

LIVERPOOL ECHO

1 9 February 1914

I AM SORRY A boatman on the Shropshire Union boat *Sovereign* was remanded at Ellesmere Port today on a charge of stealing a pair of trousers, value 8s 11d, belonging to **Edward Owen**, captain of the Shropshire Union boat *Syphon*.

Complainant said he purchased the trousers in Ellesmere Port on Friday afternoon, and placed the trousers in a cupboard on board his boat.

He missed them later in the evening. He then went to the *Sovereign*, and was given permission to search it. He asked prisoner if he had the trousers, and he replied, "No". Complainant subsequently found them, and when he told prisoner, the latter said, "Don't give me in charge".

Prisoner said he went into the cabin of the *Syphon*, and when he took the trousers, complainant was drunk and sleeping.

Police-constable Williams said he arrested prisoner on the *Sovereign*, and he said, "I may as well tell the truth. I took them, and I may as well come quietly".

When charged he said, "I am sorry".

Nothing was known against prisoner.

2 18 February 1914

OFF THE *SYPHON* - LAND PIRACY AT ELLESMERE PORT **William Owen** was sentenced to a month's imprisonment at Ellesmere Port, today, for stealing a fitch of bacon, value £1 10s, the property of the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Company, from the boat *Syphon*, of which his brother is captain. His wife, Mary, was discharged, so that she could go home and attend to their six children.

Edward Owen said his brother gave assistance in loading the boat before departure from Ellesmere Port. When about twenty five miles on her voyage, the boat gave a lurch, and he discovered that a large fitch of bacon was missing.

Inspector Howie stated that prisoner said : "Me and the missus went down to the boat and took the bacon from the boat about ten o'clock the same night as we loaded her".

Witness read that statement over to the female prisoner, and she replied, "Yes".

Prisoners, it was stated, were before the court for stealing in March last.

Henry Salmon, boatman, employed by the Shropshire Union on the boat *Sovereign*, was charged with stealing a pair of trousers belonging to Edward Owen.

Prosecutor said he purchased a pair of trousers, which he placed in his cabin, from where they disappeared.

Prisoner expressed regret, and was fined 10s and costs.

3 23 February 1914

STEALING ROPE - TWO RUNCORN MEN IN TROUBLE At Runcorn today, **Henry Smitham**, Okell Street, and **James Cavanagh**, Cooper Street, were charged together with stealing, on February 7, a quantity of rope, value 6s, belonging to the Manchester Ship Canal Company.

Superintendent Owen said that on February 21, in consequence of complaints, he instructed Police-constable Tudor to watch at the Old Quay yard. The officer concealed himself in a shed on Saturday. At about 7.40, he heard someone moving outside the door, on the Belevedere side. Presently he saw the outline of a person, and later saw someone feeling under the door. He then heard someone going away, and emerging from his place of hiding, saw Cavanagh standing by the door, and the prisoner Southam about ten yards away.

Cavanagh was carrying three sacks under his arm. The officer took both prisoners into custody. When questioned, Cavanagh said Smitham and he had arranged to go to the tug

Minnie for some rope.

Later, it was found that 30lb of rope had been sold to Mr Pritchard.

When questioned, both prisoners admitted taking and selling the rope. The prisoners had made an admission to the police that they were loitering on Saturday last for the same purpose, and both pleaded guilty.

Smitham, when charged, said that he had been tempted to take the stuff, and that he met Cavanagh in the Waterman's Arms. He asked him if he had any old rope in order that he may get a few shillings for it.

Smitham was given a good character by his employers. He had been twenty years in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Company and was mate on the tug *Minnie*. Cavanagh was captain of a flat.

For loitering and theft, fines amounting to £2 13s 6d were imposed on each prisoner.

4 31 March 1914

CHESHIRE CHEMICAL WORKERS' RESCUE The Northwich magistrates today presented – with befitting ceremony – diplomas of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society to P Halpin, J Wickens, J W Lamb, William Mills, Abram Barker and George Ridings.

The men, who are chemical workers and boatmen, were concerned in the plucky rescue and resuscitation of **George Moores**, Rode Heath, Salt Union boatman, who fell into the river Weaver, was recovered from the bed of the stream apparently dead, and restored by oxygen.

