem to be one of accident. The distinction between murder and manslaughter was, in murder there was malice aforethought, and manslaughter was what was done in the heat of the moment. If they thought that Hughes simply intended to knock him down, they must find him guilty of manslaughter. It was for them to decide.

The jury then retired, and after an absence of 20 minutes returned a verdict of manslaughter against the prisoner ; and the Coroner committed him to take his trial upon that charge at the ensuing Chester Assizes.

At the close of the inquest, Mr Coleburn, one of the jurors, called the attention of the Coroner to the great need there was of a mortuary in the town, in which the bodies of persons like the deceased could be decently laid out, instead of being in stables and other kinds of outbuildings, as was very often the case.

The Coroner thanked Mr Coleburn for his remarks, and said he entirely agreed with him as to a mortuary being much needed. The matter had, he said, been previously mooted, and he had also had some correspondence on the subject, but nothing had been done in the matter by the proper authority to do it.

19 22 December 1877

WARRINGTON COUNTY COURT

FOSTER v **ATHERTON** This was a judgement summons of rather an unusual character. The plaintiff is a maiden lady, and the defendant a boatman living at Sankey Bridge. Mr Nicholson appeared for the plaintiff, and explained that the debt amounted to £50. He asked that an order should be made upon the defendant for the payment of £1 a week, and adduced evidence to show that he was in receipt of nearly £3 a week, being captain of a flat. Mr Moore (who took the case on behalf of Mr Bretherton) urged that his client had a large family to maintain out of earnings which did not average more than 24s per week. He suggested an order for 10s per month. Mr Nicholson, after a consultation with his client, said she was willing to accept 10s per week. The Judge : I was about to suggest 15s ; but if Miss Foster is willing to take 10s, that of course settles the matter. As the defendant and his wife left the court, the latter inveighed loudly against the "cruelty" (as she was pleased to call it) of Miss Foster ; and she had ultimately to be ordered out.

20 29 December 1877

INQUEST AT KNUTSFORD On Monday, Mr Dunstan held an inquest at the Sexton's House, Knutsford, on the body of **Timothy Bailey**, who died in the House of Correction. John Ward, hospital warder at the prison, said the deceased was a prisoner convicted at the last October Sessions for felony and sentenced to six months' and one day's hard labour. He was received into prison on the 14th August for trial from Sandbach, and on the 8th October he was placed under medical treatment for an ulcerated leg. After that he was treated for dyspepsia. As he became much worse, he was ordered to remain in the hospital, where he died on the 21st inst. He was a canal boatman and (82?/32?) years of age. Mr Sutcliffe, the prison surgeon, stated that the cause of death was typhoid fever not fully developed, hastened by bronchitis. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that death was the result of natural causes.

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21 12 October 1889

MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL The storm at the commencement of the week has had the effect of hampering the work of the proposed canal at Runcorn, and it will be a week or so before things will resume their past activity.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GALE AND TIDE That portion of the Manchester Ship Canal extending from Eastham to Ince Lighthouse, about six miles, includes several points where portions of the foreshore of the Mersey are covered by ordinary tides, and these positions are in process of being cut off from the river by new embankments. Upon these at several points the tide, lashed into fury by Monday's gale, played with disastrous effect, especially in the easterly portion of the Ince section, whereby the sweep of the tide had fullest play. Immediately to the westward of the old Ince Lighthouse, the canal takes in the first portion of the river bed, and from this point for fully a mile down to the point where the Gowy river is being taken by means of a syphon under the canal, the havoc caused is almost continuous. At two or three points, the water has effected breaches in the outer embankments and flooded the cuttings inside. On these embankments, rails have been laid for the conveyance of stone for the outer facing. These rails have been torn up or undermined, and wagons overthrown. A little further, and where the embankment had not been made and the tide came in with full force, it reached the main line of the rails communicating with the other sections, and for almost 20 yards this is washed out and thrown out of place, and a considerable space flooded. A little further still, a deep cutting of about 100 yards in length is protected by an outer embankment. In this a huge breach has been made, and the cutting completely flooded. Two steam excavators in it are now standing in about 15 ft to 20 ft of water. At the Gowy syphon cutting, there was a considerable, though not serious, influx of water, which a little extra pumping will overcome. At the eastern extremity of this section one of the machines has been overthrown. The important Eastham section, which includes an embankment similar to those described, of fully a mile in length, has fortunately escaped disaster, but the escape was an exceedingly narrow one. At two points, had the water broken in, it would have submerged the work for a mile and a half, including the Eastham Locks. At about the period of high tide there was a scene of great excitement. Water reached nearly to the top of the embankment, and at one point where a shoot carrying the water from a small brook passes over the cutting and through the embankment at about 2ft or 3 ft from the top, the tidal water began to trickle through. A strong gang of men with a string of waggons were ready for the emergency ; but the crisis passed. This embankment is formed mainly of red sandstone rubble from the adjoining Pool Hall cutting, whilst those at Ince are mainly of clay and clayed loam. At a few points the caving of the outer face of the Ince embankments with strong (? rent-and-tone) blocks has been commenced, at it should be stated that at these points, even where the stress was greatest, they stood the test remarkably well. Monday morning's tide (...) the table should have been 17 feet, but the gale carried it to over 21 feet. The night's tide by then was two feet higher, but the gale having moderated, less anxiety was felt.

PROGRESS OF THE WORK At the end of the second season's operations on the Manchester Ship Canal – for though some work proceeds through the winter it is of necessity much curtailed – an inspection shows that on most of the eight or nine sections into which the whole length is divided, substantial progress has been made. This is especially marked in regard to the two end sections – Eastham and Manchester. The volume of work still remaining to be done in both is enormous, but in relation to the whole, the advancement is substantial. At Eastham the work of preparing the foundations to the locks, where the canal debouches into the Mersey, is being rapidly carried on. The granite blocks for copings, river wall facings &c are stored in huge piles, and something like an idea of the general design can now be formed. Further inland, over the remainder of the Eastham and the whole of the Ince, or No 2, section, the canal line takes in considerable portions of the bed of the Mersey, and the outside embankments are being actively made, and the riverward sides faced with strong rubble walling. Frodsham section, which is one of the earliest to excavate and presents the fewest engineering difficulties, is in a forward state ; and on this and several other detached cuttings the work of lining the slopes of the canal with red sandstone rubble facings is in active progress. Runcorn section is the most backward, for with the exception of a start having been made

with the Weaver sluices at the one extremity, and a short cutting at the other, under which the Liverpool water pipe line from Vyrnwy is being carried, practically nothing has been done. This is the more surprising seeing that the engineering difficulties to be encountered on this section are probably the most serious on the whole line, the canal having to be carried for two or three miles in the existing bed of the river. The locks at Irlam, Barton and Throstle Nest are now scenes of great activity and indeed, the great bulk of the labour on the different sections now seems to be concentrated upon them. At Barton, where the Ship Canal cuts the Bridgewater Canal and an important highway, the demolition of buildings, including the Catholic schools and the entrance lodge to Sir Humphrey de Trafford's park, which stand in the line of the canal, is now in progress, but the solution of the intricate engineering problem here to be encountered is not yet commenced. The work at the Manchester and Salford Docks is fairly well advanced, but in the excavation of the great (...) much remains to be done. With barely one half of the excavation yet completed, and with the constructive works – which will, of course, be by far the most protracted – scarcely commenced, it is probable that by this time the engineers have considerably modified their views as to the date at which the canal will be opened for traffic.

