

## NANTWICH GUARDIAN 1881 TO 1899

**1**      **1 January 1881**

### MAN FOUND DROWNED IN THE CANAL AT PENKETH

**THE INQUEST** Mr Driffield held an inquest at the Fidler's Ferry Inn, Penketh, on Tuesday morning, touching the death of a foreman platelayer named Joseph Walker, whose body was found in the canal near his own house at Penketh on Friday afternoon last. Mr Percy Davies appeared to watch the case on behalf of the deceased's two brothers. The following evidence was given :-

Rebecca Walker, Segar's Crossing, Penketh Bridge, said the deceased, Joseph Walker, was her husband. He was 36 years of age. Witness was the deceased's second wife, and their children numbered 11. About seven o'clock on Tuesday morning last, the deceased left home to go to his work, and did not return to dinner, as he was unable to do so, having to meet his "boss". The deceased came in to tea at his usual hour, and left again about seven o'clock, stating that he was going down to the Ferry to see Mr Houghton, promising not to be long away. Witness remained up until one o'clock on the following morning, and as deceased had not then returned home, she went to bed. He did not return on the following morning, and witness began to be alarmed. She did not go in search of her husband, but enquired of his fellow workmen where they thought he was. The body was dragged for and recovered on Friday last.

James Houghton, station master, Fidler's Ferry, said the deceased was foreman platelayer for the Penketh length, and lived at Penketh Hall Crossing. He last saw him on Tuesday night the 21<sup>st</sup> December. The deceased came up to him at 8.30, and remained with him for nearly an hour. The deceased came to ask him if he had received a pass which witness had been applying for for Mrs Walker. He had written for it, but it had not been received. The deceased, when leaving him, said he would get a couple of hours sleep and, as the night was foggy, relieve one of the fogmen, either Hodge or Massey, two of his men. Walker then went up the "six foot". He was quite sober. The deceased was subsequently reported to be missing, and a search was made for the body, which was recovered on Friday. He could not learn that the deceased had been seen by anyone after leaving him. In answer to Mr Davies, he said he did not remember seeing Mrs Ford on Tuesday night. He had not heard that any insinuations had been made by Mrs Walker. He had not heard anything said about someone looking white when the death was mentioned. He had never heard the words "foul play" used.

Mr Davies : Has anything been said about someone looking as white as a sheet?

Witness : No, sir.

In answer to a juryman, witness said he subsequently heard that the deceased had had a pint of beer at the Ferry Inn, but he was sober. The conversation during the hour they were together was about the time worked by the platelayers. The deceased did not say he felt very melancholy with reference to his former wife. He mentioned her name, and said he could fancy when he went home that he could see her standing at the gate ; and it used to upset him. He did not say he was uncomfortable with his present wife. He did not say there had been a quarrel between them during the day. He had seen nothing in the deceased's conduct to lead one to suppose he would commit suicide.

**James Plumpton**, waterman, Penketh, said he assisted to recover the body of the deceased. It was brought out of the canal on Friday afternoon between 3 and 4 o'clock. The nose was swollen. The body might have been in the water several days. He was present when the pockets of the deceased were examined by the officer, a sixpenny piece, a threepenny piece and a halfpenny being found. He knew the deceased well. The body was found 150 yards from deceased's house, on the towing side of the canal and furthest from the railway. By a juryman : He had not heard anyone say that before the deceased's body should be brought up, the rope (the grappling rope) should be cut.

PC William Rogers, stationed at Penketh, said he knew the deceased. He saw him on Tuesday afternoon last, when he was coming towards the Ferry, having evidently just left home. He heard nothing of him again that day ; but on the following day Samuel Walker came to the Station and said that the deceased (his brother) had been missing since Tuesday night. He said he was afraid the

affair was a serious one. He did not say anything more than that. A search was made for the body on Wednesday and Thursday, and witness was present during the whole of the time. The search was continued on Friday, and witness was present when the deceased was found by the last witness. The body was taken home. He searched the pockets. The deceased's watch had stopped at 5.43. He found a sixpenny piece, a threepenny piece and a halfpenny. The body was covered with mud. The deceased appeared to have been dead several days. The nose was swollen, and bled. There were finger nail marks on the forehead of the deceased, which he had not observed when the body was washed after it was brought out of the water. He could not call them bruises. There was a discoloured mark on the back of the left hand – a bruise, he believed.

The Coroner : Have you anything to say about anything connected with the affair? Can you throw any light on the matter?

Witness : Mrs Walker has told so many tales that one does not know what to do. She says she told the station master that if her husband was found in the canal, foul play had been used. She led one of the jurymen to believe that her husband had gone to Shropshire. She said to another person, "You will find him there", (pointing to the canal).

The Coroner : She would no doubt come to the conclusion that he was drowned, and that was a very likely conclusion to draw. Have you learned anything of a suspicious nature?

Witness : No, sir.

In answer to questions from Mr Davies and the jury, the witness said that he believed the deceased was sober on the night in question. He saw nothing about the deceased to lead him to believe he would commit suicide. The deceased's children had said that about 12 o'clock on the Tuesday night they heard a scream, and when they asked their mother if they might open the door, she said, "Keep it locked".

The Coroner having to leave to hold an inquest at Bootle, the enquiry was adjourned till Friday morning at 10.15.

A jurymen (Mr Hobson) said he thought it requisite that a *post mortem* examination of the body should be made.

Another jurymen expressed a similar opinion.

The Coroner : For what object? I don't think it is necessary.

Mr Davies : I have been requested to ask you to order a *post mortem* on behalf of the two brothers I represent.

The Coroner : Has the wife asked for one?

Mr Davies : No, sir.

The Coroner : Then, you see, it is a one sided request. (To Mr Hobson) On what ground do you make your application?

Mr Hobson : For the satisfaction of the jury.

Only two of the jury were in favour of a post mortem examination being held, and it was, therefore, decided not to have one.

## **2 5 March 1881**

RUNCORN COUNTY COURT The business at this Court on Tuesday was very light. The only case of importance that was entered into the one in which **John Forster**, a boatman, claimed from Joseph Davies, coal merchant, the sum of £10 12s 6d for demurrage. Mr J Burton defended, and there was a verdict for the defendant.

## **3 12 March 1881**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

BREACH OF THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES (ANIMALS) ACT **Thomas Rigby**, boatman, Church Lawton, was summoned for causing a cow and calf to be driven along the highway without a licence, contrary to an Order In Council respecting infected areas. PC Thomas proved that while he was on duty in the neighbourhood of Church Lawton, on the 26<sup>th</sup> ult, he saw the animals being driven along the highway. He asked the man who was driving them if he had a licence, and he said

he had not. For the defence, ignorance of the law was pleaded. Charge dismissed on payment of 4s 6d costs.

#### 4 30 March 1881

FATAL ACCIDENT TO A WIDNES BOATMAN The Liverpool Coroner yesterday held an inquest on the body of **Joseph Grice**, aged 48, a hand on board the flat *Trial*. The deceased lived in Wellington Street, Widnes. The flat left Weston Point on Saturday last in tow of the tug *Conqueror*; and early the following morning, the weather being very rough, she commenced to make water. The captain's wife and child were transferred to another flat, and the captain and the deceased got into the punt just as the flat sank. The punt also swamped, and the occupants were left struggling in mid channel, but they were rescued by the tug. The deceased was taken to the Northern Hospital, where he died on Thursday from the effects of the immersion. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

#### 5 9 April 1881

##### MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS

CRUELTY TO A HORSE AT MIDDLEWICH **William Grimes**, who did not appear, was summoned for cruelty to a horse by working it when in an unfit condition. Inspector Harper, RSPCA, stationed at Altrincham, said that the defendant, a boatman living at Stoke, worked the horse on March 18<sup>th</sup> by attaching it to a boat. The animal was in a very bad condition, and had five wounds on its shoulder. Defendant admitted that the wounds had been on the animal for some days ; also he knew that it was in very bad condition, but that he was anxious to get back to the Potteries with it. The horse had had a deal of beer, and staggered when it walked. The men in the boat admitted having given the horse beer in order to keep it going. PC Wright gave corroborative evidence. The Bench issued a warrant against the defendant.

#### 6 9 April 1881

##### CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

THEFT OF ROPE AT RUNCORN Joseph Bushell (20), labourer, was indicted for stealing 6 lbs weight of rope, the property of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, at Runcorn on March 10<sup>th</sup>. He was further indicted, together with William Randle, 46, labourer, with stealing 8 lbs of rope, the property of the Bridgewater Navigation Company, at Runcorn on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr Burke Wood prosecuted. It seemed that a number of flats, the property of the Bridgewater Trust, were occasionally anchored in the dock at Runcorn. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, Bushell went to a dock belonging to the Bridgewater Navigation Company, and got on to one of the flats. Before doing so, however, he called to a man named **George Brown**, who was engaged on a flat close by, to borrow a knife, as he wanted to go on board to (...) a flat and take the ropes to the Old Quay Yard. Randle was loitering about at the time. Bushell cut a considerable quantity of rope, which he took ashore, after which he and Randle carried it along the street in the direction of a marine store kept by a man of the name of Lavelle. Bushell asked a carter named Worrall to cart the rope for him, but this Worrall declined to do, and he gave information of the proceedings to the officials of the Bridgewater Navigation. When Randle was apprehended and charged, he said, "I did not steal the rope. I only helped him to carry it to the marine store dealer". Bushell replied, "I had had drink, or I should not have done it. I was not right in my head at the time". The statements which prisoners now told to the jury corresponded with those which they made at the time of their apprehension. They were found guilty, and Randle admitted a former conviction for felony in May 1880.

The second charge against Bushell for stealing the 8 lbs weight of rope was next gone into. Michael Thomas Lavelle, marine store dealer, was indicted for receiving the same, knowing it to have been stolen. It seemed that on the morning of March 10<sup>th</sup>, **John Dykes**, foreman boat builder in the employ of the prosecutors, went to his dinner at 12 o'clock, when 12 flats were securely moored. Upon his return, he found that three of them were adrift, the ropes having been cut. Information was given to Mr Littler, superintendent in the company, who went to Lavelle's shop.

Upon looking at Lavelle's purchase book, he could not see any entry in it respecting the rope. PC Hibbert went to Lavelle's shop two days afterwards, when Mrs Lavelle showed him the book. An entry had then been made in it to the effect that about 4 1/2 lbs of rope had been bought from Joseph Bushell for 2s 6d. This entry was not seen in the book when Mr Littler, accompanied by a police sergeant, went to the shop two days previously. Lavelle did not then say anything about having made such a purchase from Bushell. The rope was subsequently found at the back of Lavelle's premises. When charged with receiving the same knowing it to have been stolen, he replied, "I am confident. I did not know it had been stolen". Mr Banks, who defended Lavelle, addressed the jury at some length on his behalf, contending that there was not the least ground for bringing the charge against him. The reason why the purchase of the rope was not entered in the prisoner's book on March 10<sup>th</sup> was because prisoner did not make the entries until night, after business hours. He called the members of Lavelle's family in support of the statement. The jury acquitted Lavelle, but found Bushell guilty. He and Randle were sentenced to six months' hard labour.

**7 28 May 1881**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

KEEPING A DOG WITHOUT A LICENCE **James Smallwood**, a boatman, was summoned for keeping a dog without a licence. PC Williams proved going to defendant's house on the 25<sup>th</sup> April and seeing a big black dog. He asked defendant's wife if they had a licence. She said they had not taken out one this year, as they had been in poor circumstances. Defendant's wife appeared in court, and said they had taken out a licence since the constable's visit. The Bench inflicted a fine of 1s and costs.

**8 28 May 1881**

CHESHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS

BREAKING AND ENTERING A DWELLING HOUSE AT RUNCORN **William Skerratt**, boatman, was indicted for breaking and entering the dwelling house of Richard Price, ostler, 47 Gilbert Street, Runcorn, on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, and stealing therefrom £2 10s. Mr Bankes prosecuted. It appeared that the prisoner lodged with Price, who had been away from home during the day in question. Prisoner was seen by a woman named Haughton, who spoke to him, and he told her that he had been locked out of the house. She subsequently saw prisoner enter the house. When Price returned home he found the door burst, and on going upstairs he found that his money and box, to the amount of £2 10s, had been stolen from a trunk. The prisoner knew where the money was kept. The jury found the prisoner guilty, and sentenced him to six months' imprisonment with hard labour.

**9 4 June 1881**

KIDSGROVE POLICE COURT, THURSDAY

DEFRAUDING THE RAILWAY COMPANY **William Williams**, boatman, Kidsgrove, was fined 1s and 10s 6d costs for travelling without a ticket on the North Staffordshire Railway, between Chatterley and Longport on the 11<sup>th</sup> inst.

**10 11 June 1881**

MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

CRUELTY TO A CANAL HORSE **Edward Williams** the younger, a boatman, appeared on a charge of cruelly ill-treating his horse. **Thomas Richardson**, clerk at the King's Lock on the canal, stated that on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, defendant was trying to get his boat into the lock. The horse proved restive, and defendant kicked it on the belly five or six times. One of the kicks was exceedingly severe. Inspector Harper of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said the case was reported to him by letter. He met the defendant at Preston Brook. On examining the horse, he found swellings on the belly, and injuries showing that violence had been used. The horse was in good condition. The defendant said he was anxious to get his boat into the lock, and

the horse refused to pull, and he lost his temper, for which he expressed regret. Fined 1s and costs, total 14s.

**11 11 June 1881**

CHESTER CITY POLICE COURT

WHITSUNTIDE DRUNKENNESS **William Partington**, boatman of 7 Crane Street, for being drunk and riotous in Watergate Street on Saturday night, was fined 10s and costs.

**12 9 July 1881**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

ALLOWING ANIMALS TO STRAY ON THE HIGHWAY **Henry Malpas**, boatman, was ordered to pay 4s 6d costs for allowing two horses to stray on the highway on the 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**13 23 July 1881**

MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS **James Sherman**, a Staffordshire boatman, was summoned at the instance of Inspector Luckings (Altrincham) of the RSPCA for cruelty to a horse. Defendant pleaded guilty. Mr Rowlinson of Middlewich proved seeing the defendant cruelly ill-treating a horse by striking it on the head with the handle of a whip and also kicking it. Witness followed the defendant about 30 or 40 yards and noticed him striking the animal nine times. The Bench considered it was a gross case, and fined the defendant 40s including costs.

**14 3 August 1881**

CHESTER COUNTY POLICE COURT, SATURDAY

A ROW AMONG THE "PRICES" **Thomas Price**, waterman, Ellesmere Court, was summoned by Thomas (*sic*) Price for assaulting him. Mr Cartwright appeared for the complainant, and Mr Churton for defendant. It appeared that the defendant had married Mary Price, a sister of the complainant, who lived about 100 yards from defendant's house. On Saturday last about eleven o'clock, complainant with his brother Christopher was getting his supper in his mother's house, and the defendant, who was in drink, came in. He charged complainant with having struck his sister Annie, and a discussion as to whether he did or did not took place between the parties. As it waxed warmer, the defendant struck complainant a severe blow, knocking him down. The complainant got up and ran to the house of his brother James. This little affair was the beginning of an after family squabble. Cross-examined by Mr Churton, the complainant admitted that six of the family went down to the defendant's house to ask the reason why he assaulted him. He admitted also that the defendant said he (complainant) must not hit his mother again, but he had not done so. Christopher Price, complainant's brother, said he was not in the house when his brother struck his mother. Mr Churton, on behalf of the defendant Thomas Price, said there had been a family quarrel. The facts of the case were that the complainant and another brother (John) had treated the mother in an abominable and violent way. John left to live elsewhere, and on Saturday the defendant went down to the house, and said in a good tempered way to Charles and his younger brother, "Be good, lads, to your mother, now John has gone away". Charles became very cheeky and impertinent, and defendant did then hit him. The mother was called and corroborated this, and said her son had struck her "like a man". They had all left her, and she had to go to the Union for relief. The magistrates dismissed the case, as they considered the complainant, being a youth, had been the worse of the two. Margaret Price was then summoned for assaulting her sister-in-law, Mary Price, and John Price was charged with assaulting Thomas Price, the husband of Mary Price. It transpired that after the previous assault, Charles Price and the defendants in the present case, with two others of the family, went down to Thomas Price's house, and there assaulted him and his wife. The magistrates thought they had heard enough of the cases, and dismissed them all.

**15 13 August 1881**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

NON MAINTENANCE Mr George Arrowsmith, relieving officer to the Northwich Union, applied for an order to compel **James Hoole**, waterman, Ellesmere Port, to pay 17s and costs, arrears due under an order to contribute to the support of his mother. Order granted.

**16 20 August 1881**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

HAVING A DOG WITHOUT A LICENCE **John Roscoe** of Elton, boatman, was summoned for having a dog without a licence at Elton on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July last, and fined 2s 6d and costs. The case was proved by Constable Williams.

**17 5 September 1881**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

NON MAINTENANCE The following were summoned by Mr George Arrowsmith for arrears of maintenance :- **John Hough**, waterman, Waterloo Road, Castle, ordered to pay 2s 6d a week.

**18 24 September 1881**

A boatman named **John Harris** has been found in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in a drowning state. He died shortly after being rescued. It is supposed he was drunk and fell off his boat into the canal.

**19 28 September 1881**

SHOCKING FATALITIES Three fatal accidents have been reported to the Bolton County Police. **Elizabeth Ashcroft**, wife of a Liverpool boatman, was found drowned in a canal at Aspull ; Joseph Boardman, drawer, was killed by the fall of a roof in Brinsop Hall Colliery, Westhoughton, and Ellen Berry, aged 11, of Alfred Street, Swinton, was burned to death while on a visit to a married sister in Little Lever.

**20 29 October 1881**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

AN INEBRIATE **John Poole**, waterman, was charged by PC McHale with being drunk and quarrelling with his wife on the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. He was fined 5s and costs.

**21 24 December 1881**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

A "COMMERCIAL" CHARGED WITH STEALING A SOVEREIGN Moses Cranshaw, commercial traveller, Bolton, was charged on remand with stealing a sovereign, the property of Mr John Lea Ward, farmer, Stanthorpe near Middlewich, on the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. Mr Stringer appeared for the prosecution and Mr Fletcher, Northwich, for the defendant. Mr Ward said he was at the Railway Inn, Wharton, on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup> inst at seven o'clock. Amongst the company present was the defendant, who spoke about (?tossing). Shortly afterwards, witness took a sovereign out of his pocket and put it upon the table, when the defendant took it up and said it was a bad one, and threatened to become a witness against him for having a counterfeit coin upon him. When desired by the company present to return the coin, he declined to do so, but handed it over to a man named Edward Bowens, and desired him to change it, which he did. Defendant would neither give up the change nor the sovereign, nor was he so drunk as not to know what he was doing. Witness was quite sober. **David Robinson**, boatman, gave corroborative evidence. Edward Bowens, grocer, Winsford, was at the Railway Inn and heard the conversations about the sovereign, and told the defendant if it was a bad one he would give him change for it, which he at once counted out and gave him for it. When he found out to whom the coin belonged, he begged that it should be returned to its proper owner. Thomas Dodd, landlord of the Railway Inn, Wharton, said he was

called into the smoke room and told what had occurred. He desired the sovereign to be returned, or he should send for a police officer. Sergeant Gosling took defendant into custody on a charge of stealing the sovereign. Defendant said he was not guilty. When searched, he had £8 10s in gold and 22s 6d in silver upon him. Mr Fletcher, in defence, briefly addressed the Bench, who agreed to dismiss the case.

## 22 25 January 1882

ALLEGED THEFT AT BARNTON On Saturday, at the Police Court, Northwich, before Mr H Neumann, **William Palin**, a boat lad 14 years of age, was charged with stealing two shawls from the establishment of Mr William Moore, Barnton, on Friday afternoon. It was stated that the accused went into the shop to enquire whether they sold brooches, and on his departure the shawls were missed by Mr Moore's daughter, who went in search of him, and found him with the articles in his possession. Remanded until Tuesday.

## 23 25 January 1882

ALLEGED ROPE STEALING FROM A NORTHWICH FLAT At the Northwich Police Court on Saturday, before Mr H Neumann, **Frederick Harrison**, a flatman of Northwich, was brought up under warrant, charged with stealing some ropes belonging to the flat *Jack*, which was moored at Lovitt's Point, Witton. **George Miller**, waterman, Witton, said that in the month of October last he was captain of the flat *Jack*, belonging to the late **Mr Thomas Gibson**. About the latter part of the month, the flat was moored in Lovitt's Point, Witton, on the river Weaver. Previous to leaving her, he put all the ropes including the one produced in the hold, and fastened down the hatches. From something he had heard, he went soon after Christmas to the flat, and on searching the hold, found all the ropes he had left were gone. PC Miller said that from information received on the 27<sup>th</sup> December he proceeded to Runcorn, and in a marine stores belonging to Mr Job Sproston, found a quantity of ropes, and amongst them the one produced. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, he took the prisoner, who made no reply to the charge, into custody from the Birkenhead Police. Prisoner was remanded until Tuesday.

