

WIGAN OBSERVER AND DISTRICT ADVERTISER 1900 to 1918

1 6 January 1900

BLACKROD

A BLACKROD MAN AND HIS WILD GOOSE CHASE At the Chorley Petty Sessions on Tuesday, **George Sturgiss**, boatman residing at Aberdeen, Blackrod, was charged with stealing a goose, value 10s, the property of Edwin Drake, the landlord of the Howard Arms Hotel, Whittle Springs. Mr D M Aspden defended. Prosecutor stated that on the 30th December he had five geese safe in the grounds of the hotel, and on the evening of that date, he missed the one produced. George Dessaur, a schoolboy, stated that on the afternoon of Saturday, he was playing on the canal bank near to Whittle Springs Brewery, when he saw the boat *Anne of Aberdeen* pass. Two women on the boat were driving a goose down the canal. He saw the prisoner come through a coal yard and send the goose near the boat, when one of the women seized the goose by the leg and pulled it into the boat. Prisoner then joined the women on the boat. Jno Thomas Slater, collier, Blackrod, said on Saturday last he was in the Boatmen's Arms, Blackrod, when prisoner came in carrying a live goose under his arm, and said, "This is a wild goose I've caught at Whittle Springs". Half an hour afterwards the goose was dead. In reply to Superintendent Harris, witness said the goose was a cross breed between a wild goose and a tame one. Prisoner made no attempt to hide the goose. Police-constable Powell deposed to apprehending prisoner at Blackrod, and in reply to the charge he said, "I took it, but let it go at the next bridge". A few minutes afterwards, prisoner admitted that he took the goose. When witness went to prisoner's house, a woman told him that prisoner's wife had thrown the goose down a coal pit. Police-sergeant Morris deposed to finding the goose on the mangle in the kitchen of prisoner's house. In defence, prisoner said he had lived on the canal all his life, and knew a wild goose. The one produced was a cross between a wild goose and a tame one. He knew it to be a wild goose because it kept flying about and diving under the boat. He said to himself, "We'll have that goose", and he spent half an hour trying to catch it. He had never seen a tame goose on the canal, but he had seen plenty of wild geese and ducks on the canal. He took the goose because he thought he had as much right to it as anyone else, as he believed it to be a wild one. He knew what fowl were, for he was dining off a cock chicken when the constable came in, and he said what he told him, because he was frightened. Mr Aspden submitted that the prisoner had no felonious intent in taking the goose, which he believed to be a wild one, and that view was corroborated by prisoner going about openly with it when he arrived at home. The Chairman said the magistrates had no doubt prisoner was guilty. Although he may have thought the goose had strayed, that was no excuse for him saying that it was a wild bird. A wild goose was a very different bird to the one produced. They would deal leniently with him and impose a fine of 21s, in default one months' imprisonment.

2 23 February 1900

STANDISH POLICE COURT, WEDNESDAY

CRUELTY TO CHILDREN AT CROOKE A boatman and his wife, named **William and Alice Simm**, of 10 Woodcock Row, Crooke, were summoned for wilfully neglecting their seven infant children in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering, between January 1st and February 15th. Both defendants admitted the offence. Mr Lees prosecuted on behalf of the society, and stated the facts of the case. The man, he said, earned £3 15s a week, and only had to pay a boy about 15s, but he was continually drinking and left his family without proper food and clothes. He was remonstrated with in 1897, and only improved for a short time. When the inspector visited the house on February 9th of the present year, there was no food in the house and the children were very poorly clad. There were four rooms, but the family only slept on one chaff bed to keep themselves warm. The children had had to go and beg food from the neighbours. The man was away for six days, and only gave his wife 5s. The case was a shocking one, and the society felt that further remonstrances were useless. Inspector O'Dell of the NSPCC and Police-constable Southwick gave evidence in support. The defendants were dealt with leniently, the man being fined £1 1s and costs,

in default a month ; and the woman ordered to pay the costs, in default seven days.

3 14 March 1900

A CANAL MYSTERY AT INCE

AN UNKNOWN MAN FOUND DROWNED

THE VIEWING OF DEAD BODIES Mr S Brighthouse, county coroner, held an inquiry at the Walmesley Arms, Higher Ince, on Monday morning, into the circumstances concerning the death of an unknown man, who was found drowned in the canal at Ince shortly after nine o'clock on Friday morning by a boatman.

John Houghton of Earl Street said he was coming along the canal bank about nine o'clock on Friday morning, when two boatmen told him that there was a man in the canal. The deceased's cap was floating on the top of the water. The boatmen were not strangers. He knew them.

Witness, after giving his evidence, said he had been put to a great deal of inconvenience to attend the inquest. He had had to cease work altogether, and he thought he should be paid for his loss.

The Coroner said he himself was often warned to attend at the assizes, and he frequently had to wait about, when he could be making twenty guineas, but all he got was one. The gentlemen of the jury were warned to attend, and they got nothing. It was one of the responsibilities of being a British citizen.

Witness : Yes, but I don't earn a guinea.

The Coroner : I don't like Englishmen grumbling, because I don't think there is a country in the world where the people enjoy so many advantages as they do in England.

Witness said there was not a country where they enjoyed less.

The Coroner said if the witness was dissatisfied with England, he could go to South Africa before the war was over, and see how he would like Mr Kruger. (Laughter).

Police-sergeant Ormrod said in consequence of information received, he went to the canal and found the body in the water, and with the aid of the last witness's walking stick he pulled the body to the side, and got it out. It appeared to have been in the water a few hours. The deceased seemed to be a collier, about 40 years of age. He was 5 ft 5 in high, of medium build, with light brown hair, and a clean shaven face with the exception of a light brown moustache. There were two slight marks on the bridge of the nose. He was wearing a coat and vest of blue tweed with a small black stripe, drab blue plaid trousers, a blue and white shirt, nearly washed white, knitted flannel under vest, light grey stockings, clogs, red, blue and green plaid scarf and a grey plaid cap. There was 8d in the pockets, and a small Wigan railway guide. A lot of people had been to see the body, and some seemed to think they knew him as a local man.

In answer to the Coroner, the sergeant said the body had been removed to the police station, as the Rose Bridge Inn had refused to take it in.

The Coroner : They refused to take it in. I am very glad. If I were a licensed victualler, I would not only refuse the body, but I would refuse to have the coroner and the jury too, as he is perfectly entitled to do.

Inspector Longworth said the body would be photographed that afternoon, and a description had already been circulated.

In answer to the jury, the sergeant said the boatman came from Chorley, and told him he would be in Blackburn at the time of the inquest, and would have to keep his boat at Ince if he had to attend the inquiry.

The Coroner said that from a sanitary point of view, they had kept the body out of the ground as long as they could. Nobody seemed to have identified the deceased. The body was going to be photographed, and if any persons recognised the deceased as a relation, they could come before him afterwards.

The jury, after hearing all the evidence, returned a verdict to the effect that the unknown man had been found drowned.

At the conclusion of the inquiry, one of the jurors asked the coroner how long jurymen were to be compelled to go and view dead bodies. He thought it was a relic of barbarism.

The Coroner said it was the law, and if they did not like it, they knew what to do. They should make representations to their representatives in Parliament to get it altered.

The Foreman : May I ask, Mr Coroner, what object the viewing of dead bodies serves?

The Coroner : How would you know there was a body if you did not go and view it? If you had read the history of crime, you would know that coffins have been put into the ground without any bodies in them.

The Foreman : May I ask how you know there is a body, Mr Brighthouse?

The Coroner : I know because you tell me, and you have viewed it.

The Foreman : Well, and couldn't the police tell us?

The Coroner : It is all very well that you have so much confidence in the police, but the law says that you must view it. I have not come down to be baited, and to answer questions on the law. I have come to hold an inquiry, and you are here to help me. Thank you for your services, gentlemen – good morning.

4 14 March 1900

DROWNED IN THE CANAL Mr Milligan, Deputy Borough Coroner, held an inquest at the Borough Court on Saturday morning, regarding the death of Charles McEwan, a man fifty years of age, who was pulled out of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in the borough the previous day. The first witness, Thomas Cusick, of 5 Kay's Houses, said he had known deceased for sixteen years. He lived apart from his wife, and he said he would come and lodge with witness for the rest of his life. Deceased was a dataller. Three weeks ago, he met him and they went to the Navigation Inn about five o'clock and remained until eight. They then separated. It was not a foggy night, and deceased had no need to go on the canal bank, but he had had a good "sup" of drink. He was also blind in one eye. Witness did not see him again. **Laurence Aspinall** of Peter Street, Ince, employed by the Canal Company, said he found deceased in the canal between nine and ten o'clock in the morning at No 21 lock. He was covered with mud. Police-constable Hetherington also gave evidence as to the finding of the body. Sergeant Duncan said that fourpence in copper and a pipe stamped "Navigation Inn" were found in the pockets. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

5 4 July 1900

BLACKROD

ASSAULT CASE At the Bolton County Police Court on Monday, Peter Brannan, Blackrod, was summoned for assaulting **Annie Marshall**, wife of a canal boatman, on the 23rd June. The complainant stated that she went to the defendant's house for her husband, who was drinking there. The defendant came out, got hold of her, and put her head between his legs, doubling her up. He afterwards stood over her with a poker, and told his wife to "do for her". A young fellow named James Crank got hold of defendant, and pulled him away with such force that he fell to the ground. The Chairman complimented Crank on taking the woman's part and for the manner in which he gave his evidence. The magistrates bound the defendant over to keep the peace for six months, and ordered him to pay costs.

6 6 July 1900

LAKE LAND IN WIGAN Last week we told our readers that the Leigh Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, which opens up communication with the Bridgewater Canal, had burst its banks and run itself dry for about three and a half miles between the locks at Dover and Wigan. This week we give our readers some impressions of the scene and the event. A few days ago, the waterway was busy with coal and cotton traffic ; steam tugs whistled and went by, and the water line was almost level with the towing-path. But anyone passing the place the morning following the night on which the breach in the bank was made would hardly have known it. Instead of the long straight street of water on which empty flats were floating, awaiting their cargo, or steamers were tugging heavily laden boats, or horses straining at the towing line, there was a long deep clough like a deserted war trench, with a settling of water at the bottom, in which children were playing and

boats were lying crossways, high and dry, flat or tilted, like improvised bridges, pontoons, stretching from bank to bank. There was only a handful of water left in the narrow bottom. Here a flat and there a flat clung to the sloping side, like a beached boat. They had been dragged there and propped with rudder or tied with ropes, after the water had drained off. The canal has been cut for something like three quarters of a century, more or less, and during that time it has burst more than once. It is a busy waterway of traffic between two great cities, Liverpool and Manchester. The place where the breach was made this time was a few yards from the railway siding of Messrs Pearson and Knowles, where the waggons laden with coal are brought from the colliery and tipped into the boats. It is just eleven years since it burst before, almost in the same spot. It has been something of a disaster to the canal company and the boatmen, but where one man loses another man very often gains, and so one finds that the canal people's famine has been the coal picker's harvest. All along the empty trench, one may see groups of bare legged laddies wading in the deep bottom of the canal, where water is shallow, and feeling for the coal that has dropped for years from overladen boats as they have scudded along on the surface, like a street in Venice. Here and there are heaps and rucks of the black diamonds that each bather has got together, and the shine taken off by the action of the water during the long immersion. If the deep sea hath its pearls, as we are told, the canal has its black diamonds. At the point where the breach was made there were, busier than all, a gang of something like two hundred men shovelling dirt and slag, emptying waggons, puddling clay, so that the bank might be restored, the locks opened, the canal flooded, and the traffic begun again as soon as possible.

A CURLING RINK But why has the bank burst, one will ask. The question will answer itself if the interrogator were a spectator of the scene that presents itself at the place, or the company's inspector will oblige. The fields are in flood. The country between Bamfurlong and Wigan, through which the canal travels, was once level with the water line, but it has sunk something like thirty feet, and the land for a great portion of the distance along the canal on either side, is now lying upwards of twenty feet, in places, below the water level. At the best of times there is a flood, and the low lying country is covered with a flash of water, putting the bursting of the canal out of memory. It is lake land in Wigan hereabouts. It is the haunt of coot and wild duck. In Wigan! Yes. There is sport at home. You may shoot in summer, if you will, and skate in winter, if you like. As for fishing, well you may fish, of course, if you catch nothing. But fish there be. It was this place too that the canny Scotsmen of Wigan and district chose for a curling rink. If you have read Barrie's "Little Minister", you will remember that Thrums had its "Rashie-bog", on which the weaver played the laird. "A terrible snare this curling", didn't the doctor say to the little minister? He knows "the minister" wait until midnight struck on Sabbath, and then be off to Rashie-bog with a torch. And then again, wasn't there a minister who told his sexton he would neither preach nor pray while the black frost lasted. What was the confession of the doctor to the little minister? "I've been in love myself", said he. "It's bad, but it's nothing to curling". Scotsmen must curl, wherever they be – and where are they not? - and this was the Rashie-bog for the Scotsmen of Wigan. It was James Hogg that sang

There's no game that e'er I saw
Can match auld Scotland's channel stane".

And it was here that they came to roll "the witching channel stane". With much of them it was "The roarin' rink for me, boys", as Alexander Maclagen has it. A Scotsman must curl. The place got its soubriquet of the "Scotchman's Flash" from this association. But one cannot expect a real Highlandman to be forever satisfied with sport in such Lowlands, and so, after a time, he migrated to Red Rock, where he now plays the national game when the ice holds. But, curling apart, what has made the country sink and form this marsh? There are many ready to tell you that it was owing to mining subsidence and, if you look around, you are ready to believe them. No wonder the land has been gutted, for there is a cordon of collieries round the place. Standing at the breach, whilst the men are working, the Pearson and Knowles's, the Bamfurlong, Crippin's, Smethurst's, Park Lane, Blundell's and "Owd Nat's" collieries are in sight, and describe a circle with their smoking chimneys round the place. That's the story a score of men will tell you, if you ask them. Where is

the wonder if the land subsides a score of feet if almost as many collieries are gutting it to the extent of thousands of tons of coal a day! Great giant skeletons of trees struggle from the waste of water, and are silhouetted against the grey sky, black as coal, dead as dirt. Perhaps they are the remnants of some wood that has been drowned in the standing stagnant water.

A SINKING LAND The country hereabouts has been sinking for years. There are people who will tell you that they remember when there was no water on the land and the country, and the canal banks were level one with the other. Now the canal is raised above its former level perhaps forty feet or more. As the land has gradually sunken, the canal, with its bed, banks and water, has been gradually raised. There is always a gang of men engaged on the work, restoring the canal and keeping it in repair between Wigan and Bamfurlong, and during the last score of years or so, when the land had subsided and settled down at a particular point, the Canal Company have sent boats loaded with metal or dirt from the pits to be emptied on the banks and into the bed of the canal, to raise them to such a level that the water between the locks would not run over. And thus it is that gradually during all these years, the banks on either side of the waterway have been raised, like two railway "tips" with a hollow between them for the water, to the present height. Each bank has an average width of a few yards, and half way from one side to the other of each of them there is a puddle trench or gutter of clay about two feet wide, built up from the bottom, so that the water may be kept within its bounds. The banks are, for the most part, built of slag or dirt from the pits, and only for this wall of clay running right along the centre of each bank, the water would percolate through its confines and sweep over the country, and make a lake of it. A broken basin will not carry water, and this is practically what the canal is between Wigan and Bamfurlong. How the company will ultimately counteract the subsidence remains to be seen. To widen the banks and build buttressed walls would necessitate the taking of more land all along the sides, and land is a dear commodity, even when useless for the purpose of pasture or the plough. One thing is certain, and that is that the sinking of the land through which the canal runs has proved a misfortune, and very greatly depleted the company's coffers.

FOUR MILES OF WATER When the canal burst, the four miles of waterway between Wigan and Bamfurlong emptied itself in little more than an hour, and anyone might have passed over on dry land. This large body of water pressing on the sides will make itself felt in the weakest spot. Without any warning except a noise like the crack of a pistol, this volume broke through the bank and rent a gaping breach of from ten to twenty yards in width, and through this hiatus the rushing volume poured. But think of the quantity and weight of the water. The canal between Wigan and Dover Locks is about three and a half miles, and on average it is at least twelve yards wide and 3 yards drop. Treating this as a mathematical problem, we shall find that the length of the canal is 18,480 feet, the width 35 feet and the average depth 9 feet, and this gives 5,987,520 cubic feet of contents. A cubic foot of pure water – this is far from pure, but the impurity is a negligible quantity for our purposes – weighs 62 1/4 lbs, and so we have a weight of 374,320,000 lbs, equalling about 170,000 tons of water rushing through the breach on to the low lying land in about an hour's time. Looking at the water from another point of view, we know from the old rhyme that "a pound of pure water weighs a pound and a quarter", and reckoning from the weight, already obtained, we find that the amount of water contained in the canal between the two locks was something like 37,422,000 gallons. This would have been sufficient to swamp all the neighbourhood, and such would have been the fate of the district had there not been a culvert close by that carried the wash of water away to the River Douglas as fast as its carrying capacity would allow. To take another illustration, to give perhaps a better idea even than either quantity or weight is capable of carrying to the mind of the reader, the water contained in the canal and which flooded out into the sunken fields when the banks burst, if it could have been walled up on either side, would have made a river three yards in depth from Lamberhead Green to Boar's Head, and flooded Wigan Lane, Standishgate, Wallgate and Ormskirk Road, so that the policemen's spiked hats would not have shown through the surface as they patrolled the thoroughfares. This would have been sufficient to flood Poolstock and Worsley Manors, if the culvert had not served its purpose. There is sufficient water in the canal to make a modern Venice of Wigan.

A BOATMAN'S STORY The crew of the *Pattie* had a wonderful escape from drowning, **David Gill**, his wife and grown up son were within a few yards of the place when the canal burst. They came and moored besides Messrs Pearson and Knowles's Coal Wharf about eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, for the purpose of loading with a cargo of coal which they were to ship to Liverpool. There is a line of railway running from the tippler to the collieries, and it was within a few feet of the tippler where the coal wagons tilt the coal into the boats that the breach was made. The *Pattie* had been moored here all day preparatory to loading and the crew of three, father, mother and son, were just thinking of turning into bed when the banks burst. "It was about nine o'clock, and I had unlaced my shoes", said the captain of the *Pattie*, "and my wife was undressing, when we heard a clack of the rudder. "Look up", I said to the son, "is that a steamer comin'?" As the son was looking out of the cabin, the wife said, "It's happen t' cut's burst!" And the son had no sooner popped his head up than he shouted, "Hi, voh, mother, it is". "I was smokin' at the time", said the captain, "but I've never seen my pipe since! I don't know where I hove it". One of the Canal Company's boats, loaded with metal from the pit for the purpose of strengthening the banks about the place, was tethered just beyond the bridge, and this came down at a rare pace as the breach sucked the canal dry. While the captain and his wife were busy trying to keep the *Pattie* right side up with ropes around the moorings, which snapped like string with the strain of the suction, the son ran with the boat's pole and tried to stave the fast nearing metal-laden flat off the *Pattie*. "If it had run into us", said the captain, "it would have smashed us up, and we should have gone down the hole in smithers-ends". The son managed to keep the heavy flat on the other side of the canal, but it crunched against the *Pattie*'s side and left a sliced mark. "In half a minute", continued the captain, "it had gone through the hole, and had sunk in the rushing flood. If it had happened twenty minutes later we should all have been asleep, and we should have gone through the hole together". That metal-cargoed flat has never been seen since, though, of course, it will be resurrected later on. While the father was trying to save his own boat and the son was busy with the other, the woman screamed, and the people at Pearson and Knowles's Colliery, hearing her, came upon the scene. Up to this, there was only the three of them on the spot, though a laddie and a lassie had just passed over the bank where the breach was made not more than a minute or two before it happened. It went all at once like a shot out of a gun. It is a curious coincidence that the crew of the *Pattie* were in the same place when the canal burst in almost the identical spot eleven years ago. It happened then in the daytime, and they were waiting to load. "We come here regularly to load", said the woman ; but she added, with a shake of the head, "I don't think we shall ever stop here again".

ANOTHER BURST After the burst which occurred on Tuesday of last week, the company's men were busy with pick and shovel almost night and day to put the canal in order, so that the beached boats might be floated and traffic resumed. It took a week's work to set everything right, and on Tuesday the locks that had been shut for a week were reopened and the dry trench flooded. The flats that had been lying idle during the work of restoration were floated and began their journey to Manchester and Liverpool, but it was soon evident that there was some danger of a similar outburst taking place near the old breach that had been made right, and precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the craft on the canal. The waterway had scarcely been flooded more than twelve hours when a breach of a more serious nature than even the last, and almost in the same place, was rent in the bank, and the water burst out over the low land again, tearing a gap of something like twenty yards in extent, and it is estimated that it will take some weeks to put the waterway in order, and before traffic can be resumed.

7 4 August 1900

ASSAULT CASES AT THE LIVERPOOL ASSIZES At the Liverpool Assizes on Thursday, **Hugh Collins**, boatman, was found guilty of a criminal assault on a woman named Mary Ann Houghton at Abram on the 7th June. He was sent to penal servitude for three years.

8 14 September 1900

FATALITY TO A BLACKROD CANAL BOATMAN **Robert Bradley**, a canal barge owner residing at Blackrod, has met his death under somewhat singular circumstances. He was engaged removing coal from his boat to his residence at Old Goodman Fold by means of a box fixed on wheels and drawn by a horse. Bradley himself was between the shafts of the home made vehicle, with the horse in front of him as a sort of "loader". The animal took fright and bolted, with the result that Bradley was thrown down and dragged along the ground for about fifty yards under the box. The horse was stopped by a man named Woodhouse, who happened to be passing, and the injured man was removed home. This occurred on Wednesday, and Bradley succumbed to his injuries on Sunday afternoon. An inquest was held on the body on Monday, before the Bolton District Coroner (Mr S F Butcher) at the Boatman's Arms, Aberdeen, Blackrod. **Mrs Mary Bradley**, wife of the deceased, said her husband left home on Wednesday afternoon to cart sweepings from the bottom of his boat, when he met with an accident which terminated in his death on the Friday (*sic*). Thomas Hill, an adopted grandson, deposed that he was leading the horse, which was attached to a box fitted on wheels, whilst Bradley held the shaft. On reaching the pavement in the street, the rattle of the wheels startled the horse, which had never been used for that purpose before, and, taking fright, Bradley was thrown down and dragged a considerable distance under the box. Austin Woodhouse, a bricklayer who was at work in the vicinity, rushed to render assistance and succeeded in stopping the horse, extricated deceased from under the waggon, the axles of which were not so low as to allow any room between the box and the ground. The Coroner pointed out that no one was to blame in the matter, and a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

9 12 December 1900

A BOATMAN DROWNED AT ABRAM The County Police have received news of the death of a boatman named **Richard Barrow**, 55 years of age, of Whittle near Chorley, who was drowned in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Plank Lane, Abram, about half past five on Sunday evening. It appears that the deceased was in charge of a boat going from Chorley to Astley for coal. He arrived at Abram about ten minutes past five on the day mentioned, and after getting the boat through the lock, he tied it up and took the horse to the stable behind the lock house on the canal bank. He and his wife left the stable together and, as they were going back to the boat, the deceased said he would go and pay for the stabling. He walked towards the lock house, but before he reached the door his wife heard a splash, and at the same time her husband shouted for help, and on looking round she saw he had fallen into the lock. She at once raised an alarm, and Police-constable Bullock, who was on duty nearby, went to the rescue, and with the assistance and aid of a boat hook got the deceased out of the water. The constable resorted to artificial respiration for upwards of half an hour, but, as no signs of life were manifested, the body was removed to the Britannia Inn, awaiting the inquest. It was stated that the deceased had very bad eyesight, and had twice previously during the past summer fallen into the canal.

Mr S Brighouse, county coroner, held an inquiry at the Britannia Inn, Plank Lane, Abram, on Tuesday afternoon, into the circumstances concerning the death of the deceased man, when the jury, after hearing the evidence returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

10 19 December 1900

PECULIAR DEATH OF A BOATMAN A boatman named **William Lamb** of Burscough, who is a single man, and the mate of the boat *Wonder* of which his brother is captain, was found dead under peculiar circumstances on Thursday evening. The boat *Wonder* is owned by Messrs Pearson and Knowles, and plies between Liverpool and Wigan, and arrived in Wigan about one o'clock on Thursday. About half past six in the evening, **Luke Hunter**, mate on board the *Victoria*, hurried on in front of his boat and filled the Railway lock on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Wigan, in order that his boat might pass through. When the *Victoria* was inside the lock, Hunter went to loosen the line, when he noticed the deceased was fast, crushed between the wooden post of the bank and the

arm of the lock gate. On being loosened, the man was found to be dead, and was removed to the mortuary.

Mr H Milligan, deputy borough coroner, held an inquest on the body on Friday, when a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned. The two witnesses said they thought deceased had been helping someone to shut the gate, and had been caught between the arm of the lock and the stump.

11 21 December 1900

STANDISH POLICE COURT

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CASES **William Simm**, a boatman of 10 Woodcock Row, Crooke, was charged on four different summonses with neglecting to send his four children regularly to school. He was fined 5s in two cases, and the other two cases were adjourned for two months.

12 25 January 1901

HAYDOCK

A COLLIER DROWNED At the St Helens Town Hall on Monday, Mr F A Jones, deputy coroner, held an inquest on James Pye, collier, aged 29, whose body was taken out of the St Helens canal at Park Road on Friday, after he had been missing since early on Christmas morning. Mrs Pye, deceased's mother, of Florida Cottages, Haydock, said he left home on Christmas Eve, saying he was going to the Black Horse Inn, Park Road. William Roberts said he was with the deceased in the Black Horse Inn from seven o'clock to eleven. Eight of them then took two one gallon bottles of beer to the house of George Fairclough in Black Horse Street. Deceased left about half past three in the morning. Pye was neither drunk nor sober. Mr Jones : I think we know what that means. By a Juror : Deceased never said that somebody had threatened to throw him into the canal. George Fairclough corroborated, and **John Aldridge**, boatman, 14 Old Double Locks, spoke to finding the body. Police-constable Whalley said there were only matches in deceased's pockets. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

13 16 February 1901

WRIGHTINGTON

SUDDEN DEATH OF A BOATMAN **Henry Bamber**, a canal boatman residing at the Canal Bank, Appley Bridge, Wrightington, died suddenly on Wednesday morning. It appears that the deceased, who had complained of feeling unwell, was tying up his boat near his residence, when he suddenly fell down unconscious, and expired in about ten minutes time.

14 6 March 1901

A LABOURER FOUND DROWNED AT ASPULL

AN OPEN VERDICT RETURNED Mr Butcher, county coroner, held an inquiry at the Top Lock Inn, Aspull, on Thursday afternoon, into the circumstances concerning the death of Thomas Joseph Burne, a general labourer 23 years of age, of 205 Belle Green Lane, Aspull, whose body was found in the canal near the Top Lock the previous day, Wednesday, the deceased having been missing for over a month. The body, after being recovered from the canal, was conveyed to the house at which the inquest was held to await the Coroner's inquiry.