THE MOORE SECTION The canal has this week had very much the appearance of a completed work. The heavy rainfall on Sunday night and Monday partially filled the cuttings and seemingly anticipated the accomplishment of Mr Walker's great undertaking. Between Moore and Acton Grange, the cutting was filled by a large body of water, the depth in some places being not inconsiderable. In this part of the section, the work is in a very advanced state, a condition of things clearly indicated by the white line drawn along the smooth solid rock on each side of the waterway – a line which, little more than two years hence, will form the water level of the canal. Incessant pumping has already sensibly diminished the volume of water in the workings, and should the rain keep off for a little while, the cutting will soon be freed from surplus fluid. At Lower Walton the storm had the effect of destroying the temporary channel into which the mill stream had been diverted, and the brook flowed into the canal cutting, flooding the works. The breach made by the river at Arpley was reported in Wednesday's *Guardian*. The French excavator, which has been making the new river bed there, having fulfilled its mission, is now in process of dismemberment preparatory to resuming operations at another part of the works. Its destination is said to be Tom Paine's Bridge, or thereabouts.

22 16 October 1889

CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

PLEADED GUILTY **William Gibson**, 21, waterman, for, on the 16th August having assaulted Ellen Adams, under twelve years of age, three months.

23 27 November 1889

DARES BURY PETTY SESSIONS

CRUELTY CASES **William Peacocke**, a boatman, was summoned for having on the 15th November at Preston o' th' Hill, ill-treated a horse by working it whilst in an unfit state. Constable Jackson proved the case. The horse was drawing two boats on the canal, and was suffering from a wound 2 1/2 in by 2 in on the off shoulder. The collar was pressing against it, and the animal appeared to be in great pain. Matter was running down one of the horse's legs. Defendant, who said he had been told by a veterinary surgeon that he “might work the animal quietly”, was fined 10s and costs.

Edward Hewitt, a boatman, charged with a similar offence at Bartington on the 12th November, was fined 5s and the costs.

THE CANAL BOAT ACT **Samuel Hodgkinson** was charged with a breach of the Canal Boat Act on the 9th November, his boat (No 449), which was used as a sleeping place, containing a female over the age of 12 years, the same not being his wife. Mr Farrington, inspector of nuisances, stated the facts of the case. The boat was on the Bridgewater Canal.

A similar charge was preferred against **James Barlow** and **John Postles**, and each case was proved by Mr Farrington.

These being the first cases of the kind which had been brought under the notice of the Bench, each defendant was fined a shilling and costs.

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24 7 January 1903

THE SALE DROWNING MYSTERY

CHARGE OF WILFUL MURDER

ARREST OF AN ALTRINCHAM YOUNG WOMAN

SENSATIONAL AFFAIR It is believed that, at length, a clue has been found to the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of a girl aged six years, whose body was found in the Bridgewater Canal at Sale on the morning of the 25th April last. The body, which was found by a boatman named **Thomas Rigby**, of the flat *Willie* of Runcorn, was taken to the mortuary at Brooklands Cemetery, and on the following Monday morning an inquest was held by Mr Yates, the county coroner. The evidence of Dr Adolph Benschaw, who had been instructed to make a *post mortem* examination, was to the effect that the cause of death was drowning, and the doctor further stated that the child, who was apparently about six years of age, appeared to have been in the water about two days. A quantity of sago was found in the stomach, and the opinion expressed by the doctor was that this could only have been eaten about four hours before death occurred. There were one or two articles of underclothing on the body, and on the feet were a pair of slippers. A gash on the head had evidently been caused by the propeller of a steamer after death. There was nothing by which the child could be identified, and as no person came forward to claim the body, an open verdict was returned, and the case was included in the long list of unsolved canal mysteries. The police, however, as is usual, carefully preserved the articles of clothing found on the body as well as a photograph. Nothing more was heard of the affair until Friday night last, when a man named Joseph Wyatt, 12 Lower George Street, visited the police station at Sale, and disclosed certain information, upon which it was deemed necessary to act without further delay. It appeared that in November 1891(*sic*) Wyatt and his wife, who were then living in Altrincham, agreed, at the earnest solicitation of a young woman named Caroline Hurst Holt, to take charge of a child belonging to her named Jessie, which was at that time nearly six years of age. She promised to pay a sum of 3s weekly for its maintenance, and on that condition it was brought to the home of Mr and Mrs Wyatt by Mrs Jones, Palmer Street, Sale, who was a friend of Holt's. The child remained with the Wyatts until Wednesday afternoon, April 23rd. At that time, Holt was five weeks in arrears with her payments, and Mrs Wyatt determined to go to the mother at Sale and find out her intentions as to the child's future. She took the child with her, and saw its mother at a house in Hyde Grove, Sale, where Holt was then lodging. As she could not obtain anything satisfactory, she left the child with the mother. From that time, nothing appears to have been seen of the child. When questioned as to its whereabouts, Holt always said that she had placed it in a home. She asserted that the child had been placed in the Sale Girls' Training Home in Chapel Road, and when one of her friends expressed her intention of going to the home to make it a present of a doll, she represented that it had been transferred to Manchester, and that it could not be seen. Last Friday night, Mrs Jones, whose brother had been keeping company with Holt, visited Mrs Wyatt at her home in Lower George Street, Altrincham, and their conversation naturally turned upon "Carrie's child". Mrs Jones confessed that it was a complete mystery to her. Both women, as a matter of fact, said it was very strange that nothing had been seen or heard of the child, upon which the husband of Mrs Wyatt said he would go to the Sale Girls' Training Home to make personal inquiries as to whether the child had been placed there. He carried out his intention, with the result that he was informed that Holt had not entrusted the child to the care of the home. He then went to the Police Station, and was shown the photograph of the child whose body was recovered from the canal in April. He at once identified it as that of Jessie Holt, the daughter of Caroline Hurst Holt. On Saturday, Sergeant

Millington took the photograph to Altrincham, and it was also identified by Mrs Wyatt, who further recognised the articles of clothing as those which the child was wearing on the 23rd April, when she took it to the mother at Sale. On this evidence, Sergeant Millington arrested the young woman Holt the same night at the house of Mrs Jones, Palmer Street, Sale. The accused had just entered the house and wished them "A Happy New Year", adding, "Will it be a gill?", when Sergeant Millington took her into custody. At the Police Station, a charge of wilful murder was preferred against her.