5 20 April 1914

NO FIREGUARD - SERIOUS WARNING BY RUNCORN MAGISTRATE The chairman of the Runcorn court pronounced a grave warning today concerning the provision of fireguards in houses where there were children.

William Twigg, labourer of Norton Street, was summoned for failing to provide a fireguard or take reasonable precaution to prevent his child being burned.

Superintendent Owen said on March 1st defendant's son, aged ten months, received certain burns from which he died five days later.

At the inquest, the defendant stated on oath that at the time the child was burned, there was a fireguard around the fire. If that had been so, those proceedings would not have been instituted.

As the result of inquiries, however, it was ascertained that he had borrowed one immediately the child died from a neighbour.

Defendant then said he was very sorry that he did not tell the truth. He had not been in work long enough to purchase one.

Defendant pleaded guilty, and said that he had been a boatman, and he had not been in a house very long, and he had not sufficient means to purchase one. He had been in the hospital some time himself.

The Chairman (Mr R H Posnett) said that they felt very strongly on that matter. It was not the first case they had had at that court relating to negligence on that part.

It was a very serious responsibility to leave children about with an open firegrate. He personally felt that the time was come when cases of that sort came before the court, they would have to be dealt with in a different manner. He would be allowed to go on payment of costs (10s 6d) or fourteen days hard labour in default.

At the same time, they felt it was a very serious responsibility parents were taking, when they neglected to obey the law with regard to this matter.

6 19 May 1914

PRANKS ON CANAL - MISCHIEVOUS ACTION PUNISHED AT WIGAN A gang of men

who are a pest to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company in the neighbourhood of Wigan was mentioned in a prosecution at the local court, which ended in W Finch of Albion Street, Aspull, being fined 20s and costs.

Mr J C Gibson, who appeared for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, stated that on the 11th ult, a boatman named **Green** was on a journey, when prisoner came to the headgate clough and began winding. There was an immediate rush of water.

Green shouted, but he continued his action for fifteen minutes, causing a loss of over 100,000 gallons of water. In trying to cross the boat, he fell into the water.

Upon coming out, he continued his silly prank. Green got hold of him and held him on the ground, but on being released, prisoner rushed at him, knocked him to the ground and kicked him in the face.

Prisoner handed a letter to the Bench in which he pleaded for leniency since he had a wife and five children.

A fine was inflicted, as stated.

7 22 May 1914

SUPPOSED FALL - ROADSIDE END OF WELL KNOWN RUNCORN MAN A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned at the inquest into the death of William Byfield, sixty three, of 13 Thomas Street, Runcorn, the founder of the Runcorn and District Voluntary Grappling Corps, held at Warrington today. Deceased was found by a motorist in a dying condition at Moore, on Wednesday night.

Thomas Byfield, a nephew of the deceased man, said that his uncle had been drinking for the past few months. Witness saw him the day previous to the accident. He was then quite sober, and appeared to be in better spirits.

Samuel Hall, chauffeur in the employ of Messrs Pearson and Knowles Ltd, residing at Morley Road, Lower Walton, stated that on Wednesday night he was passing through Moore in the car, when he noticed the deceased with his bicycle, staggering in the centre of the road.

Witness sounded his horn, but deceased did not seem to take any notice. Later, he saw the deceased on the ground with his bicycle on top of him.

A boatman named **John Rustage**, who was hailed by the motorists to lend assistance, said he saw the motorists stop ten yards before the car reached the body.

Percy de Prez, a plumber of Moore, saw the deceased at Walton about seven o'clock in the evening. He was then riding his cycle all right, but wobbled when he was mounting.

Dr Binns of Stockton Heath, who was called to the scene of the accident, said he did not believe the deceased was under the influence of drink. An abrasion on the forehead could have been caused by a fall from the cycle.

The Coroner said it could only be surmised as no one witnessed the accident, that deceased fell from his cycle and his head struck the ground.

A verdict was returned as stated.