Martha Cain, wife of James Cain of 205 Belle Green Lane, said the deceased was her brother. He lived with witness, and he left home the last time a month the previous Saturday, on the 26th January, between twelve o'clock and one. Witness knew that he had got his sweetheart into trouble, and this seemed to prey on his mind, she thought. He never said anything about destroying himself to witness.

The Coroner : There is a young woman named Alice Dawber, on whom I have been holding an inquest today, and she comes from the same street.

Witness said she did not know the young woman.

The Coroner said he was wondering at the moment whether there might be any connection between the two cases.

Questioned by the Coroner, witness said she had not seen the deceased's sweetheart, Mary Dickenson, since he was missing. Witness had only seen her once at all, and knew nothing about her.

You had no reason to think she had any dislike to him? - No.

Anne Fell, wife of Horace Fell of Back Lane Street, Aspall, said the deceased was the young man of her sister, Mary Dickenson, and the two were at witness's house on Saturday night, 26th January, until ten o'clock, at which time they left together. They seemed to be on friendly terms. He was drunk at the time. Witness's sister, deceased's sweetheart, who lived at 147 Worthington Lane, had had a baby, and was then upstairs. Her sister had told her that she left the deceased at the corner of Hulme's back gate in Back Lane Street, when he came in the direction of the Top Lock Inn.

The Police-constable said he had made enquiries, but he had not been able to find whether the deceased did come to that house or not.

Have you any reason to think he has come to his death by any improper means? - No.

The Police-constable said the police never received information of his being missing until he was pulled out.

Witness at this point said that her husband told her three weeks since that the deceased was drowned. Somebody told her husband, but she did not know who it was.

The Coroner : Did you inform the police? - No.

The Coroner asked how did they know the man was drowned.

Witness said she did not know how it had got out, but somebody told her husband that the deceased was either drowned or that he had run away.

The Coroner : It was only a suggestion. I suppose they thought he had run away.

Police-constable Johnson, who is stationed at Top Lock, said he received the deceased's coat on Wednesday from Thomas Forster, who said he had found it on the canal bank between the Springs Bridge and the Ironworks. That place wouldn't be on the deceased's way home. In consequence of being told that a body had been seen in the water, he dragged the canal on Wednesday between the Springs Bridge and the Ironworks, near where the coat had been found, and succeeded in recovering the body, which had been identified as that of the deceased. He had carefully examined it, and there were no marks of injury upon it. Witness had seen the girl, Mary Dickenson, and she couldn't give any reason why he should drown himself. She said she had seen him on January 26th at ten o'clock at night, when he left her in the street. Witness had made inquiry, and he had no reason to believe there had been any foul play.

The Coroner : I suppose it wouldn't serve your purpose or assist you to adjourn this inquiry?

Witness said it would not.

Questioned by the jury, witness said the body was first disturbed by a steamer. A boatman came and told him he had seen a body in the water, and he then went and dragged the place.

Continuing, the police-constable said that the deceased promised the girl he would come back to her on the Sunday night. She had told him that he would have to pay for her child or go to prison. He promised her some money, but he had never paid any.

The Coroner said he did not think they could do any good by adjourning the inquiry. If they could, he would have been very happy to do so, but it did not seem to him they could serve any purpose by so doing, and he should recommend the jury to return an open verdict, and to simply say that the deceased had been found drowned, so that if any question arose hereafter the police would have a free hand.

In answer to the jury, the police-constable said the coat was not found on the towing-path, but on the opposite side, and he would have no right to go there. It was out of his way.

The Coroner : I suppose there is nothing to help you to a conclusion as to how he came there.

The constable said there was not.

The jury, after hearing the evidence, in accordance with the Coroner's suggestion, returned a verdict of "Found drowned", as there was no evidence to show by what means the deceased had got into the water.

15 6 March 1901

SUICIDE OF AN INCE WOMAN Mr S Butcher held an inquest at the Correction Inn, Plank Lane, on Thursday afternoon, on the body of Alice Ann Dawber, which was found on Wednesday in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Jane Dawber, wife of John Dawber, 163 Ince Green Lane, Ince, gave evidence of identification, and said her daughter, who was 25 years of age, lodged at 10 Stout Street. She had not seen her since September. Ann Taylor, with whom deceased had lodged, said she last saw her alive about eight o'clock on the night of Monday the 18th inst. She looked rather down hearted, and said, "There is nothing in this world to live for". She had complained of her work ; and said she could not get through it. Dr King, who had made a *post mortem* examination of the body, said in his opinion death was caused by asphyxia due to drowning. George Ainscough, Strange Common, spoke of finding deceased's shawl in the canal near the Westleigh Coal Company's tip, and **George Dale**, a boatman, said he recovered the body last Monday. Peter Ratcliffe, working manager to Messrs Jones, deposed that Dawber was a very indifferent workwoman. She was willing and obedient, but quite incompetent. Henry Nuttall said he kept company with the deceased for about two months, but broke off in December on account of a quarrel. A verdict of suicide while of unsound mind was returned.

16 13 April 1901

DEEDS OF VALOUR UNREWARDED

To the Editor of the Wigan Observer.

SIR – For over a year we have allowed ourselves to “run wild” over deeds of valour done by our sea and land destroying elements abroad, and have most magnanimously responded to appeals made for the purpose of rewarding, on account, what I might term prospective valour in the field, whilst deeds of greater worth, though without the glitter, pass unnoticed at our very doors. Though not personally acquainted with the gentleman I am about to mention, I believe from the investigations made that the following record is true. For many years, **Mr Francis Walker** of No 5 Barton Street, Wigan, a boatman in the employ of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co, has frequently, both by night and day, in all sorts of weather, been the means not only of saving lives from drowning, but of recovering under the most difficult conditions, and at great personal risk, drowned persons from the canal, without receiving the slightest public recognition for his services. I also understand that Mr Walker's father has distinguished himself on many occasions in this connection. I therefore trust that some little of the honour we have been so lavish of may find its way to the quarters indicated, which, though it may be rather more obscure, yet is not less deserving than those I have already named.

Yours truly

GEO FOUCHARD

671 Ormskirk Road, Pemberton

April 4th 1901

17 20 December 1901

A BURSCOUGH BOAT BOY DROWNED

THE FATHER MISSING Mr S Brighouse, county coroner, held an inquiry at the Red Lion Hotel, Dover Locks, Abram, on Thursday morning, into the circumstances concerning the death of **Robert Henry Wright**, a boat boy, 15 years old, of Cinder Street, Lathom, who was drowned in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Dover Lock, Abram, on Sunday, under peculiar circumstances. The body was removed from Abram to Lathom by canal steamer, the day before the inquiry, after having been seen by the jury.

When the name of the father, Thomas Porter, was called so that evidence of identification could be given, he did not appear, and the sergeant said he had received information that the lad's father had not been seen since he came to take the body home.

The Coroner : That is the worst of allowing the body to be taken away. If you do them a favour, they return it.

Thomas Draper of Cinder Street, Lathom, a boatman, said the deceased was the son of Thomas Porter, a general labourer, also living at Cinder Street, Lathom, and was a canal boatman. The deceased was employed as mate of witness's boat. Witness was on the steamer, which was towing three flats, and the deceased was alone on the last of the three boats, steering. A man on a passing steamer shouted that the deceased was missing, when near Marsden's Bridge. Witness was down the stoke hole at the time but, on hearing the man shout, he "nipped" out and jumped into the canal, and came back, and jumped in again, but no Robert did he see. No one saw the deceased fall in, and no one saw him come up. Robert would have charge of the tiller, and the man would be able to tell that there was nobody at the tiller by the boat running out of control and going to the side. The body was recovered about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour afterwards, more than a hundred yards from the place where the man shouted that he was missing. They felt for him with the shaft of their boat hook. He was dead when taken out of the water. They tried artificial respiration.

The Coroner : The father took the body away yesterday afternoon, do you know anything about him?

Witness replied that he did not. He hadn't arrived at Burscough last night at twelve o'clock when witness passed. The father went with the steamer conveying the body as far as Wigan, and then left the steamer to go by train. The steamer proceeded to Burscough with the body. Nobody had seen the father since he left the boat at Wigan. Witness had looked round Wigan that morning, but he couldn't find him anywhere. He had promised to telephone to Burscough whether he found him in Wigan or not.

The Coroner : What train do you think he would leave Wigan by?

Witness : He would catch the 5 o'clock train.

The Coroner : I hope nothing has happened to the father. Was he a sober sort of man, or was he likely to get on the booze?

Witness said the man didn't take much drink.

The foreman of the jury said the father was fearfully deaf.

The Coroner said it really didn't matter for the purpose of the inquiry that the father hadn't turned up. The body had been identified.

Witness further stated, in answer to the Coroner, that about half past three on Sunday afternoon, snow was falling, but he told deceased that if there was any weight of snow, he was to put witness's topcoat on.

The Coroner asked if the deck would not get rather slippery.

Witness replied that there was no snow on the deck.

The Coroner asked if there was any sign of footsteps on the deck.

Witness said there was not, and added that the tiller had come out of its place.

The Coroner : Where was the tiller found – in the water?

Witness : Yes, this side of Marsden's Bridge.

The Coroner : That is the explanation of the thing at once.

Questioned as to how the tiller was fastened, witness said it was fastened like the ordinary tillers were fastened.

The Coroner : I think that is sufficient to enable you to find a verdict – especially after hearing that the tiller came out.

The jury thereupon returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased had come by his death accidentally.

18 4 January 1902

A HEAPEY LANDLORD FINED On Tuesday at Chorley, James Grundy, landlord of the Anchor Inn, Heapey, was summoned for selling drink during prohibited hours, and **Peter Rimmer**, a boatman, was summoned for aiding and abetting, and for falsely representing himself to be a traveller. Police-sergeant Wilson stated that about 10.25 am on Sunday December 15th, he found Rimmer in the house drinking a pint of freshly drawn beer. The landlord's daughter was in the act of putting some whisky in a bottle for Rimmer. Witness asked him where he had come from, and he

replied that he had come from White Bear(?). As a matter of fact, however, he stayed at Botany the previous night, about a mile and three quarters away. Grundy, who pleaded guilty, said Rimmer told his daughter that he had come from Adlington the same day, and that he wanted the whisky for his daughter, who was lying sick. Grundy was fined 21s and costs, or in default a months' imprisonment, the licence not to be endorsed ; and Rimmer was fined 20s and costs, or in default a month in the first case, and 10s and costs, or 14 days, in the second, the sentences to run concurrently.

19 22 January 1902

ACCIDENT TO A CANAL BOATMAN On Monday morning, a man named **William Roughley** of 95 Queen Street, a canal boatman, fell from the side of his boat into the bottom of it, and broke his leg. Police-constable Bibby rendered first aid, and he was removed to the Infirmary in the horse ambulance.

20 8 February 1902

FATAL PERSISTENCE OF A CANAL BOATMAN The circumstances attending the death of **Edward Seddon** (24), boatman, who resided in Emma Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, were investigated by Mr H J Robinson, coroner, at the Town Hall on Monday morning.

The Coroner explained that the body of the deceased was recovered from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Shorrock Lane Bridge the previous Friday night.

It appeared that Seddon arrived at the Wigan Coal and Iron Company's depot about 8.30, having come from Wigan, and after the boat was tied up had to stable his horse, for which purpose he proceeded along the canal bank. About 8.40, Elizabeth Mitchell, widow, living at Bessall Street, who was going home by way of the towing-path, passed under Shorrock Lane Bridge, and a yard the other side met Seddon, who was riding the horse. She said to him, "If I were thee, I wouldn't go under there like that ; I would get off if I were thee". He replied, "Nay, I won't. I am not frightened. I have gone through many a time". She then moved on a little, when he shouted, "Good neet, mother", to which she responded, "Good neet". She had not gone many steps before she heard a splash, whereupon she screamed. She heard people running, and hastened to give the alarm. The evidence of **James Longton**, deceased's employer, remarked that at the siding he warned Seddon not to ride the horse, which was liable to set off suddenly, and when deceased left him he was walking. It was impossible for him to clear the bridge if on the horse, and he promised he would not ride. Police-constable Clark, who assisted to recover the body of the man and the carcase of the horse, informed the court that the bridge, which was half moon shape, was 7 ft 4 in at the highest point. There were two cuts on deceased's face, which had been caused, he thought, by contact with the bridge and not by a kick from the horse. The Coroner, in summing up, said it was evident that deceased touched against the bridge, lost his balance, and jerked the horse into the water with him when he fell. Verdict, "Accidental death".

21 14 February 1902

A BOATMAN'S BRAVERY On Friday morning at the Ormskirk Police Court, Mr S Brighthouse, county coroner, made an interesting presentation on behalf of the Royal Humane Society to **Thomas Draper**, canal boatman, Cinder Street, Burscough, for an act of bravery he performed on the 15th December in attempting to save his mate, a youth named **Robert Henry Wright**, from drowning at the Dover Locks, Abram. Mr Brighthouse, in presenting the certificate recording the thanks of the society and a donation of a sovereign, said that on the afternoon of the 15th December Mr Draper was in charge of a steamer which was drawing three boats, and Wright was at the tiller of the last one. The tiller came out and the youth fell into the water. When Draper heard of this, he at once jumped into the water, with all his clothes and heavy boots on, but being unable to find Wright came out. He however twice afterwards jumped in, the last time with a boat hook, and then recovered the body. It was bitterly cold and snowing heavily, and both the jury and himself were unanimously of the opinion that Draper had done a very brave act, performed under circumstances

that would have deterred very many from making the attempt to save the poor lad's life.

22 5 March 1902

AN UNKNOWN MAN FOUND IN THE CANAL The body of a man, who up to the present has not been identified, was found floating in No 21 Lock of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal on Friday last by a boatman named **Hugh Glover** of Orrall Lane, Burscough. Police-sergeant Hyde and Police-constable Turner got the body out and removed it to the Mortuary. The following is a description of the deceased :- Age about sixty, height 5 ft 6 in, short grey beard and hair, stout built, brown eyes, abscess mark on the left eye, wearing blue serge jacket, black worsted trousers, flannel drawers, grey stockings, flannel vest, blue and white striped shirt, and lace up clogs with cap on toes. One side of the head has been considerably smashed, but this has probably been done by the propeller of one of the boats.

Mr H Milligan, the deputy coroner, held an inquest on Tuesday at the Borough Courts.

Police-constable Turner deposed to pulling the body out of the water. He said he found a knife and 10d in the pockets. His body was decomposed, and appeared to have been in the water four or five days.

The Coroner advised them to keep the clothes in case anyone came to identify him.

Police-sergeant Willis, in reply to the Coroner, said they had had his photograph taken.

The jury returned an open verdict of "Found drowned".

23 9 April 1902

EXCITING SCENE AT LATHOM A singular and serious accident to a boatman is reported from Newburgh, Lathom. It seems that on Thursday **Joseph Smith** of Higher Audley, Blackburn, was in charge of a horse attached to a boat, when it became restive and finally got loose from the towing rope. Smith pursued the animal, and on coming up with it the horse lashed out at him, knocked him down and trampled upon him. He was picked up with both legs broken and injuries to his face and several parts of the body. William Ashurst, foreman porter, Burscough Junction, rendered first aid, and afterwards the man was conveyed to the Ormskirk Cottage Hospital.

24 3 May 1902

LATHOM

TRAMPLED BY A HORSE AT LATHOM On Tuesday, Mr Brighthouse held an inquiry at the Ormskirk Police Court respecting the death of **Joseph Smith** (42), boatman of Higher Audley Street, Blackburn, who died on Saturday morning as the result of injuries received on the 3rd April, under the following circumstances :- On this date, deceased was working a boat with a mate along the canal in the direction of Lathom, when he got off to turn the bridge known as Spencer's Bridge at Newburgh. The towing horse immediately turned back, and deceased followed it, but the faster he ran the faster went the horse. He, however, managed to get alongside, when he unfortunately fell, and the hind feet of the animal trampled over him, fractured both his legs and inflicted other injuries. Robert William Ashurst, a railway employee at Burscough, rendered first aid, and the man was removed to the Ormskirk Cottage Hospital, where he died on Saturday. His mate, **John Barron**, said the deceased had only been with him a short time, and was accustomed to the animal. If he had left it, it would have returned of its own accord. Verdict : "Accidental death".

25 17 May 1902

WIGAN COUNTY POLICE COURT

A GOOD WIFE MAKES A SLIP **Mary Boardman** was charged with stealing a silk handkerchief, valued at 2s, from the dwelling of Henry Holden, 185 Ince Green Lane, on the 13th inst. The wife of Holden did not care to press the case against the woman, whom she said she had known for years. She would not have done it had she not had drink. The husband of the defendant, a boatman, entered the box, and said his wife was a good wife, but she had had a sup of drink during the past week. They had six children. The bench bound the prisoner over in £5.

26 24 May 1902

THE BRASS BAND'S DONKEY A collier named James Shaw was charged at Chorley on Tuesday with stealing an ass, valued at £2, the property of the Crooke Brass Band. The ass grazed on the field of Peter Liptrot, a Gathurst farmer. A boatman named **John Rothwell** saw a group of men going with the donkey in the direction of Wigan. Police-constable Breeze hurried up the bank after the men. Five ran away, and he caught the prisoner, who had his arm round the donkey's neck. Prisoner's statement to the Bench was that he was told he could have the ass if he caught it. Captain Crosse said the bench had decided to dismiss the case, but it ought to be a warning to the prisoner to let other people's animals alone under any circumstances.

27 6 August 1902

FATALITY TO A BOATMAN AT WIGAN On Friday afternoon at the Infirmary, Major Rowbottom, borough coroner, held an inquest concerning the death of **Robert Halsall**, a boatman, who died at the Infirmary on Wednesday night following upon the accident received in the boat *Paris* in the Wigan basin on the 14th ult.

Ellen Halsall said she was the wife of the deceased, who lived at Broad Lane, Downholland near Ormskirk. He was a boatman aged 50 years. She was present at the Infirmary when he died. He told her while he was in the Infirmary that he was pulling the boat with a boat hook when he slipped and fell into the boat.

Richard Halsall, cousin of the deceased and living at Newburgh, said he was on the Pottery Bridge when the accident happened. Deceased was standing on his boat pulling with his hook from another boat. The hook slipped and he fell into his empty boat and hurt his foot. Witness was the first to go to him, and finding that the foot was smashed, sent for Dr Neville, who ordered him to the Infirmary, where he was taken in the ambulance.

Dr Mowatt, house surgeon at the Infirmary, said deceased was admitted on Monday July 14th with a foot broken at the ankle. They set it at first, but found it had to be amputated. That was done on the 22nd. He then developed pneumonia, from which he died on the 30th.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

28 6 August 1902

CHORLEY

CASES AT THE POLICE COURT **Thomas Prescott**, boatman, Whittle-le-Woods, was, on the evidence of Police-constable McBradent, fined 2s 6d and costs for allowing his horse to stray. He was found in the Anchor Inn.

29 14 November 1902

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT

A BOATMAN'S QUARREL **John Gregory** of 17 Fenton Street, St Helens, was charged with assaulting **Richard Peach** on the 7th inst. Complainant said he was a canal boatman, and on the 7th Gregory unhooked the rope from his horse, and when witness asked him what he had done that for, he tupp'd him and kicked him so badly that he could hardly walk. Defendant said all the bother arose about him trying to get his boat into the lock before Peach. A fine of 5s and costs was imposed.

30 3 December 1902

LATHOM OCTOGENARIAN'S SAD DEATH A sad drowning fatality is reported from Lathom. William Rimmer, a labourer in the employ of the Earl of Lathom, and over eighty years of age, proceeded to his work about five o'clock on Friday morning. In order to get to his work, he had to cross over Glover's Bridge and the canal. Later in the morning, his basket was found floating in the canal. The canal was dragged and the body of deceased was found at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The morning being very dark, it is supposed that deceased walked into the canal. On Monday, Mr S Brighouse, county coroner, held an inquest at Lathom on the body. The evidence

showed that deceased left home about five o'clock on Friday morning to go to his work at Lathom Hall. His basket and cape were found about two hours later floating in the canal near Glover's Bridge. Police-sergeant Ratcliffe stated that in all probability the bridge, a swing one, had been left uncaught by some boatman, and that the deceased, in consequence, walked straight into the water. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death" and recommended that lights should be provided at these bridges.

31 28 March 1903

A SCHOL'S WOMAN DROWNED AT INCE Yesterday (Friday) Mr S Brighthouse, county coroner, held an inquest at the Walmesley Arms, Higher Ince, touching the death of a woman named Margaret Pemberton, whose body was found in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Ince on Tuesday. The first witness was the husband of the deceased, James Pemberton, a collier, who lives at 31 Bradshawgate, Wigan. She was thirty seven years of age. He last saw her alive at half past four on Tuesday morning, when she got out of bed and left him. She was not fully dressed, and she did not say where she was going. She put on two skirts and a bodice, and he thought at the time she was going downstairs for a drink. He was left in bed with a baby eight months old. She did not say where she was going, but if he had thought she was going out, he would have stopped her. She said, "Good morning", to him and went downstairs. He did not hear any noise of the door opening. He never saw her alive again. In the afternoon he saw her dead.

The Coroner asked him if he did not think she was going out when she said, "Good morning". Witness answered that he never thought of it or he would have stopped her.

It is quite clear she has drowned herself from what we are going to be told. What is the reason? - She has never been gradely since we lost a lad killed at Bamfurlong twelve months ago.

Did I hold an inquest on him? - Yes. The baby also broke its shoulder bone, and that together with the other upset made her worse. She has not been proper since she lost the lad who was between fourteen and fifteen years old and was killed by a runaway tub down brow. My wife was afraid she was going to have another child a cripple after losing one.

You didn't think she was going to take away her life? - I didn't.

Does it leave you with other children? - It leaves me with six. She has not done it for having a bad house, because she has had plenty of money to run it. I cannot think of anything except the upsets in her mind.

By the Foreman : He had attended regularly to his work and brought his money home. If he had not worked properly, he would not have had at the present time between £50 and £80 in the Post Office Savings Bank.

William Pilkington, the next witness, said he was in the employment of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company. On Tuesday morning he left home to go to his work, and he met a man who told him a woman had been taken out of the canal. He found the woman laid on the bank of the canal under the watchman's cabin, just below No 17 lock. He did not know who pulled her out. There was no one about when he got there. A boat was going down, and he asked the boatman and also his mate, who was filling the lock, who got her out, and they said they did not know.

The Coroner : I know the reason. (Laughter).

Witness : I expect they didn't want to know.

The Coroner : They didn't want to lose a couple of days work and only get 1s 6d for attending. I don't suppose they meant anything by their answer, however.

Dr Chronnell, physician and surgeon in practice at Hindley, said he made a *post mortem* examination the previous day. He said the body was well kept and gave little evidence of putrefaction. The brain was normal, and the cause of death was drowning.

Sergeant Ormrod said he had made enquiries, and found that the husband earned middling of money and attended to his work as he had told the jury. Pemberton had told him, however, that he and his wife had had a few sharp words the night before.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

32 8 May 1903

A PLANK LANE BOATMAN'S DEATH

KILLED AT THE RAILWAY CROSSING At Leigh on Friday night, a boatman named **Thomas Walmsley**, aged 73, residing at Talbot Road near Plank Lane, was going across a footway over the Grand Central Railway Company's line near West Leigh Station, when he was knocked down by a passenger train from Wigan to Manchester and killed instantly, the body being shockingly mutilated. The deceased was a widower with a large family.

Mr Brighouse, county coroner, held an inquest relative to the death at the Britannia Inn, Plank Lane, on Tuesday afternoon.

Richard Hyde of 6 Talbot Road, Abram, said the deceased was his father-in-law, and was a canal labourer. On Friday morning, he left the house about twenty past seven, not having had breakfast, and witness saw him dead the same night. The deceased had never threatened to take his life, and he was always of a cheerful disposition. He was in the habit of coming home along the railway; he had got a job that day under a contractor and he had been to the relieving officer at Abram, and along the railroad would be his nearest way home. The deceased's hearing was a little defective.

Jordan Bradbury, signalman on the Great Central Railway, said that at 5.18 pm on Friday last he was on duty at the Bickershaw Junction box when he saw the deceased crossing the line. A passenger train from Wigan to Manchester was coming up at the time. Witness shouted to him when the train was sixty yards away, but the deceased took no notice and walked straight on in front of the engine, and the train passed over him. The driver whistled when he was 25 yards from the deceased.

Joseph Smith said he was the driver of the Wigan to Manchester train, which was a stopping train, and in approaching West Leigh Station he saw the deceased walking in the six foot. Witness sounded his whistle and put his brake on, but the man appeared to take no notice, and seemed to walk deliberately in front of the train, which ran over him.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

33 23 December 1903

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT

A BOATMAN RUNS AMOK **Thomas Aspinall**, a boatman of 35 Hoscar Street, Hoscar, was charged with being drunk and refusing to quit the Cherry Tree Inn, Chapel Lane, and also with breaking a window in the house. The licensee, Gerald Finlay, deposed to having to put prisoner out. He then lifted his hand and broke the window. Aspinall expressed his sorrow, and said that he broke the window accidentally. He had offered to pay for it. He was fined 5s and costs for the first offence, and ordered to pay the costs and the damages (1s 6d) in the second.

34 30 December 1903

DROWNED IN THE FOG

THREE WEEKS IN THE WATER The body of Ann Foley of 1 Lunn's Yard, off Railway Street, Lower Ince, was found in the canal at Railway Lock on Sunday morning. She had been missing since December 5th.

The inquest on the body was held at the Borough Courts by Mr H Milligan, the borough coroner, on Monday.

James Foley, the husband, gave evidence of identification. He said she left home on the afternoon of the 5th December to go and pay the rent, and he never saw her alive again. About a week after, he heard she was in the Navigation Inn between five and six. She had paid the rent. He had made enquiries, but had found nothing more about her. It was very foggy on that night, and she might have come out by the side door, and thinking she was on the road, have walked into the canal. They were quite comfortable at home, and there was nothing for her to cause her to drown herself. He thought it was a pure accident.

Ellen Occleshaw, landlady of the Navigation Inn, said she saw Mrs Foley at 5.30 on the night of the 5th inst. She came out of one room and went into another. She had not been served there, and

witness thought she was looking for someone. She appeared to be sober and in her usual health, and went out by the door which leads on to the canal bank.

Thomas Fazackerley of Pottery Road, a boatman, said they found the body in the Railway Lock about half past nine on Sunday morning. The woman appeared to have been in the water about a fortnight or three weeks.

Police-constable Bannister, replying to the Coroner, said there were no marks on the body.

The Coroner advised the jury to bring in an open verdict.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

35 23 January 1904

CHORLEY

PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY **Arthur Athenson**, boatman, was charged with stealing 11 lb of coal from a boat on the canal at Heapey. Police-constable Brennand caught him in the act. Defendant pleaded guilty and was committed for 14 days.

36 27 January 1904

CANAL BOAT CAPTAIN CHARGED WITH THEFT At the Ormskirk Police Court on Saturday, a boatman named **Richard Bowen** of New Lane, Burscough, was charged with the theft of a ham from the Ship Inn, Downholland. It appears that the prisoner went to the public house named, and after he had left the ham was missed. Prisoner denied the theft. He was taken to the police station by Police-constable Clarke who, on going back, found the ham on a certain boat. Prisoner was remanded, bail being allowed. On Monday, Bowen was again charged with the theft. Prisoner now admitted the theft, and was sent to gaol for a month with hard labour.

