

JACKSON'S OXFORD JOURNAL

1 March 6 1802

HEYFIELD'S HUTT, near OXFORD.
WHEREAS a Canal Boat, for the Purpose of repairing, was left on a Piece of Ground belonging to Anthony Harris, about nine Months ago, by a **Boatman** belonging to Mr. Castle, Coal Dealer, Notice is hereby given, That unless the Owner or Owners do fetch the Boat away, and pay all necessary Expences of standing, &c. within Twenty-one Days, the same will be publickly sold to the best Bidder, and the Money arising from the Sale, after defraying the necessary Expences, will be lodged in the University and City Bank, for the Use of such Owner or Owners as may hereafter prove their Claim to the said Boat.
Oxford, Feb. 20th, 1802.

2 November 5 1808

On Tuesday last **John Cutland**, boatman, was committed to our city gaol for one month, for quitting the service of his master, Mr Jeremiah Whitehouse, without any previous notice.

3 January 6 1810

TEN GUINEAS REWARD.
Melksham; Wilts, Dec. 26, 1809.
ESCAPED early this morning from Justice (charged on a violent suspicion of stealing a BROWN MARE, the property of Mr. Adam Wragg, of the Chapelry of Seend, in the parish of Melksham, in the county of Wilts, coal merchant), **GEORGE NAISH**, a tall stout Man, about 22 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches high, dark ruddy complexion, straight dark hair, very broad long chin, which makes him appear long featured, darkish eyes, a little marked with the small-pox, and has a large fleshy hand; in his talk speaks thick, as if his tongue was too large for his mouth; and has been, for several years, a **Boatman** on different canals, and some time since worked on the Puddington canal. It is probable he will be trying to get employ either as a boat-man upon a canal, or as a canal digger.
Whoever will apprehend the said George Naish, and give information to the said Mr. Adam Wragg, or to Mr. N. P. Phené, attorney, Melksham, so that the said George Naish may be committed to prison, shall receive Ten Guineas reward from the said Mr. Wragg.

4 June 21 1817

On Wednesday last **Thomas Boyce**, a boatman on the Oxford Canal, was convicted before Sir J Lock and Richard Wootten, Esq, two of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for this City, in the penalty of 20 /- for stealing a greyhound dog, the property of Mr James Morrell; and on his inability to pay the said penalty was committed to the city gaol for six months.

5 November 10 1821

INSOLVENT DEBTORS' COURT OFFICE,
No. 9, Essex-street, Strand, London.
PETITIONS of INSOLVENT DEBTORS, to be heard at the Adjourned General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, to be holden at the Grand Jury Room, in the Town Hall, Oxford, in and for the county of Oxford, on the 1st day of December next, at the hour of Twelve at noon.
GEORGE TOLLEY, late of Elsfield, in the county of Oxford, **Boatman**.
JOHN POULTON, formerly of Witney, in the county of Oxford, afterwards of Minster Lovell, in the said county, and late of Hailey, near Witney aforesaid, fisherman.
JAMES BERRY, late of Stonesfield, in the county of Oxford, cooper.
The Petitions and Schedules are filed, and may be inspected at this Office every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, between the hours of Ten and Four.—Two days' notice of any intention to oppose any Prisoner's discharge must be given to such Prisoner, to entitle any Creditor to oppose the same.
JAMES NICHOLLS, Bennet-street, Blackfriars'-road.

6 June 26 1824

INQUEST On Monday last an inquest was taken at Kidlington by Mr Cecil, coroner, on view of the body of **Joseph Smith**. **Jas Alder**, servant to **John Carter** of Abingdon, boatman, deposed that on Saturday last, about six or seven o'clock in the evening, he was going to Oxford with a boat of Mr Carter's, in company with the deceased, who was sober. When they arrived at Kidlington Green Lock, Smith began to draw the paddles, and when he had got them about three parts up, the windlass slipped off, and he fell into the canal. Witness heard him groan, and went to his assistance, and found him on the opposite side of the canal to where he had fallen in, with his head above water ; witness pulled him on to the boat, and let him lie till two boats came up. Smith was then carried into the cabin ; he was not dead. When witness took hold of Smith, he said, "You are not to look after me; you are to look after the boat". Some salt was rubbed on Smith's stomach, but it did not relieve him; he was alive for about half an hour and then died. Witness thinks Smith fell against the lock gate, as he spat blood. The deceased did not give any account how he fell in the water. Verdict *Accidental death*.

7 April 28 1827

Oxford

THEFT Samuel Guest, Susannah Drury and Ann Arnold were indicted for stealing from the dwelling house of **Thomas Cox**, in the parish of St Thomas, divers articles, of the value of 40s. The prosecutor is a boatman, and with his wife left their house locked up on the 18th of January, and went on a voyage with a boat on the Oxford Canal; on their return, in about three weeks, they found the house had been entered, and all their property stolen, consisting of a feather bed and bedding, 6 cotton and 2 silk gowns, a cloth pelisse, 2 cloth coats, 30 pair of stockings and many other articles of wearing apparel. The prisoner Guest cohabited with Drury, and lived in the neighbourhood of the prosecutor. It appeared from the evidence of Thomas Brown, that a few days before the robbery took place the prisoner Guest had more than once said to him that "it would be a good trick to get into Cox's house, and take away the bed", at the same time showing a key, which he said would open any house. Part of the property was found in the possession of the prisoners in Oxford, and the remainder in a house at Wheatley, occupied by the sister of the prisoner Arnold, which had been conveyed there by the prisoners. A skeleton key was likewise found on Guest, which would open the door of the prosecutor. The Recorder summed up the evidence very fully, and the Jury, after retiring about a quarter of an hour, found Guest guilty, Drury and Arnold not guilty. Sentence of death was recorded against Guest.

8 February 2 1828

Ten Guineas Reward.

WHEREAS on the evening of Wednesday the 23rd, or on the morning of Thursday the 24th of January instant, some person or persons cut down and carried away 3 fine young **ASH TIMBER TREES**, growing in an inclosed Copse called *Old Lands*, situate at Uffington, in the county of Berks, belonging to the Earl of Craven:—Whoever will give information of the offender or offenders, so that he or they may be convicted of the offence, shall, on such conviction, receive the above Reward, on application to me, or to Mr. Doot, Benham, near Newbury.

W. R. HALL,

Solicitor to the Hungerford Association.

Hungerford, January 29, 1828.

N. B. It is supposed that the above Trees were stolen by some **boatman** who passed by on the canal the same evening.

9 July 2 1831

BERKSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS **Thomas Birmingham**, a boatman, was indicted for having feloniously stolen, taken and carried away two iron bars and one sledge hammer, on the 13th of March last, at the parish of Marcham, the property of the Parish Officers of Marcham.

Mr Talfourd conducted the prosecution, and stated the case, as proved by the following witnesses:- Thomas Champ, a deputy surveyor of roads in Marcham parish, said there were persons working in Marcham stone pits, with bars and sledge hammers. In February last he missed two iron bars – one about 58lbs weight, and the other about 25 – from the pit. In March he went to the house of the prisoner, at Rose Hill, near Oxford, with two Abingdon constables; the constables searched the house and found under the earth floor the light bar; afterwards he saw the larger bar, before the Magistrate, when it was produced by the constables.

Henry Hutt, of Littlemore, proved being at the prisoner's house at Mount Pleasant with a man named Claydon at the latter end of February last, and purchasing the heavy bar of him for 10s. He took the bar away, and kept it till two Oxford constables went to him on the Oxford road, and removed the bar from the pit. Claydon produced the bar, which Hutt identified as that he had purchased, and Claydon proved it being one lost from Marcham pits in February.

Mr Saml Walker, deputy keeper of the bridewell, proved that the bars had been in his custody ever since they were first produced before the Magistrates.

Thomas Champ proved the smaller bar produced by Mr Walker to be the same he found in Birmingham's house.

Richard Claydon corroborated Hutt's statement relative to his purchasing a large bar of Birmingham.

Wm Waters and James Woodbridge, labourers working at the Marcham pits in February last, proved the loss of two bars from the pit at that time, and identified the two produced as those that had been lost.

Birmingham, in his defence, said that a man named John Wheeler brought the two bars to his house, and left them there, and told him he might sell them for him, if he could : and he did accordingly sell the large bar to Hutt, and he had not seen him since. He could not produce Wheeler, because he was a prisoner in Reading gaol.

Hutt admitted that Wheeler was with the prisoner when he sold the bar, and that he asked 14s for it. There was no evidence respecting the hammer, which had not been found.

Verdict: *Guilty*. Mr Talfourd put in a certificate of the former conviction of the prisoner, at the city of Oxford, which was proved, and read by the Clerk of the Peace; and Bossom, the Oxford constable, identified the prisoner as the person named in the certificate. The prisoner begged for mercy and promised to do nothing of the kind again, but the Court sentenced him to 14 years transportation.

10 **October 29 1831**

WARWICKSHIRE SESSIONS At the Warwickshire Sessions, James Smith was tried for stealing at Fenny Compton on the 23rd of August, one £5 note and other monies, the property of **Benjamin Trinder**. Richard Cox, a coal merchant of Oxford, deposed that he knew the prosecutor, who was a boatman in his employ. On the 16th of August he paid him £18 14s 1d in three £5 notes and other monies. Two of the notes were of the bank of Cox and Co, and their numbers were 24591 and 25675, and one of the bank of Walker and Co. The prosecutor said he received the notes and put them into a cupboard in the cabin of his boat. Soon after he met the prisoner on the towing-path, who asked him if he required a legger (one who pushes the boat) : witness told him that he did, and when they had walked together a short way, the prisoner went on board and assisted them in pushing the boat through the tunnel. The wife of the prosecutor said she left the boat when the prisoner was assisting, and there was only a little child with him in it. Before she left the boat she put the money on the bed, and missed it in about ten minutes after he was gone away. The other man who was assisting him had left the cabin before she did. A butcher of the name of Charles Pearson, of Kingston, recollected the prisoner coming to him and buying a quantity of beef, in payment of which he gave him a £5 note, which had written on the back “we have nothing to do”. Elizabeth Rench, who keeps a shop at the above place, changed the note for the last witness, which she had had, separate from all other notes, in her possession ever since. Cox said the note produced was of the same number as the one he gave the prosecutor, and had on the back “we have nothing to do”.

do". Pearson stated it was the same note he gave change for. A discussion as to the form of the indictment here arose, which the Court decided. The prisoner was found guilty and was ordered to be transported for seven years. Townsend, turnkey of the gaol, proved a former conviction of the prisoner in 1826.

11 August 2 1834 Banbury

Two boatmen were taken before the Mayor and Magistrates for exposing their persons, using bad language, and bathing in the Oxford Canal at Banbury Bridge. They were directed to be fined £1 each, or in default of payment to be committed to hard labour for a fortnight.

12 December 5 1835 Oxford

ACCIDENTALLY DROWNED On Monday evening last, between seven and eight o'clock, as one of Mr Ashley's boats was in Sandford Pound Lock, a young boatman, named **Edward Talbot**, working in the vessel, accidentally fell into the water, and before he could be taken out, which was very soon effected, life was extinct. The deceased was a resident of Pangbourne. On Tuesday an inquest was held on the body, before Mr Cecil :- Verdict "Accidentally drowned".

13 May 28 1836 Oxford

INQUEST BEFORE MR CECIL, CORONER On Thursday last at the Navigation End Inn, St Thomas's Parish, on view of the body of **Alice Higgins**, aged four years, daughter of a boatman, who had been missing from her father's boat that afternoon, and was found drowned in the Oxford Canal. There was no evidence how she came in the water, and the Jury returned a verdict, "Found drowned".

14 June 4 1836 Oxford

CITY POLICE Yesterday **John Beesley**, of the parish of St Thomas, boatman, was committed to gaol for one month and hard labour as an idle and disorderly person, for neglecting to support his wife, whereby she had become chargeable to the united parishes of this city.

15 July 2 1836

CITY SESSIONS **Charles Gibbs** stood indicted for having stolen on the 7th day of May last the sum of 17s 6d, the property of **William Humphries**. The prosecutor stated that he was a boatman, and kept his money in the cabin of the boat; that it was safe in the cupboard about seven in the evening of the 7th of May, at which time he left the boat for about a quarter of an hour, and returned with the prisoner, who worked in the same boat, and usually slept in the cabin. Witness went out soon after to the stable to feed the horses, and the prisoner followed in about ten minutes. They left the stable together, but witness went back to the boat alone, when he discovered that the cupboard had been broken open and that his money was gone. The prisoner slept in the boat on the 6th of May, but did not return to sleep there on the night of the 7th. Charles Bossom, another witness, said he remembered the day on which Humphries lost his money, and also recollected asking the prisoner in the morning of that day to join him in a pint of beer, saying, "I'll be my penny if you'll be yours", when prisoner answered that he had no money and had not got a penny. Elizabeth Harris said she lived near the Park End Wall, close to where the boat was lying. Saw the prosecutor and the prisoner go into the boat together on the evening in question; afterwards saw prosecutor go out and leave prisoner in the boat alone for about a quarter of an hour; was sure no other person went into the boat during that time. George Bassom, a city constable, said that in consequence of information of the robbery he apprehended the prisoner on the 8th of May, and found 3s 5d in his possession. Henry Jacob, the Clerk to the Magistrates, produced a certificate of a former conviction of the prisoner for felony, and proved his identity; and the Jury having found the prisoner guilty, the Court sentenced him to be transported for seven years.

16 October 15 1836

CITY COURT On Tuesday last **John Taylor**, a boatman, was convicted in the sum of 20s and costs, by Wm Henry Butler, Esq, Mayor and Mr Alderman Sadler, for an assault upon Richard Morgan in George Lane; and also assaulting G Bossom, on his taking him into custody for the assault on Morgan; and in default of payment, committed to the house of correction for 21 days.

17 June 3 1837

Banbury

PETTY SESSIONS At the Petty Sessions on Monday last, **Wm Line**, a boatman, was charged with leaving his wife, and sentenced to one months imprisonment and hard labour.

18 March 26 1840

BOATMEN'S CHAPEL,
Licensed by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese.

THE Trustees have much satisfaction in announcing that this Chapel has been opened for Divine Service since Christmas last, and has been exceedingly well attended by the boatmen and their families. Many persons have thus been brought to the House of God who had never before been known to enter a place of worship, and they have all expressed the greatest thankfulness for this privilege. The School has likewise been opened, and there is a good attendance of children both on Sunday and week-days.

In order to provide a remuneration for the Chaplain, and for the Master and Mistress of the School, it is necessary that there should be an annual income of at least 120*l*. The present amount of annual subscriptions is only 85*l*, of which 20*l*. is given by the Canal Company, and 10*l*. by the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church. The Trustees, therefore, are compelled to make an appeal to the public for further assistance, and they are confident that they shall not appeal in vain.

Donations and subscriptions will be thankfully received at the several banks of this city.

CHARLES CARR CLERKE, Archdeacon of Oxford,
JOHN JONES, Perpetual Curate of St. Thomas Parish,
JOHN ROBERT HALL, Vicar of St. Mary Magdalen,
WILLIAM WARD,
RICHARD COX,
Trustees of the Chapel. *Oxford, March 25, 1840.*

19 June 20 1840

Watlington

ACCIDENTAL DEATH On Thursday an inquisition was held before Mr Cooke, coroner, at Shillingford, in the parish of Warborough, on view of the body of **Wm Ricks**, aged about five years, the son of **James Ricks**, of that parish, boatman. It appeared that the deceased and his eldest brother were at play together, on Tuesday the 10th inst on Shillingford Wharf, close to the River Thames, when the deceased fell into the water, and was drowned. The body was soon afterwards brought to land, but the vital spark had fled. Verdict, "Accidental death".

20 December 19 1840

CAUTION TO BOATMEN On Thursday last a fire broke out in a barge lying at the quay in Tewkesbury, belonging to **Mr Oakes** of Broseley, Shropshire, owing to the gross neglect of the boatmen in quitting it leaving a fire in the cabin. To so great a height had the flames got when assistance was obtained that the only way of stopping their progress was by sinking the barge, which was accordingly done. Through this highly reprehensible conduct of his servants, it is supposed that Mr Oakes will suffer to the extent of £60 or £80 there being money in the cabin (principally notes) to the amount of £40.

21 January 23 1841

INUNDATION AT BRENTFORD – IMMENSE DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY AND LOSS OF LIFE Sunday morning a most fearful inundation occurred in the town of Brentford, occasioned by the bursting of the banks and locks on the Grand Junction Canal, which has been attended by the

destruction of great property, the carrying away of many houses by the stream, as well as loss of life.

The Grand Junction Canal, it should be stated, joins the river Thames southward of the town of New Brentford, running at the rear of the town on the south for some hundred yards when, turning short to the right, it divides New Brentford from Isleworth parish at Brentford End, and proceeds along towards Southall. On the north side of the high road, which crosses the canal by means of a strongly built stone bridge, it is joined by the river Brent, which passes thence through Hanwell, Perivale &c towards Harrow, and the general belief is that it was the immense body of land water, occasioned by the rapid thaw, which poured down from the country, swelling the stream of the Brent, which caused the catastrophe.