## 24 28 January 1882

NORTHWICH POLICE COURT, TUESDAY

STEALING ROPE **Frederick Harrison** and **Thomas Royle** of Northwich were charged with stealing, on the 29<sup>th</sup> December, 10 lbs of rope valued at £1, the property of the Cheshire Amalgamated Society Salt Company Limited. Mr Fletcher appeared for the prisoner Royle. John Williams, a pansmith working at the works, stated that about the middle of December he took down the elevator flat rope, which was used for discharging salt, and he put it into the storeroom amongst a lot of other ropes. He did not see the rope again until the 22<sup>nd</sup> inst, when he saw it at the Northwich Police Station. The rope produced was the same he placed in the storeroom. **Thomas Hamnett**, boatman living at Lymm, stated that about three weeks ago he saw the prisoner and two other men with three bundles of rope at Preston Brook, on the canal side. They asked him to take them to Runcorn, and threw the rope on to the boat. He took them to the Old Quay at Runcorn. Harrison accompanied him on the boat, and took the rope away when they got to the journey's end. He believed the three bundles of rope produced were those he had in his boat. He did not identify the prisoner Royle. PS Batty said that from information he received on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January, he apprehended the prisoner Royle about one o'clock the next morning at his house in Leicester Street, Northwich, and charged him with stealing a quantity of rope from Blackwell's Salt Works, in company with the prisoner Harrison and another man, on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> December. He replied, "I know nothing about it". Witness then took him into custody, and at the police station charged the two prisoners together with stealing the coil of flat rope produced and a quantity of round rope, on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> December last. Harrison replied, "I am guilty. Royle, Gresty and I met in the Green Dragon, Witton, on Thursday evening, the 29<sup>th</sup> December. Royle and Gresty asked me if I could find a place to (....) some rope, and if I could, they would find some rope. We

arranged to meet at night, and we met at the Market Tavern in Apple Market Street, and we went to Bleckwell's at about (.....). Royle and Gresty went up the steps first, and I followed them. We went through a room into the storeroom. Royle and Gresty picked the ropes out, and we all carried them away. Early next morning, we took them to Barnton and put them in a boat, and we all three walked to Preston Brook". (Next part unreadable). Royle again said he knew nothing about it. There was a further charge against Harrison of stealing rope, value £1, the property of Mr Thomas Gibson. George Mills, waterman, Northwich, stated that in the month of October last, he was captain of the flat *Jack*, belonging to the late Mr Thomas Gibson. About the latter part of the month, the flat was moored at Lovitt's Point on the river Weaver. Previous to leaving her, he had put all the ropes, including the one produced, in the hold, and fastened down the hatches. From something he had heard around Christmas, he went into the flat and found that the ropes were gone. He particularly identified the rope produced by the flaw in one of the strands. Thomas Banner gave similar evidence to that recorded in the last case. W H Radcliffe, assistant to Mr John Sproston, marine store dealer, said that on the 6<sup>th</sup> December he bought the small rope produced for 4s 6d from a man who gave the name of Fred Harrison. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December he bought the large rope produced from the same man. PC Miller proved taking the prisoner into custody from the Birkenhead police. Prisoner made no reply to the charge. The Bench, in the last case, sentenced Harrison to three months' imprisonment, and in the former charges to one day's imprisonment, the prisoner Hoyle being discharged.

## 25 1 March 1882

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY

SCHOOL BOARD PROSECUTION **Richard Seymour**, boatman, whose wife appeared, was summoned for not sending his child regularly to school. Mr Bowyer, school attendance officer, stated that during the past three months the defendant had only sent his child to school nine times out of 105. The mother had been before the committee, and stated that the child was taken on board the boat. Mr Bankes : Have they a residence here? Mr Bowyer : Yes, sir. The Bench fined the defendant 5s, including costs.

AN UNTRUSTWORTHY BOATMAN **Richard Taylor**, a boatman, was charged with having, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, stolen £1 2s 9d, the moneys of his employer, Mr W Bate. Mr F Bate, son of the prosecutor, said the prisoner had been in his father's employ about a month or six weeks, and had charge of the boat "*Martha*". On the 18<sup>th</sup> instant, he (witness) arranged with the prisoner to take a cargo of sand to Bury, and at the time paid him £1 17s 3d, the full freight. He gave him £1 2s 9d to pay the canal dues on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Canal, telling him not to spend it or he should have a policeman after him. He should have left on Wednesday with his boat, but he came to the office and said he had spent all the money he had given him, and could not go away without some more. His wife soon afterwards came, and he gave her 10s more. The prisoner neglected to go away with the boat, and on the following day the prisoner again came to the office saying he had spent the money, and he was given into custody. Sergeant Walley proved apprehending the prisoner at the Stanley Arms, and on charging him, he said, "Yes, I have spent the money". The prisoner now pleaded guilty, and was sent to prison for one month with hard labour.

## 26 1 March 1882

NORTHWICH POLICE COURT, FRIDAY

BEATING HIS WIFE **James William Catton**, a boatman, was brought up under warrant, charged with committing an aggravated assault on his wife, **Harriet Catton**. The complainant said that on Monday she was attending to her business, when her husband, who was "rather put about" came to her and ill-treated her, knocking her about fearfully. The boat was at Wincham at one of the salt works at the time. When she went to the cabin, he beat her all about the body several times. He was in the habit of doing it. She did not wish to press the case too hard against him, but hoped this would be a sufficient warning to him. The prisoner besought the Bench to "look it over" this time,

saying that "he would never, never, do it any more". He was fined 10s, including costs, and cautioned.

### **27 1 March 1882**

**SAD DEATH OF A BOATMAN** Mr Yates, coroner, held an inquest at the Town Hall on Monday, on the body of **Richard Biddle**, a boatman, who died on Friday from injuries received the previous day from a fall, the outcome of an altercation which took place between the deceased and a farm servant named Thomas Edwards, who is in custody charged with the manslaughter of the deceased. It appears that the deceased had bargained with Edwards' employer, Mr Joseph Dale, farmer, Buglawton, for a quantity of hay, in exchange for which Mr Dale was to receive a certain quantity of manure from the deceased, and on Thursday last the hay was delivered at the Buxton Bridge Wharf, Buglawton, at which place the deceased's boat was stationed, when a dispute arose as to the quality and quantity of the hay, in consequence of which Edwards, by the direction of his master, who was also present, went to fetch the hay from off the deceased's boat, for the purpose of taking it back home, when the deceased endeavoured to prevent Edwards from carrying out his master's directions ; whereupon Edwards pushed deceased, who was at the time standing on a plank across an empty boat which was lying alongside that of his own, when deceased fell into the empty boat and received such injuries as resulted in his death. Mr A Andrew appeared for the prisoner Edwards, and Mr R Linton watched the case on behalf of the relatives of the deceased. In consequence of the Coroner having another inquest to attend to in the afternoon at Church Lawton, after hearing the evidence of two witnesses, the inquest was adjourned until Tuesday morning.

### **28 4 March 1882**

**THE ALLEGED MANSLAUGHTER – ADJOURNED INQUEST** The adjourned inquest on the body of **Richard Biddle**, boatman, who died on the 24<sup>th</sup> February from the effects of a fall caused by a push from Thomas Edwards, farm servant, Buglawton, was resumed at the Town Hall on Tuesday morning. Further evidence was adduced which showed that the deceased, while endeavouring to prevent Edwards from taking the hay off the boat, was pushed by Edwards, from which he fell from the plank on which he stood into the empty boat, thereby receiving the injuries that led to his death. Dr Davidson, who had made a *post mortem* examination of the body, stated that death had resulted from fracture of the spine, which might be caused by a fall as had been described. In his opinion, if medical assistance had been called in at once, deceased's life would not have been saved as, from the nature of the injury, it was utterly impossible for the man to recover or to live for any length of time. The jury, after upwards of an hour's consultation, returned a verdict that deceased had met his death by a fall into Messrs Fitton and Co's boat, the fall being caused by Thomas Edwards who, in the act of saving himself from falling into the canal, pushed the deceased, from which he fell. Edwards was brought before the County Magistrates on Wednesday, charged with the manslaughter of Biddle, the hearing resulting in his committal to the assizes on the above charge ; bail was allowed, the prisoner in £50, and two others of £25 each, or one in £50.

### **29 1 April 1882**

**MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY**

**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CASES** Mr Fletcher, in prosecuting on behalf of the Northwich School Attendance Committee, said that he had been asked by the committee to request the Bench to support them in these proceedings. Complaints were constantly made by the school managers of the irregular attendance, and the attendance officer, Mr Davies, had made special visits in the district. As their worships were aware, there was a committee at Middlewich with the Vicar as Chairman, and that committee had investigated these cases in the first instance, and they were particularly careful before they sent any cases before their worships. The Chairman said that they should take each case on its merits. Mr Fletcher said that he only wished the Bench to bear in mind that the people well knew that the Act had been in operation some time, and there could, therefore, be no excuse on the ground of ignorance. Mr Davies then proved the following cases :-

**John Atherton**, waterman, Wharton Road ; **Thomas Smith**, boatman of Wharton ; each fined 2s 6d.

**30 20 May 1882**

CHESHIRE ADJOURNED SESSIONS

Michael Riley, 19, labourer, and **William Greenwood**, 27, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing one windlass handle, the property of Messrs Jesse and Wright, Lymm, at Hyde on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, and were each sentenced to four months' imprisonment.

WEDNESDAY

ASSAULT AT RUNCORN **Joseph Taylor**, 37, flatman was indicted for assaulting **Mary Ann Brookes** at Runcorn on the 30<sup>th</sup> April. Mr Burke Wood prosecuted and Mr Marshall defended. It appeared that the prosecutrix was alone in a boat manned by a man named (?Hidier), with whom she had lived for eleven years, and prisoner had his boat alongside, by the Salt Works, Runcorn. Prisoner asked her if there was anyone on board, and she said "that there must be someone on board if she was there". She was at the time standing by the scuttle hole of the forecastle, when the prisoner came to her, asked her to go down, which she refused, pushed her down and assaulted her. The jury found the prisoner guilty, and he was sentenced to three calendar months' imprisonment.

THEFTS AT RUNCORN Walter Barker (23), bricksetter ; **William Hogan alias Frawley** (23), boatman ; and Thomas Blakemore (22), labourer, were charged with stealing and receiving one overcoat, one singlet, one towel, one pair of braces, one comb and one knife, the property of **Thomas Weedall** ; and one pair of trousers, one shirt and one handkerchief, the property of **Peter Poole**, at Runcorn on the 18<sup>th</sup> April. Mr Burke Wood prosecuted, and said that Weedall was the mate of the flat "*Sarah*", and Peter Poole, who was master of the flat, left about twelve o'clock on the day in question, leaving Weedall in charge. Weedall departed at about six o'clock, when all the articles were safe and the cabin fastened. An officer stationed at Runcorn Dock met Barker, and as he appeared very "bulky" his suspicions were aroused, the result being that he searched him in a hut close by, and the various articles were found upon him. When he was taken to the police station, he mentioned the other prisoners as being concerned in the affair, but he (Mr Wood) did not believe there was any evidence against Blackmore, and that against Hogan was extremely dangerous to convict upon. Hogan and Blackmore were then acquitted. Walter Barker was found guilty and sentenced to five years penal servitude, having borne previously a very bad character. Walter Barker was further charged, along with Thomas Lane, with stealing one coat, one pair of trousers and one pair of boots, the property of **William Wareing**, at Runcorn on the 21<sup>st</sup> April. Mr Burke Wood, who prosecuted, said that as Barker had been found guilty in the last case, he would not proceed against him on this charge, and Lane had pleaded guilty. The circumstances of the case were these :- William Wareing, a boatman, locked up the cabin of his flat at Runcorn on the 30<sup>th</sup> April about nine o'clock at night, and when he returned the next morning he found the cabin broken open and some things stolen. Lane was sentenced to six calendar months' hard labour.

**31 15 July 1882**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

NON PAYMENT OF MAINTENANCE The following were summoned by Mr Arthur Arrowsmith, relieving officer to the Northwich Union, for non payment of maintenance arrears, and against whom the usual orders were made :-

Thomas Hodgkinson, Hartford Lane, Davenham ; and **John Pickstock**, waterman.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CASES Mr Caleb Davies, school attendance officer to the Northwich Union, summoned the following for breach of the education bye laws :-

**James Williamson**, waterman, Castle.

**32 22 July 1882**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

STRAYING CATTLE **Benjamin Fradley**, boatman, was summoned by Sergeant Jones for allowing two mules to stray upon the road at Rode Heath, and was fined 5s and costs.

**33 16 September 1882**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CASES The following persons were summoned by Mr Caleb Davies, school attendance officer to the Northwich Union, for breach of the education bye laws :-

**Walter Perry**, waterman, Navigation Road, 3s : **James Williamson**, waterman, Navigation Road, 5s.

**34 27 September 1882**

A MAN DROWNED IN THE CANAL AT LYMM

THE INQUEST Mr Worsley, deputy coroner, held an inquest at the Bridgewater Arms, Lymm, on Thursday, touching the death of **William Bradshaw**, a horse driver in the employment of the Bridgewater Navigation Company.

Eliza Bradshaw said the deceased was her father, and lived at 10 Beatrice Street, Latchford. He was 54 years of age. She last saw him alive last Monday night. He left home early on Tuesday morning to go to his work. As far as she knew, deceased was never subject to fits of any kind.

**Thomas Wood**, 5 Egerton Street, captain of No 16 flat, belonging to the canal company, said the deceased was the driver of the boat under him. He last saw him alive on Monday night. He was then at Oughtrington Bridge, and shouted to witness that he would take the horse to the stables, and immediately went away with it in that direction. The ostler told him on Tuesday morning that the horse had come home without the driver. Deceased was sober when he left witness, but the night was very dark.

John Bate said he lived in Cherry Lane, Lymm, and worked on the canal bank. He was well acquainted with the deceased. On Tuesday morning, he heard that the deceased was missing, and he sent to Thomas Wood, the captain of No 16 flat, to ascertain whether he had gone home. On Wednesday morning, he began grappling in the Bridgewater Navigation Canal to see whether he could find the body. He found it in the canal near the Navigation stables, between Lymm Bridge and Oughtrington Bridge. Deceased had no coat on.

Joseph Chatterton, police-constable, said he searched the body of the deceased, and found that his watch had stopped at three minutes past nine o'clock. Witness had the body stripped and examined carefully. There was a slight mark over the right eye, which he should say was done with a grappling iron. There were no other marks of violence on the body. Witness did not think the deceased had met with any foul play.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

**35 13 October 1882**

NORTHWICH COUNTY COURT At this court on Wednesday, before Mr W Wynn Ffoulkes, judge, **William Forster**, boatman, Regent Street, Runcorn, brought an action against **Charles Williams**, another boatman, of Stoke on Trent, for the recovery of £15 for the loss of a horse, alleged to have been drowned through the negligence of the defendant. Mr A Fletcher represented the plaintiff and Mr Paine of Handley appeared for the defendant. The plaintiff's case was that on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July last, he was proceeding from Runcorn with two barges to Marston, and that when at Runcorn he met the defendant, who was going in the opposite direction and refused to give way according to the rule of the road, the result being that the plaintiff's horse got between the defendant's horse and line and, falling into the canal, was drowned. At that time the defendant did not happen to be at the head of his horse, but the steersman in his boat called out to the defendant when he was 60 or 70 yards away. For the defence, it was contended that the night was dark, and that the accident occurred through the negligence of the plaintiff, the driver in the employ of the

defendant stating that while they were going along he heard the sound of footsteps on the towing path and, getting off the boat, he found that the plaintiff's horse and the defendant's had met. Witness noticed the plaintiff's horse give a "spring", and immediately there was a "plunge" in the canal. Assistance was got, and Williams, the defendant, came up. The jury who tried the case, after twenty minutes deliberation, found a verdict for the defendant.

### **36 13 October 1882**

THE FATAL ACCIDENT TO A NORTHWICH FLATMAN

THE INQUEST Mr H C Yates held an inquest at the Old Ship Inn, Northwich, on Wednesday, on the body of **William Clough**, 61 years of age, who was killed in a river flat near Northwich on Monday afternoon.

**Mary Ann Clough** of Leicester Street, Northwich, said the deceased was her husband, and was a flat captain. He left home at six o'clock on Monday morning to go to his flat at Winsford. She was informed of his death on Monday night.

Joseph Senior of Castlebank, Northwich, said that on Monday at 4.15 pm, he was at the lock bridge, Vale Royal. The deceased's flat was in the lock, and he (the deceased) was lowering the mast with the windlass, when the loading block slipped and forced the windlass handle out of his hand. The handle struck him violently on the head and he fell. Witness went to him, and he died in a few seconds. Deceased was alone on the flat.

**John Molyneux**, lock tender at Vale Royal, deposed that on Monday he was at the lock when the deceased put his barge in. He proceeded to lower his mast, and before the mast was down, he saw him fall. Witness went on deck and raised the deceased, but life was extinct. The loading block had given way. The block had been tied with wire instead of being shackled. It was the captain's duty to see that the block was securely shackled. It was customary to lower the masts for the Hartford Bridge while vessels were in the lock. Many of the barges were now manned by the captains and their wives.

The Coroner having summed up, the jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

### **37 17 October 1882**

CHARGE AGAINST A RUNCORN BOATMAN On Monday at Leigh, a boatman named **Benjamin Taylor** of Runcorn was charged on remand with stealing £11 17s 6d from the person of **William Bradshaw**, also a boatman. Prosecutor had been drinking in Manchester, where he met prisoner, who gave him permission to ride to Leigh on his boat. They bought a pint of whisky at Patricroft, and drank it on the boat. Prosecutor said his money was safe at Astley, but when in the basin at Leigh, he recollected seeing prisoner withdraw his hand from his pocket, being too drunk at the time to offer any resistance. Mr Taylor said there was not the slightest evidence against the accused, who was captain of his own boat and a respectable man. The case was dismissed.

### **38 18 November 1882**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **William Taylor**, a boatman, was summoned for cruelty to a horse by working it while in an unfit state. On the 21<sup>st</sup> October, PC Hale found the defendant driving a horse on the canal side at Broken Cross. It was in a very poor condition, suffering from two wounds on the shoulder, and totally unfit for work. Inspector Harper of the RSPCA was communicated with, and on the following day he found the horse completely worn out. The defendant had since destroyed the animal, and Mr Harper therefore did not press for a heavy penalty. A fine of 10s was imposed.

### **39 3 February 1883**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

ALLEGED PERMISSION OF DRUNKENNESS **Henry Owen** and Allen Jones were charged, the one with being drunk on licensed premises on the 13<sup>th</sup> January, and the other with permitting

drunkenness. Superintendent Hindley prosecuted, and Mr Fletcher appeared for the defence. Sergeant Turner said he visited the Red Lion Inn at Marston, kept by the defendant Allen Jones on the 13<sup>th</sup> last. He saw the defendant Owen in the taproom with a spirit glass before him, very drunk. He drew the attention of the landlord to him, and he replied that he was all right. When Owen was ordered to leave the house, he staggered very much. He asked the defendant Jones if Owen was sober, and he said he was not. By Mr Fletcher : I had not known Owen previously, and had not had an opportunity of seeing how he walked when he was free from drink. He saw a man named Peter Hargreaves there, and he was little better. Constable Hatton gave corroborative evidence, and said after defendant left the house, he had to support himself by the rails of the bridge. The defendant Jones said to last witness that he had no reason to report him, as he was not so bad. Mr Fletcher, in addressing the Bench on behalf of the defendants, said it was not a case of permitting drunkenness at all. Henry Owen, who was a respectable boatman, went into the house at the time in question, where he had only three glasses of gin. Unfortunately he was afflicted with the rheumatism, which affected his gait. When they had heard the evidence, he was sure the Bench would not consider it "a case for conviction, and not even for investigation by the police". Allen Jones, landlord of the Red Lion, said he remembered the other defendant coming to his house on the day in question, a little before one o'clock, and he stayed till three o'clock. During the time he was in his house, he had only three glasses of gin. He knew him to be a respectable man of good character. He was afflicted with rheumatism, and one could not tell whether he was drunk or not. He was not noisy at the time, and the officers made no complaint of noise. When Sergeant Turner came into the house, he said he thought that man had had too much drink, or something to that effect ; and he (witness) replied that he did not think he had had too much at all. He then said, "You had better get him out", and added that he would report him, but did not say for what. He did not intend to serve Owen with any more drink. He knew how far he could go, and that it was not safe for him to go beyond three glasses. (Laughter). Henry Owen said he came from Preston Brook that morning. When he got to Marston he went to buy some provisions for the men. He then met Mr Hargreaves, and he went with him into the Red Lion to make some arrangements with him about that business. When he came out, he went to the bridge and looked over to see if the boats were all right. In answer to Superintendent Hindley, witness said he went into the house at half past twelve, and it was he (witness) who took the policeman home, and not the policeman him. (Laughter). He was quite sure none of his lads had got hold of him when he went away. He might have his hand on his shoulder, but that was all. Mr Hargreaves and Mr Ayres also added some corroborative evidence. The Chairman said it was a suspicious case, but the Bench did not consider the evidence strong enough for a conviction. The defendants would therefore be dismissed.

#### **40      24 February 1883**

##### **WHEELOCK**

**INQUEST** An inquest was held on Wednesday at the New Inn by Mr H C Yates, coroner, on the body of **Henry Green**, 67, formerly a boatman, residing at Arrowsmith's Row, who died suddenly on Sunday morning. Deceased had been to church though in a very weak condition, for on his return home he was observed to stop several times to rest. He had no sooner arrived at home and sat down than his son-in-law noticed that he was ill. He moved him to the sofa, and immediately afterwards he died. **Richard Jinks**, boatman, said he was son-in-law of the deceased. He saw deceased alive on Sunday morning before he went to church. Deceased complained of being unwell, and witness tried to dissuade him from going to church, but he did go, and on his return home, as soon as he had entered the house and sat down, he cried out, "Oh Lord, help me", and was in the act of falling from the chair when witness ran forward, caught him in his arms and lifted him on to the sofa, where he immediately died. He had complained for a day or two before, but had not seen a doctor for ten days previously. He had never seen him in a fit. He had not been working on the Saturday, and had done nothing but walk about. The Coroner said he had had some private conversation with Dr Latham whilst at Smallwood on Monday about the case, and had then learned that Dr Latham had not seen deceased for ten days previous to his death and, therefore, could not

give a certificate, though he had no doubt that the poor fellow had had a fit of apoplexy. Under these circumstances, he thought the jury would have no difficulty in finding a verdict. Verdict : "Died from natural causes".

