

WALSALL OBSERVER
1900 to 1911

1 24 February 1900

WALSALL POLICE COURT

BOATMAN SENT TO GAOL **Henry Benton** (26), labourer of 6 Upper Navigation Street, was charged with stealing a set of boat harness, valued £2 10s, from the stable of the Junction Inn, Bridgeman Street, on February 14th. **Luke Dovey**, a boatman, Mill Street, Birmingham, stated that on the morning of the day named he took a boat from Birmingham to Walsall, the horse wearing the harness named in the charge. When he got to the Junction Inn he put the horse up, owing to excess of traffic on the canal. At about two o'clock the next morning he went to get the horse out again, and found the harness gone. Detective Haycock stated that he made inquiries respecting the robbery, and visited the house of prisoner, where he found the harness in the front bedroom. Witness asked prisoner how he accounted for it, and he said, "My boss will account for it". Prisoner pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to two months' hard labour.

2 7 April 1900

BENTLEY

BAD FOR THE CYCLIST At the Willenhall Police Court on Monday, **John Day**, a boatman of Bentley, was fined 5s and costs for allowing a horse to stray in Walsall Road on the night of the 25th March. Arthur Bunn of Coseley stated that he was riding a bicycle from Walsall to Coseley when he ran into the horse and was thrown, damaging himself and the machine.

3 28 April 1900

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THEFT BY A LAD OF ELEVEN Joseph Lee (11), 72 Pleck Road, was charged with stealing 1 1/2 cwts of coal, value 1s 6d, the property of the British and Colonial Horse Shoe Company, on the 10th inst. Mr Enoch Evans appeared for the prosecution. Detective Burrell said that at about 7.30 pm on Monday last, he saw defendant on the canal side carrying a bag of coal. When the lad saw him, he dropped the coal and ran. Witness caught him, and defendant said that he had taken the coal from a boat on the canal side. **George Tuckley**, boatman, said that on Tuesday morning Detective Burrell brought him the coal, which witness identified. Defendant was before the Court a short time ago on a charge of stealing iron, and he was then let off, his parents promising to thrash him. The magistrates now sentenced him to receive twelve strokes with the birch rod.

CRUELTY TO A MARE James Quance, 67 Murdock Road, Handsworth and **Robert Draper**, boatman, were summoned for cruelty to a mare by working her while in an unfit state on April 3rd. Inspector Wilkie of the Walsall Branch of the SPCA, said that on April 3rd he was on Pratt's Bridge, Bloxwich Road, and that he saw coming along the towing-path a horse attached to a canal boat. The horse was limping badly from sprained tendons, accompanied by inflammation. Draper, who was driving the animal, told him that he knew that the animal was lame. When he went to visit Quance, who was manager for Williams and Co, Birmingham, he also admitted that he knew the animal was lame. Mr Prickett, veterinary surgeon, said that the mare was in a perfectly unworkable state, and had been in that condition for some time. Robert Thornton, carter, said that when he first saw the horse it seemed all right to him, but it had had a week's rest then. Witness believed that when the horse was bought, three weeks before the time in question, it was all right. Defendant said that he knew little about horses, and wasn't aware it was bad until after Draper had taken it out. Defendant Quance was fined 40s and costs in West Bromwich a short time ago for working a horse in an unfit condition. The Magistrates fined Quance 40s, or a month, and Draper 10s, or 14 days.

4 23 June 1900

WEDNESBURY

CRUELTY TO HORSES At the Police Court on Tuesday, the following persons were convicted for ill-treating their horses by working them while suffering from sores under the harness or from lameness :- **John Edgar**, canal boatman, was fined 12s 6d, including costs.