8 23 June 1914

TRAGIC DEATH OF A CHESTER BOY Mr Brassey, the Chester Coroner, held an inquest at the Town Hall yesterday concerning the death of **George Sidwell** (10), son of **Thomas Sidwell**, boatman on the canal boat *Shazada*. It appears that deceased had been living with his uncle and aunt, **Mr and Mrs Dolman**, on the canal boat *Vall*. Shortly after three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, the boat was going through the Northgate bottom lock, in the direction of Ellesmere Port, when it bumped against the wall. Deceased, who was standing on the stern of the boat, was thrown into the water. Mrs Dolman raised an alarm, and her husband ran to the spot, and dived twice into the canal, but failed to find the boy. The canal was dragged, and the body was found a few minutes later and conveyed to the mortuary, where Dr Dobie failed to restore animation. The jury returned a verdict of

“Accidentally drowned”.

9 25 June 1914

COALING - A STORY OF SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT In a prosecution at Blackburn today, it was stated by Mr J J Radcliffe that there was a great deal of pilfering from canal boats from Liverpool to various Lancashire towns.

Richard Glover, captain, of 7 Canal Bank, Wigan, **Peter Ruddick**, canal boatman, of Swan Meadows, Wigan, and **John Richard Melling**, of 13 Fletcher Street, Wigan, were summoned for stealing 336lb of household coal from a barge belonging to Messrs Cook, Thompson, coal merchants of Liverpool.

It was stated that Glover was in charge of a small tug which was proceeding to Liverpool, when he passed the barge. He jumped onto it, and two witnesses said they saw him throw large pieces of coal into his own boat.

Glover took the blame upon himself, and said he took the coal for home purposes. He was fined 20s and the other defendants 10s.

10 29 June 1914

A CANAL DROWNING MYSTERY **Thomas Makinson**, a boatman of 3 Crown Street, New Springs, was found drowned in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Wigan. The deceased had been missing for some few days.

11 15 July 1914

PLUCKY BUT UNSUCCESSFUL A plucky attempt to save a lad from drowning in the canal at Lydiate is reported.

A lad named **William Cheetham** (8), son of **Robert Cheetham**, a boatman of Lydiate, fell into the canal while attempting to recover his hoop from the water. His companion ran to an adjoining boat builder's yard, and Mr Daniel H Lund rushed to the spot. He saw a bubble on the water and dived in several times. He failed, however, to find the boy, and a few minutes later, the body was recovered with a boat hook.

Artificial respiration was tried, but without success.

12 5 August 1914

LIVERPOOL FLATMAN'S ROWDINESS The refractory behaviour of **James Bate**, a Liverpool flatman, at the Railway Hotel, Runcorn, led to his appearance at the local court, where he was charged with being drunk and disorderly, and with doing wilful damage to the extent of 8s.

The licensee, Mr Egerton, who is an ex inspector of the police force, advised Bate not to take a “rise” out of the new barman, but he took no notice and in consequence was ordered out.

Refusing to go, he was put out, and in the scuffle, the licensee had his waistcoat completely ripped off his back. His presentation watch was fortunately picked up by a person, and handed back only slightly damaged.

Prisoner said he could not recollect anything, and was fined 10s and ordered to pay the damage, 8s, or 14 days in default.

13 6 October 1914

FLATMAN'S TERRIBLE INJURIES **Samuel Thompson** (27), a flatman of 46 Great Howard Street, was knocked down by a train crossing the road from the docks to a railway goods station last evening.

His left arm was cut right off, and his toes were crushed. He was attended to at the Northern Hospital, but died some hours later.

14 23 November 1914

FLATMAN DROWNED AT RUNCORN The body of **Luke Speed**, fifty, of 27 Queen Street, Hulme, Manchester, was found this morning at the bottom of the tide dock in the Bridgewater Canal.

Deceased was captain of the flat *Lill*. On Saturday he left his flat, which was lying at the time in the Tide Dock. How he got in the water is a mystery.

15 26 November 1914

FLATMAN DROWNED AT RUNCORN A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned at an inquest at Runcorn on the body of **Luke Speed** (64) a waterman, who lived at 27 Queen Street, Manchester.