The water, it appears, was first observed to be slowly rising about half past twelve o'clock on Saturday night; but no fears of an inundation were entertained by the persons residing near. Towards two o'clock, however, police-constable Smith, who was on duty near the bridge, observing the water still increasing and rushing with great power to the Thames, awakened some of the boatmen belonging to what are called "monkey boats", large numbers of which were moored off the different wharfs abutting on the canal, and cautioned them to be on the alert for their own security. At that time, and even up to half past three o'clock yesterday morning, immediate danger was not apprehended; but a few minutes before four o'clock a loud noise was heard towards the north of the town, which approached nearer and nearer, and it was soon ascertained that the narrow stream of the Brent had become swelled into a mighty river and, overflowing its banks, was pouring itself into the already increased waters of the canal. Numbers of boats, barges and lighters were instantly torn from their moorings, and driven with great force and speed through the bridge towards the Thames. At the same instant also the accumulated waters, having overflowed all the premises north of the high road, burst with frightful force through the two avenues by the houses of Mr Brasher, near the bridge, and Mr Farrell, directly opposite the church, filling the lower rooms of the houses. The police lost no time in waking the inhabitants. The scene at that moment it is impossible to describe. Men, women and children, many of them in their night clothes, were running in all directions for places of shelter, while the roaring of the waters, added to the screams of the wretched inhabitants of the monkey boats borne along on the stream, and of the persons inhabiting the numerous cottages running south of the town down to the waterside, were most appalling. In a very short time all the houses at that portion of the town were flooded and, the water rising rapidly, the occupiers of the houses near the market place commenced damming up their doors, and there is no doubt that the whole not only of New Brentford, but also of Old Brentford would soon have become under water had it not forced itself an outlet at the bottom of Church Alley, by razing the wall of the extensive nursery grounds of Messrs Ronalds, and another wall at the southern extremity of the grounds, by which it joined the stream of the canal near its outlet to the Thames.

About five o'clock the water was at the highest, and the only communication between the houses near the bridge was by means of a boat. Towards six o'clock it was ascertained that the water was gradually decreasing, and when daylight came the extent of the damage was pretty clearly ascertained.

Above the bridge, as far as has been ascertained, the damage has not been so extensive as below. Below the bridge, a short distance on the right, were found five large barges driven by the force of the water against the wharf of Mr Fowler, an extensive wharfinger at Brentford End, and swamped. They belonged to Mr Chas Saunders, lighterman, of Stroud on the Green, Kewbridge, and were laden with 1300 qrs of corn and 350 qrs of linseed. It was near to the mouth of the outlet to the Thames where the greatest damage has been done.

At other parts of the canal several barges and lighters have foundered, and many have sunk, the names of the owners of which are not yet known. It has, however, been ascertained beyond doubt that the barge *Susan*, the property of Mr Scheele, lighterman, of North Hyde, near Southall, has gone to pieces, and the body of one of the persons on board of her, named **Wm Spruce**, about 17 years of age, was picked up about eleven o'clock yesterday, jammed between the rails at the bottom of Catherine Wheel yard, covered by some tarpaulin. It was immediately conveyed by the police to

the Catherine Wheel public house, in the high road, where it awaits a coroner's inquest.

In the tan-yard of Mr Norris the whole of a large quantity of tan with which the warehouses were stored have been carried away by the stream, and portions of it are still remaining on the high road. It has been ascertained that no less than 21 men, women and children saved their lives by climbing over the wall of the Duke of Northumberland's grounds, and taking refuge in a cow house, where they have been since found.

Throughout the whole of yesterday a large number of men were employed with wagons and carts in carrying away sacks of grain and other articles which have been rescued from the sunken barges, or driven ashore, one of which, belonging to Mr Saunders, went to pieces in the afternoon. Messrs Joseph Dawson and Co, whose timber wharf is on the north side of the bridge, have lost numerous timber floats, as have also Messrs Abercrombie, but they will be probably recovered. The house of Mr Whitburn, tobacconist, at the opposite corner of the bridge, has sustained great damage, the gable end having been carried away at the bottom, and there is no doubt had the water, which was within a foot of the crown of the bridge, risen higher than the bridge itself, with the adjoining houses, must have been carried away. Above the bridge, where the junction of the waters of the Brent with those of the canal took place, the towing-path has been washed away and, consequently, no intelligence could be obtained as to the extent of damage further up the country.

ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS

New Brentford, Monday evening Throughout the day the town of Brentford has been thronged by persons from the neighbouring towns and villages, and even from the Metropolis, anxious to visit the scene of the late inundation.

The infant school rooms in the Butts were on Sunday evening prepared, by order of the Rev Dr Stoddart and Messrs Banting and Hopkins, the churchwardens, for the reception of the distressed boatmen, and public intimation to that effect having been given, on the doors being thrown open no less a number than ninety men, women and children presented themselves and were admitted. At six o'clock they were refreshed with a plentiful supply of coffee and bread and butter, after which those whose boats were not so much damaged as to render them destitute were dismissed, and the remainder, amounting to sixty, were at nine o'clock supplied with a good supper, and at about half past ten o'clock, clean straw having been laid down, they retired to rest, the males in one room and the females in another. This morning, at eight o'clock, they all had breakfast, and at dinner the number was increased to sixty eight. What makes the case of these unfortunate individuals more distressing is the fact that, as they were clearing out, about five weeks since, to return with their boats to their houses, the late severe frost set in, and they being compelled to remain until the ice broke up, many of them were reduced to such distress as to be obliged to beg of the inhabitants, and now that the ice had partly broken up and they were preparing to start on Sunday morning, their vessels have been wrecked, and most of them have escaped but with their lives.

Nine boats are supposed to have been sunk and broken up by the stream, as no trace of them has as yet been discovered. In addition to this, several are known to be seriously injured, as well as their freights rendered unfit for further use.

During the day great numbers of persons have been busily engaged in clearing out some of the barges lying off the shore, in which they have to some extent succeeded; also in fishing up large numbers of sacks of wheat &c, which had been washed out of the craft, but from its sodden and swollen state, by which many of the sacks have been burst, it is feared it will not be of much value. Mr Saunders has today succeeded in getting up one of his five barges, which has been found not to be so much injured as was anticipated. Mr Fowler, against whose wharf Mr Saunders's barges were swamped, has lost three barges of coals. He had for some time previously been ill, and died rather unexpectedly on Sunday evening.

A man belonging to Mr Fowler, named Henry Corsell, is now lying without the slightest chance of surviving. He was found about 11 o'clock on Sunday forenoon in one of the barges, which was riding in safety off the wharf, lying on his bed in the cabin in a state of insensibility, and very much cut about the head, and is labouring under a concussion of the brain.

In addition to the wharfs and premises of Messrs Bourne, Curtis, Sims and others, whose premises

were stored with wheat and other grain, &c, most of which have been flooded and damaged, there are nearly fifty small cottages, situated in the yards and alleys leading from the high road to the water, and are inhabited by the poorer class, who have suffered considerably by the inundation, as have also a large number of inhabitants of the High street. The damage done at Mr Norris's yard is estimated at nearly £1000.

In the course of the afternoon each of the poorer cottagers who have suffered from the flood have been presented by the parochial authorities with a hundred and a half weight of coals, for the purpose of drying their dwellings, the water having nearly subsided.

With regard to the origin of the calamity, it is evident, from an inspection of the locks and banks of the canal, that they have not given way, as was at first supposed; and police-constable Smith, who was on duty at the time at the side of the canal, gave the following statement of the occurrence :- It was about twenty minutes past twelve o'clock on Saturday night that he first noticed the boatmen, whose boats were moored on the side of the canal, preparatory to their departure, making remarks about the rising of the water, when he rendered them assistance in more securely fastening their craft. Before one o'clock, however, the ice broke up with a loud noise, when the boatmen became more alarmed, and some of them got out on the towing-path, where they were immediately knee deep in water, and one woman, about two o'clock, being knocked by the ice into the canal, he jumped in and got her out. About two o'clock some timber boats, belonging to Messrs Dowson and Co, which were moored at the entrance of the river Brent, got loose, and he got over into Messrs Dowson's yard and acquainted Mr Pepper, the manager, with the circumstances, who told him to tell the watermen of it which, not being able to leave his boat, he was unable to do. He then went on the bridge on the high road, and watched the water, which kept gradually getting higher, until a few minutes before four o'clock, when the great body of it which hurried down the Brent forced itself into the canal, pouring over the locks without bursting them. The boats were now forced onwards to the bridge, where the first that sank was a coal barge; the next was one belonging to Mr Saunders, freighted with corn; then a coal barge belonging to Mr Eaton; and next one of Bissell's passage boats, freighted with hoop iron from which, as it was scuttling, he pulled up to the top of the bridge a child, by means of his strap, and also a woman, but before her husband could be got at, the boat sank and he swam on shore with great difficulty. Immediately afterwards another of Bissell's boats ran against the corner of Mr Whitehorn's house, and carried it away. As the boat passed under the bridge, Mr Plim, butcher, threw a bullock rope to a woman who was on top of the cabin, who instantly seized hold of it, and was partly drawn up when, seeing her husband passing under the bridge without being rescued, she let go of it with one hand, but fortunately he (Smith) being at the moment sitting astride of the parapet of the bridge, seized hold of her arm, and she was saved. At that time he observed fourteen or fifteen woman and children on the lock bridge, but admittance was refused them, on which he got them onto Brentford Bridge, while he knocked up the landlord of the Six Bells, who sheltered them, and he then assisted the inhabitants.

The escape of twenty one men, women and children, from off the passage boat, as they passed the wall of the Duke of Northumberland's grounds, was almost miraculous. The first that got over was a boy, named John Jones, who instantly fastened a rope to a tree, by which means the others got over. As they did so, they felt the wall tottering underneath them, and while the last boy was on it it was overthrown by the water, he falling within the grounds. Immediately on being discovered by his Grace's gardener, they received both shelter and succour, for which they express their heartfelt gratitude.

During the day considerable excitement has been occasioned in the town by the fact that Mr Charles Morris, a market gardener at Old Brentford, had been missing since the evening of Saturday; and in the course of the afternoon all doubt on the subject was removed by the discovery of the body near his own residence, in a stream communicating with the Brent, and which until yesterday was much swollen. The body was removed to his residence, where it awaits an inquest.

No time has been fixed for the inquest on Spruce, as it is probable there may still be other bodies in the water.

22 May 18 1844

George Skelsey, canal boatman, residing at Coleshill near Coventry, committed for trial last week on coroner's warrant for murder of Henry Clewley, weaver – deceased had become indebted to prisoner and, through lack of employment, had been unable to pay – as deceased was passing down at Ebburn's Bridge, prisoner was heard to call to someone in boat on canal, "Haven't you heard me talk to you about the man who owes me a sovereign?" to which boatman having replied, "Yes, George", he said, "Now I'll go and pay the rascal", and then ran after deceased, knocked him down, followed him to his own door, again struck him to the earth, kicked and jumped on him, and deceased shortly after expired, when prisoner exultingly said to deceased's sister, "I've done for your brother, and I'll do for you before night", but was followed and secured.

23 July 6 1844

George Dixon, monkey-boatman, residing in Harrow Road, charged last week at Brentford Petty Sessions with attempting to drown police-constable Keeler in Grand Junction Canal. Prosecutor stated, that being stationed at Apperton, near Harrow, he was sent for to take the prisoner into custody on charge of stealing a fishing rod, and on doing so, prisoner struck him several violent blows under each ear, and by superior muscular power, forced him into canal, Prosecutor, however, still kept hold of his prisoner, and drew him into water with him, but on reaching centre of stream, prisoner, freeing himself from grasp of prosecutor, pushed him under water and swam ashore. He was subsequently secured after desperate struggle, and fully committed to Newgate.

24 August 10 1844

CITY POLICE COURT, FRIDAY AUGUST 9 **Samuel Collis**, boatman, convicted of having assaulted John Kelly, was fined 20s and 12s 6d costs.

25 November 8 1845

INQUISITION BEFORE JOHN CHURCHILL, ESQ On the 1st instant, at Lower Heyford, on view of the body of **Joseph Slater**, aged 30, a boatman in the employ of Mr Sutton of Oxford, who was drowned in the Oxford Canal in the parish of Lower Heyford. From the evidence before the jury it appeared that the deceased was very much intoxicated. His wife, who was attending the boat with him, stated that she left him sitting on the ground, near the tow path, whilst she took the horse to a public house for the night, at the same time cautioning him to take care he did not fall into the canal; she hastened back as soon as she had taken care of the horse, and on her return found he had fallen in the canal. She called for assistance, which was promptly at hand, and every means used to restore him, but life was extinct. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

26 September 18 1847

Aylesbury

A FEMALE FOUND DROWNED IN THE AYLESBURY CANAL Great excitement was created in the town of Aylesbury on Monday last, in consequence of the body of a fine young woman, about 20 years of age, having been found in the canal between the High Bridge and the Wharf, which appeared to have been in the water several days. A man of the name of Wm Wright, in the employ of Mr Gurney of the Bell Inn, was walking along the towing-path about half past six o'clock in the morning in the direction of the Canal Basin, when he observed something resembling the appearance of a bonnet floating on the water, which circumstance he communicated to three men standing near the wharf who, with him, returned to the spot and having provided themselves with shafts or poles they dragged the canal, and shortly brought to the surface of the water the body of a young woman, which they recognised to be that of Mary Ann Wenham, niece to the late Mr Thomas Smith, coal merchant of this town. Having succeeded in getting the body out of the water it was conveyed to her aunt's (Mrs Smith) in Walton, where it was subsequently examined by a medical gentleman. Various rumours were afloat as to the manner in which the deceased came by her death. One was that she had thrown herself into the canal. Another that a young man of the name of **Thomas Osbourne**, alias Pigtie, a boatman, with whom she was last seen, and with whom she

kept company, had beaten her and afterwards pushed her into the water, as it was stated that there were marks of violence on her person. This latter rumour being exceedingly prevalent, induced Police-sergeant Cornaby to apprehend Osbourne on Monday night, and he was consequently confined in the station house until Tuesday, on which day the inquest was held.

It appeared at the inquest, taken before J W Cowley, Esq at the George Inn, from a statement made by Osbourne, and confirmed by evidence, that he and deceased were walking together on the previous Tuesday night between eight and nine o'clock, when a person of the name of Vincent (whose father keeps a lodging house) stopped Osbourne and requested him to call at his father's house, and he would settle for some bricks. Deceased persuaded him not to go then, and they continued walking together for some time afterwards in the direction of the canal into a field called "The Crofs", where the subject of the lodging house was again introduced by the deceased, which appeared to offend Osbourne, who replied, "If I can't be trusted without going to a lodging house, it is odd. Go and be ----". She then took hold of his arm and, after squeezing it, said, "If that is your temper, I'll go". They then separated, deceased going one way and Osbourne another. After the elapse of a short time Osbourne endeavoured to find deceased, but could not: he called to her twice, and whistled three times, but received no answer. The next morning, about half past five o'clock, according to an arrangement made on the previous night with his master, Mr England, he started from the Canal Wharf with a boat; but prior to his leaving requested a companion of his, named **Doddy**, to let him know about Mary Ann Wenham who, he said, left him rather strangely on the night before. Doddy left the wharf with a boat a day or two after Osbourne, and on seeing him near Leicester informed him that deceased had not been seen or heard of since Tuesday evening, which appeared greatly to affect him, and he immediately started for Aylesbury, walking some distance and travelling by rail the remainder. On Osbourne arriving at Aylesbury he expressed a wish to see deceased, and on his being shown into the room in which she laid, he threw himself across her and exclaimed, "Oh my dear Mary, this is what I expected months ago. I wish someone would cut my head from my body and lay it by her side". The deceased lived with Mrs Smith, and the circumstance of her not returning home on Tuesday night induced her to believe she had gone with Osbourne with the intention of getting married.

The coroner directed a *post mortem* examination of the body, which was conducted by E Owen Esq, surgeon of Aylesbury who, at the inquest, gave it as his opinion that death arose from suffocation by drowning, and not from violence, as was reported. There were two bruises on the face, which in his opinion were produced by the suffocation, coupled with the fact of the body having been in the water several days. There were no marks of violence on the body.

The coroner having summed up the evidence, the Jury returned a verdict of *Found drowned*, and the accused, who was present throughout the enquiry, was immediately discharged.

27 March 11 1848

FATAL DISASTER AT THE CANAL BRIDGE BETWEEN ADDERBURY AND AYNHOE

On Tuesday last an inquest was held at Nell Bridge Wharf in the parish of Adderbury, before J Churchill Esq, one of the coroners for Oxfordshire, on view of the body of Elizabeth Townsend of Adderbury, aged 78, who was killed on the previous Saturday when walking on the turnpike road between Adderbury and Aynhoe, and near the canal bridge. From the depositions it appeared the deceased, who was staying with her son, **Richard Townsend** of Nell Bridge, canal foreman, was out for a walk on Saturday afternoon by the side of the road and near to the canal. **Joseph Fisher**, boatman for Mr Robert Farmer of Oxford was on his way from Banbury to Heyford with the *Tantiny* laden with coal. On arriving at the canal bridge he, instead of unfastening the boat rope as he is required by the laws of the Canal Company, allowed the horse to ascend the turnpike road, and go down into the towing-path again, with the boat cord attached. The cord was consequently across the road, and was prevented from lying flat on the ground by the parapets of the bridge. At the time, John Auger, servant to the Rev John Ballard, staying at Woodeaton, came up on horseback. Fisher told him to stay while he unfastened the rope, and Auger pulled up. At this instant Thomas Huxford, servant to E Ethelstone Esq, staying at the Crown Hotel Bicester, who was on his way

home from Chipping Warden on a hack which his master had ridden to cover, came along at a furious rate, the horse having bolted with him and become unmanageable. Fisher and Auger both called to him to stop, but he could not manage the horse, and he went over the bridge; the force of the horse against the rope broke it in two, and that portion of it attached to the mast flew off from the force into the road, striking the deceased on the neck and face, and so injuring her as to cause her death before the arrival of John Griffin Esq, surgeon of Adderbury, who was quickly on the spot. Mr G described the injuries, which were sufficient to cause death. It appeared that Huxford did not see the rope nor the unfortunate woman till after the disaster, and that he stopped his horse as soon as he could; that he went back and stayed some time, and that he voluntarily attended the inquest. He expressed great regret at the occurrence, as did the boatman, who was in attendance. The Jury, of which Mr James Garner was foreman, after a consultation, returned a verdict of "Accidental death". Fisher was censured, and was given to understand that he would be proceeded against, under the Act of Parliament, for having allowed the rope to be across the road. It appears that many boatmen act thus negligently, and endanger the lives of persons passing along the road. We understood, while at the inquest, that no less than three ropes were thus allowed to be across the road while the inquiry was going on.