37 5 March 1904

SAD DEATH OF A WIGAN SOLICITOR A painful impression was created in Wigan on Tuesday afternoon when it became known that the body of Mr Thomas Hatton Cowburn, solicitor, had been found that morning in the canal at Crooke, near Gathurst. A boatman was passing along the canal shortly after six on Tuesday morning, and noticed a body floating in the water. He called to a man named **Thomas Whittle**, a labourer of Wigan who works for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, and who was proceeding along the canal bank to his work near Aspley Bridge. Together they got the body out of the water and Police-constable Brooke, with assistance, had it removed to the Crooke Hall Inn.

Mr Cowburn, who was 37 years old, was the son of the late Mr Albert Cowburn, who for many years was a managing clerk in the office of Messrs Peace and Ellis, solicitors, King Street, Wigan. He was a grandson of Mr Thomas Hatton, who at one time was a member of the Ince Local Board. Deciding to enter the legal profession, Mr Cowburn was articled as a solicitor to Messrs Darlington and Sons, King Street, Wigan, and after serving his term with them, he commenced practice for himself, having an office in King Street. For some years he was the deputy Town Clerk of Wigan, and when Mr Arthur Smith resigned the office of Town Clerk Mr Cowburn was a candidate for the position, and was beaten by just one vote, the successful applicant being the late Mr J J Charnock. For a considerable period, Mr Cowburn resided at Park View, Wigan, but for some years he had lived with his wife and mother in Liverpool Road, Birkdale. This news of his sad death came as a great shock to those who knew him so well, and instantly there went out to the bereaved wife and mother the sincere sympathy of a large number of friends.

THE INQUEST Mr Parker, the County Coroner for Preston, held an inquest at the Crooke Hall Inn on Thursday morning touching the death of the deceased.

William James Mulling, medical practitioner of 241 Upper Brook Street, Manchester, identified the body as that of his cousin. Deceased was a solicitor living at 59 Liverpool Road, Birkdale, and was 37 years of age. Witness saw him a month or two ago. He had never heard deceased saying he would do anything to himself, neither had he heard of any letter or writing that he had left behind. Deceased had no present worry or anything of that kind which would lead anyone to suspect that he

would commit suicide.

Frederick Emery, son of the occupant of the George and Dragon Inn, said he was a ticket collector at the Gathurst Station of the L and Y Railway Co. He was on duty about five minutes past eleven on the night of the 29th February, when the Wigan to Southport train arrived. He did not know the deceased man personally, but he had since seen the body. He saw him step on to the platform. He was slightly under the influence of drink. Witness asked him for his ticket, and he gave it to him. It was available from Wigan to Southport, and he gave him the ticket back. Deceased then asked him if there was another train to either Wigan or Southport, and he told him there was not. Witness advised him to stay at the Navigation Inn at Gathurst, and walked along with him to the Inn. He asked witness how far it was to Wigan, and he told him about three miles. At that, he said he would go to Wigan by the canal bank, and get lodgings there. Witness showed him the way to the canal bank, and left him. It was then about half past eleven at night, and it was moonlight and clear. That was the reason deceased said he would walk.

The Coroner : Did you think he was in a fit condition to walk along the canal bank? - Oh, yes! He was quite sober in his talk.

Witness added that when deceased presented his ticket on the platform, the train had gone, or he would have put him back into the train. He said he had been asleep on the train, and it was his own mistake ; he got out because he thought he had been over-carried. Deceased was alone when he went along the bank.

By the Foreman : Witness went a few yards along the bank with him to show him the way. He did not notice whether it was slippery, but it would be because it was freezing keenly.

Thomas Whittle, 19 Great George Street, Wigan, said he was a labourer in the employ of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co, and about half past six on Tuesday morning, the 1st inst, he was going along the bank in the direction of Gathurst. When opposite Crooke Village a steamer passed him, and one of the boatmen shouted that there was a man in the water. He then saw the body of the deceased about a yard from the towing-path ; he was face downwards. Then he obtained assistance and got the body out of the water and waited until the police came. The place he saw him was one and a half miles from the Navigation Inn. Except for the hat, the body was fully dressed.

By the Foreman : About twenty yards from where he found the body, the bank had been raised. He might have been walking and slipped.

Police-constable Brooke said he was a constable stationed at Crooke. About twenty minutes past seven on Tuesday morning, he received information that a man had been found drowned in the canal near Crooke Village, Shevington, and he at once went to the place and found deceased lying on the canal bank. The body was removed to the Crooke Hall Inn. He searched the body. In the pockets he found a gold watch and chain with a silver match box attached, a wooden pipe, two pocket knives, a tobacco pouch and twelve and twopence halfpenny in money. There was also a soda water bottle half full of whisky. He was wearing a pair of gold rimmed spectacles and had on a gold ring. The watch had stopped at 11.40. In one of the pockets he found a letter addressed to Mr T Cowburn, Liverpool Road, Birkdale.

Sergeant Gill said the letter was wet, and seemed to be a business letter.

The Coroner (looking at it) : It is a whisky dealer's letter.

Witness said there were no marks of violence on the body, and the police had no suspicion of foul play. He had examined the place where the deceased was found, and thereabouts the bank had been raised, and the stones were uneven. It was quite possible for deceased to have stumbled and fallen into the water.

The Coroner, in summing up, said that the ticket collector very properly recommended the deceased to stay the night at the Navigation Inn, but he could not make up his mind to do that, and preferred to walk. He began to walk, and took the most direct way – along the canal bank. It was said to have been a light night, and under ordinary conditions one would have thought that he would have got there all right. It was very probable that he came by his death accidentally, because there was nothing to suggest that he meant to do away with himself.

The jury returned a verdict of “Accidental death”.

38 9 April 1904

BOATMAN BLOWN INTO THE CANAL Whilst walking along a plank separating the boats *Gog* and *Magog*, lying in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at the Corporation Yard, Wigan, on Wednesday afternoon, **Henry Burton**, a boatman of Runcorn, who is said to have been under the influence of drink at the time, was blown into the water. He was pulled out insensible by the aid of a boat hook, and artificial respiration brought him round. Medical aid was summoned, and he was put to bed, but when the boats reached Appley Bridge in the evening, he began to vomit and suddenly expired. The inquest on the body was held on Thursday evening at the Appley Bridge Inn, by Mr Parker, county coroner for the district. After evidence had been given bearing out the above facts, the jury returned a verdict that the deceased died from shock through falling into the water.

39 23 April 1904

A BOAT HORSE DEAL At Chorley County Court on Wednesday, before his Honour Judge Coventry, William Tootall of 26 Sterling Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, described as a property repairer, brought an action against Richard Holden, formerly landlord of the Anchor Inn, Whittle, for the return of a horse, and for £3 6s damages for its retention. Plaintiff was represented by Mr Bennison, Blackburn, and Mr D M Aspden was for the defendant. The animal in question was a canal boat horse. It had been bought by Holden from a man named Norris, and defendant then disposed of it to **George Hart**, a boatman of Wigan, who again sold it for £4 10s to plaintiff. Plaintiff's son took the horse on a trip to Whittle, where Holden took possession of it, saying it was his horse, and that he had not sold it to Hart. Hart stated that he did buy the animal from Holden. The price was £5, but witness had not paid for it. Defendant, and the man Morris, who was the original owner of the horse, said that it was only disposed of to Hart on the understanding that it remained Holden's property until paid for, and that, in the meantime, the profits of the trips on the canal would be due to Holden, and that Holden would pay Hart for his work. His Honour said it was difficult in such cases to know what was the bargain made. He believed, however, that the horse was sold by Holden to Hart, and that it was Hart's to sell. The horse was therefore Tootell's property, and it would be for Holden to get its value from Hart. There would be a verdict for plaintiff for the return of the horse and 10s damages.

40 15 October 1904

LOCAL NEWS At Leigh on Wednesday, **Robert Wood**, boatman, residing at Bottomley near Chorley, was fined 20s and costs, or in default committed for a month, for obtaining by false pretences £2 12s 6d from Ackers, Whitley and Co, Bickershaw Collieries, Plank Lane. Prisoner presented a pay note for coal transport on the Liverpool and Leeds Canal, and so obtained money which was due to **Philip Metcalfe**, captain of prisoner's boat.

41 12 November 1904

AGGRAVATED ASSAULT ON AN OLD WOMAN At the Chorley Police Court on Friday, **Samuel Briggs**, boatman residing at Shevington, was charged with an aggravated assault on Mary Blundell, his wife's grandmother. On November 1st, defendant's wife came to her crying, and while they were having tea, defendant entered, threw his billycock on the fire, put a cap on and said he was ready. He began to assault his wife, and on complainant intervening he struck her on the face, and when his wife ran out he locked the door ; he then kicked the old woman several times, and on going outside he smashed a window. Prisoner was remanded on bail.

42 3 February 1905

FOUND DEAD IN A CHAIR

A BOATMAN'S SUDDEN END On Thursday morning, Mr H Milligan, the Borough Coroner, held an inquest at the Borough Courts on the body of **John Hooper** (57), a boatman, who lived at Higher Cop, Whittle-le-Woods, near Chorley, who died suddenly on the 31st ult. The first witness called was the widow, **Ellen Hooper**, who said her husband was in charge of the

boat *Progress* from Blackburn, and on Tuesday morning they came to Wigan. He had complained of a bad cold and also of palpitation. About twelve months ago, he had bronchitis, but that morning, however, he had not complained. They arrived at Wigan about twelve o'clock, and about half an hour later he went down in the cabin to have his dinner. He had been down about fifteen minutes when she knocked for him to come up. She went down, as he didn't reply, and found her husband sitting in a chair apparently dead. His dinner was on the table, and he had not eaten anything. She called her son, and he went for a doctor.

A Juryman remarked that it was not a very easy job coming down the locks.

Robert Hooper, a son of the deceased, said when his mother called him into the cabin, witness went for a doctor. He came, and said life was extinct. There was no bustling getting through the locks. Deceased had a very bad cold, but he didn't look anything out of the ordinary. He had been coughing a lot. Witness didn't know that his father had anything the matter with his heart, although when he was hurried he was troubled with a bit of palpitation. He was a fairly stout man.

The Coroner said he should think the man died of heart failure.

A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

43 3 March 1905

A CANAL BOATMAN SENT TO PRISON At the Liverpool County Intermediate Sessions on Tuesday, **George Minnion** (34), a boatman, was sent to prison for two months for obtaining various small sums of money by false pretences from persons at Ince. He said his horse had fallen into the canal and got drowned, whereas a witness stated that for ten years to his knowledge he had never had any such animal.

44 18 March 1905

FIREGUARDS AND FATALITIES On Tuesday, Mr S Brighthouse, county coroner, held an inquiry at the Packet House, Burscough, respecting the death of **Mary Glover**, eight years of age, who died on Saturday morning as the result of burns. The evidence showed that, whilst the parents of the deceased were away with the boat, the five children were left in charge of the eldest girl, aged fifteen. On Friday afternoon, the latter went to a shop close by, leaving the deceased in the house alone. A retired boatman heard deceased screaming, and saw her running across the yard with her clothing on fire and the flames rising above her head. Deceased was shockingly burnt, and died early on Saturday morning. The Coroner said he talked about the value of fireguards until people began to think he was a crank, but when they considered that 750 children a year were burnt to death in England through want of this precaution, they would agree that it was a very serious matter. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

45 3 May 1905

THROWN INTO THE CANAL **Charles Royle**, a boatman of Burscough Bridge, at the Manchester Police Court on Thursday, was charged by **William Taverner**, a clerk in the employment of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company at Castleford Wharf, Knot Mill, with having endangered his life by throwing him into the canal. On April 17th, Taverner said he told Royle to take his barge down to the Salford Docks to load for Yorkshire. Royle disobeyed the order, and some time afterwards, when spoken to, remained obstinate. "Then", Taverner said, "You need not go ; I will send another barge. The Liverpool office will deal with you". Afterwards he returned to the quayside, and to reach the captain of another barge, which lay alongside, had to cross that of Royle, who rushed upon him and pushed him into the water. He could not swim, and would have been drowned but for the help of two men. As he lay on the canal bank, Taverner said, Royle kicked him twice. Royle did not attempt to justify his conduct. He was "very sorry it had occurred". He was fined 21s and costs, or a month's imprisonment.

46 24 May 1905

A MEAN THEFT At the Wigan County Police Court on Monday, before Mr W S Barrett and other

magistrates, a young boatman named **Robert Woods** was charged with stealing a rope from a house at Haigh on the 20th inst. He pleaded guilty, but said the woman's husband owed him five shillings. Inspector Radcliffe, in stating the case, described it as a very mean theft. He called at the house of Mr and Mrs Taylor, which was on the canal bank at Haigh, and where ropes were sold to boatmen. After asking Mrs Taylor, who was seventy seven years of age, the price of a rope, he seized it and ran out of the place and on to a passing boat. The old husband tried to pursue him, but failed. The police received information, and apprehended him at Britannia Bridge the following morning. They however had not been able to find the rope. He was sent to prison for fourteen days with hard labour.

47 31 May 1905

RESCUE FROM DROWNING On Monday evening, a child named Michael Gormally, four years of age, who resides at 4 Lyon Street, fell into the basin of the canal in Wallgate. A boatman named **Richard Deakin** of Spencer's Bridge, Parbold, got the body out with a boat hook, and the child was little the worse for its immersion.

48 21 June 1905

APPLEY BRIDGE

DROWNED IN THE CANAL **John Simm**, aged seven years, son of **William Simm**, boatman of Appley Bridge, on Tuesday week took some potato peelings in a bass to a pig keeper named John Freeman, and obtained a handful of toffee for them. On his way back along the canal bank, when about fifty yards from home, he met a man named John Mawdesley and asked him if he would have some toffee. As he did not return home in the evening, his mother became alarmed and went in search of him. She noticed the bass floating in the canal. She obtained assistance, and dragging operations were commenced. The lad's body was recovered later in the evening.

49 18 August 1905

DROWNED IN THE CANAL AT INCE

A KINDLY BOATWOMAN Mr S Brighouse, the County Coroner, held an inquest at the Walmesley Arms, Higher Ince, on Tuesday evening, regarding the death of a young boatman named **William Evans**, which occurred through drowning on Monday.

Mary Ann Hesketh was the principal witness. She said she was the wife of **John Hesketh**, captain of the boat *May*. In the early part of June, deceased came to them at the Oldfield Lane Locks, Manchester. He asked her if she would take him on the boat, as he had no parents. He said his age was eighteen. She consented, and since then he had remained on the boat and worked with her husband on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal between Manchester and Blackburn. About five o'clock on Monday afternoon, she and deceased were engaged preparing to get the boat through No 7 lock at Ince. She saw him lift one of the side lever paddles for the lock to open, and by some means he released his hold on the lever, and it came back with considerable force and struck him on the breast. He fell into the canal. She raised an alarm, and her husband and another boatman named **Joseph Walker** came. Deceased only came to the surface, and then Walker dived into the water, which was ten feet deep, but failed to reach him. He was afterwards drawn through the paddle hole into the lock, and his body was recovered half an hour later.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said that the deceased had never been on that canal previously, but he had been on the Bolton Canal, where the levers were different. They had never allowed him to work the paddles before, but on this occasion he went himself. Before she could make her husband hear, he was in the empty lock. When they first met him at Manchester, deceased asked her daughter if they would give him a meal, which she did, and then he made the request that he should be allowed to remain on the boat. He said that for three weeks he had been lying under bridges and sleeping on the canal bank.

By Inspector Radcliffe : He told her he had no friends, and was left to himself when seven years of age. He was a very good lad to them, and very civil.

The inspector told the court that the woman held the deceased in such respect that, although she was very poor, she was trying to raise money to get him a respectable funeral. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

50 6 December 1905

BOATMAN DROWNED AT ABRAM On Friday, a man who at the time of writing had not been identified was drowned in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Wilcock's Bridge, Abram. About nineteen days ago, he was engaged by **Ernest Moore**, the captain of the boat *Alfred* (taking slack from Cross, Tetley and Company's colliery to the Alkali Works, Runcorn) to assist him. His name was unknown. All that he was called was "Bill". At this particular time, while the boat was at Abram, "Bill" was reaching a pan of water out of the canal, and he seemed to overbalance himself and fall into the water. The captain threw a rope to him three times, but all efforts to save him were in vain and he sank. As soon as possible, the body was recovered and taken to the mortuary.

51 29 December 1905

OBSTRUCTING THE NAVIGATION OF THE CANAL

AN OBSTINATE BOATMAN **Henry Baldwin** of 1 Shackleton Street, Blackburn, was summoned at the Wigan Borough Police Court on Thursday for obstructing the navigation of the canal by running his boat abreast with another, contrary to the bye laws. He pleaded guilty, but said he just did what anyone would have done under the circumstances.

Mr James Wilson appeared to prosecute on behalf of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co. He said that the facts were that shortly after a quarter past seven on the evening of the 28th November, the defendant arrived at Henhurst Bridge lock at the same time as another, and the two boats entered the head of the lock together. Neither of the men would give way, and it was their duty to follow out the instructions of the lock-keeper. The lock-keeper went to the defendant and asked him to withdraw his boat, and the defendant refused. After quarter of an hour, he was asked again, but refused, and the lock-keeper went a third time, and he refused. The result was that the navigation was stopped for an hour and twenty minutes, and the defendant then withdrew his boat.

Defendant said he was there twenty minutes before the other boat came.

William Derbyshire, the lock-keeper, gave evidence in support. He said that the defendant was there first, but he had forfeited his turn by not getting the lock ready. He let the other man get the lock ready and then he wanted to claim it.

A fine of 20s and costs was imposed.

52 3 February 1906

OBSTINATE CANAL BOAT CAPTAIN **John Peach**, a canal boat captain, was summoned at the Wigan Borough Police Court on Monday, with refusing to give way and allow a fly boat to pass him and go through the lock. He pleaded guilty.

Mr Jas Wilson prosecuted on behalf of the Leeds and Liverpool Company, and stated that the defendant was the captain of the two boats *Perch* and *Dace*. On the 5th inst, the boats had been lying in the pool outside No 21 lock since the previous evening. At seven o'clock in the morning, a fly boat came along. That was a steamer which had another boat in tow and specially laden with goods which had to be delivered in a particular time and according to the bye laws of the company. All boats must give way to a fly boat. A fly boat came to that lock, but the defendant kept his two boats in the neck of the approach to the lock, and although spoken to by the lock-keeper and his assistant, refused to give way, and went through first with his two boats, declining to allow the fly boat the priority to which it was entitled under the bye laws. The result of the defendant's conduct was that the navigation and the fly boat itself was detained a little over an hour.

Peach said he stopped the boat hardly ten minutes. When the fly boat arrived at the top lock, there was nothing to take it away, and he didn't think he was doing anything when there was nothing to take it away. The boat was lying at Burnley two clear days without starting to discharge. It was laden with the same stuff as he had on his two boats.

The magistrates imposed a fine of 10s and costs.

53 7 March 1906

ADJOURNED COUNTY LICENSING SESSIONS

A MAGEE, MARSHALL LICENCE LOST Joseph Williams, Patricroft Inn, Canal Bank, Ince, applied for the renewal of his licence, which was objected to. Mr W S France jun represented him.

Inspector Palmer said the house was situate on the canal bank at Higher Ince, and belonged to Messrs Magee, Marshall and Company of Bolton and Wigan. The poor rate assessment was £29 net, and the annual value for the purpose of the publican's licence was £35. Witness mentioned the accommodation of the house, and said that the sanitary condition was fairly good. The facilities for effective police supervision were not good. It was open to the canal bank, and surrounded by waste land. It was an ante 1869 beerhouse. Applicant was a monthly tenant, and the rent was £15 a year. He informed witness that the house was just about paying its way – no profit and no loss. The sale was four barrels a week and three dozen bottles, and the average takings were between £9 and £10. The trade was of a respectable class among colliers, boatmen and iron workers. There were two stables with stalls for thirteen horses. The licensee was a collier and worked as a collier. Witness considered that the house could be done away with and was not wanted for the neighbourhood.

By Mr France : That was an isolated district. There were twenty three licenses within a radius of four hundred and forty yards, but in that radius they took in licenses from Manchester Road, Ince, and a large population of the Wigan borough.

Mr France did not consider that a satisfactory radius to take.

The Inspector said the licenses were there. The nearest houses were a hundred yards away.

Mr France said that this was one of the houses objected to some two years ago on the ground of annual value, but the license was restored, and the owners, after going through that, naturally thought the license was safe for the future. They said the last time the district was improving and developing, and that had turned out so. The house was in a better position now than it had been for some years – it was a greatly improving house. It now did a fair trade with the residents in the vicinity. He would suggest that the time for taking the house on the grounds mentioned in his notice was too late. It might have been successful some years ago before the change came, but not now. He pointed out that in this district there were other houses on the canal bank, and he was not aware that any others were attacked on the grounds of that objection. The house had been licensed for considerably over forty years, and there had never been the slightest complaint concerning it. Mr Scotson was in for fourteen years, Mr Starkie six years, Mr Tomlinson, the late tenant, thirteen years, and the present applicant since last September. That was strong evidence that a house was required. The owners had purchased a considerable quantity of land at a cost of £331, without the slightest idea of any proceedings being taken against the licence. In the middle of last year, they spent £238 in putting the house into a thorough state of repair to meet the increasing trade. The police had raised the point of police supervision, and said the house was isolated. Surely if the house was isolated they could all the more easily supervise it. It was the first time he had ever heard it suggested that a house was too difficult of supervision because it was too open.

Joseph Williams, the tenant, gave evidence.

Mr Walter Booth, the manager for the Wigan properties of the Brewery Company, gave evidence as to the amount of money spent on the house and land adjoining in recent years. There had never been a complaint against the house so far as he knew.

Robert Cheetham, a boatman, said he had known the house for forty years. It was a great convenience to him and other boatmen, and he always used the stables for his horses. He had always found the house comfortable and well conducted.

Thomas Auty, another boatman, said he used the house every other day, sometimes twice a day.

The Superintendent : If there was another house a hundred yards away, you would use that too? Witness created much amusement by replying that he always passed another house to get to this because he could get a better pint.

The licence was referred for compensation.

54 20 April 1906

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT, THURSDAY

A MOTHER'S MAINTENANCE **Francis Cullen**, a canal boatman of Woodcock Row, Crooke, was summoned to show cause why he should not contribute to the maintenance of his mother. Mr Danson, relieving officer, said his average wages were 35s per week. He applied for him to pay 1s a week. Defendant said he had a wife and five children. He had to pay a young man 3s a trip out of that money. Three other brothers are paying 1s, and the magistrates made an order for defendant to pay 1s a week.

55 19 September 1906

A BOATMAN'S PECULIAR DEATH The singular death has been reported of **Henry Gill** (43), a boatman who was a single man and resided with his sister at 1 Dobb's Field. It is said that eight months ago, he was near Writtle Springs with a canal boat, when he fell into a lock. He was afterwards frequently medically attended for his heart, and on the 28th ult another doctor saw him, and thought he had been drinking heavily. He had complained of having injured himself, but the doctor could not say he died from injury. Death took place on Monday.

56 6 October 1906

AN INCE DROWNING MYSTERY

WORKMAN FOUND DROWNED IN THE SCOTCHMAN'S FLASH Mr S Brighthouse, county coroner, held an inquest on Wednesday morning at the Old Hall Hotel, Lower Ince, relative to the death of a man at present unknown, who was found dead on Monday in a sheet of water called the "Scotchman's Flash" off the canal bank near Ince Moss. A boatman named **Sylvester Derbyshire**, of 20 Derby Street, Lower Ince, was taking his boat to Poolstock on Monday morning, and when near the "Scotchman's Flash" he heard some boys on the canal bank shout out, "There's a man in the water". Derbyshire got off his boat and walked along the towing-path to the flash of water when the boys ran away. The water of the flash is very deep, and considerably below the canal bank, and Derbyshire was surprised to see the deceased man in the water, being in a standing position, the man's head, which was without hat, being just level with the water. He got assistance, and with a rope and a boat hook, the deceased was got out and laid on the towing-path, where it was found that he was quite dead, having apparently been in the water a few hours. The deceased was conveyed to the Old Hall Hotel to await the inquest. There were no marks of violence on the body.

The deceased was a man of about sixty years of age, 5 ft 8 in in height, and had grey hair and moustache, being otherwise clean shaven, bald on the top of the head, grey eyes, fresh complexion, full round face, and was of stout build. He was dressed in a dark grey jacket, vest and trousers, and a red white and blue cotton shirt, grey home-made flannel singlet, black ribbed stockings, with a small black and white plaid woollen scarf round the neck. He was also wearing a new pair of lace-up boots, size seven or eight, which had the words "Wheatsheaf Brand" stamped in golden letters inside the top of the boot.

Inspector Ratcliffe said the man appeared to have been well cared for. Inquiries had been made, but he had not been identified.

The jury, after hearing the evidence, returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased, who was unknown, was found drowned, but how he got into the water there was no evidence to show.

57 20 October 1906

BURSCOUGH BOATMAN'S STRANGE DEATH

FOUND HANGED IN A WIGAN SHED Mr H Milligan, the Wigan Borough Coroner, held an inquest at the Borough Courts on Saturday morning relative to the death of **John Whittle**, a boatman 44 years old, of Bog Houses, Burscough, who was found hanging in a disused shed near Seven Stars Bridge, Wallgate, Wigan, having to all appearances been there for some little time.

Betsy Whittle, the widow of the deceased, said her husband had been complaining to her for about three weeks of a pain in his left side. He also complained of his head, but did not see anybody,

being able to continue following his work. She last saw him alive the previous Sunday week, when he was on the boat. Witness added that she herself was troubled with the rheumatics, and she thought that his own illness and hers had upset him.

Thomas Whittle, the son of the deceased, said he was on the boat with his father, who never said anything to him about being bad. Witness was with his father in the canal basin, Wallgate, Wigan, on the 5th inst. They were on the way to Birkenhead, and the boat should have been started at half past one, but his father didn't turn up.

Thomas Kilbey of *The Folly* said that on Thursday afternoon he happened to look into the shed near the Seven Stars Bridge, Wallgate, which belonged to Mr Wild, lime merchant, when he saw the body of the deceased hanging.

Peter Wild said the last witness reported finding the deceased in the shed which belonged to witness's father, and witness went and cut down the body which was hanging to a rope attached to a beam in the roof. The shed was not used much, and the man who did use it had been away for a fortnight, so that it had not been used at all for some time. The shed used to be the old tramway coking station. The rope didn't belong to witness's firm ; it looked like a boat rope that must have been taken there. The body seemed to have been there some time, as it smelled very badly.

Police-constable A Jones deposed to receiving information on Thursday afternoon of the body being found, when he went to the shed. There was a quantity of old bricks about two feet high under the beam to which the rope was attached, but that was hardly high enough for deceased to get on, and witness thought he had got on a slope to attach the rope. Witness found 5 1/2d in copper and an old knife in deceased's pockets.