Deceased was reported missing on Sunday to the officials of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, with the result that the body was discovered lying at the bottom of No 7 lock.

Deceased was captain of the flat *Lill*, and on Saturday, during a fog, left his boat, which was lying in the tide dock, to go ashore to make some purchases.

There were no marks of violence on the body when examined as to suggest foul play.

16 14 January 1915

MEN MISSING FROM RUNCORN Anxiety is felt for the safety of John Sherriff, a native of Plymouth, and **Thomas Helsby**, narrow boatman, whose mysterious disappearance is engaging the attention of the Runcorn Police. Sherriff is 32 years of age, and came to Weston Point Docks with the boat *Constance Mary*.

After visiting the barber's on Wednesday the 6th inst, he had not been seen since.

Helsby, who is known among his associates as Frodsham, is 35 years of age. He was a well built man, and had an abscess mark on the left side of the forehead. He has been missing from the narrow boat *Winifred* since Saturday last. The boat was lying at Halton Crane. He is a native of Runcorn, but lived on the boat.

17 2 June 1915

NORTHWICH BOY DROWNED The body of a child named **Richard Hickson** (7), son of Mr **William Hickson**, boatman, was taken from the North Stafford Canal today.

The boy went out to play after tea yesterday afternoon, and was not seen again alive. Diligent search was made when he failed to return but, for a long time, without result. This morning, he was found forty yards from Wright's Bridge. It is surmised he was playing on the bridge, slipped over, and was washed down.

18 15 June 1915

RUNCORN DROWNING FATALITY Whilst playing along the Manchester Ship Canal bank, near to what is known as "Castle Rock" in the Dukesfield neighbourhood of Runcorn last night, **James Reginald Carman**, aged 7 years, slipped and fell into the water. An alarm was raised by companions. The water at this particular spot is very deep, and the youngster was carried away with the current.

The Runcorn and District Grappling Corps commenced to grapple, and the body was recovered early this morning.

The child was the son of **Mr E Carman**, a flatman, of 3 Hope Street.

19 26 June 1915

THREE NORTHWICH MEN KILLED News is to hand of three Northwich men killed at the front. Lance Corporal Mills (26), Green Lane, Davenham, of the 5th Cheshire, was shot through the mouth while on night patrol. Private Fred Platt (31), London Road, Northwich, a member of the 2nd Cheshire Regiment, has been shot through the head. Private **Abe Barker** of Winnington, a flatman who joined the 4th Rifles, has died in Rouen Hospital after

having his shrapnel wounded arm amputated.

20 22 July 1915

MERSEY HERO The death has occurred at Ellesmere Port of **Mr James Evans**, one of our fast dwindling band of Crimean heroes, in his eighty ninth year, and a man who was once known as the "hero of the Mersey".

Mr Evans was a native of Runcorn, the son of a flatman. He went to Ellesmere Port some 68 years ago with *The Tower*, the first boat to negotiate Ellesmere Port. At the outbreak of hostilities in the Crimea, Mr Evans was one of the first to volunteer to board the *Arabia* at Liverpool, which was commissioned to take troops out to the front. "I left my ship", said Mr Evans to an interviewer, "and volunteered to serve my country. We took the 17th Lancers, and landed them at Barcelona, afterwards going to Marseilles for a load of French troops. We had a lieutenant on board the boat, and he was anxious for his country. "To him who will volunteer for the trenches, I will give £5 a month," he said one day, and I shouted, "Put my name down". We then had to go to the flagship *Royal Albert*, where we had big gun drill, after which we were sent to Inkerman with the 4th Battery".



At Sebastopol, Mr Evans was wounded by a piece of shell. Of Florence Nightingale, whom he saw at Inkerman, Mr Evans said, "She was a grand young woman, who always walked and worked among the wounded. We all thought the world of her, and she was just like a mother to us lads".

Subsequently, the Bridgewater Company put Mr Evans in charge of the lightship at Stanlow Point. One stormy night, he had a narrow escape, with difficulty getting clear of the ship before she sank.