28 June 17 1848

CITY COURT Yesterday **Thos Cutting**, (22), a boatman, was committed to gaol, by the Mayor and W Thorp Esq, for 14 days, in default of paying a fine of 20s and costs 12s for assaulting Ann Fisher in the parish of St Thomas on the 12th inst.

29 December 16 1848

CITY COURT **Robert Harvey**, otherwise White (23), boatman, was committed to the city gaol for trial at the Epiphany Sessions, charged with stealing a smock frock, of the value of 1s, the property of **Enoch Redman**, boatman.

30 March 17 1849 Brackley

PETTY SESSIONS At the Petty Sessions, on Monday the 12th instant, a case of considerable importance to boatmen on the Oxford Canal Company's property was adjudicated on. The decision is calculated to cause the above portion of the industrious workers of society to be careful in not wasting the liquid property of the Company. **Richard Howes**, boatman of Banbury, charged by the above company with wasting water from the canal, was convicted in £2 fine and £1 2s 6d costs.

31 September 1 1849 Aylesbury

THE CHOLERA Much excitement was created in this town on Monday evening last, in consequence of a report becoming extensively circulated that a man of the name of **William Davis** from Marsworth, a boatman on the Aylesbury Canal, had been attacked by cholera. Mr J Ceeley of Aylesbury, surgeon, was called on to attend the poor man, whom he found lying on some straw in a shed adjoining the wharf, and at once pronounced him suffering from the above disease. A van was procured, and the man conveyed to the workhouse, where he was placed in the vagrants' ward, and every attention was paid him. We are happy to add that he is now nearly recovered from the attack. On being questioned as to the nature of the food he had been partaking of, he admitted drinking a pint of milk with his breakfast, and shortly afterwards "enjoying some half and half" which he had every reason to believe did not sit well on his stomach.

32 October 13 1849 Aylesbury

ACCIDENT An accident happened on Saturday last to a lad about 13 years of age, in the service of **Mr Thomas Landon**, a boatman of this town, who was thrown from a horse. It appears that the boy was riding a horse along the Oxford Road, where there were several others being ridden, belonging to horse dealers who had attended the market, and which were being tried as to their rate of speed, for the purpose of being sold. The lad, however, who was coming down the road, and not

liking to be outdone by his opponents, determined to try the speed of his horse against another, but he had no sooner applied the whip than the horse commenced kicking and threw him off, and he was pitched on his head, near the slaughter house of Mr Mitchell, where he laid for a considerable time, being stunned by the fall. On being picked up, his mouth was found to contain a quantity of blood and mud, and his nose cut and stuffed up with mud also; on a further examination he was found to have received a severe injury on the hip and several bruises; he was, however, conveyed home, and attendance was procured. The lad had been cautioned previously not to trot the horse.

33 October 26 1850

INQUESTS BY WM BRUNNER ESQ, CORONER On the 18th instant at Wolvercote, on view of the body of **John Paine** aged 50 years. The deceased was a boatman, and on the night of the 17th was in his usual health; he went to sleep on a sideboard in the cabin of his boat, and on the following morning was found on the cabin floor quite dead. Verdict, "Died by the visitation of God".

34 March 29 1851

PEREMPTORY AND UNRESERVED SALE AT THE
WORCESTER BAR LOCK, BIRMINGHAM.
FIFTEEN CANAL BOATS,
With their CLOTHS and all other proper equipments,
The Property of the IMPERIAL SALT and ALKALI COMPANY,
STOKE WORKS, near BRAMSGROVE, Worcestershire,
T O B E S O L D B Y A U C T I O N,
By Mr. R. PIKE,
In the Worcester Bar Lock Basin, Birmingham, on Thursday
the 10th of April, 1851, at half-past Ten for Eleven o'clock pre-
cisely, without reserve (by direction of William Turquand, Esq.,
the Official Manager appointed to wind up the affairs of this
Company, under the Joint Stock Companies' Winding-up Acts,
1848 and 1849); comprising 12 very excellent SALT BOATS,
with Top and Side Cloths, Salt Sheets, Lines, Planks, &c.; also
3 capital COAL BOATS, the whole in good working condition,
and fully particularized in catalogues, to be had at Mr. Turquand's
office, 13, Old Jewry Chambers, London; at the auctioneer's
offices, Oxford; at Aris's Birmingham Gazette and Midland
Counties' Herald Offices, Birmingham; of Mr. Sanders, surveyor,
Bramsgrove; at the Stoke Works; at the Gloucester Journal
Office; and of Henry Hodges, **broker** at the Bar Lock Basin,
where the boats may be seen two days previous to the sale.
N. B. The Furniture at the late Superintendent's Residence at
Stoke, with a variety of other Effects at the Company's Works,
will be sold upon the premises on the following day, April 11,
also without any reserve whatever.

35 June 21 1851

SINGULAR ACCIDENT A boatman named **John Watts** of Hill Morton, employed by a gentleman at Oxford was, on Wednesday evening last, drawing the paddle at the lock in Banbury Wharf for his boat to pass, when some part of it broke, and he lost his footing and fell into the water; his father, who was on the spot, and naturally much excited, fancying he might save him by so doing, let down the paddle, which fell upon him, the force of water having drawn him underneath, and some moments elapsed before it could be discovered where he was; the water was, however, let into the lock, and he came to the surface and, when taken out, exhibited no symptoms of life, but when removed, and restoratives applied, he began to revive, and is now in a fair way of recovery.

36 August 2 1851

INQUESTS BY WM BRUNNER ESQ, CORONER On Friday July 25 at the parish of St Thomas, on view of the body of Reuben Midwinter, aged twelve months, a son of a boatman named **Job Midwinter**. The mother stated that the deceased could walk about, and that three weeks ago, while they were having their breakfast in the cabin of their boat on the canal at Hythe Bridge, the child was on the floor; another child, three years old, reached to the table, and pulled a cup of tea over the breast and arm of deceased, and scalded it very much; the child was taken to Mr Hester, who attended it till its death. Mr Hester stated that the child died from inflammation of the chest, and diarrhoea, and it was probable that the scalding on the chest might have produced death. Verdict, "That deceased died by accident from being scalded on the chest and from inflammation and

diarrhoea consequent thereupon”.

37 November 1 1851 Banbury

TOWN HALL, MONDAY The case of **W Chard**, a boatman, for assaulting Ward, one of the police officers, was also adjourned,

38 November 29 1851 Wootten South Division

PETTY SESSIONS William Darby, the younger, and William Darby, the elder, were charged with assaulting **Henry Berry** of Ensham, boatman, on the 6th instant on the footpath of the Oxford Canal; fined 6d each and 8s 6d costs.

39 December 27 1851 Banbury

William Bridgewater, a boatman, was charged with an assault on John Pebody by seizing him by the heels, dragging him from the settle of the Packet beer house in Mill Lane, Banbury, “doubling him up” with his head on his chest, and legs over his body, turning him over, and kneeling on his back in the most ferocious manner and so suddenly that other persons in the tap room had not time to prevent it. When Bridgewater had left the victim, and made his vulgar boatman's expression, “Take that! You ----”, the party in the room thought Pebody dead; when a little recovered, he was conveyed to his brother's, but is still in a dangerous state, and has not recovered the use of his hands and legs. S Chesterman Esq, the surgeon who attended him, stated that the injury to the vertebrae of the neck was most serious, and that the whole body was paralysed; he had partially recovered, but he could not pronounce him out of danger. The parties had had “a round”, but were at the time of the assault drinking together; and the cause of offence to the prisoner was a stated debt of 2s, a long time since, left from an amount of 6s, of which 4s was paid previous to the affray. The prisoner was remanded till Monday next.

40 January 31 1852

CITY COURT, WEDNESDAY **Alfred Turner** of Abingdon, boatman, was charged with assaulting Thomas Jenkins, one of the University Police Constables, on the 27th instant.

Thomas Jenkins, sworn – Last evening, about a quarter past eleven o'clock, I was on duty in St Giles, and was requested by Mrs Neave, of the Pheasant, to remove a man who had burst her door open, and wanted to go into the house. I went to him, and got him away. He said he wanted to go to the canal. I took him through the churchyard, and showed him the way. He wanted me to go with him, but I refused; he then followed me about, annoying me with abusive language and threatening to fight me. I then led him through the churchyard a second time. He still annoyed me. I took him into custody, and he tried to throw me down; and when I got him to the police rooms, he struck me on the forehead. He was then locked up.

The defendant was fined 10s and 8s costs, or ten days imprisonment; he was committed in default of payment.

41 March 6 1852

SHOOTING AT A BOY **George Darby**, a boatman, was charged with wounding Charles Walker by shooting at him with a gun, with intent to do him grievous bodily harm. Mr Pigott for the prosecution; Mr Cripps for the defence.

Mr Pigott briefly stated the facts of the case, and then called the following witnesses: - James H Walker, son of Charles Walker of St Ebbe's – I was by the water side on the 14th of February with some boys, throwing stones in the water; two of them hit a barge passing. The prisoner, who was in the barge, said he would shoot us if we did not be quiet. We threw again, when he put a cap on his gun. My brother Charles threw again, when the prisoner put the gun to his shoulder and fired. My brother was hit in the eye.

Cross-examined by Mr Cripps – I have been in the habit of throwing stones before. Directly after my brother threw, the gun was fired.

Edward Carter – I am a labourer, and was near the water side on the 14th of February, and heard the man say to the woman, steer to the bank; she did so, and the man got into the barge. [This witness was evidently intoxicated, and was ordered out of court].

George Mills – I am one of the Oxford police ; on the 14th of February I went to take the prisoner into custody, and told him it was for shooting some boys. He said they were so frequently in the habit of throwing stones at the boats that they could not pass without being annoyed. He said that he had fired in the water to frighten them, and hoped they would leave off throwing stones.

Cross-examined – I knew the prisoner before as a steady, well-conducted man.

John Briscoe – I am a house surgeon at the Infirmary; between six and seven in the evening of the 14th of February, Walker was brought there; he had received shots in the eye, neck and shoulder; he had lost the sight of one eye, and is still in bed.

Thomas Lucas, superintendent of police, said he had examined the spot where the gun was fired; some of the shots had struck a fence, and some were lodged in a door near the bank; he had known an instance where shots which had struck the water had bounced off.

Mr Cripps addressed the jury on behalf of the prisoner, and urged that there was no intention to injure the prisoner, but merely to frighten him, and that the accident had been caused by stray shots aimed at the water.

James Piper – On the 14th of February I saw the prisoner get out of the barge, and when he got in again some boys were throwing stones at the barge. I saw the prisoner with a gun, and when it was fired, it appeared to be pointed towards the water.

Cross-examined by Mr Pigott – I was behind the prisoner, and saw him put the gun to his shoulder; he was on a higher level than the boys, who were 20 or 30 yards off of him; the gun was pointed towards the water.

Mr Maynard of Crowmarsh gave the prisoner a good character, and said that he believed he was not accustomed to the use of a gun, and had heard that he had recently won it in a raffle.

After a few observations from Mr Pigott, the Judge summed up, and the Jury convicted the prisoner of unlawfully firing the gun, but not with the intent to do grievous bodily harm.

Sentence – three months imprisonment.

42 March 6 1852 Banbury

INQUEST On Monday last an inquest was held on the body of **William Beesley**, infant son of a boatman, at the Hawk and Partridge, Cherwell Street, before J Churchill Esq, coroner. Verdict, “Died by the visitation of God”.

43 November 6 1852

CITY COURT, TUESDAY NOV 2 Mary Truby was charged with stealing a jacket belonging to **Thomas Cutting**. It appeared that the prisoner lodged in the same house as the prosecutor, who is a boatman, and while he was following his occupation, the jacket was stolen, and sold by the prisoner to Mrs Holt, who keeps a shop for second hand clothes. The prisoner was fully committed to take her trial at the next City Sessions.

44 January 14 1854

OXFORD CITY QUARTER SESSIONS **Alfred Shutes**, a boatman aged 19, pleaded guilty to the charge of stealing a watch and sundry articles, the property of Mr Thos Hickman, and was sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour.

45 June 24 1854

A WOMAN FOUND DROWNED The body of a female, supposed to be about 30 years of age, decently attired, and apparently advanced in pregnancy, has been taken out of the Wilts and Berks Canal, near Bug's Mill in the parish of Sutton Wick, about a mile from Abingdon. She is a woman of common stature, stout, fair complexion, dark hair; dressed in a dark plaid silk dress, with net-work around the sleeves, muslin work wrist cuffs, plain habit shirt, red ribbon around the neck, light

cashmere shawl, fastened with a common brooch, black kid gloves and elastic side boots, nearly new. She had no money in her possession when found, but in her pocket was a steel purse-ring and a tassel, and a pocket handkerchief marked "S A T", a hair brush, comb and toothbrush; and in a paper parcel near the body was a night cap, night gown and a pocket handkerchief, similarly marked; a dark parasol and a fancy straw bonnet were also picked up. From the fact of her having a wedding ring, it is supposed she is a married woman. It appears she was seen walking past the toll-gate by Mr Harper about three o'clock on the previous afternoon; at half past three a man in the employ of Mr James Simmons of Tith Barn Farm, observed her walking to and fro on the towing-path of the Canal (which is not a frequented walk), and she was next seen about half past four by a bargeman named **Fry** who, when about three or four hundred yards from the Pound Lock, near the Mill (the spot where the body was found) met the deceased, when they exchanged a passing remark as to the weather, and he noticed she was carrying a bundle on her arm, and had a parasol. Fry was, it seems, walking in advance of a barge to get the lock filled in readiness for its passing, as it was in a sinking condition and, according to his account, about twenty minutes elapsed before the barge reached the lock, and he had not again seen the woman, or heard any cries for help. With the boat were three other men, named **Cook, Mills and Horner**, and who, on coming up, was asked by Fry what they had just stopped for? When they said it was to pick out of the water a bundle, a parasol and a bonnet. Fry asked them if they had not met anyone on the towing-path, as a woman had just gone along? They said they had not; and although it appears they felt certain the woman referred to by Fry was drowned, they came on to Abingdon without first taking any steps in regard to the discovery of the body, or raising an alarm. We are supplied with the motive for this callousness by their subsequent proceedings, as it appears they went to the spot afterwards with a small dog, and examined the water, hoping doubtless to monopolise and make certain for themselves of the reward, but not succeeding in their search, and not feeling quite comfortable with the secret and the possession of the articles found, they took them later in the evening to the police office and gave information, and the next morning they went up to the spot and found the body immediately. An inquest was held on the body at Blanchard's Wharf, on the same morning, before E Cowcher Esq, coroner for the county, when evidence was given, from which we have narrated the foregoing particulars, and as rumours had been circulated affecting the character of the boatmen, their conduct in the matter was strictly scrutinised, but beyond the selfish and improper motives and their unfeeling proceedings, there appeared to be no ground of accusation against them. The Jury, after being satisfied by the testimony of a woman who was directed by the Coroner to make a careful examination of the body that there were no marks of violence, returned a verdict of "Found drowned". Publicity, by handbills and otherwise, has been given of the occurrence, with a full description of the deceased, but not the slightest information has been obtained as to her identity. The melancholy event has caused quite an excited interest in the town.

46 August 5 1854

PETTY SESSIONS – BANBURY DIVISION A boatman of the name of **Bustin** was fined £2 for drawing the paddles of the Lower Cropedy Gate before the lock was shut. Mr Nicks, one of the officers of the Oxford Canal Company, saw the offence committed, and stated that the same thing frequently occurred, thus causing a waste of water, and an injury to the lock gates.

47 August 19 1854

PETTY SESSIONS, BANBURY DIVISION **William Coles**, a boatman, was charged by Mr Nicks, one of the officers of the Oxford Canal Company, with having improperly drawn the locks at Cropedy, thereby injuring them, and causing a waste of water. The offence was proved by the lock-keeper, who saw it committed, and defendant was fined 40s including costs.

48 September 16 1854

Brackley

PETTY SESSIONS SEPT 11 In the case of **Cassell v Hone**, an assault charge, preferred by a boatman of Banbury against a brother boatman of the same place, an adjournment to the next

Middleton Cheney Petty Sessions was granted on the application of Mr Francillon, who appeared for the defendant.