#### **41**      **7 April 1883**

##### **RUNCORN COUNTY COURT, TUESDAY**

**FEARFUL DEATH OF A HORSE** An action was brought by **Richard Forshaw**, boatman, Shaw Street, Runcorn, to recover from Thomas Acton, contractor, Knutsford, the sum of £14, being damages for the value of a horse which the plaintiff alleged lost its life through the unprotected state of a lime pit on the farm of Mr James Weir at Norton. Mr Taylor, barrister at law, Liverpool, instructed by Mr Burton, was for the plaintiff, and Mr Fletcher of Northwich for the defendant. In opening the case, the learned counsel said, originally and even now, there were two co-defendants, one named James Weir and the other John Acton (*sic*), and the claim made by Forshaw was for £14 for the loss of his horse. Since the action had been commenced, Weir had died by misadventure, and in order to explain Mr Acton's liability, it would be necessary for him to deal at some little length with the circumstances under which they alleged Weir himself was liable. Forshaw was a boatman, and the horse in question was used to tow his boat along the canal. Plaintiff had been in the habit of making arrangements with Mr Weir to put up his horse in his stable. On the night of the 10<sup>th</sup> January last, plaintiff took his horse to Mr Weir's stable for it to remain there until morning. At four o'clock on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> January, Forshaw went for the horse, and took the animal from the farm premises towards the canal, where his boat lay. A road led to the canal, which, although not on the plan produced in court, had been used for more than 20 years. The horse having taken fright at a heap of lime lying off the road, in trying to get through a gate lower down, tumbled down a steep incline and fell into a lime pit. The pit was five feet in depth and contained lime to the depth of two feet six inches. In spite of all the efforts of Forshaw and a number of men who came to his assistance, it was impossible to rescue the animal until it had perished through the effects of the lime. The hair was completely burned off, and the eyes of the animal burned out, and shortly after being got out of the pit the horse ceased to exist. The question for the jury was, who was to blame for the loss of the horse? The plaintiff's case originally against Weir was, that this path was dangerous, and it was his duty to fence it. Mr Acton was a contractor, and was employed to effect certain changes to the farm buildings of Mr Weir. In the course of his work he had dug a lime pit, and the question he would submit to the jury was whether he left the pit in a negligent and unfenced condition, which the learned counsel contended was the fact. His Honour : You contend it was the duty of the contractor to fence the pit for the protection of the public? Mr Taylor : Not for the protection of the public, but for the protection of the people whom Weir wanted to use the road. His Honour : Have you authority for that? Mr Taylor : I think so, sir. Evidence in support of the learned counsel was given by the plaintiff, who stated that since his horse was burned, the pit had been protected. He had used the road for fifty years. There was about 18 inches of lime in the pit. Cross-examined by Mr Fletcher : The horse got beyond his control as he was going down the road, and jumped into the pit while he was on his back. If the horse had not got beyond his control, he would have passed the pit all right. He could not say what caused the horse to take fright. Richard Burrows, foreman joiner, 8 Vine Street, Runcorn, deposed that he surveyed the land and road where the lime pit was situated. This pit was 3 ft 9 in in depth, and contained lime to the depth of nine or ten inches. He had seen the pit that morning, and found that an embankment had been made for a protection from the road. **William Morris**, captain of the flat *Gerty*, deposed that when his boat was lying at Newton on the 11<sup>th</sup> January, he helped Forshaw to get the horse out of the pit. He had used the road himself for many years, and at the time his horse was kept at Mr Weir's stables. Edwin Tuckey, Top Locks, deposed that the horse was hired from him by Forshaw, and was worth £14. By Mr Fletcher : The action was partly his, as he had told the plaintiff he should hold him responsible for the value of the horse. Mr C L Evans, agent to Sir Richard Brooke, said he gave instructions to Mr Acton to do certain repairs at Mr Weir's farm premises at Norton. He knew that Mr Acton was using the pit shown on the plan during the course of the work. He had written a letter

to Mr Acton, who had stated to him that he considered the lime in the pit belonged to him. By Mr Fletcher : The lime pit was there when Mr Acton undertook the work. The repairs were finished about November. George Pennington, farmer of Norton, deposed that in March 1879, he made a lime pit upon exactly the same spot the present one was made. The one he made was filled up again. The road upon which the horse was proceeding towards the canal had been made by Mr Weir, and was one of convenience. Mr Taylor read a letter written by Mr Acton to Mr Burton on the 14<sup>th</sup> February, in which the writer stated that the pit had been made about six or seven years prior to his using it, and seeing that the accident did not occur until two months after he had finished with it, he was quite at a loss to see any grounds of action against him. The writer further stated that Forshaw must have been guilty of a certain amount of carelessness, and that the road was merely an occupation road. Mr Fletcher said, before addressing the jury, he wished to urge most strongly that there was no case of negligence made out against Mr Acton. The Judge said he had listened to the case all through, and he could not see that there was any evidence to go to the jury that Acton ever made the pit at all. Mr Taylor submitted that it had been clearly proved that as a contractor he had used the pit. The Judge said that there was no evidence that he was a contractor. Mr Taylor : There is the statement of Mr Evans that he was a contractor. The Judge remarked that Mr Evans's evidence was that Acton was employed by him to do the work. He should say he was not a contractor unless he entered into a contract. He did not think there was any evidence of negligence. There was no evidence to go to the jury that the accident was caused by the fact of the lime pit being there, but by the fact of the horse having taken fright at something else. Mr Taylor : The only evidence upon that point is that he took fright at another lot of lime. His Honour : I think there is no case for the jury. Mr Taylor asked the Judge to make a note of the following, to which his Honour assented. "There is evidence that Acton was a contractor – an independent contractor, that he used this lime pit in question as part of his operations in performing the contract ; that he left it in an unfenced and negligent condition ; that it was dangerously close to a private road which had been much used for a considerable period of time ; that in leaving it unfenced, close to the road, in that way, Acton was guilty of negligence ; that there was evidence of it to go to the jury". He did not know whether it was necessary to cite the case. Mr Fletcher : The propositions my friend has stated are not borne out in evidence. His Honour : That is exactly it. I am of opinion there is no evidence that Acton made the hole. Unless he did so, he would not be liable under the circumstances of this case, and I think also there is no evidence to go to the jury of any negligence on the part of Acton. Further, that there is no evidence that the accident was caused by any negligent act at all. The evidence is that the accident was caused by the horse's own act. His Honour non suited the plaintiff, with leave to bring a fresh action.

## **42     May 19 1883**

**SINGULAR DEATH OF A NEWLY BORN CHILD AT ACTON, NANTWICH**     On Thursday afternoon, Mr Henry Churton, coroner, held an inquest at the Star Inn, Acton, on the body of a newly born female child belonging to Mrs Owen, wife of **John Owen**, boatman in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company.

Sarah Owen stated that she resided with her parents at Burland, and her father was a boatman. About half past eight o'clock on Wednesday, her mother, who expected to be confined, sent her to fetch a neighbour. Her mother had previously engaged the services of a midwife, but she was not at home when wanted. Witness heard cries as of an infant before going for assistance, and they proceeded from under the bedclothes. She went for Mrs Hassall, who attended her mother. Witness did not see the child alive, but after it was dead she noticed a discolouration of the right ear and neck. Her mother had a family of eleven children, and two had died previously. She had been suffering from swelling of the legs during the past eight months, and was incapable of attending to her domestic duties. For the past three months, she had acted in a strange way as if her mind was affected, and on one or two occasions had torn the bedclothes into shreds. On another occasion she got up in the middle of the night and brought all the pictures which were hanging up downstairs and placed them in her own bedroom. Sometimes she talked in a wild and incoherent manner, but

witness never heard her threaten to make away with her infant. She had always been an exceedingly kind mother.

Charlotte Hassall stated that she was a neighbour of Mrs Owen, and was fetched to attend her about nine o'clock the previous morning. Mrs Owen was in bed, and the child was in a utensil covered by the bedclothes. Witness asked her how she was, and she replied, "All right". She said the child had been born, and witness pulled off the bedclothes and found the body as described. The child was quite dead. It was a full grown and fine baby. From the position in which witness discovered the body, she was of opinion that it might easily have been suffocated in the vessel in which it was found, and which was half full of water. The mother of the child told witness that it was alive when born, and that she heard it cry. Witness rendered what assistance she could in conjunction with another woman she took with her to assist. She also gave instructions for a doctor to be sent for, but there was no one to convey the message. The mother, when told the child was dead, said she expected it. There were marks of discolouration on the back and the right ear. The mother seemed rational enough when witness first spoke to her, but she afterwards rambled and seemed queer in her head.

Dr William Mathews deposed that he made a *post mortem* examination of the body of the deceased. It was a well developed nine months' child. Externally there were marks of discolouration on the right ear and the right side of the head. The skin was not broken. There was also a discolouration from the middle of the back extending to the left side of the hip. Upon removing the scalp, there was a slight amount of extravasated blood underneath the part discoloured. The brain was perfectly healthy. The lungs were sufficiently inflated with air to convince him that the child was born alive. The cause of death was suffocation or drowning, owing to having been dropped into the vessel, containing water, and the marks on the body were consistent with the child's death having been accidentally caused during the birth of the child. He only saw the body five hours after the birth. The mother was not responsible for her actions now. She was rambling in her mind, and it was necessary for someone to look after her. Three weeks ago, his assistant attended the mother in anticipation of her confinement, but witness heard nothing of her from that time until the present.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said the case was a peculiar one. The mother had given birth to some ten or a dozen children, the majority of whom were still living. The deceased child was somewhat unexpectedly born the previous morning, but there was nothing in the mother's conduct to lead them to suppose she had any intention of concealing its birth. On the contrary, the doctor had been sent for three weeks before, and a midwife's services were secured. It was evident from the medical evidence that there was nothing inconsistent with the child meeting its death accidentally. The husband of the woman was a respectable man in the employ of the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Company, and was at his work when this unfortunate occurrence took place. The question for the jury to decide was whether they were satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the infant was accidentally drowned in the period of childbirth.

The Coroner and witnesses having retired a few minutes to enable the jury to consider their verdict, the foreman, Mr John Boffey, informed the Coroner upon re-entering the room that they were unanimously of opinion that the death of the child was the result of accident.

### **43      19 May 1883**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

**CRUELTY TO ANIMALS    Thomas Bricknell**, canal boatman, was summoned for cruelty to a mare by working the same when suffering from lameness and wounds on the shoulders, at Rudheath Lordship on the 26<sup>th</sup> April. The offence was proved by Sergeant Shaw and Inspector Harper of the RSPCA. The defendant, who made no defence, said he had since destroyed the mare. Fined 10s and 8s 6d costs. Mr Neumann : Is the practice of using horses of this kind on the canal very prevalent? Inspector Harper : It is, sir. Mr Neumann : I was afraid so.

#### 44 23 May 1883

##### THE BOAT ACCIDENT AT RUNCORN

**INQUEST ON THE BODIES** An enquiry into the circumstances of the deaths of **Emily Musker**, wife of **William Musker** of Barnton near Northwich, and her two children, who were drowned on Wednesday night in the Tidal Dock, Runcorn, through the capsizing of a narrow boat when loading, was held on Friday morning before Mr Ridgway, coroner. The inquest was held at the Bridgewater Arms Hotel, Top Locks, Mr Robert Wright being foreman of the jury. Mr J Meadowcroft represented the Bridgewater Navigation Co Limited, and Mr E B Toft and Mr Gibson, the owner of the boat, were also present.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said the facts of the case into which the jury had to enquire were shortly these. It appeared that on Wednesday night Musker, whose flat was in one of the docks, was loading stone out of a schooner, and had got his boat loaded with the exception of the last stone, which was a heavy one. This had been put on the flat with one end resting on another stone in the flat and supported by a chain from a crane from the schooner on the side of the dock. Musker, it appears, was doing something, and either moved the chain or undid the stone in some way. As far as this one point was concerned, there was some little difference of opinion in the evidence which would be put before the jury, but it appeared that by some means, into which they would have to enquire, the stone tipped over and sunk the boat. The facts were simple, and the jury would have no difficulty in arriving at a verdict, and the point to which he would specially direct their attention was the question whether there was any negligence on the part of any person who had to do with the loading of the boat. He might say, since he had been Coroner, he thought this was the most painful case in which he had held an inquest. The facts were simple, but when they thought of a mother and two children being trapped in a small cabin, without any chance of escaping, there was something particularly sad about it. He trusted the jury would give their careful consideration to the question of whether there was any neglect on the part of any person.

The first witness was

William Musker, boatman, Prince's Park, Barnton, Northwich, who said : The bodies which the jury have just seen are those of my wife and children. My wife's name was Emily, aged 30, and the names of my children were Ardin and Robert, aged four years and 17 months respectively. On Wednesday afternoon last, I was loading my boat, called the *Ant of Anderson* in the Tidal Dock with a load of stone, from a schooner called *Cwmavon*, lying next to me. Whilst I was loading my boat, my wife and children were in the cabin. My boat is gauged to hold 35 tons. I had loaded the boat with the exception of the last stone. The last stone, weighing from two tons to two and a half, was lowered on to the boat by a crane from the wharf. There was a skid under the stone. I looked round, and saw that the boat was just about right. I then moved the chain from the middle of the stone to one end, in order to get the skid from under it, so that the chain could be got away. I then called to the men at the crane to lower the stone so as to get it into position, and while the men were lowering the stone it slipped about two inches too near the side of the boat. As soon as I saw the boat heaving and filling with water, I shouted to the men at the crane to heave up, but before they could do that, the boat was gone altogether. The chain was fast at one end, but there was too much slack out, and the men could not get the stone up in time to save the boat. I ran to the hatches to try to save my wife and children, who were in the cabin. I reached the cabin, but I could not do anything, as I was then up to the neck in water and had to spring to the vessel to save myself. There were three men at the crane, and I think that if they had not lowered so quickly the boat might have recovered. The man at the brake of the crane belonged to the schooner. I think the mishap was caused through the man at the brake lowering too quickly.

The Foreman : Do you think the mishap would have occurred if a competent man had been at the crane?

Witness : I don't suppose it would.

The Foreman : Were the men at the crane all sober?

Witness : Yes.

The Foreman : The fact that it is Whit week makes me ask this question.

Witness : They were all sober.

The Foreman : A juryman wishes to know whether the stone was lowered steadily or too quickly.

Witness : When the stone got on to the skid, he lowered it too fast for a short time, and when I shouted "heave up", they could not draw it up in time.

The Foreman : Was the boat fast by any ropes to the dock on the vessel?

Witness : No ; they had all been loosed off.

Mr Sinnott remarked that he had seen the crane at work, and the brake was so powerful that the man in charge could lower it inch by inch. It therefore appeared that the boat, when the last stone was lowered, must actually have been top heavy.

In reply to the Coroner, witness stated that the boat was loaded quite straight.

The Foreman, referring to Mr Sinott's remark, said it might be possible for a competent man at the crane to lower the stone as described, but it was a question whether it could be done by a strange man.

Mr Harrison said it was perfectly clear that if a large stone was placed on a boat already heavily laden, if it moved even an inch from the centre, it would capsize the boat. He therefore wished to know whether the stone was lowered gradually, or whether it was allowed to drop.

Witness : He let it run out too far.

Mr Harrison : That is not answering the question.

The Coroner : What the juryman wishes to know is whether, after he removed the first skid, he lowered the stone gently or quickly.

Witness : He lowered it out gently, and after the boat had got it, he slacked it out.

The Coroner : Do we understand that he first of all lowered it down gently?

Witness : Yes.

The Coroner : Then after he had done that, did he pay the chain out?

Witness : Yes, and before they could heave up, the boat had gone. In reply to further questions of the Coroner, witness stated that after the large skid was taken away, the stone was properly lowered on the small skid, and then the man paid out the chain. When he called out, the man at the crane did not pull up sharp enough for him, and the stone over-got him.

The Coroner : How were you trying to keep the stone in position?

Witness : By standing on one side and pushing it with my hands.

The Coroner : Did you use a crowbar?

Witness : No, sir.

Replying to further questions, witness said when he shouted to the men to "lower" they were a minute before they lowered, and while he was waiting the stone moved towards him. The man who was lowering the stone which capsized the boat had lowered several others. One of the men at the crane was taken away while the work was going on, and a strange man was sent.

The Coroner : Did the second man lower them properly?

Witness : Well, when he was lowering one in the middle of the boat, I told him to be careful, or he would have us over if he did not lower properly. The man said it would only be a bit of a roll for him.

The Coroner : Who was that man?

Witness : I don't know.

The Coroner : How was it that you did not get a proper man to finish loading with?

Witness : I did not know whether it was my place or not.

The Coroner : I suppose you are responsible for your boat being properly loaded? You have no need to go on if you find a man is not competent?

Witness : No, not if I like to be stupid ; but I did not know how they worked.

Mr Harrison : It would not be Musker's duty to look after the men on the wharf. All that he would have to do would be to look after his own boat.

The Coroner : It struck me if he had got a thoroughly incompetent man at the crane he could have stopped them, and said he would not have his boat loaded until a proper man was sent.

Mr Meadowcroft : What sort of a skid was the second one used?

Witness : It was one of my old timber-heads, almost like a wedge.

The Foreman : That may have been the cause of the stone shifting.

The Coroner : Where was the wedge placed?

Witness : Under the stone about the middle.

The Coroner : When the pressure was on the wedge, did the stone slip?

Witness : No. In reply to Mr Woodland, the witness said the stone could not possibly slip from the small skid.

The Coroner : Then, as I understand it, really the stone slipped whilst it was being lowered after the larger wedge had been removed, and you could not recover it when you called out.

Witness : Yes. By Mr Meadowcroft : The boat was loaded by the stern. He selected the stone from the vessel, remarking that it would just be sufficient to complete the load. By the Coroner : When he altered the chain, he left it about two inches from the end, just sufficient to raise it. If the chain had been tight, and the crane had been hoisted, the pressure on the boat would have been relieved, and thus the boat would have been saved from going over. He did not know of any restriction as to what a narrow boat must carry. In reply to Mr Meadowcroft, witness said when the stone was lowered into the boat, one end was perfectly stationary, and he could only account for it moving by the fact that it twisted when the one end was raised. When the stone was put down first he had no difficulty about it. It was put down right, and one end was not lifted again.

**George Tomlinson**, 18 Surrey Street, said he was a weigher in the employ of the Bridgewater Navigation Company Limited. He was assisting in loading the boat *Ant* on Wednesday last, and was engaged counting the stones and seeing that the chain was put properly round the stones. He saw the last stone, weighing about two tons and a half, taken out of the schooner, and when it was lowered into the boat she sank some three or four inches. When the stone was lowered, he was on the schooner, and could not say what Musker did about the skids. He saw him move the chain a little, and heard him call to the men to lift up a bit, so as to move the chain. The men did so, and Musker did something he could not see. Witness called out to lower steadily. The stone was lowered very steadily, and he saw it settle down into the boat. He then saw Musker unhook the chain, and the boat was all right. Witness then turned to the lad to tell him to move the crane round, and heard Musker shout, "Heave up". He turned round and saw the boat sinking.

At this point of the witness's evidence, Musker was recalled, and asked by the Coroner whether he unhooked the chain. He repeated that the chain was not unhooked, but that it was only moved to one end of the stone.

Mr R Morris suggested that Tomlinson might only have supposed that the chain was unhooked, and thought it possible that he might not have seen it himself.

Tomlinson emphatically stated that he saw Musker unhook the chain, and when he called, "Heave up", the men could not lift the stone. The chain had not been taken from its position round the stone, but it was unhooked from the crane. He had had thirty years' experience in loading boats, but could not form any opinion as to why the boat capsized. The boat was not by any means overloaded. In reply to the Foreman, witness stated that a man in the employ of the company had been at the brake in the earlier part of the work, but he was taken away, and the brake was taken charge of by the mate of the vessel. The mate was quite capable of working the crane.

Mr Meadowcroft : Was the stone lowered steadily?

Witness : Yes.

The Coroner observed that if the statement of Tomlinson was correct, even if the stone was improperly lowered, that would not be a question for them to consider.

David Roberts of Milford Haven said that he was mate of the schooner *Cwmavon*, lying in the Tidal Dock. He was helping to load the narrow boat *Ant* on Wednesday last, and was at the crane assisting in lowering the last stone. Musker was on the narrow boat, but he could not see all that Musker did. He lowered the stone as easily as he could, and landed it and stood near the brake. He saw Musker unhook the chain off the stone, and directly afterwards the boat capsized. He had been used to loading boats, but could not say whether this boat was properly loaded. In reply to the question of the jury, witness said he was perfectly certain that Musker unhooked the chain.

Richard Edwards, seaman on board the *Cwmavon*, gave corroborative evidence, and on being asked whether, after the stone was lowered, they raised it to allow the second skid to be put under, replied in the negative.

Musker, on being recalled, held to his former statement.

The Coroner said he could easily understand Musker in the excitement forgetting that he had unhooked the chain.

Musker said he was perfectly clear as to what took place.

Tomlinson, on being recalled, said the stone, after being first lowered, was raised just a little at the request of Musker, and when he had got it placed, he unhooked the chain.

