

WALSALL OBSERVER AND SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE CHRONICLE
1873 to 1885

1 15 February 1873

WALSALL POLICE COURT

NEGLECT OF WORK **John Dyas**, a boatman, was summoned on the complaint of **James Pomfray** with neglecting his employ on the 8th inst. Mr Dale appeared for complainant, and in opening the case stated that the complainant was a steerer in the employ of the Walsall Iron Company, and the present charge was one of the most gross character. The defendant was in the employ of complainant, and was sent to Rowley Park Colliery for a boat load of coal. He was paid 10s for canal dues. Instead of discharging his duty, he absconded from the boat, and two tons of coal was stolen from it. He came back to him on the Saturday night and tendered him 7s 6d out of the 10s. He ought to have returned with the boat on the Friday night. Defendant set up as a defence that the helm of the boat broke, and he had no money to get another. Complainant stated that defendant spent the money he gave him to pay the canal dues, and could not get the boat through the locks. Mr Jones, of the Walsall Iron Company, deposed to the inconvenience and loss to which the company had been subject. Fined £1 and costs, in default one month's imprisonment.

2 3 May 1873

BLOXWICH POLICE CASES

STEALING COAL At the Walsall Police Court, Caroline Woodward, a respectable married woman, was charged with stealing 25 lb of coal from a wharf at Little Bloxwich, the property of George and Richard Thomas. PC Clarke deposed to being on the canal bridge on Friday morning. He saw the defendant go down the wharf and get upon one of the prosecutors' boats, and fill a bucket with slack. She could not get off the boat, and she then emptied the bucket and got off and filled it with some lumps of coal. He spoke to her, and she said the boatman gave it to her. He asked the boatman his name, and he told him to find out. The boatman was also summoned, but did not appear. The defendant was discharged on promising to appear if called upon and give evidence against the boatman.

3 5 July 1873

GREAT BARR

FATAL ACCIDENT About twenty minutes past nine o'clock on Wednesday evening, a boatman named **Thomas Frend**, aged 21, who lived with his father in Heath Mill Lane, Birmingham, accidentally fell into the lock of the Birmingham Canal near to the Five Ways, and was drowned. The body was got out as speedily as possible and conveyed to the Bell Inn.

4 5 July 1873

WALSALL POLICE COURT

INTEMPERANCE ALIAS VIOLENCE **Samuel Dyas**, boatman, was brought up, charged on the information of Acting Sergeant Hodson with being drunk and disorderly in Littleton Street the previous night, and with wilfully and maliciously damaging his (the sergeant's) best uniform trousers. From the evidence of the sergeant, it appeared that he found the prisoner in the street named at the time in question, very drunk and disorderly. He took him into custody, and he then became very violent, and put his hands into witness's pocket and tore down his trousers all the length of the leg. He had to get assistance to convey the prisoner to the station. Prisoner said he was very drunk, and knew nothing about it. Prisoner was ordered to pay the damage, 16s, in default one month. For being drunk and disorderly prisoner was fined £1, in default a month, the second term to commence at the expiration of the first.

5 18 October 1873

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CLAIM FOR WAGES **James Pomfrey**, a boatman, was summoned for refusing to pay 12s 9d, wages due to **Thomas Everett**, a lad in his employ. Defendant was ordered to pay 10s 6d and costs, a deduction on account of food being allowed on the amount claimed.

6 20 December 1873

CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION A boatman named **Thomas Carr**, in the employ of the Liverpool Customs, brought an action at the assizes in that town on the 13th inst against a man named Burks, for injuries he had received through the negligence of the defendant's servant, he having let a heavy chain fall upon plaintiff's head. £600 damages were awarded the plaintiff.

7 15 August 1874

ATTACK ON A GIPSIES' CAMP Some years ago a band of gipsies, consisting of two or three families, pitched their camp on a piece of waste land near to the Navigation Inn at Smethwick. They have obtained a subsistence since that time by vending knick-knacks, as is customary with these migratory tribes. Anyhow, they have maintained a peaceful existence, and have hitherto been undisturbed in their abode. On Thursday night, however, a violent attack was made upon them by a gang of roughs who had their appetite for cruel sport excited by drink. About dusk, something like a dozen roughs, led by a boatman of Greet's Green named **James Hope**, surrounded the camp, and without provocation commenced to abuse the inmates. One of the gipsies named Smith, and another, offered resistance, but they were overpowered, and Smith was knocked down and unmercifully kicked, while his companion was more or less bruised by the blows he received. The ruffians threatened to murder the whole lot of gipsies, and would doubtless have fulfilled their threat but for the timely arrival of Police-constables Johnson and Rowbottom from the Smethwick Town force. The roughs, however, were not overawed by the appearance of the police, but savagely attacked the constables. Johnson seized the ringleader, Hope, but the latter struck him furiously on the chest and also kicked him, at the same time one of his companions hurled a brick end at him. The missile struck him on the eye and inflicted a severe wound. Stones and other missiles were flung at the officers, who were both repeatedly struck, but at length, by the free use of their staves, they succeeded in dispersing their assailants. Hope was brought up on Saturday at the West Bromwich Police Court, before Messrs Wiggin, Adkins, Heaton and Watson, and was charged with assaulting Police-constable Johnson. The gipsies did not appear to give evidence, as they were evidently intimidated by the fear of incurring the vengeance of the roughs. The charge however was proved by the constables, and Hope, who had been previously convicted for assault, was sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

8 12 September 1874

WEST BROMWICH

SUDDEN DEATH On Saturday afternoon last, Mr Edwin Hooper (coroner) held an inquest at the Sun, Greet's Green, on the body of **Charles Gibbons** (60), boatman. Deceased had been drinking rather heavily of late, and whilst at home on Thursday evening, suddenly fell down dead. Verdict : "Died from natural causes".

9 12 September 1874

WEST BROMWICH POLICE CASES

COALMASTERS AND THE RIGHTS OF SINKERS John Nock, sinker, Cutler's Lane, West Bromwich, was summoned by Messrs Jones and Withers, coalmasters, Bush Farm Colliery, Greet's Green, for neglect of work. Mr Topham appeared for the plaintiffs, and Mr Bailey for the defendant. Plaintiffs' case was that defendant was engaged to work for them at 11d an hour, subject to 14 days' notice on either side, and that he worked regularly from the 1st to the 17th of August. Then, finding a banksman named Bagot had been discharged, he declined to work. He came to the

colliery on the following day and on the 19th but, the banksman being still away, he refused to work and had not worked since that time. For this loss of service, £2 was claimed as compensation. Mr Withers said he agreed with defendant relative to the 14 days' notice, but in cross-examination admitted that he had never known a sinker to give any notice on leaving. Five miners were called in support of the case. They considered the banksmen who succeeded Bagot competent to discharge their duties. Neither were particularly good, but the best was a boatman named **Griffiths**, who had at times acted as banksman. The defence was that no notice was required on either side, as the "sinkers' rules" (produced) showed ; and that defendant was perfectly justified in refusing to trust his life to what he considered incompetent banksmen. Defendant said that on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday he went to the pit, hoping that an experienced banksman had been engaged, but was disappointed. He would have been only too glad to have been kept from "playing". When he told Mr Jones that the boatman and the "thick coal banksman" were not fit for the work, Mr Jones told him to "bolt", and away he went. A sinker named Bradley said he and the defendant were engaged together by Mr Withers. Nothing was said about notice. He was sure the banksmen did not understand their business. Having once had his head split open by a "baulk", he would rather not risk his life to such men. Miners gave 14 days' notice, but sinkers never thought of such a thing. It was not likely that they would place their lives at the risk of any incompetent banksman. The magistrates said it was not clear there had been any agreement as to notice, and dismissed the case.

10 14 November 1874

WALSALL COUNTY COURT

G AND R THOMAS v JOSEPH RICE This was a case, heard on the 12th of August, in which the plaintiffs, of Hatherton Colliery, Bloxwich, sued the defendant, of Tewkesbury, for £4 1s 10d, for that the defendant's servants on or about the 22nd December 1873 at Bloxwich, while acting in the execution of defendant's business, so negligently and improperly managed a boat belonging to the defendant as to cause a collision with a boat belonging to the plaintiffs, and do damage to the amount mentioned. The evidence for the plaintiffs was to the effect that plaintiffs' boat had broken loose and was lying across the canal. A person named King was getting it out of the way, when defendant's boat came along and the steerer wilfully ran into the plaintiffs' boat and damaged it. The defence was that the defendant's boatman had not done the damage while in the execution of his master's business, but out of sheer mischief and wantonness. Mr J H Stanley acted for the plaintiffs, and Messrs Duignan and Lewis for the defence, and his Honour today delivered judgement. He referred at some length to the evidence, and quoted the authorities bearing upon the case, which he said was very conflicting but appeared to be that where a servant committed damage in the execution of his duty the master was liable, but where he did it from wantonness, from his own free will, the servant only would be liable. Under these circumstances, he was sorry to say, he must non suit the plaintiffs.

11 30 January 1875

WALSALL POLICE COURT, MONDAY

COAL STEALING **Joseph Twigg**, a boatman, was charged with stealing upwards of four tons of coal, the property of the Walsall Iron Company, Birchills. Mr Williams (of the firm of Messrs Duignan, Lewis and Lewis) appeared to prosecute, and defendant pleaded guilty. Mr Williams explained that the prosecutors had lost a great deal of coal, and it was difficult to trace it. In this case, however, they had discovered it, and though the company, in consideration of defendant pleading guilty, did not wish to have a heavy sentence inflicted, they did ask for some punishment, which would teach the other men in their employment that they must not do this sort of thing. The circumstances of the case were that between three and four in the morning, Twigg took a loaded boat some distance up the canal and, with the assistance of another man, put about four tons of coal into an empty boat there. He then returned with his own boat, and moored it so that it would not, under ordinary circumstances, have been known that he had ever been away. Mr Williams added that there was very little doubt but that there were a number of other persons mixed up in this sort of

thing. The Mayor said that there must have been others connected with a matter of this kind. His Worship afterwards added that if there were no receivers for this stolen coal, there would not be this continued coal stealing. He thought it would be well to proceed against them if they could be found. Defendant was sent to prison for three months with hard labour.

WALSALL POLICE COURT, WEDNESDAY

COAL STEALING **Thomas Walker** was summoned for stealing about 3 1/2 tons of coal on the 24th inst, belonging to the Walsall Iron Company, in company with Twigg, who was convicted on a similar charge on Monday. Mr Williams (of Messrs Duignan, Lewis and Williams) appeared to prosecute, and Mr Ebsworth to defend. Mr Williams briefly opened the facts of the case, and then called **Thomas Dyas**, who stated that on the morning of the 15th last he saw defendant and Twigg in a hovel at the wharf early in the morning, and saw them again about half past five. At the time Twigg was with a boat in the basin and defendant was asleep in the hovel. David Meeten stated that he saw Twigg push a full boat out of the basin up the canal to where an empty boat lay. At the boat Walker met him, and the two then proceeded to throw a quantity of coal from the full boat to the empty one. They were at it about an hour and twenty minutes, out of which he watched them for about a quarter of an hour. Cross-examined by Mr Ebsworth, witness said the defendant was engaged as a boat unloader, and it would be his business to load and unload boats. He did not know that defendant had to take some coal to Messrs Maiden and Parkes. Mr J K Jones deposed that a boat of coal arrived at their wharf on the 14th last containing, according to the ticket, 22 tons. On the Saturday following he gauged the coal and found only 18 1/2 tons. The coal was of a particular kind. He had subsequently seen, in the cellar of the defendant's father-in-law, a quantity of coal similar to what he had missed. Cross-examined, he said he had ascertained that defendant took some coal to Messrs Maiden and Parkes' wharf. The prisoner, Joseph Twigg, was then called, and deposed that about half past five on the morning in question, he and Walker took the loaded boat from the prosecutors and put a quantity of coal from it into a boat, which had a little coal in it, that was going to be taken to defendant's father-in-law, who was prosecutors' steerer. In cross-examination by Mr Ebsworth, Twigg said it was half past five before he got to the wharf. He also admitted that he had been convicted and sentenced to four years' imprisonment before this affair. Mr Ebsworth, for the defence, contended that Twigg's evidence must be rejected, as he was a party to the crime, if there was one, because it was not corroborated by the evidence of the other witnesses. He maintained that, on the contrary, the evidence of the others could not be true if Twigg's was. He then went carefully over the statements which had been made, and pointed out there were many things tending to show that the witness Meeten was probably mistaken. The Bench said they should commit the defendant to take his trial at the Sessions. Bail was accepted – two sureties in £20 each, and defendant himself in £40.