The prisoner is a young woman of 26. She is the daughter of William Hurst, a journeyman tailor, formerly living at Tamworth. Her mother died at her birth, and the infant was placed in the care of her grandmother, who was then living in Manchester. When a year old, she was adopted by Mr and Mrs Samuel Holt, who now carry on the business of newsagents in Church Street, Altrincham. Mr and Mrs Holt gave the child their own name, and she lived with them as their own child until about seven years ago. She then left her home, and got her own living by charring and working in the fields. Soon after the disappearance of the girl Jessie in April last, she gave birth to a boy, who is still living in Sale. Two other children of which she was also the mother are dead. About three years ago, Holt left the Workhouse at Knutsford after her confinement, and for some time made her home with two children with Mr and Mrs Wyatt, who were then living in Egerton Street, Sale. They befriended her until they were compelled to leave Sale for Weston, and saw nothing more of her until November 1901, when the child Jessie was brought to them.

The fact that the prisoner was to be brought up at the Altrincham Petty Sessions on Monday morning seems to have been well known, and there was a crowded court. Only sufficient evidence for the purposes of a remand was taken in order that the Public Prosecutor may be communicated with.

After the hearing of the case, the accused was removed to Knutsford. A large crowd gathered at the railway station to see her departure in charge of the police.

POLICE COURT PROCEEDINGS At the Altrincham Petty Sessions on Monday, before Mr J K Bradbury (in the chair) and other magistrates, a young woman named Caroline Hurst Holt of Sale was charged with the wilful murder, on or about April 23rd 1902, of her illegitimate child, Jessie, a girl aged six, whose body was recovered from the Bridgewater Canal at Sale last April.

The courtroom was crowded.

In a deposition which was read, Sergeant Millington stated that he was stationed at Sale, and on Saturday, from information received, he proceeded to Altrincham and obtained a photograph of the child alleged to have been murdered. He then went to George Street, Altrincham, to a Mrs Wyatt, for the purpose of ascertaining whether she could identify it as a photograph of the deceased child. He apprehended prisoner on Saturday night at a house occupied by Mrs Jones of Palmer Street, Sale. He took her to the Sale Police Station and charged her on suspicion of having caused the death of her child, Jessie Holt, whose body was taken from the Bridgewater Canal on the 25th April. Prisoner replied, "I couldn't do it". Witness then made further inquiries, and in about an hour and a half later, he charged her with the wilful murder of her child, Jessie Holt. In reply she said, "I was in trouble at the time, and didn't know what I was doing. I did not push her in at all, I didn't. I don't know what came over me. I must have been out of my mind. I felt very queer and let go her hand. I stopped there over an hour, and nobody came, not even a boatman. I could not find her anywhere. I thought she must be in the canal".

Mr Bradbury (to prisoner) : Have you any question to ask? Perhaps if I could advise you – it is a very serious thing – I should advise you at present not to say anything or ask any question. Will you take that advice?

Prisoner : Yes, sir.

Mr Bradbury : I think that is wise.

The evidence of Margaret Hannah Wyatt, wife of Joseph Wyatt, of 12 Lower George Street, Altrincham, was then read over. In this deposition, witness stated that she received the child in question to keep for prisoner twelve months last November, the understanding being that witness was to be paid 3s weekly for the child's support. Prisoner made payments to her for its support for

some time. Witness took the child to Sale to hand it over to its mother in April last. Prisoner was then five weeks in arrears with her payments, and she said she had no money and could not pay ; she had not been working. When prisoner handed over the child into the keeping of witness, the little girl was short of two teeth which had been broken off in the top jaw. Witness thought they were single teeth. The photograph produced was that of the child Jessie Holt, and the clothes and shoes produced were those which the child was wearing that day. Prisoner was remanded for eight days.

25 7 January 1903

SHOCKING DISCOVERY AT RUNCORN BODY FOUND IN A CANAL LOCK

INQUEST AND VERDICT An inquiry was conducted at the Runcorn Police Station on Friday morning by Mr R Dobson, district coroner, into the circumstances surrounding the death of Sylvanus Walker, a salt lofter, whose body was found in a lock of the Bridgewater Canal on Wednesday. Mr Byfield was foreman of the jury.

Sarah Walker, wife of Enoch Walker, 55 Percival's Lane, Runcorn, said deceased was her son. She last saw him alive at a quarter to eight on the night of December 6th. He came into the shop and she took him into the kitchen and told him to wait there while she brought some coal from the cellar. When she returned, he had gone. He had complained of pains in his head for two days. The doctor had seen him earlier the same evening, and told her to send for a bottle of medicine. She did so, but deceased had gone before it arrived. He was troubled in the same way about two years ago. What the complaint was exactly she could not state, but he had had a drop of drink. He, however, had none except at the end of the week. He followed his work up to Friday night. She reported his disappearance to the police. By the foreman : She did not think of reporting that he was missing the same evening. Her husband and son searched for him until between two and three o'clock on the following morning. By a juror (Mr Dutton) : The workmen told her he was strange in his manner on the Thursday night. She got up between three and four o'clock on the Friday morning to let him in from his work. He went to bed, but immediately his father had gone out, he came to her bedside wringing his hands. She told him to wrap himself up and take no notice. He then went back to bed. She got up at half past five on the following morning to light the fire, and turning round found him beside her. He said his head was bad. She went upstairs and he followed her.

Annie Smith (13), 47 Percival's Lane, said she saw the deceased walking along the lane at 7.40 on the night of December 6th. He did not speak to her. Immediately he passed her, he turned round and then commenced to run, as though someone was following him. In answer to the foreman, witness said deceased had no hat on.

Richard Joynson, 12 Hereford Street, Salford, a boatman in the employ of Mr Abel, said he found the body in one of the locks on Wednesday. He sent for the police.

PC Davies spoke to removing the body to the mortuary. There were bruises on the head and chest which he conjectured had been caused by the propellers of steamers.

Detective-sergeant Gregory said deceased's father reported that his son was missing about noon on December 7th. Witness made inquiries, but could hear nothing further than that the girl had seen him. About two years ago, it was reported that he was acting strangely.