49 November 18 1854

MURDER AT WOLVERHAMPTON A boatman named **Leverett**, accompanied by two other boatmen and his wife, were walking up Canal Street shortly before 11 on Saturday night last, with the intention of purchasing some article of food in the town. Opposite the door of the Admiral Vernon public house, a number of blackguard Irishmen were collected, who hailed the passing Englishmen with epithets of a most disgusting character, and insulted Leverett's wife in revolting terms. The woman asked her husband to turn back, as she was afraid of these scoundrels, to which the poor fellow replied, "It's as bad to go backwards as forwards, as there are lots of Irish behind". Immediately after this observation his wife was knocked down, her hand striking forcibly against a pump which is erected at the spot. Leverett was also felled to the ground. Leverett's two "butties", for such his companions were, managed to escape and communicated to a couple of policemen in Stafford Street the particulars of the savage and unprovoked assault that had just occurred. What followed is not so clear as could be wished; but we give the version related by Leverett's wife. She says that she was assisted from the ground by a woman and that, accompanied by her husband, she ran towards the Black Horse public house, where they met two policemen, who enquired if they were the parties who had been ill-used by the Irish. They replied in the affirmative, and the officers requested them to walk down Canal Street, promising to be on the watch if anyone dared to interfere with them. Unfortunately, they complied with this desire, and on approaching the spot where they had before been assaulted, saw the same four Irishmen again collected, one of whom exclaimed, "Here the ----- come again," and directly ran towards them. The woman was first knocked down, and while on the ground saw her husband fall heavily to the earth and, while in that prostrate position, receive several kicks from the fellows around him. The deceased man is a native of Oxford, twenty five years of age, and had only been married two months.

50 June 30 1855

Banbury

INQUEST An inquest was held at the Wharf House, Fenny Compton, on Friday week before H O Hunt Esq, on the body of a new born child, taken out of the water by **Charles Chard**, a boatman. Verdict, "Found drowned".

51 June 30 1855

INQUESTS BY W BRUNNER ESQ, CORONER On the 22nd inst, at Wet Sandford, on the body of Mr Paul Stone of Radley, farmer, aged 37 years, who had been found in the river, near to Sandford, that morning. From the evidence of Mr Mundy, landlord of the King's Arms, it appeared that the deceased dined there with some friends the previous day; they had some wine after dinner, and after deceased's friends left, he went to look over the paper mills, and on returning from them he had some supper, and then left for home; it was then about half past ten o'clock, and witness went across the lock gates with him, and saw him start on the road to Radley; he considered the deceased capable of taking care of himself, or he would not have let him go alone; deceased was not unfit to go by himself by the water side. The foreman at Sandford Mills stated that the deceased called in and looked over the mills, after which he had a little brandy and water, and then went back to the King's Arms and had some supper; he was not intoxicated. **William Woodley**, a boatman, stated that he was passing up the river to Oxford with his employer's barge, and on coming near to Sandford he discovered something in the river; with assistance it was got out and, on examination, he found it was the body of Mr Stone; he had formerly been in his employ; he knew the watch he wore and by that he identified the deceased. The water where the deceased was found was very deep, and the bank steep. The jury returned their verdict "Found drowned".

52 September 22 1855

Abingdon

A GERMAN MUSICIAN IN TROUBLE A man calling himself Daniel Foch, a member of a

56 December 6 1856

Banbury

BOROUGH POLICE, DEC 1 **Samuel Bonner**, boatman of Souldern, was charged by Catherine Curtis, Mill Lane, with being the father of her illegitimate child; he was ordered to pay 1s 6d a week for its support.

57 May 8th 1857

Bicester

POLICE OFFICE MAY 2 **Charles Taylor, William Drinkwater** and **James Cripps**, boatmen from Bletchingdon, were brought up on suspicion of stealing some rails from Souldern Meadow, the property of Joseph White; the evidence not being sufficiently strong, they were discharged.

58 May 30 1857

Bicester

PETTY SESSIONS – PLOUGHLEY DIVISION **Charles Taylor** of Bletchingdon was charged with having on the 28th of April last stolen four timber rails, value 3s, the property of Joseph White of Fritwell. The timber was missed from Souldern Meadow, and was traced to the premises where the prisoner lived; he did not deny taking the timber to the premises, but alleged that he picked the rails up out of the canal. His witness, a fellow boatman, was called to prove the story, but failed to adduce corroborative evidence. The prisoner was convicted and sentenced to three weeks imprisonment. Mr Massey, solicitor, of Oxford, appeared on his behalf.

59 January 2 1858

Banbury

BOROUGH POLICE DEC 26 **Joseph Watson** and **William Wells**, boatmen on the Oxford Canal, were each fined 8s 6d including costs, for being drunk and disorderly in the streets on the previous Sunday morning.

60 August 14 1858

CITY COURT **John Taylor**, boatman, entered into his own recognizances of £10 to appear at the next City Sessions to answer a complaint against him by the London and North Western Railway Company for leaving open a bridge near the Old Sheep-wash.

61 September 18 1858

CITY COURT, TUESDAY Harriet Berry, wife of **Henry Berry**, boatman, of the parish of St Thomas, complained of Mary Butlin, wife of **James Butlin**, boatman, of the same parish, for an assault. The case was settled by each party apologising to the other, and paying costs.

62 October 23 1858

BUCKS MICHAELAMAS SESSIONS **Edward Jenkins**, 26, boatman, charged with stealing one waistcoat, three handkerchiefs and three pairs of stockings, value together £1, the property of Jos Smith, at Linslade. One months imprisonment.

63 October 23 1858

The Grand Jury, in ignoring the bill against **John Taylor**, a boatman, against whom a bill of indictment had been preferred, charging him with wilfully leaving open the swing bridge on the London and North Western Railway, alluded to in the Recorder's charge, made the following presentment :- "That it is the opinion of the Grand Jury that an officer of the London and North Western Railway Company should be constantly in attendance at the swing bridge as a proper security to the public". The Learned Recorder considered it a very proper presentment.

64 February 5 1859

BOROUGH MAGISTRATES CHAMBER JAN 29 **Joseph Strange**, a boatman in the employ of Mrs Sophia Kimber, coal merchant, was convicted on his own confession, and sentenced to 21 days hard labour, for stealing a boat line, the property of his employer.

65 April 23 1859 Bicester

PETTY SESSIONS – PLOUGHLEY DIVISION **Wm Darby, Wm Wells** and **Joseph Jeffs**, boatmen, were charged by Edward West with having, on the 10th inst, stolen a quantity of poles, value 1s, his property. Jeffs was acquitted. Darby and Wells were convicted under the Criminal Justice Act. Wells was committed for 14 days and Darby for three weeks, Darby has been previously convicted.

66 July 23 1859 Woodstock

PETTY SESSIONS – WOOTTEN SOUTH DIVISION **Charles Humphris** of Ensham, boatman, was convicted in fine and costs £2 0s 6d for assaulting William Leech of Ensham, labourer; in default of payment to be imprisoned for fourteen days.

67 January 7 1860

MAGISTRATES CHAMBER DEC 31 **Henry Lander**, a boatman, earning £1 a week was ordered to pay 2s 6d per week towards the support of his mother.

68 March 24 1860 Banbury

BOROUGH POLICE MARCH 20 **George Verey**, boatman of Cassington was fined 10s, including costs, for being drunk and disorderly in Bridge Street on the previous night.

69 September 8 1860 Woodstock

PETTY SESSIONS – WOOTTEN SOUTH DIVISION **William Hudson**, a boatman, was committed for six weeks hard labour for stealing coal, the property of Mr Job Turner of Enslow wharf.

70 May 11 1861

A WOMAN FOUND DROWNED On Tuesday the 30th ult, an inquest was held by Wm Brunner Esq, Coroner, at the Bell Inn, Cassington, on the body of a woman unknown who was found drowned on the previous afternoon in Cassington stream by a boatman named Humphries of Ensham, who was coming with his boat from that place to Oxford. The Jury having viewed the body, which no one could identify, the following evidence was taken.

Benjamin Brown, one of the Jury, stated as follows: - Yesterday afternoon, about four o'clock, **Samuel Humphries** of Ensham, boatman, came to me as I was near my house, and said he had found a woman drowned in the river. James Belgrave and my son started towards the river, and I followed; when I got there I saw them bringing the body towards me. It is the same that the Jury have viewed. Humphries said that as he was going with his boat from Ensham towards Oxford, his wife, who was with him, saw a bonnet and cape on the tow path, near Cassington Lock, and they took them up; his wife said she thought a woman must be drowned; they went on, and a little further he saw a body on the surface of the water, and got it out.

The inquest was then adjourned to Thursday at 4 p m, as Humphries, the boatman, was not in attendance.

At the adjourned inquest, Samuel Humphries attended, and said: - I am a boatman. I live at Ensham, in this county. On Monday the 29th ult between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, I was coming with my boat on the River Isis, between Ensham and Oxford, but before I got to Cassington Lock I observed something on the towing-path. I put the boat to the shore, and my wife got out and picked up a black bonnet and black cape; the cape was spread open and the bonnet was on the cape; my wife said she thought someone was drowned; we put the cape and bonnet in the boat and came on, and when we got just below Cassington Mill stream, I saw something floating down the river, and as we got to it I could see it was the body apparently of a woman. I pulled it with a hitcher to the side of the river, and then got it out. It was the body of a woman dressed, but without any cape or bonnet, and was quite dead. It is the same body which was brought to this house and viewed by the Jury. The body had the appearance of having been drowned. I did not

know the person.

Elizabeth Green said :- I am wife of John Green of Cassington stream; I assisted in undressing the deceased, and carefully examined the body externally; there are not any marks of violence upon it, nor anything to lead to suspicion that her death was from violence.

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

The Coroner directed that the clothes taken off the deceased, as well as a ring and the cape and bonnet, should be taken care of by the constable, as they might assist in leading to the identification of the body. After the inquest, Mr Goodwin of Ensham came in to the public house where it was held and said he believed that the woman was at his house on Sunday afternoon the 28th ult, asking charity; that a man and a boy were with her, and that the man and woman were quarrelling when they left, but he did not know them.

71 August 3 1861

Banbury

BOROUGH POLICE, MONDAY Before Messrs Goffe, Rusher and Bennett. Whittaker Bevan, a carpenter and **William Duckett**, boatman, were charged with being drunk and fighting in Bridge Street on the previous evening; they were each fined 5s and costs or in default 14 days imprisonment.

72 September 14 1861

FRIGHTFUL ACCIDENT IN A CANAL TUNNEL To the long list of recent railway fatalities there is to be added a melancholy and fatal accident which happened on Saturday in a tunnel on the Grand Junction Canal, near Blisworth, Northamptonshire, whereby two men have lost their lives, and the lives of two other men have been placed in imminent danger.

The tunnel in question is sufficiently wide to allow of the passage of two boats at the same time. There is no towing-path, and the only means of ventilation is a shaft near the middle of the tunnel; but this shaft is enclosed by woodwork at the top, as it is not many yards from the turnpike road between the villages. Until very recently all the boats on the canal were towed by horses. On arriving at the mouth of the tunnel the horses are detached, and sent on above ground to the other end of the tunnel, where they are again attached to the barges. The boats themselves are worked through the tunnel by men termed "leggers" who lie in the boats on their backs, and propel the barges through the tunnel by means of their feet.

The Grand Junction Canal Company have, however, within the past few months, made an important alteration in the mode of working their barges, so as to dispense with the services of these "leggers". Last November they started one barge, called the *Pioneer*, fitted with a small screw propeller. Since that time they have fitted other boats with a similar apparatus, which is said to answer very well, and to be extremely economical.

On Saturday evening a barge called the *Wasp*, fitted with one of these screws, was on its journey from Birmingham to London, having another boat in tow. In the first boat were two men named Gower and Jones, engine drivers, and one or two other men employed on the canal. They were passing through the tunnel at about the rate of three miles per hour, and stopped at a place called "stanks", which is a number of piles driven in to afford a standing place for some workmen who were engaged in repairing the tunnel. Here they took in a carpenter named Edward Webb, who lived at Stoke Bruerne. They proceeded to their way, and soon afterwards met in the tunnel two other boats, which were being worked by "leggers". They became entangled, but in about ten minutes were set free. The boat which the steamer was towing was, however, unloosed from it, and was left behind. The smoke from the engine flue became dreadfully dense, and very much affected the "leggers", so much so that they could not work. On board the steam boat its effect was such that it suffocated two men, one of whom fell into the water and was not found until some hours afterwards. A third man in the company's employ was so overpowered that on arriving at the mouth of the tunnel he too fell overboard; the water, however, restored him to partial consciousness, and he managed to climb on board the boat again, and instinctively shut off the steam. The boat could only proceed a short distance, and on arriving at the lock the awful catastrophe was at once

revealed. The young carpenter was lying dead in the hold, one of the boatmen was missing, and the two engine men were lying near the furnace, awfully burned. They were at once removed to the Boat Inn, adjoining the lock, and medical men were immediately sent for. They attended to the sufferers, who are now progressing favourably, though it will be a long time before they are again fit for work.

The following is a list of those who were killed and injured :-

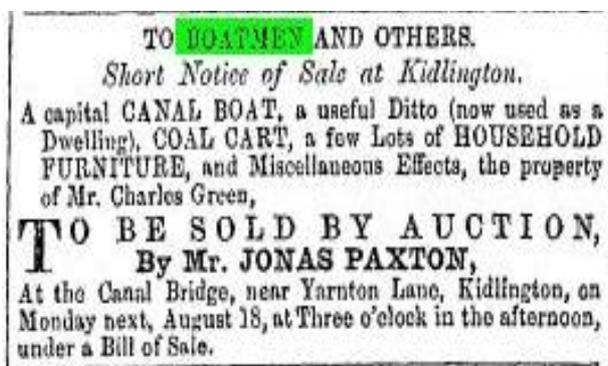
DEAD – Edward Webb, carpenter, of Stoke Bruerne, **Edward Broadbent**, boatman of Bramston, living at Birmingham.

INJURED – **Joseph Jones**, engine driver, severely burned; **William Gower**, engine driver, severely burned; **John Chambers**, boatman of Warwick, injured by immersion and partial suffocation.

73 September 21 1861 Banbury

SEPT 16 Anthony Cripps was charged with stealing several articles of wearing apparel, the property of **Richard Pensley**, boatman, but, as the charge could not be substantiated, he was discharged.

74 August 16 1862



TO BOATMEN AND OTHERS.
Short Notice of Sale at Kidlington.
A capital CANAL BOAT, a useful Ditto (now used as a Dwelling), COAL CART, a few Lots of HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, and Miscellaneous Effects, the property of Mr. Charles Green,
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
By Mr. JONAS PAXTON,
At the Canal Bridge, near Yarnton Lane, Kidlington, on Monday next, August 18, at Three o'clock in the afternoon, under a Bill of Sale.

75 February 21 1863 Aylesbury

MAGISTRATES CHAMBERS FEB 14 **Joseph Edmonds**, boatman, was fined 5s, including costs, for being drunk and disorderly at Wendover on the 31st of January.

76 July 4 1863 Oxfordshire Trinity Quarter Sessions

STEALING PLANKS AT NEITHROP John Roberts, 32, labourer, **Joseph Spencer**, 24, boatman, and **Robert Aldridge**, 21, boatman, were charged with stealing three planks at Neithrop on the 15th of May, the property of Thomas Welch Barrows. Mr Sawyer prosecuted.

The prosecutor is an engineer at Banbury, and Roberts was in his employ, while the other two prisoners were in the service of the Board of Health, on adjoining premises. Charles Stow, a fellow workman, saw Roberts take a plank from Mr Barrow's timber yard, for which he gave a very unsatisfactory reason, and afterwards saw the same and another plank in the Board of Health yard, which he recognised as his master's, though they had been rubbed with mud. Edward Jarvis, another of the prosecutor's workmen, deposed to seeing Roberts take a plank into the Board of Health Yard. Supt Gaskins went to the canal at Leamington Hastings, and found in the barge on which Spencer and Aldridge removed the sweepings from Banbury, the plank which the previous witnesses had identified. The two prisoners, on being asked, said that the plank belonged to them, and that they had had it from the Board of Health Yard. The witnesses stated that planking was used in wheeling the sweepings on to the barge, but of an inferior kind to that found. The Deputy Chairman thought that there was not sufficient evidence against Spencer and Aldridge. Robert's defence was that he lent the planks to a man named Callow. Roberts was convicted and sentenced to three months hard labour, the other prisoners being acquitted.

77 December 26 1863

BANKRUPTS – Bankrupts from the London Gazette of Friday Dec 18.

Thomas Knight, Neithrop, Oxfordshire, boatman, Dec 31 at 10 County Court, Banbury.

78 October 29 1864 Banbury

BOROUGH POLICE On Wednesday (before the Mayor and Mr Bennett) **Richard Pearman**, a boatman from Kirtlington, was committed for seven days, in default of paying fine and costs, for being drunk in Bridge Street on the previous evening.

79 October 6 1866

INQUESTS BEFORE W BRUNNER ESQ An inquest was held before W Brunner Esq on Monday last at the Running Horses, on the body of Edward Ragan, aged 29, a travelling dealer in woollen and cotton goods, who was drowned in Louse Lock on the previous Saturday night. The deceased was a native of Northampton, and born of Irish parents.