"One night", he said, "I was looking through the window of the lighthouse during a terrible gale, when I suddenly saw a ship capsize in the Mersey. She was a salt laden vessel bound for Runcorn, and I got my boat and went to the spot as fast as I could. When I got there, the captain and his daughter were hanging over the side of the ship and clinging to a rope. I got them off, and kept them at the lighthouse for nine days. Before they went, they thanked me for what I'd done, and gave me £5.

On another occasion, he lost his boat after effecting a rescue in the Mersey, and the Royal Humane Society presented him with a medal, which he however refused.

A crew of ten were wrecked in the Mersey in the dead of night, and when Mr Evans arrived on the scene after receiving the signal, he found eight men clinging to the masthead, all of whom he saved.

He claimed to have saved in all over forty lives from drowning in the Mersey, and on receiving a reward, many years ago, at Liverpool, he was christened the "hero of the Mersey". He was a devoted member of the Salvation Army, to which he belonged for upwards of forty years, and held the rank of sergeant for thirty two years.

In his latter days, he worked as a scavenger for the Urban District Council, but he was pensioned off about twelve months ago.

[\[The same article, verbatim, but under a different heading, and without the photograph, appears in the Chester Chronicle of 24 July 1915\]](#)

21 26 July 1915

CHILDREN ON CANAL BOATS An inquest was held at Northwich today on **William Wood** (9), son of a Staffordshire canal boatman. The boy, who was a cripple, lived on the boat and, in attempting to jump from the boat to another, fell into the water. His father rescued him. Artificial respiration was successfully applied, but the boy died some hours later from heart failure, due to shock. The coroner remarked that it was a great pity

children had to live on canal boats. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

22 30 September 1915

At Ellesmere Port, Joseph Johnson, 4 Spital Walk, Broughton, Chester ; John Massey, 1 Spital Walk, Broughton, Chester, and **Ernest Poole**, boatman, were charged with poaching. Johnson was fined £5, Massey 10s and Poole 40s.

23 1 November 1915

A DOCK VICTIM – BIRKENHEAD MAN FOUND DROWNED The decomposed body of a man was found in Brunswick Dock today.

He has been identified as **William Harrison**, thirty years of age, captain of the flat *Progress*. He resided in Harcourt Street, Birkenhead.

24 23 November 1915

RUNCORN MAN DROWNED AT BOOTLE The chairman of the Runcorn and District Police Grappling Corps (Mr William Shaw of Runcorn), this afternoon, after working for a day and a half, recovered from the Alexandra Dock, Bootle, the body of **James Bowen**, a flatman of Lock Street, Runcorn. Bowen was missed from the flat last Wednesday, and it being inferred that perhaps he had fallen into the dock, the grappling apparatus was brought. Bowen was a married man without family. As he had lost a leg, he would be at a great disadvantage in case of a stumble over a mooring rope in the dark.

25 14 January 1916

D C M FOR LEIGH MINER The War Office have sent word to Leigh that Private **George Singleton**, aged 23, of Taylor's Square, Leigh, who is in the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, has been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous bravery in France on the night of December 28.

Singleton, who was a miner, and formerly a boatman, is now in Lincoln Hospital, having lost his right eye.

26 8 March 1916

MANY APPEALS AT LOCAL TRIBUNAL A canal boatman named **Richard Watkinson** of Burscough, in appealing for his son, said it took two men, himself and his lad, to manage a canal boat, one to steer the boat and one to manage the horse. That day they had passed through forty locks on the way from Blackburn. Conditional exemption was granted.

27 24 March 1916

BOATMAN DROWNED AT MAGHULL Late last night, a boatman named **John Evans** (36) of Whittle-le-Woods, near Chorley, was drowned in the canal at Maghull. He was in charge of the tiller of a steam tug when the latter bumped against the bridge and swung the tiller round, throwing Evans into the water.

Another boatman tried to rescue him, but owing to the darkness, some time elapsed before he could be found. He was pulled out of the water with a boathook, and artificial respiration was tried for some time, but without success.

28 25 March 1916

A CANAL FATALITY At an inquest at Maghull today, concerning the death of a boatman – **John Robert Evans** of Whittle-le-Woods, Chorley – who was drowned in the canal, Mr Brighthouse and a jury severely censured the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company's Bootle agent, and also the captain of the boat, for permitting the man to board the barge whilst in a drunken condition.