12 21 August 1875

BROWNHILLS

INDECENT ASSAULT At the Shenstone Petty Sessions on Wednesday week, Noah Hill, collier, Brownhills, was charged with having indecently assaulted **Mary Ann Mayou**, at Brownhills on the 27th July. Mr Ebsworth defended. Prosecutrix stated that she was the wife of **James Mayou**, boatman of Gloucester. On the 27th ult, she and a Mrs Griffin were at the Turf Tavern, Norton Canes, drinking, and left the prisoner and another man named Corbett there. When she and her friend were returning to their boats, prisoner and Corbett overtook them. Corbett and Mrs Griffin went away, and shortly afterwards prisoner put his arm round prosecutrix's neck, threw her down, and committed the assault complained of. She resisted him, and he threatened to throw her into the canal. Cross-examined by Mr Ebsworth : I was not drunk. I had had two or three quarts of porter. I was rather fresh. I got to my husband's boat between 10 and 11 o'clock. For the defence, Richard Edwards, collier, who lodged with the prisoner, said the prisoner returned home about 20 minutes to 10 o'clock, and they had supper together. They both went to bed about 10 o'clock. When prisoner returned home he had no dirt on his clothes. Prisoner was committed to take his trial at the Quarter

Sessions.

13 30 October 1875

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ASSAULT **John Woodhouse**, Smethwick, boatman, was summoned for assaulting **Enoch Hughes**, a lockman on the canal, on the 4th October. Mr Turner (of the firm of Messrs Jesson, Wragge and Evans) appeared for the complainant, and defendant was fined £1 and costs, or in default one month's imprisonment.

WASTING CANAL WATER **George Perry**, boatman, Birmingham, who did not appear, was summoned for wasting the water of the Birmingham Canal Company at the Rushall Locks in the borough, on the 15th inst. Mr Farmer appeared in this case, and explained that the waste was committed while the defendant was passing his boat through the lock. Fined 20s and costs, or one month's imprisonment.

14 24 December 1875

CANNOCK

A BOATMAN DROWNED On Saturday an inquest was held at the Workhouse before Mr George Cotterell, Deputy Coroner, Cannock, on the body of **Alfred Wheaver** aged 27, a boatman, who whilst shifting his boat in the basin at Hednesford on the Saturday previous, fell into the water. No one saw him fall in, and he was nearly dead when got out. He was conveyed to the Workhouse where he died on the Wednesday following. A verdict of "Accidental death from drowning" was returned. Nothing is known of the residence of the deceased, except that of late he has been working a boat between Worcester and Hereford.

15 1 April 1876

RUSHALL PETTY SESSIONS

STEALING A WHEELBARROW **James Wilson**, **William Haywood** and **Robert Bell** of Rushall were charged with stealing a wheelbarrow, the property of Major Strongitharm, on the 13th January. Mr Ebsworth appeared for the defence. Richard Taylor deposed that he was in prosecutor's employ, and had been repairing the wheelbarrow on the 12th January. About six o'clock on the following morning it was gone. He traced it on the snow to the edge of the canal, and then he lost it. It would be worth about 12s. The barrow in the yard at the Police Station was the one which was lost. **William Moss**, Longwood, lock-keeper to the Canal Company, deposed that on the 13th of January he saw some timber on a boat in the canal, and saw Wilson with it. Two men were with him. It was four o'clock in the morning. There was coal in the boat and nothing else. Sergeant Arnold deposed that on the 13th January he received information of the robbery and, in consequence, he traced a boat to Smethwick. The prisoners Wilson and Bell were in charge of it. It was laden with coal. There was timber on the boat then. On the 15th March witness went to a house at Smethwick and found the wheelbarrow, which was identified by the first witness. It was in the garden, and not concealed in any way. The prisoners were separately arrested by witness the same night. Haywood said they saw it in the canal, and pulled it into the boat with the line. Wilson said that Haywood and Bell put the barrow in the boat while he was with the horse, and that he wheeled it afterwards to the house in Smethwick. Bell first said he knew nothing about it, but afterwards said that Wilson and Haywood had put it in the boat. In cross-examination, witness said that he did not question Haywood at all. **Daniel Jones**, boatman, Smethwick, deposed that Wilson went to his house and left the wheelbarrow. That was seven or eight weeks since, and it had been left there until Sergeant Arnold fetched it. The barrow had the owner's name burned on both sides of it. In cross-examination, he said that frequently things were picked up in the canal by the boatmen. Haywood was the brother of the proprietor of the ironworks at the Cape. Mr Ebsworth submitted that the evidence was not of such a character as would justify a committal. He pointed out that, except in the statements of the prisoners themselves against each other, there was no evidence against Haywood or Bell, and there

was, therefore, nothing whatever to send them to trial. The Bench thought there were grounds for the committal of all, and they were sent for trial at the Sessions. Bail for the appearance of all three was accepted – themselves in £50 each, and with two sureties each in the sum of £25.

16 6 May 1876

HEDNESFORD POLICE NEWS

DAMAGING MOWING GRASS At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, **George Bishop**, a boatman of Hednesford, was charged with having damaged mowing grass belonging to Thomas Wassall, and also with having used threatening language to John Wassall, on the 24th April. It appeared complainant's son saw defendant in the mowing grass, and on going to get his name, defendant used threatening language. He was fined 6d and the costs for having damaged the grass, and ordered to pay costs in the other case.

17 20 May 1876

CANNOCK

REFUSING TO QUIT At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, **Joseph Thay**, a boatman of Birmingham, was fined 20s and costs for having refused to quit the Lord Nelson Inn, Cheslyn Hay, on the 25th April.

18 27 May 1876

WALSALL POLICE COURT

STEALING HARNESS **Henry Mouuntney**, boatman, who had been remanded from Monday last, was brought up in custody charged with having stolen a quantity of harness, value £4, the property of Messrs G and R Thomas. Prisoner pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

19 22 July 1876

DAW END

DRUNKENNESS At the Rushall Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before F James Esq, **Thomas Berry**, boatman, was summoned for being drunk at Daw End on the 4th inst, and was fined 2s 6d and 10s 6d costs.

20 29 July 1876

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGED THEFT FROM A BOAT **Robert Gardner** and **Jasper Cowdry**, boatmen, were charged with stealing £35 from a boat, the property of **Henry (sic) Lewis** of Stonehouse. Mr Gillespie (of the firm of Wilkinson and Gillespie) appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Williams (of the firm of Duignan, Lewis and Williams) for the defence. George Lewis deposed that he was in charge of a boat at the Fishley Colliery. About one am he was in the boat, and put £30 in gold and a £5 note in a cupboard in the cabin and locked it up. He then went to the other end of the boat and lay down. About daybreak he saw the prisoners with their boat just entering the basin. Cowdry was on the boat and Gardner was on the bridge. He knew them, but did not speak to them. He got up at four, and about five he called up the prisoners, asking them what time they came in. Gardner said at ten minutes past three, and asked where witness was at the time, as he was not in the cabin. Gardner added that he saw someone in his (witness's) cabin. Cowdry denied this. Witness then went to his boat and discovered the robbery, finding that a key had been broken in the lock and the door had then been forced open. Witness then went to prisoners again, and Gardner again said that he had seen someone in their boat, and Cowdry again denied it. In cross-examination, witness said he had had a little drop of beer but not much. Between Birmingham and that place that day he had had perhaps four or five pints of ale. **Alfred Hyatt** was with witness on the boat, and he had had about the same quantity of beer. Witness did not see Hyatt near the cabin at all. The money was in his (witness's) pocket until he put it in the cupboard. He received the money on Monday, and on

Tuesday he had stayed at Darlaston for an hour or two. They had a little drink at Little Bloxwich, but they had nothing after they got to Fishley and were not drunk. When Gardner told him he had seen someone on the boat, witness went to look after his money. His mate was just getting up. He went to the prisoners again, and Gardner again said that he was sure he had seen someone in the boat, but Cowdry said he had not. He had known the prisoners for years, and was friendly with them. Walter Salt, a lad of 14, deposed that he worked for Messrs Thomas at Fishley Colliery. He knew the prisoners by sight. He last saw them three weeks or a month since at Bloxwich. He afterwards saw them on the Tuesday previous at Fishley. He did not see them after that. They were then standing on the "cut" side. Gardner was in the cabin of Lewis's boat. It was early in the morning, he having just come up the pit. His time for coming up was three in the morning. Gardner left the boat while witness was there and went behind the dirt mound. Cowdry was on the bridge and went down to witness and asked what he was doing. In cross-examination witness said that he did not know that the boat where he had seen Gardner was Lewis's until afterwards. Lewis told him on the following night that his boat had been robbed, and that was the boat which had been lying where he had seen Gardner in the morning. Witness did not know that the boat was Lewis's until told afterwards. There were a number of other boats about. He had talked to Lewis about the affair, but had not been told what he would have to say. Alfred Hyatt, boatman, deposed that he accompanied George Lewis, and that both of them were sober. Sergeant Martin deposed that he apprehended prisoners at Gloucester. Cowdry had £5 13s and Gardner 11s 11d. He told them the charge, and they denied that they had been on prosecutor's boat. The Bench, after a short consultation, dismissed the case.

21 26 August 1876

WALSALL POLICE COURT

WASTING WATER **George Smith**, boatman, pleaded guilty to wasting the water of the Birmingham Canal Company by raising one "paddle" before closing the other, so that as the water ran in at the top of the lock it run out at the bottom. Fined 10s and costs, or in default to be imprisoned for 14 days. **David Till**, boatman, pleaded guilty to a similar charge, but as there were some mitigating circumstances in his case, he was fined 5s and costs, or in default to be imprisoned for six days. **William Nicholls**, for a similar offence, was fined £1 and costs, as he had not only opened the paddle but also the gate. **Thomas Almwick**, for having wasted a lockful of water by drawing up the paddle and letting the water over the lock of the canal, and when spoken to by one of the canal men he used very bad language, was fined £1 and costs.