The first witness examined was Thos Carroll, a traveller stopping at the Rose and Crown, New Road, who said he had known the deceased for about five weeks. He dealt in woollen and cotton goods and was also a traveller. He last saw him on Saturday night, about seven or eight o'clock; they had both engaged lodgings at the Ship Inn, and as they were going towards their lodgings, he was accosted by a female, with whom he entered into conversation. Witness left him talking to her. The deceased was a Northampton man, and had a wife and two children there. Witness had seen the body and identified it. He had had a glass or two to drink, but he was not drunk, and was perfectly capable of walking.

Mary Ann Pope, who said she lived in High Street, St Thomas's, deposed that she met the deceased about half past eight o'clock on Saturday night, near to the Queen's Arms Inn. The deceased was with another man. She accompanied him up the towing-path, between the canal and the river. They were walking along and had come to the lock, when all at once he fell in. She screamed out, and some men came up and got him out. She believed he fell in without catching his foot against anything, and did not think he was drunk. She heard him swimming in the water, but could not see him, and said to the men who came up, "There he is!" They had not had any altercation, and nothing improper had taken place between them.

James Beesley, jun, boatman, stated that shortly before ten o'clock on Saturday night he heard someone calling out, "Help!" He and his father instantly got some drags, jumped in a punt, and proceeded to the lock. The woman pointed out the place where she said the deceased had fallen in. There was seven feet of water. The clothes were warm but the man appeared to be dead. The body was taken to the Running Horses, and the usual means employed to restore animation, but without avail. A surgeon was also sent for.

Robert Hawes, one of the University police, stated that he was told of the occurrence on Saturday night, and searched the person of the deceased. There was no money, but a meerschaum pipe and gold pin. He found that he had been in company with Pope, and he asked her to show him the spot where he was drowned. She did so, and said he had been across the lock gates and fell in after crossing it, as also that he swam about four yards.

The witness Carroll said the deceased had not any money on him when he left him, except 3d, which he gave him himself.

Mr Hosier stated that the account which had been given to the police officer by Pope tallied with what she had told him.

Mr Beesley stated that the place in question, on a dark night, was very dangerous, owing to stumps of wood, over which anyone might easily stumble.

The Jury almost immediately returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

An enquiry was held at the King's Arms, Sandford, on Wednesday, touching the death of **George Franklin**, a boatman, who was in the service of Mr Wire of Dorchester. Deceased went through

Sandford Lock on Tuesday week with a boat going to Oxford. When the man in charge of the boat reached Iffley lock, he missed deceased, and he was not found till last Wednesday morning, when his body was perceived in the old lock pool. The Jury returned an open verdict.

80 August 31 1867 Bicester

PETTY SESSIONS – PLOUGHLEY DIVISION **Thomas Hunt** of Oxford, boatman, was charged with having, on the 23rd inst, at the parish of Lower Heyford, feloniously stolen a horse, the property of **William Evans** of Oxford, his master; no prosecutor appearing, he was discharged.

81 May 9th 1868 Banbury

PETTY SESSIONS **George Taylor** and **Charles Taylor** of Bletchingdon, boatmen, were charged with wilfully damaging the grass growing in a meadow in the occupation of Mr E Deer of Bodicote. It appeared that the policeman found the horse in the meadow at night, and the two men in their boat on the canal close by. The prosecutor impounded the horse at the time, but afterwards released it without payment of the damage, and then took out the summons for wilful damage. The Magistrates did not consider this the proper course, and dismissed the summons.

82 June 20 1868 Henley

PETTY SESSIONS **George Poulton** of Goring, boatman, charged with having stolen, on the 28th ult, monies of the value of 13s, the property of his employers, Messrs F and G Weedon of Goring, was committed for six weeks to hard labour.

83 July 11 1868

CITY COURT **Geoffrey Beesley**, boatman, was charged with violently assaulting Thomas Harris at Medley Lock on the 3rd instant. Adjourned for a fortnight.

84 October 17 1868 Oxford City Sessions

STEALING A BANK NOTE **Henry Taylor**, 49, boatman, was charged with stealing a Bank of England note for £10 from the person of **Stephen Hanks**, on the 19th of February, the money of Isaac Mouldey of Culham. Mr W Brunner was for the prosecution, and Mr G Mallam for the defence. On the 19th of February, Mr Mouldey engaged Taylor and Hanks to fetch some coals from the Moira Colliery. While on their way thither, the note was extracted from Hanks's pocket while he was asleep in the barge and the prisoner was with him. Hanks got drunk that night at the Running Horses, Oxford, while in the company of the prisoner, "Capt Dabb" and other persons, who were alleged for the defence to be improper characters and more likely to commit the robbery than the prisoner. Nothing more was heard of the note till the following August, when it was paid in at the London and County Bank at Newbury. The number of the note having been retained, it was traced to the prisoner. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

85 February 13 1869

INQUESTS BEFORE W BRUNNER ESQ On Tuesday last, at the dwelling house of **Sam Tolley**, boatman, Upper Fisher Row, St Thomas's, on the body of his son, George Tolley aged 13. James Beesley of Upper Fisher Row, having heard that a boy was missing about 12 o'clock on Saturday morning, searched the river before that house and the road, and about fifty yards below, he found the body of the deceased. Emily, the wife of Sam Tolley, said the deceased had been subject to fits, and was seized suddenly and staggered and fell when they came on. She believed the boy must have fallen into the water in a fit. Verdict "Accidentally drowned".

86 April 24 1869 Banbury

BOROUGH POLICE APRIL 19 Police-constable Puffitt was charged with assaulting **George Edwards**, a boatman, and Ann Meads, wife of William Meads of Castle Street West. It appeared that Edwards and some others were in the High Street late on Saturday night the 10th inst, making a

noise; they were told to move on, but would not; a scuffle ensued, and complainants considered themselves assaulted; both cases were dismissed, the Bench considering that Puffitt had not exceeded his duty.

87 November 13 1869 Buckingham

BOROUGH PETTY SESSIONS Before the Mayor and Alderman Allen and Chandler. A travelling grinder named Kent was charged with stealing a gold ring from the house of **John Owen**, a boatman, but, as a witness necessary to prove the case was unable to be present by reason of illness, the case was adjourned for a week.

88 March 19 1870 Faringdon

PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY **John Beesley**, a boatman in the employ of Messrs Townsend of Abingdon, maltsters, was fined £2 10s and £2 1s costs for navigating his boat on the Wilts and Berks Canal at Bourton during prohibited hours.

89 May 7 1870 Wantage

DEATH BY DROWNING On Friday April 29 W D Wasbrough Esq, Coroner, held an inquest at the Lamb, Wantage, to enquire into the circumstances attending the death of William Pert, aged 76 years, a shoemaker of Wantage, who was found dead in the Wilts and Berks Canal the same afternoon. The following evidence was taken :- **Frederick Townsend** deposed – I am a boatman and live at Abingdon, from which place I was coming today, on my way to Somersetshire. When the boat reached the Grove Lock I saw a man's hat in the lock tail. The lower lock gate was open, and the hat was under the bridge, but within the lock. I then saw something in the water and ran to the top of the bridge, when I discovered the body of a man floating on the water, and apparently dead. I saw no motion. In a field just by I saw a man working with horses. I called to him, but he could not leave his horses. Three women came and afterwards others. I got on to the boat, and with the boat hook I drew the body towards the shore, and the women got it out of the water and laid it upon the grass, where it remained till it was removed home. The lock gate must have been open an hour. Sarah Pert, widow of deceased, said that her husband had been attended by Mr Green since January, and his illness had rendered him very weak. He had an allowance of brandy weekly from the parish, and of late had improved in health. When the weather was favourable he went for a walk daily. At times he was depressed in mind, and spoke much on religious matters. On Sunday night, when he went to Chapel, he was so weak as nearly to fall down the steps. After he had his dinner today he said he should go for a walk, and thinking it would do him good she advised him to do so; she had no reason to suppose he was likely to commit suicide; they lived most happily together. James Palmer said – About a quarter past two I was walking by the canal. I saw the deceased about 100 yards from the Grove Lock walking in the direction of Wantage. He spoke to me. I replied and passed on. When I came back to the same spot, in about an hour, several people were there, and the body of deceased was floating on the water of the lock. Townsend said, “What had we better do?” I said, “Get him out”. The body was got out and laid upon the grass whilst I was there; life was quite extinct. I recognised the deceased as the same man I met an hour previous. The Coroner having summed up the evidence, the Jury found a verdict “That deceased was found drowned, but how he came into the water there is no evidence to show”.

90 June 11 1870

OXFORD CITY COURT – TUESDAY **William Butlin**, boatman of Fisher Row, was charged with assaulting P C Partridge at Pacey's Bridge on the 4th inst, and **Mary Butlin** (mother of William Butlin) and **William Dawson** of Fisher Row, were also accused of assaulting P S Adams and P S Clark at the same time, as well as with attempting to rescue William Butlin. It seemed from the evidence that Butlin and another man not in custody were fighting near the bridge, when the officer went up and separated the combatants. Again they began fighting and were parted; a third fight ensued, and an attempt was made to get the men separated, when Butlin struck Partridge on the

nose. At this moment Mrs Butlin, the prisoner's mother, came up and tripped the officer, who fell, on which Butlin kicked him about the head and body, and Mrs Butlin aided her son in knocking the officer down each time he rose after being knocked down by her son, William Butlin all the while assaulting the officer with both fists and feet. Inspector Soanes, with Sergeants Clark and Adams, then coming up, Wm Butlin was secured and as he was being conveyed to the lock up on the shoulders of the officers his mother attempted to rescue him; and Dawson, while accompanying the party, kicked Sergeants Adams and Clark, for which both Dawson and the woman were locked up. P C Partridge, who is still suffering from his injuries, gave evidence to the above effect, and was corroborated by P S Adams, who added that when he got to Pacey's Bridge he found a mob of people about Partridge and Wm Butlin. The former was nearly exhausted from the treatment he had received; and witness seized hold of Wm Butlin, whereupon the latter bit the Sergeant's thumb through the nail, seriously wounding it. Adams then requested the aid of William Dawson, another boatman, who stood by, but Dawson refused to help him; and as the Sergeant, with the help of Inspector Soanes, Sergt Clark and Partridge, was conveying Butlin to the police station, Mrs Butlin jumped on his back and attempted to rescue her son. Indeed while she was in this position he son bit her thumb, thinking it was that of the officer; the latter was also kicked and beaten by Dawson and others in the row. Mr Joshua Alban Smith, Gloucester Green, saw the fight and also the assault on P C Partridge who, he said, was kicked about the head and body as he lay on the ground. Seeing the danger of Partridge he ran for assistance, and sent Sergt Adams and others to the scene. He also saw Mrs Butlin assault Partridge. Henry Harvey, living in St Thomas's, proved an assault on P S Adams by someone in the crowd, but he did not know who, and he naively swore that Dawson helped to convey the prisoner to the station, instead of attempting to rescue. He did not know, however, that it was Dawson who assaulted the officer. P S Adams interposing, said that Harvey had volunteered to give evidence in the case, and had then said that Dawson was the man; Harvey strongly denied this, but Inspector Soanes corroborated P S Adams statement. The end was that the Mayor said they placed little faith in Harvey's evidence. Inspector Soanes proved an attempted rescue by Mrs Butlin, and an assault on P S Adams and also on P S Clark, who had come to the rescue. Mr Brunner, in defence, appealed to the Bench to deal mercifully with the case, more especially as regarded the mother, who had only interposed on behalf of her son from maternal feelings. Butlin himself was excited by drink, and as for Dawson he appeared to have done little in the melee. Mr Brunner then called a man named Watts to show that Dawson had aided the police when asked to do so, and that he did not kick Sergeant Adams. Watts said he helped to convey Butlin to the station; but this was denied by the police, who said they alone took Butlin into custody. The Magistrates deliberated in private, and the Mayor announced their decision to be that the whole three charges of assaulting the police in the execution of their duty had been proved. William Butlin would have to go to prison for three months; Mrs Butlin, in consideration of her being the mother of Butlin, would be fined 10s and costs 10s; in default of payment she would be sent to gaol for 14 days. They considered Dawson's case a serious one, and he would have to be imprisoned for 21 days. In reply to the Mayor, the Superintendent of Police said there were constant rows in this neighbourhood on Saturday nights, and he hoped this would prove an example to others.

91 September 17 1870

Jesse Duckett, a boatman from Banbury, was charged with stealing £4 15s from the pocket of **John Smith**, another boatman, on Saturday night last. Duckett, it appears, had been engaged about Smith's boat, discharging the cargo, when he learnt that Smith had some money about him. The captain of the barge, Smith, went to his hammock early on Saturday night, having the money then in his pocket. In the course of the morning he awoke, missed his money, and gave information of his loss to the police. Intelligence of the robbery was sent to Banbury, and after due enquiry the prisoner was apprehended the same night, he then having £2 upon him. He was sent to gaol for three months, with hard labour.

64, boatman, who pleaded guilty to stealing, on the 11th of September, an iron pot, the property of Martin Nathan. Two previous convictions were proved against the prisoner, who was sentenced to three years penal servitude and seven years police surveillance. The Recorder cautioned Mr Nathan against exposing his goods outside his shop.

100 May 2 1874

OXFORD CITY COURT, FRIDAY **Benj Johnson**, boatman of Jericho, was fined 5s and 6s costs for being drunk and incapable in George Street on the 13th of April.

101 June 20 1874

MAGISTRATES' CHAMBER JUNE 13 **Wm Dorman**, a boatman, was charged at the instance of the Grand Junction Canal Company with having cruelly ill-treated a horse belonging to them by beating it with a piece of iron called a "windlass" on the 3rd inst, at Marsworth. He pleaded guilty, and was fined £2 and in default was committed for one month.

102 July 4 1874

BUCKS MIDSUMMER SESSIONS **John Baylis**, 53, boatman, charged with stealing seven bags of lime, value 21s, the property of Charles Nelson and Company, at Simpson. Six months.

103 August 7 1875

OXFORD CITY COURT, FRIDAY **Henry Harris**, Blackfriar's Road, was charged with assaulting Daniel Williams of 136 High Street, at the Regatta, on Monday last, on the raft of the *Oriel* barge. The plaintiff had paid a waterman a penny for landing him at the raft, and the defendant asserted that he had provided the raft especially for the Odd Fellows, and if strangers stopped they were charged 6d. The plaintiff refused to pay this, whereupon he was put ashore, and this constituted the assault. A witness named Best, of 2 King Street, High Street, said the plaintiff was the worse for liquor at the time. The case was dismissed.

104 June 3 1876

OXFORD CITY POLICE COURT, TUESDAY **Thomas Faulkner**, boatman, 95 Great Clarendon Street, Jericho, was charged with being drunk and incapable in Hythe Bridge Street on Sunday night. He pleaded guilty, and P C Skelcher said he found him lying by the side of the river in the Fisher Row. He was fined 5s and 3s 6d costs, or 7 days, and cautioned not to appear again.

105 July 7 1877

INQUEST BEFORE W W ROBINSON ESQ, COUNTY CORONER On Monday evening at the Plough Inn Wolvercote, to enquire into the cause of death of **William Lapworth**, aged five years, the child of **John Lapworth**, a boatman of Nuneaton, whose body was found in the Oxford Canal near Duke's Lock, on Sunday evening. From the evidence it appeared that deceased was missed on Sunday afternoon from the canal boat in which he travelled with his parents, and upon making search a stick, which he had been accustomed to use, was seen floating a short distance from the spot where the boat was lying, near to Duke's Lock. It was then surmised that he had fallen into the canal, and the body was soon afterwards found, but the child was dead, having been in the water for two hours. Next morning, upon drawing the paddles, the father of deceased found under the step a small bat which belonged to deceased, and it was therefore supposed that, having lost the bat, he was endeavouring with the stick to reach it out of the water, and accidentally fell in. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

106 July 21 1877

DEATHS FROM DROWNING On Monday afternoon a case of drowning occurred at Ashton near Preston. A boatman named **John Kay** was proceeding with his boat, which was laden with coal, from Preston to Lancaster. Four of his children were on board, his wife having remained in Preston.

Dunn left the cabin and closed the door, and Griffin immediately afterwards assaulted her. He offered her sixpence and she refused it. Griffin then assisted her out of the boat, and she was crying. A young man on the railway asked her what was the matter, and she said she wanted a policeman, she had been insulted. He told her to walk towards Oxford, and she did so, and found one near Jones's Hotel, and described the men to him. He took her to the police station, and she was there examined by Mr Briscoe. Cross-examined by Dunn – He did not ask her to get off the boat at Wolvercote Lock, neither did he at the next bridge. The boat was not stopped at the drawbridge before Heyfield's Hut, and she never refused to leave the boat at the bridge opposite Mr Beavis's house at Wolvercote, but she was told that they could not run the boat ashore there as it was heavy. She left the boat about half past eleven near Heyfield's Hut. Mr J Briscoe, FRCS, examined complainant about three o'clock on the day in question, and her statement was borne out by appearances which he noticed. Charlotte Parsons, the mother of the girl, said her son and daughter left home on the day in question shortly after eight o'clock in the morning. The boy returned about twelve o'clock, and in consequence of what he said she came to the County Police Station at Oxford, and was present when Mr Briscoe examined her daughter. John Smith, a policeman in the service of the London and North Western Railway Company, said about 20 minutes past 12 on Wednesday last he saw one of Clayton's barges in the canal lock, and he opened their bridge for them to pass. He did not see the prisoner Griffin at that time. He had seen Dunn before, and knew the boat in which he travelled, but did not remember Griffin. When on the railway the prosecutrix who was crying and walking on the canal towing-path, called out to him and made a statement to him. He was 100 yards away, and the prisoner Dunn was on the boat about 20 yards off. The girl pointed to Dunn and said, "These men have been insulting me, and won't allow me to pass". He told her where she would be likely to find a policeman. P C Butler of the City Police, said about half past twelve on the day in question the prosecutrix came to him and told him she had been grossly insulted, and he took her to the County Police Station. He apprehended Griffin at the Gas Works, and charged him, and he said he knew nothing at all about it. When the girl came to him in Park End Street she was not crying and was quiet. Griffin told him his mate's name was Dunn, and about a half an hour afterwards he met the prisoner Dunn, and asked him if his name was Dunn, and he said it was not. He asked him if he came along the canal on one of Clayton's boats, and he said, "No". He asked where his horse and boat were and he said they were at Sandford. Mr Bickerton said he felt it to be his duty to advise his client to reserve his defence, and he also applied for bail for him. Prisoners were committed for trial at the Assizes, bail being refused.