The manager of the company said the agent refused to allow Evans to board the boat until the captain took the responsibility.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

29 15 July 1916

Killed in Action

MOORE July 1, with the Pals, aged 19 years, James Moore of Union Street, grandson of the late **James Moore**, master boatman. From all at home.

30 9 August 1916

MIDDLEWICH BOY DROWNED A case of drowning occurred in the canal at Middlewich last night. While walking along the canal bank with his younger brother and sister, William Sant, aged 10, son of Mr William Sant, salt boiler, Pepper Street, Middlewich, picked up a stick to throw, overbalanced, and fell into the canal. His screams attracted **John Carter**, a Hassall Green boatman, who recovered the body with a boathook. Application of artificial respiration failed.

31 12 September 1916

NOTES UNDER BED **Leonard Gribbin**, a youthful boatman, today pleaded guilty at Liverpool to having stolen £82 in Treasury notes belonging to Mary Bolger, Upper Milk Street, and was sent to prison for six months in the juvenile adult section.

Gribbin, it appeared, had gone to Mrs Bolger's with a friend who lodged there and, while under the influence of drink, was allowed to lie down on a bed. Underneath the bed was a box which contained the money.

Detective Kelly, who arrested Gribbin, found that he had spent over £32 of the money on clothes, boots, a gold watch and other jewellery, and that only 16s remained.

Mr H F Neale, who defended, said his client got robbed of part of the money.

32 19 December 1916

FOG FATALITIES Two other fog fatalities were investigated by the county coroner, Mr S Brighthouse, and a jury, at Bootle.

The first was with regard to a ship's plater named William Rogers (38), who was killed on the electric railway line.

An open verdict was returned.

In the second case, the victim was a man named **Samuel Harrison** (43), a widower residing in Manchester, the captain of a flat which was lying in the Carriers' Dock.

The mate of the vessel said that about half past seven on Saturday night, he went ashore with the deceased. They had two pints of beer each at a public house, and then started for the flat. They had a candle, as the fog was very thick. After getting inside the dock gates, they lost their way, and were groping about trying to find the flat. Although shoulder to shoulder, they could not see each other, and witness heard a splash in the water, but although he knew it was his companion, he was powerless to do anything in the fog. The body was recovered by grappling irons the next morning.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

33 3 January 1917

DOLLYTUB TRAGEDY – FOUR YEAR OLD CHILD DROWNED AT ORMSKIRK A drowning tragedy was reported today by the Ormskirk police. Yesterday afternoon, Mrs Vickers, wife of **James Vickers**, a canal boatman of Ring-o-Bells, Lathom, was washing. She left the washhouse about five o'clock to prepare tea, leaving her daughter, Emma, aged four years, playing on the step at the back door.

A few minutes later, she called for her little girl, and receiving no reply, she went into the washhouse and was horrified to find her lying face downwards in 3 1/2in of water in the

dolly-tub. Her clothes were over her head. She pulled the child out, but life was extinct.

34 5 January 1917

6/- NOT £100 – WHEELING A BARROW WITHOUT A LIGHT At the Ormskirk Sessions today, an unusual case was heard when **Ralph Spencer**, a canal boatman of Burscough, was charged with wheeling a wheelbarrow without a light.

The police-sergeant stated that one night he saw Spencer wheeling a barrowload of coal from the boat to his house. There had been many complaints about this practice by boatmen.

The clerk pointed out that the penalty for this offence was £100 or six months, or both (laughter).

The Chairman stated that this being the first case of its kind, a nominal fine of 6s only would be imposed.

35 5 January 1917

DRINKS IN BOOTLE – SUMMONS AGAINST LICENSEE DISMISSED A licensing prosecution engaged the attention of the Bootle magistrates today, Thomas Pinnington being summoned for permitting drunkenness at his premises, the Langton Hotel, Stanley Road, on November 20. The summons was dismissed.