22 9 September 1876

DAW END

IRON STEALING At the Rushall Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before F James Esq and Colonel Harrison, **Stephen Jarvis** was charged with stealing some scrap iron, the property of Messrs Strongitharm, on the 17th August. Mr Williams (of the firm of Duignan, Lewis and Williams) appeared to prosecute, and Mr Stirk (Wolverhampton) to defend. William Hollowood, engineer in the employ of prosecutors, deposed that prisoner was a boatman in their employ, and that near the canal a quantity of scrap iron lay. The iron produced was similar to the iron which had been on the canal side, but he could not say that it was the same. Police-constable Houston deposed that on the 17th of August he went to Birmingham, and waited until prisoner arrived with his boat. On searching it, the iron produced was found. Mr Horatio Strongitharm deposed that prisoner was a boatman in his employ, and had no right to interfere with the scrap iron, a quantity of which lay about. A great deal had been missed. A wheel amongst iron produced was so like some belonging to his firm that he had no doubt it was his, but he would not swear to it. He thought the iron was that of his firm. The value of it would be about 4s. In cross-examination, witness said that some months ago, he gave prisoner a good character. He had been ill since then, and his wife and someone else had charge of the boat. The whole of the iron might easily be hid in the cabin of a boat except the wheel. Sometimes a piece of iron was used as anchor for a boat, but he did not

know that the wheel had been used by prisoner for that purpose. If the iron did belong to his firm, he could not say when it was missed. The Bench thought there was not evidence sufficient to convict prisoner, and dismissed the case.

23 9 September 1876

ALLEGED RAPE OF A WALSALL GIRL At the Willenhall Police Court on Monday, before J Moreton Esq, **Samuel James** (20), boatman, was brought up in custody charged with committing a rape on Mary Jane Parton, a girl 16 years of age. The prosecutrix said she lived with her grandfather at No 12, Wisemore, Walsall. Her grandfather had a horse which was grazed at a colliery in Deepmore, Bentley, and on Monday morning she went to fetch the horse, arriving at the colliery about half past six o'clock. As she walked past the colliery field she was overtaken by the prisoner and another man, who were looking for a horse belonging to them. She asked them if they had seen her grandfather's horse, and they replied that they had not. The prisoner told the other man to go and look for their horse in another part of the colliery land, and after his companion had left, he continued to walk along with witness. When they got to the top of the field, near to a colliery mound, he suddenly threw her down, and committed the offence with which he now stood charged. She screamed and struggled, but he threatened violence if she resisted, and also held his hand over her mouth. As soon as she got away she went to the colliery offices, and made a complaint there. She was referred to the police, and she went and informed Police-constable Newman of what had occurred, and the prisoner was afterwards taken into custody by that officer. On prisoner being asked whether he objected to a remand, he said he could procure witnesses to prove that at the time given by prosecutrix as that which the offence was committed, he was engaged in baling water out of his boat, which lay at a wharf in the adjoining field. He was remanded for a week, his application for bail being refused.

24 3 February 1877

WALSALL POLICE COURT

COAL STEALING **James Russell** was charged with stealing 1 cwt of coal, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company, on the 29th January. **John Tobin**, boat loader, deposed that he was engaged at the wharf near Marsh Lane. About seven o'clock he saw a boat going out of the wharf, and saw that the prisoner was in it, and that there was coal on the boat. He saw prisoner put some coal outside the wall. Prisoner put several pieces out of the boat. **Charles Walter Fletcher**, boatman, deposed that he went to the canal, and saw prisoner and another man. The other was throwing coal on to the path while prisoner held the boat to the side. He watched, and saw prisoner wheel a barrowful of coal away. Police-constable Mercer deposed that he went to the wharf, and saw prisoner wheeling away a barrow load of coal. There was about 3 cwt on the barrow, and the other coal lay under the wall. Witness took prisoner into custody. There were a number of previous convictions against prisoner, who was sent to gaol for three months.

25 25 August 1877

WALSALL WOOD

REMANDED CASE At the Magistrates' Clerk's Office, Walsall, on Thursday, before Mr Barker Esq, **John Higgins**, boatman, 6 Court, Aston Road, Birmingham, was brought up in custody of Police-constable Glyde, charged with stealing a plank, value 2s, out of the canal at Walsall Wood, on the 21st inst. Evidence having been given to justify that course, an application was made for a remand until Monday at the Rushall Petty Sessions, and was granted.

26 6 October 1877

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ASSAULT **Henry Tillson**, Blue Lane, was summoned for assaulting **Thomas Marson** in September. Complainant deposed that he was a boatman, as defendant was, and wanted to pass the defendant. Defendant then seized him, tried to throw him into the canal, and tore his waistcoat. A

witness corroborated this, stating that defendant attacked complainant three times, and defendant, who did not appear, was fined 40s and costs, or two months' imprisonment.

27 20 October 1877

WALSALL POLICE COURT

WASTING WATER **Joseph Jones**, boatman, was summoned by Mr Craddock, superintendent of the Birmingham Canal Company, for wasting the water on that canal by opening one set of paddles before closing the other paddles. Mt Holliday (of the firm of Wragge, Evans and Holliday) appeared for the company. The lock-keeper at No 6 lock deposed that defendant was the captain of a boat, and drew the water from the top gate before closing the bottom one. He spoke to defendant, who threatened him, and also attempted to get the boatline round him so as to drag him into the water. Defendant denied that he had been spoken to about the sixth lock. Witness threatened him with the windlass. He had drawn a little water but it was very little, and only just while he closed the bottom gates. Fined 10s and costs, or 14 days' imprisonment. **James Voyce**, boatman of Gloucester, was summoned for a similar offence. Defendant pleaded guilty, but said that the boy who was with him had neglected to close the bottom gates of the lock at first. Fined 10s, or 14 days' imprisonment. **Charles Clarke**, Darlaston, was summoned for a similar offence, and pleaded that he had only partly opened the top paddle before closing the other. Fined 2s 6d and costs. **John James Hallam**, Birmingham, was summoned, but did not appear, for using his boat without having a helm on it, and so improperly navigating his boat. The service of the summons having been proved, Mr Craddock proved the offence, and defendant was ordered to pay a fine of 10s and costs.

28 13 July 1878

WALSALL POLICE COURT

STEALING HAY **John Hillman**, Wolverhampton, a boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of hay, the property of the Fishley Colliery Company, on Thursday. James Perry, a boy employed at the farm, deposed that about seven o'clock on Thursday morning he saw prisoner get over the rails into the field and take an armful of hay, which had been cut and lay in the field. Prisoner took it and put it in his boat. A person named Mills, who was not sworn, said that he was agent of the Fishley Colliery Company, and that he gave the prisoner into custody. Prisoner said that he had taken the hay. His horse had been out two days, and he had used all his corn. He was sorry for the horse, and took the hay for its sake. Mr Mills said that his instructions were to make an example of the first person they could catch, because so much fodder had been missed from the fields. Prisoner was ordered to pay 2d, the value of the hay, and 5s and costs, or 14 days' imprisonment.

29 31 August 1878

WALSALL POLICE COURT

AN UNDUTIFUL SON **William Wood**, boatman, Darlaston, was charged with refusing to pay 2s 6d a week towards his father's maintenance, as defendant is in receipt of 3s a day when at work. The defendant said his father was a confounded old scoundrel, who 20 years ago turned the defendant, his mother and another brother out, and afterwards got married while defendant's mother was still alive. The Bench declined to make an order, as the defendant was not in regular employment.

30 28 December 1878

HEDNESFORD

ASSAULT At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, before B Gilpin and R H Briscoe Esqs, a young man named **Samuel Smith**, a boatman, Birmingham, was charged with having assaulted the wife of a gatekeeper in the employ of the Birmingham Canal Navigation Company, named **Mary Blakemore**, at Littleworth on the 2nd November. It appeared that defendant, along with four or five others, wanted to go through a certain gate with a horse, which complainant objected to, and

defendant committed the assault complained of. The other four were summoned, but did not put in an appearance, and warrants were asked for their apprehension. Smith was ordered to pay a fine which, with the costs, amounted to 16s 6d.

31 5 April 1879

SUICIDE OF MR R LEIGHTON Yesterday afternoon, an inquest was held at the Red Lion Inn, Pool Green, Aldridge, before Mr E Hooper, district coroner, touching the death of Robert Leighton, rate and tax collector, Vicarage Place, Walsall, whose body was found in the canal near to Dumblebury Bridge, in the parish of Aldridge, on Thursday last. The room in which the inquiry took place was crowded, among those present being a number of deceased's friends. Mr W H Duignan appeared on behalf of the relatives of the deceased.

Mr Edwin Leighton, commercial traveller of Walsall, deposed that deceased was his brother, and that he was 29 years of age last birthday. Witness last saw his brother alive on Sunday evening at Mr Bill's, Wednesbury. Deceased left witness there, and witness did not know where he went to, but was under the impression that he was going home. Witness first heard of his brother being drowned in the canal at Aldridge on Wednesday night, and on Thursday morning he went to the place where he had been taken, and identified him. Deceased had been suffering from carbuncle, and this put him about very much. Witness spoke to deceased about his health a fortnight ago, and he told witness that the carbuncles had broken out again, and that they were driving him wild. In reply to the Coroner, witness said that he was not aware that his brother was short in his accounts until the present time. Witness had no reason to think that deceased would commit suicide if he was in his usual health. In reply to Mr Duignan, witness stated that deceased was a rate and tax collector.

Mr Pritchard, master of the Walsall Workhouse, deposed that he had known deceased for about eighteen months, and that the last time he saw him was on Tuesday morning last at the workhouse, about ten minutes past twelve o'clock. Witness did not see him prior to the meeting, but it was at the workhouse, deceased having come there to have his books audited by the auditor. He had some conversation with him, but he did not seem to be in his usual state of health. When deceased went into the room, witness said "Good morning" to him, but he made no reply, as though he did not hear him. Witness again said "Good morning" to him, taking hold of deceased's hand and shaking it, but he made no reply, and did not seem conscious that he had been spoken to.

The Coroner asked witness if there was any discrepancy in his accounts and whether he saw him leave the house. Witness said there was a discrepancy in his accounts, but he did not see him leave the house, yet it must have been about ten minutes to twelve when he left.

John Gidley, boatman, Birmingham, was the next witness. He deposed that he was driving along the canal at about quarter past two on the day in question, near to Dumblebury Bridge, when he saw the head and shoulders of a man out of the water. Deceased's head was hanging down, but the other part of the body was under water. Witness called to his companion, and said there was a man in the water. He was quite dead, there being no movement of the limbs or body. He (witness) could not get him out himself, so he went and procured the assistance of another man, who was in a field near, and they got him out. Deceased's hat was about twelve yards from where he was found in the water. There were no marks upon deceased when he was rescued from the water. Information was given to the police, and deceased was conveyed to the Red Lion public house.

Police-constable Willis deposed that in consequence of information given by the last witness, which he received at about three o'clock in the afternoon, he went immediately to the place and found the deceased. When he got there, there was no sign of life. Witness searched him and found £8 7s 2d in a purse, a cigar case with four cigars in, a pocket knife, pencil, bunch of keys and other small things. Upon one of the articles there was engraved the words "R Leighton, Vicarage Place, Walsall". There was also an audit summons in his possession, upon which was written the following letter to his wife :-

"My own Darling Wife,

My last few words are that you may forgive me for my wrongdoing. I cannot bear the disgrace of

going to gaol, so have drowned myself. RL".

George Fryer, farm labourer, said that he saw the deceased going along the canal side at about half past one o'clock on the day in question, witness being at work in a field at the time. When deceased reached the next field on the canal side where he was working, he saw deceased sit down on some rails and pull out what witness supposed was a pocket book, but he was not near enough to see what it was, being some 50 yards from him. He commenced to write, and he should think he was there about ten minutes. Witness stayed in the field until a boatman came to witness and asked him to come and help to get a man out of the canal. The deceased was the same man that he had seen walking on the canal side. When deceased was on the towing-path he must have walked about, as the boatline would touch the hedge, and must have waited whilst two boats passed him. He did not appear to be taking any notice of anyone, and was walking at a sharp pace.