112 May 11 1878

Banbury

BOY DROWNED IN THE CANAL On Tuesday evening a boy, named **John Brown**, aged 9, the son of a boatman, was drowned in the canal, near the Tweed factory. An inquest was held the same evening at the Leathern Bottle, before T Pain Esq, coroner. Mr George Sansom was Foreman of the Jury. The following was the evidence adduced : - **John Brown**, boatman, Hartshill, deposed that the deceased was his son, and was in the habit of accompanying him with his boat. He was between 9 and 10 years of age. He last saw him alive between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. He left him in the boat, and told him he was going to the town. Witness went to John Hone's in Mill Lane to have some beer, and when he returned he could not find deceased. He made inquiries, but no one had seen him. He saw his hat floating in the canal a short distance from the boat, and a short time afterwards the body was dragged out by a man named Parker. Witness said he was absent from the boat for an hour and a half. **Albert Parker**, a boatman of Coventry, stated that he saw the deceased while he was at work during the afternoon. About five o'clock he heard his father inquiring for him, and a short time afterwards he saw a hat in the water, which he pulled out. He then got an iron rake, and after he threw it into the water three times, he dragged the body of the deceased out, and it was brought to this house. The deceased was quite dead when he got him out of the water. The Jury returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased had been "accidentally drowned" but they considered that there was neglect on the part of the father in not getting a medical man to see the body when it was taken out of the water, as there was no evidence to prove

how long the body had been in the canal. The father was called into the room, and was informed of the opinion of the Jury.

113 June 29 1878

INQUEST BEFORE E L HUSSEY ESQ, CITY CORONER On Thursday at Ward's Dock near Walton Well, on the body of **Charles George Ricks**, aged four years, son of **David Ricks**, boatman, which had been found in the canal that morning near the drawbridge. The father stated that the boy was with him at three o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, and some time after he missed him; thinking he might have fallen into the canal he walked about in the water for over an hour, but could not find him. A man named John Berry, boot closer of Summertown, having heard that the boy was missing, went to the place and pointed out to the father the spot where he had seen him sitting on the brickwork at the edge of the canal, and on the grappling irons being used the body was fished up in the course of a minute or two. The Jury returned an open verdict of "Found drowned".

114 July 13 1878

PETTY SESSIONS JULY 6 **Samuel Dickins**, a boatman, was summoned on the information of P C Robinson for keeping a dog without a licence at Aylesbury on the 3rd of June. Defendant was fined 20s.

115 July 13 1878

Oxfordshire Summer Assizes

SERIOUS CHARGE OF RAPE **George Griffin**, 21, boatman and **Emmanuel Dunn**, 23, boatman, were indicted for committing a rape on Emily Parsons at Wolvercote on the 3rd April. The Hon F Parker prosecuted, Mr J Ashton Cross defended Griffin, and Mr Bailey defended Dunn. The Hon F Parker, having briefly opened the case, called:-

The prosecutrix, 15 years of age, who said – On Wednesday the 3rd of April, about half past eight o'clock in the morning, she and her brother, aged seven, went to Kidlington for some medicine and started back about ten o'clock by the side of the canal. Near Yarnton Lock she saw the two prisoners with a barge. Dunn, who was leading the horse, asked her if she would like a ride. She said she would, and they accordingly brought the barge to the bank, and she and her brother got on board. After proceeding some distance, she and her brother went into the cabin. On their arrival at Duke's Lock she said she should not get out till they arrived at the next bridge. When near the bridge she told Griffin she wished to get out, and he said she could not as the boat was heavy, and they could not get it near the shore. Shortly after this her brother left the cabin, and Griffin came in, and the assault complained of was then committed. Subsequently she went to Mr Townley's public house and made a statement, and afterwards spoke to a man on the railway, and he told her where she would find a constable. She afterwards went to the police station, and was there examined by Mr Briscoe.

Cross-examined by Mr Cross – Dunn spoke to her first. She spoke to Griffin before she got on the boat, but did not ask him to assist her on to it. She did not get out at Wolvercote Lock because she was going to the house of Mr Beavis, which was opposite the next bridge.

Charlotte Parsons, mother of the last witness, said her son and daughter started to Kidlington together in the morning, and her son returned shortly after 12 o'clock by himself. In consequence of what he said she went to the police station at Oxford, where she saw her daughter. She was present when she was examined by Mr Briscoe.

John Smith, policeman on the London and North Western Railway, said on the 3rd of April the prosecutrix beckoned to him as he was on the railway near the canal. She appeared in a very excited state. He saw Dunn on the bank with a barge and she, pointing at him, said, "Those men have insulted me".

P C Butler, of the Oxford City Police, said he was on duty in Park End Street on the 3rd April, shortly after 12 o'clock, and the prosecutrix made a complaint to him. In consequence of it he apprehended Griffin at the Gas Works, and afterwards saw Dunn and asked him if he came with one of Clayton's boats, and he said his name was not Dunn and that he did not come with Clayton's boat.

Sergeant Leach proved apprehending Dunn the same day, and in reply to the charge he said he gave the girl a ride but denied the assault.

Mr John Briscoe, surgeon, proved examining prosecutrix on the 3rd of April, and his evidence tended to show that the offence had been committed.

Mr Cross and Mr Bailey addressed the Jury for the defence, the former urging that they had had no evidence laid before them that violence was used by either of the prisoners, especially Griffin, and called :-

Mr William Clayton, boat owner, Birmingham, who stated that Griffin had been in his service for a number of years, and that he bore an excellent character.

His Lordship, in summing up, dwelt on the various points which had been raised by the Counsel for the defence as to the manner in which the prosecutrix made her complaint, and the facts shown by the medical evidence, and said it was for them to consider whether force or violence was used by the prisoners, or whether the prosecutrix was a consenting party to the occurrence.

The Jury retired to consider their verdict, and after an absence of three quarters of an hour returned into Court, and the Foreman asked if a particular threat used by Dunn was equivalent to physical force.

His Lordship said he did not consider that question was raised. The point for them to consider was whether the girl practically and substantially consented or not. If prosecutrix consented through fear of strong language, of course it was against her will.

A Juryman said he did not think there was any chance of their arriving at a unanimous verdict, and his Lordship said if they could not the prisoners would have to be imprisoned till next Assizes before they could be again tried. They (the Jury) would have to be locked up for some hours before they were discharged.

The Jury then again retired, and returned into Court in about an hour when, being unable to agree, Mr Matthews said he was directed to discharge them. Mr Cross applied for bail for Griffin, and also on behalf of Mr Bailey for Dunn. Griffin was bound over in the sum of £50 and two sureties in the sum of £25 each to surrender at the next Assizes, and Dunn was informed that if he could find substantial bail he also would be liberated.

116 November 2 1878

Winter Assizes

FELONIOUS ASSAULT AT WOLVERCOTE **George Griffin**, 21,(on bail) and **Emmanuel Dunn**, 23, boatman, were indicted for committing a felonious assault on April 3rd last in a canal boat at Wolvercote, on a girl named Emily Parsons. The prisoners were put on their trial at the Summer Assizes but as the Jury were unable to agree, they were remitted to these Assizes.

The Hon F Parker prosecuted, and Mr Ashton Cross defended Griffin, and Mr Bulley defended Dunn.

The facts, as deposed to by the girl, who was under 15 years of age at the time, were that on the day in question she, with her brother, left her home at Wolvercote to go to Kidlington for some medicine, and they returned by the side of the canal. When they got as far as Yarnton Lock they were overtaken by the prisoners, one of whom was driving a horse, and the other was steering a canal boat. They asked her if she would like to ride and, on replying that she should, they lifted her on to the barge. They had been on board about ten minutes when her brother went into the cabin; she followed him, and Griffin showed her where all the things were kept. At Wolvercote Lock she said to her brother that they would not get out until they arrived at the next bridge, but when they got there the prisoners said she could not get out as the boat was heavily laden. Her brother, however, left the cabin, leaving her there, and after passing the bridge, Griffin came into the cabin and asked her to kiss him. She refused, and he said she ought to for giving her such a nice ride. He went out and Dunn came in, and then she alleged the offence was committed by each of the prisoners, the door being shut. She screamed and cried, and tried to get away. Griffin offered her 6d, which she refused to take, and asked to be let out. She got out at the next bridge, and saw two men, named Townsley and Smith, and from what they said she went for a policeman.

Cross-examined by Mr Cross – One of the men did not ask her if she was not going ashore when the

boat was in Wolvercote Lock. She did not get out there because Beavis's house, where she was going to, was nearer the next bridge. She did not know where her brother went when he left the cabin, nor where he got ashore, as the cabin doors were shut. She screamed but could not remember saying anything. The moment she said she wanted to get ashore Dunn steered the boat in shore, and Griffin helped her off the boat. She did not, on leaving, say, "Good morning, thank you". Cross-examined by Mr Bulley – Dunn attempted liberties with her some time before the offence was committed, but she did not leave the cabin because she felt faint. Dunn took off his coat and waistcoat between that and the offence, but she did not get up off the seat during that time on account of feeling faint.

By his Lordship – She had no bruises anywhere, although she struggled all she could. She thought she was in the cabin two hours altogether, and she stayed there because it was warmer than outside. She was not afraid that her brother, who was seven years old, when he left the cabin would fall into the water. She did not remember that she talked to either of the prisoners before the offence. It began to rain when she was in the cabin. She allowed her brother to go out into the rain when he left the cabin. Dunn said he would knock her nose flat, but Griffin did not threaten her at all. Her hair was disordered, and her hat was crumpled.

Charlotte Parsons, the mother, said that the girl's undergarment was torn.

James Townsley, landlord of Heyfield's Hut public house, situate about fifty yards from the canal, said that the girl came to his house on the 3rd of April. Her hair was down, her hat was off, her jacket was torn, and she was crying bitterly. He gave her information respecting the boatmen.

John Smith, a policeman on the London and North Western Railway, said that he saw the girl on the 3rd of April in an excited state and crying, and she told him that the prisoners had been insulting her, and would not let her pass.

Police-constable Butler, of the Oxford City Police, said that, in consequence of what the girl told him, he charged Griffin with a gross assault upon her. He apprehended him, and subsequently he met Dunn at St Aldate's. He denied that his name was Dunn, or that he had been on the canal that morning. He was apprehended the same night at Kidlington.

Mr Briscoe, surgeon, Oxford, stated that the result of his examination of the girl was that he found no bruises, but appearances were consistent with something having taken place.

Mr Cross denied, on the part of Griffin, that any force was used but that, on the contrary, the most willing consent was given, and he proceeded to point out the inconsistencies and improbabilities of the girl's story, observing that the surgeon's statement completely disproved her statement.

Mr Clayton, barge owner, Birmingham, was called to give evidence as to character on the part of Griffin who, he said, he had known from his youth as being quiet, respectable and well-conducted.

Mr Bulley addressed the Jury on behalf of Dunn.

His Lordship, in summing up, said that the question for the Jury was whether what was done – for it was admitted that something was done – was with the girl's consent or not; and, if guilt and innocence were left in doubt, it was their duty to give the prisoners the benefit of it. They would have to consider that these two men were strangers to this girl of 14, and whether they could believe that she was so abandoned. One great point in her favour was the prompt and immediate complaint which she made to the first two men she met, but then they must bear in mind that she bore no bruises, which one might have expected would have been existent. He, in conclusion, impressed upon them the necessity of their having no doubt before they convicted the prisoners.

The Jury, after about five minutes consultation, found the prisoners guilty.

His Lordship, in passing sentence, said that the Jury had found them guilty of the crime of rape. It was a grievous thing that a young child, who had occasions to go about, should be subject to such an outrage, and there was nothing to protect her but the law. The sentence upon them was that they be kept in penal servitude for ten years.

117 January 24 1880

Aylesbury

FATAL ACCIDENT THROUGH SCALDING Joseph Parrott Esq, coroner, held an inquest at the Bucks Infirmary on Thursday last, touching the death of two children named **Eliza Jane Merchant**,

aged three years, and **Joseph Wm Merchant**, aged fifteen months, who died at that institution on the previous Wednesday from the effects of scalds. It appeared from the evidence of the father, **John Merchant**, who is a boatman, that on Tuesday he was going with two boats into the locks at Clifton, his wife, sister and brother, and another young man and himself being in charge. As the first boat (in which deceased lived) was entering the lock the rope broke and shook the boat, shaking also a pot which was on the fire on to the children, who were alone in the cabin, and he, seeing steam issuing from the cabin, went down at once and found the children dreadfully scalded. Everything possible was done for the children, and a doctor at Leighton Buzzard was sent for, who immediately ordered the removal of the children to the Infirmary, where they died the morning after admission, never having rallied. The Jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

118 April 9 1881

Easter Quarter Sessions

STEALING A GUN AT CROPEDY William Barnett, 32, labourer, and William Hunt, 20, labourer, were charged with stealing a gun, the property of **Thomas Wills**, at Cropedy on December 13th. Mr Mackarness prosecuted.

The prosecutor, a boatman on the Oxford Canal, said Edward Barnett, brother of the prisoner, came to the boat about five o'clock and assisted him in putting the boat straight. He stayed with him about three hours, and they left the boat. On returning at ten o'clock his gun was missing.

Subsequently he and a policeman went to Hunt's house, and he saw his gun there.

Police-constable White deposed that he went to Hunt's house on the 19th of March. His mother handed him the stock of the gun produced, and the barrel was found in the pocket of a coat hanging in the house. He arrested Hunt and charged him with stealing the gun, and he replied, "I did not steal the gun; I had it from William Barnett, and I told him I would have nothing to do with it".

Sergeant Baker said, on March the 20th, he charged Wm Barnett with the theft. He said, "I know nothing about it". He took him into custody, and the prisoner then said, "I should not have done it if I had not been in beer".

Supt Cope deposed that Hunt told him that Wm Barnett showed him where the gun was. He declined to have anything to do with it but, after some persuasion, he took it to his house.

Barnett declared that he did not steal the gun. His brother-in-law, who had gone away, told him where to find it,

Barnett was found guilty of stealing and Hunt of receiving, the latter being recommended to mercy on the ground that he was persuaded to take the gun by the other prisoner.

A sentence of six weeks hard labour was passed on Barnett and three weeks on Hunt.

119 April 23 1881

INQUESTS BEFORE E L HUSSEY ESQ, CITY CORONER On Tuesday at Upper Fisher Row, on the body of **Henry James Webb** aged 17. **George Webb**, boatman, father of the deceased, said his son had been out of health for a long time and had not been able to work. His feet, legs and one of his arms were much swollen, and Dr Gray had attended him since the late frost, and had given him medicine. The deceased had kept his bed for a fortnight, and died on Saturday before he could be seen by a medical man. Verdict "Death from natural causes".

120 September 24 1881

Banbury

COUNTY POLICE, THURSDAY **William Rowbotham** and **John Hone**, boatmen, Banbury, were charged with stealing 4lbs of beef, value 3s, from the boat of **Thomas Grantham**. The evidence showed that Hone took the meat out of the boat as it was passing, and divided it between several of his companions. Rowbotham admitted having some of the meat, but said he thought it belonged to Hone. Hone pleaded guilty, but urged that he was drunk at the time, and took the meat in a mistake, his own boat lying close to Grantham's. He was committed for 21 days, and Rowbotham was discharged.

121 March 11 1882**Oxford City Police Court**

DRUNK AND RIOTOUS CHARGES **John Joseph Butlin**, of no fixed home, was charged with being drunk and riotous in Hythe Bridge Street on Monday night. He pleaded guilty and P S Keen said he heard shouting while in George Street, and on getting into Hythe Bridge Street he found prisoner among a lot of boatmen, swearing very much. He threatened witness, and was with difficulty got to the station. Fined 5s and 3s 6d costs, or 7 days.

122 March 18 1882**Winslow**

SPECIAL SESSIONS On Wednesday March 15th, before E W Selby-Lowndes Esq, G R Greaves Esq and Lieut-Col Hubbard, **John Edwards** of Tring, boatman, was fined 20s with 22s 8d costs for travelling on the London and North Western Railway from Bletchley to Winslow on the 9th inst without having paid his fare and with intent to avoid payment thereof, and was sent to gaol for 14 days in default of payment. The same defendant was also committed for 14 days hard labour for assaulting P C Alfred Clifford into whose custody he was given for the above offence at the same time and place.