The jury, after hearing the evidence, returned a verdict of "Suicide while temporarily insane".

58 27 October 1906

BOATMAN'S SINGULAR DEATH AT INCE

FOUND DEAD IN HIS CABIN

MATE'S INHUMAN CONDUCT CENSURED A boatman named **Thomas Hunter** of Whittle Springs, near Chorley, was found dead in the cabin of the canal boat *Finch*, which was lying in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Ince on Monday night. It appears that a watchman of the canal heard someone shouting from the direction of No 10 lock. On going there, he saw the deceased in the lock, struggling in the water. A man named **Ralph Stopford**, captain of the flat *Progress*, who was about to enter the lock, got hold of him with a boat hook and got him on the boat. Deceased was afterwards taken into the cabin of his own boat and left there, it is surmised in charge of no one. On returning, his mate found him dead and stripped of his clothing. Information was given to the police, and the deceased was removed to the Ince Mortuary.

Mr S Brighouse, county coroner, held the inquest on Thursday morning at the Walmesley Arms, Higher Ince.

Margaret Deakin of Lower Audley, Blackburn, said the deceased, who was her uncle, was 56 years of age.

James Henry Worthington, mate on the *Finch*, said they left Cunliffe's coal wharf, Whittle-le-Woods, with the boat, which was empty, about two o'clock on Monday afternoon, at which time the deceased was in good health, except that he was suffering from asthma. He had had some drink, but was not drunk. All went well until they arrived at No 10 lock, Ince, when witness opened one gate and the deceased opened the other, and witness had drawn the boat about half way out of the lock when he heard a scream which seemed to come out of the lock. Witness ran back, when he saw some men off a laden boat, which was about to enter the lock, with a boat hook holding up the deceased, who was in the water. The men pulled him on to their boat, and witness afterwards assisted to get him on to his own boat. At this time, the deceased could just speak and walk with difficulty. Witness led him into the cabin of the *Finch*, assisted by a man whom he did not know, after which witness went to his horse and took his boat to No 15 lock, where he moored it. He then took his horse to the stables at No 16 lock, after which he went to the Broomfield Inn, where he remained until eleven o'clock at night, and on returning to the boat he went and spoke to the

deceased, who did not answer. He then touched the deceased, who was naked, and found that he was cold. There was a fire in the cabin. Witness then went to the lock-keeper and told him, and Henry Sharples, the watchman, came up when he told him also. Sharples said he would go and look for a policeman, and witness went with him along the canal bank until they met an officer. Witness had known the deceased about two years. He was a single man, and resided with Henry Blundell at Whittle Springs. Neither witness nor the deceased had any drink from the time they left Whittle Springs to the time they reached Ince. He did not know how deceased fell into the lock, it being dark at the time.

The Coroner : This is a funny story, you know. You get this man out of the water, put him into a cabin – who stripped him naked?

Witness : He undressed himself.

Did you see him? - No, I had to mind the horse, and he said he was all right.

The Coroner pointed out that the witness did not say in the police statement that deceased told him he was all right, and then asked, “Did you see this man undress himself before you took the boat down to No 15 lock?”

Witness : No. Continuing, in answer to the Coroner, witness said that he did see the deceased about ten o'clock after taking his horse to the stables.

Inspector Ratcliffe said that in getting the statement of the witness he questioned him closely, and his answer was that he never was in the cabin at all.

Witness, continuing, in answer to the coroner's questions, said that the deceased had no change of clothes, and when he saw him he was in bed naked, only for the sheets, and when witness asked him if he was all right, he said, “Yes”.

The Coroner : He is telling quite a different story now from that which he told the Inspector.

Witness, questioned by the inspector, admitted signing his name to a statement and saying it was all true.

The Coroner : You needn't worry him Inspector Ratcliffe, I don't believe him. I won't believe him, if he swore twenty oaths.

Inspector Ratcliffe said that when he was getting the evidence, the man was very insolent.

The Coroner : He would like to be insolent here, only he daren't.

Inspector Ratcliffe said he told witness at the time that he ought to be ashamed of himself for his inhuman conduct in leaving the deceased in the cabin.

The Coroner : I suppose there is no legal obligation on you to do anything. If you like to be inhuman, we cannot help it. How this man got his clothes off, we don't know, we can only surmise that when he was taken into the cabin he had sufficient life left in him to undress himself and get naked into the sheets, and he had no other clothes.

Dr Chronnell said he had made a *post mortem* examination. The deceased had two leather plasters on his body which, he thought, had been put there in consequence of his suffering from asthma. The cause of death was haemorrhage of the abdomen.

The Coroner : And would that be brought about by the immersion in the water?

Witness said it would, and possibly also his being caught hold of with the boat hook, which had something to do with it.

The Coroner : Supposing he had had any medical assistance, would there have been any chance of recovery?

Witness : Everything was so much diseased that he wouldn't have lived long. He would have ruptured the aorta, so that he couldn't have lived much longer.

Henry Whittle, night watchman in the employ of the company, who lives in Elizabeth Street, Ince, said he heard some shouts, and on going to the lock, saw the deceased in the water, and a boatman named **Ralph Stopforth** was holding him up with a boat hook. They put him in his own boat, he being only just able to speak and walk.

PC Bachelor said that at midnight he was on duty on Rose Bridge, when the last witness came and told him there was a man dead on the boat *Finch*. On going to the boat, witness saw the body of the deceased in a nude state in the cabin bunk, a sheet lying partly over, with a blanket and a sheet

underneath. He removed the body to the Ince mortuary. Worthington was very far advanced in drink when he came to inform witness, and he was very insolent when being questioned about the death, and his statements could not be relied upon.

The Coroner : I should think his statements cannot ever be relied upon when he is sober.

In reviewing the evidence, the coroner pointed out that according to the medical evidence the deceased could not have lived long, if this had not happened. Of course, they could censure Worthington for his conduct in leaving the deceased as he did, but they must consider what effect it would have upon him, for he did not seem to be a man of fine feelings.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death", the foreman adding that the jury were of opinion that Worthington should be censured for his inhuman conduct.

The Coroner then called Worthington before the jury and, addressing him, said that the police-constable had stated that he was very far advanced in drink and was very insolent on the Monday night. The jury were perfectly satisfied that the statement made to the inspector in the first instance was true, namely, that after carrying the deceased into the cabin, he left him there and went to put his horse into the stable, and afterwards went to the public house and stayed there until he couldn't stay any longer, it being turning out time. Then he was very insolent to the police officer. That, however, was not a very grave offence. The offence he had committed was that of being so inhuman to the man he knew. "Supposing you and I were going along the road", said the Coroner, "and something happened to you in the same way and I left you, I wonder what would be said of me? There is our duty towards our neighbour, which is the most important duty after our duty towards God. Think of leaving this poor fellow in the cabin stripped naked, with no covering except a sheet – how would you like people to deal with you in that way? What the jury say, and I agree with it, is that you are not deserving to be called a man, and I hope this will be a lesson to you, and that in future you will remember that there is something else in the world besides getting drunk. Remember that you have a duty towards your neighbour. Let that sink into your mind. You can go outside now".

The inquiry then closed.

59 12 March 1907

SAD DROWNING CASE AT LATHOM On Saturday night, a distressing drowning case occurred at Ring O' Bells, Lathom. John Alty, aged 15, went to a shop close to home for six bottles of ginger beer, and having put them in his pockets, he hurriedly left the shop and proceeded in the direction of home, which lay along the canal bank. Shortly afterwards, a woman was walking along the canal bank when she heard a splash and a scream but, as the night was very dark and stormy, she could not see anyone struggling in the water. She gave an alarm, and after an hour's dragging with a hook, the body was recovered by a boatman named **William Abram**, and Dr Gardner pronounced life extinct. It was thought that the deceased in the darkness stumbled over a ring set in stone used for tying up boats.

60 12 September 1907

INCE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CANAL HORSES CROSSING THE ROAD Mr Kerr said that Mr Walters had referred in committee to the danger of boat horses crossing the road at canal crossings. He (Mr Kerr) happened to be a witness of one or two accidents at Britannia Bridge, Warrington Road. One woman in going to Wigan got knocked down by a horse which bolted on to the footpath before it could be seen. There was no one in charge of the horse. The woman was injured, and still suffering from the effects. He himself had also a narrow escape. On one occasion, he had to pull his pony almost to its hind quarters to evade a boat horse. There were many complaints, and he hoped the matter would be taken on by the authority.

Mr Walters said he brought the matter up because he was an eye witness of what might have been a serious accident in connection with Mr Kerr's horse. The man in charge of the boat horse took no notice of what was said to him.

Mr Percy said that the Canal Company had posted notices at these points cautioning boatmen. Anyone who saw boat horses straying along the highway should take the number of the boat and report to the Canal Company, who would deal with the boatmen severely. The company were as anxious as anyone to prevent accidents.

Mr Kerr said in regard to his own case he had the number of the boat. As regards the woman, she was so bewildered that she was glad to get away.

The Chairman said if Mr Kerr would forward the number to his clerk, he would write to the Canal Company.

61 9 January 1908

FOUND DROWNED AT INCE

GOING TO LOOK FOR WORK The County Coroner, Mr S Brighthouse, held an inquest on Tuesday at the Independent Methodist Church, Keble Street, relative to the death of a man, about 60 years of age, who was found drowned in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Ince on Monday. The deceased remained unidentified until shortly before the Coroner's inquiry, when he was recognised by a woman named Martha Seddon of Bird Street, Ince, as Richard Wild, hailing from Bolton, who had stayed at her house last weekend.

Giving evidence, Mrs Seddon said the deceased was her husband's cousin, and he came to their house on Friday last. She last saw him alive at 5 am on Saturday, when he left the house to seek work.

The Coroner : Where did he live when at home?

Witness : I could not tell you where he lived before. He has been in Manchester and Bolton. He came to Ince because he was out of work.

Has he got a wife or family? - No, his wife is dead. His son lives at Bickershaw.

Continuing, witness said that on Saturday morning, the deceased was asleep at her house. He asked her husband what time the "boss" came at Pearson's yard. He was a "horse man", and when told that the boss came at seven o'clock, he said he would go and see him about a job. He left the house to go to Pearson's, and would probably go along the canal bank. It was a dark foggy morning. Deceased knew the district very well, as he was an old Ince resident.

The Coroner : No one saw him fall into the canal, and the chances are that he fell in on his way to Pearson's. I suppose there is no doubt about him being your husband's cousin?

Witness : No, it is him, I am sorry to say.

William Pilkington, foreman bank ranger of 16 Canal Bank, Ince, said that at a quarter past four on Monday morning he was called to No 20 lock by a boatman, who said he could not get the lock gate open. Witness went there, and found the body of the deceased jammed between the lock gates.

Police-constable Ellis deposed to conveying the body to the mortuary. There were two wounds on the side of the head, which might have been caused either by his being jammed between the locks or by passing boats.

By the Coroner : It was dark and foggy on that particular morning.

A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

62 11 February 1908

BRUTAL ASSAULT ON A WIGAN MAN At Blackburn Police Court on Tuesday morning, **James Longton** (23), boatman, 28 Patterson Street, was charged with assaulting **Matthew Rothwell** of Wigan on the 5th inst. Mr J G Radcliffe prosecuted. Both prisoner and prosecutor are boatmen on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

The latter stated that on Wednesday night he was near the Hall Street lock, when Longton boarded his boat, pulled him to the bank and "tapped" him. As witness was pulling one of the levers to draw the water through the lock, prisoner again came up and kicked him, twice repeating this conduct as he afterwards lay on the ground. He had to be treated at the Infirmary before being taken home, and had to go to Wigan Infirmary from Thursday to Saturday noon. He was still an out patient of that institution.

Prisoner said he was remonstrating with Rothwell for damaging a boat, when the latter remarked, "Yes, and I'll damage you", and got hold of him.

The Bench regarded the assault as a very brutal one, and committed Longton to prison for a month.

63 9 May 1908

CANAL BOAT CAPTAIN'S END The death is reported of a canal boat captain named **Thomas Turner**, aged 36 years, of 24 Miny Lane, Wigan, which occurred at 7.10 on Monday morning. It appears that the deceased was returning to Wigan on the 28th ult, and when near Wigan Moss his boat struck, and he and his mate, **George McDonald**, got off to remove it. When the deceased arrived home later, he complained of having hurt his back. He was removed to the Wigan Infirmary, where he died as stated.

THE INQUEST The inquest on the body was held on Wednesday.

Rose Ann Turner, widow, gave evidence of identification.

George McDonald, boatman, said that when he and the deceased removed the boat that struck, the deceased he didn't complain of having hurt himself.

Dr Buchanan, house surgeon at the Wigan Infirmary, said he was called to the deceased, and he found him suffering from bronchial pneumonia. He said he had strained himself a few days before witness saw him, but there was no evidence of any injury to his back. Witness was satisfied that the deceased died from bronchial pneumonia.

A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

64 18 August 1908

MOTOR FATALITY AT LEIGH The first motor fatality in the Leigh district was reported on Monday, **James Didsley**, aged 43, of Brideoak Street, Leigh, having died at Leigh Workhouse Infirmary from injuries received late on Sunday afternoon. Didsley, who was formerly a boatman, but lately earned his living by selling firewood, and was very deaf, was crossing Brown Street, Leigh, as a motor car belonging to Mr Holden, The Firs, Leigh, and driven by his chauffeur, Edgar Righton, was coming slowly round the corner. The chauffeur sounded his horn, but deceased hesitated, and was knocked down. He leaves a widow and four children.

65 5 September 1908

CROSSED IN LOVE

LOWER INCE MAN FOUND DROWNED A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned by a coroner's jury at New Springs on Saturday – though one jurymen expressed the opinion that it was a case of "suicide through love" - when the circumstances attending the death of Alfred James Rowlands (27), a locomotive fireman, of Williams Street, Lower Ince, were inquired into by Mr Butcher, the district coroner. The body of Rowlands was found in the canal at New Springs on Friday.

The first witness was Alan Rowlands, a younger brother of the deceased, who said his brother was last at home on Thursday evening. He did not say where he was going. He came into witness's bedroom at 10 pm, opened a drawer and took out his cap. He looked at witness, but never said, "Goodbye", "Goodnight", or anything.

The Coroner : Was he in work?

Witness : Yes.

Where did his work lie? - At Springs Branch.

Was there any occasion for him to go along the canal bank? - Well, you are aware he had been keeping company with a young lady.

Apart from that, did he have any business up this way at all? - No.

Did she live up this way? - Yes, close to Monks Hall Ironworks, and near to the canal bank.

Had he told you anything throughout the week about his sweetheart? - No.

He didn't tell you anything about ill health? - No ; he had previously.

Had he ever expressed any intention of destroying himself? - No, sir.

Has he made any preparations at home – any arrangements as though he proposed killing himself?

Witness : No, sir, not exactly. We thought he had gone to work during the night, as he does as a rule. When we looked round we found that he had left his watch, a thing he had never done before. He had also emptied his pockets of all the money he had, even to 1 1/2d. He left a pen, and a packet half full of cigarettes, one partly smoked.

Has he shown any signs of insanity? - No, sir ; he was himself when I last saw him.

Is there something else you would like to tell the jury? - The only thing I suggest is he may possibly have come up to see his sweetheart. You are aware that the lights from the Wigan Coal and Iron Company's works glare all night, and he has been looking about one way or the other, anxious to see her, and has walked into the canal. It has been done. I am pretty well acquainted with that place.

A Juryman : The rumour is that the girl has been missing for two or three days, and that his parents were against him keeping company with this young lady. That might have upset him.

Witness : My parents were never against it. If anything, it was on the other side.

Another Juror : I think it was on the other side.

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER George Monk Jones, a grocer and provision dealer, of the canal bank, Top Lock, Aspull, said the deceased had been keeping company with his daughter.

The Coroner : I am sorry to hear she is in poor health ; is that so?

Witness : Yes.

When did he last come to see her? - Monday afternoon.

Were you present at the interview? - No, sir.

I think he was rather anxious to be married? - Yes, sir.

I believe your daughter told him her health was such that she could not marry? - Yes.

Did you see him at all that afternoon? - Yes.

Did you have a talk with him about it? - No.

Did you notice anything wrong with him at all? - No, there was nothing wrong as far as I could see.

Did he seem cheerful or otherwise? - As usual.

Was that after his interview with your daughter? - No, before.

Did you see him after the interview? - He bade me good afternoon.

How did he seem? - All right.

Have you or your daughter had any communication from him so far as you are aware? - Well, his brother said she had a letter. She has had a letter.

When was that? - On Thursday morning.

Do you know the contents? - No, it was Friday morning. His brother came up and wanted to know if he had been to see her the night before ; that he had not been at work. He said his mother went upstairs and found he had not been in bed, and she said Miss Jones had had a letter, because his brother was a long time writing upstairs.

What did the letter say? - The deceased said he was going to come up as usual at six o'clock on Sunday night.

Was that the only communication she had? - That is the only one I know.

Has she had any communication from him at all to suggest that he intended to make away with himself? - No. I asked her particularly about that in the last letter, and she said, "No".

Was he a welcome visitor as far as you were concerned? - Yes, all objections had been thrown aside for some time. He was a regular visitor to the house.

ENGAGEMENT RING RETURNED The Coroner (to the first witness) : Did you know your brother had written that letter?

Rowlands : Well, on Thursday he was upstairs getting himself ready, and had everything prepared to go and see his young lady, when a parcel came by the dinner time post. My mother thought it was a present, but it turned out to be his engagement ring being returned.

The Coroner : Why didn't you tell us that before?

Witness : She told him she didn't wish to see him again, and asking him to try to forgive her.

Mr Jones informed the Coroner that his daughter destroyed the letter she received from the deceased.

Rowlands : I have in my possession the letter that came from your daughter.

The Coroner, after reading the letter to himself, asked, "Who is the "she" referred to here?"

Witness : I fancy it is her mother.

Did you hear this letter read that Mr Jones has spoken of? - No, it was another brother.

Has he told you the contents of that letter? - All he said was that he would come up as usual on Sunday night.

Did you see him writing the letter on Thursday night? - No, but after receiving the letter he stayed upstairs a considerable time writing a letter.

The Coroner : I must say it is a very singular thing that this letter has been destroyed.

Mr Jones : I asked her about it, and she said she had destroyed it after reading it.

John Ashurst, a canal boatman of Mill Hill, Blackburn, spoke to recovering the body of the deceased from the canal.

Dr Cooke deposed that he had made a *post mortem* examination of the body. There was a wound 1 1/2 inches long running parallel to the left jaw, whilst the breast bone was fractured. Death was due to asphyxia, caused by drowning. In witness's opinion, the injuries were sustained after death.

The Coroner read the letter sent by Miss Jones to the deceased on Wednesday. The letter stated : "She does not need to bother herself any more, because I have made up my mind not to see you again. You will get over it in time, and I will get some friends perhaps if we go away from here..... I hope you won't write again, or try to see me, as it only makes matters worse, and I want to forget all about it".

The Coroner : It is an unfortunate thing that the other letter has been destroyed. It certainly ought to have been kept. It does not necessarily follow that something has been kept back from us. This letter does not prove that he has drowned himself ; it gives us some reason why he might, but it does not necessarily prove that he has. If it be true, as Mr Jones says, that he said in the letter he proposed coming up on Sunday night, then, of course, he wrote the letter without any intention of committing suicide – unless that was a "cloak" or something of that kind.

In a brief summing up, the Coroner said if the jury had any doubt, they would probably return a verdict that the deceased was found drowned.

The Coroner then took the opinions of the jury. One man indicated that he thought it was suicide, and the rest were in favour of a verdict of "Found drowned", a verdict accordingly returned.

The Juryman : I think it is suicide through love. It seems strange he was on the top side of the lock.

66 10 October 1908

LITTLE BOY KILLED AT ASPULL RUN OVER WHILST RIDING A TRUCK

CHILDREN AT PLAY A sad fatality occurred at Aspull on Saturday morning, when a little lad named Samuel Melling, nearly six years old, the son of James Melling, ironworks labourer of 8 Liverpool Street, Aspull, was killed by being run over by a horse and cart belonging to the Wigan Coal and Iron Company. From the report of the police, it appears that the accident happened at a quarter past ten in the morning, and the little fellow had left home half an hour earlier in the company of his fourteen months old brother and a boy twelve years old named Alfred Harrison. They had a small two wheeled truck, and they went into Withington Lane to play, but when near the ironworks deceased's father saw them, and sent them back. Deceased and his little brother were riding in the truck, which was being pushed by the boy Harrison. When coming towards Top Lock Bridge, a horse and cart laden with timber, belonging to the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, and driven by John Peter Aiker, was coming down the incline from the bridge in the opposite direction, and in passing near a turn in the road, the wheel of the cart caught the end of the truck and threw deceased out. The wheel of the cart passed over the right side of the head, killing the boy instantly. The driver stated he never saw the truck, and was surprised when he was told what had happened. Mr Butcher, the County Coroner, held the inquest at the Independent Methodist Chapel, Whalley, on

Monday evening. The inquiry was timed for half past five, but the Coroner did not arrive until an hour later, the jury being kept waiting.

The Coroner, on arrival, said he was sorry to have delayed the inquiry, but his lateness was due to the cotton strike. The railway company had altered the trains by handbills, and he left Bury expecting to catch a train at five o'clock at Bolton, but the train had been knocked off, and he had to wait until ten minutes to six before he could come on.

The inquest was then proceeded with.

Rebecca Melling, the mother of the deceased, gave evidence of identification.

Alfred Harrison said he was with the deceased and deceased's little brother when the accident happened. He saw the horse and cart coming towards them when they were going down the slope. The driver was loading the horse, and he whipped it up, and the truck caught the side of the wheel and knocked deceased out. The horse was between the driver and the truck, and witness was as near the sleeper boards on the side of the road as he could get. The deceased had one leg in the truck and one leg out.

John Hardman, a boatman, said he saw the accident occur. The driver was a good yard from his side of the road, but in witness's opinion there was plenty of room for the trolley to pass. The cart seemed to give a switch with the horse being whipped up, and the trolley was caught.

The Coroner : How do you account for the driver not seeing this little truck?

Witness said there was timber nearly over the horse's head.

John Peter Aiker, the driver, who lives at 20 Liverpool Street and is 20 years of age, said he didn't see the truck at all, and he had got twenty eight yards from the Basin Bridge before he knew what had happened, when he was told of it. When he looked up the road from Basin Bridge, the road was clear.

The Coroner : It is a hundred yards from Top Lock Bridge to Basin Bridge, and how could you come along without seeing the truck?

Witness said he had twenty three feet planks on, and he couldn't see. He didn't whip his horse, he added.

The jury then deliberated in private, and returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

The Coroner said the jury had returned a verdict that the death was due to accident, but there was a feeling amongst the jurors that Aiker was rather a small man to be in charge of a seventeen hands horse, and then there was likewise a feeling of the majority of the jury that the driver could hardly have been using his eyes as carefully as he ought, otherwise he could hardly have missed seeing these children. The jury did not say there was anything in the way of gross neglect, but they thought he had been unable, or at all events had failed, to keep a proper lookout. "You are only a young fellow", the Coroner continued, addressing Aiker, "and we don't want to do anything in the way of censoring you, because it might be a (.....) thing for you in the future, but let me advise you in future to keep a proper lookout, and remember that you have your duty to the people using the road as well as to your horse".

67 28 November 1908

UNDER THE CLOCK

WIGAN AND SITES FOR NEW INDUSTRIES The Mayor of Wigan is thinking out a scheme with the idea of bringing before manufacturers who may choose to build works in this country under the operation of the new patent law which will shortly come into force, the geographical and commercial activities that the Wigan district possesses as a centre for new industries, and in view of this it is interesting to note how excellently Wigan is situated from an industrial point of view. In the first place, Wigan is situate on the Douglas, and had the original scheme for making the river navigable for boats down to the sea been carried out, and facilities granted years ago for the setting up of new industries, Wigan might have occupied the place of Manchester as a commercial centre today. Then the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, which was a busy waterway before the coming of the railways, connected up Wigan by inland navigation with Liverpool and the Mersey on the west and the German ocean on the east, and even when the quicker means of railway transit was inaugurated,

Wigan was favoured by its situation. On 3rd September 1832, a line was opened to Parkside, where it was linked up with the early Manchester and Liverpool Railway. The length of this line was six miles, and £70,000 was the cost of its construction. Later, other lines were constructed, and Wigan was very soon connected by railway with Liverpool, Bolton, Preston, and in fact all the important towns in the kingdom, “thus”, as a writer of half a century ago said, “offering the greatest advantages to a town and neighbourhood with such a manufacturing interest, and abounding as it does with coal of the most excellent quality”.

LOCAL TRADE AND THE MEANS OF TRANSIT Had the Douglas been made navigable to the Ribble, Wigan would have been in direct communication with the sea, and would certainly have taken higher rank as an industrial and a commercial centre, and might have rivalled either Manchester or Liverpool in trade activity. Indeed, it can be shown that nearly two hundred years ago, local enterprise was stirred up with the idea of making Wigan the emporium of the north, and we are assured that had the ambitions of the promoters of the scheme been persevered with, Wigan would undoubtedly have been the most important town in Lancashire. But apart from the neglected opportunities of the past, the proper use of the present may lead up to a prosperous future. The means of transit that Wigan can offer for local trade today are in themselves good, but those, as a local business man with more than half a century of commercial experience to work upon suggests in a communication, may be greatly improved by municipal and concerted effort.

“I notice”, writes **Mr John Preston**, “that the Mayor and the members of the Wigan Corporation propose to bring before the country, and especially those who are or may be affected by the recent revision of the patent laws, the fact that Wigan is well situated from an industrial point of view, and this I think is a very proper work for the Corporation to undertake. We have seen the efforts that are being made by the Trafford Estate Co in Manchester to attract the firms who are or will be affected by the patent law revision, and having an earnest desire to assist in this matter by giving what information I consider may be useful to those who propose to take the matter up, I am writing you this for publication”.

THE COST OF CARRIAGE FROM WIGAN TO THE SEA “I do not think it is generally known what peculiar advantages Wigan has as an industrial centre, with its canal connections and the sea at Tarleton, adjacent to the banks of the Ribble. When in my business life I had traffic with my own boats on the canal, I gathered particulars of the rates and charges from Wigan to various places, and I now, for the information of the town's authorities, give what the rates were when I was in business. I do not remember that they have been changed. In the Lancaster Canal Act, the fixed rate for a 40 ton boat from any part of the canal, say from Writtle Springs to Tarleton, which would cover Wigan, was 18s, plus 5s for light dues, making the dues to the canal for the 40 ton load equal to 23s. A boat of that capacity would be hired for 10s, and the boatman who hired and took the boat from Wigan to Tarleton would require 40s – making a total of 73s. This would enable anyone manufacturing in the neighbourhood of Wigan to get to the banks of the Ribble at a charge of, say, 1s 10d per ton. I am presuming that arrangements could be made by the Corporation of Wigan and the Corporation of Preston to have means for transshipping goods out of the canal boat into sea going vessels. These would certainly be very much better terms than the Manchester Ship Canal could give, and should be a very great advantage to any firm who located themselves upon the side of the canal.