Edwin Leighton was recalled, and stated that he believed the letter was in the handwriting of the deceased. The Coroner asked witness if there were anyone in the family who had suffered from insanity. Witness said that he was not aware that any member of his family had ever been afflicted in that way.

The Coroner asked Mr Pritchard whether there was any difference in the accounts as to be serious enough to make deceased commit suicide.

Mr Pritchard said the books had not been thoroughly audited yet, although for the last half year he had heard that there was a deficiency of £220.

Dr G A Phillips, Walsall, was called on behalf of deceased. He stated that he had attended deceased for some time, who had been suffering very severely from carbuncles, which was very lowering and depressed the spirits. A large one had just made its appearance and he had recommended him to try a change of air. Deceased was an unusually temperate man, and witness did not believe that he would commit suicide whilst in his usual health. In reply to the Coroner, witness said deceased had complained to him about losing his rest at night in consequence of having carbuncle. He had used strong terms to deceased to try and persuade him to go to Ireland for a few weeks.

Mr Duignan asked what amount of security deceased had given, when it was stated that he had given security to the amount of £300, which would more than cover the deficiency.

Mr S Russell deposed that he had been on most intimate terms with deceased, he (deceased) being at his house for about half an hour on the day prior to his being found in the canal. He did not see deceased alive again. Whilst deceased was at his house, which was between seven and eight, he appeared very strange, and after he had gone witness made a remark to his wife as to his strangeness. He did not consider deceased need have troubled himself about his accounts, as he could have had assistance to almost any amount if he had only mentioned it. In fact, he should have had no hesitation in helping him had he known anything was required ; but he was of opinion that it had nothing to do with his committing suicide. Deceased had made complaint to witness about suffering from carbuncle, and he had talked to him about going to Belfast for the benefit of his health, but it was difficult to persuade him to go away from home.

The Coroner asked Mr Pritchard whether it was known that there was any deficiency before the morning of the audit.

Mr Pritchard said it was not known until after Mr Leighton had gone that there was anything wrong. This was the whole of the evidence.

The Coroner, in summing up, said the jury would have no difficulty in coming to a decision. The only question they had to consider and determine upon was whether deceased committed suicide whilst in a sound state of mind, upon which they had no evidence to show either one way or the other. He was of opinion that the medical evidence went to show that deceased had been very much upset by having carbuncles, and he thought the jury would be safe in returning a verdict that deceased had committed suicide by drowning himself whilst in an unsound state of mind.

The foreman (Mr Joberns) said that was his opinion ; but Mr Watson, a juryman, said he did not agree with the verdict.

Another juryman suggested that they should return a verdict to the effect that deceased was found drowned, but there was no evidence to show how he was drowned.

The Coroner did not agree with that idea, and pointed out that the letter plainly indicated that it was deceased's intention to kill himself.

Ultimately it was decided to return a verdict to the effect that deceased committed suicide by drowning himself, but there was no evidence to show what state of mind he was in at the time.

32 28 June 1879

WALSALL POLICE COURT

STEALING WATERCRESSES Sarah Plant (50) and John Hall (46), both of Darlaston, were charged with having, on Sunday the 22nd inst, stolen a quantity of watercresses from a bed belonging to Messrs Jones and Co, Birchills. The charge having been proved by a boatman named **James Nicholls**, who caught them in the act of taking the watercresses, prisoners were fined 5s and costs each, or 14 days' imprisonment. Prisoners said they had been working at the stoneyard at the Workhouse, but it was now closed and they had nothing to do, and had gone to look for a bit of watercress.

33 31 January 1880

DAW END

STEALING AND RECEIVING COAL At the Rushall Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before F James and S Stokes Esqs, **George Osbourne** (18), boatman, Leabrook, Wednesbury, was charged with stealing about 35 cwt of coal, value 1s 6d, the property of the Great Bridge Steel and Iron Company, on the 15th inst. It appeared from the evidence of Police-constables Willis and Lloyd that the defendant was coming along the canal at Daw End with a boat from the Leigh's Wood Colliery, and when near the bridge he threw the coal on to the footpath. Defendant pleaded guilty, and was fined £3, or one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

34 10 July 1880

CANNOCK

USING THREATS At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, before B Gilpin, R H Briscoe and F V Forster Esqs, a boatman named **John Butt** was charged with using threats towards **Henry Cope**, lock-keeper at Wedge's Mills on the Stafford and Worcester Canal, on the 29th April. Defendant denied the charge, but was bound over to keep the peace for six months.

35 7 August 1880

SUICIDE On Thursday afternoon, the body of a young man named Coles, aged 23, was found in the canal at Tame Valley, near West Bromwich. Previous to the body being discovered, deceased's jacket had been picked up by a boatman, who found in it a letter addressed to the young man's father in Walsall. The letter, which stated deceased's intention to commit suicide, was taken to its destination by the finder, and search was at once made. It is understood that poverty was the cause of the sad act.

36 11 September 1880

WALSALL POLICE COURT

STEALING TURNIPS **Reuben Copson** (15), boatman, Birmingham, was charged with having stolen two turnips from a field belonging to the Fishley Colliery Company, at Bloxwich on the previous Friday. Police-constable Bull proved the case, and deposed that on the evening of the day in question he saw the defendant go into the field and take the turnips. A witness named Miles said that a great amount of damage had been committed by different persons, and he brought defendant there as an example to others. As soon as the turnips began to make their appearance, people began to pull them, and the language which was used towards the women who were employed hoeing the field was most disgusting. Prisoner, who had been locked up since Friday, was discharged on paying the costs, 3s, Mr Brewer telling him that he must not come there again on such a charge or he would be more severely dealt with, and wished him to warn others of the trouble they would get

into if such practices were continued.

37 13 November 1880

CHARGE OF STEALING PIG IRON At the Willenhall Police Court on Monday, before R D Gough and W Edwards Esqs, **Ernest Worsey** (23) of Park Brook, Walsall, boatman, was again charged with having stolen about half a ton of pig iron, and Francis Cordell (20), hawker, of Green Lane, Walsall, and William Cordell (29), miner, of Long Acre, Walsall, were charged with receiving the same, knowing it to have been stolen. Mr Vaughan appeared for Worsey. The case had been remanded from Bilston on Friday, to enable the police to ascertain to whom the iron belonged. Evidence was now given by Robert Dexter, cashier to Messrs Bagnall, Bentley, who stated that on Thursday last he saw Francis Cordell carrying the iron from a boat at Bentley to a cart. The iron was subsequently found at the house of William Cordell. The prisoner was remanded, on bail, until Monday next.

38 20 November 1880

THE ALLEGED THEFT OF IRON At the Willenhall Police Court on Monday, before the Rev G H Fisher and W Lloyd Esq, **Ernest Worsey**, boatman, Park Brook, Walsall, was charged under remand with stealing 9 3/4 cwts of pig iron, the property of the London and North Western Railway Company, and Francis Cordell, Green Lane, Walsall, hawker ; William Cordell, Longacre, Walsall, miner ; and John Johnson, Longacre, coal dealer, were charged with receiving the iron, well knowing it to have been stolen. Mr Vaughan appeared for Worsey, and Mr John Clarke for the two Cordells, the remaining prisoner having no attorney. Robert Dexter, clerk and cashier at the Bentley Colliery of Messrs John Bagnall and Sons, said that on the afternoon of Thursday the 4th inst he saw the prisoners Francis Cordell and Johnson at Bentley. Cordell was carrying a piece of pig iron from the canal towards a cart which stood on the canal bridge. He put the iron in the cart, and then went down to the boat, which was on the canal under the bridge upon which the cart stood. There were two men in the boat, and Cordell asked them whether there was any more, and they replied that there was not. Johnson stood by the cart when the iron was put in. Witness looked into the cart, attached to which there were two horses, and saw that it contained six pieces of pig iron, in consequence of which he hastened to the colliery, and gave information. In reply to Mr Vaughan, witness said Worsey, whom he had known two years, was not there, but a man named Newton was in the boat. Police-constable Abernethy said that about three o'clock on the afternoon of the 4th November, he went to the house of the prisoner Worsey at Park Brook, and asked him, "What about that pig iron you have sold to Frank Cordell?" He replied, "I was with the boat, and a man named Morton asked me to carry it for him. There were only two or three pieces in it, and I carried them for him. Morton had taken it out of the canal. I know nothing further about it. I was having my dinner in the cabin when Cordell came and brought the iron away from the boat when the boat was at the bridge". Worsey went with him to Walsall, and they and Police-constable Cliffe, a Walsall constable, who joined them, went together to the house of William Cordell in Longacre. Witness there saw eighteen pieces of pig iron, one of them branded "Wingerworth" and three "Kirklees", and the remaining 14 being without marks. These pieces were in a brewhouse. When witness came down the entry he saw the prisoners Frank Cordell and Johnson drive up with a pony cart, which contained old iron, like bulldog. Witness said to Frank, "I want you about that iron in the brewhouse", and Frank replied that he bought it for 7s from the man Morton. Witness afterwards brought both Worsey and Frank Cordell to the Police Station at Willenhall, and the same night he apprehended William Cordell in a public house in Long Acre Street. William said he knew nothing about the iron, as he was out when it was brought to his house. On Monday the 8th inst, witness apprehended Johnson who, when charged, said all he did was hold the head of Frank Cordell's pony while iron was put into the cart, and was to have eightpence for his trouble. Police-constable Cliffe of the Walsall borough force corroborated the evidence of Abernethy as to what transpired at the house where the iron was discovered, and also as to what was said by William Cordell when arrested, witness being with the county officer when he took William into custody. Recalled,

Abernethy said when William Cordell was apprehended he said he had given information to the Walsall police. Evidence was given connecting Worsey with the boat from which the iron was taken, and witnesses were called to prove that the iron was consigned with the London and North Western Railway Company. The Magistrates thought the evidence not strong enough to convict upon. They thought Worsey had been the dupe of another man, and discharged the prisoners, Worsey leaving the court without a stain upon his character.

39 30 April 1881

HEDNESFORD

ASSAULT At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, before B Gilpin and R H Briscoe Esqs, a man named Frank Reynolds, miner, was charged with having assaulted a boatman named **Henry Pemberton** of Wolverhampton a short time ago. Complainant deposed that he was in the cabin of his boat when someone called to him that he was wanted. He went on to the embankment, and defendant struck him, once in the face and twice at the back of his head. Annie and Esther Rudd deposed to defendant being near complainant's boat, and that complainant was called out at his instigation. One of these witnesses also saw defendant strike complainant. Defendant denied the charge, stating that he merely went to ask complainant what he had been saying about him, when complainant ran at him. He (complainant) said he could fight anyone for an hour, and he had had a grudge against defendant ever since Christmas for turning him out of a public house, drunk. A fine of 2s 6d and costs was imposed.