Mr Byfield explained that the futility of the efforts made to recover the body by the dragging operations was due probably to the fact that the body became fixed in one of the sluice holes of the lock.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

26 10 January 1903

CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS, KNUTSFORD

ALLEGED THEFT OF INDIAN CORN AT NORTHWICH **William Salkin** (53), waterman, and **Joseph Moores** (28), flatman, were indicted for stealing 66 lb of Indian corn, the property of Jas Sanders at Northwich, on December 16th. Mr Colt Williams prosecuted, and Mr T Artemas Jones

appeared for Moores. Salkin was employed on a barge which was unloading a cargo of Indian corn at Mr Sanders' mill, and he was seen to hand a bag to Moores, who was in a small boat. The latter prisoner sold a bag of Indian corn to a licensed victualler in town. It weighed 66 lb ; the ordinary bags weighed 240 lb. Salkin said that the Indian corn was brushings up from the hold, which he always understood belonged to the men who brushed up. Mr Jones, for Moores, said there was no evidence to show that his client knew the corn was stolen. The jury found the prisoners not guilty.

27 18 February 1903

BOROUGH POLICE COURT

ACTED LIKE A MADMAN – ASSAULT ON THE POLICE **William Prior**, a boatman, was charged with having been drunk and disorderly in Howley Lane at about one o'clock that morning, and also with assaulting PC Bruen. The constable stated that he was on duty in Howley Lane and saw the prisoner, who was bleeding from a wound on the eye, lying against the door of Messrs Naylor's works. A young man was standing near, who was trying to get the prisoner up to take him home. Witness had succeeded in getting him on his feet, when prisoner struck him in the mouth. They struggled together and he got the prisoner to the floor. He then feigned to be helplessly drunk. PC Corbett came to his assistance, and they again got the prisoner up. He became very violent and they had almost to carry him. He kicked out furiously and acted like a madman. He was the most reckless man he had had to deal with. PC Corbett corroborated, and said that Bruen was exhausted when he came on the scene. A fine of 10s and costs was inflicted or, in default of payment, 14 days' imprisonment.

28 4 March 1903

DROWNING FATALITY AT RUNCORN

AN OLD BOATMAN'S SAD END Mr R Dobson, district coroner, conducted an inquiry at the Runcorn Police Station on Saturday into the circumstances attending the death of **Samuel Chorlton** (60 years of age), a boatman, whose body was recovered from the Iron Ore Basin, No 7 and 8 lock of the Bridgewater Canal at Runcorn on Thursday evening. Mr C Dutton was foreman of the jury.

Thomas Smith, Cowsley near Wolverhampton, captain of the narrow boat *Elba*, owned by Messrs John Perry and Son, Wolverhampton, said the deceased was mate on the boat. They arrived at Runcorn on Wednesday afternoon, and at six in the evening "tied up" in the bottom locks. Deceased, who seemed quite well and hearty, went ashore. Witness did not see him alive again. He had been with him two years on and off. He had a drop of beer to do him good once in a way, but was a steady man.

By the Foreman : He said he was going up above Delph Bridge to pass an hour away with a friend.

Mr Byfield (a juror) : Did you find a hat belonging to him in the water the next morning? - A hat was found, but I did not recognise it as belonging to him.

When did you report to the police? - Between five and six on Thursday evening.

Mr Byfield said he was away from home at the time information was received that the body had been found.

The Coroner (to witness) : Whenever anyone is missing, you ought to inform the police at once.

Arthur Morris, boatman, 32 Canal Street, said deceased was a friend of his. He came to his house about seven o'clock on Wednesday night. They had a walk, and called in the Wheatsheaf in Bridge Street. That was at nine, and they stayed until eleven. They had two pints of beer each. Deceased declined to have any more. Witness went with him a little way on the road, and when they came to the Big Lamp, deceased said he knew where he was, and said witness could leave him. Witness went along a little further and then left him.

The Coroner : The quantity of drink consumed has a different effect upon different people. I could not drink two pints of beer. (Laughter). Was deceased sober?

Witness : He was perfectly sober.

William Hignett, 29 Bridgewater Street, lock-keeper, said that on Wednesday night he was on duty at No 7 and 8 lock. Deceased passed the gate at five and twenty minutes past eleven, and crossed

the lock and went in the direction of his boat. He did not seem to be under the influence of drink. He said good night to witness and crossed the lock all right. The weather was rough, and it had just commenced to blow very strongly.

The Foreman : A man was drowned at this same place some time ago.

By Inspector Egerton : He did not hear any cry. It was so rough that he could not have heard a cry.

Samuel Laker, Penkrige, captain of the *Tees*, said that he and others grappled in the Iron Ore Basin on Thursday evening and recovered the body. It was found close to the bank.

PC Wilding said he had the body conveyed to the mortuary. He searched the clothing and found matches, pipe, tobacco and a knife. There was no marks on the body.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

29 4 March 1903

THE DROWNING CASE AT WALTON ARCHES

INQUEST

RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY Mr Dobson, coroner, held an inquest at the Stag Inn, Lower Walton, on Saturday afternoon, on the body of **Herbert Buchanan** of Walton, who was drowned in the river Mersey near Walton Arches on the 13th January. Mr Weir was foreman of the jury. Mr Willett appeared for the employer, Mr William Griffiths, and Mr Steel for the relatives of the deceased. The first witness called was

Robert Buchanan, farm labourer, who stated that the deceased lived at Morley Road and was a boatman. He was 20 years of age, he was unmarried and lived with his mother.

Joseph Morris, Moss Side, Norton, farmer, deposed to seeing the body of the deceased floating on the incoming tide. It was in the township of Norton. He informed PC Ellis of the occurrence.

PC Ellis of Moore said the body was fully dressed. The deceased wore clogs. There were marks on the face, which was crushed, as if it had been buried in sand. He found a knife in one of the pockets.

Denis Clarke, Morley Road, Walton Inferior, captain of the flat *James*, owned by Mr Griffiths, said he remembered the disappearance of the deceased on January 13th. At 2.10 pm, the deceased was "shoving" a boat in with a boat hook to the jetty in the Mersey at Walton. The stern end of the boat had been made fast to the jetty, the bow end was across the river. Buchanan took the shaft or boat hook to push the boat in to the jetty. Witness began to pump water out of the boat when he heard a splash, and on looking round saw the shaft sticking out of the river. Witness gave the alarm to the men on the boat, and when he got to the forward end he saw the deceased in the water. He threw him a line. At that time, the deceased was grasping the shaft but failed to grasp the line. Witness shouted, "Herbert, grasp the shaft", but the deceased could not see it, gave one moan, rolled over and went down. He did not think the deceased could swim ; witness could not. He thought there were two men on the boat who could swim. There was no small boat on the boat with which they could have gone to the rescue of the deceased. It was a clear day, but frosty, and there was some ice on the forward end of the boat and cinders on it. The deceased had put them down. By Mr Hewitt : There was a lifebuoy on the forward end of the boat. Witness did not get it. His first thought was to throw the line. The current was running down towards Liverpool and was very strong at the time. By Mr Steel : So far as he was aware, the shaft did not break. He knew, however, that a broken shaft had since been found. He did not know that it had been identified as the one Buchanan was using. He had seen a piece of it but he did not recognise it. Deceased had been with witness about nine months. By the Foreman : The shaft was never recovered. It would be from 25 ft to 28 ft in length altogether. He could not tell whether the shaft was broken when it was in the water. Re-examined by Mr Hewitt : The boat hook was a new one ; it was bought about two months ago. By Mr Ward, juryman : The lifebuoy was hanging on the bulk head below the deck. Mr Ward asked a number of questions of a technical character, and witness replied that he did not think they could work the boat properly if they had a lot of rails and stanchions on it.