Roberts, on being recalled, said the handles were taken off the crane before the stone was lowered, and the stone was not afterwards raised.

The Coroner said all the witnesses agreed as to the unhooking of the chain, with the exception of Musker, and this was the only material difference in the evidence. Referring to Musker's evidence, the Coroner said he had gone through terrible excitement, and it was quite possible he might have unhooked the chain and forgotten it.

After a short consultation, the jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

#### 45 25 July 1883

##### CHESHIRE SUMMER ASSIZES

ROBBERY WITH VIOLENCE AT ROMILLY **William Carroll** (20), boatman ; **Joseph Yates** (39), boatman ; and **Joseph Bowden** (30), boatman, were indicted for robbing **Richard Hurtle** of the sum of £1 7s 6d, and with using personal violence to him, at Romilly on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1882. Mr Honoratus Lloyd prosecuted, and prisoners, who were undefended, pleaded guilty to the robbery, but denied using violence. It appeared that on the day named the prisoners met prosecutor, who was working a canal boat along the canal in the direction of Hatherlow Tunnel. The prisoners, seeing that the prosecutor was alone, got on to the boat. The tunnel was a very difficult one to pass through, as the boat had to be worked by a person lying on his back and pressing the boat along with his feet. The tunnel was very low. Whilst carrying on this operation, the prisoners committed the offence complained of, tied prosecutor to the mast of his boat and pushed the boat backwards into the tunnel after they had got off it. A man named Hurst heard prisoners talking about some money when they were walking along the towing path, and another man named Allwood saw the prisoners at a table in the public house dividing the money. Bowden received a portion of the money. The jury found prisoners guilty. His Lordship said it was a most cowardly action to tie the man to the mast, and Carroll and Yates would be imprisoned for one year with hard labour, and Bowden for one month.

#### 46 1 August 1883

A FLATMAN DROWNED AT RUNCORN A flatman named **Robert Barker**, 22 years of age, was drowned in the Iron Ore Basin, Francis Dock, Runcorn, early on Sunday morning. The deceased was the hand of the flat *Samuel*, belonging to **Mr Richard Abel**, and the boat was lying at the place mentioned on Saturday. The deceased went on deck at half past three on Sunday morning, and accidentally fell overboard. A woman named Mary Houghton, who was sleeping on board the flat, heard the splash and raised an alarm. The body was recovered shortly afterwards, but life was extinct. An inquest will be held.

#### 47 29 September 1883

THE SUSPICIOUS DEATH OF A WIDNES MAN An inquest was held on Monday by Mr T W Barker, coroner, at the Mersey Hotel, Garston, on the body of a young man named **Samuel Hambley**. The deceased, who was twenty one years of age and was a waterman of the flat *Prospect*, was found drowned on Friday last in Garston Old Dock. He had been missing for about ten days. The body bore some evidence of foul play having been practised. It appears that he and a fellow waterman named **Alfred Hunt** went ashore and got a good deal of drink, and the last thing

that Hunt remembers in connection with Hambley was seeing him quarrelling with some women. John Wise of 80 Chalmondeley Street, Widnes, recognised the body, although it was very much disfigured, as that of Samuel Hambley. He said the deceased, who was his wife's brother, resided at 78 Chalmondeley Street, Widnes, and was a waterman on board the flat *Prospect*. He took a glass occasionally, but not to excess.

**William Walding**, captain of the flat *Prospect*, said he resided at Sankey Bridge near Warrington. The deceased was his mate, and was a steady man, though just at night time, when he went ashore, he took a glass of beer. Witness last saw him alive about a quarter past nine o'clock on the night of Thursday week, when he left the flat and went ashore. He had been ashore that afternoon, and came back "as near drunk as could be". He did not remain on board above an hour and a half altogether. Alfred Hunt was with him when he left.

Alfred Hunt said he was a flatman on board the *Jane*, and he resided at 18 Parsonage Road, Widnes. He had known the deceased about twelve months, and they were always on good terms with each other. On the evening in question, the deceased took him ashore, and they went to the Vulcan Hotel. They had a quantity of beer at the Vulcan, which they left about half past ten. Deceased remained behind talking to a young woman, and that was the last witness remembered of him. The next thing he could recall was the captain awaking him to go with the flat next morning, as it was high water. Deceased complained to his captain that some women with whom he had an aberration took half an ounce of tobacco from him, but did not touch his money.

Annie Anderson, landlady of the Vulcan, said the deceased and Hunt left her place together. The woman whom deceased had been talking to left before either of them. While in the beerhouse, deceased changed half a sovereign.

John Burns, a dockgateman, said he found the body in the Old Dock.

Police-sergeant Hutchinson said he examined the body when it was recovered from the water. There was a cut which went through the skin right across the throat, but it did not expose the windpipe. The left side of the face was bruised as if it had been crushed ; the lobe of the left ear was torn away, and the upper portion of the ear was also gone.

The jury, after a short consultation, returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

#### **48      23 January 1884**

**TERRIBLE ASSAULT ON A WOMAN AT RUNCORN** At the Runcorn Police Court on Friday morning, before Mr Brundrit, **Robert Jones** was brought up under a warrant charged with having, on the 15<sup>th</sup> inst, unlawfully assaulted a young woman named Annie Cody. Complainant said she was a single woman and belonged to Broadheath. For a short time she had been going with the defendant in his flat, which was called the *Cricket*, belonging to **Mr C T Falkner** of Manchester. The flat arrived at Runcorn on Tuesday morning. He then became very violent towards her, and pulled her about by the hair. He took out a knife and tried to destroy her. He then sent another man down into the cabin of the flat, who tried to assault her. Inspector Hollingworth said he was called down to the boat of the prisoner, and found the complainant lying in a hut at Bottom Locks. She was in a very bad state and groaned very much. He called Dr McDougall to see the woman, and he examined her injuries. As Dr McDougall had been called out of town and could not be present that morning, he asked for a remand until Saturday morning. Mr Brundrit accordingly remanded the prisoner.

On Saturday morning, the prisoner was again brought up, before Captain Hazlehurst and Mr James Hindley, charged with assaulting Annie Cody.

The complainant said she belonged to Broadheath near Altrincham. For the last three weeks, she had been living with the prisoner on board his flat. On Sunday night the 12<sup>th</sup> inst, they went down to Liverpool with the flat, and on the way he abused her in a shameful manner. He pulled her about by the hair and tried to kick her. He then fastened her in the cabin, and in coming back to Runcorn he again savagely assaulted her, and taking out a knife he threatened to destroy her. She got the knife from him and thrust it to her bosom. The black mark on her arm was caused by the prisoner's violence at the time. When the flat arrived at Runcorn she went ashore, being afraid to stay longer

with the prisoner. When he was beating her, she asked him to spare her life, and he retorted that he would make her a "coffin suit". She was carried into a hut in an insensible state when at Runcorn by some lock parters. Examined by Mr Superintendent Williamson : When she ran from the flat, the prisoner followed her and said he would drown her. He kicked her several times with his clogs, and said he would finish her. Complainant further stated that when her mother knew she had been living with the prisoner, she refused to allow her to remain at home. Cross-examined by prisoner : She did not come on board the flat at Manchester and ask him to let her ride to Altrincham. When they left Altrincham she did say she would go to Runcorn. She did so because her mother had told her she would not have her at home. She did not say when they were at Liverpool that she would drown herself. When she got off at Runcorn she did not shout that she was mad.

Mr Superintendent Williamson observed that the complainant had been so injured about the head that she was not exactly clear about the dates of the assaults, but she had been the victim of the prisoner's violence on three separate days.

The Prisoner (to complainant) : Haven't you been following the flat up and down?

Complainant : No, I have not, and I will stick to it.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : You have been sufficiently long with the prisoner to be dishonoured and beaten to the bargain.

Complainant (crying) : Yes.

Prisoner : Did I ever lift my hand to you?

Complainant : Yes, you have. Do you think I dare lie before God?

Prisoner : You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Peter Lowe, a labourer, said he lived in Mersey Street. On the 12<sup>th</sup> inst he helped the prisoner with his boat down the locks. He saw the prisoner go to the cabin, and shortly afterwards heard screams. The mate told him to stop where he was, as the affair had nothing to do with him. When the prisoner had finished his tea, he wanted to go on deck, and as he came up the cabin steps the complainant kept pulling him back, and the prisoner fell on complainant's breasts with his knees several times. The prisoner asked complainant several times whether she would go ashore, and then dropped with his knees on her breast. The woman aggravated him to it.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : Did he drop with his knees on her purposely?

Witness : I could not say. Every time she pulled him down he dropped with his knees upon her breast.

Mr Johnson : Did you see her struck at all?

Witness : I saw the prisoner pull her out of the bedplace and knock her on the floor.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : When all this was going on, did the woman say anything?

Witness : Only screamed.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : What age are you?

Witness : Nineteen.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : And could you stand there and see the woman abused without taking her part?

Witness : There were two of them, and I was frightened of interfering myself.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : What would you have done if you could have had your own way?

Witness : I should have done him the same.

**Robert Brown**, a lock-keeper at the Tidal Dock, said the prisoner's was the first flat that came through the locks on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> inst. When the flat entered the lock, he heard someone moaning. He said to the mate of the flat that there must be someone in the water, but he made no reply, and witness went to where he thought the sound came from. He saw the complainant standing on the deck, moaning. He said, "My good woman, what's the matter? Are you ill?" and she then told him what the Court already knew. He told her that if she was afraid of the prisoner, she had better come into his hut, and he would see that she was protected. She said she wanted her clothes, but he said if she was in danger she had better leave them. The flat went on through two locks and, as near as he could guess, had entered the fourth lock, when the complainant came running back screaming loudly. He crossed the lock to meet her. It was moonlight, and he could

see very well. Before she could get to him, she fell to the ground. If she had not fallen, she would certainly have run into the lock. He asked two men who were there to take care of the woman while he went for a watchman. When he returned, they carried the woman into his hut, and when she came round a bit she said she was hungry. He said to her, "Do you think you could eat anything if you had it?" and she said, "Yes. He would not let me have any meat". Witness then said, "You shall have my supper, then, if you want". He gave the complainant his supper and some hot tea, and made up a good fire in the hut. While lying in the hut, she drew a knife from her bosom. As soon as he saw it, he said, "Whatever are you doing with that knife in your bosom?" Complainant replied, "He was going to put an end to me with it". He persuaded her to give him the knife. He then left her in the hut until morning, looking in about every ten minutes to see that she was safe. By Mr Superintendent Williamson : She remained in his hut from between twelve and one o'clock until six on the following morning. She was very weak, and once she pointed her finger and said, "See". The watchman said, "What is it?" and she replied, "Heaven".

Mr Superintendent Williamson : Did she appear to have been abused?

Witness : She was deathly.

Mr Superintendent Williamson : Had you any conversation with the prisoner?

Witness : I sung out to him that he must be aware of what was going on ; and that he would get himself into trouble about the woman.

Inspector Hollingworth said on Tuesday morning he was told that a woman was lying seriously ill in a hut at Bottom Locks, and on going to the place, found the complainant in a weak state and moaning very much. She was seen by Dr McDougall, who said there was no doubt the woman had been very badly abused. By the doctor's advice, the woman was removed to a lodging house in Mersey Street.

Mr Superintendent Williamson said he had not called the doctor to give evidence on account of the expense.

The Chairman thought medical evidence was unnecessary.

The prisoner, in defence, denied that he even struck the complainant. He alleged that she persisted in coming to the boat and annoying him.

Mr Superintendent Williamson said the prisoner ought to know well enough what to do if he had been persistently annoyed as he stated, and under no circumstances should he have assaulted the woman. He could have obtained the assistance of the police, and he was sure he had made no application, or he should have heard of it. He had tried to stain the woman's character, and had made some allusion to drink, but he wished to point out that when the woman came to the police station she was perfectly sober, and he had learned that she had never tasted drink in her life. After what he heard of the prisoner, he had scarcely patience to address their worships, and he could not help losing his temper. The prisoner was said to be one of the most brutal men on the Bridgewater Canal, and was a terror, not only to women, but to men also.

The Chairman said the Bench considered the case proved. The prisoner's conduct had been brutal in the extreme, and he would be sent to prison for three months with hard labour, at the expiration of which term he must enter into his own recognisances of £5 to keep the peace for six months, failing which he would be imprisoned for another month.

#### **49      23 January 1884**

A FLATMAN DROWNED AT WIDNES    The body of **John Davies**, waterman on board the flat *James*, was found in the canal at Widnes on Sunday morning. The flat upon which the deceased was employed was lying at Widnes. The deceased was at the Main Top public house in Mersey Road on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> inst, and between nine and ten o'clock a man named **George Whiteman**, who is also a waterman, took the deceased to the flat and saw him safe in the fore-castle, where he left him. The next morning the deceased was missing, and the body was recovered on Sunday.

## A JUVENILE PICKPOCKET AT RUNCORN

HOW THIEVES ARE MADE At the Runcorn Police Court on Saturday morning, before Captain Hazlehurst and Mr James Hindley, Thomas John Oliver, aged ten, was brought up in custody charged with stealing a half crown from the person of a girl named Jane Eccleston.

The prosecutrix said she was a domestic servant at Messrs Howard and Pearson's, Church Street. On Friday night she was sent on an errand, and was given a half crown. She wrapped the coin in a piece of brown paper and put it in her dress pocket. She was going along Church Street to Johnson's shop, and on the way stopped to look at a new shop at the bottom of Fryer Street. There was a number of people round the window, and while she was standing there she felt something at her pocket, and on turning round to see what it was, saw the prisoner standing at her side. She said, "Have you been at my pocket?" and he said he had not. He turned his pockets out, saying he had only three. From the way he talked, she thought he had not got the coin, but a man who was standing there picked the prisoner up and said he would take him to the Town Hall, and the half crown, wrapped in the paper, fell from him, and a boy picked it up and gave it to her.

**John Pickering** said he was a waterman living in Bridgewater Street. He was in Church Street between seven and eight o'clock on the previous night, and when near the shop spoken of by the prosecutrix, he heard that someone's pocket had been picked. He watched the prisoner for some time, and then said, "You had better give me that purse", and he said he had not got it. He suspected that he had it, and he then picked him up, and something which he thought was a paper fell from him. This was picked up by a boy when about near, and witness handed it to the girl.

Prosecutrix, recalled, said the coin was wrapped in a piece of paper in the shape of a purse, and when the last witness handed it to her, she found that it was the half crown.

PC Morris said from information received he went on the previous night to the house of the prisoner's parents in Fryer Street, and as soon as he saw him, prisoner commenced to cry and said he did not take it. He took the prisoner to the Police Station and charged him with stealing the half crown, and he made no reply.

The prisoner pleaded not guilty, and his father, who was in court, said he preferred the magistrates to deal with the case summarily.

The Chairman asked Mr Superintendent Williamson whether he knew anything of prisoner.

Mr Superintendent Williamson replied that, with the permission of the Bench, he would not say anything until their worships had decided whether to convict or not.

The Bench, after a short consultation, said they had decided to convict.

Mr Superintendent Williamson said he was always sorry to bring children before the Bench as felons. This little fellow now before the Court was only ten years of age, and he was sorry to say that was not the first time he had been there. Only on the 6<sup>th</sup> November last he was tried, together with another little boy, for stealing a florin from a stall on the fairground. The other boy was sent to a reformatory and Oliver was ordered to be whipped. Subsequently to that, the boy was again brought under his notice. He attended Trinity School, where he was noted as a bright boy who always did his lessons well and attended school regularly. Some time ago, the schoolmaster found that the boy was spending money very freely, and brought the matter under his notice, and he found that he was in possession of about ten shillings. He made inquiries, but could not at that time ascertain whether the money had been stolen or not. The boy said he had found a half sovereign in the street, and after some time, the police handed the money to his parents. It afterwards transpired that a half sovereign had been stolen from a shop in Percival Lane. The police had received numerous reports of women's pockets having been picked, and it had always happened that the prisoner had been seen about. The boy's father was an industrious respectable man, and up to a short time ago he thought the same of his wife ; but he could not imagine how a little boy would pick pockets, sometimes to the extent of £2, without there being a "receiver" in the affair. Sometimes people had gone in his house and been blackguarded for their pains. The prisoner was a very sharp fellow, but a very sharp thief too.

The Chairman said it was very sad indeed to see a boy in that position. Unfortunately, it was not the

first time, and they were now going to send him for a long term where he would be removed from evil influences, and where he would be taught to live a better life. He would be imprisoned for 21 days at Knutsford, and at the expiration of that time, be sent to a reformatory school for five years.

**51 7 May 1884**

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY

**ASSAULT BY A FLAT CAPTAIN** A powerful looking young fellow named **William Wild** was charged with having on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April assaulted **James Baldwin**, an old man employed as a flatman under the defendant, who is the captain of a flat. A cross summons was issued by Wild against Baldwin charging the latter with a similar offence. Baldwin stated that on the day in question he was in the employ of Wild. Defendant asked him to do something which was impossible for an old man to do. Defendant then struck Baldwin on the face, seized him by the neck with both hands, and threatened to tear his eyes out. Witness finished his work, and then went to the defendant's house, where he got his money. Eventually the defendant threatened to throw him into the canal, struck him several times in the face with his fist, and also kicked him. Defendant put his fingers in his mouth and tore his lips. This statement was corroborated by **William Woodward**, a flatman. It was alleged by Wild that Baldwin, through sheer carelessness, had damaged the flat very much. When he spoke to him about it, Baldwin laughed and "blackguarded" him, and while he was showing Baldwin how he had broken the back bend, the latter got Wild's thumb in his mouth, and if he (defendant) had not struck him, he would have bitten it off. The Bench thought Wild had had some little provocation, and inflicted a penalty of 5s and costs.

**52 17 May 1884**

MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

**SCHOOL BOARD PROSECUTIONS** **Hiram Taylor**, boatman, Crook Lane, Wharton, was similarly fined for a like offence. (Disobedience of an order) His child Benjamin had attended 59 out of 98, and defendant had been eight times before the Committee and four times before the magistrates.

**53 28 June 1884**

NORTHWICH COUNTY COURT, WEDNESDAY

A COLLISION ON THE CANAL AT MIDDLEWICH

**HOLLINSHEAD v FRADLEY** This was an action to recover £3 12s, the amount of damage alleged to have been caused to plaintiff's boat in consequence of the negligence of the defendant in not tying up his boat. Mr J H Cooke appeared for complainant, and Mr A Fletcher for defendant. In opening the case, Mr Cooke said the plaintiff was the owner of the boat *Sarah*, trading on the canal. In the early part of April, the boat was properly fastened up by the canal side at Middlewich, and the defendant's boat was lying up close by. Between five and six o'clock in the morning, defendant moved his boat without fastening it to a horse, as was customary on the canal. In consequence of that, defendant's boat collided with the plaintiff's boat, and so caused the damage in respect of which the present action was brought. **Eliza Scragg**, wife of **John Scragg**, a boatman in the employ of the Anderton Co, said she passed plaintiff's and defendant's boats on the morning in question on board the barge *Stork*. Hollinshead's boat was fastened to the canal bank and Fradley's boat was loose. She saw Fradley's boat strike Hollinshead's. Fradley was standing with his horse on the other side of the canal. By Mr Fletcher : The two boats were lying stern to stern on the off side of the canal. Her boat was going to the Potteries, and Fradley was about to proceed in the same direction. She saw **Samuel Sparrow** on the defendant's boat pushing it off to try to prevent any damage, and Fradley told him to push as hard as he could. There was a current caused by her boat and also by the lock. By Mr Cooke : If Fradley's boat had been fastened up at both ends, the accident would not have happened. **Thomas Marston**, captain of the *Sarah*, said he was in bed when the offence occurred. He went on deck, and said to a man on defendant's boat, "You see what you've done at our boat". Fradley replied, "I have done nothing". Witness invited him to examine

the boat, which he did, and repeated that his boat had not done any mischief. Witness pointed out the damage, and then went for Hollinshead. Fradley then admitted that he saw his boat hit the *Sarah*. After Hollinshead had examined the boat, she was taken to Marston, where the cargo of slack was discharged. The iron stern plate and part of the stern port were broken, and the cabin side was thrown open. They had great difficulty in keeping the boat afloat. Fradley's boat was loose. The rule was to get horses and keep their boats out of (.....) as well as they could. By Mr Fletcher : He arrived at the place in question after Fradley, and tied up his boat about a yard and a half from Fradley's. There was usually a good deal of way in the canal at that point. When he went to bed, both boats were tied up. Thomas Hollinshead, the plaintiff, said : I am a boatman and live in Middlewich. On the morning in question, I saw Fradley with the last witness. I said to him, "Well, John, what about the damage to my boat?" to which he replied, "Well, it is done, and we must make the best of it ; but I can't see how my boat has done that much injury". I said, "Very well, has not your boat hit mine?" and he answered, "Yes". I then examined the boat, and found injuries as described by the last witness. I took her to Mr Williams's boat yard on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, and the repairs were done in two days. In consequence of the delay, I lost a journey to Messrs Verdin's works at Marston with slack, for which I should have received £1 16s. The Judge : Were Messrs Verdin obliged to employ another boat for those two days because you could not go? Plaintiff : I can't say. Mr Cooke : But if you had had your boat, you could have earned £1 16s? Plaintiff : Yes. I took the bill for the repairs to Fradley, and he said he would only pay 5s 6d towards the stern plate. It was the rule of the canal to fasten the boats up. By Mr Fletcher : But they don't fasten the boats up when they are about to start? Plaintiff : No. William Simpson, salt boiler, Middlewich, said he was on the boat *Sarah* on the morning in question, and was knocked into the side (.....) by the force of the collision. Marston's description of the damage was correct. James Williams, boatbuilder, Middlewich, said he repaired the damage to the plaintiff's boat by the collision, for which he charged £1 16s. He saw Fradley before the repairs were done, and told him they would cost about £2. Fradley said he thought 18s was about as much as he ought to pay. Mr Fletcher, for the defence, said that this was one of those accidents which might happen at any moment, and for which no one was in law responsible. If anyone was to blame at all in the matter, it was the plaintiff's servant, who put the barge in such close proximity to the place where he alleged he knew there was a strong current from the lock, and where that current would be increased by the suction from passing barges. He contended that the plaintiff had failed to show that there had been any negligence on the part of the defendant, who was clearly within rights in all that he did ; he tied up his boat for the night, and next morning his man untied the tow rope, while he (defendant) was waiting with a horse on the hauling site for the purpose of proceeding on his journey towards Stoke ; but the boat *Stork* came up, and the increased current which it caused resulted in the sterns of the two vessels coming in contact. Fradley, however, could not believe that damage had been done to the extent alleged by the plaintiff. He asked his Honour whether such a case was one for which anyone could be held responsible. The Judge held that the case was one which the defendant should be called upon to answer. John Fradley, the defendant, said : I am a boatman and am captain of the boat *Providence*. I moored my boat fore and aft by two chains at Middlewich on the off side of the canal about four o'clock in the afternoon. There was no other boat near me at the time. Next morning about five o'clock I went from my house to the boat, and woke my nephew Sparrow, who was on board. I went for my horse, and when I returned I saw Sparrow had loosed the fore end of the boat. John Scragg's boat then came up, and his passing caused Hollinshead's boat and mine to come into collision, but the (.....) was not a severe one. I don't see how any man could have avoided the accident. It was impossible for my boat to have caused all the damage to the plaintiff's boat. William Bailey of Middlewich said he was on the defendant's boat on the day in question. Fradley's boat went against Hollinshead's with a slight "shove" The only way the boat had on her was caused by the passing of Scragg's boat. His Honour said he dared say that this kind of thing frequently occurred on the canal, but he could not come to any other conclusion than that in the present case the accident was brought about by a want of due care on the part of the defendant, who must have known perfectly well that there was a way in the water from the lock and from the

passing boat. It did not seem to him that the defendant took any care whatever to combat the effect of the stream or the effect of the passing boat, and it was owing to a want of that care that the accident really happened. With regard to the damage, he could not see how loss of trade was made out, because there was no evidence to show that the plaintiff would possibly have been employed during the two days occupied in repairing the boat. What the plaintiff had really lost was the cost of the damage to the boat, namely £1 16s, and for that amount he would give judgement.