40 18 June 1881

GREAT BARR

INQUEST On Monday last Edwin Hooper Esq (District Coroner) held an enquiry at the Bell Inn respecting the death of a man named **Paul Martin** (63), lock filer of Hill Top, whose body was found in the Birmingham Canal on the previous Thursday. The son of deceased was the first witness called. He stated that his father left home on Wednesday morning between eight and nine o'clock, and immediately he was missed, search was made for him. He heard no tidings of him until he heard of him lying at the Bell public house. Deceased was not responsible for his actions, his mind often being affected. **Edward Aspilbond**, boatman, Smethwick, deposed that at midnight on Wednesday he was passing along the canal towards Shustoke Bridge, when he saw deceased standing in the water with his jacket off. He asked him if he was having a swill, and deceased replied that he was trying to. Witness's companion threw a line to the man, as they thought the boat would crush him, but he would not lay hold of it. Witness and his companion pushed the boat off, and left the man standing in the water. They did not think it strange at all, as men frequently got in the water at night to look after coal. Witness mentioned the matter to the lock-keeper. **Charles Oxford**, the lock-keeper, and Police-constable Given were called, both of whom stated that from information received they proceeded to the place with drags, and found deceased in the water at 3.45, with his face downwards and his pockets filled with stones and coal. There were no marks of violence about the body, or indications of a struggle having taken place. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that deceased was found drowned.

41 24 September 1881

HEDNESFORD

REFUSING TO QUIT At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, before Lord Hatherton, **Martin Cane**, boatman, was summoned, but did not appear, for refusing to quit the Uxbridge Arms on the 5th inst, when requested to do so by the landlord, William Ormson. Fined 16s 6d, including costs, or 14 days' hard labour.

42 24 September 1881

Early on Tuesday morning, a boatman named **John Harris** was found in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Wigan in a drowning state. He died shortly after being rescued. It is supposed deceased

was drunk and fell off his boat into the canal.

43 31 December 1881

BOY DROWNED On Thursday afternoon, an inquest was held at the Junction Inn, Bridgman Street, respecting the death of John Parkes (16), whose body was found in the Birmingham Canal near the above street. William Didger, roller, deposed the deceased worked for him at Messrs Lester's ironworks, and he last saw him about six o'clock on the 23rd inst, in the works. Witness at that time told him to go and fetch his tea, and in doing so deceased would have to walk along the side of the canal for several hundred yards. It was foggy at the time and, as deceased did not return, the canal was searched, but no trace of him was found. **Daniel Till**, boatman, deposed that on Tuesday last he dropped a windlass into the canal, and while searching for it, he discovered the body of the boy. Deceased had the whole of his clothes on, with the exception of his hat. There were no marks of violence or injury about the body. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

44 7 January 1882

BROWNHILLS

SHOPLIFTING At the Oldbury Petty Sessions on Monday, **Thomas Banman alias Baggot**, boatman, Brownhills, was charged with stealing an overcoat, a cloth jacket and a pair of tailor's shears, the property of Mr J Vernon, tailor, Church Street, on the 24th ult. Prisoner pleaded guilty, and said he had been out of work for fourteen weeks and was half starved. He was sentenced to three months' hard labour.

45 11 February 1882

PELSALL

ALLEGED THEFT **George Stanton** and **Thomas Whalan** (12), boatmen of Birmingham, were charged with stealing a saucepan, a frying pan and two windlasses, the property of **George Butler**, boatman, Oldbury. The case was clearly proved, so far as possession of the articles was concerned. **Thomas Sanders**, boatman, Oldbury, however, stated that on the 4th inst he employed the prisoners, and directed them to take the articles they would need from a hovel at the Stour Valley Ironworks, at the same time telling them that if when at their work they found they had taken anything which they ought not to have done, to bring it back, so that the complainant could have it. The complainant was also employed by him, and kept his things in the hovel. The Bench dismissed the case, saying that the complainant ought never to have brought it into Court.

46 25 February 1882

BROWNHILLS

WASTING CANAL WATER At the Muckley Corner Petty Sessions on Wednesday, before W F Gordon Esq and Major Webb, **Henry Birch**, boatman, Walsall Wood, who did not appear, was charged with the above offence, on January 31st. It appeared that the bottom lock at Ogley was under repair, and when defendant came with his boat, he could not go through. When the repairs were completed he went through, and at the same time let the water waste in such a manner as to run over the tow path. It was decided that the case should be adjourned, and that if in the meantime defendant went to the canal office at Birmingham and paid 11s expenses, the matter would be considered settled.

47 8 April 1882

CANNOCK

DRUNK At the Petty Sessions on Monday, before R H Briscoe Esq, an old man named **William Mortiboys**, boatman, was charged by Police-constable Hutchinson with being drunk in Church Street on the 12th ult. Defendant was ordered to pay a fine of 2s 6d and 8s 6d costs.

48 29 April 1882

CHASETOWN

LARCENY At the Muckley Corner Petty Sessions on Wednesday, **Isaac Fern**, boatman, was charged with having stolen, on the 29th September last, ten ducks and three tame rabbits, the property of Samuel Nixon, landlord of the Miners' Rest beerhouse. It appears that complainant went to the back door of his premises to look after the pigs, when he found a dead duck near the door. Defendant was in his house drinking on the night previous, in company with three other men, who had since been convicted. From that time until now he had not seen the prisoner. PC Hodgetts produced six ducks' heads, which complainant identified as his property. PC McHugh also produced four heads and wings of ducks, which were identified. PC Peek deposed that from information received on the 30th September he went, in company with another officer, to the Chasetown Canal Wharf. Complainant, who was with witness, pointed out prisoner and three others, two of whom – named Holbrook and Stanley – were arrested. During the time, prisoner made his escape. He searched the boat and found some feathers, and when he went back a search was made, but prisoner could not be found. A warrant was issued for his apprehension ; but he had not been heard of until Thursday last, when he was handed over from Inspector Hinton at Smethwick to witness, who read over the charge to him, which prisoner denied, and said they were stolen and put in his boat. Witness had been in search of prisoner since the time at which the summons was issued. PC Hodgetts deposed that on the 30th September he found a number of ducks upon the Common, about half a mile from Nixon's house. He took possession of them, and on the following day complainant identified them as his property. PC McHugh deposed that he went, in company with others, to the wharf and on the Common to search, when he found three ducks and a drake in a bag in a culvert near the canal. He took them to Brownhills, and they were identified by Mr Nixon as his property. It was about 300 yards from the boat of prisoner where the ducks were found. Prisoner did not say anything in reply to the charge, and was committed to take his trial at the next Stafford Quarter Sessions. Bail was accepted, prisoner in the sum of £50, and two other sureties in the sum of £25 each.

49 13 May 1882

PELSALL

DROWNED On Friday the 5th inst, Mr W H Phillips (Wolverhampton Borough Coroner) held an inquest at the Free Trade Inn, touching the death of **John Timms** (19), boatman of Birmingham. It appeared that on the 1st inst deceased was steering a boat along the canal at this place, about seven o'clock in the morning, when he had occasion to pass from his boat to another, and in doing so fell into the water. He was got out in a few minutes, but life was extinct, he having been severely crushed between the boats. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

50 12 August 1882

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE CANAL On Wednesday, an inquest was held at the Elephant and Castle Inn, Wolverhampton Street, Walsall, by the Borough Coroner (Mr A A Fletcher) on the body of **Francis Bates** (28), a boatman lately residing in Dudley Street, who met his death by drowning on the previous day in the canal, near to the old Gasworks.

Samuel Green, a boatman living in Hollyhedge Lane, deposed that the deceased worked with him. On Tuesday morning they were employed in taking an empty boat from Messrs John Russell and Co's Cyclops Works, and they proceeded safely until they got to the second lock. When there, witness drew the second paddle, as usual, and then ran on to the third lock to get it ready for the boat. He drew the inside paddle, and turned round to see where the boat was. Upon doing so he missed the deceased, and ran back to the second lock to ascertain what had become of him, and found his hat in the water by the boat. He at once raised an alarm, and three or four men, who were at the bottom lock at the time, immediately ran up to assist in the search for the deceased. They got upon the boat, but could not at first find the deceased. Upon opening the bottom gate and pushing the boat out again, however, they found the body of the deceased in the water about three yards

from the gate. Life was quite extinct. The body was pulled up with a rake, the boat again pushed into the lock, and then two men took the body and placed it upon the end of the boat, which was then raised to the top of the lock and the body removed, with the aid of the police, to the place where it then lay. Witness believed that the deceased had been accustomed to boating for many years and was, he thought, a steady sober man. He was quite sober on the morning of the accident, and witness was of opinion that he fell into the water while doing something at the lock ; but he did not think that anyone saw the occurrence. The depth of the water in the lock at the time was perhaps three or four yards. In reply to a question by a juryman, witness said that in all probability the deceased was jerked off the gate when it shut. The deceased was a good swimmer, and he should think he was stunned, or else he would have risen, unless, as some of the jurymen pointed out, he got right under the boat. From the time he left deceased until he missed him, about ten minutes elapsed.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

51 26 August 1882

ALDRIDGE

STEALING COAL FROM THE CANAL At the Rushall Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before F James and E T Holden Esqs, **William Pumfrey** of Hill Top, West Bromwich, was charged with having stolen a quantity of coal, value 6d, the property of Messrs Firmstone, West Bromwich, on the 14th inst. Mr A Baker, Walsall, appeared for the defence. Police-constable Silvester deposed that on the day in question he was on the canal bridge at Aldridge, when he saw a boat going along, and saw defendant throw two large lumps of coal into the canal, as near to the side as he could. A woman was on the canal side at the time, but when she saw the officer, she went away. Charles Medhurst, clerk to Mr Firmstone, said that his firm, who had been great sufferers of thefts of this nature, were receiving a cargo of coal from the Aldridge Colliery on the date named. For the defence, it was contended that the two lumps of coal had caught fire, and were therefore thrown into the canal, there being no intention to steal. **Thomas Gretton**, boatman, deposed that he and Pumfrey were in charge of the boat, and he called the attention of the steerer to the fact that the coal was on fire, whereupon defendant threw two small lumps into the canal. **William Evans**, boatman, said that he was driving a horse on the tow path near the defendant's boat, and he saw two small lumps of coal on fire, which were thrown into the canal. **Elizabeth Evans**, wife of the last witness, and a little girl named Mary Robinson gave corroborative evidence, the latter stating that the coal "fizzed" when thrown into the water. Mr James, in dismissing the case, said it was one of strong suspicion, and if there had been any corroborative evidence for the prosecution the decision would have been different.

52 2 September 1882

A DANGEROUS CANAL On Monday afternoon the Borough Coroner (A A Fletcher Esq) held an inquest at the Navigation Inn, Bridgman Street, upon the body of William Broadhurst (6) of Frederick Street, who was drowned in the canal between Bridgman Street and Wolverhampton Road on Saturday last.

Ernest Cauldry, of 43 Frederick Street, said he was a horse driver to his brother-in-law, who was a boatman. On Saturday afternoon, as he was taking his horse along the canal bank to the stable, he saw a boy in the canal on his back. He had his arms stretched out and was spitting. Witness at once jumped off his horse and, as the boy was too far from the side for witness to reach him, he ran to the ironworks for a boat hook. Several of the men from the works ran with him to the side of the canal, but the deceased had sunk. Frank White of 40 Queen Street entered the water, and in a few minutes found the body under a coal boat. He should think it was more than ten minutes from the time he first saw the deceased in the water to the time when his body was recovered.

Frank White of 40 Queen Street, iron roller, said that on Saturday afternoon he saw the last witness run into the works with another man and, after calling out that someone was in the water, they ran out with a rake. He at once followed them and went into the water but, as a boat was passing at the

time, he could not find the body for more than ten minutes. He however eventually found it under a coal boat. The deceased was quite dead, and had all his clothes on.