The Coroner said the question of the broken shaft did not concern the jury, who had simply to ascertain the cause of death, whether it was accidental or due to someone's negligence. There was

not the least allegation of neglect in the sense in which the jury had to deal with it, and therefore he thought the jury would readily come to the conclusion that Buchanan's death was due to an accident of some kind. It was quite possible on account of the frosty condition of the weather, and as deceased was wearing clogs, that he might have slipped and fallen into the river. It was an easy thing for a man to over reach himself, as punting was not as easy as it looked.

A verdict of "Accidentally drowned at Warrington" was returned, and the jury thought that some protection should be placed round the boat in the way of a rope and stanchions.

Mr Ward said if there had been a rope round the forward end of the boat with iron stanchions, the deceased could have taken hold of the rope and could have had the boat hook against his shoulder.

The Coroner : I will ask Mr Hewitt, who appears on behalf of the employer, to make a note of the recommendation and let Mr Griffiths know.

Mr Hewitt said he would mention the request of the jury to Mr Griffiths.

A juror : And there ought to be a small boat provided as well.

30 4 March 1903

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

BOATMEN PROSECUTED **Joseph Chambers**, boatman, was fined 2s 6d and costs for allowing a female over the age of 12 to occupy the same sleeping place as himself and wife on the boat *Snowdrop*, on February 12th. Mr F A Lake prosecuted on behalf of the Urban District Council, and **Thomas Boote**, canal boat inspector, gave evidence. **David Butters** was fined 2s 6d and costs for allowing six persons to occupy the *Doric*, which was registered for only four. He said his man left him. He took his wife on the boat, and the children had also to come. **George Lowe**, Middlewich, was summoned for allowing a youth over the age of 12 to occupy the same sleeping place as himself and wife on the *Grief*. Mr Boote gave evidence, but was not able to prove that the youth actually slept on the boat, and the case was dismissed. Mr Lane informed the defendant that he had got off luckily.

31 11 March 1903

DARESBURY PETTY SESSIONS

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS **Edward Osborne**, 46, Gilbert Street, Runcorn, a boatman, was summoned for causing a horse to be worked while in an unfit state. The case was proved by Police-constable Williams, who said there were two sores on the horse's shoulders, and it was lame on the off hind leg. A fine of 10s was imposed. A summons against **John Haddock**, also of Runcorn, for working the horse referred to in the last case, was withdrawn, as the defendant had left the district.

32 14 March 1903

SHIP CANAL ACCIDENT

NARROW ESCAPE OF A RUNCORN MAN A Runcorn waterman named **George Hooper**, of Belvedere, met with a serious accident on the Manchester Ship Canal, which might have been attended with fatal results. While working on a dredger, he was violently struck on the forehead just over the right eye with a winch handle which had unexpectedly recoiled. He was rendered unconscious by the blow and, for three weeks, lay in a critical condition. Mr Hooper did not recover from the effects of the accident – which proved very serious – until he took Dr Williams' pink pills for pale people. Interviewed by a "Warrington Examiner" representative, Mr Hooper said:-

"After the stitches had been taken out and the wound healed, I was not very long before I began to be troubled with a dull sickening pain right across my forehead. My memory, hitherto retentive, failed me, so that I frequently forgot the captain's orders. The men on the job can tell you that if I was ordered to get three articles I would often bring back but one, having clean forgotten the others. Further, I often used to see three or four barges coming alongside when there was only one ; and similarly with other things. Before receiving the blow I never experienced anything like that, and at times I was greatly alarmed. For seven or eight years I took all kinds of medicines. I also

consulted several doctors.

One of the doctors I saw told me that the incised scar would have to be lifted, re-opened as there was pressure on the brain. In June last year, I resolved to consult a specialist, but in the meantime, while working at the Old Quay, I felt so ill that one Saturday I went to the doctor's for some medicine. While I was waiting, a young woman told me that Dr Williams' pink pills had done her a great deal of good, and she advised me to give them a trial. I was so disappointed at trying different things that I thought no more of it at the time. Feeling no better by the following Saturday, I resolved to go to the Liverpool Infirmary, but found that the building closed before I could get a suitable train. I then remembered the young woman's advice, and purchased a box of Dr Williams' pink pills for pale people. I took the first one on the Saturday night, two after each of my four meals on Sunday, and such was their immediate effect on me that by Monday morning I was a different man altogether. I took, in all, about half the box. I am all right now, and feel better than I have ever done since receiving the blow.

Half the pills in the second box I gave to my little girl, who suffered from chronic bronchitis. Before taking the pills, she weighed only 29 1/2 lbs ; in two weeks, she put on 2 1/2 lbs. The pills were not purgative, but on the contrary strengthening."

Before leaving, the interviewer learned that Mr Hooper knew several people who had benefited by Dr Williams' pink pills, and that he had recommended their use to all his relations and friends.

33 8 April 1903

CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

OFFENDED IN ALMOST EVERY COUNTY **Joseph Spencer, alias Harry Rambles** (68), boatman, was charged with stealing a watch and chain, and fraudulently obtaining lodging and board to the extent of 14s at Runcorn on January 19th. Prisoner obtained board and lodgings on the statement that he had £128 in the bank, which was untrue. He knew where the watch and chain were kept, and stole it. The Chairman said that the prisoner had committed offences in almost every county in England. He had been to penal servitude, but having regard to his age they would not send him back again, where he certainly deserved to go. They sentenced him to nine months' hard labour.

34 6 June 1903

WIDNES PETTY SESSIONS

A FLAT CAPTAIN FINED **William Morrison**, captain of the flat *Sarah* of Widnes, was summoned for the non payment of dues charged by the Upper Mersey Navigation Commissioners. Mr Hawkins, Liverpool, prosecuted, and stated that £2 16s 4d was due for various dates upon which the defendant took his ship into the Upper Mersey. The penalty affixed by the Act under which proceedings were taken, namely three times the amount of the dues, was imposed, together with the costs, being £9 1s in all.