THE RATES FOR WIGAN AND OTHER LANCASHIRE TOWNS “Whilst dealing with traffic rates”, Mr Preston says, “let me point out another work the Corporation might take in hand, and that is the cheapening of the cost of traffic from Liverpool to Wigan. Warrington is half a mile nearer Liverpool than Wigan, but the rate for timber and other goods from Liverpool to Warrington is only 4s 2d per ton, whereas Wigan's rate for the same class of goods at present is, I believe, 5s 4d per ton. I myself had the pleasure of getting the rate reduced from 6s 8d to 5s 4d, but why should Wigan be charged 1s 2d per ton more in carriage than Warrington is charged? Don't you think the reduction of 1s 2d per ton would be some advantage to the tradesmen of Wigan, and to get such a reduction would be worth an effort? Whilst upon the matter too, I should like to bring before the town another anomaly which is going on betwixt Garston and Wigan. The rate from Garston to Wigan is 5s 4d per ton, but if a tradesman in St Helens sent goods from Garston to Wigan he would

only be charged, if my memory serves me right, at 4s 2d per ton. Owing to the old dock at Garston, and its connection by canal with St Helens, the people could get their goods carried by canal to Garston at 1s 6d per ton. When the L and NW Railway Company were first developing the port of Garston, an effort was made by the company to shut up the old dock, but the St Helen's people were alive to their town's interest, and secured a clause giving a perpetual charge of only 1s 6d per ton from Garston to St Helens. Consequently the St Helens tradesman shifts his goods from Garston to St Helens, and is charged 1s 6d per ton. Then he gives another order sending them on to Wigan, for which the L and NW Railway charge 2s 8d per ton, giving the St Helens tradesman 1s 2d per ton of an advantage over the Wigan tradesman. This rate wants equalising. But, after all, Tarleton is the most advantageous to the town if proper arrangements could be made with Preston, and the rate ought to have weight with anyone seeking a cheap rate transit to the sea from a populous neighbourhood with labour. In conclusion, let me say I trust it will not be thought I have entered upon this matter in a spirit of antagonism to the Corporation, and that what has been stated will be accepted as the experience and knowledge of a well wisher to the old town”.

68 12 December 1908

BOATMAN'S FATAL FALL **Ralph Walmsley**, 53, boatman of Lower Cophurst, Whittle-le-Woods, was killed on Wednesday night last week at the third lock, Whittle Springs, by falling from the towing path on to the fore part of the boat, a distance of about 14 feet. Deceased and **James Taylor** left Wigan that morning with a boat load of coal for Blackburn, and reached the locks about six o'clock. It was dark and foggy, and deceased took charge of the horse on the bank. When the third lock had been reached, Smith(*sic*) heard a thud, and called out to Walmsley, asking if he was in the water. Walmsley replied, “I am dying”. Smith got assistance, and deceased was carried to a cabin, but life was found to be extinct. Dr Maclean, who examined the body, found the left knee broken, the left ribs fractured, and one lung ruptured.

69 12 December 1908

APPLEY BRIDGE

CASE FOR THE CIVIL COURT At the Chorley Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before Colonel Widdows and a full bench, **William Fazackerley**, boatman, was charged with converting to his own use a horse, the property of **Thomas Holcroft**, boatman of Appley Bridge. Complainant stated that a fortnight ago his horse became sick, and defendant said he would take it to Burnley, and in its place lent him one of his own. Defendant then swapped it for another. It was worth £4 with the harness. After hearing further evidence, the Bench said it was a case for a civil court, and dismissed the summons.

70 19 December 1908

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT

BOATMAN DISOBEYS ORDERS A youth named **John Boardman** admitted unlawfully navigating a vessel on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, contrary to the bye laws of the Canal Co.

Mr Jas Wilson prosecuted, and stated that another man named **Carrington** with his boat passed a post 100 yards from the Henhurst Bridge Lock before the defendant, and was, therefore, entitled to pass through the lock first, but the defendant got alongside him, and the entrance to the lock was blocked, and Carrington's boat caused to be grounded. The lock-keeper ordered the defendant to take his boat back and allow Carrington to proceed, but he refused ; and that refusal constituted the offence, because in those matters the boatmen had to obey the lock-keeper.

Defendant said he wanted to go through first, because Carrington's boat was grounded.

He had to pay 5s and costs.

71 23 February 1909

CANAL TRAGEDY

GIRL'S BODY RECOVERED AFTER NEARLY FIVE DAYS The body of a little girl named

Sarah Jane Spencer (7), daughter of canal boat people living at Crooke, was found in the canal at Feniscowles on Sunday morning. During the last four months, the girl had been staying with her grandmother, Mrs Elizabeth Fairbank, 93 Bonsall Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn. After school hours last Tuesday afternoon, she went to play on the canal towing path with another girl the same age as herself, named Annie Higson, who lives in the same street. The girl Higson went home before her companion, and that was the last time the deceased was seen alive.

The canal was dragged from the Navigation Bridge to Cherry Tree, but no trace of her body could be found. On Sunday morning, however, a boatman saw the body in the water at Feniscowles, considerably over a mile from where she is supposed to have fallen in. Much of her clothing was missing, having, it is conjectured, been torn from her by the screw of a passing boat.

72 27 February 1909

BOATMAN DROWNED AT ABRAM A canal boatman named **William Foster**, aged 35, of 6 Spring Street, Aspull, was drowned in the canal near Doctor's Bridge, Abram, at 7.15 pm on Tuesday. It appears that he had been steering the boat *John*, and he intended to change places with **John Mailey**, who drove the horse, and when he was jumping from the boat to the canal bank he fell in the water. Mailey and a man named **John Spencer**, a steam crane driver for the Canal Co, tried to find deceased in the water with a boat hook, but a quarter of an hour went by before they recovered the body. Artificial respiration was then tried for half an hour, but to no avail.

73 6 March 1909

BOATMAN DROWNED AT ABRAM

A DANGEROUS PRACTICE The details of a singular drowning fatality were inquired into at Abram on Saturday morning, when the County Coroner, Mr S Brighthouse, held an inquest at the Britannia Inn, Plank Lane, relative to the death of a boatman named **William Foster** (35), of 6 Springs Bridge, Aspull.

John Mailey of 5 Springs Bridge, Aspull, captain of the canal boat *John*, owned by Messrs Crook and Thompson, Blackburn, said Foster had worked with him for about sixteen years. On Tuesday evening about seven o'clock, he and Foster were in charge of the boat proceeding along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal from Plank Lane to Abram. Foster was steering the boat, and witness was on the bank driving the horse. On arriving at Doctor's Bridge, Abram, they arranged to change places, and the boat passed near the bank so that witness could jump on to it, and Foster to leave it and climb on to the towing-path. The bank was about four feet higher than the boat, and Foster put his hands on it and tried to jump up. He, however, slipped back, and as the boat had left him, he fell into the canal. Witness ran to the other end of the boat with the boat hook with the object of rescuing Foster, but when he returned he could not see anything of him. It was very dark at the time, and he got on the bank and shouted Foster's name. A man named Spencer came up and took the boat hook, and found Foster's body after it had been in the water about a quarter of an hour. Artificial respiration was tried, but without success.

John Spencer of Scarisbrick, employed by the Canal Company, said on Tuesday evening he was sitting in a houseboat, when he heard the last witness shouting. He went to the place and assisted Mailey to look for the deceased. Foster was quite dead when recovered from the water. Witness's impression was that Foster had jumped from the back end of the boat on to the wall at the side of the canal, and had slipped back into the water.

The Coroner : Is it not rather dangerous to get off boats in that manner?

Witness : Yes ; very dangerous, particularly on a dark night like that.

The Coroner : There would be better places than that to get off. He would be able to walk on to the bank at some places?

Witness : Oh, yes. It is a very dangerous thing to do at that point, but I think it is one of their changing places. I suppose it is the practice they have.

William Foster, 92 Schofield Lane, Wigan, father of the deceased, gave evidence of identification. Answering the Coroner, witness said he had seen the place where the accident occurred. He added,

“It was not fit for anyone to jump off the boat there ; no one in their senses would attempt to get off there”.

A juryman said at that particular spot the canal was from seven to eight feet deep.

The jury returned a verdict of “Accidental death”.

74 28 September 1909

WIGAN COUNTY POLICE COURT

A CLEAN “COP” James Turner, a boatman of Ince, got on a canal boat and stole 1 cwt of slack, and when caught by a police-constable, said it was a clean “cop”.

He had no explanation to offer the Bench, and he was fined 10s and costs.

75 16 October 1909

A BOATMAN'S BRAVERY Mr John Chantler of Aberdeen Cottages, Blackrod, who holds the testimonial of the Royal Humane Society, has again distinguished himself by saving the life of a child who was in danger of drowning in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Blackrod. A boy named John Bradley, aged about three years, accidentally fell into the canal, and some children near raised an alarm. John Chantler was with his boat about 50 yards away. He ran to the spot at personal risk, jumped into the canal and rescued the child, afterwards applying the necessary treatment for the restoration of the apparently drowned with success. Superintendent J Wilson of the Bolton County Constabulary, has interested himself in the case, and placed the facts before Mr F Lomax, hon. representative of the Royal Humane Society for this district, who will recommend an appropriate reward.

76 6 November 1909

BOAT HORSE DROWNED AT APPELEY BRIDGE

MOTOR CAR ON THE TOWING-PATH

A FATAL NOSE BUCKET

ACTION AGAINST A STANDISH DOCTOR At the Wigan County Court on Tuesday, before his Honour Judge Bradbury, an interesting case was heard in which **John Sutton**, of Guild House, Tarleton, boat owner, claimed from Dr J H Wilson of Standish the sum of £25 as damages for the loss of a boat horse which was drowned under peculiar circumstances in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Appley Bridge, on 17th June last, owing, it was alleged, to the negligent driving of a motor car by the defendant or his servant. Mr Overend Evans, barrister, appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr J Cecil Owen, solicitor of Manchester, defended at the instance of the insurance company concerned.

Mr Overend Evans, in opening the case, said the plaintiff was a boat owner and a contractor for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, and regularly carried stores along the canal. On 17th June, one of plaintiff's boats, the *Henry*, was coming empty along the canal from Tarleton to Wigan for cinders, and was being drawn by an eight year old mare, which Mr Sutton had bought two years previously for £40, and which had been regularly used for this class of work. In coming to Wigan, the boat had to pass through the Appley Bridge locks, and a nephew of the complainant, **John Sutton jun**, was in the boat steering, while a man named **John Files** was leading the mare on the towing-path. The rope stretching between the boat and the mare was about 30 yards long. They had successfully negotiated the Appley Bridge lock when they noticed there was a motor car standing near the cottages there. This motor car was off the towing-path, and whether it had a right to be there he did not know. He took it that the motor car had travelled the length of the towing-path from the highway to the cottages. The chauffeur was seated in the motor car, and the doctor was apparently visiting a patient in one of the cottages. There was plenty of room beside the cottages, but the road narrowed considerably as the towing-path continued. The boat travelled all right until it got about a hundred yards from the lock, and then John Sutton, who was on the boat, saw the motor car coming along. It came until opposite the boat, when Sutton said, “Wait a minute until we get to where the path is wider”. For a minute the motor did stop, and Seddon thought it was going to be all right, but

it started again. The mare, which was perfectly quiet as a rule, hearing the sound of the motor began to be restive, and the man in charge of it put up his hand to stop the car, saying, "Wait a bit". The chauffeur, however, took no notice, but came along the towing-path, which at that place was only 13 ft wide, and dashed past the animal which, having already shown signs of fright, turned round to see what the thing was, and in doing so its hind legs got off the bank into the canal. The result was that the mare was drowned. The towing-path at the place was 13 ft wide, and allowing a foot on each side, that only left 11 ft for the car, the animal and the man. It was obvious, one would think, that there was the greatest possible danger of the animal getting into the canal if it were frightened, and the very thing happened that one would expect unless prudence was exercised by the driver of the motor car in abstaining from going on under the circumstances.

Mr Gilbert Wilson produced plans he had prepared showing the towing-path and the canal in the vicinity of the place where the accident happened.

John Sutton, the plaintiff, gave evidence, and said he bought the mare two years before the accident for £40, and he thought £25 was a very low figure at which to assess his loss.

John Sutton jun, who was on the boat at the time of the accident, also went into the witness box, and corroborated the statement of plaintiff's counsel.

In answer to Mr Owen, witness admitted that he had seen traps and luries going along the towing-path to the cottages at the place, but he had never seen motor cars. He didn't think there was any other way from Appley Bridge except along the towing-path for vehicles to get to the cottages. The nose tin was on the mare's head, and it filled with water when the animal got into the canal. The mare's head wasn't under the water, but the plunging filled the nose bucket, and perceiving the danger, witness got a pole and tried to knock the water filled bucket off.

His Honour asked Mr Owen if he contended there was negligence in having the feeding bucket on the animal's nose.

Mr Owen : I think it will be common ground that the animal could have been saved if the bucket hadn't been over its nose.

Witness, questioned further by Mr Owen, said he had seen a horse in the canal before, and he had seen it got out. But it was seldom that an animal got into the water with a bucket on its nose.

Mr Owen : You will recognise the extreme danger. The bucket gets filled with water and suffocates the animal. Hadn't you a boat hook to take off the bucket with?

Witness : No, the rules won't allow us to carry boat hooks.

What did you do to try to get the animal out?

We got a pole and tried to knock the nose tin off.

Witness, questioned further, said the mare got into the middle of the canal, where it was until it expired with the nose tin on.

By Mr Overend Evans : The animal only had the nose tin on when it was having its feed, and it was feeding at the time of the accident.

John Files, the boatman who was with the mare on the towing-path, gave corroborative evidence. He had never seen a motor car there before, but other vehicles had passed often, and the animal had never been frightened.

Mr Owen addressed his Honour before calling the witnesses for the defence. He failed to see, if their story was true, that there was any negligence on their part. At a point where there was room to pass, the motor car did pass as quietly as possible, and it was after having passed that the animal slipped into the canal and was drowned.

His Honour asked Mr Owen if he meant that the motor car had nothing to do with it.

Mr Owen said he could only suggest that the horse must have been startled somewhat after the motor had passed. Supposing it had been any other vehicle, a bassinette for instance, and the animal had taken fright, would the wheeler of the bassinette be guilty of negligence? He instanced also the case of a man ludicrously dressed passing along the canal bank. He thought it would be agreed that the defendants were reasonably using the towing-path, and that there was room for them to pass, and he didn't see how they could be guilty of negligence.

Dr Wilson, the owner of the motor car, said the car had been left just off the towing-path while he

made his visit at the cottages, and when he rejoined the motor the boat was in front, and the animal, which was about a hundred yards away, was on the extreme end of the towing-path. They came up behind the horse until they got to a place where he thought there was plenty of room to pass, the first indication of the accident that they had being a splash. The wheel width of the car was 4ft 9in, and it was 5 ft overall. Witness did not receive any warning from the boatman to stop until they got to a wider place. The animal began to go a little more quickly, but it wasn't plunging. If they had seen any indication of fright, they would never have attempted to pass. They made the best attempts they could to get the nose tin off with the pole they had, which was without a hook. He had constantly used his motor car to get to the cottages, having passed boat horses many a time before.

William Blackburn, the chauffeur, said he asked the man with the boat horse to wait and let the motor car go first, as he thought the boat might delay them. The man said something about not being able to afford to do that. Witness thought if the boat went first, they might have to wait until they got to the bridge to pass. If the boatman had put up his hand, witness would have seen him, but he didn't see him. They passed the mare at a place where there was room. The animal was just a little excited, going rather quick, that was all.

His Honour, in giving judgement, reviewed the evidence at some length, and said he was not going to say that the motor car was rightly on the towing-path, but he would assume that it was, and it was quite obvious that the canal towing-path was different from an ordinary highway. Unlike an ordinary highway, one side of the towing-path was dangerous. They knew that horses soon became accustomed to motor cars, but the first few times most horses were frightened of motors passing. This rendered a canal bank exceptionally dangerous for a motor car to pass along. It must be remembered too that the primary use of the canal towing-path was for horses towing boats, and he should say it must be clear to anyone going along the canal bank that horses there would be particularly liable to take fright at motor cars. He didn't blame the doctor, but he thought that both the doctor and the chauffeur were in a bit of a hurry, and under all the circumstances he came to the conclusion that that extreme care which he thought ought to be exercised was not exercised on this occasion. It was a dangerous thing to take a motor car along the towing-path, and to do so was to do it at one's own risk. It was said there was no other road, but the six hundred yards between the highway and the cottages could be walked in five minutes, and he thought under the circumstances it would be better to do this. There would be a verdict in favour of the plaintiff, and damages of £25 and costs.

77 27 November 1909

GALLANT ATTEMPT TO SAVE LIFE

CERTIFICATE FOR ABRAM MAN At Leigh on Thursday, the Mayor, Alderman W G Smith, presented the Royal Humane Society's certificate to William Jackson, 150 Talbot Road, Abram, and also to **Thomas E Evans**, 16 Chapel Place, Barton-upon-Irwell. He said the certificates were not for saving life, but for pluckily attempting to do so.

A Barton boatman named **Alfred Mason**, aged 22, went along with Evans to Plank Lane Colliery to have two coal boats filled. Mason went into the canal to bathe, the water being 9 ft deep. He got into difficulties and called for help. Evans threw off his coat and jumped in. Mason let go of Evans and fell back into the water, and Evans being exhausted himself called for help, and the man Jackson came up and jumped into the water and brought up Mason. Artificial respiration was tried, but without success.

The Mayor said he would have pleasure in paying for the cost of framing the certificates for the two men, and thanked them for their courageous action.

78 8 January 1910

CANAL PORTER'S DEATH

DIED WHILE UNDER AN OPERATION The Wigan Borough Coroner has had reported to him the fatal accident to **William Higham**, a single man aged 32, described as a canal porter, of 39 Miry

Lane, Wigan, which occurred on Sunday at the Canal Wharf, Wigan. It appears that about 10.30 am, he was engaged along with another man in lowering a flat laden with cloth into a boat by means of the hand crane. He was in charge of the brake, and it got beyond his control. The speed caused the winch handles to stretch out, and the right side caught him on the face, fracturing his upper and lower jaw, and when he staggered away, the left hand side caught his left arm, causing a compound fracture. Dr Graham ordered his removal to the Wigan Infirmary. At 4 pm the same day, the house surgeon operated on him, and whilst he was under chloroform he collapsed and died.

THE INQUEST The inquest on the body was held at the Wigan Borough Courts on Wednesday by Mr H Milligan, the Borough Coroner. Mr A Smith appeared on behalf of the Canal Company. Evidence of identification was given by the father, Thomas Higham.

Thomas Burns said he was working with the deceased on Sunday morning, engaged lowering a flat laden with cloth, weighing about 2 tons 5 cwt. Higham had hold of the brake of the hand crane, and as it was going too quickly, he turned round to speak to deceased, and saw him bleeding in the face. The crane had raced away with him, and he was caught by the handle. He was doing the work as it was usually done. Had it not been for the handle straightening out, deceased would not have been struck. The brake on the crane had always acted, but the damp weather might have affected it. The crane was registered to lift two tons, but such a crane would lift much more than that.

By Mr Smith : Witness thought deceased had taken too much of his weight off.

William Langton, a boatman, gave evidence in support.

William Peet, a foreman of the canal company, said he examined the crane on December 13th. The gearing was overhauled, and the day following he tested it, and found it in perfect working order.

Mr Sydney Park said he had examined the handles and the brakes in them. He found the iron of good quality, with no flaw or defect. He did not know anything about the history of the iron.

Dr Berrie, senior house surgeon at the Infirmary, said deceased was admitted on Sunday about noon suffering from shock. One side of his face was smashed, and he had a compound fracture of one arm. An operation was necessary, and whilst under chloroform he stopped breathing. Dr Graham was performing the operation, with witness assisting him. Artificial respiration was tried, but without avail. Dr Bullough administered the chloroform, which was about four drachms. Deceased was previously examined and considered a proper subject. He had apparently lost a great deal of blood before. Witness thought he died of shock consequent to the injuries. He was under the chloroform about an hour.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

79 3 March 1910

WIGAN CARTER'S SUICIDE

EFFORTS AT ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION

CONSTABLE AND BOATMAN COMPLIMENTED At seven o'clock on Sunday morning, a boatman named **George Lawson**, passing with his boat near the Seven Stars Bridge, Wallgate, saw a body in the water. He pulled it out on to the towing-path and sent for the police. Police-constable Hague arrived ten minutes later, and he at once tried artificial respiration. The officer succeeded in getting the man to breathe, and sent for the police ambulance. With the assistance of Police-constable Rylands, Police-constable Hague brought the man round to consciousness, and they removed him to the Workhouse Hospital, where he was admitted at 8.50, but died at ten minutes past two the same afternoon. The dead man was found to be Thomas Holme (59), a carter, who had lodged at 4 Clayton Street.

Mr H Milligan, the borough coroner, held the inquest on the body at the Borough Courts on Tuesday.

The first witness was Jane Beard, sister to deceased, who resided at 4 Baker Street. She stated that deceased lodged at Clayton Street, but on Thursday night he came to her home and stated that his landlady had locked him out because he had no money. He asked for shelter and food, and witness said that he could have both so long as she had it to give him. He had been out of work three

weeks, and looked very poorly and starved. He remained on Thursday and Friday nights, but at a quarter to eleven on Saturday morning he went out, since when she had not seen him alive.

William Holme, deceased's brother, gave evidence of identification, and added that five weeks ago, in consequence of his brother being poorly and getting into a bad state of health, he offered to take him home, and wanted to let a doctor see him. Witness explained that when in work, deceased's employment took him among the boatmen ; and he having got into a mentally rambling condition, was under the impression there was employment for him on the canal bank. Deceased had been out of work a fortnight then, but his employers had paid him his wages for the two weeks. Deceased only wanted money and drink. He was, when in work, in receipt of 16s a week, and as he paid 10s a week for board and lodging, he could not have very much to spend in drink. Deceased had been twice married, but there were no children.

George Lawson, boatman of Burscough, gave evidence to the effect that there were signs of life when Holme was taken from the water.

Police-constable Hague deposed to being called to the canal bank by the witness Lawson, and to applying artificial respiration until Holme commenced to breathe. He had the man removed to the police station in the ambulance, and with Police-constable Rylands continued the respiratory exercises for an hour and a half until Holme became conscious, commenced rubbing himself and looking round the room, but he did not speak. They then removed him to the Workhouse Hospital. Witness added, in answer to the Coroner, that it was a very clear but cold frosty morning. Witness could not detect the smell of intoxicants.

The Coroner : I suppose you are trained in the method of restoring animation?

Witness : Yes.

What method do you use – Sylvester's? - Yes.

Lawson was recalled and, in answer to the Coroner, stated that Holme was lying on his back, with one hand clinging to the coping, in from 2 1/2 feet to 3 feet of water. He was on the stone yard and not the towing-path side of the canal. He was moaning, and appeared as if he had struggled until fagged, and the water of the canal, which was very dirty at that place, was running into his mouth. The man appeared to be deliberately lying there, and made no attempt to get out.

The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide whilst temporarily insane", and the foreman (Mr Philip Matthews) said the jury desired him to add a word of praise for the officer for the way in which he acted in restoring the man to consciousness after he was removed from the canal. He thought such conduct was worth recognition.

The Coroner : I quite agree.

The Foreman : And we hope attention will be drawn to it in the proper quarter.

The Coroner : That shall be done ; if you had not mentioned it, I had intended doing so. I think the conduct of the officer was very praiseworthy, and he does deserve credit for the way in which he acted. Of course, I must also say something about the boatman ; he too deserves credit for the manner in which he got the man from the water, and the readiness with which he called the police.

The jury coincided with the Coroner's opinion.

80 18 June 1910

CHARGE AGAINST A BOATMAN

ALLEGED FALSE PRETENCES A young man named **Robert Hughes**, a boatman, appeared in the dock at the Wigan Borough Police Court on a charge of obtaining a suit of clothes by false pretences, value £2 8s 6d, the property of Robert Alstead and Co Ltd of Wigan.

Mr J C Gibson, who prosecuted, said that on the 17th January prisoner went to Mr Alstead and said his name was Robert Hughes, and he lived at 28 Pottery. His father was dead, and he wanted a suit of clothes to go to the funeral. He said he had some insurance money to draw, and that he had been recommended to go there by a Mrs Lawson. Mr Alstead told him it would have to be a cash transaction, and that he would have to bring the money the following day when he came for the suit. He went to the shop on the 18th January, and the assistant then handed the suit, but prisoner said there was some bother with the insurance company, and he had not the money. Inquiries were

afterwards made, and it was found that the address was wrong, and that he had no insurance money to draw.

Defendant said if they would give him a chance he would pay for the clothes. He had been in the Infirmary for ten weeks with appendicitis, and only came out a fortnight ago.

Robert Alstead gave evidence in support. He said he understood that prisoner had undergone rather a serious operation, and was out of work, and he did not wish to press the case.

Mr Ellis (magistrates' clerk) said that was rather what was influencing their worships.

The Bench adjourned the case for two months, Hughes promising to pay for the clothes.

81 25 June 1910

WIGAN BOATMAN'S DEATH The death is reported of **John Abram**, a canal boatman aged 56, of 16 Canal Bank, off Warrington Lane, Wigan, which occurred on Thursday evening. It appears that one evening in December last year, the deceased, whilst crossing the deck of his boat when at Leeds, fell into the cabin, the lid of which was open. He fractured his ribs, and was sent home. He was medically attended for seven weeks, and eventually was able to resume his work. On the 4th inst, however, when engaged in lifting some boxes of potatoes, he complained of straining himself, and said he had a pain in his left side. On the 6th inst, he came home from Burnley and went to bed. Dr Hodder was called in and attended deceased, but he died as stated.

82 28 June 1910

WIGAN BOATMAN'S DEATH

THE INQUEST The Wigan Borough Coroner (Mr H Milligan) held an inquiry at the Wigan Borough Courts on Saturday morning, touching the death of **John Abram**, (56), a canal boatman, of 16 Canal Bank, off Warrington Lane, Wigan, which occurred on the previous Thursday evening. Mr E V Clarke, HM Inspector of Factories, was present, and Mr A Smith attended on behalf of the Canal Company.

The widow said that last December her husband was brought home, and he said he was crossing another boat's deck to loosen his own boat in the Canal Wharf at Wigan, and the scuttle was off, and it being dark he fell with one leg down the opening into the cabin. His ribs were fractured, and he was attended by Drs Hodder and Blair. He was medically attended for about seven weeks. When he got better, he resumed his work, but always complained of his left side. He always complained of that when he "pushed a bit". Nearly three weeks ago, having been to Leeds, he came home from Burnley and said he had the pain in his side. Two days later, deceased told her he was lifting some potatoes a month since in Leeds, and went dizzy. Two days after his coming home, witness again called in Dr Hodder, who attended deceased until he died.

Dr Hodder said he saw the deceased in December. He had a fracture of the ninth rib on the left side, but under treatment he got better, and he resumed his work. Witness saw him again on the 6th inst, when he found him suffering from lobar pneumonia. The cause of death was the pneumonia.