A verdict was returned to the effect that the deceased was found drowned in the canal, but that there was no evidence to show how he got there. It was the opinion of the jury that the canal should be more protected than it was at Bridgman Street, it being quite open for children to walk from the street on to the towing-path. On Saturday morning a child was fetched out only just in time to save its life, and another on Sunday. One of the jurors said that his little son, seven years of age, last week held a lad bigger than himself above the water until help arrived.

Mr Dutton (the foreman of the jury) stated that in the last few years he had rescued four children from the same part of the canal.

The Coroner thought there never was such an unfortunate bit of canal, for if he had held one inquest upon persons who had met with their death in it since he had been in office, he had held a hundred. At the request of the jury, the Coroner complimented Mr White upon the ready way in which he entered the water to endeavour to save the deceased.

53 28 October 1882

FATALITY TO A BIRMINGHAM BOY AT RUSHALL On Saturday Mr E Hooper (district coroner) held an inquest at the Royal Oak Inn, Daw End, Rushall, on the body of Phillip Lennon (11), Sheepcote Street, Birmingham, which was on the 18th inst found in the canal at Daw End.

William Hill, a miner living at Daw End, said that as he stood on the canal bridge, between one and two o'clock on Wednesday the 18th inst, a boatman who was taking an empty boat in the direction of Brownhills told him there was either a man or a woman in the canal about 200 yards from this bridge. Witness then went along the canal, and saw the body of deceased floating in the water some four or five yards from the bank. He went to the Police Station before attempting to get the body out.

The Coroner here remarked that he wished the people of that district to get out of the mistaken notion they had that nothing ought to be touched in such a case until the arrival of the police. If a body was pulled out when first seen, life might probably in many instances be saved.

Witness, resuming his evidence, said that when the police arrived, a boatman drew the body out with his shaft. It had every appearance of having been in the water a week or more. He did not know the boy. The deceased had his right arm broken, but witness saw no other marks of injury. The jacket hung on to one wrist only, being nearly pulled off, and his trousers were down.

George Lennon, a galvaniser living in Sheepcote Street, Birmingham, deposed that he was the father of deceased, who was eleven years and ten months old. On Monday the 9th inst, witness left home about half past five in the morning to go to his work, leaving the boy in bed with the rest of the family. He came home again at half past six in the evening, and a neighbour whom he met in the street told him that deceased had gone out with a boatman named Copson. He did not know the man himself until after the death of the boy. He waited before making inquiries until Sunday the 15th inst, as he thought deceased would come home every day, as he had previously gone along the canal on two occasions. The police at Ladywood told witness on the 17th that a boy had been found in the canal near Rushall, and on the following morning he came and identified the body. Copson told him on the 15th that he sent the lad back at the top of the street, and he had gone with another boatman. He did not know that anyone bore any spite against his son. When deceased left home he was in perfect health, and to witness's knowledge had never had a day's illness in his life. When he had left home before, he had only stayed away one night. On the day which followed the finding of the body, Copson acknowledged that the boy had been with him, and that he left him outside the boat. The boy was in a club – St Patrick's – but witness did not suppose that he should get one penny from it, as it had lately been extensively robbed. He should, however, get £2 from the shop at which he worked.

Joseph Copson, boatman of Rawlins Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, deposed that he had frequently seen the deceased about the streets and the canal. About nine o'clock in the morning of the 9th inst, witness saw him in Easington Street, along with witness's brother. Deceased asked if he

might go with them, and witness told him he might if he liked. They were going to Brownhills, and it was about nine o'clock at night when they got to Rushall. Witness there left the boat, and left his brother and deceased in it. He went to the Royal Oak, and in about half an hour his brother followed him, leaving the boy in the boat. He and his brother stayed in the house until about ten o'clock, and when they got back to the boat, deceased was gone. They thought he had gone back in another boat, as he had done before, and so they went on to Brownhills. The deceased had as much to eat during the day as he wanted, and he seemed in good spirits. He was not asked to work, and was not scolded at all during the day. There was a fire bucket in the boat, and when witness left the boat, deceased was sitting on the corn bag close to it, having some tea with witness's brother.

The Coroner pointed out that the right arm of the deceased was broken, and that his neck was dislocated, and said that if the jury thought it necessary he would adjourn the inquiry for a *post mortem* examination to be made. If the body had been in the water as long as it was stated, it was, however, quite possible that those injuries had been caused by passing boats.

A juror remarked that it was very wrong to take boys away from their houses as boatmen did.

The Coroner concurred ; but added that it was unfortunately a very common practice. That was the second case of the same kind that he had had that week. The other was at Newton Road on Monday, upon a boy of about the same age, who had also been taken away by a boatman. In the present case, the boatman seemed to have taken the boy away out of pure kindness and not from any interested motive, as was shown by the fact that he was not compelled to work.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

54 11 November 1882

WALSALL POLICE COURT

A NEGLIGENT HUSBAND **Charles Mellors**, Green Lane, boatman, was sentenced to 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour for neglecting to maintain his wife. Mr R Cozens, the relieving officer, stated that on the 24th ult he was applied to for relief for the defendant's wife, who was suffering from dropsy, and on the 26th he had her removed into the workhouse. The cost to the Union had been 10s, besides the legal expenses.

55 16 December 1882

HEDNESFORD

ASSAULT At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, before B Gilpin and R H Briscoe Esqs, **Henry Lewin**, boatman of Birmingham, was summoned for having assaulted **Samuel Round**, harbour master and wharfinger at the Hednesford Canal Basin, on the 24th ult. Mr Holliday (of the firm of Wragge, Evans and Holliday, Birmingham) appeared to prosecute on behalf of the Birmingham Canal Navigation Company. It appeared from the evidence of Round that on the day in question defendant brought an empty boat from Birmingham to the Hednesford Basin, and on his arrival he passed no less than eighty other boats. When this was discovered, he was requested to take his boat back and proceed to his proper turn. This he refused to do, when complainant attempted to take the boat back for him, and whilst he was so engaged defendant kicked at him in the face, but caught his shoulder instead. Complainant still forced the boat back to its proper place, and then defendant struck him on the breast and head with a boat hook. Complainant threw defendant against the hedge, and when he relaxed his hold upon him, he (defendant) set about him again. In reply to defendant, complainant said he did not attempt to cut the line until after the assault ; in fact he did not cut it at all, because his knife broke whilst trying to do so. **Thomas Henry Reynolds**, boat catcher employed by the Cannock and Rugeley Colliery Company, deposed that he was employed to fetch the boats in as they were required. He was on the spot on the day mentioned, and saw the assault committed. Defendant said he had nothing to say, except that if he had not struck complainant he would have killed him. A boy named **Samuel Wood** said he was employed by the Shropshire Union, and that complainant attempted to cut defendant's line and struck him first. Mr Gilpin said defendant would be fined 40s and costs, or a month's imprisonment, which was not so heavy a penalty as he deserved. The money, £2 12s 6d, was

unanimously paid.

56 20 January 1883

HEDNESFORD

INQUEST On Monday an inquest was held at the Globe Inn, touching the death of a boatman, who was drowned in the canal near the wharf. From the evidence, it appeared that the deceased was working his way to his boat along a road leading from the Cannock Road, and had walked into the canal and was drowned. The place where the accident occurred was a very awkward one, owing to a sharp turn in the road. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death", and recommended that the Canal Company put a fence up to prevent similar accidents in future.

57 19 May 1883

WALSALL POLICE COURT

STEALING COAL **George Perkins alias Smith, boatman**, Birmingham ; George Moreton and Mary Edwards, Coal Pool, were charged with stealing coal from a boat, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company, on the 10th May. Police-constable Curtis deposed that he was near the canal at Coal Pool on the day in question, when he saw Smith throw a quantity of coal from a boat, and it was picked up by the other two defendants. Mr Cooksey (Dudley) appeared on behalf of Messrs Wiggin and Co, Birmingham. He stated that these thefts were of very frequent occurrence, and they wanted such proceedings put a stop to. Perkins, being in a position of trust, was fined 20s and costs, or one month's imprisonment with hard labour, and the other two were dismissed with a caution.

58 30 June 1883

NORTON CANES

THEFT OF COAL At the Cannock Petty Sessions on Monday, **Job Hatfield and William Chelton**, dockmen, were charged with stealing coal, the property of the Conduit Colliery Company. On Monday the 18th inst, Police-constable Gibbs saw a boatman throw a quantity of coal into an empty boat, and the prisoners were afterwards seen to remove a portion of the coal. They were each ordered to pay 30s, including costs.

59 30 June 1883

WALSALL WOOD

STEALING COAL At the Rushall Petty Sessions last week, **Thomas Morgan**, boatman of Inge Street, Birmingham, was charged with stealing 3 cwt of coal, value 1s 6d, the property of the Cannock Chase Colliery Company, on the 5th inst. Mr Tyler (Tyler and Tanner, Birmingham) appeared to prosecute, on behalf of the Birmingham Coal Merchants and Consumers' Association. It appeared that on the day in question the defendant was in charge of a boat on its way to the Nickel Company's works at Erdington, and when he got to Walsall Wood, he tied the boat up opposite the residence of a man named Woolley, and took four lots of coal into the house. When the fifth lot was being taken, the police officers interposed. Police-constables Aldritt and Gibbs proved the case. Defendant said he was guilty of taking the coal, but he took it to the cottage to make a fire for his own use, as the boat was damp and not fit to sleep in. Fined 20s and costs, or in default two months' hard labour.

CHARGE OF RECEIVING STOLEN COAL At the same Court, Samuel Woolley alias Birch, bricklayer, was charged with receiving the stolen coal mentioned in the last case, with a guilty knowledge. Mr Tyler again conducted the prosecution, while Mr J Sheldon appeared for the defence. Thomas Morgan deposed that he had stabled his horse at the Beehive, and was going to stay in the kitchen all night. It was the custom of boatmen to stop at that place, and take coal from their boats with them. Defendant did not know that he was taking the coal into the room. Eva Hurley said that her house adjoins that of the defendant. She could recollect that at ten o'clock on

the night of the 5th inst, Mrs Woolley went to look for her husband, and whilst she was away, Morgan came. Witness could swear that neither defendant nor his wife were at home at the time the coal was taken there. In reply to the Bench, witness said she was present when defendant, his wife and the lodger came home, and she left immediately without saying a word. William Whitby stated that he was at the Boat public house with defendant on the date named, and they did not leave until 10.25 pm. The defendant's house was but a few minutes walk away, and at the time they got to the bridge, there was no boat tied up there. George Swan, labourer, deposed that on the night in question, a young man and defendant's wife came to the public house for defendant, and he went towards the bridge with them. They got to the house about 10.35, defendant's wife causing him to look at the clock. After Mr Sheldon had addressed the Bench on behalf of his client, Mr Holden said there was a doubt in the case, and defendant would have the benefit of it ; but he strongly recommended him to be more careful in the future. The case was therefore dismissed.