5 30 June 1900

On Monday, Mr H A Pearson held an inquest at Tipton relative to the death of **Sarah Sophia Bradley**, one year and four months old, daughter of **John Bradley**, boatman, Aston Street, Toll End. The child was found in the kitchen leaning over a small tub, with her feet on the floor and her face in the water. Dr Morris tried artificial respiration, but without effect. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

6 14 July 1900

WALSALL POLICE COURT

KICKED THE POLICEMAN **James William Green** (24), boatman of James Street, was summoned for an assault on Police-constable Breeze on Saturday night. Evidence was given to the effect that there was a disturbance in Stafford Street. Police-constable Breeze was endeavouring to clear the street, when the prisoner came up and deliberately kicked him on the thigh. The officer arrested him, whereupon he struck the officer violently on the face. The crowd rescued defendant, but he was eventually re-arrested at his home. Defendant denied the assault, contending that it was another man who kicked the officer. Sentenced to 21 days' hard labour.

7 28 July 1900

WALSALL WOOD

CRUELTY TO A HORSE At the Rushall Police Court on Monday, **Charles Bond**, boatman, Miller Street, Birmingham, who did not appear, was summoned for cruelty to a horse by beating it with a whip and kicking it. Arthur Thomas Kirkham, farm bailiff at the Brownhills Sewage Farm, stated that on the 9th inst he was standing on some rising land near the canal side, when he saw the defendant beating the horse in question and kicking it in the stomach. Witness remonstrated with defendant for his conduct, when he made use of bad language. He asked him his name, but he would not give it, so witness took the name off the boat. F J Bradbury, Chester House, Brownhills, member of the Urban District Council, said he, in company with the last witness, saw the horse being knocked about. It was a good horse, and broke the boat line twice in consequence of defendant's ill-treatment. He could not endure the sight any longer, and went in search of a policeman. William Turner said he was employed by the owner of the horse to look after the horses, and the horse in question was all right when it left for a journey to Cannock. It was a good horse, and when he went to clean it after its return, it acted in a very different manner and attempted to get away. He thought someone had been doing something at it. Inspector Wilkie said he received information of the ill-treatment, and went to Birmingham to examine the animal on the 14th. He found several bruises on the legs and marks on the body. He saw defendant on the occasion, and he did not deny having beaten the horse, saying he had had some drink at the time. Defendant was fined 5s and 10s costs, or seven days.

8 9 March 1901

THE BOATMEN'S REST On Monday, the new "Boatman's Rest", which has just been completed at the top lock, Birchills, was formally opened by Mr H D Clark. The new premises consist of a large coffee and reading room, with a convenient kitchen downstairs and a mission room to accommodate about a hundred persons on the second storey. It is well and substantially built and neatly coloured inside, and provided with the necessary furniture. The total cost has been about £350.

Mr Clark was accompanied by Mr H A Pepper (local hon sec) ; the Revs R W Cusworth (local

superintendent) and A Hampden Lee ; Messrs A Gameson, C H Gameson, F G Mason, F J Overton, A Stanley, C R Stanley, J Bostock, R L Tyndall and others.

Mr A Stanley said that he had great pleasure in handing to Mr Clark the key of the new building, and asking him to declare it open.

Mr Clark, having opened the door, said that he had much pleasure in declaring that place duly open as a Boatman's Rest and Mission in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and he trusted that it would fulfil the desires of the promoters, and that it would not only be a boon and a convenience to the men, but would also promote in the most efficient degree the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had much pleasure in declaring it open – (loud applause).

Those present then adjourned to the Mission Room, which was well filled, the meeting being presided over by Mr Clark.

The Hon Sec announced letters of apology from the Right Hon Sir Arthur D Hayter, Bart, MP, Mr Joel Cadbury, Mr A W Hutton, the Revs C E McCreery, J Pritchard and W T Tutton, and others. He then went on to say that the estimated cost of the place was £350, including the furniture. Towards that, they had in cash and promises £300 13s 10d – (applause) – of which £274 14s 10d had been paid to the treasurer. From Walsall the cash and promises had amounted to £90 12s, and the balance had been raised by friends in Birmingham and the district. As to the £50 which was still required, the committee would be glad if it could be raised by the end of the month, but he would rather say by the end of that day – (applause). He read a long list of donation of articles, including a harmonium from Mr F G Mason, and thanked the Walsall friends for the generous way in which they had contributed.