For the prosecution, the Town Clerk, Mr J S Tumulty, said that the captain and mate of a flat went to the hotel and had some intoxicating liquor. It was alleged that they were in such a state when they returned to their flat that the captain of the tug which was to take the flat in tow would not take them, the local agent of the company being of the same opinion.

The captain of the flat, **John Fairhurst**, denied being drunk. He had a pint of beer in the Langton with a small rum in it, and then another small rum. He was perfectly sober.

The mate, **John Gibbons**, a typical boatman, who gave his evidence in a rather boisterous style, said he had two pints, two small rums and a glass of bitter. He was sober.

Mr Kelly (for the defence) : The quantity of drink you had wouldn't turn a hair on you?

Witness : It would take a barrel of beer to turn a hair on me (laughter).

36 3 February 1917

THE CANALS – GOVERNMENT MEASURE FOR BETTER USE Exemptions for 36 boatman in their service was claimed at the County Tribunal yesterday, by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company. The appeals were lodged from decisions of the local tribunals at Lathom and Burscough. None of the men were present, it being explained that they were on duty with their boats in the neighbourhood of Leeds and Bradford.

Mr A Peploe, traffic manager of the company, explained that all these cases were formally declined at the local tribunals in order that he might bring them before that tribunal, and also because of the negotiations pending with the War Office, the Board of Trade, and the Munitions Ministry. Lately, the last named department called all the canal companies in the country together and requested them to make a report on the question of the better utilisation of the canals, in view of the more acute railways congestion. In their report, the canal companies' representatives expressed a wish that the authorities would defer taking any more men from the canal boat service owing to the very great difficulties experienced in conducting the traffic – in the case of this company, 64 boats were tied up for want of men – and the reply from the department expressed appreciation of their position. What he (Mr Peploe) now asked was that the tribunal should postpone the hearing of these cases until a reply had been received from the government. The Ministry of Munitions also wanted them to be deferred. The representatives of some of the principal canal companies were now in London, and a letter he had received that morning from one of

them stated that the Board of Trade were determined to get this matter of the canals settled this week.

Captain Dickinson, appeal military representative, invited the tribunal to deal with the cases on their merits forthwith, and he put in a letter from the War Office indicating the course they wished him to adopt.

Mr Peplow said the Preston Tribunal the previous day agreed to defer a number of similar cases of canal boatmen until the 15th inst. He urged the present tribunal not to do anything which would stop a concern which had been going since the year 1770. If any more men were taken, it would mean the concern would have to close altogether.

Questioned on the point that a proportion of the men appealed for were under twenty five years of age, and also in regard to their wages, the company's representative said that the average service of those in the list was five or six years. They were all acting as mates. They had youths of 14 in their service acting as mates. "You cannot make a canal boatman," said Mr Peplow, "He has to be brought up to it from the time of leaving school. All these men get 33s 6d a week in wages, and a boy of fourteen gets the same. The trade union insists upon it".

In deciding to deal with each case on its merits, the Tribunal made orders whereby some of the men were to be released for military duties, others to have a month's exemption with no further appeal without leave, and a further number to have conditional exemption.

37 25 May 1917

ELUSIVE JOHN – TWELVE MONTHS DODGING TO EVADE SERVICE This morning, at the Ormskirk Police Court, the story of a boatman's attempt to evade military service was related, when **John Peet** (30), canal boatman, pleaded guilty to being an absentee. Major Denton, recruiting officer, stated that the man had been an absentee since March 16 1916. They had not been able to trace him until yesterday, although he had been advertised for. Replying to Superintendent Hodgson, the major stated that he had received several anonymous letters regarding Peet.

When apprehended on a canal boat yesterday, Peet stated that he got notice about three weeks ago, and alleged that his employer sent it back. It was stated that Peet had been dodging in and out of the canal boats for twelve months, in order to evade military service. He was fined 45s and handed over to a military escort.

38 29 June 1917

John Peet, a canal boatman, who lives at Crooke, dropped dead today in Stanley Road, Bootle.