The Coroner : Knowing the previous condition of the man, do you in any way attribute the cause of the death to the accident which he received in December?

Witness : No, I do not.

In your opinion, was it or was it not a death from natural causes? - In my opinion, it was a death from natural causes. The main stress of the pneumonia, if not the whole, was on the right lower lobe of the lung.

When pneumonia is set up by injury, there is a difference in the symptoms? - Yes, you get the symptoms of the injury in addition to those of the pneumonia.

In this case the symptoms were of pneumonia set up naturally? - Yes, there was nothing to connect it with the injury in December so far as I could make out.

Can you say what was the cause of the pain he always complained of? - I think it is a symptom very often complained of in cases of injury to the ribs, where the person's work is heavy manual labour of any kind. It is the symptom very commonly complained of.

The jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes".

Mr Smith, on behalf of the Canal Company, said the deceased worked with them all his life. He was a very good workman, and the company sympathised very deeply with the family in their bereavement.

The Foreman and jury associated themselves with the expression of sympathy.

83 13 August 1910

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT

BOATMAN COMMITTED TO PRISON An adjourned case came up for hearing in which **Robert Hughes**, a canal boatman, was charged under warrant with obtaining by false pretences a suit of clothes, value £2 8s 6d, from Robert Alstead of West View, Wigan. He did not appear.

Mr J C Gibson appeared for the prosecutor, and said that when the case first came up on the 16th June, the prisoner said he was quite prepared to pay if they gave him time, but from then till now he had not been seen, except the day after, when he was brought up for being drunk.

The Chief Constable said he thought the man went down for seven days.

Mr Gibson said Hughes had paid nothing, and he asked for a conviction.

Hughes was committed to prison for one month.

84 5 November 1910

BOATMAN FALLS IN THE CANAL

SATURDAY EVENING DROWNING TRAGEDY "He'll get in the cut", was the remark passed by Elizabeth Alice Rourke to two young men when she saw a boatman named **Henry Rotherham** (66) of 5 Seven Stars Road, Wallgate, who was staggering on the canal bank at Ince Moss on Saturday evening. He crossed the Moss Bridge, and when about ten yards past Pearson and Knowles' tipper he fell into the water. She ran to him, and found him floating on his back and waving his arms, and forcing the water from his mouth. He sank twice, and the woman shouted to a man on the opposite bank to be sharp, as he was going down a third time. He said he could not swim, and the woman then ran some distance and found a man near the railway. He said, "Go and tell the first bobby you see", and Mrs Rourke went and told her husband, who informed a borough constable. The man had then disappeared, and his body was recovered on Sunday afternoon.

85 2 January 1912

DEATH OF A BOATMAN The death occurred early on Saturday morning, the 30th ult, by drowning, of **Daniel Marsden**, aged 27, a boatman employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co. Deceased, on account of the present dispute, was on strike, and was a married man living with his wife, **Elizabeth Marsden**, in Ford Street, Burscough. He left home at half past six on Tuesday morning, the 26th December, to go to Accrington, from which place he had to work the boat *Edgar* to Liverpool. The boat is owned by his brother-in-law, **James Wilkinson**, and arrived in Wigan on Friday night, the 29th December, and at six o'clock, **William McAlpine**, another boatman employed on the *Edgar*, left deceased in the Wigan Basin, Wallgate, while he went for the horse. When he came back, the boat had gone, and on shouting he received no answer. He then went to look for the boat, and in his absence it was found near the warehouse in Wallgate, and deceased's cap and shaft were found in the water. Information was given to the police, and dragging was commenced, the body being recovered at ten minutes to one on Sunday morning by Thomas Fazackerley, and conveyed to the Mortuary by PC Whittle. There were no marks of violence, and it was supposed that deceased had fallen into the water whilst moving the boat with the shaft. In his pockets was found the sum of £1 7s 11 1/2d.

THE INQUEST

BOATMEN AND THE QUESTION OF SWIMMING The Borough Coroner, Mr H Milligan, conducted the inquest at the Wigan Borough Courts this (Tuesday) morning.

William McAlpine, a boatman employed on the *Edgar*, said deceased joined the boat at Accrington at 9 pm on Tuesday, and arrived at Wigan at 4.30 pm on Friday. The boat was tied up in the Wigan Basin, Wallgate. On Saturday morning, witness went for the horse, leaving Marsden on the boat.

When he returned an hour and a half later, the *Edgar* had gone. Witness proceeded along the bank, and found the boat near the Wallgate warehouses at Pottery Bridge. Marsden was not on the boat, but his coat and a boat shaft were found in the water. Witness gave information to the police, and the canal being dragged, the body was recovered the same day at ten minutes to one.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said it had been arranged that Marsden should push the boat off with a shaft, and he had got a distance of about fifty yards when he had evidently slipped and fallen into the water. The deceased could not swim.

The Coroner : I should have thought that every boatman would have been able to swim. Can you swim?

Witness : No.

The Coroner : I would have thought it would have been the first thing a boatman would learn to do.

Witness added that he had been a boatman all his life, and he could not swim.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

86 16 January 1912

BOAT WOMAN OF EIGHTY THREE

FELL INTO THE CANAL IN THE DARK

DEATH FOLLOWS SHOCK AND EXPOSURE Mr S Brighthouse held an inquest this (Tuesday) morning at the Ince Public Hall into the circumstances attending the death of **Elizabeth Bamber**, who was a widow 83 years of age, and died on Saturday morning from pneumonia following from shock and exposure in consequence of falling into the canal at the Chapel Lane lock, Wigan, on Saturday week.

William Bamber, boatman on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, said the deceased was his mother, and lived with him at No 1 Rose Street, Ince. Witness told how he was returning from Worsley to Ince on Saturday week, and about half past six o'clock in the evening, his mother, who was in good health, left the boat on getting to Poolstock Bridge to do some shopping, saying she would join the boat again at Chapel Lane lock. A few minutes after she left, he heard cries that someone was in the water, and then saw his mother brought up the canal bank by two women. They placed her on the boat, where she remained until the following morning, when she was conveyed home and put to bed. Dr Ainscow attended her until she died. His mother used to go on the boat, and she knocked about in the cabin and got their food ready. She was a very healthy woman.

The Coroner said that the deceased must have been a remarkable woman to be able to do this at eighty three.

Witness remarked that she was very "game".

Robert Howard, boatman of Burscough, said that about half past six on the evening of Saturday week, he was bringing his boat from Blackrod to Burscough, and arriving at Chapel Lane, he was opening the lock gate when he heard a splash in the lock. It was very dark, and on looking into the water he saw a woman. He got his boat hook, which deceased got hold of, and with the assistance of another man he got her out on to the canal bank, and she was taken away by two women. Witness thought that the deceased must have walked into the canal in the dark.

In answer to the Coroner, witness said that the opening of the lock had nothing to do with the deceased falling into the water.

A Juror mentioned that the old lady had only one eye.

Witness added that in his opinion, deceased must have made a mistake and gone round on the wrong side of the bridge.

Dr Ainscow said the deceased was suffering from pneumonia of the left lung when she came under his care.

The Coroner : Do you think this fall into the canal had accelerated her death?

Witness said he did, and added that death was brought about by shock and exposure. It was an awful day when she fell into the water, a day of snow and sleet. The cause of death was pneumonia following shock and exposure, brought about by immersion in the water.

The Foreman said he put it down to the deceased not being able to see, as she had only one eye.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

87 24 February 1912

WIGAN COUNTY POLICE COURT

STEALING COAL FROM A CANAL BOAT **John Carrington, Henry Abram**, Elizabeth Abram and a boy named James Yardley (for whom his mother appeared) pleaded guilty to stealing 56 lbs of coal, the property of Dean Weldon and Co, from a canal boat at Top Lock, Aspull.

Superintendent Kelly said the captain of the boat had gone for some refreshment, leaving the boat unattended, and in his absence Carrington and Henry Abram jumped on the boat and commenced shovelling the coal off, whilst the other defendants took it away. Both Carrington, who was an elderly man, and Abram, who was 37 years of age, had been employed as weekly wage men by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co.

Carrington, Henry Abram and Elizabeth Abram were each fined 10s and costs, and the boy Yardley was bound over, under the care of the Probation Officer (Mr Hudson) for twelve months.

The Bench called the boatman, and told him he had been very remiss in leaving his boat unattended for ten minutes. He was told not to leave it again without somebody in charge.

88 12 March 1912

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT

BOATMAN'S CRUELTY TO HIS WIFE A boatman named **James Prescott**, of No 1 Johnson's Place, was summoned by his wife, **Elizabeth Prescott** of 28 Wood Street for persistent cruelty.

Defendant did not appear.

Complainant said they had been married eight years, and there were four children living. She had to leave home. He could make £1 and his keep on the boat.

A separation order, with 10s per week, was granted.

89 9 May 1912

BARGES IN COLLISION

DAMAGES FOR WOMAN'S FORCED DIVE In the Liverpool County Court on Monday, **Elizabeth Kirby**, a widow, claimed damages from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company for personal injuries caused by the negligence of the servants of the company in the management of a barge on the canal. Mr Brandreth (instructed by Mr R Barrow Sierce) appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr Bodel (instructed by Mr R Mills Roberts) was counsel for the defendants.

The plaintiff was employed on the horse barge *Norman* as assistant to **Captain Wareing**, to steer, cook and do any other work that might be required, her wages being £1 per week. On September 16th last, on a journey from Wigan to Liverpool, the plaintiff's barge had reached Burscough when, about 2.30 in the morning, the defendants' steam barge No 32 came up behind, and with its bow struck the rudder of the *Norman*, causing the tiller to strike the plaintiff on the chest, thereby throwing her into the water, from which she was rescued with difficulty after she had sunk twice. The plaintiff developed congestion of the lungs, and on October 6th she had to go into the workhouse hospital at Walton for several weeks. She alleged that she was still suffering from nervousness caused by the accident.

Evidence was given by the captain of the *Norman* and a bargeman, who said it was almost as light as day at the time of the collision.

The witnesses, in cross-examination, admitted that the barge was not carrying a red light at her stern, but said they had never heard of a horse barge carrying one, though the Canal Company's bye laws made this precaution obligatory. They denied that it was a dark hazy night.

Dr Lucas of Boundary Street, Liverpool, having given evidence for the plaintiff, the captain of the defendants' barge said the night was dark and hazy. He was steering the barge, which was going at about two miles an hour. He observed the *Norman* ten yards ahead of him, and at once reversed the engines, but before his barge lost way she touched the rudder of the *Norman* lightly. He saw a splash at the stern of the *Norman* as if someone had fallen into the water. His mate ran forward,

jumped on to the *Norman*, got on to the bank of the canal and helped to pull the plaintiff out of the water. If the *Norman* had been carrying a red stern light in accordance with the canal bye laws, he would have seen her in time to avoid the accident.

His Honour Judge Thomas told the jury that the plaintiff was guilty of contributory negligence in not having a red light at the stern of the barge, but that nevertheless the plaintiff was entitled to a verdict if they thought the accident was in fact caused by the negligence of those on the defendants' barge in not keeping a proper look out.

The jury, after consulting in the box, returned a verdict for the plaintiff for £15.

90 22 June 1912

BOATMAN'S BRAVERY REWARDED At the Wigan Borough Police Court on Monday morning, an interesting presentation took place when a boatman named **John Murphy** was made the recipient of the Royal Humane Society's certificate on vellum for saving life, and also £1 to cover his expenses. The Chief Constable said Murphy was a boatman residing at Melling, and on the 3rd May he was on the canal bank at the Wigan Basin when one of a number of children playing near fell into the water about thirty yards away. Murphy ran to the spot, and jumping into the water managed to rescue the child, and there being fortunately someone near who could administer artificial respiration, the child's life was saved. One special feature of the case was that Murphy, who had no other clothes with him to change, had to walk fourteen miles in his wet clothes afterwards. Such conduct as that recommended itself to Englishmen, and he (the Chief Constable) communicated with the Royal Humane Society, and they had sent on one of their certificates, and also a postal order for £1 to cover the man's expenses for the day. He thought it was a testimonial to Murphy that he walked fourteen miles in his wet clothes. Alderman J Phillips, in making the presentation, said they had great pleasure in giving him that certificate and postal order on behalf of the Royal Humane Society, and complimented him in successfully saving that life. Murphy expressed his thanks.

91 29 August 1912

WIGAN LOCK-KEEPER'S PECULIAR DEATH

FOUND DEAD IN EIGHTEEN INCHES OF WATER

THE INQUEST ADJOURNED The singular circumstances surrounding the death of a lock-keeper named **Peter Cross** (65), of Sovereign Road, Wigan, were inquired into by the County Coroner, Mr S Brighouse, at the Ince Council Offices on Wednesday morning. According to the police report, Cross was employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, and he left home about eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, apparently in good health. He commenced work on a boat at Poolstock Lock, and about 9 am, **John Robinson**, a boatman of 144 Lyons Lane, Chorley, was entering the lock when he noticed Cross working on the boat. After getting his boat lowered in the lock, he proceeded towards Ince Moss until he overtook the boat on which he had seen Cross. He then noticed the man lying on the off side of the canal between the boat and the canal bank. His body was about two feet from the side, and was face downwards in about eighteen inches of water. Some workmen were close by, and artificial respiration was resorted to for some time, but without success. The body was then taken to the Ince mortuary.

Mr Moss represented the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company.

The Coroner said he was afraid the jury would not be able to finish the inquest that day, and he only proposed to call evidence of identification. From a conversation he had had with Mr Moss, some facts had since come to light which were unknown to him before. He understood that one side of the man's clothing was quite dry when the body was recovered.

Mr Moss : That information was conveyed to me ; I did not see it.

The Coroner added that having that information, the Company quite naturally wanted to know whether the man had died from natural causes or from drowning. That could not be determined without a *post mortem*, and he would therefore adjourn the inquest to get the police surgeon to make the examination.

Martha Cross, the widow, gave evidence of identification, and said when her husband left home he appeared to be in good health, and made no complaint.

Police-constable Wardle, stationed at Lower Ince, deposed to finding the body on the canal bank from whence he removed it to the Ince mortuary. In the pockets were 13s 6d in silver, 5d in copper and a silver watch, which was stopped at 9.25.

In answer to the Coroner, witness said the clothing on the left side was quite dry.

The Coroner said a *post mortem* was necessary to prove what the man actually died from. If they closed the inquest in that uncertain way and a question arose as to money matters, it would be quite possible for the Company to turn round and say that the man did not die from drowning, but from natural causes.

Mr Moss said the Company thought a *post mortem* would be more satisfactory to both parties.

The Coroner said he knew the Canal Company were not people who shirked their obligations. They would not be shabby or mean, but simply do what was right.

The inquest was adjourned.

92 7 September 1912

THE PECULIAR DEATH OF A WIGAN LOCK-KEEPER

FOUND DEAD IN EIGHTEEN INCHES OF WATER

WHAT THE POST MORTEM REVEALED Mr S Brighouse, the county coroner, held the adjourned inquest, at the Ince Public Hall on Monday morning, relative to the death of **Peter Cross**, a lock-keeper 65 years old, who was employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, and was found dead under peculiar circumstances on Tuesday last week. Cross, who lived at 8 Sovereign Road, Wigan, left home about eight o'clock on the Tuesday morning apparently in good health, commencing work on a boat at Poolstock Lock, and about nine o'clock the same morning, **John Robinson**, a boatman of 144 Lyon's Lane, Chorley, was entering the lock when he noticed Cross working on the boat. After getting his boat lowered in the lock, he proceeded towards Ince until he overtook the boat on which he had seen Cross. He then noticed the man lying on the off side of the canal between the boat and the canal bank. His body was about two feet from the side, and was face downwards in about eighteen inches of water. Some workmen were close by, and artificial respiration was resorted to for some time, but without success. The body was taken to the Ince mortuary. The inquest was opened on Wednesday morning last week, and after taking evidence of identification, the Coroner adjourned the inquiry in order that a *post mortem* examination might be made to ascertain the cause of death. At the adjourned inquiry, Mr Arthur Smith, solicitor, represented the canal company, and Dr Chronnell, the police surgeon, and Dr Baildon, who was present at the *post mortem* on behalf of the Canal Company, were also in attendance.

Dr Chronnell, police surgeon, said the inquiry was adjourned in order that he might make a *post mortem* examination, at which Dr Baildon was present on behalf of the Canal Company, no one attending for the relatives. The deceased, who was 65 years old, was, so he was informed, engaged pumping water out of a boat, and after having been missed, was found in the canal in eighteen inches of water. The man was said to have enjoyed good health, and the body was in good condition. There were no external marks of violence. The lungs showed evidence of old adhesion, and the heart was covered with a layer of fat. The aorta, the principal artery, was dilated. Behind the heart, the cavity of the pericardium was filled with clotted blood. On removing the heart and lungs, he found a rent in the back wall of the left ventricle, about half an inch long. The heart muscle was soft, and at this point consisted almost entirely of fat. The heart was in the condition described as fatty degeneration. The cause of death was asphyxiation, probably due to rupture of the heart.

The Coroner : Did this man die from natural causes?

Witness : Yes, sir. It was a very rare and most unusual termination of death, the witness added.

The Coroner asked if the fall in the water would be subsequent to the rupture.

Witness : Oh, yes. He was dead when he fell into the water.

In other words, if he had been on land, or in this room, or in the boat, when he fell it would have been the same, and it was simply a coincidence that the water was there for him to fall into? - That is so.

Did Dr Baildon agree with you? - Yes, sir.

Dr Baildon handed the Coroner some written notes giving information with respect to the type of case, and stating that it was a very rare occurrence.

Mr Smith mentioned that George II died from the same thing, naturally, as did the Emperor of Russia after being stabbed.

The Coroner : What is the rarity of the case?

Dr Baildon said there were very few similar cases recorded.

The Coroner asked Dr Baildon if he agreed with Dr Chronnel.

Dr Baildon : Absolutely.

Would it be a sudden rupture and a sudden death? - Yes, it would only be a few seconds in duration.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, to the effect that the deceased died from asphyxia due to rupture of the heart.

93 10 September 1912

CANAL BOATMAN'S FATAL FALL At an inquest held on Thursday evening on **James Draper** (62), a Newburgh boatman, whose death took place on Monday as the result of an injury alleged to have been received last November by falling off a horse during his employment, a verdict was returned that death was the result of injuries then received.

94 21 September 1912

BURSCOUGH BOATMAN DROWNED AT INCE

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE AT NIGHT

BOATMAN'S FALL INTO A LOCK The body of a boatman named **William John Trew Robinson** (21) of the canal boat *Olive*, from Tarleton, was recovered from the No 5 lock at Ince at ten minutes to ten on Tuesday night.

Deceased was the mate of the boat, and lived with his wife on the boat *Olive*, owned by **John Sutton**, boat owner of Tarleton, the captain of the boat being **James Barrow** of New Lane, Burscough. About half past eight that night, the boat *Olive* was passing through the locks at Ince, and it was deceased's work to open and close the lock gates. He had had that job for about three months. Whilst the boat was in the No 6 lock, the deceased went on in advance to No 5 lock to close the gates, and just as the boat was about to leave No 6, someone shouted from the canal bank to the captain to ask where the "lock dropper" was, and he replied at No 5 lock. The captain then went to No 5, and found one gate closed and the other open, and the deceased nowhere in sight. A search was made, and deceased's cap was seen in the lock, his body being recovered from the lock at ten minutes to ten.

Deceased was a strong and healthy man, and the captain assumes that the light from the Wigan Coal and Iron Works may have affected deceased's sight, and caused him to tumble into the lock. A deep cut was found on the right side of the head, and a mark over the left eye.

Mr S Brighouse, the County Coroner, held the inquiry at the Ince Council Offices yesterday (Friday) morning. Mr J H Glover of Liverpool appeared on behalf of Mr John Sutton, owner of the canal boat *Olive*, belonging to Tarleton.

Evidence of identification was given by **Christina Robinson**, widow of Burscough, who stated that she and her husband were on the canal boat *Olive* about 8.30 on Tuesday night. His work was to open and close the lock gates. The boat had started out of No 6 lock when she saw her husband go on in advance to close the gates at No 5 lock. She did not see him again until his body was recovered from the water about 10 pm. In her opinion, it was the light at the Top Place Ironworks which had deceived her husband's sight.

James Barrow, captain of the boat *Olive*, said he was present when Robinson went ahead to No 5

lock. Shortly afterwards, someone shouted, "Where's the lock dropper?" He shouted back that Robinson was at No 5 lock, and he received the reply that there was no one there and that one gate was open and one was shut. He immediately went to the lock, and could not find Robinson. On looking into the water, he saw the man's hat floating in the lock.

The Coroner : Do you think that the light from the ironworks would affect him?

Witness : I could not say. He had very good sight, but the light from the works does keep going in and out. He might have been running along the lock and have caught against something. He was a steady chap and never would have a drink.

Police-constable (?Chetter) deposed that he was present when the body was recovered. There was a mark over the left side of the head, and the left eye was discoloured. In his opinion, Robinson must have been crossing the top of the locks instead of going over the bridge which was quite near. It was a common practice for boatmen to walk over the top of the lock gates.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

On behalf of the owner, Mr Glover tendered his sympathy to the widow and family.

95 19 November 1912

YOUNG BOATMAN DROWNED The body of a young man named **Joseph Michael Cross** (19), of 16 Howard Street, Oswaldtwistle, was recovered from the Wallgate Basin of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal on Saturday morning. It was surmised that deceased was pushing his boat along by means of a boat hook, when the latter slipped and he fell into the canal. His shouts were heard, but owing to the dense fog at the time, his exact whereabouts could not be ascertained.

96 21 November 1912

FOG TRAGEDY AT WALLGATE BASIN

WHY BOATMEN CAN'T SWIM Mr H Milligan, the Wigan Borough Coroner, conducted an inquiry at the Borough Courts on Monday afternoon, relative to the death, which took place by drowning under somewhat mysterious conditions on Friday night, of a young man named **Joseph Michael Cross**, aged 19, son of Thomas Cross, with whom and his mother deceased lived at 16 Howard Street, Oswaldtwistle. Deceased was employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, and was often away from home for a week at a time, and was last seen at home on the 15th inst, when he was in good health.

Mr A Smith appeared on behalf of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company.

Mary Cross, wife of Thomas Cross, a builders' labourer, and mother of the deceased, gave evidence of identification. She said deceased would have been twenty years of age on the 21st inst, and had been employed by the Canal Company for the last four years, Deceased could swim a little.

John Vickers, a boatman employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, said he was in the Wallgate basin just before seven o'clock on the 15th inst, when he heard someone shouting for help. He pushed his own boat over the canal, and got on to No 285, which was adrift. Witness did not know what sort of swimmer the deceased was.

The Coroner : Can you swim?

Witness : No.

The Coroner : How is it you boatmen don't learn how to swim?

Witness : I'm freeten'd o' t' watter. (Laughter).

The Coroner : One would think you boatmen would learn to swim a little at any rate. I suppose it is a fact that very few boatmen can swim?

Witness : Yes, very few.

Mr Smith (to witness) : It was very foggy, was it not?

Witness : Yes, and the steam off the water made it worse.

George Fazackerley, captain of the boat No 285, and hailing from Appley Bridge, said deceased was his mate and had been on that boat about three weeks, but had been previously engaged on other boats in the company's service. On the 15th inst, witness left the boat tied up near the Wallgate warehouse about half past six, for the purpose of going home to Appley Bridge by train, and leaving

deceased in charge. Witness's idea was to return to the boat by eight o'clock, as they intended taking it to Manchester the same night. Deceased said he would move the boat along to the bottom lock whilst witness was away. As it happened, witness missed the train, and returned to the boat about half past seven, which was earlier than he had intended, and on arrival was met by the boatman Vickers, who said he had heard somebody shouting for help. Witness asked where the sound came from, and was told near the Pottery Bridge. He then got the boat hook and felt about the spot with it. They kept on searching the canal until about one o'clock in the morning, when it became so foggy that they had to stop. About twelve o'clock, witness had found the shaft floating in the water. After resting in the cabin until next morning, they started again, and witness found deceased by means of the boat hook, stuck in the mud at the bottom of the canal.

The Coroner : What is your opinion as to what had happened?

Witness : I fancy he has been giving the boat a start from the warehouse, and the shaft has slipped and let him into the water.

Further questioned as to whether deceased was sober, witness said he (deceased) was a very steady and sober young man, and witness had never known him to taste liquor.

The Coroner : Had he ever been in the canal?

Witness : He told me he had been in before, but had got out himself.

The Coroner : Can you swim?

Witness : Yes, every boatman should be able to swim.

The Coroner : A good many boatmen can't swim though, can they?

Witness : No.

Mr Smith said the basin was the very worst place the man could have fallen into.

Police-constable Bowden said he had been grappling for deceased from 7.15 pm to 9.50 pm the previous night, and next morning was informed that the body had been found at 10.15. Witness conveyed deceased to the mortuary, and after examination could find no marks of violence. Deceased was fully dressed.

In addressing the jury, the Coroner remarked that there was no reason whatever to suspect anything otherwise than that the deceased had met with an accident. The captain's explanation of how the accident must have taken place was a very feasible one.

The jury unanimously returned a verdict of "Accidental death", and expressed their sympathy with the relatives of the deceased.

Mr Smith said he wished to associate the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company with the jury's expression of sympathy. The deceased was a young man of perfectly steady habits – he (Mr Smith) raised that point because a question had been asked about it – and gave promise of being a very excellent workman in the service of the Canal Company, who were sorry to have thus lost his services.

The Coroner : Thank you.

97 18 January 1913

A BOATMAN'S DEATH

ALLOCATION OF COMPENSATION MONEY At the Wigan County Court on Tuesday before Mr Leresche, Judge Bradbury's deputy, Thomas Cross of 16 Howard Street, Oswaldtwistle, builders' labourer, and his wife, Mary Ann Cross, were the claimants in a compensation case following the death of their son, **Joseph Michael Cross**, who met his death by drowning on 15th November 1912, while working as a boatman for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company. Mr R E Sharples, solicitor of Accrington, appeared for the parents, and the company was represented by Mr A Smith of Wigan. The sum of £57 10s had been paid into court for apportionment.

Mr Sharples said the question for his Honour to decide was who were dependants, and to apportion the compensation money. The father, who was sixty years old, was an out-door labourer. The deceased was a single young man and lived at home with his parents, and there were now four daughters at home, all of whom had expressed to him their desire that the money should go to their father and mother.

The mother said that 30s a week was coming into the home, her husband only earning 5s or 6s a week on an average, and there were bills amounting to £24 9s 9 1/2d.

Mr Sharples asked that the payment awarded should be transferred to the registrar of the Accrington County Court.

Mr Brierley, the Registrar, said that the money was sent from Wigan by post in dozens of cases.

His Honour said that the balance remaining in court would be very small, and he asked Mr Sharples to approach the creditors with a view to getting some reduction in the accounts.

Mr Brierley said that creditors were very good in such cases.

His Honour allowed £1 a month to the parents, it being understood that Mr Sharples would try to make some arrangement with the creditors.