The Chairman said that it was his first duty to congratulate the society on having erected that capacious and substantial building, and having so engineered their finances that they were able to open it practically free of debt. He could not help thinking that one result of that meeting, and the one which was to follow it, would be that before the end of the present month they would be entirely free from debt. He must confess that at the outset, and until the secretary had furnished him the particulars, he had had no idea of the extent and usefulness of the operations of this society. There were so many philanthropic and religious societies that it was almost impossible to keep in touch with the whole of them. He was surprised in reading the reports to find what a successful work they were doing, and what an influence they were having upon the canal boatmen. He did not know why he was asked to open that building, but it might be owing to his position as President of the Chamber of Commerce, and that they thought there must be some connection between commerce and canals – (laughter). So far as Chambers of Commerce were concerned, they wished, if possible, the internal waterways to be more developed than at present. In fact it was one of the things they had been pegging away at for a number of years, namely, that instead of developing the railway system, the internal waterways, which were the cheapest, easiest and most economical means of communication should be further developed and extended. In this part of the country, it had been pretty well understood that the canals had been in the hands of the Railway Companies, and he was amazed to find the enormous amount of traffic which appeared on that particular canal. It seemed to him almost incredible that he should hardly have believed it if he had not seen it in print. The report told them that about 200 boats passed these locks every day, in charge of 400 or 500 persons. Estimating that each loaded boat carried 25 tons, and that half of them were empty, that would give about 25,000 tons of material which passed through these locks every day. That was a most satisfactory state of things, but as a commercial man he could not help thinking it would be more to the advantage of commerce if that amount, large as it was, was considerably extended. Having such a large amount of traffic, he thought they had done right to provide for the comfort, convenience and religious instruction of the boatmen in charge of it. They were a most deserving class of individuals, who had to suffer many privations and trials, and it was only fair and reasonable, and an attempt should be made – as was being done – to do something for their comfort and religious help. One of the things which appealed to him most in connection with this work was that they cared for the bodies as well as the souls of the men – (applause). He thought that was a step in the right direction, for men had bodies, and they should be cared for, and wants should be

supplied. It was of the utmost importance to see to it, that the refreshment of their bodies should be seen to, but in addition to this the society provided for their spiritual welfare. He understood that at times men had to spend their Sundays there, and with all the attractions around them, there must be many temptations for them, but there they would be well looked after, and if they had appointed a missionary he was sure that a splendid work would be done amongst the men in charge of the boats – (applause). They had not met that day so much to make speeches as to make a collection, towards which he would be glad to give £2 2s – (applause) – and he would be very glad if at the end of the proceedings they found that the “rest” was out of debt – (applause).

The Rev R W Cusworth gave some interesting details as to the society, which he stated was founded 55 years ago so that it was just in its prime. They were undenominational, though not in the sense that they had no creed, for they had a very clear and definite one, and it was that of the Apostle Paul, “We preach Christ, and Him crucified”. The government of the society was in the hands of a general committee, and there was also a local committee, consisting of Messrs A Gameson, A Stanley, F J Overton and C Marshall who, he thought, pretty well represented all the churches. As to that rest, it had its origin in the fact that one of the friends of the society some years ago had seen the great traffic and the great need at that point, and he and others had worked until they had obtained the present building. They had to thank the Canal Company, which had 162 miles of canal, for their liberal help, but of course it had taken some time to obtain it, as it did with all great companies. He afterwards gave a brief account of boat life, and also referred to the Hednesford rest and mission, and announced that Mr Evison had been appointed to take charge of the work at Walsall.

The Rev A Hampden Lee and Mr A Stanley afterwards spoke, the former urging the claims of the boatmen strongly upon the Walsall public, who, as he pointed out, had done much for sailors, railway men and other great industries.

THE TEA MEETING After the meeting, tea was served in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, which closely adjoins the canal, and at this a goodly number of friends sat down.

THE EVENING MEETING In the evening, a public meeting was held in the Mission Room, Mr Joel Cadbury presiding.

The Rev R W Cusworth announced that the collections during the day amounted to £12 7s 4 1/2d. In addition, he had received from their Chairman £5, making a total of £17 7s 4 1/2d, and he hoped the collection that night would make it up to £20 for the day. With regard to their chairman, in introducing him, he need say nothing more than that he had taken a great interest in boatmen – (applause).