#### **54 16 July 1884**

**THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL BILL** The Select Committee began their second week's inquiry into the merits of the Ship Canal Bill on Monday morning. Mr (?Sclater-Heath) presided, the other members of the Committee being the Marquis of Tavistock, Mr L Fry and Mr J A Campbell.

Mr James (?Abersetry) , past president of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and consulting engineer to the scheme, having mentioned the river improvements with which he had been connected, expressed the opinion that the proposed works would not be injurious to the Mersey ; that they would not lead to the formation of banks and shoals in the estuary ; and that the training walls would not be conducive to silting up. The cutting of the channel would accelerate the time at which the tide would arrive at Runcorn, and there would also be an increased volume brought into the upper part of the river. These results would have a beneficial effect, because they would give an increased scour at ebb tide. At present the ebb tide had to scour out what was brought up with the flood, as well as to carry away the matter which was created all the way up to Manchester. During floods that erosion was very great, but when these works were made it would cease, and to that extent there would be a diminution of matter held in suspension brought down to be acted upon in the estuary by the outgoing tide. There would, therefore, be less deposit on the banks in the estuary and on the bar in consequence of the greater scouring power. These results had followed the construction of similar works in other rivers, and were also the results of experience and not of theory. There would be no secretion in consequence of the training walls. He was of opinion that the canal works were well laid out for the purpose intended. Since last year there had been considerable improvement in the place, many curves having been (.....) and the interference with the tide above Warrington had been prevented.

During the examination of the witness, Mr Bidder QC complained of Mr Michael QC putting leading questions to him, and spoke of the process as equivalent to putting "spoon meat down his throat".

The Chairman stated that unless leading questions were put to witnesses, private bill inquiries would never terminate.

Witness, in cross-examination by Mr Bidder QC, on behalf of the Mersey Dock Board, said there were several rivers in the country in which analogous works had been carried out with success. He admitted, however, there was this difference – that in the case of the Mersey the bar was 20 miles from the beginning of the deep water channel, whereas, in the case of other rivers the bars, where they existed, were very much closer to the training walls and other works which had been carried out. He denied that the works, as proposed, would injure the bar, which it was equally to the interest of Manchester as Liverpool to get rid of.

The Chairman : When you say it may be the interest of Manchester to aid Liverpool in getting rid of the bar, do you mean by special works and not by your increased scour?

Witness : Yes ; by special works similar to those at the mouths of the Danube and the Mississippi.

By Mr Pope : If the training walls were above the existing sand banks, secretion would not follow unless there were transverse walls. He believed that when the new deep water channel was made, the present channel would inevitably silt up, but he could not tell to what extent. The witness stated the whole of the works could be completed in five years.

Mr (?Bewlers) CE, engineer to the Mersey Tunnel Company, said he had carefully inspected the estuary of the Mersey. In his opinion the proposed works would be successful, and that they would have no injurious effects upon the bar, because it was too remote from the low water channel. He

had considered the estimates, and he thought they were fair and ample. By Mr Aspinall : If the upper estuary were silted up the bar might be injured in a remote degree.

Mr (?Messant?) CE, (engineer to the Tyne Commissioners) expressed the emphatic belief that the low water channel would not cause any injurious effect to the navigable channels of the Mersey. If the works had any effect at all upon the bar, it must be of a beneficial character. He was proceeding to describe the improvements which had been effected in the Tyne, when

The Chairman said the Committee were convinced that improvements had followed the works carried out in the Tyne.

Witness added that he quite approved of the works proposed to be carried out in the Mersey, which agreed in principle with those existing in the Tyne. The estimation of Mr Leader Williams in respect of rock excavation and dredging were higher than the prices he was paying on the Tyne.

The Chairman : When the channel is completed, do the training walls remain the property of the Ship Canal Company?

Mr Cripps : Yes.

The Chairman : They have no right to impede or charge the toll for navigating that portion?

Mr (?Potts?) : Yes, they have. It is included in their toll power. (To Mr Cripps) : You mean that a vessel going to Runcorn could not enter the canal without paying toll?

Mr Cripps : So far as any vessel can now navigate the Mersey to Runcorn, a toll will be leviable ; but for vessels that cannot now go up we have the right to levy toll.

The Chairman : What is your criterion?

Mr Cripps : The existing dock sill, which shows the largest vessel that can go up now.

The Chairman : There will be some property in the channel as against the general public?

Mr Cripps : Yes ; the Ship Canal Company will be the authority to control it, and will be responsible for buoying and lighting.

The Chairman : The port of Manchester goes to the mouth of the canal only?

Mr Cripps : No ; to the mouth of the channel ; Garston Dock, Ellesmere Port and Runcorn are specially excepted.

Mr James Dees, CE, (engineer to the Clyde Commissioners) entirely approved of Mr Leader Williams's plans, and stated that the estimates for dredging were most liberal. The works would do no injury in the river. Even assuming that there was accretion in the estuary, he did not think its effects would be to injure the bar.

Mr John Fowler, CE, (engineer to the Tees Commissioners), also supported the scheme, and declared that the works would not injure the bar or lead to accretion.

The Committee then adjourned.

## **55 31 December 1884**

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY

CHARGE AGAINST A SON William Henry Hardley was brought up in custody charged with stealing 56 lbs weight of rope, value 5s, the property of James Taylor and Co. **Edward Hardley** said the prisoner was his son. Witness was the captain of the flat *George*, belonging to Taylor and Co, which on Saturday last was lying in the Old Quay Dock. About eleven o'clock on Saturday morning, from what he heard, he went down to the flat and found the prisoner coming from the forecastle with the rope produced. He had no right on the flat, and he informed the police. PC Wallace proved apprehending the prisoner, who in reply to the charge, said he had not stolen the ropes. The prosecutor said his son had given him a good deal of trouble. For several months he had not worked at all, and had left his wife and family to themselves. Superintendent Leah said the prisoner was idle and dissolute. The prisoner held that he had not stolen the ropes, inasmuch as he had not carried them away. The Bench committed him to prison for three months with hard labour.

## **56 17 January 1885**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

DRUNKENNESS **John Goodier**, boatman of Barnton, summoned by PC Bottoms, and Edward

Powell, labourer of Northwich, summoned by PC Knight, were each fined 5s including costs, for being drunk and disorderly.

SCHOOL BOARD CASES The following persons were summoned by Mr Caleb Davies, school attendance officer, for not sending their children regularly to school :-

**William Fairclough**, boatman (3 cases) 12s 6d

**57 14 March 1885**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

CHIMNEY ON FIRE **James Mills**, waterman of London Road, Leftwich, was fined 5s including costs for allowing his chimney to be on fire on the 5<sup>th</sup> March. Mr Court, inspector of nuisances to the Northwich Local Board, proved the case.

**58 4 April 1885**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CASES Mr Caleb Davies, attendance officer to the Northwich School Attendance Committee, summoned the following persons :-

**Catherine Moffatt**, a boatwoman, was fined 5s for not sending her daughter to school.

**William Wignall**, a boatman, was ordered to pay a similar amount for not sending his grandson, **Samuel Taylor**, to school.

ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT OF A CHILD **Frederick Jinks**, a boatman hailing from Sandbach, was summoned by Mr Caleb Davies, school attendance officer, for employing his child, **Jane**, aged twelve years, on the 13<sup>th</sup> February at Norbury, in contravention of Section 5 of the Education Act 1876. It was proved that the girl was driving a horse along the canal bank. The mother stated that the child attended school at Sandbach, but on making enquiries Mr Davies found out this was not true. The magistrates imposed a fine of 20s including costs.

**59 2 May 1885**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CASES **Edward Godfrey**, boatman, Barnton, was summoned for illegally employing **Edwin Godfrey**. There were also cases against the same defendant for not sending his children **John** and **David** regularly to school. Mr Davies said on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March he was at Wincham and saw the mother of these children. He asked her how it was the lads did not attend school, and she said they had no home and she could not send them, but she hoped to get a house soon, and then she would see they went. He made a special note of the case then, but on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April he was at Barnton, when he saw Edwin driving the horse attached to the boat. The other two lads were on the boat. Edwin told him that neither he nor his brothers ever went to school. Defendant was fined 3s for Edwin, and 1s each in respect to John and David.

Mr Arnold, school attendance officer, had charge of the following cases :-

**James Lamb**, waterman, Leicester Street, Witton, child **Cornelius** 9 years of age, 32 attendances out of 66, fined 3s 6d.

**Samuel Wilkinson**, waterman, London Road, Leftwich, child **Thomas** 6 years of age, 48 attendances out of 110, fined 2s.

**William Starkey**, waterman, London Road, Leftwich, child **Florence** 8 years old, 64 attendances out of 85, fined 1s ; ditto child **Albert**, 12 years old, 43 attendances out of 85, fined 5s.

**60 21 October 1885**

A BOATMEN'S QUARREL At noon on Monday, a boatman named **Archibald Aspinall** was charged at Chorley with a murderous assault on another boatman named **Thomas Whittle**. They quarrelled as to which of their boats should pass through the locks. Prisoner knocked Whittle down and kicked him about the face and head, his features being unrecognisable. Whittle lies in Bootle

Hospital, and is not expected to recover. Prisoner was remanded for a week.

## **61 9 December 1885**

THE DROWNING OF A RUNCORN FLATMAN IN THE RIVER MERSEY The body of **Arthur Hardley**, aged 30, formerly of Regent Street, Runcorn, was found on Sunday morning on a bank between Runcorn and Widnes by a ferryman named William Leeson. The deceased was master of the flat *Eveline*, which on Saturday morning the 28<sup>th</sup> ult was being navigated up the Mersey to West Bank Dock by the deceased and a hand named **Henry Clare**. The deceased was knocked overboard by the fall of the down haul, and, notwithstanding that every effort was made to save him, he was drowned and the body was not recovered until the time mentioned.

An inquest was held on Monday at the Masonic Hotel, Devonshire Square, to enquire into the circumstances of the death. Evidence of identification having been given by W B Brimslow, Henry Clare of 24 Back Norfolk Street, said he was mate of the *Eveline*, of which the deceased was formerly the master. At three o'clock on Saturday morning the deceased, two other hands and himself were bringing the flat to West Bank Dock, Widnes. When about 100 yards from the dock, there was a sudden gust of wind which brought down the peak haul. This swept the deck, and the deceased, who was standing about the middle of the deck, was thrown overboard. Witness jumped into the small boat, and went in the direction where he thought Hardley was. He saw him rise to the surface about two or three yards away and swim towards the boat, but in the darkness he lost him. He heard the deceased shout three times, but he could not say what he said. He searched for three quarters of an hour, and then returned to the flat.

William Leeson, New Pier, Runcorn, said he had kept a look out for the body since the day of the accident, and on Sunday morning he went with others to search the river. He found the body lying in a hole on a sandbank.

PC Smith deposed to searching the body. In one pocket he found a purse containing £2 7s 10 1/2d. There were no marks on the body but a slight bruise on the nose.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

## **62 10 February 1886**

ANNUAL REPORT UNDER THE CANAL BOATS ACT FOR THE YEAR 1885 My appointment as inspector under the Canal Boats Act dating only from May of last year, this report will refer to barely half a year's work upon the canals in the Nantwich Rural Sanitary Authority's district, papers, forms and books having to be obtained, and a general survey made before the carrying out of the actual work began. The very first two boats inspected at Beeston were found overcrowded, and the action of the Authority caused the owner of the (...) and to arrange for a house for the family of the captain of that boat, which, consisting of six persons, previously lived on board. Other cases were dealt with according to their merits. In August, the Authority prosecuted the owners of the boats *Little Harry* and *Speedwell* for having no certificates with them, and not being registered under the Act, the result being that in each case there was a conviction and a fine imposed. Several inspections resulted in arrangements with the owners of boats for painting, decking or other improvements. The Shropshire Union Canal Company, whose canals run through this district, have always shown a very laudable desire to comply with the provisions of the Act, and employ an inspector, whose duty it is to prevent breaches of the law in connection with their property ; and this official (**Inspector White**) appears to have every desire to carry out the duty entrusted to him. At the close of the year two prosecutions were ordered, one for overcrowding on a boat, and the second for having a female over 12 years of age in the same cabin as a man and his wife, which cases have yet to be heard before the magistrates. In December, alas, I found some scarlet fever cases on board boats at the Wharf. I immediately detained them, and communicated with the Medical Officer of Health, and had the boats moored in a suitable situation, strict isolation as far as possible being enforced, and the necessities of the families on board the boats attended to. There has been no spreading of the disease, and the patients are now well. The disinfection of the boats with sulphur and the needful medical certificate will enable the boats to proceed. As a rule, I

have hitherto found the boatmen in the thirty miles of canals within my district, civil and ready to render required information, and since the inspection which I made some years ago, prior to the passing of the Canal Boats Act, and upon which I then made a report to the Sanitary Authority, I perceive in the boats generally a decided improvement. The grave cases of overcrowding are not so observable ; and although it is fair to assume that we do not become acquainted with all that takes place, still the improvement is noticeable. The system of sending boats in pairs would seem to enable the boatmen practically to evade the overcrowding regulation, and also the Education Acts. The captain, his wife and family may all be on one boat or divided between the two. They naturally prefer to be together, and one boat has thus often more than its share of occupants. It is evident, too, that if the whole of the children are essentially on the boats, it is not very likely that they will get much education ; and I have frequently received the answer that the children attend school on a Sunday, or where and when they can, and similar indefinite statements. The Sunday Schools, such as we have at Nantwich and elsewhere, are exercising an undoubted influence for good ; whilst the missions there and at other places on the line of the canal are doing excellent work, the results of which in the future will no doubt be more distinctly visible. Still, I think the education of the boatmen's children is a weak point ; and the difficulties surrounding it, whilst the children are continually on the move in the boats, seem great. It is satisfactory, however, to be able to remark an improvement and a tendency to better things, where very great improvement was indeed needed. Appended in this report will be found the tabular system of particulars as to the canals in this district required by the Local Government Board, from which it will be seen that we have, in round figures, 26 miles of canals, upon which there are 20 wharves for unloading goods, and (?23) locks. The Chester Canal enters the district from Shropshire at the point where it crosses the boundary of the townships of Adderley and Audlem, near to Cox Bank and, passing through the centre of our district, for nearly half a mile through the urban district of Nantwich, finally leaves us at the boundary of Tiverton and Huxley townships. The two branch canals to Ellesmere and Middlewich both commence in our district, the former passing into the Whitchurch district at the boundary of Wrenbury and Norbury townships, and the latter into the Northwich district at the boundary of Minshull Vernon and Wimboldsley townships.

JAMES ALDERSON **DAVENPORT**  
Inspector under the Canal Boats Acts  
January 1886

**63**     **18 May 1887**

WARRINGTON COUNTY COURT, THURSDAY

CLAIM FOR THE LOSS OF A PONY    Plaintiff : **George Dale**, boatman of Strange Common, West Leigh, brought an action against John Banner, coal dealer of Moore, to recover £9 for damage sustained through the loss of a pony which was alleged to have been drowned through the wrongful act of the defendant. Mr Dixon of Northwich appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr Percy Davies for the defence. Defendant, it was shown, had a coalyard near the Bridgewater Canal at Moore, and the business was managed in his absence by his wife and two boys. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, plaintiff, who is a boatman, was in charge of two boats, the *Mary* and the *Maria*, and was steering the first named, whilst **Alice Ashcroft** was driving. When near the defendant's coalyard, two boys were observed to rush off the high road on to the towing path of the canal. The highway was fenced from the canal by means of poles and chains. The boys were in charge of a handcart, and made a great noise by shouting "Gee-up". They rushed apparently on to the animals, which swerved on to one side to get away from the cart and fell into the canal. The animals, two ponies and a donkey, were afterwards got out of the water, but one of the ponies was drowned. Mr Dixon contended that if he established the fact that the boys were the defendant's agents, and were engaged in his work on that particular day, and that they were shouting at the animals in such a way as was calculated to frighten them, as it did, defendant would be liable for their reckless acts. Further than that, the boys, it was alleged, were committing a trespass by going on the towing path. There was an agreement between the Bridgewater Canal Company and the defendant which entitled the latter to

pass across a footpath for the purpose of discharging coal from the canal boats into his yard ; but on the occasion in question the boys were about 50 yards from the coal yard, therefore they were trespassing. Evidence having been called, Mr Davies submitted that the defendant could not be held liable for any wrongful act on the part of the boys. His Honour : My difficulty has been to see how the boys were in the service of Banner. The question is whether the person who committed the act – if it was a negligent act – was a trespasser, or whether he was there in the exercise of some right. If he was a trespasser he would be responsible. If he had a right to be there, it would become a question whether there was negligence on the plaintiff's part. Mr Davies : I shall submit that the defendant could not be held responsible for any act of the kind. His Honour : There is no evidence that the boys were in the service of John Banner. I must, therefore, enter a nonsuit.

**64 25 May 1887**

**A BOATMAN'S SUICIDE** On Friday morning, **John Unwin**, 45, a boatman, was found hanging to a beam at the Finsley Coal Staithe, Burnley. He had been drinking since Christmas, and within the last few weeks had broken up his home. Depression of spirits had resulted.

**65 17 September 1887**

**NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY**

**A MAINTENANCE CASE** **Thomas Lawson**, boatman, was summoned to show cause why he should not contribute towards the maintenance of his father, **Peter Lawson**, who was chargeable to the Guardians. The case was proved by Mr Pimlott, relieving officer, and the magistrates made an order of 1s a week.

**A PAINFUL CASE** **James Deakin**, waterman, was summoned for not sending his son **Jesse** regularly to school. Mr Caleb Davies said the defendant was a most respectable man. He could not get his lad to attend school, and had tried various methods to do so, but without success. They had consequently to resort to the last means, and that was to ask the Bench to send the boy to an industrial school. Mr Newell said according to the section of the Industrial Schools Act under which the proceedings were taken, the father would have to pay for the maintenance of the boy. Mr Davies : That he is prepared to do. In answer to the Bench, the defendant, who was much affected, said it was his desire that the boy should be sent to an industrial school, as he was quite beyond his control. The Bench made the necessary order for the lad to be sent to an industrial school for three years.

**66 5 June 1889**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY**

**A STRAY** **Henry Robinson**, a boatman, was summoned for permitting his horse to stray in Heath Road, Weston, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May. The case was stated by PC Breeze, and defendant was fined 6d and 9s 6d costs.