98 10 June 1913

CANAL LOCK FATALITY

BOATMAN'S DAUGHTER DROWNED A sad fatality occurred at Dover Locks, Abram, last Saturday morning, when **Jane Gibbons** (18), the daughter of a boatman named **John Gibbons** of New Lane, Burscough, fell into the lock and was drowned. Deceased resided with her father at the address mentioned, and on Saturday accompanied him on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company's boat *Maria*, which was conveying coal from Plank Lane to Liverpool. Deceased assisted her father through the Dover Locks, and then left him with the boat and went to the Dover Top Locks about 300 yards away to get ready for the boat to pass through. When the father arrived with the boat, however, deceased was missing, and thinking she must be in the water, he got the assistance of **Thomas Spencer**, a boatman, also of New Lane, who was loading a boat nearby, and he with a boat hook recovered the body. Artificial respiration proved unsuccessful. It is supposed that in shutting the top gate deceased missed her footing and fell into the water.

99 19 July 1913

FACTORY OPERATIVE DROWNED A factory operative named Annie McMahon (14) of 9 Brown Street, Wigan, was drowned on Saturday afternoon, whilst trying to walk across a lock of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Poolstock. The inquest was held by Mr H Milligan on Monday afternoon. Catherine Lannon of Melbourne Street deposed that, while she was going along the canal bank with the deceased, McMahon helped at the lock when a boat was going through, and then got on the lock gates and commenced to walk across. On reaching the middle her foot slipped and she fell into the water. The deceased was going to turn the handle at the other side of the lock, and she was told to go over the bridge to do it, but refused and went over the gates. **John Thomas Wilkinson**, a boatman, spoke to recovering the body, which was outside the lock. The girl had fallen into the lock, but had been washed through the "padlock". A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

100 9 August 1913

BOATMAN DROWNED IN THE CANAL

MISTAKEN HIS BARGE On Thursday morning the body of a boatman's mate named **Benjamin Booth** (55) of Ward's Court, Hunslet Lane, Leeds, was found in the canal in the vicinity of the block of warehouses situated at the bottom of Wallgate. At the inquest, which was held on Friday last by Mr H Milligan, Mr A Smith appeared on behalf of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company.

It transpired from the evidence of the captain of the boat 115 that deceased had been with them for three weeks. They arrived in Wigan on Sunday afternoon from Accrington, and left on Tuesday, and then discovered Booth was missing. He had gone ashore on Monday night, and was not seen alive again.

When found in the water, he had a coil of rope in his left hand, and the end in his right. It was identified as being from another boat.

The Coroner said it would rather look as if he had missed his way to the boat.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

101 16 August 1913

UNDER KEEPER FOUND DROWNED

DISCOVERY AT APPLEY BRIDGE The body of William Austin, an under gamekeeper, who until recently was employed on Lord Lathom's estate at Dalton near Wigan, was found in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Appley Bridge on Saturday. The deceased, who was about thirty years of age, had been missing since the previous Monday.

The inquest was held on Monday by Mr Parker at Appley Bridge.

Alfred Austin of Pool Hall, Nantwich, gamekeeper in the employ of Mr Thos Henry Hardy, Nantwich, stated that the deceased was his son. He was a very healthy and steady man. Witness last saw him alive in February last, when his son got the situation at Dalton. His son had written to him several times, and told him he liked his place very well. He excused himself for not writing oftener, because they were busy with the young birds. The last time he wrote was five weeks ago. As far as witness knew, his son had never threatened to take his life.

Edward Noy of Hawksclough, Dalton, head keeper on the Dalton beat, said the deceased was a very good man at his work. During the last three weeks, Austin had been drinking heavily, though prior to that he had been very steady. Witness spoke to him several times, but he took no notice, and he had to report him to the head keeper at Lathom, who also spoke to the deceased. As Austin still took no notice, he was discharged. About 4.30 on Monday afternoon, August 4th, the deceased came to his (witness's) house for his boxes. He did not say where he was going when he left. He was sober, was not low-spirited, and did not threaten to do away with himself.

Frances Rice, a girl employed at the Alison Arms, Upholland, deposed that the deceased called for a drink on Monday evening, August 4th. He was sober when he left, but he seemed to be upset.

The Coroner : Did he tell you what about?

Witness : No, sir.

Did you know him? - No, I had never seen him before.

How do you know he was the same man? - I have seen the body since.

Richard Grimshaw, a boatman of Appley Bridge, stated that at 6.50 on Friday evening, while loading his boat at the Linoleum Works, he saw something floating in the canal about thirty yards away. On going towards it, he saw it was the body of a man. He dragged the body to the side, and with assistance got it out of the water.

After concluding his evidence, the witness said, "I think it is a bit hard that I should come here and pay another man 5s to work my boat".

"You don't know what I shall give you yet", replied the Coroner, "I am going to give you something. I will look after you".

Sergeant Willis spoke to receiving information from the last witness as to the body being found in the canal. There was a cut on the forehead one inch long, and a cut over the bridge of the nose, both, in witness's opinion, caused by the propellers of passing steamers. There was no suspicion of foul play. In the pockets of the deceased were a pair of handcuffs, knuckle dusters, 1 1/2 d and some keys.

The Coroner : He was prepared for poachers, police, or anybody.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

102 2 September 1913

RESCUE BY A BOATMAN

BOY'S ESCAPE FROM DROWNING The plucky rescue by a boatman of a boy who was in imminent danger of drowning is reported, the circumstances being as follows :- It appears that about half past eleven on Friday morning last week, a boatman named **Thomas Bibby** of 188 Ince Green Lane, was in charge of his horse near the railway lock at Britannia Bridge, when he saw a boy struggling in the water near the lock wash ; the lad was fully dressed, and was in danger of drowning. Bibby at once dived into the water, dressed as he was, and swam a distance of some sixty yards before reaching the lad, whom he eventually got out of the water. Fortunately the boy

did not suffer any serious effects from the immersion, and Bibby went back to his horse, but after attending to it for a short time, he noticed that the boy had gone away. Bibby states that he lost 9s 6d and a pocket knife whilst swimming to the lad's rescue.

Enquiries made by the police show that the boy mentioned was Peter Dermott (10), of 29 Lower Morris Street, Wigan, and he was playing with another boy when he fell into the water, being fortunately noticed and rescued by Bibby, whose prompt action is deserving of commendation and recognition.

103 4 October 1913

ASSAULT BY A BOATMAN IN WALLGATE On Tuesday morning at the Wigan Borough Police Court, before the Mayor (Alderman Dickinson), Alderman Layland, Mr R H Wood and Mr W Reay, a charge was preferred against a canal boatman, **Peter Sellars**, of inflicting grievous bodily harm upon a woman named Elizabeth Harrop, with whom he is cohabiting.

Mr G Hardy, the Chief Constable, stated that on the previous afternoon, whilst Police-constable Wrigley of the County Constabulary was going down Wallgate, he saw the man near Clayton Street strike the woman deliberately with his fist and knock her down. She rose, and he knocked her down again. The constable went to the woman, and found that she was unconscious. She was carried to Dr Hamilton's surgery, and from there to the Infirmary, where she remained unconscious until a late hour at night. The woman now said he only gave her a push, and did not intend to hurt her, but he submitted some punishment should be meted out to a man who lost his temper, and knocked her unconscious in that way.

The woman now informed the Bench that that was the first time he had knocked her about, and she had had a drop of drink.

Police-constable Wrigley described the assault as he saw it while passing on a tram, and Police-constable Lowe gave evidence that the woman was unconscious when taken to the Infirmary.

Prisoner did not deny striking one blow. He said the woman had been drinking, and he wanted her to go home and get some food ready.

The charge was reduced to one of common assault, and prisoner was fined 10s and costs, and told that he ought to consider himself very fortunate that he was not sent to prison.

104 13 November 1913

LATHOM CHILD DROWNED IN CANAL Leaving his two year old son to play on the canal side while he chatted with some friends, **Thomas Varley**, a boatman of Lathom, later missed the child. A fruitless search was made, and then the canal was dragged and the dead body recovered. At the inquest on Tuesday, when a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned, the father said he watched from time to time to see that the boy was all right.

105 22 November 1913

BOATMAN DROWNED AT INCE

CANAL COMPANY'S TRIBUTE TO THE FAMILY

CORONER AND CHILDREN'S BAITING OF MOTORISTS Mr S Brighouse, the County Coroner, conducted an inquiry at the Ince Council Offices on Wednesday afternoon into the circumstances attending the death of a young boatman named **James Prescott** (18), son of a boatman named **William Prescott** of 6 Greenfield Lane, Litherland, whose dead body was recovered from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Ince on the previous night.

William Prescott, the father of the deceased, said the previous (Tuesday) afternoon, the deceased was in charge of the horse drawn fly boat, No 288, and was steering it down the locks at Ince. Witness was looking after the boat, No 232, which was two locks in front. Shortly after half past five, witness was told that his son was missing from his boat, and at a quarter to nine in the evening, witness was present when the body was recovered from the pool adjoining the 12th lock. Witness said he was able to swim, but deceased was not.

At the conclusion of the father's evidence, Mr Peplow, the general manager of the Leeds and

Liverpool Canal Company, and who represented the company at the inquiry, said he wished to state that that morning they had had a meeting of the chairman and directors, and at the request of the chairman, he had left that meeting to come to the inquest in order to express their deep sympathy with the father in his loss. The deceased had been in the employ of the company for the past three years, and was described as a bright civil youth and an excellent boatman. The father had just mentioned very modestly, in reply to the Coroner, that he could swim, but Mr Peplow could inform them that only in October last, he (the father) was presented by the Mayor of Bradford with a medal for saving life ; with a knowledge of that fact, they therefore felt added sympathy with the father that the boy who had been drowned was his own son.

John Carrington, a boatman living at 12 Liverpool Street, Aspull, said at half past five on Tuesday afternoon he was driving the horse which was drawing the fly boat, No 288, down the locks at Ince, and deceased, who was in charge of the boat in the stern, was steering. As the boat was about to enter the 12th lock, witness stopped the horse, and saw deceased leave the stern and set off quickly along the deck side. There was a strong wind blowing at the time, and as the boat came to the lock witness stepped on the boat, and then missed deceased. He got a pole, but could not find the body in the water, and then got assistance. In his opinion, the force of the wind had caused the boat to twist round, and the sudden jerk would cause deceased to be thrown into the pool.

Police-constable Reid said on hearing of the accident shortly after half past five, he went to the spot and commenced dragging operations, but as they could not find the body by that means, the water in the pool had to be run off, the body then being recovered and taken to the Ince Mortuary.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

CHILDREN AS MOTORIST BAITERS At the conclusion of the inquest proceedings, the Coroner said on his arrival the foreman had asked him how he was ; he could tell him now that he was very upset. He had come to that inquest from Wigan in a taxi driven by perhaps the most careful driver in the employ of Mr Timberlake, and when they were passing the Manley Arms Hotel there were two children, a boy and a girl, the latter being about six or seven years of age, standing on the parapet, but as the motor got almost abreast of them they ran across the road, and had the driver not pulled up dead, there would have been a serious accident, and perhaps a fatality. His (the Coroner's) heart was in his mouth. He did not wish to speak harshly on the subject, but he had been much upset by the occurrence. He did think that if the school mistresses and teachers could see their way to give a little advice now and then to the children regarding the danger of such actions, it might have the effect of saving life and preventing people being upset. The Coroner believed that nowadays children played a game in the street called "Last Over", and when a motor car was coming along the street they tried to see who could be the last to cross in front of it. Men in charge of motor cars had plenty to do without having that sort of thing to contend with.

The Foreman : And when anything happens the driver is blamed.

The Coroner : Yes, they say you have murdered the children.

Continuing, the Coroner said he was sure the jury appreciated, as he did, the action of the Canal Company in sending their general manager to represent them, and voice their sympathy with the father of the deceased.

Mr Peplow informed the Coroner that the Prescott family was one which the company highly respected, being all good boat people and excellent servants. In fact, the company respected all their boatmen, perhaps even more than the men themselves thought, considering the present times of strikes and labour disputes. By that accident, the company felt they had lost a good servant.

106 13 December 1913

A BOATMAN'S DEATH AT WIGAN

WIDOW'S CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION

RETURNING TO THE BOAT AT NIGHT Before His Honour Judge Spencer Hogg at the Wigan County Court on Tuesday, Mrs Booth, widow of **Benjamin Booth**, a boatman of Ward's Court, Hunslet Road, Leeds, was the applicant in a case under the Workmen's Compensation Act, the respondents being the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co. Mr Hans Hamilton, barrister (instructed by

Messrs Hind, Son and Burniston, solicitors, Goole) was for the applicant, and the respondents were represented by Mr W Greaves-Lord, barrister instructed by Messrs Vint, Hill and Killick, Bradford. Mr Hamilton stated that about 5 pm on Bank Holiday, 4th August, Booth, who was the mate, went ashore at Wigan, and that was the last time he was seen alive, his body being found in the canal two days later. On the Monday night, his barge was moored to another barge, and there was a barge between the two boats and the canal bank.

He would be able to prove that during the night the barge near the bank was moved away, and they could only conjecture what happened. The man was not familiar with the wharf at Wigan, and when he found that one of the barges had been moved, he (Mr Hamilton) supposed that he attempted to reach his own boat by pulling at the rope of another boat, and the reason for thinking such must have been the case, was that one of the boats was afterwards found adrift, and when Booth was recovered the loop of the coil of rope which had been attached to the two boats was in the grasp of the deceased. He did not think it would be disputed that the mishap arose out of the man's employment.

Henry Deakin, captain of No 115 barge, stated that Booth was his mate. He saw Booth go ashore about two o'clock on August Bank Holiday, and he saw him going ashore again at a quarter past five. When he left, there was a boat between witness's boat and the canal bank. When witness returned at quarter past eleven at night, he found that the last mentioned boat had been removed. Booth had been on a trip to Wigan before, but he did not know the wharf very well.

Mr Greaves-Lord : When he got a little money and had no work to do, was he inclined to go into public houses and get drunk?

Witness : Yes, he would get drink when he had no work to do.

By Mr Hamilton : On the Monday, Booth was all right.

John William Varley spoke to finding Booth's body in the water on the Thursday following August Bank Holiday. Deceased had a coil of rope on his left arm, and the loop of the rope was in his hand.

Richard Deakin, a mate, stated that he left his boat securely fastened on the Sunday morning, and on Tuesday he found it adrift.

Varley, recalled, was questioned as to the means of reaching Booth's boat, and added that the matter would present some difficulty to a stranger to the place.

Mr Greaves-Lord submitted there was a perfectly proper way on to the boat, and one which could be easily seen.

Judge Spencer Hogg : There was a proper way, and that disappeared. Finding the proper way was closed, he thereupon took other means to reach his boat.

Mr Greaves-Lord remarked that the man was evidently of intemperate habits, and the inference which suggested itself was that the accident arose out of Booth's condition. He certainly urged that it was going too far to suggest the man was taking reasonable means to reach his boat, because if there was a perfectly safe way, the man was not entitled to take a wrong way. By reason of its dangers, the latter way took him outside his employment.

Mr Hamilton urged that it was not certain that Booth knew the way referred to by Mr Greaves-Lord. When the man left his boat, the barges formed a normal bridge, and as it was not unreasonable to suppose the man was under the impression that normal means continued, he submitted the widow was entitled to compensation.

His Honour reserved judgement.

107 16 December 1913

INCE DROWNING FATALITY

BOATMAN'S LIFE SAVING RECORD Mr S Brighthouse, the County Coroner, conducted an inquest at the Ince Council Offices on Friday afternoon last week, touching the death of a labourer and married man named John Wareing (65) of 112 Belle Green Lane, Ince, who was drowned in the canal on the previous day.

John Wareing, an insurance agent, said deceased was his father, and witness lived with him. Deceased had been off work four months with muscular rheumatism, being depressed about it, and

being under the care of Dr Ainscow. At ten minutes to nine the previous morning, deceased left home after having breakfast, and said he was going for a walk, but would not be long. Two hours later, witness was called to the Ince Mortuary to identify the body of the deceased. Deceased had never threatened to take his own life. Witness was asked if a note found on deceased was in his handwriting, but he replied that deceased could not write.

William Ode, a boatman employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, and residing at 51 Leader Street, Wigan, said he was on the canal bank at Ince near the No 13 lock at nine o'clock the previous morning, and saw deceased struggling in the water, and deceased's overcoat was on the bank. Witness got a boat hook, and with assistance got him out ; he tried artificial respiration for some considerable time, but without success, after which he gave information to the police.

Police-constable Gaskell of Ince deposed to being called to the spot, and later to conveying the body to the mortuary. In the pockets were 2d, two tickets, two bills and the note produced, which read : "The name of the complaint is neuritis". The place where deceased was drowned was half a mile from where he lived ; deceased's overcoat, which had never been in the water, was found on the other side.

The Coroner pointed out to the jury that, although the man's overcoat was found on the bank, the jury had to be absolutely certain of their grounds before returning a definite verdict, and however suspicious they might be, their verdict must not be founded on it. If there was reasonable doubt in their minds, they could return an open verdict, but on the other hand if they were certain, they could return a definite verdict.

After deliberating in private for some time, the jury unanimously returned a verdict of "Found drowned", stating that there was no evidence to show how deceased came to be in the water.

It was mentioned that the boatman, William Ode, who had just given evidence, had now, including the present case, taken five bodies out of the canal, and this was the first he had failed to resuscitate.

108 17 January 1914

LEEDS BOATMAN DROWNED AT WIGAN

JUDGEMENT IN COMPENSATION CLAIM Judge Spencer Hogg gave judgement at the Wigan County Court on Tuesday in a claim under the Workmen's Compensation Act, in which the widow of a boatman named **Benjamin Booth** of Ward's Court, Hunslet Road, Leeds was the applicant, and the respondents the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company. On August Bank Holiday, Booth left his boat, which had been moored in a wharf at Wigan, and two days later his body was found in the canal, there being considerable doubt as to how he got into the water. The claim was before the Court in December, when his Honour reserved his judgement. Having reviewed the evidence which had been given, the Judge now held that the man's death arose out of and in the course of his employment. The solicitors engaged in the case agreed that the average weekly earnings came to 26s, and on that basis his Honour made an award for the payment of £202 15s with costs. He also directed that the payment out of the money should take place at the Leeds County Court.

109 17 February 1914

RESCUE OF A BOATMAN AT INCE On Saturday afternoon, a boatman named **James King** was walking across the lock gates at Rose Bridge, when he slipped and fell into the empty lock. Police-constable Winterton, who was a hundred yards away at the time, ran up and climbed down the gates, and succeeded in supporting the boatman until Andrew Howarth, a collier of Manchester Road, Ince, got a rope down to them, and after some exertions both were hauled up safely. The affair created some excitement, and the prompt and plucky conduct of the officer was favourably commented upon.

110 21 February 1914

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT

CRUELTY TO A BOAT HORSE **Samuel Bridge**, a boatman residing at 69 Croke, pleaded guilty to cruelly ill-treating a boat horse on January 23rd, but denied a further charge of assaulting a lock-

keeper named **Thomas H Whittle** of 9 Battersby Street, Higher Ince, the same day.

Mr J C Gibson, who prosecuted for the NSPCA in the first case, and on behalf of Whittle in the second case, said defendant was employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, and was captain of the boat No 206. On the morning of January 23rd, they were coming from beyond Britannia Bridge from Ince to Wigan, and at the bridge the horse had to be unhooked from the boat and taken across the bridge. Whilst being taken across, the horse started running about and seemed frightened, being caught and sent back by a foreman painter who was working on the bridge. Defendant hooked the horse to the tow rope again and then kicked it violently in the stomach, and not content with that, he then kicked it again on the hind legs twice, and in addition threw two stones at the horse, one glancing off it into the canal and the other breaking as it struck the horse. This was seen by the lock-keeper Whittle at the 21st lock, who shouted to defendant to stop. It was a brutal assault. When the horse was taken to the stable at night, it was in a nervous and frightened condition, and next morning it was found to be lame, so the stable keeper kept it in the stable two days. The NSPCA looked upon that case as a bad one. Regarding the assault, when Whittle went to the defendant and told him about his treatment of the horse, defendant replied that he would kick him the same way. He struck Whittle on the face and kicked him on the knee, and they grappled and fell to the floor, defendant underneath. The mate of the boat, however, came to defendant's assistance, and placed him on top of Whittle.

Corroborative evidence was given by James Heaton, a foreman painter of 58 Scot Lane, Newtown, Thomas Whittle, the lock-keeper, and an old man named Carrington, who amidst laughter described himself as a "horse marine".

Defendant said he did not kick the horse, and he only shoved at Whittle. He (defendant) had had a "sup o' beer".

The mate of the boat gave similar evidence, and remarked, "We was all tipsy". (Laughter).

The Bench considered both cases proved, and fined Bridge 20s and costs for the cruelty, and 2s 6d and costs for the assault.

111 16 May 1914

SCHOOLBOY DROWNED IN THE CANAL The body of a schoolboy named Sidney Frank Wright (7), son of a pedlar named Herbert Wright of 74 Caroline Street, Wigan, was recovered from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal early on Thursday morning. It appears deceased was out playing on Saturday last, and as he did not return, enquiries were made, but he could not be traced. On Monday afternoon, a girl told the father that she saw deceased fall into the canal in Chapel Lane on Saturday. The canal was dragged by the police, but the body was not recovered until a quarter to four on Thursday morning, when it was seen by a passing boatman.

Mr H Milligan, the Wigan Borough Coroner, conducted the inquest at the Borough Courts on Thursday.

In giving evidence of identification, the father said he had been to St Helens on Saturday last, and on returning heard that deceased was missing. He made enquiries, and a search, and reported the matter at ten o'clock that night to the police. Witness and others searched all Sunday and Monday, the canal being dragged by the police. At about five o'clock on Monday afternoon, a little girl named Annie Gray came and asked if Sidney was in. Being told he was not, she went away, but returned in a few minutes and said Sidney was drowned, as she saw him fall into the canal on the Saturday. The body was found next morning by a boatman, floating in the canal.

The little girl, Annie Gray, gave evidence, stating that she saw deceased running a trundle on the canal bank after tea on Saturday last ; deceased's trundle went into the canal, and he fell in whilst trying to recover it. She went home, but was afraid to tell her mother for fear she would beat her for going near the water.

Henry Gill, of 9 Douglas Terrace, Newtown, Wigan, a boatman employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company, said whilst coming with his boat under the Pottery Bridge on Tuesday, he saw the body of a boy floating in the water, and recovered it. Witness had heard that the boy was missing.

Annie Gray, mother of the little girl who had just given evidence, said the latter did not tell her she had seen deceased fall into the water until Monday night. Some people had been questioning the child, and then brought her home, and so witness got to know about it. Had witness known before, she would certainly have reported it, as she had children of her own. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

112 23 May 1914

WIGAN BOROUGH POLICE COURT, MONDAY

GREAT WASTE OF CANAL WATER

WILFUL ACTS **William Finch**, of 10 Albion Street, Aspull, was summoned for unlawfully interfering with the clough of a certain lock on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

Mr J C Gibson, who prosecuted for the company, said that about seven o'clock on the evening of May 11th, a man named **Green** was in charge of the boat *James*, and going down the Wigan Locks. When he got to lock No 17, he was doing the necessary things to enable him to get the boat through the lock, when defendant came on the scene and began winding up the headgate clough, and the result was that there was an inrush of water into the lock which prevented the boat from getting through. Green shouted, but prisoner took no notice, and when Green crossed the gate and got up to the man, the latter turned the clough back and Green returned. Immediately he did this, Finch once again turned the clough gates. That kind of thing went on for fifteen minutes, and it was only when the mate came along that prisoner left the clough alone. According to Mr Moss, an inspector of the company, the result of that interference with the lock meant a loss of 80,000 gallons to the company. Finch followed the boat to the 18th lock, where he interfered with the clough, and it caused an inrush of water. He took no notice of Green, and there was a further loss of 30,000 gallons of water.

The Chairman suggested that that would go to replace the other.

Mr Gibson said it was a waste of water because they were going down. On the 18th lock, Finch afterwards attempted to cross the boat and fell into the canal. After he got out of the water, he went for the boatman Green, who got him down and held him there until the mate came up. On Finch promising not to molest them again, they allowed him to get up. Instead of going away, he followed them to No 19 lock, where he was prevented from crossing by the mate. At No 20 lock, Green sent the mate for a policeman, and while he was away, Finch went for the boatman Green, who got him down and held him until he asked to be allowed to go, and said he would not interfere any more with him. Foolishly, Green allowed the man to get up, and the result was that Finch turned on the boatman, got him on the ground and kicked him in the face. He would have done further damage had not the mate appeared on the scene. The prisoner ought certainly to have been brought up for assault. The boatmen were afraid of the man and his gang, who were perfect pests to the Canal Company. It was only a few weeks ago that Finch served a month for robbing the Canal Company of coal. He seemed to get a living by pilfering from the boats. Interfering with the cloughs of the locks was a very serious matter, because it caused a want of water. Last year there was a shortage of water, certain parts of the canal being closed for nine weeks. He understood that this year the quantity of water was considerably below what it was last year at this time, so that it was exceedingly essential the greatest care should be taken in the preservation of the water. He was instructed to press for a heavy penalty. The penalty was £5.

Prisoner handed a note to the Bench asking for leniency because of his wife and five children ; a small fine would act as a warning to him.

The Chairman said they considered the offence a very serious one, and they would fine him 20s and costs.

113 4 July 1914

DROWNED IN THE CANAL Whilst walking along the canal bank near the Wigan Corporation Electricity Works early on Monday morning, a boatman saw the body of a man floating in the canal, and recovered it by means of a boat hook, the deceased being later identified as Thomas Makinson (34), a dataller who, living apart from his wife, had resided with his brother at Crown Street, New

Springs. Deceased, who had been out of work for several weeks, left home on June 24th, and his brother heard that he had gone on a canal boat with a man named **Harrison**, but later heard that deceased was missing from the boat which was then at the Electricity Works wharf in Wigan. Deceased's cap, jacket, muffler and clogs were found in the boat, but he was not discovered until Monday, as stated, having been missing for two days.

THE INQUEST Mr H Milligan, Wigan Borough Coroner, conducted the inquest at the Borough Courts on Tuesday afternoon.

Evidence of identification was given by Harry Makinson of 3 Crown Street, New Springs, brother of the deceased. Witness said that was deceased's first trip on a canal boat ; deceased had never threatened to do away with himself, and had no reason to do so. He had been separated from his wife about ten years, had good health, and had no worry except being out of work. Witness had been told by the owner of the boat that deceased had fallen into the water accidentally, although he had not seen him fall in.

James Mailey, a boatman, said he and deceased were on the boat *Edwin*, deceased joining it on the Wednesday previous and going with them to Blackburn on Friday night, witness last seeing deceased in the boat cabin at half past ten that night. Both slept in the cabin that night. Deceased was not employed on the boat, but just went with them on a pleasure trip. Witness first missed deceased from the cabin at half past two on Saturday morning ; he found deceased's clogs, jacket and handkerchief in the cabin, and his cap on deck about five o'clock, when he made a search for deceased. Witness, not finding him, thought he had got into the water, and felt around the boat with a boat hook for him, but could not find him. Deceased had been with them the week before on another trip, and had known witness a long time. Deceased was quite sober that night.