The Chairman, in the first instance, recalled the event of about six months ago when the Seamen and Boatmen's Friendly Society was represented at the time of the laying of the corner stone of that building, which, he was pleased to know, had so far progressed as to be practically finished. To come to their work, he might say that the canal population was perhaps larger than any of them had any idea of. About 10,000 boats were registered as dwellings in Great Britain. Then they calculated three people to each boat, making about 30,000 people who were residing in these boats. In addition, there were a large number of boats engaged on the canals which were not registered as dwellings. Therefore the canal population would be at the least 50,000. That being the case, it was pleasant to be able to administer in some way to the great number that came along that canal. The society had had this district under their notice for some time as being connected with Birmingham, but they had only recently seen their way to put up this building, although they had had it in contemplation for some years. In the first place, they had to get an exactly suitable site, and the Canal Company had kindly placed this site at their disposal for a nominal rent. They were not at all desirous of making what would be a handsome or grand building, but one that would be useful in every respect. With regard to the exterior, it came out better than he had any idea, and he was pleased that it was not a discredit to the Canal Company, or to the Seamen and Boatmen's Society, that they had such a building erected there. This station was just one of the links of the society. In connection with it, they had stations at Birmingham, Hednesford, Plymouth, Bristol, Liverpool, and more recently they had opened a station in Leeds. The Leeds branch was under the care of a Leeds

committee – a valuable, hard working and useful committee – and, he believed, they would find that the station at Leeds would be of little less importance than the station in Birmingham. They therefore felt a great deal of pleasure in knowing that during the last two years the work had prospered, and seemed likely to become more useful (Hear, hear). Each of these centres formed another connecting link with the whole work, and made the rest of the work more useful. He thought it was a wise decision that was come to, namely that this work should be under the care of a strong Walsall committee – (applause). He was glad they had taken the idea up so thoroughly, and he believed it would be found that they would be as interested in the work and be as enthusiastic as some of them. With regard to the committee, the more they knew of the work, the more they would be interested in it. Of that he was assured. This “rest” was not only a place where the boatmen could have rest and refreshment, but he thought they had not a station where there was not someone who would write letters for the men, and in Birmingham many hundreds were written. The committee there had been taking very considerable care in finding someone suitable to manage that building. They had not a large salary to offer, and they wanted a good Christian man and his wife. What they had done was to get a man who was engaged in business, and who could spare a few hours a day in the “rest” and in visits along the canal. The yearly expenses, including the caretaker, would be about £70, and considering the amount of work he thought it was a small sum. They would require the assistance of some of their friends in Walsall, and he was sure they would like to think that the work there was supported by Walsall people. He would suggest that they should form a ladies' committee, and collect small sums from persons who were not known to their Birmingham Committee. He concluded by expressing the belief that the boatmen would appreciate the attention they would give them, and the benefits they would derive from this “rest”.

The Rev J W Cannings (organising secretary) addressed the meeting in reference to the various stations of the society.

Song, Miss Eva Cusworth.

Mr E Tindall also spoke on the advantages of this station.

Solo, Mr A E Warren.

An address was afterwards delivered by **Mr Boyce**, a working boatman of Gloucester, who could speak from experience of the usefulness of these institutions.

Addresses were also delivered by the Rev Mr Bird (boatmen's missionary for Birmingham), the Rev R W Cusworth and Mr Alfred Stanley, and votes of thanks concluded the proceedings.

The services next Sunday at the Mission Room will be conducted by the Revs A Hampden Lee and R W Cusworth.