60 25 August 1883

BROWNHILLS

DRUNK At the Shenstone Petty Sessions on Wednesday, **Joseph Emery**, boatman, Birmingham, was charged with being drunk and making use of bad language in the Chester Road on the 9th inst. Sergeant Lavin deposed that on the night in question, he found the defendant drunk in the above road and making use of bad language. He was in such a state that he had to be locked up. Defendant denied the charge, stating that he went to Roberts's for the purpose of writing two letters, which he did, and during the time he was there he only had five glasses of whisky. He said he had been robbed at the police station of 6d. Superintendent Hackney said he thought it his duty to speak when such a serious charge was made against the police. When the defendant made the charge, his clothes were searched in his presence, when a halfpenny was found upon him, and then he said he had been robbed. George Gurney, Birmingham, was called for the defence, who deposed that he and defendant went to Roberts's, and he had a little ale and defendant whisky. When they had left the house he called out for his friend, when the policeman came and knocked them down. Col Bagnall said it was disgraceful that such abominable language should be used and a disturbance created just at the time people wanted to go to bed. He had conferred with the other magistrates, and they suggested a fine of 5s and costs, but he did not agree with such a small fine, and said defendant had got off very lightly. Fined 5s and costs.

61 26 April 1884

ALDRIDGE

ALLEGED THEFT OF A STOVE At the Rushall Police Court on Tuesday, before F James, T A Negus and J Nayler Esqs, **John Cooper**, boatman of Smethwick, was charged with having stolen a stove from a boat, whilst in the canal basin at Aldridge Colliery. Mr E Evans appeared for the defence. Police-constable Overton deposed that on the 2nd inst he received information that a stove had been stolen from a boat some time between the 14th and 15th of March. On inquiry, he found that the missing article had been seen in defendant's possession. The latter, when taxed with the theft, ran away, and he then gave the name of John Smith and a false address. The stove and boat belonged to a person named Mullet of Catshill, but when boats were in the basin they and everything they contained were considered for the time being to be the property of the Colliery Company. The stove was not produced. Mr Evans, at this stage, asked the Bench to adjourn the case for a short time, in order that he might have an interview with defendant's father. The solicitor afterwards intimated that he was of opinion that his client was innocent of the charge ; that, although defendant was a big fellow, he was young in years ; and that, as would have been the case with most other young persons, he became frightened at the policeman, and when caught gave a false name and address. Mr James said, as the Colliery Company were not prosecuting, the summons would be dismissed.

62 3 May 1884

HEDNESFORD

SERIOUS CHARGE At a Special Police Court at Cannock on Thursday, before B Gilpin Esq, **Thomas Mayo**, boatman, Droitwich, was charged with having attempted to commit a criminal assault upon a woman named **Jane Harmer**, the wife of **Richard Harmer**, also a boatman. From the evidence, it appeared that on Wednesday night the prosecutrix went to the Globe Inn, and there saw her husband drinking with the prisoner. She drank with them, stayed some time, and then left at the request of her husband to attend to the house. The prisoner went with her, and on the way to the boats, which were at the Hednesford Basin, he caught hold of her and attempted to commit the offence. They struggled, and prosecutrix eventually got away. She as soon as possible complained to her husband, and gave information to the police. Police-constable Parsons arrested the prisoner, who denied the charge. Prisoner was remanded until Monday next, at Penkridge.

63 17 May 1884

CHURCHBRIDGE

DRUNKENNESS AND PERMITTING DRUNKENNESS At the Cannock Police Court on Monday, before B Gilpin and R H Briscoe Esqs, two men named John Evans, ironworker, and **Joseph Richards**, boatman, were charged with being drunk on licensed premises, viz the White Lion Inn, on the 26th April, and John Wainwright, the landlord, was charged with permitting drunkenness on the same occasion. Police-constable Hodgetts deposed that at 10.45 on the night in question he visited the house, and found the two men drunk and asleep, with their heads upon their arms on the table. Witness accused the landlord of permitting drunkenness, but he replied that he was not aware of it. Mr Loxton appeared on behalf of the owner of the house. Evans said that when the officer came to his house the next day, he (Evans) told him he could not have been drunk, as he had only had four pints of ale and three glasses of rum the previous night. Joseph Hood, labourer, deposed that on the night in question he was in the White Lion public house from eight to eleven o'clock. Evans and Richards were also there, and witness saw the former with his head upon the table. In reply to Mr Gilpin, witness said that, if he were on his oath, he should say Evans was not drunk. He was sober himself ; in fact he could not get enough. Witness could not say what condition "boatman Joe" was in. Evans denied the charge, stating that he had done three turns of twelve hours each from the Friday to the Saturday night, and he put in a certificate to that effect. "Boatman Joe" said he was not drunk, as he went straight away home when ordered. Wainwright, the landlord, said that everything was quiet in the taproom, and he had not the slightest idea that anything was wrong. When the officer called his attention to the matter, he had to inquire who the men were. Thomas Bates was called for the defence, and deposed that he was in the house about nine o'clock, and that Richards came in, in company with others, about eleven, but they had nothing whatever to drink. The case against the landlord was dismissed, Mr Gilpin remarking that there was no evidence to show that Wainwright had supplied any drink. Evans was also discharged, but Richards was fined 2s 6d and costs.

64 17 May 1884

WALSALL POLICE COURT

WASTING CANAL WATER **Joseph Green**, a boatman, was summoned for wasting the water in the canal by opening the paddle of a lock without having closed the gate above him, on the 4th inst. Mr Bagnall, solicitor, Birmingham, appeared to prosecute, and stated that the defendant, in order to save himself trouble, had opened the paddle at the bottom of the full lock without closing the upper gate. The effect of that was that his boat was sucked into the lock, and he had not the trouble to pull it in. The locks were very deep, and the amount of water wasted was very great. Defendant was spoken to and said he was sorry ; but, being watched, he was seen to do the same thing two locks below. Evidence having been given in proof of the solicitor's statement, defendant was fined 20s and costs, or to be imprisoned for 14 days.

65 21 June 1884

BOY DROWNED IN THE CANAL On Monday afternoon the Borough Coroner, T H Stanley Esq, held an inquest at the Priory Hotel, Park Street, respecting the death of Charles Henry Sharp, seven years of age, of 340 Green Lane. The first witness called was **Joseph Till**, boatman, living in Navigation Street, who stated that about seven o'clock on Saturday evening he was in his own house, when a girl came and told him that a boy had fallen into the canal. He at once went to the spot, but could not see the boy, and he commenced to search with a boat shaft. After searching for about 20 minutes, he found the body close to the point where he had fallen in. He left the body with the boy's mother. Mary Sharp, mother of deceased, deposed that on the night in question she went to market leaving her three children in charge of their eldest brother, aged 14 years. On returning home in half an hour's time, only two of the four were at home. She inquired after the other two, and was told they were in the yard. Not finding them there, she went in search, and found the girl coming out of a yard by the Barrel Inn. The girl then told her that Charlie was in the canal. She added that he was trying to catch fish, when he overbalanced himself and fell in. She went to the canal bank, and was present when the boatman Till succeeded in finding the body. Verdict : "Accidental death".

66 6 September 1884

FOUND DROWNED AT DAW END On Wednesday Mr E Hooper, district coroner, held an inquest at the Royal Oak Inn, Daw End, on the body of James Corkram (64) of Bloxwich, whose dead body was found in the canal at Daw End on Monday morning.

Edward Corkram of Bloxwich deposed that he was son of the deceased, whose body the coroner and jury had seen. Deceased was a farm labourer, and had lived with witness at Bloxwich. Deceased had been unwell for the last twelve months. He had had rheumatism, and had fretted a good deal over the death of a daughter, which took place some time ago. On Sunday afternoon, deceased left the house about two o'clock, immediately after dinner. They asked deceased where he was going, but he never made no answer. Witness's brother asked him to stop until it had done raining, but deceased picked up his hat and went away. Deceased had been about as usual during the dinner time. He had not said much, but he was not in the habit of saying much. For the last six months, deceased had seemed to be getting childish, and they had kept knives and such things out of his way. He had never threatened nor offered to do any injury to himself. They expected him to return to tea on Sunday night, but he did not come, neither did he come home all night. Witness and the family did not take much notice, as he had relations in Walsall whom he used to visit ; and it being a very wet day, they thought that some of the people he had visited had kept him all night. On Monday evening, witness went to see for deceased, but found that he had not been seen nor heard of after about half past two on Sunday. Witness gave information to the police, from whom he heard on Tuesday of a body being found at Daw End. Witness at once proceeded to see the body, and found it to be that of his father. He could see no sign of ill usage on the body of the deceased, and did not think that there had been anything of the sort. He thought deceased had walked into the water in the dark. Deceased had worked for Mr Stackhouse for many years, and Mr Stackhouse now lived at Berry Farm, the way to which would have been past Daw End. Deceased's life was insured, as the club in which he had been had broken up, and witness and his brother wished to have the means to bury him respectably. Deceased had known of the insurance being effected, and had consented to it.

Joseph Bushell, boatman, Dale Street, Wednesbury, deposed that as he was going along the canal with a boat, near to the (Blue?) Hole, he saw something swimming in the water. The body was in the middle of the canal, and was cold and stiff. He believed it had been in the water some hours. Deceased had his jacket over his arm as he floated in the water. The banks of the canal were wet and slippery, and there was no sign of any struggle on the bank. The hands of the deceased were open, and there was no sign on the body of any ill usage.

The Coroner said that if the jury desired it he would make a *post mortem* examination of the body, but there was no suggestion or suspicion of any foul play. Of course, it was impossible for them or

anyone else to say whether deceased committed suicide or got into the water accidentally, and as there was no evidence on that, the only verdict was one of "Found drowned" on what they had heard. If they thought that a proper verdict well and good, but he would have medical testimony if the jury desired it.

The jury considered it quite unnecessary, and at once returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

67 6 September 1884

SAD FATALITY TO A CHILD

EXTRAORDINARY BELIEF On Thursday morning, the Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) held an inquest at the Horse and Jockey Inn, Stafford Street, on the body of Leah Brown, aged 12, whose parents reside at 129 Bloxwich Road, and whose body was found in the canal near Pratt's Bridge on Wednesday. The following evidence was taken :-

Miriam Brown, wife of Thomas Brown, deposed that the deceased was her daughter. Deceased was 12 years old last April, and witness last saw her alive a few minutes before two last Sunday morning. Deceased was then starting for the Ryecroft Congregational Sunday School. Deceased's brother, a boy of 10, went with her, but did not see her after she got to school, as the girls came out of school before the boys. The boy got home about four o'clock, and noticing that she had not returned, asked for her. Deceased had wanted to go blackberrying all last week, but witness would not let her ; and witness thought deceased must have started off with the intention of doing that. The reason that she did not let deceased go was that she had had some strange dreams about baking. She had done the same when she lost her other children. They died natural deaths, and previous to their dying she had dreamed about baking and kneading dough. Last week she dreamed three nights running that she was baking, and had an oven of 12 or 14 yards in length. Whenever she had such dreams, something had happened, and in consequence of that she would not let the children go. The boy had wanted to go with deceased blackberrying. Deceased had gone to the Sunday School in the morning of the day she was drowned. When deceased did not return in the afternoon, witness went to her relations at Ocker Hill and every place she could think of to inquire about her, but could not find out anything of her. Deceased was a very good girl. Witness gave information to the police on Monday, but nothing was heard of the child until Wednesday, when the body was taken home. The body was fully dressed as when she left home, except for the hat. The hat was found by some children on Monday night, but not returned to witness until Wednesday night. It was given to her son by the children who found it, and who said that they had seen it floating in the canal at the second lock below the bridge, and had got it out. Deceased's pocket handkerchief was the only thing which was missing. Deceased had said she wanted to go to a place near Crimea Bridge, at Coal Pool, to get blackberries. Witness had no suspicion that deceased had been foully dealt with in any way. In reply to the jury, witness said there had been no quarrelling that day, and she had never threatened to kill herself. Deceased was in the habit of returning straight home, and witness could not say how she got to the canal, unless she had gone up to Reed's Wood. Then she would return by the canal side. None of the other scholars seemed to know anything about her after she left school, though she asked some of them to go with her. They refused to go – indeed, she was not in the habit of going with any of the other scholars. It was fine about the time when deceased would leave school, but afterwards a violent storm came on. The only marks about the deceased were some upon her face, which appeared to have been done by the passing boats.