35 18 July 1903

LYMM PETTY SESSIONS

ALLEGED ILL TREATMENT OF A HORSE **William Bent**, the Stables, Canal Side, Lymm, was summoned for causing a horse to be ill-treated on June 20th. Evidence was given to the effect that a horse belonging to the Ship Canal Company was found walking down Dunham Road on the night in question, and there was no one in charge of it. The animal was placed in Mr Goodall's stables and examined. A wound two inches long by 1 1/2 inches in diameter was found on the off shoulder, from which the collar was saturated with blood and matter. The wound was inflamed and painful. Defendant said he was the horse-keeper in charge of the horse in question. He considered the horse was quite fit to work. He had been among horses for 43 years, and this was the first time he had had any charge brought against him. Henry Starkey of Stockton Heath stated that he was of opinion the horse was fit for working. J B Wolstenholme, veterinary surgeon, who has charge of the Company's horses, stated that a week before the date in question, there was a scar of old standing on

the off shoulder. The Chairman said as defendant had had such a good character for a number of years they would dismiss the case. Inspector (????) asked the Bench if they would remit the costs, or the society would have to pay them. Mr Wolstenholme offered to pay the costs (8s 6d), and the offer was accepted.

ALLEGED ASSAULT A young boatman named **Thomas Cooley**, Top Lane, Lymm, summoned a married woman named Annie Brooks for assault, but after hearing the evidence, the Bench dismissed the case.

36 25 July 1903

POACHING AFFRAY NEAR WARRINGTON

EXCITING CHASE

CONSTABLE INJURED AND A BOATMAN DROWNED At about eleven o'clock on Monday night, three gamekeepers on Lady Hedford's estate at Rixton, together with PC Clarke of Rixton, surprised a party of boatmen who were poaching in the St Swithin's wood. On seeing the constable and keepers approaching, a powerfully built man named **William Wilson**, who appeared to be the ringleader, said with an oath, "Go on, let them have it". The poachers, four in number, then attacked the keepers, and Wilson struck the constable on the hand with a stick, rendering the limb useless. The poachers struck out right and left with their sticks, but soon lost courage and made off. Wilson dashed in the direction of the river, and the constable pluckily followed. Wilson gained the bank of the Mersey, but forgetting in his excitement the game nets, of which 100 yards had been laid, caught his foot in one and rolled down the bank. The constable rushed after him, and chased him in the direction of a flat, of which he (Wilson) was the captain, and which was emptying manure at Fishington brook wharf. Wilson then turned into the wood again, and here the constable temporarily lost him in the bushes, the night being dark. He saw him again, however, and Wilson then made for the riverside and jumped in. He was an expert swimmer and soon disappeared in the darkness. Nothing was seen or heard of him for five minutes, when two slight coughs were heard. Meanwhile, two of the keepers had chased one of the other men towards Rixton Hall, but he with the other two escaped. At daybreak, a search was made on the opposite side of the river, but there were no marks to show where Wilson had left the water. Thinking he might be drowned, dragging operations were commenced, and on Thursday evening a body was recovered by some other boatmen and identified as that of Wilson. The other men who took part in the affray are thought to be boatmen. No arrests have been made, but it is thought that the offenders will be caught.

37 1 August 1903

THE FATAL POACHING AFFRAY AT RIXTON

INQUEST AT SALFORD Mr A Holmes, the Salford borough coroner, conducted an inquiry on Monday afternoon at the Manor Inn, Salford, into the circumstances attending the death of **William Wilson**, a boatman 36 years of age, who resided at 90 Derwent Street, Ordsall Lane, Salford, and who was drowned after a poaching adventure at Rixton on the 20th July. The reason for the holding of the inquest at Salford was that the body, on being recovered from the water, was put on a flat and removed to Salford without being landed at Rixton. Mr E A White (Warrington) appeared to represent the gamekeepers, Mr Chapman (Manchester) represented the relatives of the deceased, and Inspector Foster (Earlestown) was present on behalf of the police.

Eliza Ann Wilson, widow, stated that the deceased was her husband. He was 36 years of age, He left home at 6 am on Monday the 20th July. He was with **William Green**. Her husband was a boatman in the employ of Mr William Beardall, flat owner, and Green was in the same employ. On the 20th July the two men went to Woolston. Green returned the same night, but did not tell her (witness) where he husband was. She asked him where he was, and he replied that he had heard him go into the water at Woolston and shout for mercy. Deceased's dead body was brought home at midnight on the 23rd July.

William Green, 108 West Union Street, Salford, stated that at 11 o'clock on the night of the 20th July,

witness and deceased went on some land on the Rixton estate to get a rabbit. They set nets, and they managed to get two rabbits, Both witness and deceased were engaged on the flat *Ellen*, and they had tied up at Fishington Brook. Deceased was captain and witness was mate. There was nobody else getting rabbits. They set two nets and they were walking away when they heard a rabbit squeal. The witness went back, and whilst he (witness) was killing the rabbit, they heard another one squeal lower down. He killed that one and left them both in the net. Wilson turned round and said, "Here's somebody coming". Witness turned round and he saw four men coming towards them. He said to Wilson, "Stand still, they cannot touch us, they can only summon us". He went towards them, and they ran towards him and one of the men struck him with a stick on the forehead. He fell to the ground and was kicked. He could not say how many times he was kicked. The men then left him, and he scrambled up and ran a distance of 100 yards and fell again. He was dazed. By the Coroner : They were about 20 feet from the river side. By a Juror : He did not hear the deceased shout, "God help me", he only heard him shout, "Oh". By Mr Chapman : Neither witness nor deceased had any stones or sticks. They had never been there before poaching. The width across the river was about 100 yards, but it varied very much. If he had been in perfect health, deceased could have got to the flat and back. By Mr White : There were two broken railings from the bank into the field. He killed both rabbits with his hands. It was a very dark night. There was not another man with them. He could not say whether anyone was hit on the hand by Wilson. He never saw the policeman hit. He did not aim a blow at one of the men. He was entirely disabled, and they could have locked him up if they had wanted. By a Juror : Why he went round to the other flat was because he was afraid he would be ill-used.

Dr Gamble, senior house surgeon at the Salford Royal Hospital, stated that he had held a *post mortem* examination of the body of Wilson. It was decomposed. Death was due to drowning. He thought that the man, judging by his organs, must have drunk heavily. There were marks on the body caused by decomposition. By a Juror : The decomposition would make it more difficult to trace bruises. He had heard that violence had been alleged, and that was what led him to look most carefully both internally and externally. He had not noticed any bruises on the side of the face.

A Juror : I want to know if the man was ill-used before he went into the water. Can you account for the head being bruised?

Dr Gamble : I did not notice any bruises whatever on the head.

The Coroner : The fact that the man had been in water from the 20th to the 23rd July would show that the flesh had become flabby and the outer skin very hard. If the head was out of shape, it would be due to the decomposition.

The Jury : When we saw the body there were bruises on the side of the face.