**67 10 August 1889**

**NANTWICH – INQUEST ON A BOATMAN** On Thursday, Mr H Churton, coroner, held an inquest at the Oddfellows' Arms, Welsh Row, Nantwich, on the body of **George Lowe**, boatman, aged 56, who died the previous day somewhat suddenly. It appeared from the evidence of the deceased's wife that both she and her husband had charge of boats. On the previous Thursday, the deceased was at Wolverhampton on the way to Welshpool with a cargo of bricks. She (witness) was away on her boat elsewhere, and received a telegram to the effect that her husband had met with an accident. She went to Wolverhampton and found him in the Infirmary. It transpired that when in the act of pushing off his boat in the basin, he accidentally fell into the water. There were several other boats about, and he went beneath two before he was rescued at some risk by another man. The water was contaminated with tar and other deleterious matter, a quantity of which entered his lungs and stomach. Acting on the advice of the nurse, witness removed her husband from the

infirmery, and brought him on board her own boat to the Acton basin, near Nantwich. On Wednesday morning, he complained of feeling very unwell, and as he seemed to get worse, she came to Nantwich for a doctor. He advised her to apply a mustard plaster, and promised to come and visit the deceased. She attended to the instructions given her, but her husband continued to get rapidly worse, and died at half past ten o'clock on Wednesday morning, two hours before the doctor arrived. When giving her evidence, the woman burst into tears, and exclaimed that it looked as if a boatman's life was of no value. The Coroner, in reviewing the facts, said it was unfortunate that the doctor did not see the man alive, but there was no doubt as to the cause of death, the deceased having told his wife all about the accident. He must have swallowed a lot of poisonous matter which was mixed with the water in the canal, and his lungs were no doubt affected with it as well. The jury returned a verdict that the death was the result of accidental causes.

## **68 16 October 1889**

### CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

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

RUNCORN CASE **Samuel Cox**, 39, boatman, was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for assaulting Mary Nicholls at Runcorn on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

## **69 30 November 1889**

### DARESBURY PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

CRUELTY CASES **William Peacocke**, a boatman, was summoned for having on the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> November, was fined 3s and costs.

THE CANAL BOAT ACT **Samuel Hodgkinson** was charged with a breach of the Canal Boat Act, on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, his boat (No 449), which was used as a sleeping place, containing a female above 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.

## **70 12 February 1890**

### SANDBACH

#### THE SHOCKING BURNING FATALITY AT HASSALL GREEN

INQUEST On Friday morning, an inquest was held by Mr H Churton at the Red Lion Inn, Hassall Green, near Sandbach, respecting the death of **Mary Jackson**, aged 60 years, wife of **John Jackson**, a boatman of Hassall Green, who died on Tuesday night last from injuries received in consequence of being burnt on the previous night. It appears from the evidence that whilst Mr Jackson had gone to visit a friend who was sick, his wife's clothing became ignited. Someone rushed after him and informed him of the circumstance, and he immediately ran home. He found his wife, who had managed to get to the door, completely enveloped in flames, and after some little time he succeeded in extinguishing them. Dr Bennett of Sandbach was summoned, and despite his strenuous efforts, Mrs Jackson lingered in great agony, and died about seven o'clock on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

**71 14 May 1890**

SANDBACH POLICE COURT, FRIDAY

**THEFT OF A PAIR OF TROUSERS** **William Groomie**, alias "Bill the Devil", hailing from Tunstall, was charged with stealing a pair of trousers, the property of **John Evanson**, a boatman, at Wheelock on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1890. The prosecutor stated that on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, the prisoner and another man were instructed to bring his boat from Tunstall to Middlewich. On arrival at Wheelock the prisoner left the boat, taking with him a new pair of trousers out of the cabin. On the 8<sup>th</sup> inst, witness saw the prisoner at the Wheelock wharf, and he was then wearing the trousers which he had stolen. Information was given to the police, and the prisoner was taken into custody. PC Bailey stated that in answer to the charge the prisoner admitted taking the trousers, and expressed his sorrow. The prisoner, who had been previously convicted for various offences, was now committed to Knutsford gaol for six weeks with hard labour.

**72 21 June 1890**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

**OFFENCES UNDER THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACT** Joseph Perry of Witton Street, Witton, was summoned under the Public Health Act, at the instance of the Northwich Local Board, to show cause why an order should not be made upon him to abate a nuisance on some property in Penny's Court, Witton, by providing proper privy accommodation. Mr Cowley, clerk of the Local Board, said the defendant was the owner of some property in close proximity to the Police Station. The case had been before them on a previous occasion, and on April 24<sup>th</sup> a notice was served upon him to clean up the present cesspools and put the closets on a pail system, and to provide more accommodation. There had, it would appear, been some little disputes between Mr Perry and the nightsoil contractors to the Board, as to what were their duties. The latter contended that they had done everything that came within their promises, whilst the former alleged that he could not get the work accomplished owing to the non-fulfillment of the duties of the contractors. There seemed to have been a quantity of bricks &c at the bottom of the cesspools, and these the contractor said they had no right to remove. Mr Stow, surveyor, deposed to there only being three closets to eight houses. There ought to be at least two more. The old pits were in a very disgraceful state. The tenants were such that he could understand they would throw bricks off the walls into the pits, with which they were partially filled. The contractors did not undertake to remove them. The present cesspools had not been filled up, the placement of closets on the pail system had only been partially done, and no new closets had been provided. These particulars were confirmed by Mr Potts, assistant sanitary inspector. Defendant said the work would have been completed but for the fact that he could not get it done until the refuse had been removed. He had repeatedly appealed to the members of the Local Board in the matter, and several of them had seen how matters stood. Henry Maddock said he had filled the cesspools with ashes, and had placed in the pails. He had been asked to do the work long ago, but was unable to execute it because of the contractors not removing the whole of the nightsoil. The Bench made an order for the work to be done within a fortnight ; and they expressed a hope that the men of the contractors, as well as those of Mr Perry, would work harmoniously together. He would have to pay the costs.

**A SUMMONS THE ONLY REMEDY** **James Lawson** of 30 Nelson Street, Runcorn, waterman, was summoned, at the instance of Mr Plunkett, relieving officer to the Northwich Union, to show why an order should not be made upon him for the payment of £1 6s. It was stated that an order had been made upon the defendant to contribute 1s a week towards the maintenance of his father. He was actually in arrears to the extent of £3 ; but there had only been taken out a summons for 25 weeks. Lawson was in work, earning good wages, but was one of those men from whom nothing could be obtained except by the taking out of summonses. He asked for an order to recover the amount. Granted.

**73 28 June 1890**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

BRUTAL TREATMENT BY A FATHER **George Shaw**, a boatman, was summoned for assaulting and beating his daughter, **Myra Shaw**, at Thirlwood on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. In answer to the Clerk, the defendant said, "I did hit her". The complainant said she was 12 years of age, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst her father assaulted her. She was standing on the flat at Thirlwood, and the defendant came to her, took hold of her by her hair and lifted her on to the cabin out of the bottom of the boat. The defendant then struck witness with a strap belonging to the boat. He struck her because the boat "rubbed" against the bridge. Witness could not help the boat rubbing against the bridge. The defendant had had a drop of beer. The strap was a thick one, and it struck witness on the side. The defendant had assaulted her many a time, and he once struck her with the buckle end of his strap. William Sharman stated that he resided at Thirlwood, and on Monday he was repairing some property belonging to a gentleman at Macclesfield. He heard a child crying, and on going to the towing path he saw the defendant thrashing his child most unmercifully with a thick rope, which fastened the boat to the lock. Witness followed the defendant to the lock, and asked him why he was so brutal to his child, and he said it was because she had disobeyed his orders. In answer to the Clerk (Mr Bygott), witness said the defendant was under the influence of drink. Matthew Hudson, a labourer, gave similar evidence, and in addition stated that the defendant "knocked the child's head on the cabin several times". The Bench retired, and on re-entering the Court, the Chairman, addressing the prisoner, said, "You will be committed for 21 days' imprisonment with hard labour, and if this sort of thing occurs again, you will be more severely dealt with".

WASTING CANAL WATER **William Bevans**, a boatman, was summoned for wasting canal water at Lowton, and was fined £1 including costs.

**74 28 June 1890**

AN EGREMONT YOUTH DROWNED A sad accident occurred on the river Dee near Chester on Monday afternoon. It appears that a lad named William Orton, aged 17, along with five companions, all members of the Bible class of St Mary's, Seacombe, who were holding their annual excursion at Ecclestone, got into a boat there shortly after four o'clock and rowed up the river as far as opposite Eaton Stud Farm. Here, four of the lads stripped and commenced bathing, leaving Orton and another lad in the boat. Some of the bathers, it is stated, caught hold of the side of the boat, and it immediately capsized, throwing both lads into the water. Orton disappeared beneath the surface, and one of the swimmers dived after him, but could not reach him. The other lad managed to scramble to the bank. A waterman named **Ellis Rowlands** at once commenced dragging near the spot, and the body was recovered in about half an hour. Dr King was telephoned for from Chester, and made all haste to the scene, but his efforts to restore animation were unavailing, and the body was removed to the Stud Farm. The painful affair threw a gloom over the excursion party.

**75 12 July 1890**

MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

DAMAGING A CANAL LOCK **Reuben Roberts**, boatman on the Trent and Mersey Canal, was summoned for suffering his boat to strike Rump lock, Newton, and damage it, on May 20<sup>th</sup>. The witnesses were **William Hambleton**, constable on the canal and **John Wilkinson**, lock tender. The latter said that defendant allowed the boat to run on the top of the gates, thereby damaging them. The repairs would cost 2s 6d ; but the gates, it was feared, would be permanently injured. A penalty of 10s, including costs, was imposed.

**76 12 July 1890**

SAD DROWNING CASE AT RUNCORN

THE CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND INQUESTS On Tuesday Mr J E Worsley, coroner for the (????) and Fee of Hallam, held an inquiry at the Court Room at Runcorn into the

circumstances attending the death of **Thomas Evans Reese**, aged nine years, who was drowned in a pit on Sunday afternoon at Runcorn Common. Emma Baguley, wife of Richard Baguley, a labourer, living at 2 Brunswick Street, said the deceased's father's name was **Thomas Reese**, who was a waterman. She did not see the deceased alive after he left home about a quarter to two on Sunday afternoon, when he left to go to Sunday School. Joseph Derbyshire, aged 10, living with his parents in Hope Street, Runcorn, said on Sunday afternoon about three o'clock, witness, the deceased, Frank Smitham, George Moston, John Mort and Bertie Mort went together to Runcorn Common to bathe in a pit there. Witness, Frank Smitham and the deceased undressed themselves and went into the water, whilst the other boys stood on the side of the pond. Deceased got out of his depth, and neither he nor witness could swim. When the deceased got out of his depth, he did not cry out. He came to the surface once, and witness saw the top of his head, and the deceased subsequently sank. Smitham tried to rescue the deceased, but was unable to do so. Witness then informed a young man what had occurred, and the latter went to the pond, but the deceased was nowhere to be seen, and the police were communicated with. PC Edwards said he received information of the accident about half past four on Sunday afternoon from a young man from Widnes, who said that the last witness and another boy informed him that the deceased had got drowned in the Common pit. The body was recovered about half past seven o'clock in the evening. The young man who had given information to witness said he went to the pit, but could see nothing of the deceased, and he ran as hard as he could to the police station. So far as witness observed, there appeared to be no negligence on his part. A Juryman : The pit is rather deep. Witness : It is 12 feet deep. Mr G Ward (the foreman) pointed out that the banks sloped down suddenly. The Coroner said it was a very sad affair, as the deceased was a promising boy, and was the son of respectable parents. He did not think they had evidence to show that the young man had not rendered any assistance. A Juryman : No, sir. The Coroner believed that if the young man could have rendered any assistance he would have done so ; as he had shown it by running so speedily to the police station. He thought the jury could return no other verdict than the deceased had been accidentally drowned, and express their sympathy with the relatives on the loss they had sustained. Whilst the weather was so warm, boys would bathe. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the Coroner's statement, and the Coroner observed that there was a new recommendation sent down by the Cheshire County Council to the effect that in all cases, where it was possible, except where bodies were taken to the mortuary, of death where an enquiry was necessary, the inquests should be held at the Police Court instead of, as formerly, at inns and public houses. That was the last recommendation of the County Council, and in future in Runcorn, when the body was not lying at the mortuary – and where, of course, the inquest would be held at the Burial Board Office – the inquests would be held in that court room, and the jurymen might be taken from the district where the accident happened. It was a very convenient place, and the change was a good one ; it was not his alteration, but that of the Cheshire County Council.

## **77 30 July 1890**

### **CHESTER ASSIZES**

**BURGLARY AT RUNCORN** **John Hilyer**, boatman, Runcorn, pleading guilty to entering a house in Runcorn on the 15<sup>th</sup> May last and stealing six pork pies, the property of George Davidson. The Judge informed the prisoner that he was on the high road to penal servitude, and sentenced him to twelve months' imprisonment.

## **78 30 August 1890**

**STRIKE OF SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL FLATMEN** In consequence of the refusal of the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Company to allow their flatmen Saturday afternoon as a half holiday, and to pay overtime for work done after one o'clock on that day, the flatmen struck work last weekend. They were supported in their action by the Upper Mersey Watermen and Quay Porters' Association, the result being that trade was interfered with, not only along the actual line of canal, but also at the Ellesmere Port, Birkenhead and Liverpool Docks. The company's clerks at

Ellesmere Port were engaged performing flatman's duty, and the consignments on hand were forwarded by train with as little delay as possible. Prior to going to press, we learn that the men were still out. The officials of the company state that their endeavour has always been to, as far as possible, avoid calling upon the men to work on Saturday, by dealing only with traffic of a very urgent nature. The terms of the flatmen's engagement are that they shall work whenever called upon, and no demand for the half holiday has been made to the knowledge of the officials in Chester, who did not know the reason for the strike until they saw it in the papers. Mr Thomas Hales, the general traffic manager, has refused to see a representative of the Union, which will not be recognised by the company in their dealings with the men. Some of the flatmen left their vessels, with valuable cargoes on board, without giving notice to the company, and thus rendered themselves liable to prosecution. The officials maintain that every demand the men have made has been conceded.

**79      27 September 1890**

CONGLETON COUNTY PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

TRESPASSING ON LAND IN SEARCH OF GAME    **Thomas Newton**, a boatman residing at Congleton, was summoned for coming from land on the 1<sup>st</sup> inst, where he had been unlawfully in search of game, and having in his possession things used for taking game. The defendant denied the offence. PC Griffiths stated that about midnight on the 1<sup>st</sup> September, he was on duty in Warburton's Lane. He was on the highway. He saw two men in the ditch at the side of the road. They were lying down. Witness went across the road to them, and one jumped up and ran away. Witness followed him, and on apprehending him, he took the bag produced from his possession. The bag contained four rabbits, which were alive. Witness brought the man back again on to the highway, and he there found the defendant Newton. On searching Newton, witness found the net produced in his pocket. The other man afterwards ran away. He gave the name of John Woodward, but witness had been unable to find him since. Witness seized the bag, net and rabbits, and took Newton to Astbury Police Station. He afterwards took him to Congleton, where he ascertained his proper name and address from Sergeant Wilson of the borough police. Witness here produced pegs, net and bag, which he said were taken by him from the defendant and the other man. The defendant (to the constable) : There are three more pegs yet. (Laughter). Come, let us have the truth. Let us see these other three pegs. (Laughter). The constable having produced the pegs, the defendant said : When we got to the Astbury Police Station, I killed the four rabbits, didn't I? Witness : Yes. Was my net dry when you found it? No, it was not dry. Why was it not dry? (Laughter). It was a bit damp. Do you mean to tell me that a net will get damp on the highway? Does grass grow in the middle of the road? (Laughter). In addressing the Bench, the defendant said when he started from home on that particular night, he had four rabbits in a bag. They were alive, and he and another man were taking them into the country for the purpose of having a race. (Laughter). The Clerk (Mr Reade) : Do you wish to say anything about the net and pegs? The defendant : Oh, yes. They all belong to me. (Reserved laughter). The bag is made of calico, and you can't stain calico, can you? (Continued laughter). I hope you won't take any notice of what I say. I wish I had that chap (pointing to Mr Walker, who sat at the solicitors' table) to speak for me. He would have pulled me clear. (Laughter). The Chairman : What is your occupation? Defendant : I am a boatman, but my horse is dead. (Laughter). After a brief consultation, the Chairman said the Bench considered the defendant guilty, and he would be fined 21s, including costs, or in default of payment one month's imprisonment with hard labour. He would also forfeit the net and pegs. The defendant applied for a week in which to pay the fine, but an objection was raised by the police, and the Chairman said it must be paid at once, or otherwise the defendant would have to go to gaol.

**80      11 February 1891**

HASSALL GREEN

SINGULAR FATALITY – INQUEST    On Saturday morning, Mr H Churton, coroner, held an enquiry at Hassall Green on the body of **Samuel Key**, aged 18 years, son of **Peter Key**, a boatman,

who was killed by falling in the lock at Hassall Green early on Thursday morning. Evidence was given by the deceased's father to the effect that as he was proceeding by Hassall Green with his boat, deceased went forward with a lamp for the purpose of opening the lock gates. As it was very dark the deceased made a mistake and walked into the lock, injuring himself severely about the head and face. The lad's father, hearing a splash in the water, ran to the deceased's assistance, and by means of a boat hook succeeded in pulling him out of the lock. He was conveyed to an adjoining house, where he rallied for a time, but before medical aid could be procured, he expired. The Coroner remarked that it was a singular case, and he thought the jury could do no other than return a verdict of accidental death. It was quite clear that the deceased died from injuries sustained to his head by falling in the lock.

After a short consultation, the jury returned a verdict in accordance with the Coroner's suggestion.

### **81 14 March 1891**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

MORE BARNTONIANS **James Leicester**, Barnton, boatman, was fined 7s 6d for being drunk on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, whilst Joseph Barrow had to pay 10s.

### **82 25 March 1891**

ODD RODE

THEFT BY WOMEN At the Congleton County Police Court on Saturday, before Messrs C W Hogg (Chairman) and E Shaw, Annie Maria Green, general servant, residing at Little Moss, Odd Rode, and Eliza Shallcross, a married woman residing at Kent Green, were charged with stealing, and also receiving, from the dwelling house of **William Green**, a boatman, Odd Rode, between the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1891, a pair of trousers, a pair of boots, a blanket, a sheet, a bolster, a pillow slip, a skip, a frock, nightdress, pinafore &c, value £2 7s 6d. The prosecutor stated that some time ago the prisoner Green, who was his sister, came from service and stayed at his house for several weeks. On the 12<sup>th</sup> instant he missed a pair of boots (produced) and asked his sister, and also the other prisoner, who was a neighbour, if they had seen anything of them, and they said they had not. Witness and his wife went away, and when they returned on the 18<sup>th</sup> inst, they missed the articles mentioned in the charge, which were now produced. Before going away, witness locked the house up. **Mary Green**, wife of the prosecutor, gave corroborative evidence. PC Lee stated that from information received he instituted inquiries, and found the articles produced pledged at Messrs Salt and Allcock's pawnshop at Congleton, and also at Mr D Richmond's pawnshop at Kidsgrove. He afterwards went in search of the prisoners, and apprehended them. He charged them with stealing the articles named, and they replied that they were both as bad as each other. Evidence was then given to the effect that the goods were pledged by Shallcross. In reply to the Bench, Green pleaded guilty, and Shallcross said she was not guilty. The Bench fined Green £3 and costs, amounting in all to £3 19s 4d, and committed Shallcross to take her trial at the next Quarter Sessions at Knutsford, bail being allowed.

### **83 15 April 1891**

ANOTHER PARAFFIN LAMP FATALITY AT NANTWICH On Monday, Mr H Churton, coroner, held an inquest at the Nantwich Workhouse on the body of **Hannah Sherwin alias Edwards**, aged 35, who died last Friday from the effects of a paraffin lamp accident. **Charles Edwards** said he was formerly a boatman, but for the past twelve months had been employed at Mr Clarke's brickworks at Baddington. He had lived with the deceased for the past eight years, and she was the wife of a boatman known as "Baccy Jack". On Wednesday night, the 25<sup>th</sup> March, about twelve o'clock, he had occasion to go into the back yard, but on his return, when bolting the door, he heard the crash of a paraffin lamp, which was on the kitchen table. As soon as he got inside, he saw the lamp broken on the floor, and the deceased's clothing in flames. He did his best to put out the fire, and burnt his trousers, waistcoat and shirt, as well as his hands, in the attempt. After three or four minutes, he got the deceased out of the room for fear of the house taking fire, and managed to

extinguish the flames. He sent for a doctor, and he came and dressed the deceased's injuries. She was badly burned about the body and face, and it was found necessary to remove her to the Workhouse Hospital. Letitia Gouldbourn, nurse, stated that the deceased was brought to the Workhouse Hospital on Good Friday. She was attended by Dr Munro and his assistant, but she died from the injuries sustained last Friday afternoon. She explained to witness that the paraffin lamp tumbled off the table, and that her injuries were the result of a pure accident. The first witness was recalled, and in answer to a question, said the bottom of the lamp was broken, and it was put into a jar. He could not say how it got knocked off the table as he was not in the room at the time, but they usually took it to light them to bed. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

#### **84 2 July 1892**

**RESCUE AT THE LIVERPOOL LANDING STAGE** On Tuesday morning about four o'clock, while **James Hampson**, residing in Potter Street, Runcorn, and captain of the flat *Garston* belonging to the United Alkali Company, was taking his vessel into the wharf near the south end of the George's Landing stage and handling a rope to make her fast, he was struck by the tiller and knocked overboard. There were very few upon the stage at the moment, but fortunately Police-constable 170A (Waterson), who was on duty, observed the accident and flung out a lifebuoy, which was grasped by Hampson, and other assistance coming he was drawn up to the stage and removed to the receiving house, where Mr Spooner paid him every attention until half past seven, when he went away to join his father, who is also employed on the flat. He complained of severe pain in the back, the result of the blow from the tiller, but he refused to go to the hospital.