123 July 1 1882

BUCKS MIDSUMMER SESSIONS **Daniel Berry**, 43, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing 60lbs of coal, value 8d, the property of William Adams, at Wolverton on May 24; also to a previous conviction for stealing coal, at Northampton in 1879. 3 months.

124 September 16 1882**DEATH**

September 4 at 15 Fisher Row, Oxford, Mary, widow of Thomas Ashley, boatman, aged 100 years
DEATH OF A CENTENARIAN The death is announced, at the advanced age of 100, of **Mrs Mary Ashley** of 15 Fisher Row, St Thomas's, Oxford, who expired on the 4th inst. Mrs Ashley, who enjoyed very good health almost up to the time of her death, was the widow of **Thomas Ashley**, a boatman, who died a few weeks since at a very advanced age. The remarkable age of the deceased has been verified by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

125 October 21 1882**Oxfordshire Michaelmas Quarter Sessions**

STEALING FOWLS **William Johnson**, 25, boatman, was indicted for stealing three fowls at Kidlington on the 17th November 1881, the property of Charles Pease of Thrupp.

Mr Keating prosecuted; the prisoner was undefended.

The prosecutor, who is a porter on the Great Western Railway, and lives at Thrupp, said his house abutted on the Canal, and he had seven fowls in a pen – five being game and Black Spanish, and two Dorkings. On the evening of the 17th November he missed the birds, and communicated with the police. He went with an officer to a boat on the canal and found three of the fowls there. Three men and a boy were on the boat, all of whom, except the boy, ran off.

Emily Busby, who lived close to the prosecutor's house, said that on the 17th November as she was returning from Thrupp she heard a slight whistle, and when she got to the fowl house she met three men. They had a donkey, which was drawing a boat. She then heard the fowls making a noise, but she could not recognise anybody but the prisoner.

By the prisoner – He was close by the donkey on the footpath.

Charles Hone, aged 14, said that on the 17th November he was boating on the canal, and was going that day from Oxford to Banbury. The prisoner and two others were in charge of the boat. The men went into the prosecutor's pigsty, and when they came out he saw that they had a fowl each. The birds, which were of a black colour, were put in the fore part of the boat. The skins produced were similar in colour to the birds. Johnson told witness not to tell the policeman about the fowls.

P C Judge said in consequence of what the prosecutor said to him he went to the boat, and found the three men and the boy in the cabin. He searched the cabin, but not finding anything there he went to the fore part of the boat, and there found three fowls under half a truss of hay. When he returned

to the cabin the three men had gone, and he took the boy into custody. The prosecutor identified the fowls as his.

Inspector Hawtin deposed to receiving the fowls from the last witness, and the skins produced belonged to them.

P C Baker said he apprehended the prisoner on the 5th inst, and he then denied stealing the fowls or knowing anything about them, until the policeman came to the boat.

P C Judge (recalled) said one of the other men, **Fulbrook**, had been tried and convicted in January last.

The prisoner, in his statement, asserted that Fulbrook stepped on to the boat with something under his arm, which he took to the fore part of the boat.

Lord Jersey went carefully through the evidence, and said the question for the Jury was whether they thought the prisoner was a direct party in the theft of the fowls.

The Jury found the prisoner guilty of being in possession of fowls knowing them to be stolen. He was then charged with having been previously convicted, to which he pleaded not guilty, whereupon Inspector Matthews, of Towchester, proved that he was convicted in April at Northampton in the name of **Jackson** for stealing a lamb at Blisworth.

He now admitted the conviction, and was sentenced to six calendar months hard labour.

126 February 17 1883

Oxford City Police Court

REFUSING TO QUIT LICENSED PREMISES **Thos Cleaver**, boatman, Medley, was summoned for refusing to quit the Royal Blenheim, Little Clarendon Street, on the 8th inst. Defendant pleaded guilty, and the case was dismissed on payment of 6s costs.

127 March 3 1883

Oxford City Police Court

DRUNK AND RIOTOUS **John Brockhall**, boatman, of no home, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Queen Street on Friday. P C Butler said the prisoner was the means of drawing together a crowd of people through his drunken and disorderly conduct. He made use of bad language, and refused to move on. The prisoner denied that he was drunk. Supt Head handed in a list of five convictions, and the prisoner was fined 5s and 3s 6d costs, or seven days.

128 June 9 1883

Banbury

INQUESTS Mr C D Faulkner, County Coroner, held an inquest at the Temperance Hall on Saturday morning, touching the death of **John Windsor**, infant son of a boatman from Oldbury. The child was with its parents on Thursday night in a boat halting near the Castle Wharf, and on Friday morning when the mother woke, she found the child dead in her arms. Dr Hudson was of opinion that death was caused by convulsions, and the Jury returned a verdict accordingly.

129 June 21 1884

PETTY SESSIONS, JUNE 14 **Joseph Fanthorn**, boatman, was charged with assaulting Joel Bedford at Wendover on June 4. It appeared that some dispute arose between the parties with reference to the delivery of some trusses of hay at Wendover Wharf, when the assault took place. Fined 5s and costs.

130 October 16 1884

BUCKS MICHAELMAS SESSIONS **Edw Smith**, boatman, was charged with stealing from the person of Henry Parry Rowe two loaves of bread, value 5d, the property of Henry Wells, at Linslade, on the 23rd of July last. Prisoner pleaded guilty, and the Chairman told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself to rob such a lad, and sentenced him to three months hard labour.

131 February 6 1886

INQUESTS BEFORE E L HUSSEY ESQ, CITY CORONER At the Red Lion, Kidlington, on Monday, on view of the body of an unknown woman between 45 and 50 years of age, found in the

Oxford Canal on the previous Friday.

Joseph Beauchamp of Fisher Row, Oxford, boatman, deposed :- About three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday last I was going with two boats on the Oxford Canal, from Oxford towards Banbury, and when between King's Bridge and the drawbridge in Kidlington parish he noticed the top of a woman's hat in the canal when about 20 yards distant, and stopped and told his wife, who was on the boat, to pick the hat up. When she attempted to do so, the body of the deceased rolled over as the boat approached it. I then got a line and tied a drag to it, and caught the body, which was then upright in the water – which was between five and six feet deep. I landed the body on the towing-path; it was dead, the eyes were open, and both hands were in the pocket of the ulster which deceased wore. About 300 yards further I saw a brown silk umbrella in the ditch over the hedge of the towing-path, and a bottle containing some liquid was also in the ditch. I had not seen any person on the towing-path, and about two hours previously a boat passed me on the canal. The body appeared not to have been long in the water. I went and gave information to the police. The deceased was not known to me.

Joseph Ford, of the Duke's Lock, deposed that on Thursday, January 28th, he saw the deceased walk along the towing-path from the Duke's Lock in the direction of Kidlington, about three o'clock in the afternoon. She carried an umbrella under her right arm, and had both her hands in the pocket of her ulster, and I noticed nothing particular in her appearance. The distance from the Duke's Lock to where the body was found is not quite one mile. About twenty minutes afterwards two women came from towards Oxford, and asked me at the Duke's Lock the road to Wolvercote. I told them they had passed Wolvercote, and pointed out the road, and they returned in that direction. On Friday I saw no one pass along the towing path excepting boatmen.

PC George Judge of Kidlington, described finding the umbrella and bottle in the ditch, and that there was a gap in the hedge from which the umbrella could be seen, also that the mark of a boot heel was visible on the towing-path, as if someone had walked into the canal. Upon searching the body a white pocket handkerchief was found in a pocket in the under skirt, which was marked "HT" in red cotton. The pockets of the ulster were empty. He took a pair of ear drops from the ears, and found a brooch consisting of four rings, which fastened a red woollen scarf worn by deceased. Deceased was dressed in a dark brown ulster, black gown, black petticoat with striped lining, a red flannel petticoat, red flannel drawers and red bodice and stays, blue stockings and button boots, and a black silk bonnet with pheasant feathers, black bugles and red lace around it, and black knitted worsted cuffs. The body had the appearance of being drowned, and there were no marks on it. He had not been able to discover who the deceased was, though he had made numerous inquiries. Mr Parry of Kidlington, surgeon, had examined the body, and did not find any marks or injuries, and found the face was drawn aside a little, and that the pupils were unusually dilated, which would indicate that deceased might have had an epileptic fit. The age appeared to be between 45 and 50, and deceased had not been in a very humble condition of life, judging from her hands and feet. The appearance of the body was that of having been drowned.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

132 March 20 1886

Fenny Compton

The Warwickshire police, having thoroughly investigated the professed confession made by **Samuel Mountford**, a boatman of Wordsley, of complicity in the murder of Police-constable Hine at Fenny Compton on the 15th of February, are satisfied that the man's statement is devoid of truth, and have consequently discharged him. The fact that the prisoner was a boatman, and that the body was found in the canal, furnished some grounds for suspicion, but subsequent statements and inquiries showed that the self-accused prisoner could not possibly have had a hand in the perpetration of the murder. The murder still remains a mystery.

133 April 17 1886

Oxford City Police Court, Tuesday

DRUNK AND DISORDERLY **Alfred Edwards**, boatman of the Upper Fisher Row, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Hythe Bridge Street early on Saturday morning. He pleaded

guilty and P C Mortimore said he had to bring him to the station because he would not desist making a noise. Fined 1s and 3s 6d costs, or 7 days.

134 April 24 1886

Deddington

INQUEST An inquest was held by Mr C D Faulkner at Somerton on Thursday se'nnight on the body of John Prickett, about 68 years of age, gardener to Mr Bevello Ramsay of Croughton, who was found drowned in the Oxford Canal on the previous day. **John Arnold**, a boatman, said that he was working two boats on the canal on Wednesday, when he saw the body of deceased floating in the middle of it; the top of the head was on a level with the surface, and the body was floating in a bent position. He sought assistance, and Mr Stephen Plumb, blacksmith of Somerton, came and assisted him in getting the body out. Other witnesses were examined, but no facts were elicited as to how the deceased came in the canal. The Jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

135 July 3 1886

Abingdon

A WOMAN BURNT TO DEATH On Saturday Mr B Challenor, Borough Coroner, held an inquest at the Guildhall on the body of **Sarah Edwards**, aged 72 years, wife of **Thomas Edwards** of Abingdon, boatman. The husband said : It was a little after three o'clock on the previous afternoon that he left his house for five minutes. Deceased was then sitting in the arm chair by the fireplace. There was very little fire in the grate; not more than a handful. He heard someone cry out, and ran back up the yard, and saw his wife's clothes on fire. She was awake when he left her. He assisted to extinguish the fire. They put her to bed, and got two doctors to see her, but she never opened her eyes or spoke again. Thirza Darling, the wife of Stephen Darling of West Street, a neighbour, said she was sitting at work in her cottage, and on looking up saw deceased open her door. She was full of flames and all on fire. Witness called out for assistance, and helped to put the fire out. All her clothes, except her stockings and shoes, were burnt. She appeared conscious, but did not speak until her husband came, when she said, "Is that you, Thomas?" There was only a small fire in the grate. Verdict, "Accidentally burnt to death".

136 April 23 1887

Oxford City Police Court

HARD SWEARING Thomas Powell, landlord of the Perch Inn, Binsey, was summoned for assaulting **William Robert Tanner** of Medley, boatman, on the 13th inst. The complainant said he was at the Perch for about two hours on the day named, and was sober. The defendant had pressed him to play a game of cards, and a dispute arising he called him names, and ordered him out of the house, and as he was going out he was struck on the eye. On looking round he saw defendant striking his wife, and he returned and struck him with his strap. The defendant said he had refused the complainant permission to play cards, and had desired him to keep away from the house. This was denied by Tanner, whose wife stated that the defendant pressed him to play at cards, and said he would pay what was lost, even if it were a barrel of beer. After striking her husband and calling him names the defendant caught her by the hair, called her foul names, and struck her. He also called to his son Joe to bring a stick. The defendant said that both Tanner and his wife were "more or less" the worse for drink, and they did no credit to his house, which he had asked them to keep away from. He called his daughter, Elizabeth Mary Robinson, who said she heard Mrs Tanner quarrelling with her husband, and she saw her pick up a can and strike him across the face. Her father requested them to leave, and Mrs Tanner then struck him on the eye with the can (causing a mark). Her father then got them outside, and she heard loud words outside. Tanner took off his belt, and it was taken from him by her brother just as he was about to strike her father a second time. Her father did not strike Tanner. Richard Styles of Binsey said he heard the defendant order Mr and Mrs Tanner to leave; they refused to go, and he saw Mrs Tanner strike the defendant on the face with a can. He did not see the defendant strike Tanner. Tanner and his wife declared that neither Mrs Robinson nor Styles was present, and the only person who saw the affair was defendant's son. The case was adjourned till Friday, the Bench being of opinion that they had not got to the bottom of the matter.

THE LATE MR. WILLIAM WARD.

The accompanying sketches of the Oxford Boatmen's Floating Chapel, and of the Drinking Fountain at Walton Well, may be of interest in connection with Mr. William Ward's life in Oxford. With regard to the former, we are permitted to publish an interesting letter from the then Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Bagot, to Mr. Henry Ward, but whether Mr. Ward's good example was elsewhere followed we cannot say.

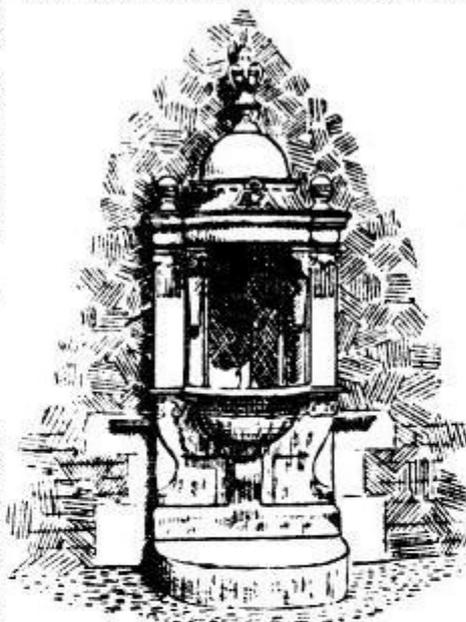
COPY OF LETTER.

Blithfield, near Rugby.

April 3rd, 1840.

SIR,

I will not apologise for the trouble I may give in the request I am about to make, well knowing it will gratify you to hear that the example you so laudably and generously set in endeavouring (and I thank God successfully) to give means of Religious instruction to that



Drinking Fountain, erected near the site of Walton Well.

neglected and too often de- praved class, the **costume** on your Canals, is likely to spread.

I have been requested by some influential people in this county to gain what information I could respecting the **Boatmen's** Chapel which I lately licensed in Oxford, which is the cause of my troubling you.

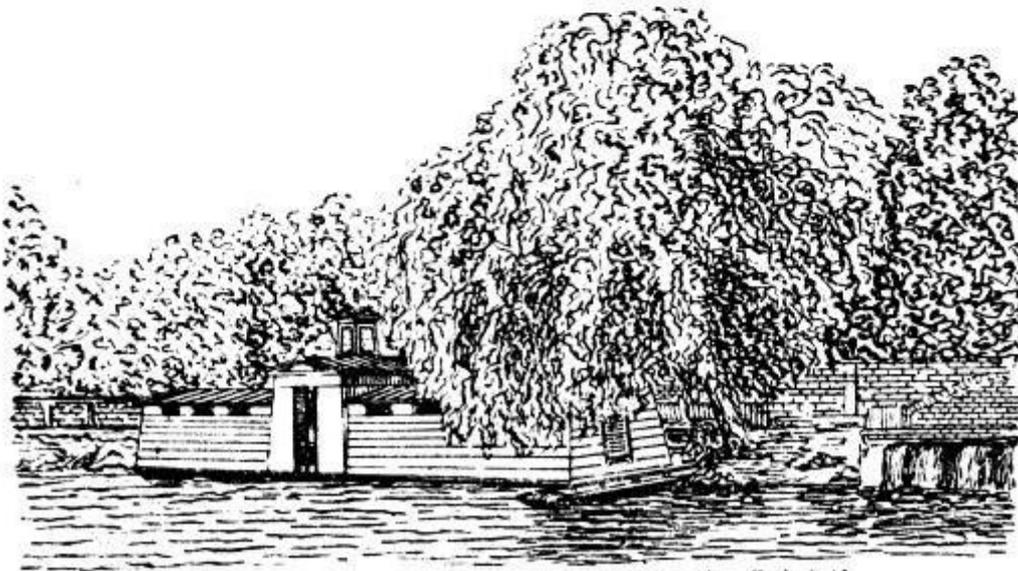
I shall be greatly obliged to you therefore, if you have no objection, to allow me to have an abstract of the deed of grant by which you gave the Chapel, and which, I doubt not, will give me every information.

It has given me sincere pleasure to hear how well the service is attended.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Your faithful servant,

R. Oxroad.



Boatmen's Floating Chapel, formerly moored on the Old River above Hyths Bridge.