Dr Gamble : I never saw any marks either outside or inside the body.

A Juror : If a man had been violently struck, you would expect to find some marks, even if the body had been in the water some time?

Dr Gamble : Yes.

The Coroner : If the man had been ill-used, there would certainly have been some marks.

Dr Gamble : His body was not as decomposed as his face.

A Juror : Could you tell if there had been ill-usage, and if he had exhausted himself?

Dr Gamble : No, I don't think I could tell that.

A Juror : The face just looked as if it had been hit with a stick. I have never seen a body so much discoloured about the head and body before. Both his eyes were black.

Mr Chapman : Do you mean to say seriously that, suppose the man had been knocked about on the towing-path and had jumped into the river, that that would remove all traces of a blow? Suppose the man was five minutes before he took to the water.

Dr Gamble : Yes, it would to an extent, it would prevent the swelling. The fact that the body was in the water three days would wipe away all marks. By Mr White : There would have been signs internally of blows as well as externally.

PC William Clarke, stationed at Rixton, deposed that on the 20th July shortly after 10 pm, three men named Peter Hankinson and John and Thomas Arstall came to him and asked for assistance, as they

expected poachers on the estate. They went to St Swithin's Wood. They stood a few minutes and they heard a rabbit squealing, and they proceeded in the direction of the noise until they came to a stile at the corner of the wood, and Hankinson got over and shouted, "Come on chaps, they are here". Witness got over, and he saw three men rushing towards them. He recognised the three men as boatmen. He saw one man with a stick, and he had hold of it by both hands and struck a blow at Hankinson. He (witness) made a grab at him with his right hand and received the blow on his hand, entirely disabling that limb and cutting it open. At the same time, he heard somebody get a blow on his left hand side. The three men then turned and ran away, and he (witness) followed the man who had struck him. They ran across the field, and deceased was turning to go down the embankment towards the river Mersey when he caught his foot in the rabbit net and fell head foremost down the embankment. When half way down, he appeared to turn over and roll down on to the towing-path on his side. He got up and started running afresh along the bank. Witness was following close behind, and shouted to deceased that he had no need to run to the boats as he knew him. Wilson then turned into the end of the wood and there the constable missed him amongst the bushes as it was a very dark night. He (witness) came out of the wood again and saw Wilson on the bank. He ran towards deceased again and he got about two yards from him, when he took one step and plunged into the river, and swam away apparently to the other side. By the Coroner : He heard two coughs whilst deceased was in the water. The coughs came from the direction in which deceased had swum. He never struck the man at all. He never got close enough to him. He did not know that Hankinson had been following behind. He never heard deceased shout, "Oh! Oh! Oh!", he heard somebody shout, "Oh!" in the field. It was the deceased who struck him with the stick. They ran neck to neck with each other until they came to the net, a distance of about 100 yards. They ran a distance of about 30 yards before they got to the wood. The chase lasted about four or five minutes from when they first met. By Mr Chapman : He left his station at Rixton about 10.5 pm, and it was a few minutes to 11 when they arrived at the stile. They all entered the field together. He had never seen those men there before. He had seen the deceased before, and he recognised him as a boatman. He knew he was a regular visitor with the boats. If he had been wanted, he could have been found any time with the boats. Witness had his truncheon with him, and the three other men each had a stick. He would swear that they saw three men and they each had sticks. They came towards them with a rush. He did not know what became of the other two men. He had seen Green before. He never laid hands on Wilson at all. He never kicked him. He could not account for the bruises on Green. He never heard Wilson crying or moaning. He heard him cough. He could not account for deceased drowning, unless he was "out of wind". He did not know why the men should run at them, unless it was to save the nets. By Mr White : Witness went with a view of taking the men into custody. He tried to report the matter to his superior officer at 2 am, but could get no answer and he reported it at 6 am the same morning by telephone. By Mr Chapman : He went to grapple for the body immediately he returned from Salford after making inquiries on the following Tuesday evening.

John Arstall, labourer and gamekeeper on the Dowager Marchioness of Handfort's estate, stated that on the 20th July he saw two men looking at the rabbit burrows and fences in a field. They were near St Swithin's Wood at about two o'clock pm. They were not allowed in the field at all. He thought they were looking out for something. He told his foreman, Hankinson, and his brother Thomas, what he had seen. They then went to the Police Station and told PC Clarke that they were expecting some poachers at night. They turned out about 10.20 pm, and they got there about 11. When they got to a stile, they heard a rabbit squeal in such a way they knew it was being interfered with. They proceeded to the wood where they thought the noise came from. Hankinson was the first to lead the way, witness was second, PC Clarke third, and Thomas Arstall last. Two men came rushing at them, and he heard Hankinson say, "They are here". One of the poachers said, "Let them have it". One of the men struck witness first, and he aimed back again and caught Green on the head somewhere. Green made off and witness followed. He lost him in the darkness. He never saw the third man there. He only saw two men make the rush. He did not see the policeman run after the other man. He never saw the policeman hit one of the men. When they were altogether, he hit

Green. He did not think there were above two blows struck at the time. He could not say where his man went. He turned back. When Green got the blow, he fell on his hands, but quickly picked himself up again. He did not know deceased or Green.

By Mr Chapman : He had a better view of the men than Clarke. He did not see any blood on Green. He did not kick Green. They were anxious to catch the men.

By Mr White : Wilson dealt Clarke a severe blow.

Peter Hankinson, carpenter on the Rixton estate, corroborated the last witness's statement, but he (witness) saw a crowd of men when they got to the stile. The blow that Clarke heard was dealt by John Astall. Green did not fall to the floor. The man who struck the policeman ran away as soon as he had struck. PC Clarke followed him, and he (witness) followed behind on the towing path. He heard the splash in the river, and witness said, "Is that you, Clarke?" and Clarke replied, "This man has jumped into the river". Clarke then shouted, "You might as well come back, as you are known". He never heard deceased say anything. He could hear him cough. He never saw deceased and Clarke from the time they ran away till they were on the towing-path. There would not have been time for Clarke or anybody else to have ill-used deceased. He would have heard if there had been any violence.

Daniel Wilson of 108 West Hart Street, Salford, stated that deceased was his cousin. He went to Rixton in search of the body. It was found on the 23rd July at 6 pm. It was 60 yards from the Cheshire side of the bank. A good many boats went along the river. He brought the body to Salford on the flat. He noticed that the body was very much discoloured. There was a scar on the left side ; there was also a bruise on the left side which looked like a kick from a boot.

By a Juror : There were no marks on the body relating to those made by a stick.

The Coroner having summed up the evidence, the Jury returned an open verdict.

38 8 August 1903

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS At these Sessions on Tuesday, **William Sinnett**, a flatman, was fined 5s and 8s 6d costs for having been drunk and disorderly in High Street, Runcorn, on Saturday. PC Brayford proved the case.