#### **85 3 September 1892**

**THE WATERMEN'S STRIKE ON THE WEAVER  
INTIMIDATION OF NON UNION MEN**

**PROSECUTION BY THE SALT UNION** On Tuesday at the Northwich Police Court, before Mr J T Brunner (in the chair) MP and Mr Lea Jones, **Samuel Mills** and **George Broughton**, both of Barnton, watermen, were charged in custody with having, on the 27<sup>th</sup> August at Barnton, for the purpose of compelling **Benjamin Hughes, Elias Martin, James Weir** and **Joseph Connell** to abstain from working in the employ of the Salt Union Limited, such work in such employ being an act which the said Benjamin Hughes, Elias Martin, James Weir and Joseph Connell had a legal right to do, did unlawfully and wrongfully and without legal authority intimidate them. **Abraham Mills** and **Alfred Siddall**, watermen, both of Barnton, were charged in similar terms with intimidating **John Leather** at Witton on the 25<sup>th</sup> August. **George Whitehead**, waterman, Castle, was charged with intimidating **Matthew Allman** on the 25<sup>th</sup> August. Mr H Hatt Cook of Northwich represented the Salt Union, and Mr J W Thompson of Liverpool appeared for the prisoners.

As the non-union men, on whose information the proceedings were taken, entered the Court room, which was filled with watermen, they were greeted with hisses and boeing. On the suggestion of Inspector Johnson, they were removed to an ante room, to be called as required.

The charge against George Whitehead having been read,

Mr Cook said : I was intending, with your permission, to just state exactly the circumstances under which we are here today, and then to take each case separately if need be. The proceedings in the three cases before your worships are taken under the Conspiracy Act of 1823.

The Chairman : There are five names.

Mr Cook : Three cases. There are five men it is true, but two men are concerned in one case, two in another, and one in a third.

Mr Thompson : My friend agrees with me that I may take the opinion of the Bench that an adjournment shall be granted for the taking of the evidence of these men. I was only instructed this morning, and I believe they were taken under warrant last night. Possibly, some suggestion will fall from Mr Cook which will help your worships to intervene, and then there may be an end to the whole case.

The Chairman : Through adjournment.

Mr Cook : Without an adjournment, I hope. I find it necessary to explain the circumstances in the first instance. The proceedings are taken under the Act with a view to compel any other persons to abstain from doing certain things or they shall be liable to imprisonment, for not exceeding three calendar months with or without hard labour, or to a fine not exceeding £20.

The Chairman : You have read the material part?

Mr Cook : Yes ; I read the material part. The cases before your worships are serious ones, as I shall be able to show you, and it is necessary that I should just state the unfortunate position of things in the district at the present moment. It is much to be regretted a dispute has taken place between the Salt Union and their watermen. Now this dispute is greatly to be regretted in the interests of the district, and the Salt Union directors, as far as is consistent with their duty, are and have been most anxious to put an end to it, and steps up to a certain point were taken with that view, assisted by an association of shareholders in the town to which too much credit cannot be given. But, unfortunately, some four or five days ago, this, what I may call the reign of reason, gave way to the reign of riot, and the men, ill-advised I am sure – I cannot help saying it, badly advised – took the law into their own hands. They have stopped vessels on the river, in some cases by stoning the men, who were obliged to retreat below when the vessels ran aground, and in other cases conducting the men to railway stations, putting them into trains, paying their fares, and sending them out of the district. That is the change which came over the district a few days ago. The effect of it is to paralyse the trade here. It has created a reign of terror in this district. Men are afraid to give evidence, and are afraid to go about the streets, and they are followed to their own houses. It is practically paralysing the salt trade in Liverpool, and is causing, and will cause, by breach of contracts, widespread distress elsewhere ; and therefore it will become much more serious than it is today. The Salt Union directors wish me to state that that is the present position of affairs. They believe from many of the men themselves – not from the men charged but from other watermen – that these men are acting under coercion.

The Chairman : Which set of men are said to be working under coercion?

Mr Cook : Several men are said to be working under coercion.

Mr Thompson : I can speak as the mouthpiece of the men's Union, and I say it is not so.

Mr Cook : I do not say anything against the Union.

The Chairman : Which set of men are working under coercion?

Mr Cook : No set of men ; but those who have lately been in the employ of the Union, and are now on strike. To put it shortly, some of the strikers have, individually, told the directors that they are acting under coercion ; that they bitterly regret this ; that they were never doing better ; and that they would only be too thankful if it were at an end ; but they are not permitted to allow it to be at an end. The directors wish to take this view of the case, and if it meets with the approval of your worships, what struck me is this – that, feeling they would be quite satisfied if the men here today admit the offence, they should be bound over to keep the peace, and to come up for judgement if and when called upon. If that met with your worships' approval, I need not say that the matter could be ended in a few minutes, and I think it would be to the interest of all parties ; but, of course, it would have to be distinctly understood that in any future cases which arise of this kind, we should ask your worships to deal with the matter in the most stringent form possible.

The Chairman : You desire it to be known that that would be the feeling of the directors? You are speaking for the directors now?

Mr Cook : Yes, certainly. And I am submitting it to your consideration in the hope that it may meet with approval, and if my friend may see his way to falling in with it, we hope the matter will come to an end. These things have become most serious, and on Saturday night there was even a more serious case, where men were very much damaged. But, however, the directors are willing to take that course if it meets with your approval. Now the first case, if you wish me to go into the evidence, is the case of George Whitehead.

The Chairman : Has Mr Thompson anything to say in this case?

Mr Thompson : I shall have, but Mr Cook has another word or two. I represent the five defendants.

Mr Lea Jones : I have a very small interest indeed in the Salt Union, and I thought I ought to

mention it.

Mr Thompson : It does not matter. I am quite convinced that the Bench will do what is quite right. I represent these five defendants, but I am in this unfortunate position ; I was only instructed this morning a little before ten o'clock, and I have not had an opportunity of taking the evidence further than seeing the men in the cells below. They were taken in a way which was considered rather high handed by warrant, rather than by summons. I do not think there is any necessity to resort to that course, for the town is not in a state of open riot. These men were put into gaol last night, and had to pass the night in the cells, and are brought here this morning in a very peremptory way – such a way that they cannot prepare their defence, and the ordinary course would be to ask for a remand and it would be granted ; but my friend has thrown out a suggestion this morning. But perhaps your worships might feel inclined to fall in, providing the preliminary difficulty can be got over as to dealing with these men. In respect to these men, I am prepared to admit without prejudice, if my friend will accept it, an offence has been committed by two, and these two should be bound over as a warning to evil doers not to commit like offences and, if necessary, come up for judgement when called upon.

The Chairman : Do you give names?

Mr Thompson : I am prepared to give them, but it would rather prejudice the case if I mention them at this stage. There are two against whom there might be a case of intimidation, but with regard to the other three, I am conscientiously advised that there has been no case of intimidation and naturally, as your worships would expect, it is not for me to make scapegoats of innocent men for the sake of letting off the guilty ones or getting a lesser punishment. I understand my friend wants a moral effect produced, and no one can deplore more than I, or more than those at the back of these men – for you know there are some at the back of these men – that any such reign of terror as described by my friend should have taken place. It is a most deplorable state of affairs, and so far as my advice to these men is concerned, it has always been, “Keep quiet ; fight your own battles if you can in a legal way ; don't get into conflict with the law ; go about your business in this strike in a way which is consistent with law ; and you will have the sympathy of the public. If, however, you go the other way, you will lose the sympathy of the public and lose confidence in yourselves, and your position will be worse than before”. That is the advice given to these men by myself and people behind me, and it is only right I should state that. My friend is entitled to any such moral effect he can obtain, whether there is only a nominal penalty or not. There is no doubt there has been a riot in these cases, but if all the cases were tried and men were found guilty, my friend would have no moral effect. The moral effect would be on the other side, and probably worse scenes would take place, for as you know there is a section of mankind which will not understand the reason why certain events have come to pass. They consider if a case has been won at court that it has been won on the wrong merits, and they persist in the evil courses, thinking they have been justified by the hearing of the case. If my friend is prepared, I think, after that, I can mention the names of the men. That is, if he is prepared to take these two men.

The Chairman : I do not think there would be any objection on the part of Mr Cook to say, before the names were mentioned, whether two being dealt with instead of five would not satisfy him and those by whom he is instructed.

Mr Cook : I am in this difficulty. I should have to ask you for a remand today, for it has been impossible in the short time at my disposal to get up this case thoroughly, and also because it is difficult until order is restored to get men to give evidence. They are afraid to give evidence.

The Chairman : If the course is adopted that you yourself suggested, there is no need for evidence.

Mr Cook : This is the difficulty. In the three cases which Mr Thompson thinks should not be dealt with at all, we have distinct evidence identifying and stating distinctly two specific acts. Then, it puts me in a most difficult position. I should have been glad if Mr Thompson had said, without going into merits, “These five men are here, and we will bind them over to come up for judgement when called upon, and we need not discuss any merits or demerits.” No names have been mentioned at present, and if Mr Thompson could include them all without discussing the case of any particular man, I should be very thankful.

The Chairman : Both you gentlemen came to us today to say that you have not had time to get up your case, and I think that Mr Cook will not be going too far if he says he is content, under these circumstances, with two names instead of five.

Mr Cook : That is your suggestion, your worship?

The Chairman : Yes.

Mr Cook : May I consult with Mr Ward a minute?

The Chairman : Certainly.

Mr Cook then left the room and held a short conference with Mr T Ward who, during the hearing of the case, had been seated on the Bench, but had taken no magisterial part. On Mr Cook's return, Mr Thompson said : I am under a difficulty. I find that my friend is prepared to make some concessions, and I will tell you what the difficulty is. The difficulty is, as regards one of the men, he is charged with having taken certain men from the towing path to the station and paid their railway fares at the station, leaving them there ; and I understand it is to be decided upon by the Bench whether that, coupled with other facts, constituted intimidation. If I admit that, I am practically admitting the whole case.

The Chairman : May we be allowed to express our feeling on the point? It is this – we are not at all anxious to be put into the position of deciding very delicate questions of law and, having heard from you gentlemen that all that is wanted today is to produce moral effect – we shall be very thankful to be relieved of the necessity of going into this extremely delicate point, and to take such action as will meet your views, and in a way which shall bring peace to the neighbourhood.

Mr Thompson : Thank you. I am much obliged for your worships' expression of opinion.

The Chairman : It is meeting fully your wish of producing a moral effect in the neighbourhood without imposing on us the necessity of expressing an opinion upon an exceedingly difficult point.

Mr Thompson : The case would not end here. Both my friend and I would feel it absolutely necessary, whichever way it went, to take this matter to appeal, for it is a point of great importance, and I think it would not stop at your worships. As I said before, I am prepared fully with facts. I admit that there had been certain things done by some men connected with the strikers which are exceedingly reprehensible, and which ought never to have been committed, and which your worships would do well to express a very decided opinion about. With that admission, perhaps my friend would feel contented, and you could, therefore, dismiss the cases with the exception of the two mentioned. The moral effect would be gained there, for these two men, I will admit, have been guilty of intimidation.

The Chairman : I do not think it necessary that we should dismiss the cases.

Mr Thompson : They might be adjourned *sine die* or withdrawn. It is a dismissal on the merits, of course a withdrawal of the cases with a right to bring them up again if need be.

Mr Cook : I am most anxious, and as are those advising me, to fall in with any suggestion from the Bench and, in those cases named by Mr Thompson, I should suggest that they should be bound over to keep the peace and come up for judgement when called upon, and the other cases should be adjourned *sine die*.

Mr Thompson : I have no objection in that case. I am quite prepared to meet with that.

Mr Cook : Of course, your worships will deal with the question of costs? I think that is reasonable.

Mr Thompson : I will mention the names, your worships, if that meets with your approval. The names are : Abraham Hills and Alfred Siddall.

Mr Brunner : Many thanks. You, gentlemen, have come to this conclusion for this amongst other reasons. That taking the case we would leave the matter in suspense, and to my mind it would not have the effect that we desire to produce in the neighbourhood. It is very well, no doubt, to have such a matter settled in a thoroughly decisive way, but our duty today is to produce as far as we possibly can the best possible effect upon the neighbourhood. Very well, the decision is that Siddall and Mills are bound over to keep the peace for six months, themselves in £10 each, and two sureties of £10. Now I want to say, further, that this dispute between the Salt Union and the watermen must in the end be settled by reasonable means, that it is absolutely impossible to settle it by violence. Violence may stop trade, violence may prevent payment of wages, but violence cannot possibly

settle the dispute. The dispute, I say again, must in the end be settled by reason, and I hope that every man here who listens to me will use his influence with his neighbours to procure as early as possible a settlement of this dispute by reason. I hope that an effort will be made to discuss any point at issue between the Salt Union directors and the men in their employ, and that a meeting may be held as early as possible at which the Trades Union shall be represented, to consider item after item all the arrangements that are now in force between the Salt Union and these watermen. I have very good reason to believe the directors of the Salt Union are ready at any moment to sit down with the representatives of the Trades Union, and to sit as long as necessary to have a thorough understanding on both sides. Now these men have (????), through their representatives – and I must compliment the two gentlemen who have spoken to us today upon having stated their case with great clearness and ability – these two men, who have been represented very ably, have assented through their legal advisor to the decision of the Bench, and I hope that they accept that decision fully and frankly, that they will themselves keep the peace, and that they will endeavour to induce their fellows to keep the peace during the six months, and, what is very much more important, that they will use their best endeavours to bring about peace long before the end of the six months. I hope that peace will be thoroughly restored within a very few days. I have only one thing more to say, and that is, that my colleague, who signed two of the warrants, did so with the idea that in the end it was far the kindest thing to the workmen of the neighbourhood that these men should undergo the indignity of being locked up, for the reason that if they had been summoned, this matter could not have been settled for a fortnight. I cordially agree with him that he took the wisest and kindest course, and that under the circumstances it was very much better they should be apprehended, in order that the trouble might be brought to an end at the earliest possible date.

Mr Thompson : I am very pleased on behalf of the men to hear that explanation, and I cordially accept it. I consider the explanation is a very reasonable one, and I think I must admit the men were benefited.

The Chairman : I am very glad to hear that from Mr Thompson. I have omitted to say that these two men, Abraham Mills and Alfred Siddall, will also be bound over to come up for judgement if and when called upon.

Mr Cook : I understand then that the cases stand thus ; in the case of Leather v Abraham Mills and Alfred Siddall, the two defendants are each bound over, themselves in £10 and two sureties of £10, to keep the peace for six months, and to come up for judgement if and when called upon. And the other cases are adjourned *sine die*, subject to 14 days' notice. We ask for costs in each case.

Mr Thompson : That is only costs in the two convicted cases.

The Chairman : The question of costs is also adjourned.

Mr Thompson : Precisely.

The Chairman : I ought to add that, as I understand the matter, the directors of the Salt Union would feel it their duty to proceed with strictness in any case, if the peace is again broken.

Mr Cook : We should be much obliged if your worship would make it quite clear that this is only done today in the interests of peace.

The Chairman : Yes.

The two men, Abraham Mills and Siddall, were then bound over, the bondsmen being :- For Siddall, Edward Hindley, assistant overseer, Barnton, and **Hamlet Mills**, waterman, Barnton. For Mills, **Ebrahim Edgerley Palin**, waterman, Barnton and Alfred Capper jun, Newtown, Barnton.

The other three defendants were also liberated.

## 86 2 November 1892

MYSTERIOUS DROWNING CASE AT APPLETON An inquest was held by Mr Worsley at the London Bridge Inn, Appleton, on Saturday, touching the death of a canal boatman named **Robinson**, who was drowned under mysterious circumstances in the Bridgewater Canal on the preceding evening. A boatman said he was on the same flat as the deceased. He heard a splash and found the deceased missing. By the aid of a boat hook his body was recovered in five minutes. Verdict "Found drowned".

**87 16 September 1893**

**A CANAL BOAT CAPSIZED NEAR NORTHWICH  
TWO CHILDREN DROWNED**

**INQUEST AND VERDICT** On Monday afternoon at the Red Lion Inn, Barnton, Mr C Blunt, deputy coroner, held an inquest on the bodies of **Elizabeth Theobald**, aged four years and seven months, and **Lily Theobald**, aged nine months, daughters of **Thomas Theobald**, who met with their death in an extraordinary manner and under circumstances detailed below. The Rev S L Laidman, vicar of Barnton, was appointed foreman of the jury.

Thomas Theobald, Ducie Street, Piccadilly, Manchester, deposed that he was a boatman. On Saturday, in charge of two boats on the river Weaver. The boats were named *Ted* and *Willie*, and belonged to **Mr Thomas Hassalls** of Ducie Street, Manchester. He (witness) had been captain of the boats for about a year and seven months. They arrived at Barnton with them on Friday night, and went to Higgins' works at Anderton in order to obtain salt in bags. They put in about 12 tons of salt and a ton of empty jars, and about nine o'clock on Saturday morning, they left the salt works to go to Brunner Mond's. They intended to complete the cargo at the chemical works, and during the morning 11 tons 12 cwts of soda crystals in bags were placed on the boat *Willie*. When they finished at Brunner's, witness, **Thomas Ditchfield** (who worked under him), witness's wife and four children were on the boat *Willie*. The children were aged six years, four years and seven months, two years and seven months and nine months respectively. The boats lay by the embankment, *Ted*, which was empty, being next to the shore. The boat *Willie* was registered to carry (...) tons, and on the two boats they had carried as much as 75 tons. It was witness's intention to have the empty boat laden with crystal soda. *Willie* was laden by a quarter past eleven, and a few minutes afterwards the accident occurred. Just on the completion of the loading, the shipping clerk said to him, "Captain, we will get the boat clothed up for fear of rain". Ditchfield threw the stern plank on the boat ; but witness said, "Hold hard ; we will trim the boat first". Ditchfield was at the stern end, and he came to the bags to assist in moving one to the other side of the boat. This was necessary in order to trim the boat straight, and it was a job which often had to be done on narrow boats. They moved the bag which contained the soda, but even then the boat was not straight, and he said to Ditchfield, "The boat is not straight yet, and we will shift another one". They therefore moved another bag which also weighed 5 cwts, and then the boat began to "what?" over on the side nearest to the empty boat. His wife ran out of the cabin, and called out, "Oh dear, Tom, whatever are you doing?" Then she screamed and said, "The boat is going over". He believed the boat would recover herself ; but, as soon as he saw that she continued to go over towards the empty craft to which she was tied, he ran to the cabin to assist his wife and children. He called out to Mrs Theobald to get ashore. Two of the children were in the hatches. He picked up one of them and threw her on the other boat to a man who was working there. He then threw the other child, and Ditchfield caught her. His wife wanted to go into the cabin for the other children, and he had difficulty in preventing her from doing so. The water was in the cabin. He told his wife to jump on the empty boat, and the man on the *Ted* caught hold of her hand, but a sudden lurch made him leave go of her, and she was thrown into the water. She caught hold of the string which was hanging by the side of the boat, and she was rescued. As the boat was sinking, he (witness) entered the cabin to save the other two children. The water rose to his waist, and he had to turn back. A minute or so later the boat went down, turning completely over.

The Coroner : How do you know that the weights of the salt and soda on the boat which you have given us are correct? From what you say, there would be about 21 tons on the boat.

Witness said he had given the tickets of weights to his employer. He knew that the tickets from Higgins' works stated that there were 112 two cwt bags.

The Coroner observed that that made the figures eleven tons 4 cwt of salt, and the witness had stated that there were 12 tons 4 cwt.

Witness said the last were the correct figures. With reference to the soda, the man who checked told him that there were 11 tons 12 cwt.

The Coroner : Have you ever had a similar occurrence? - Witness : No, sir. Do you think your boat was too heavily weighted? - I cannot make out the cause of its going over. If the canal had had plenty of water, I should have put on a greater cargo. We ought to take 35 tons easily and without any danger. And you cannot account for the accident? - I cannot give any information at all. The boat has been got up and is empty? - Yes. Have you examined her since? - Not carefully, but she does not seem to be leaking at all. She is a boat that did not ordinarily ship a bucketful of water. I dare say she would be four feet deep and she drew about 14 inches.

The Foreman : You say that after you moved one bag, the boat listed to the same side? Witness : She still listed towards the open river. After we moved the second bag, she leaned over to the other side and went down. While you were moving the bags, did anyone interfere with the ropes by which the boat was tied to the empty craft? - I believe the rope slipped, and my wife was unloosening it so that she could tighten it again, but the boat went down. Do you think the unloosening made a difference? - Well, if it had been properly fast, it might have made a difference.

Witness, in answer to Mr Hazlehurst (a juror), said the bags were laid all the way down the boat. The boats were specially built for the trade in which they were being employed.

Thomas Ditchfield, living with Theobald, stated that he was in the *Willie* on Saturday when the accident occurred. When the last four bags had been put in place, the boat started lying slightly towards the open river. They decided to move some of the soda, and accordingly shifted one bag. This made no difference, and so they moved another two cwts. As soon as they had done this, the vessel began to sink. She was not long in turning over and going to the bottom. Two of the children were saved in the manner described. He could not account for the boat going over without a rope or something slipped. She was by no means heavily laden.

Frank Hickson of Anderton, labourer, deposed that on Saturday morning he was engaged in loading the *Ted*, which lay by the side of the boat which had capsized. He noticed Theobald and Ditchfield moving a bag and concluded that they were trimming the cargo. He next noticed that the boat was leaning over towards the boat in which he was working. He caught the two children thrown by the captain ; but the boat was soon full and at the bottom. He did not see the rope slip, but he thought that if it was loosened by the captain's wife, that would have something to do with the accident.