138 December 3 1887

Oxford City Police Court

STEALING COAL AT MIDNIGHT **William Thos Simmons**, boatman, of no home, was charged with stealing a quantity of coal, value 1s 6d, from a barge at Osney Lock, at 1 15 am on the 24th of November, the property of Wm Pratt. P C Bates said he saw the prisoner on the iron footbridge over the railway at Osney with 1 1/2 cwt of coal produced in a sack. In reply to him, he said he had a bit of coal which he had got from a barge at Osney Lock, Mr Pratt, the owner of the boat, having given him leave to take some. The constable requested him to accompany him to Mr Pratt's, in the Fisher Row, and on waking him up he said that the prisoner had no right with the coal. The prosecutor, a coal haulier by means of barges, said he had never given the prisoner permission to take coal. The prisoner had been helping him to work the boats for six weeks. Sentenced to one months hard labour.

139 November 17 1888

BERKSHIRE AUTUMN ASSIZES **Arthur George Redknap**, 15, boatman, pleaded guilty to committing a burglary at the house of Henry Percy Kilby at Bisham, and stealing five boxes of cigars, value £6 on Oct 19, and £1 4s 11d on Oct 20, and was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment and three years in a reformatory.

140 November 2 1889

FOUND DEAD ON THE CANAL PATH On Thursday last the City Coroner (Mr E L Hussey) held an inquest at 24 Fisher Row on the body of **Daniel Gibbons**, aged 77 years, who resided at 25 Fisher Row. Emma Gibbons, wife of the deceased, living at 25 Fisher Row, stated that her husband was formerly a boatman. He had been subject to epileptic fits for some years, and had been attended by Mr Thompson. He had sometimes been brought home in a fit. On Tuesday he was pretty well, and after having had his tea about four o'clock, he said that he would go out for a walk. She always went out and searched for him if he was gone very long. He said that he was going towards Osney Bridge, but he went the other way. She went in the direction of Osney Bridge, and on her return about six o'clock was met on the steps at the end of the row leading into the street and told that her husband was dead. Thomas Howkins, ink maker, 35 Juxon Street, deposed that he knew the deceased, whom he had heard was subject to fits. On Tuesday evening about 5.30, witness was on the bank of the canal near the ink manufactory, and saw the deceased on the towing-path. The deceased, who seemed to be in his usual health, stood talking to witness about five minutes, and after a time he turned back towards home. There was no one in sight on the path when the deceased left him. Witness came back to get some article for himself about half an hour afterwards, and then saw the deceased lying quite dead under the hedge on the towing-path, exactly opposite the tallow factory. Several other people were then present. Henry Hyatt, maltster, 23 Cardigan Street, stated that about six o'clock on Tuesday evening he was on the towing-path of the canal, not far from St Barnabas Church, when he saw something lying under the hedge. He had a friend with him, and it was then nearly dark. They obtained a candle from the Ferry House near by, and Mr Mortimer, who lived there, recognised Gibbons, who was quite dead. The deceased was lying on his face, and had one hand in his pocket. Verdict, "Died suddenly in a fit of epilepsy".

141 October 3 1891

Bicester

TORTURING A BOY ON A CANAL BOAT At a special sitting of the Bicester Petty Sessions on Friday, **Henry Hodson**, 20, a powerful looking young fellow, described as a boatman of Longford, near Coventry, was charged with cruelly ill-treating and beating John Brown, aged six years, by striking him, and also by throwing him into the canal on several occasions between August 16 and September 1. Mr Hope Kyd, barrister, appeared to prosecute on behalf of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; and Mr F W R Lindsay, solicitor, defended.

Thomas Brown, aged 13, stated that his mother was a widow, and lived at Longford. For about five weeks witness had been working for the prisoner on a canal boat running between Longford and Somerton. The prosecutor was witness's brother, and on August 16 Hodson said he would take the lad for a trip to Oxford if his mother would allow him to go. As it was holiday at the school their mother gave her consent, and they all left Longford early the following morning. The first day they went as far as Atherstone Quarries, where the boat was loaded with stone, and they then proceeded down the canal. Hodson made witness's brother drive the horse, and because he did not drive quick enough he beat him with a hand brush, and then ducked him in the canal. Witness said, "Don't beat Jack, beat me", and Hodson then turned upon witness and gave him a good thrashing. On the 20th ult they were at Fazeley, and witness was sent on ahead to pay the canal tolls, and on his return to the boat his brother was crying bitterly. Witness asked him what was the matter, and he said that Hodson had been thrashing him. His hand was bleeding. A few days later they were at Somerton, and while there Hodson beat the boy very severely, striking him over the head and body with a whipstock, and blacking one of his eyes. The eye swelled very much, and Hodson wanted witness to cut the swelling with a pocket knife to reduce it, but this witness refused to do. On

Sunday, while still in the vicinity of Somerton, Hodson tied a rope round his brother's waist, and threw him into the canal. The boy kept sinking under water, but every time he did so Hodson pulled him up again with the rope. This treatment was continued for some time, and on being pulled out of the water the lad could hardly stand, so Hodson took him to a stable on the bank till he came round. The lad was a day or two recovering from this treatment. They returned to Longford on September 1, and the boy was again ill-used because he lost a farthing which Hodson had given him. The prisoner beat him over the head and body with a hand brush and bruised him very much. The lad was then put in a cabin, and stayed there all night till witness went home and told their mother, and she went down to the boat and took his brother away.

Dr Orton of Bedworth stated that about midday on Wednesday Sept 2, the boy was brought to his surgery, and at the request of the mother he examined him. He found a contused wound on the back of the head, and there was also a wound on the side of the face. One eye was covered with contused wounds. The lad's shoulders, arms, legs, hips, ribs and almost the whole surface of the body was covered with severe bruises. There was a small wound at the bottom of the spine, and several wounds on the back of the left hand. Unusual and excessive violence must have been used to produce the bruises, which appeared to have been caused at different times, but within a week or ten days. Replying to Mr Lindsay, witness said he had known the prisoner some time and had always found him an industrious, steady young man.

The mother of the lad said before she gave her consent for her son to go, Hodson promised to take care of him.

Mr Lindsay, for the defence, said that acting under his advice the prisoner would plead guilty to a common assault. The case had been worked up by a powerful society, and everything that could be brought against the prisoner had been put forward; but he asked the Bench to believe that it was not so bad as it had been painted. The prisoner showed kindness of heart in inviting this lad to take a trip during his holidays and so let him see a bit of the country. The prisoner had to keep the boy out of his own pocket, and it was not to be believed that he would wilfully and maliciously injure him. Mr Francis Standing, a coal merchant of Longford, stated that he had known the prisoner from childhood and had always found him a quiet, inoffensive young man.

The magistrates retired and, on returning into court, the Chairman said that taking into consideration the previous good character, and the fact that the prisoner had already been ten days in gaol, they had decided to treat him leniently. The sentence of the court was that he would go to prison for twenty one days.

In commenting on the above, the *Daily Chronicle* says :- "One of those unaccountable cases of atrocious and continued cruelty which occasionally shock the community came to light at Bicester yesterday. A boy named Thomas Brown, employed on a canal boat, obtained the permission of the boatman, Henry Hodson, for his brother John, a lad of six, to accompany them on a journey to Oxford. When the boat left Longford, near Coventry, Hodson for no apparent reason commenced to torture little John in an extraordinary manner, and apparently was unable to refrain from beating and abusing the lad, even up to the return home. The defence was simply that the matter had been exaggerated, but this was disposed of by the medical evidence. Now what was the duty of a Bench of Magistrates in such a case? Unfortunately they could not order a sound flogging, but they went to the other extreme, and on the ground of previous good character and ten days already spent in gaol, they let the ruffian off with three weeks hard labour".

142 April 21 1894

AN ABINGDON MAN DROWNED The body of Samuel Cook, who was a familiar figure in Abingdon from the fact of his having worked for years at the clothing factory, was taken from the Berks and Wilts canal on Saturday morning last. Deceased had been missing since the previous Wednesday morning. Our readers may draw their own conclusions as to the cause of the unfortunate man's death from a perusal of the evidence given at the inquest held on Saturday evening at the Old Air Balloon, Ock Street, before Mr Coroner Challenor.

Elizabeth Cook, a daughter of deceased, said her father was 54 years of age and resided in Ock

Street. He was a cutter at Messrs Clarke's factory. He worked there regularly until about three years ago when he had to go to Moulsoford Asylum as a patient. He was there a year and nine months and was discharged cured. He has not worked at his old trade since then. He had complained of depression of spirits for some time past. He could not sleep, and had been under Dr Martin since he came from the asylum. He had been regularly taking chloral to produce sleep. He had said he could not come home again, and that he could not live such a life, but as he came home they used to take no notice of what he said. She last saw him alive on Wednesday morning about eight o'clock at home. She thought he was better, but seemed very depressed. He said his head was very bad.

William Dolman, a boatman residing at Shafton near Swindon, stated that that morning he went in his canal boat from Steventon to Abingdon. He was on the bank near the Tythe Barn Lock, and was going to fill the lock. He shut the outside bottom gate, and as he jumped across on to the other side before filling he noticed the body of deceased in the water at the tail of the lock. He at once gave information, and with assistance got the body out.

Richard Gerring and Charles Beckett both deposed to seeing deceased by the canal on Saturday morning.

P C Molden said he went to the lock at 7.30 that morning, and saw deceased lying on the bank. He was dead and his limbs were quite stiff, and the body had evidently been in the water some time. On searching the body he found a pocket handkerchief, 2d in money and a thimble. There were no marks of violence. Witness had known deceased for some years. He used to get up at three and four in the morning and go for a walk, as he said he could get no sleep. He complained of his nerves being in a bad state from want of rest.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

143 August 3 1895

BOY DROWNED IN THE CANAL An inquest was held before Coroner Galpin on Friday at the Settling Room, Gloucester Green, on the body of **Allan Jones**, aged six, son of **James Allan Jones**, canal boatman of Oldbury, Worcestershire, who was drowned in the Oxford Canal the previous evening. **John Jones**, brother of the deceased, said he, his father and the rest of the family came to Oxford on Friday morning from Oldbury on a canal boat, Witness and his brother, James Allan, were playing by the side of the canal the same evening between five and six o'clock. About that time witness was near to the canal bridge, and he had occasion to go and attend to the horse attached to the boat, and his brother was leaning over the side of the boat washing his hands, but when witness returned with the horse he found his brother had disappeared. Witness had heard no shouts, and he at once came to the conclusion that the boy had fallen into the water. Consequently he got the boat hook, which was about twenty yards from the spot where he had previously seen the deceased washing his hands, and went and found the body in the canal. With the aid of the hook he got the deceased out after about ten minutes search, in the meantime calling to his brother **Edwin**, who was standing on the bridge in Hythe Bridge Street, and came and assisted to get the body out of the water. A Mr Cox was present during the search, and also when the body was discovered. An attempt was made to restore life, but their efforts were unavailing. Witness had no doubt his brother accidentally fell into the water. Edward Cox, butler at Trinity College, said he was on the canal path between five and six o'clock on Friday afternoon, near to the bridge leading to Tumbling Bay Bathing Place, and saw the last witness and his brother Edwin trying to get something out of the water. He went and spoke to them, and ascertained that they had lost their brother, and feared that he was in the water. They said it was not long since he was about there, and that he might possibly have gone for a walk. At that moment the elder Jones got the deceased out of the water. He adopted the usual means with a view to restoration of life, but they proved unsuccessful. He was certain the boy was dead when his body was taken out of the water. James Allan Jones, father of the deceased, also gave evidence, and the Jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

144 November 11 1899

Oxford City Court

BOUND OVER William Clark, 67 High Street, St Thomas's, labourer, was charged with stealing from a coal barge a knife and fork, clothes brush, six plates and a quantity of meat, valued at 2s 6d, on the 6th inst, the property of **Isaac Butlin**. Prosecutor said he lived at New Headington, and was a boatman. On Saturday last he left his boat in the canal near Hythe Bridge, at about 4.30 in the afternoon, when the stolen property was in the cabin. On his return on the Monday the articles were missing. The cabin was not locked up, as his man could not find the keys. Prisoner had no right to enter his barge, and he was not indebted to him in any shape or form. He valued the articles at 2s 6d. Prisoner: I put the plates back on Saturday night. P C Hudson said he went in search of prisoner on Monday, and found him near the railway station in the evening. Witness asked him what he did with the things he had taken from the barge, and he replied that he took the knife and fork, and put the brush back, but did not take the meat at all, which he left in the cupboard, and when he went back the meat was still there. Witness then took him into custody, and on the way to the station prisoner said he took the things because prosecutor owed him money. He afterwards searched for the missing articles, but could not find them. Prosecutor said he had not yet found the property. Prisoner pleaded guilty and the Mayor, in summing up, said the magistrates had taken a lenient view of the case, and wished to give him another chance. He would be bound over in the sum of £5 to come up for judgement when called upon.

145 June 30 1900

AN "UNFORTUNATE" FOUND DROWNED An inquest was held at the Settling Room before Mr Coroner Galpin on the body of Margaret Serey, aged 35, wife of Arthur Serey, 5 Paradise Place, labourer, who was found drowned in the Old River near Hythe Bridge Street, early on Sunday morning.

The Coroner told the jury the tale he had to unfold to them was a somewhat sad and ghastly one, but notwithstanding that, he thought their duties would be easy and simple. He believed the woman was an "unfortunate" or prostitute, that she left her home on Saturday night about half past ten or eleven, doubtless for immoral purposes. He would call before them several witnesses who saw her on that night, and he regretted to say that she was undoubtedly in a drunken state. Later she went down the tow-path leading from Hythe Bridge between the river and the canal. She did not return, so her husband went in search of her, and on Sunday morning she was found dead in the river on the right hand side of the path between the canal and the river. They had no evidence to show how she got in the river, so if they concluded the inquiry that day and formulated their verdict it would take the usual form of "Found drowned". These were the whole of the facts he had to bring before them, and if one might be disposed to moralise, a lot could be said. Fortunately their duty was a legal and judicial one. They had to satisfy the public of Oxford as far as they could how this poor woman came by her death, and if no further evidence was forthcoming, as he had already hinted, they would properly have discharged their duty by saying she was found drowned. They would hear the statements of the various witnesses who would be called before them, and if they thought by adjourning the inquiry further light could be thrown upon the matter, if they would give an intimation of that wish of course it would be properly considered.

Arthur Serey, the husband of the deceased woman said she was an "unfortunate". About half past ten on Saturday night she left home, and he expected her back about eleven o'clock. As she did not return by twelve, he went to the police station to see if she was locked up. He afterwards went to Hythe Bridge Street and along the tow-path. He saw nothing of her, and some chaps he met said, "You won't find your old woman tonight". He could find nothing of her and returned home. He was 49, and had been married to deceased 20 years. His wife was not sober when she left home. By the Jury : He could not recognise either of the young men he met. Her life had been threatened before now. She had not been out before that night.

Frederick Curtis, 5 Paradise Place, boatman on the canal, said he knew deceased, and on Saturday night about half past ten he was on the tow-path near Hythe Bridge Street. He met deceased, who was in company with a young man, and he said "good night" to her. She answered, "Good night". He was walking towards Hythe Bridge and they were going the other way. He did not know the

young man, and would not know him if he saw him again.

Thomas Tomkins, the landlord of the Packet public house, George Street, said the deceased called at his house about ten o'clock on Saturday night. A young man was with her. As she was drunk he told her he should not serve her, and she left the house.

By the jury : He did not know the man deceased was with. As soon as they came in he said he would not serve them and they left.

William Maycock, landlord of the "Running Horses", Hythe Bridge Street said he knew the deceased, who called at his house at 10.50 on Saturday night. She was intoxicated and he refused to serve her. She was alone and left the house.

Frederick William Couldrey, 6 Gloucester Street, hairdresser, said that about 4.40 am on Sunday he was going along the tow-path from Hythe Bridge Street. He was going out to fish. He saw a dark object in the river and found it to be the body of a woman. He went in search of a constable, and PC Mitchell returned with him. The constable sent him to the station for the ambulance, and the body had been got out of the water when he returned. It was about half way between Hythe Bridge and Louse Lock.

P C Mitchell said he was on duty in Fisher Row when the last witness came to him at 4.50 on Sunday morning. He went to the river with him, got the body out, and brought it to the mortuary. There were no signs of any struggle on the river bank.

The husband, recalled, said his wife had left no letter throwing any light upon her death, and she said nothing on Saturday which would lead him to believe she was going to commit suicide – she never had any cause to do so. She told him several times she had been threatened by the chaps working at the engine shed. She had come home and told him she had been thrown out; they said they would do for her, the same as they did the other one.

The Coroner : Why should she be threatened?

The husband : They said she blamed them for the drowning of the other woman, and she never made any statement. She spoke the truth when she was here, I believe.

Anyhow, she never told you she was threatened by any particular individual? Not any particular one.

P C Cross, the coroner's officer, said he examined the body of the deceased, and there was one small bruise on the right upper arm, about the size of a threepenny piece. There were no other marks. He saw deceased before she was undressed, and the clothes were not torn. He found on the body one shilling, six sixpences and ninepence in bronze. He did not regard the bruise on the arm as a recent one.

The Coroner said the first question for the jury was whether they would return their verdict that day, or whether they thought any useful purpose could be served by adjourning the inquiry.

The jury, having consulted for a few minutes, returned a verdict of "Found drowned" and the inquiry, at which Chief Constable Cole and Detective Inspector Prior were present, terminated.

146 November 10 1900

OXFORD CITY COURT **James Clifford**, boatman, Clyffe Pypard near Wootten Bassett, Wilts, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Hythe Bridge Street at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, and was fined 2s 6d and 3s 6d costs,