39 23 October 1917

LITTLE GIRL DROWNED

SAD FATALITY AT ORMSKIRK – BODY FOUND IN CANAL This morning, the Ormskirk police report a sad drowning tragedy. About half past four yesterday afternoon, a little girl named **Ellen Johnson** (8), daughter of **Thomas Johnson**, a boatman of Bog Houses, Martin Lane, Burscough, was sent to a shop close by for some bread.

Some time afterwards, a boy walking along the towing path of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, which runs through the neighbourhood, noticed a bag, containing three loaves of bread, floating in the water.

The lad gave an alarm, and the body of the girl was recovered later by a boatman. How the girl got into the water remains at present a mystery.

[Note – next article gives name as JACKSON not JOHNSON]

40 25 October 1817

BOATMAN'S DAUGHTER DROWNED IN CANAL NEAR HER HOME IN BURSCOUGH
An inquest was held today at Burscough on **Mary Ellen Jackson**, aged eight, daughter of a boatman of Martin Lane, Burscough, who was drowned in the canal. She was sent to purchase bread. Half an hour later, three loaves were seen floating in the canal, and dragging operations recovered the body of the child. It was stated that the girl had on a big jacket, and that probably this had blown over her head and forced her into the water. A very strong breeze prevailed at the time.
A verdict of "Death by misadventure" was returned.

41 4 February 1918

BOATMAN DROWNED AT WIDNES **Henry Williams**, 23 Powell's Cottages, Bagillt, Holywell, boatman, employed on a flat belonging to the United Alkali Company, was drowned in a lock connecting the Widnes dock with the river Mersey, at Widnes, last evening. He and a comrade were approaching the lock when the latter said, "Mind where you are going, it is very dark". The next minute, a splash was heard, Williams having fallen in.

42 9 March 1918

LIFE'S SAVINGS STOLEN – BURSCOUGH BOATMAN'S BITTER EXPERIENCE A canal boatman named **Hector Parr**, New Lane, Burscough, has been the victim of a serious robbery during his absence for four days with his boat. He was accompanied by his wife and two sons.

The house was broken into, and the man's savings, together with those of his four sons, two of whom are in the Army, were stolen.

An entrance to the house was effected by breaking a window, and the money, which was in Treasury notes, Bank of England notes, and about £60, was taken from a drawer, which was forced open. The house stands on the canal bank, and is surrounded by other cottages of a similar type.

43 27 April 1918

FELL IN CANAL – SCOTLAND ROAD BOY DROWNED AT HALSALL A verdict of "Death by misadventure" was returned at an inquest at Halsall today, on **James Edward Quirk** (15), son of Mr Edward Quirk, a ship's cook on the Baltic, of 151 Nursery Street, Scotland Road, whose body was recovered from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Halsall on Thursday night.

The lad was employed as a post boy on a boat belonging to a Burscough man, who left the lad on the boat while he went to feed his horse. When the boatman returned, the lad was missing, and the body was recovered with grappling irons.

It was stated by the police that in all probability the lad had been playing on the embankment, which was a steep one, on the canal side, and had fallen in. He had only been employed on the boat for a fortnight.

44 23 October 1918

MOTHER'S TRAGIC PLIGHT A drowning accident is reported from Burscough. About 6 last evening, **Mrs Gibbon**, wife of a canal boatman of Burscough, was going along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal towing path with three of her children, when Elizabeth, aged five years, fell into the water. The distracted mother at once went into the canal, gripping the grass on the bank, and tried to reach the child, but failed. **James Barrow**, a boatman, recovered the body in about ten minutes. Artificial respiration was tried without avail.

45 5 December 1918

SCREAMS FROM BARGE

A BOATMAN'S EXTRAORDINARY ASSAULT ON BOY EMPLOYEE An extraordinary story of an attack on a boy was told at Leigh today, when **Thomas Johnson**, boatman, Manchester Road, Leigh, was fined £14 for assaulting **George Bartin**, an undersized lad aged 14, employed by him. Johnson got vexed because the lad, being afraid of Johnson's restive horse, got a man to help him to feed it. Johnson made Bartin strip naked, blackened his eyes, burnt his nose and made his ears bleed, and kicked and struck him. Thomas Smith, hearing the lad's screams, rushed on the barge, rescued the lad, and pummelled Johnson.