Patrick Wilson of Castle Northwich, labourer, spoke to diving into the boat's cabin when she lay under water, and recovering the bodies of the two children. The eldest was covered with utensils, and the stove and ashpan had also turned over upon her. The baby was fast in a chair.

The Coroner, in summing up, gave it as his opinion that the jury could do nothing but record a verdict of accidental death. The boat might not have been loaded properly ; but he would not like to say that that was the case.

The foreman agreed with the coroner that they could only return a verdict of accidentally drowned. It was quite possible that as long as the rope kept in position the boat was secure ; but he was not going to say that the captain was any way to blame in the matter.

The jury agreed to a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

## **88 18 October 1893**

### CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

UNLAWFUL ASSAULT **John Harris**, 25, boatman, indicted for unlawfully assaulting Eliza Wenlock on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August at Newton (Middlewich) was found guilty and sentenced to six months' hard labour.

## **89 6 February 1895**

SINGULAR GUN ACCIDENT A young canal boatman named **Harry Grimley** of Winson Green, Birmingham, was admitted to Nuneaton Hospital on Friday evening suffering from terrible injuries to his face. It appears that a barge was loading at Griff Colliery, and a loaded gun lay on the top of the cabin. Whilst Grimley's mate was sweeping off the snow, he caught the trigger, and the charge struck the unfortunate youth, shattering his jaw. He lies in a precarious condition.

**90**      **13 April 1895**

## DISGRACEFUL CHILD NEGLECT AT WHARTON

### A SHOCKING STORY

**EXEMPLARY PUNISHMENT** At the Middlewich Police Court on Monday, before Mr G Garfit and Mr W Boosey, **William Hatton**, commonly known as "Billy four o'clock", of no fixed residence, bargeman, was charged under warrant with ill treating, neglecting, abandoning and exposing his children, **George Hatton** aged five years and **Charles** aged three, in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering and injury to their health between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March last. Prisoner pleaded guilty.

Inspector Maguire, of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, said the prisoner had been under his observation for about 12 months. He had a wife of weak intellect and two children aged five and three years. After numerous cautions, he was brought before the Northwich magistrates in June 1894 and sent to prison for a month. The Bench then directed the wife and children to be taken to the Workhouse but, on coming out of gaol, the prisoner took them out and went to live in Leicestershire. Sergeant Thompson said he visited the house in November last, and the officer would be able to tell them the state of things which then existed. Prisoner then removed, and the next time witness found any trace of the family was at 10.30 am on the 14<sup>th</sup> March, when he was in company with Mr Shaw (school attendance officer) and Mr Dodd, one of the guardians for Winsford. They were then in the Wharton streets. The children were fairly nourished, but were in rags and covered with vermin. The younger child had a burn two inches long and one inch wide on the right leg, and from this, matter was oozing. Witness applied for and obtained from the Relieving Officer of the Winsford district a workhouse order, and had them removed to the Northwich Workhouse, of which institution they were inmates for several days, when the prisoner fetched them out. He also applied for and obtained a warrant for the apprehension of the prisoner. He (the Inspector) had seen the two children and the imbecile mother that day, and they were still unprovided for. He was able to call evidence to show that the prisoner was in receipt of wages which were sufficient to enable him to maintain his wife and children without leaving them in the streets or allowing them to become chargeable to the union.

Mr John Dodd, engineer of Wharton, a guardian, stated that during March he saw the prisoner's wife and children on many occasions in the streets of Winsford. He saw them repeatedly during the very severe weather, and he considered that their condition was a disgrace to the prisoner, and also a disgrace to the neighbourhood. They were half starved, and he did not suppose they could have any home to go to, for they were frequently standing for an hour at a time in front of shop windows. He received numerous complaints from people in the town that such a state of affairs should be allowed to exist. He saw the woman and children on the 14<sup>th</sup> March, when he noticed that the youngest child had a wound on one leg which was about two inches wide and an inch long. It appeared as if it had been burned, and was apparently very bad. Previous to this date, he had ascertained that the children had been sleeping on salt works and other places. On the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> March the children slept at Messrs Bragg and Kitchen's works, and it seemed quite probable that the burn had been caused by the child lying in front of the salt pans where the ashes fell. The children were in a filthy state, and were covered with vermin.

William Shaw (school attendance officer) deposed that he had made both verbal and written complaints to the Inspector as to the condition of **Mary Hatton** and her children. He frequently found them in the street, and it was some time before he was able to ascertain who they were and where they belonged to. The children were hanging about for hours under shop windows and in entries and other places where they could get. He also found that the mother was sending them into shops to beg. She told him that her husband was a waterman, and he cautioned her and left a notice with her to give to her husband, warning him about the elder boy not going to school. He was with Mr Dodd at 10.30 on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> ult, when he saw the mother and children in Wharton. They were in a dirty condition, and looked as if they had not had their clothes off for some time. The stench was abominable. The wound seemed to pain the youngest child very much. Witness

assisted the Inspector to convey the children to the residence of the Relieving Officer, but on the way the Inspector removed vermin from the woman's clothing, and he (witness) refused to go any further in the cart.

Sergeant Thompson gave evidence as to the previous conviction and, with reference to the general character of the prisoner, said that he had known the family for two years, and had found that the wife was of weak intellect, and that, instead of bestowing upon her and the family care and attention, Hatton abused her in a most shameful fashion. He left her for weeks together and, although he had a regular job on a flat belonging to Mr Vernon of Northwich, he would not stick to it. He would not place his wife and children in proper lodgings, but left them to the mercy of the world. The woman went out begging, the children were neglected, as she was unable to look after them. When they resided in Northwich, he visited the house on several occasions, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> November, when he went there in company with the Inspector, he found that there was not a bit of food in the house and that the clothing consisted of a parish blanket belonging to the Northwich Blanket Society, and which was swarming with vermin and was very filthy. He gave the prisoner good advice and asked him to get an order and send them to the workhouse. Instead of doing that, he took them away to Winsford on the following day, so that he would be out of the Inspector's way. Prisoner might work if he would, but he refused to stick at anything for long, and he certainly would not look after his family.

PC Woodward, stationed at Moulton, said he arrested the prisoner under a warrant on Friday morning. In answer to the charge, he said he had left his wife and family when he went to work at Mr Dodd's at Winsford. That week he had been with the boat from Anderton to Liverpool, and with his bonus had made 28s, 23s being his ordinary wages. Had he been allowed to go this week, he would have made £2 out of the trip. He was always fetched away when he got a good job.

Prisoner now said before he left Winsford for work after the frost, he arranged for his wife and family to remain at the house of a Mr Thomas Barrow, Winsford Hill. Afterwards, he took them to William Dodd's in Chapel Street, Over, and arranged to pay 5s when he returned from a trip. While he was away, he was under the impression that the family were at this house, and consequently he was quite content, but he was made very anxious when he arrived at Acton Bridge and was informed by a boy that they had been taken to the workhouse. He fetched them out of the house as soon as he arrived at Anderton. The Chairman : You have heard about the state she was in? Prisoner : I could not help it. I could not be with her all the time.

The Chairman : The Bench think that this is a case of gross cruelty to your children. I may say that I saw the children myself as they were being taken to the workhouse, and I can bear out all that has been said. The extreme penalty for this offence is six months, and it seems, as you have been up before, that you will not take any notice. The Bench do not, however, wish to inflict the extreme penalty of the law upon you, and will give you one more chance. You will be sent to the House of Correction for three months with hard labour. An order to remove the wife and children to the workhouse was made.

## **91      27 April 1895**

### **SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY**

**DESERTING A WIFE AND FAMILY** **Thomas Roscoe**, a flatman, was summoned for deserting his wife and family at Sandbach on March 6<sup>th</sup>. **Caroline Roscoe**, the wife, said her husband left her on March 6<sup>th</sup>, taking away his clothing. He had not since contributed anything to her maintenance. She had two children, one a girl who was able to keep herself, and a boy aged 13, earning 4s per week. Her husband was a boatman and earned from 30s to £1 15s per month. Cross-examined by Mr Thompson, she said she had not always been quarrelling with her husband. She had always been kind to her husband when he came home, that was if he conducted himself in a proper manner. Mrs (?Gilfoot) and Caroline Roscoe, daughters of Mrs Roscoe gave corroborative evidence. Mr Thompson, for the defence, said that the parties had a dispute in January, and since then when he returned they never said anything to him, and he returned on March 6<sup>th</sup>, when he could not get admittance to his own house. His wife had taken the house in her own name. He was perfectly

willing to live with his wife so that there could be no desertion, and what desertion there was was caused by the acts of the wife. Defendant corroborated his solicitor's statement. An order was made compelling the defendant to contribute 5s per week.

**92 31 July 1895**

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY

SAVAGE ASSAULT ON A WIFE AT RUNCORN **Thomas Gandy**, St John Street, Runcorn, waterman, was charged under warrant with unlawfully wounding his wife on June 10<sup>th</sup>. **Ellen Gandy** stated that on the date named her husband was not sober, he having been drinking all the previous week. He came home and abused her, beating her with the tongs, with which he struck her on the mouth several times. She was knocked senseless. She could not say how often he struck her. He knocked out two teeth and broke others. He cut her mouth. He also kicked her. Since the assault he had been out of town. This was not the first occasion on which he had ill-treated her. He had frequently done so. She had previously summoned him before that Court, but a settlement was effected. Inspector Hicks spoke to the previous witness coming to the police station on the date named. She could scarcely speak. Her teeth were very loose, and her lip was split through, the cut being a very ugly one. Complainant said her husband had struck her with the tongs, and kicked her with heavy lace up boots. She was in such a condition that it was necessary for a warrant to be taken out. He visited the house and found blood on the floor ; in fact, the place looked more like a slaughter house than a dwelling. The prisoner absconded, and had since been at Salford. Defendant said he was in drink at the time, having been on the spree during Whitsuntide. He took spirits, to which he was not accustomed. She aggravated him. The magistrates reduced the case to one of assault, which they considered proved, and sent the prisoner to gaol for three months with hard labour.

**93 14 September 1895** (*Extremely difficult to read, and faded*)

CHESTER CITY POLICE, TUESDAY

SEQUEL TO A DROWNING CASE – CHARGE OF PERMITTING DRUNKENNESS Joseph Wilson, landlord of the Grosvenor Arms public house at the foot of Queen Street and on the canal bank, was summoned for permitting drunkenness on his licensed premises on 20<sup>th</sup> July last. Mr E S Giles represented the defendant. The Chief Constable, in opening the case, said in consequence of the inquest which was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July, the City Coroner wrote to him suggesting that there was a need for inquiry. As a result of this inquiry, this summons was taken out. On the night of Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July, there were among others in the defendant's house **Joseph Pritchard**, who was captain of the canal boat *Cadiz*, **Charles Lloyd**, **Samuel Lloyd**, his brother and **James Morris**, all boatmen. Pritchard's boat was then lying at the locks. The defendant's house was very often frequented by boatmen. The four men left the house at eleven o'clock, and they started to walk to their boat. Then Pritchard was in such an intoxicated condition that his comrades suggested that instead of going by the canal side he should go by the streets. He disagreed, and they all went along the towing path. When they came to the Northgate, Pritchard (.... ....) a little, and was seen by his comrades going towards a rail at the canal side. A splash was afterwards heard, the brothers Lloyd went to the spot, but nothing could be seen of Pritchard, who was taken out near the (.... ..) about half an hour afterwards. Samuel Lloyd, canal boatman living at (.....), stated he was at Chester on Saturday night the 20<sup>th</sup> July. He went into the Grosvenor Arms public house about twenty minutes to eleven. His brother, Charles Lloyd, James Morris and Joseph Pritchard captain of the boat *Cadiz*, were there. He had had a pint in there, and Pritchard had a pint. They left together about eleven o'clock. When he left the public house, he was sober enough to know what he was doing, but Pritchard was drunk. They stood against Mr (.....) wall for some time, and they then started for the boat. Witness and his brother tried to persuade Pritchard to go round by the town and not along the towpath, but he would not. Pritchard was staggering on the towpath as they went along. When they got to the Northgate Bridge, Pritchard told them to go on, and they went along about 20 yards. They then heard a splash, and they went and looked in the direction of the noise, but could not see

anything. He saw Pritchard taken out of the water dead a short time afterwards. Cross-examined by Mr Giles : Pritchard and Morris were drinking out of one pint. Pritchard was drunk when they got outside. It was so dark that night that he could not see his hand before him. They stopped at (.....) wall about ten minutes. Charles Lloyd, another canal boatman and brother of the last witness, said that he was at Chester on the 20<sup>th</sup> July. He went to the Grosvenor Arms about twenty minutes past ten. He saw Pritchard, who was captain of the canal boat *Cadiz*, witness being in his employ. He saw Pritchard have a pint to drink. He (witness) had two pints. It was about eleven o'clock when they left the house, and they stood against the (.....) for twenty minutes. They started along the towpath, and they tried to persuade Pritchard to go round the town way, but he refused. Witness and his brother got one each side of the deceased to prevent him falling into the canal. When they got to the Northgate Bridge, Pritchard asked them to go on for a minute. They went on about 20 yards, and the last witness saw of him was when he was sliding his hand along the rails which are by the side of the canal. They heard a splash and went back, but could not see anything of the deceased. By Mr Giles : He could not tell whether Pritchard was drunk (.....) in the public house. He discovered that Pritchard was drunk when he was walking about 30 or 40 yards outside the house. It was safer for them all to have gone along the town road. The towing-path was about three or four yards wide. By the Northgate, it was only wide enough to walk two abreast. PC Austin stated that he was called to the Northgate Bridge on the 20<sup>th</sup> July. He found the two Lloyds there and the lock-keeper, who were dragging. The two Lloyds seemed as though they had had a lot of drink, and were very much excited. The body of Pritchard was found and conveyed to the mortuary. PC Dryland stated that on the night in question he went to Austin under the Northgate Bridge. He saw the two Lloyds there, and they were drunk and stumbling about. Mr Giles said he did not think there was a *prima facie* case made out against his client. This man Wilson was a respectable tradesman, who had carried on the business for the past eight years, and no complaints had ever been made against him. From the evidence of two drunken boatmen, the magistrates were asked to believe that he had permitted drunkenness on the premises. He would call witnesses to prove that Pritchard was not drunk. James Stockton, cashier in the employ of the Shropshire Union Company, Ellesmere Port, said he knew Pritchard, who had been in the employ of the company (?all his life?). He had never seen him the worse for drink. On Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, he remembered seeing Pritchard at Ellesmere Port. He was going on the two minutes to (.....) train to Chester. In his opinion, Pritchard was perfectly sober. Edward Thomas (.....), labourer in the employ of the company, living at Queen Street, said he knew Joseph Pritchard. He (witness) was in the Grosvenor Arms on the night in question. Pritchard came in about 20 minutes past ten. He was sober when he came in, and he had one pint of beer. Witness was talking to him in the bar, and sat next to him for a few minutes. Witness (.....) and he (witness) left there at about a quarter to eleven. Joseph Wilson, the defendant, then went into the witness box. He stated that he was the licensee of the Grosvenor Arms, and on the night in question he served Pritchard with a pint of beer. The two Lloyds were there. Pritchard, in his opinion, was perfectly sober. He saw him leave the house, and he was sober. Witness had kept that house for 8 1/2 years. He would have served Pritchard with another drink if he had asked for it. Cross-examined by the Chief Constable : His wife had been serving for a few minutes. He had served the two Lloyds with two half pints. Deceased was the last man he thought would have been drowned. The house was mostly frequented by boatmen. The magistrates said the evidence which had been submitted was not enough to satisfy them that the licensee had permitted drunkenness on his premises, and the case would be dismissed.

#### **94 14 September 1895**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION **James Williamson**, waterman, Northwich, was ordered to send his child to school and pay costs amounting to 9s 6d.

**95 9 October 1895**

**WINDFALL FOR A CANAL BOATMAN** A great sensation has been caused at Clayton-le-Moors, a township near Accrington, by the news received by a man named **Turner** that he is heir to a fortune of £150,000. Turner follows the occupation of a boatman on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Many years ago, his uncle went to Australia gold mining, and it was rumoured in England that he had become enormously rich. Turner's life has been a very hard one, and the news of his windfall was a great surprise. It is stated that a firm of Manchester solicitors have the case in hand.

**96 12 October 1895**

**SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY**

**CRUELTY TO HORSES** **Samuel Holland**, a canal boatman, was summoned for ill treating a horse on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Defendant did not appear. Inspector Lindsey stated that he saw the horse on the canal towing path towing a boat. It was suffering from a disease of the fetlock joint on the off fore leg. He had cautioned defendant before, and he had promised to get rid of the horse. Defendant was fined 5s and costs.

**WASTING WATER ON THE CANAL** **John Davenport** was fined 20s, including costs, **John Wood** 20s and costs, and **Albert Wood** 10s including costs, for wasting water while going through locks on the Shropshire Union Canal on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr Hamilton prosecuted on behalf of the Canal Company.

**97 8 December 1895**

**A BOATMAN CHARGED WITH ILL TREATING HIS HORSE** **Walter Swain**, a boat captain living at Stoke on Trent, was charged with cruelty to his horse, by working it while in an unfit state. Inspector Lindsay of the RSPCA stated that he was on the canal bank at Baddington, and saw the defendant driving a grey mare which was drawing a canal boat laden with 20 tons of coal. The animal was walking lame, and suffering from a sprained foot and inflammation. On the off side of the horse was an old sore which the side strap of the rope was rubbing, and the wound was suppurating. Witness asked the defendant why he was working the horse in that state, and he said it was a little lame when he brought it from home a week ago. PC Scott said he noticed the horse was lame on the off fore leg, and a wound on its side, as stated by the previous witness. The defendant was fined 10s and costs, or in default 14 days imprisonment.

**98 21 December 1895**

**NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY**

**NO LICENCES** **Robert Poole** of Runcorn Road, Barnton, waterman, was summoned for keeping a dog without a licence, and was ordered to pay 10s including costs.

**99 4 January 1896**

**OAKMERE PETTY SESSIONS**

**ASSAULTING A CANAL PORTER** **William Lloyd**, boatman of Wardle, was summoned by **Francis Richard Hankinson**, porter on the Shropshire Canal, for assault on the 27<sup>th</sup> November. Complainant said he was in the office when the defendant came in swearing and, without any provocation, struck him in the mouth. Inspector Talbot of Chester said the proceedings had been instituted by the Canal Company, because they felt that their servants ought to have protection. Defendant pleaded guilty. He had had a drop of beer and was now sorry for what he had done. Fined 5s.

**100 4 January 1896**

**CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS**

**A RUNCORN CASE** **Enoch Rollinson**, 53, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing five pairs of stockings, the goods of Anthony Bradley, at Runcorn on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, and was sentenced to

three months' hard labour.

**101 18 April 1896**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS, WEDNESDAY

DRUNK AND DISORDERLY **William Williams**, a boatman, was, on the evidence of PC McBennett, fined 10s including costs for being drunk and disorderly in Forge Fields, Sandbach.

**102 18 July 1896**

SAD FATALITY TO A RUNCORN FLATMAN An inquest was held at the Chester Infirmary on Tuesday by the city coroner (Mr E Brassey) upon the body of **George Beckett**, 65 years of age, a flatman residing at Runcorn. Louisa (?Dambell?), Runcorn, said deceased was her father and he worked on the flat *Joseph*, which went between Runcorn and Mostyn. He was steady. He had been a sailor all his life, but had been out of work. **John Waterworth**, Runcorn, captain of the flat, stated that this was deceased's first trip in it. They left Runcorn on Friday morning, arriving at Mostyn about 10.30 at night. Witness(*sic*) went ashore about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon. Witness went to fetch him about seven o'clock. He found the deceased in a public house, and he was rather the worse for drink. Deceased walked with witness down to the dry dock where the boat was. Deceased could not walk straight. Witness wanted deceased to wait so that he could fetch him in a small boat, but deceased said he would get down the boom. He was about two yards down the boom, when he slipped and fell over to the bottom of the dock. Deceased was put on board. His head was cut. A doctor was sent for, and he arrived about 10.30 and ordered him to be taken ashore, where he dressed his wounds. Deceased was taken to the Infirmary on Sunday morning. John Jones, barman at the Mostyn Arms, stated that deceased came into the house about four o'clock. He served deceased with two pints of beer, and then he refused him any more. Dr Emmerson, surgeon at the Chester Infirmary, said that deceased was brought there on Sunday morning. He had a scalp wound on the right side of the head and part of his skull was fractured. Three of his ribs were also fractured, and he died about four o'clock. In answer to the jury, Waterworth said there was no accommodation of any sort at the dock. The Coroner said if the jury thought there ought to be a recommendation to the police about the matter, he would send one. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death" and also recommended that a proper gangway should be erected.

**103 14 October 1899**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS

OBSCENE LANGUAGE **Joseph Bradshaw**, boatman, Marston, was fined 5s for using obscene language in Ollershaw Lane on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. PC Mason proved the case.

**104 16 December 1899**

MIDDLEWICH PETTY SESSIONS

SISTERS IN LAW AT VARIANCE **Mary Ann Beech**, wife of **George Beech**, boatman, Middlewich, was summoned by **Jemima Shecklestone**, wife of **James Shecklestone**, boatman, Middlewich, for using threats towards her on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Complainant said that on the date named she returned home with a boat from Runcorn, when the defendant, who was her sister-in-law, came and threatened to "double her up and burst her". She also made use of very bad language. The defendant denied having made use of the threat, and said the complainant had annoyed her. The Bench dismissed the case.