39 22 August 1903

DOUBLE DROWNING FATALITY AT LATCHFORD

HEROIC ATTEMPT AT RESCUE A double drowning fatality surrounded by unusually sad circumstances occurred at Latchford on Wednesday night. Three boys, named John Handford Corbett, aged 9, son of Mr Joseph Rowland Corbett of 9 Belmont Avenue, Latchford ; John Hodgson Wilson, aged 10, son of Mr William John Wilson, 6 Lyon Street ; and another named Acton, were playing on the wooden turn bridge which spans the Bridgewater Canal near Black Bear Bridge, when Corbett fell into the water. Wilson at once took off his coat and jumped in after him. Both sank, and assistance was not forthcoming soon enough to be of value. The bodies were recovered shortly after by a man named **Joseph Lowe**, a Runcorn boat captain. Dr Smith was called to the spot, and although artificial respiration was used for nearly an hour, it proved to be unsuccessful. The bodies were then removed to the homes of the parents. Both Mr Corbett and Mr Wilson, the fathers of the boys, are well known in Warrington, the former being especially popular as a missionary, having conducted a series of successful meetings in the Parr Hall. He was away from home at the time of the accident. Mr Wilson will doubtless find some consolation, however small it may be, in the fact that his son died in an heroic attempt to save the life of another, and his bravery will make all hearts glow with pride. Although only in his tenth year, it is not many weeks ago since he saved a boy from drowning at Latchford Pits, and it was understood he was shortly to receive the Royal Humane Society's award for his brave conduct. Much sympathy is extended to the bereaved families.

THE INQUEST

SYMPATHY OF CORONER AND JURY The inquest on the bodies was held in the Coroner's Court at the police premises on Friday morning by Mr Brighthouse and a jury, of which Mr Lake was

foreman. The first witness called was

May Wilson, who said she was the wife of William John Wilson. Her son John was 10 years of age. He left home at about one o'clock and went to Wash Lane School. She next saw him at 7.30, when he was brought home dead.

The Coroner : Is it true that your boy saved a boy's life some time ago?

Witness replied in the affirmative.

Mr Wilson, in answer to Mr Brighouse, said a paper had been received from the Royal Humane Society for him to fill up. He understood his son was to receive some recognition of his services.

Mrs Corbett said her son left home at about one o'clock, and was brought home dead at 7.30.

George Acton, a boy 10 years of age, said that at 4.30 on Wednesday, he and the deceased boys were playing near the old wooden turn bridge on the Bridgewater Canal. Wilson was in the act of turning the bridge, and Corbett tried to jump on to it, but missed and fell into the water. Wilson at once took off his jacket and jumped into the canal, but both boys were drowned. Witness informed the boatman of what had occurred, and he recovered the bodies. There was no one near the bridge at the time of the accident except witness and the other two lads.

The Foreman said this was not the first accident that had occurred at this particular spot.

PC Hardy, stationed at Latchford, said the bodies had just been recovered when he appeared on the scene. Artificial respiration was resorted to, but when Dr Smith saw the boys, he pronounced them to be dead. If a boy once got into this water, which was dirty and deep, he had little chance of getting out again, as the sides of the canal were steep.

In the case of Corbett, a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned, and in the case of Wilson, it was recorded that he was drowned while attempting to save the life of Corbett. The jury expressed their sympathy with the bereaved parents.

The Coroner (addressing Messrs Corbett and Wilson) said : The jury, in returning their verdict, want me to convey to you their sympathy with you in the loss you have sustained. Of course I don't know you as well as the jury, but I join in the expression of sympathy. It is to be regretted that Wilson lost his life. I should feel proud if a lad of mine had saved life, although he might have lost his own life. I should be proud to be the father of such a lad.

Both parents thanked the Coroner and jury for their kind expressions of sympathy.

THE FUNERALS The boy Wilson will be interred at the Warrington Cemetery today at three o'clock. Corbett will also be buried today at Hill Cliffe.

40 22 August 1903

RUNCORN BOY DROWNED AT LYMM

INQUEST Mr R Dobson, coroner, held an inquiry at Lymm Police Station on Monday night, touching the death of a boy named **George Evans**, 11 years of age, son of a Runcorn boat captain residing at 21 Gilbert Street, Runcorn. On Thursday night, the boy was put ashore at Ditchfield's Bridge, Lymm, by his father, and given a letter to post. After posting the letter, he was to go back and meet his father's boat at the Bridgewater Arms. The boy, however, was not there, and the father went to look for him along the canal side. He saw no trace of him, but found the covering of the letter floating in the water near Brookfield's Bridge. He then reported the occurrence to the police. Dragging operations were commenced by Mr Byfield (of Runcorn), Acting Sergeant Sharp and others, and the body was recovered on Sunday. The letter was found floating on the water. It contained no money or valuables, and was still sealed.

At the inquest, the boy's father stated that the footpath near where the body was found was about two feet narrower than it used to be.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

THE FUNERAL The funeral took place at Runcorn Cemetery on Thursday. The deceased lad was a Sunday School scholar at the Seamen's Mission Church, and the first portion of the service was conducted at the church. The Rev W Scholes officiated. Mr W Shaw, missionary, read the lesson. The hymn "Jesus, lover of my soul" was sung by the boys of the Sunday School.

41 2 September 1903

A DISCLAIMER It was reported in last week's Guardian that **William Evans**, a boatman, was fined at the Runcorn Petty Sessions for using obscene language. We are desirous to state that this man is not Mr William Evans, boatman of Gilbert Street, Runcorn, whose child was drowned at Lymm a fortnight ago.

42 3 October 1903

RIVER MYSTERY AT WARRINGTON

FLAT CAPTAIN'S BODY FOUND Shortly before ten on Wednesday morning, the body of **Albert Rotherham**, captain of the flat *Laurel*, was found floating in the river Mersey near Bishop's Wharf, Warrington. How he came by his death is not known, but he was last seen alive at a quarter to eleven on Saturday night on the wharf near to which he was recovered by a boatman named **Clare**. It is believed that Rotherham has friends in Widnes.

THE INQUEST The inquest was held by Mr Brighthouse, coroner, at the Police Station on Friday afternoon.

Joseph Rotherham, waterman, 50 Widnes Road, Simms Cross, Widnes, said the deceased was his son, and was 26 years of age. He resided on the barge *Laurel*. Witness last saw him alive two months ago.

Robert Rawlinson, mate on the *Laurel*, said they landed at the Wharf on Tuesday week. Deceased was on board the barge at five o'clock on September 26th, and was under the influence of drink. Witness saw him in Mersey Street the same evening, drunk. Deceased did not return on board that night, and the following morning he informed the police.

A general labourer named Clare deposed to recovering the body.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.