William Simecox, Bentley Lane, boatman, deposed that on Wednesday the young man who worked with him called him to the canal, saying that he thought he saw a woman or something floating in the canal. Witness went at once to the place pointed out, and found the body of deceased. Witness got the body out with the boat shaft. The water had begun to change the colour of the body, as though it had been in some time. Deceased was fully dressed, but witness did not particularly notice what clothes she had on. Witness noticed that there was a mark on the side of the face, as if it had been grazed by a passing boat. Witness laid the body on the bank, and it was identified by a man who worked near, and who had it removed to the parents' house. In reply to the jury, witness said that the body was in the middle of the canal, where the water was about 5 ft 6 in or 6 ft deep.

The current of the canal set towards Wolverhampton, and the body might have floated from Pratt's Bridge to where witness found it. There was an old wharf near where the body was found, and probably it would float to that, and there lodge until a passing boat caused it to come up.

The Coroner, in summing up, pointed out that the mother of the deceased had stated that there were no marks of violence upon the body, except such as were caused after death. That view was supported by the man who found the body. Of course the evidence was unsatisfactory, as it gave no idea at all of how she got into the water. It was certain, from the evidence, that deceased was found dead in the canal, and that seemed the only verdict which could be returned. As there was no suggestion of violence having been used, he had not thought it necessary to order a *post mortem* examination. He would do so, however, if the jury desired it.

The jury said they did not, and at once returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

68 11 October 1884

BROWNHILLS

STEALING TURNIPS **William Smith**, boatman of Birmingham, was charged with stealing a quantity of turnips, value 6d, the property of William Roberts of the Station Hotel, on the 7th inst. Henry Scatelawn, in the employ of the prosecutor, deposed that on the day in question he was at work in the field, when he saw the defendant getting turnips. Witness shouted out, "Hold hard, you have got enough", and defendant immediately jumped on to his boat, which lay at the side of the field. Defendant then ran away, and witness took the number of the boat. Prosecutor stated that the canal passed through his land, and he was subject to continued robberies of this kind. If the vegetables were put in camp they were fetched away by people. He did not wish to press the case, but if any more persons were caught, he would press the charge against them. Defendant said he did not take the turnips off the land, but merely pulled them up. Fined 1s and 10s 6d costs, or 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour.

69 11 October 1884

WALSALL POLICE COURT

PUNISHED FOR IMPUDENCE AS WELL **William Deston**, boatman of Birmingham, was charged with wasting the water of the Birmingham Canal Company by opening the bottom gates of the seventh lock before closing the top gate. When spoken to by the lock-keeper about the matter, defendant used foul language. **Charles Hawksford**, lock-keeper at Rushall Locks, said on the night of the 19th ult, defendant came into the seventh lock near the Bell basin, and drew the paddle halfway up. Witness remonstrated, and defendant went to the lock below, and drew the paddle there. Defendant had been cautioned several times before, and had always used the "foulest language a tongue could utter". Defendant was told he was liable to a penalty of £5, and was ordered to pay 20s and costs, or 21 days' hard labour.

70 13 December 1884

BROWNHILLS

STEALING A BOAT HELM At the Police Court on Wednesday, before A E Manley, L T Birch and H A Wakeman-Newport Esqs, a young man named **Bernard Wersey**, boatman, Toll End, Tipton, was summoned for stealing a boat helm and shaft, the property of the Conduit Colliery Company, on the 27th ult. Mr Sheldon appeared for the defence. Thomas Evans, assistant manager, stated that he did not wish to press the case, but it had been common for men to take things belonging to the company, and it was desirable that a stop should be put to such conduct. Mr Sheldon said the things had not been stolen, but admitted that they had been wrongly taken away, and would have been brought back again. Sergeant Barratt said that a number of complaints had been made of late about things being taken. The charge was withdrawn on payment of costs.

DRUNKENNESS At the same Court, **Oliver Whitehouse**, boatman, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in the Watling Street Road. Police-constable Maxwell stated that on the 1st

inst he saw the defendant very drunk and unable to take care of himself. Mr Manley said as defendant was quiet he thought he (defendant) ought not to have been interfered with by the police. Police-constable Maxwell stated that he should not have done so had not his attention been called to the defendant by a gentleman on the highway. Sergeant Barratt said it was a rule of his not to summon quiet drunkards. Defendant was discharged with a caution.

71 27 December 1884

WALSALL POLICE COURT

COAL STEALING **George Hill**, Blue Lane West, was summoned for stealing coal, the property of John Russell and Company Limited, on the 20th inst. **Thomas Sutton**, boatman, deposed that he was with a boat at the second lock, and saw the defendant go on to the boat and fetch two good sized lumps of coal off it. Defendant said he took the coal for the purposes of making a fire on his own boat, he being a steerer. Defendant was sent to gaol for 10 days with hard labour.

72 7 February 1885

CHURCHBRIDGE

QUARRELSOME BOATMEN At the Cannock Police Court on Monday, before Colonel Littleton, B Gilpin and R H Briscoe Esqs, **John Cawern**, boatman, Brewood, was charged with having assaulted **James Cooper**, also a boatman, of Birmingham. Complainant stated that on the 24th ult he was proceeding along the canal from Calf Heath to Churchbridge with his horse and boat, when he met the defendant coming in the opposite direction. When defendant got up to complainant, he asked him if he was going to fight him. Complainant said, "No, he was not ; he did not get his living by fighting". Defendant then picked up a lump of coal and threw it at him, but it missed him. Defendant afterwards went to complainant and struck him on the side of the head, knocking him down. Not content with this, defendant then threw complainant into the canal. Defendant denied the charge, stating that complainant began the row by striking him with a heavy windlass, and used most disgraceful language towards him. Colonel Littleton said if complainant had assaulted defendant, he should have summoned him. The case was dismissed upon defendant paying 10s 6d costs.

73 7 March 1885

BROWNHILLS LOCAL BOARD

CANAL BRIDGE AT WALSALL WOOD The Surveyor recommended the Board to call upon the Canal Company at once to complete the bridge over the canal at Boatman's Lane, the approach to the eastern side being very dangerous. He said a temporary bridge had been erected, but he considered it was quite time the bridge and approaches were put in proper order. Mr Beetlestone said if the bridge was dangerous, the Canal Company ought to be called upon to finish the work. Mr Croft thought a letter ought to go from that Board to the Canal Company upon the subject. The Surveyor said the property owners near it had something to do with the roads near the bridge. It was agreed to write to the Canal Company, and also to Mr John Cordwell, the agent for the property.

74 20 June 1885

A WALSALL MAN IN TROUBLE At the Wolverhampton Police Court on Wednesday, **James Anslow**, boatman of Walsall, was charged on remand with stealing a silver watch at Wolverhampton, the property of **John Boffey** of Tat Bank, Oldbury. Prisoner asked prosecutor, while in the Potteries, to give him a lift, and while the boat was in the fifth lock at Wolverhampton, prisoner absconded with the watch, which was hanging in the cabin, in prosecutor's absence. A fine of 10s and costs, or 14 days' imprisonment, was imposed.

75 31 October 1885

CANNOCK

NOT A JOKE AFTER ALL At the Police Court on Monday, **William Timbrell**, boatman, Stroud, was charged with having stolen a pair of socks, value 6d, the property of Edward Withington of the Acorn Inn. Elizabeth Withington, wife of the prosecutor, stated that on Saturday last prisoner was in the house, in company with other men, when he took the socks from a box and put them into his pocket. Some time afterwards, witness made inquiries about the socks, and discovered that prisoner had taken them away. James Sellman, labourer, stated that he saw a man named Jukes hand a box to prisoner, and he took out the socks and some reels of cotton, and left the house with them in his possession. Police-constable Wall stated that, from information received, he apprehended prisoner the same night at the Swan Inn, searched him, and found the things upon him. Prisoner told him he would rather have paid for twenty pairs of socks than have such a charge brought against him. Prisoner, in reply to the charge, said he was at the Acorn Inn, when a man named Jukes took a box from a shelf and asked him to have a cigar. He took the things out for a joke, and put them in his pocket, not thinking any more about them. He could have had no intention of stealing the things, as he took them openly, in the presence of a number of people. James Birch was called for the defence, and stated that prisoner had the box handed to him, and took the things out for a lark. Prisoner was not drunk, but had had quite enough to drink. The Bench did not consider there was any felonious intent, and ordered prisoner to pay 7s, including costs.

76 5 December 1885

A WALSALL MAN DROWNED About eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, a moulder named Joseph Little, lately residing at 45 Long Street, and who has been missing from his home for about a fortnight, was found in the canal at Bridgeman Street by a boatman named Astley. The face of the deceased was much disfigured by coming in contact with canal boats.

On Wednesday afternoon, T H Stanley Esq (Coroner for the borough) held an inquest upon the body in the Sessions Court, Guildhall.

The first witness examined was James Little, son of the deceased, who stated that his father was about 55 years of age, was a moulder by trade, and worked at Mr James Crapper's Birchills factory. The last time he saw deceased alive was about one o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday the 21st November. He heard deceased was drunk about five o'clock on the same afternoon in Bridgeman Street ; and when deceased, who was not in the habit of staying out at night and never was about from home a single night, did not return, he (witness) made inquiries of the police, but could get no tidings of him. The body he had seen in the mortuary was that of his father.

A witness named Charles Ricks was called, and said he first saw deceased in the Red Lion public house, Navigation Street. They went from there to the Anchor, and from there to the Globe, but how they got to the Globe he could not tell. Witness was so tipsy that he remembered nothing till he got home.

Enoch Astley, boatman, proved the finding of the body in the canal, near to the Junction Inn. When discovered, deceased was "bolt upright" and the feet must have been in the mud at the bottom. He pulled the body to the towing-path. Between the 21st November, when deceased was last seen, and the 1st December, his boat had passed the place where the body was found five or six times, and boats were continually passing and repassing. The body lay a little out of the way of the traffic, being on the opposite side to the towing-path, and near to James's Foundry. The body when found was covered with mud. Some boats had been racing that morning, and it was probable the current caused by their doing so had raised the body, which had the appearance of having been in the water several days.

Aaron Frankham said that on the 21st November he saw deceased at the Red Lion in Navigation Street. Deceased had a pint of ale before him, and seemed to be "pretty right". He asked him (witness) to drink, and he did so, as also the witness Ricks. Witness called for a pint, and asked deceased to drink, which he did. They had three pints of ale, witness paying for two and Ricks for one. They all went to the Anchor, where deceased called for two glasses of ale and two pennyworth

of whiskey. Witness had the whiskey and the others the ale. They then went to the Globe, and deceased called for a quart of ale, but the landlady refused to fill it, saying, "You have had sufficient". Witness then said, "Fill it for me", and she did, witness paying for it, but deceased did not taste it. On coming out of the Globe, deceased's niece came past, and said to him, "Joe, what brings you here? Come and go home". Witness told deceased to go with his niece, and she took his arm. He went with her eight or nine yards, and then wrenched his arm from her. That was the last witness saw of deceased.

Other corroborative evidence having been given, John Stringer, the Coroner's officer, deposed that there were no marks of violence upon the body.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".