Thomas Edwards, employed by the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, said he was taking two boats into the Wigan Electricity Works about half past seven on Saturday morning, when he saw the body floating in the canal. Witness recovered it, and sent for the police. Deceased had neither clogs nor jacket on.

Police-constable Whittle deposed to having examined the body of the deceased, and said there were no marks of violence on it.

The jury unanimously returned a verdict of "Accidental death by drowning".

114 25 August 1914

LAD'S SINGULAR DEATH ON THE CANAL BANK

THE CORONER'S POOR BOX On Monday evening Mr S Brighthouse, County Coroner, held an inquest at the Ince Council Offices regarding the death of John James Wynne, a boy twelve years of age, which occurred on Saturday morning on the canal bank at Ince, as the result of a singular accident. **Mr Moss**, Inspector for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co, was present at the inquiry.

Mary Jane Wynne, the mother of the boy, living at 61 Leeds Street, Top Lock, New Springs, said deceased left home at ten o'clock on Saturday morning, saying he was going to see his aunt at Ince. He was then in good health. She never again saw him alive.

James Kershaw, a boatman, who until recently lived at 57 Bolton Street, Ince, said that about a quarter to eleven on Saturday morning, he was in charge of a fly boat proceeding down the locks at Ince. The boat was drawn by a horse. He had just started to open the lock gates of the North Lock, when a passing train frightened the horse, which pulled at the boat and caused it to bump into the lock gate, which closed quickly. At this time the lock was being emptied, and the boat was in it. Witness had not noticed the lad about the gates, but he saw something was not right, and he crossed from the towing-path to the other side, and found the lad lying on the ground. He had been between the arm of the lock gate and the stop block, and he was terribly crushed about the head. In witness's opinion, the boy must have been swinging on the arm of the gate, and become jammed against the stop block. Witness did what he could, and sent for the police. The boy died a few minutes later. Witness went for one doctor, who was not in, and another doctor refused to come.

In reply to the Coroner, Inspector Campbell said the deceased would be a good half mile from his home, and he understood the boy was always about the lock gates.

Sergeant (?Anson) said he received information of the occurrence about eleven o'clock on Saturday morning, and he found deceased being attended to by the last witness. He was alive, but unconscious, and crushed about the head. Blood was on the arm of the lock gate and the stop block. He died on the canal bank, and the body was removed to the mortuary. Deceased must have been on the arm of the lock gate, and when the swing came, he slipped off and his head was crushed.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

A Juryman complained that a doctor would not come when asked.

The Coroner said a doctor was not bound to go.

A Juror : They always ask who is going to pay, who is going to find the money.

The foreman said if there was no law to compel a doctor to attend they could not say anything.

The father of the deceased was called into the room, and said he had three more children, aged 8 months, 5 years and 11 years.

Inspector Campbell said the man was very respectable, but in poor circumstances.

The Coroner : Suppose I give you a couple of pounds out of my poor box, will it be of assistance to you?

Wynne : I shall be very thankful to you.

The Coroner : You are welcome. We must try to do something for one another in this world. It is the police we are indebted to for this money, because it is from the sports.

The Foreman : It is well spent.

115 14 November 1914

SUICIDE OF A SERVANT GIRL

DROWNED IN THE CANAL AT INCE Mr F A Jones, Deputy County Coroner, held an inquest at the Ince Public Hall on Thursday, relative to the death of Nellie Gill, a domestic servant, 21 years old, of 180 Frog Lane, Wigan, who was drowned on Tuesday morning in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

Ellen Gill, wife of Samson Gill, engineers' labourer, of 180 Frog Lane, said the deceased, who was her daughter, was a servant up to Saturday last with Mr Leather, who had an off licence in Darlington Street, when she obtained a few days' leave to go and look after her sister, who was in a delicate state of health. The deceased had been unwell for some months, and this seemed to have affected her health, and at times she was very strange in her manner, and if she could not get just what she wanted she would threaten to poison herself. About eight weeks ago, she went to see Dr Blakemoor at Atherton, who prescribed for her, but deceased still continued to be depressed. About half past seven on Monday night, deceased called at witness's house, but only stayed a minute or two. They had very little conversation, and when her daughter left, witness understood she was going to Mr Leather's house.

Thomas Leather, off licence holder of 104 Darlington Street, said the deceased entered their service in July last, and for some time lately had appeared strange in her manner and depressed. On Saturday, she obtained a fortnight's leave to look after her sister, but about nine o'clock on Monday night she returned and said her sister might not require her for another fortnight. She appeared depressed at supper, and went to bed at eleven o'clock. On the following morning, he heard her going downstairs and called to her asking what time it was, and she replied that it was about half past seven. Shortly afterwards he heard the side door clasp, and as she did not return he thought her sister had sent for her. At nine o'clock he went to her mother's and sister's houses to make enquiries if she had arrived at either place, and as she was not there, he communicated with the police. The place where she was drowned in the canal was about three hundred yards from witness's house.

Thomas Dutton, boatman of 3 Liverpool Street, Top Lock, Aspull, who is employed on the boat *Defiance* by Messrs Crook and Thompson, coal merchants of Blackburn, said that about 7.50 on Tuesday morning he was in the 19th lock of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Ince, his boat going in the direction of Wigan, when he was informed by a boy that a woman was in the pool. He took a boat hook and ran down the bank, which was about fifty yards from the lock, and he saw the deceased holding up her hand in the water. He tried to reach her with the boat hook, but was unable

to do so, and called to the captain of the boat to bring a hauling line. This he threw to her, but she sank. As the boat passed over the place, it brought deceased to the surface, and with assistance he got her on to the bank, she being quite dead. The body was fully dressed except the clogs, which were on the bank.

Thomas Adshead, goods porter in the employ of the Great Central Railway Co, and living at 30 Wood Street, Wigan, deposed to assisting to recover the body.

The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide whilst of unsound mind".

116 26 December 1914

STANDISH POLICE COURT, WEDNESDAY

MIDNIGHT ASSAULT ON A CANAL BOAT A middle aged boatman named **John Foster** summoned two other boatmen named **Thomas Ollerton** and **Peter Ashcroft**, both of Newburgh, for assaulting him on the night of Monday the 14th inst. Ollerton, a young man, appeared, but Ashcroft did not appear.

Mr J C Gibson, for the complainant, said all those men were boatmen employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company. The complainant Foster was at the present time stationed at Appley Lock, Appley Bridge, and was engaged in looking after some canal boats which were not at present in use. He and his wife and children slept on one of the boats there. The two defendants were mates on other boats. On the night of the 14th inst, Foster and his family were retiring to bed on their boat when they were disturbed by another boat colliding with theirs, and also immediately after heard strong language and footsteps on their deck. Foster dressed himself and went up to the deck, and saw the defendants trying to get complainant's boat from the outer to the inner lock. There were some four boats attached to a steamer and on their way to Liverpool, and it was with those that defendants were. They had mistaken the outer lock for the inner lock owing to their having had too much drink. Foster helped them to pass through the right channel, and defendants again began bothering, Ollerton striking Foster in the chest. They got to grips, and Ashcroft came and struck Foster a blow with his fist behind the left ear, causing it to bleed. Mrs Foster, who had been dressing, was just in time to see that blow struck, and told Ashcroft not to "two him". Ashcroft then got hold of an iron stanchion, and threatened to chop Foster's ----- head off, but fortunately refrained from attempting it. Foster was taken into his own cabin in a dazed condition, and his ear was bathed. Mr Gibson added that, in fairness to the two defendants, he wished to say that they did come to the cabin and express their regret for what they had done, but when Mrs Foster said she would have to report the matter, Ollerton said there would be bigger bother. If these men were of a fighting disposition, Mr Gibson thought the Bench would agree that there was plenty of scope for them elsewhere without assaulting a man old enough to be their father, and in their own country. He hoped the Bench would deal with the men in such a way as to deter them from similar conduct in future.

The complainant Foster bore out his solicitor's statement.

The Defendant Ollerton : I don't remember anything that I said or that happened that night. We (he and Ashcroft) were both drunk, and had never been drunk before. It is the first time anything like that has happened with me, and I am very sorry that it did happen.

The Bench fined Ollerton 5s and costs, and in the case of Ashcroft imposed a fine of 7s 6d and costs, as he had not appeared at court. Advocate's fee was also allowed.

117 31 December 1914

BOATMAN DROWNED ON CHRISTMAS EVE The body of **Joseph Bootle**, a single man 50 years old, of 95 Manchester Road, Ince, was recovered from the 19th pool of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Ince at half past eleven on the morning of Christmas Day. It appears deceased was employed as a boatman on the boat *Margaret* by **Jesse Boardman**, the captain, and about six o'clock on Christmas Eve, Boardman and the deceased tied the boat up in the 19th pool, Boardman instructing the deceased to tidy up the boat and boil the kettle for tea, while he stabled the horse at the Navigation Inn close by. Deceased was then on the canal bank close to the boat, and on

Boardman returning, he was informed that someone had fallen into the canal. Being unable to find deceased on the boat, he then got the boat hook and commenced to drag the canal. Information was given to the police, who also began dragging operations, but owing to the night being dark and foggy, the operations had to be suspended until the following day. On Christmas morning the body was recovered about ten yards from the boat, and conveyed to the Ince mortuary. The deceased is said to have been a steady man and attentive to his work, and he would appear to have fallen into the water owing to the night being dark and foggy.

THE INQUEST Mr S Brighthouse, the County Coroner, conducted the inquest at the Ince Council Offices on Tuesday morning.

Elizabeth Orrell of 95 Manchester Road, Higher Ince, a married sister of the deceased, gave evidence of identification, stating that he had been a boatman nearly all his life ; he was 50 years of age and was employed on the boat *Margaret* on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Witness last saw him alive at seven o'clock on Thursday last week, when he called at her house, and identified his dead body at the mortuary on Christmas Day. He spent his time either on the boat or at her house.

Jesse Boardman, captain of the boat *Margaret*, and residing at 11 Long Row, Botley, said deceased was employed by him. At 6 pm on Christmas Eve, they tied the boat up in the 19th pool at Ince, the night being very foggy. Witness told deceased to tie the boat up and put the kettle on for tea, whilst he went and stabled the horse at the Navigation Inn, but when witness returned to the boat, a woman on a boat at the other side of the canal said she had heard a splash. Witness found one end of the boat rope on the bank and the other in the water. Deceased was very steady and attentive to his work, and was perfectly sober at the time ; witness thought deceased must have fallen over the boat's bows.

Police-constable Wolfendale deposed to receiving information of the case at seven o'clock on Thursday evening, and grappling operations were commenced, but owing to the fog these had to be suspended and resumed on Christmas morning, the body being recovered at 11 30 am. It was fully dressed, with the exception of the cap, and there were no marks of violence or suspicion of foul play.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

118 15 April 1915

BOATMAN'S SAD END The death is reported of **Robert Cheetham**, a boatman aged 69 years of 36 Pottery Road, Wigan. The deceased was a widower and lived with his married daughter. On Wednesday he was found hanging by a rope tied to a beam in the closet, and was quite dead.

119 11 January 1916

WIGAN COUNTY POLICE COURT, FRIDAY

CANAL BOATMAN FINED A boatman named **Thomas Boardman** of 11 Warrington Road, Lower Ince, and employed by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co, pleaded guilty to a breach of the company's bye laws by obstructing the passage of a lock with his boat. Mr J C Gibson prosecuted. After hearing the circumstances, the Bench imposed a fine of 10s, and also ordered defendant to pay 20s costs.

120 29 January 1916

A HORSE TRANSACTION

SEQUEL IN THE COUNTY COURT Before His Honour Judge Spencer Hogg at the Wigan County Court on Tuesday, a case was down for hearing in which **Jonathan Johnson**, canal boatman of 5 Norfolk Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, sued Israel Ratcliffe, horse dealer and fruit salesman of 49 Queen Street, Wigan, in respect of the sale of a horse. The plaintiff claimed damages from the defendant for alleged breach of warranty on the sale of a certain horse on 13th December 1915 which, it was stated in the plaintiff's statement of claim, was found to be unworkable and useless for the purpose for which it was sold, and warranted by the defendant to the plaintiff. Alternatively, the plaintiff claimed damages for alleged false representation. The plaintiff

claimed £14 6s in all, £8 10s in respect of the horse, and £7 16s in respect of the loss alleged to have been suffered by him in being unable to undertake three journeys with a canal boat between Edge Green and Blackburn and back at £2 12s each. Mr J Hopwood Sayer appeared for the plaintiff and the defendant was represented by Mr J C Gibson.

Mr Sayer, on the case being reached, said he and his friend, Mr Gibson, had settled the claim for £8 10s with costs on that amount, payable by instalments of £1 a month.

His Honour, under the circumstances, said there would be judgement by consent for plaintiff for £8 10s with costs on that sum, the money to be paid at the rate of £1 a month.

121 30 May 1916

FOUND DROWNED

UNKNOWN MAN'S DEATH AT HAIGH Mr S Brighthouse held an inquest on Tuesday at the Packet House, Haigh, on the body of a man unknown, who was found in the canal on Saturday morning near Senacar Bridge, Haigh.

The body was found floating in the water, face downwards, by a boatman named **John Hesketh**.

The Coroner said the body had not been identified, and Police-constable Kirkham, who removed the body, said the only property found on it was an old pocket knife. The body did not appear to have been in the water long. Deceased was apparently a man about 30 years of age and 5 ft 2 inches in height. He was wearing a black vicuna jacket and vest, brown trousers, red check muffler, and two shirts, blue striped cotton and a union woollen vest. The body had been photographed.

The Coroner said that all the jury could do was to return a verdict of found drowned.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned", adding that there was no evidence to show how deceased got into the water.

122 12 August 1916

AGED BOATMAN DIES IN WORKHOUSE AFTER FALLING INTO CANAL AT INCE Mr H Milligan, the Wigan Borough Coroner, held an inquest yesterday (Friday) afternoon at the Wigan Borough Courts, relative to the death of **Jeffrey Wareing**, a boatman of no fixed abode, whose age was 68 years, and who died in the Wigan Workhouse on Wednesday from pneumonia following his recovery after having fallen into the water at the Rose Bridge locks of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Higher Ince the previous Saturday, whilst crossing the canal by means of baulks used as a stay for the locks.

Jeffrey Wareing of Canal Bank, New Lane, a boatman, said the deceased was his uncle and had been married when a young man, but he did not know whether his wife was living. His uncle had been a boatman ever since he could remember him.

Andrew Howarth of 22 Bird Street, Ince, said he was in the Rose Bridge Inn, Ince, on Saturday afternoon last, when a man named Levi Cartwright came in and said, "There's a man drowning in the canal. Is there anyone here can swim?" Witness ran to the canal and plunged into the water, and brought the deceased to the side. Artificial respiration was used, and after witness had been home to change, the deceased appeared to be all right. The place where deceased was in the water was about ten yards from the locks. Witness had seen the deceased working on the canal for about eight years. There were baulks at the Rose Bridge locks, and witness had seen the deceased and other boatmen cross the canal walking on these.

Sergeant Porter, the coroner's officer, said there were no marks of violence on the body. On making inquiries at Ince, he found that the deceased had been in the district three or four days, and that he had a black eye, which he had informed a woman was the result of a mazy bout. The deceased had been sleeping out.

The Coroner pointed out that no one actually saw the deceased fall into the water, but the supposition was that he had accidentally got into the canal by crossing one of the baulks. The deceased was brought round by artificial respiration, but had died of pneumonia, set up, in the opinion of the doctor who attended him, by his immersion in the water.

The jury returned a verdict of death from pneumonia, accelerated by the deceased having

accidentally fallen into the canal.

123 6 January 1917

DROWNED IN 3 1/2 INCHES OF WATER A sad drowning tragedy is reported from Lathom. On Tuesday afternoon, Mrs Vickers, wife of **James Vickers**, a canal boatman of Ring o' Bells, Lathom, who had been washing, entered the house to prepare tea, leaving her little daughter Emma, aged four years, playing on the steps at the back door. A few minutes later she called her and, receiving no reply, went into the washhouse and was horrified to find the child lying face downwards in 3 1/2 inches of water in the dolly tub, with her clothes over her head, life being extinct.

124 9 January 1917

LIGHT REQUIRED ON WHEELBARROWS An unusual case was heard at Ormskirk Sessions last week, when **Richard Spencer**, a canal boatman of Burscough, was charged with wheeling a wheelbarrow without a light. A police-sergeant saw the defendant at 10.30 one night, wheeling a barrow load of coal from his boat to the house. There had been frequent complaints about this kind of thing. The Clerk said that the penalty was £100 or six months' imprisonment, or both. (Laughter). The Chairman stated that as this was the first case, a nominal penalty of 6s only would be imposed.

125 6 March 1917

A BOATMAN'S DEATH **John Forshaw**, a boatman, a single man with no settled place of abode, was found lying on the canal bank near Henhurst Bridge, Chapel Lane, on the 1st inst. The attention of **William Derbyshire**, a lock-keeper, was attracted to him, and he telephoned to the police. Forshaw was conveyed in the horse ambulance to the Wigan Workhouse Hospital, where he died on Saturday.

126 10 March 1917

INQUESTS IN THE BOROUGH The Borough Coroner (Mr H Milligan) held four inquests at the Borough Courts on Tuesday morning.

The first case enquired into was concerning the death of a boatman named **John Forshaw** (42), who died in the Wigan Union Hospital on the 3rd inst. The evidence showed that about twenty minutes past ten on the morning of Thursday 1st inst, **William Derbyshire**, lock-keeper on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Chapel Lane, Wigan, had his attention called to the deceased, who was a single man of no fixed abode. He was lying down on the towing path of the canal. He was evidently ill, breathing hard, and his mouth was full of blood. Assistance was obtained, and Police-constable Jones removed deceased to the Union Workhouse in the horse ambulance, where he died. Dr Bradley gave evidence that deceased when admitted to the Workhouse was found to be suffering from bronchitis, inflammation of the lungs and exhaustion. Deceased had made a statement that he had been hit a blow on the mouth, but the condition of his mouth could have been caused by a fall. The only mark on the deceased's mouth was a slight scratch on the lower lip. He had the appearance of a man who had been neglected for a long time, and was suffering partly from cold and starvation. In witness's opinion, the cause of death was inflammation of the lungs, due to natural causes.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes", according to medical evidence.

127 2 June 1917

CANAL BOATMAN AS ABSENTEE At the Ormskirk Police Court on Friday, a canal boatman named **John Peet**, 30, of Crooke, was fined £2 and handed over to a military escort. Major Denton, recruiting officer of Ormskirk, said defendant had been advertised for, but never turned up. Replying to Superintendent Hodgson, the Major stated that he had received several anonymous letters regarding Peet, and Mr Hodgson said that he also received some. Peet said he got his calling up notice about three weeks ago, but his employer sent it back. He was arrested on a canal boat

where, it is alleged, he had been staying for nearly 12 months.

128 22 September 1917

THEFT FROM AN ALLOTMENT At the Wigan Borough Police Court on Monday, **John Gibbons**, bargeman, Weaver House Buildings, Halsall, was charged with stealing a quantity of onions and lettuces from an allotment garden on September 9th. The Chief Constable stated that the land was a piece of land which Messrs Walker Bros had devoted to being cultivated by their employees, and on the date named, one of the employees saw the defendant go on the land and pull up some onions and lettuces. The employee shouted to him, and defendant then put them down. Defendant said he did not think he was doing any wrong, as the watchman had given him such things before. The Mayor said the Bench would protect allotment holders, and defendant was fined 20s.

129 25 October 1917

LITTLE GIRL DROWNED A sad drowning tragedy is reported. About half past four on Tuesday 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 the alarm, and the body of the girl was recovered later by a boatman.

130 4 December 1917

A LABOURER FOUND DROWNED An inquest was held at the Royal Oak Hotel, Standish Lower Ground, on the 26th ult, by Mr J Parker, County Coroner, relative to the death of Henry Topping, aged 49 years, a labourer residing in Crooke, whose dead body was found in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Deane Lock, Shevington, on the 24th ult, after being reported missing since the 12th ult.

James Barton of Crooke Hall Inn stated that the deceased resided with him for the last three years, and was a very healthy man. He left home at 6 am on the 12th ult to go to his work at the Appley Bridge Linoleum Works. He did not return for his tea, and at 9 15 pm Barton called at the George and Dragon Inn, Gathurst Lane and there saw Topping, who asked him if he would treat him, which request Barton refused. He did not see him again until he identified him at 1 pm on the 24th ult. He also identified the boot and sock, which were worn on the left leg of the deceased.

A Juryman asked : Did you identify him by anything else? To which Barton replied, "Yes, by a mark under the left ear, which had been caused by a razor about twelve years ago."

Mary Southern, another witness, said she was the wife of James Southern, licensee of the George and Dragon Inn, Shevington. The deceased called at her house about 7.30 pm on the 12th ult, and had about four pints of beer. He left about 9.30 pm. She considered he was then quite capable of finding his way home.

Richard Rigby of Crooke, a boatman, said he was on his boat on Saturday the 24th November, when he saw the dead body floating near Deane Lock. He secured the body with a rope to the side of the canal, and at once informed the police.

Police-constable Gaskell of Crooke stated that he received the information on the 24th, and at once had the body removed. On examining the body, he found the left arm, the right leg and the lower parts of the body missing. The face and head were badly crushed. The only clothing on the body were a black sock and a black laced boot. In the police-constable's opinion, the clothing had been torn from the body by the propellers of passing steamboats. There was no suspicion of foul play. Previous to the body being recovered, the constable had dragged the canal several times without success. The night of the 12th was very dark and foggy, and it would be very dangerous for any person to travel on the canal bank.

The Coroner asked the constable if Topping could have got home by any other way than by the canal bank, to which witness replied that he might have gone across the fields by the footpath

leading from Gathurst Lane to Crooke, which would have kept him within a quarter of a mile of the canal. The police-constable said he was surprised the man did not go that way. The jury concluded that the deceased was accidentally drowned, and returned a verdict accordingly.

131 8 December 1917

FORMER CANAL BOAT CAPTAIN KILLED

Former Canal Boat Captain Killed



COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR J. ATHERTON.

The relatives of Company-Sergeant-Major J. Atherton, of the Royal Engineers, have received news that he has been killed by the explosion of a bomb in Dunkirk, France. Company-Sergeant-Major Atherton, who was 51 years old and married, enlisted in November, 1915, and was prior to that captain for the Hordale Canal Co., at Mansfield. He leaves a widow and three young children, whose home is at 120, Trufalgar-street, Wigan, his mother and sister residing at 4, Fairknigh-street, off Darlington-street, Wigan. His mother, Emmeline T. Taylor, has been serving with the colours since the beginning of the war and his brother-in-law, Thomas Callaghan, has been with the Forces for three years, both being at home at the present time.

132 22 December 1917

CANAL BOATMAN'S RETIRED LIFE On Thursday, the police at Whittle Springs secured the conviction of **William Boardman**, a single man aged 29, a bargeman on the Leeds and Liverpool

Canal, who had no exemption card, and who alleged that he had never been asked to register under the Registration Act of 915. The man was fined and handed over to the military.

133 22 December 1917

CANAL PILFERING CASES At the Wigan Borough Police Court on Thursday, before Messrs W Lowe and T J Arkwright, a canal boat captain named **John Fairbank**, Higher Cops Thrus, Whittle Springs, was sent to gaol for fourteen days for stealing two cwts of coal from the canal boat *Agnes* on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the property of Messrs Dean and Waddington of Burnley, on December 15th. He was also sent to gaol for fourteen days on a charge of stealing, during the past twelve months, ropes, fenders, a hammer and a brush, value £10, the property of the Canal Co. Mary Whelan, 30 Victoria Street, and Elizabeth Christy, 49 Hopwood Street, were also charged in connection with the theft of the coal, and were sent to prison for seven days.

134 10 January 1918

INCE BOATMAN FINED At Chorley on Tuesday, **John Boardman**, boatman, Ince, was summoned for failing to have posted up on the canal boat *Edith* a list of male persons over 16 years of age, as required by the Defence of the Realm Regulations.

Police-sergeant Egerton said that at 11.05 am on December 18th, he was on the canal bank of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Whittle Springs, and saw the boat *Edith* passing through the locks. Defendant was the captain. Witness and another constable took the mate into custody as an absentee under the Military Service Act. Defendant said the man had been employed on the boat five or six weeks. Defendant was asked if he had a list posted up on his boat, and replied that being unable to read he knew nothing about it.

Defendant said he thought his employer looked after these matters.

The Chairman : Did you know this man was an absentee? - No.

Superintendent Whittaker : It is his own brother he was harbouring.

Defendant said he did not think any boat had a list up.

Defendant was fined £2.

135 2 July 1918

WIGAN COUNTY POLICE COURT

A LAME HORSE **John Abram**, boatman, pleaded guilty to working a horse while in an unfit state on June 17th. Inspector Holt (RSPCA) gave evidence to seeing the defendant was in charge of a bay gelding on the date named. The animal was lame, also had sprained tendons, ring bone, etc. A fine of 40s was imposed.

136 27 July 1918

WIGAN COUNTY POLICE COURT

CANAL BOAT CAPTAIN FINED **Charles Malley**, canal boat captain, was charged with stealing two towing lines and one sack, value £2 5s 9d, the property of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company.

Superintendent Bannister said that on Saturday 13th July, Detective Constable Haigh of the Borough Police Force, was making inquiries, when he had occasion to go to the boat *Tom*, of which prisoner was the captain. The boat was moored at Britannia Bridge, Lower Ince, and the detective noticed that the boat was fastened with a coloured boat line similar to those used by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co. Making further inquiries, he found in the cabin a new line belonging to the company. Also on the boat he found a sack. The property was afterwards identified by Mr E J Halliwell, an agent of the company, as belonging to the company. Inquiries were made respecting prisoner, but he could not be found until Monday, when he came to the County Police Station and saw Detective Sergeant Kirkwood, and asked if the police had any lines belonging to him. The sergeant knew of some inquiries having been made, and detained him. Prisoner showed a receipted bill for lines in his possession, and the Sergeant pointed out that this was dated April 1917, and one

of the lines in question was a new one. Prisoner then made a statement that he had found the new line near the works of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company at Kirklees. The Sergeant then charged him, and he replied, "I did not steal them. I admit I should have reported finding them".

Mr E J Halliwell identified the new rope by a cream coloured strand which ran through it, and which was used by no other boat company.

In reply to Mr Baucher, witness said he could not accept the explanation of prisoner.

Detective Constable Haigh gave his evidence and, cross-examined, said he examined the line, and it being a new one he thought he would see the mark in it.

Detective Sergeant Kirkwood spoke as to prisoner coming in the station and being detained.

The defendant said he lived at 9 Bridge Street, Aspull, and had been employed by Messrs Crook and Thompson for the past ten years. On Thursday the 11th inst, he found the sack and the new rope at a point near the railway bridge higher up than Rose Bridge. His intention was to deliver it to a representative of the company when he came back on the Monday, and he had no intention of detaining it. One of the ropes produced by the police he denied ever having had in his possession.

Mr Baucher claimed that the actions of the defendant were not those of a man who had committed a theft.

The Bench, however, decided to convict, and fined defendant 50s.