9 8 June 1901

BRIDGTOWN

THREATS At the Cannock Police Court on Monday, **John and George Cowen**, boatmen of Mill Street, Tettenhall, were charged with using threats towards **William Sutton**, boatman of Bridgtown. Mr R A Willcock (of the firm of Willcock and Taylor, Wolverhampton) was for the defence. Complainant stated that on May 13th he was with his boat at Walk Mill, when John Cowen said that the first time he caught him up he would drown him, and George said complainant must recollect he had got his brother Tom to deal with, and that there was a score to wipe off on his account. Threats were also used towards complainant's wife, but she was not on the boat at the time. In reply to Mr Willcock, complainant denied blocking the way on the canal or making use of bad language towards him, or at least he was nearly sure he did not use the language. He had thrashed defendants' brother, but he did not say he was ready for defendants at any time. **John Pugh**, boatman, deposed that he was at the canal at the time in question, when he heard one of the defendants say if he had got a good horse he would burst complainant, and said if complainant came off his boat they would drown him. **Ellen Sutton**, wife of complainant, stated that she heard the elder Cowen threaten her husband, saying he would drown him. John Cowen said he had been a boatman 35 years, and this was the first time anything had been preferred against him. At the time and place in question, his horse was at the bridge first, and complainant threatened to thrash him.

Defendant said complainant would have a suck in if he attempted it. Since then defendant had met complainant, and all he said to him was, "How goes it?", and passed on. The Bench thought the evidence was conflicting, and thought the justice of the case would be met by defendants paying the costs, which they did.

10 13 July 1901

DARLASTON

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING On Tuesday afternoon, a little boy named Arthur Gibbs, aged seven years, son of **James Gibbs**, a boatman who lives in the Willenhall Road, Darlaston Green, narrowly escaped being drowned in the Birmingham Canal near Willenhall, by falling into the water. It is stated that he had only left his home about ten minutes when there was an outcry that he was in the canal ; but fortunately, as a boatman named **George Griffiths** was passing along the canal towing path at the spot, he saw some "bubbles" upon the water under the bridge, where the water is stated to be very deep, but was unable to see the lad until a boat shaft had been put into the water, and the hook on the shaft caught on one of the boy's stockings, by which means he was brought to the surface. As soon as possible, artificial means of respiration were used with good effects, and the little fellow is progressing favourably towards recovery.

11 20 July 1901

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CHARGE OF BURGLARY **John Thomas Russell** (20), boatman, Upper Green Lane ; **James Faulkner** (18), boatman, Upper Green Lane ; William Cooper (18), labourer, Reed's Wood ; and Harry Lake (18), labourer, Upper Green Lane, were charged with breaking and entering the Boat Inn, Upper Green Lane, and with stealing therefrom nine half ounces of tobacco, value 1s 1 1/2d and one shilling in coppers, the property of James Nicholls, on the 17th inst. Prosecutor said that the prisoners were in his house on the night of the 17th until closing time. Next morning he found that a window had been wrenched off, and that the tobacco and money had gone. Detective Smith said that the prisoner Lake came to him yesterday morning in Green Lane, and asked him for his two pals, and said that there were four of them in it. Police-constable Key said that Cooper and Faulkner came to the Police Station, and said that they wanted to stand with the other two who were in the Boat Inn. Police-sergeant Cattermole (6) stated that on the afternoon of the 18th he arrested Russell on a canal boat. The Bench committed the prisoners to the next Assizes.

12 27 July 1901

STAFFORDSHIRE ASSIZES

CHARGE OF BURGLARY **John Thomas Russell** (20), boatman, Upper Green Lane ; **James Faulkner** (18), boatman, Upper Green Lane ; William Cooper (18), labourer, Reed's Wood ; and Harry Lake (18), labourer, Upper Green Lane, all of Walsall, were charged with breaking and entering the Boat Inn, Upper Green Lane, Walsall, and with stealing therefrom nine half ounces of tobacco, value 1s 1 1/2d and one shilling in coppers, the property of James Nicholls, on the 17th inst. Prosecutor said that the prisoners were in his house on the night of the 17th until closing time. Next morning he found that a window had been wrenched off, and that the tobacco and money had gone. Detective Smith said that the prisoner Lake came to him in Green Lane, and asked him for his two pals, and said that there were four of them in it. Police-constable Key said that Cooper and Faulkner came to the Police Station, and said that they wanted to stand with the other two who were in the Boat Inn. Police-sergeant Cattermole (6) stated that on the afternoon of the 18th he arrested Russell on a canal boat. They were all bound over to come up for judgement when called upon.

13 26 October 1901

SAD DROWNING FATALITY Yesterday afternoon the Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) held an enquiry at the Bloxwich Police Station, into the circumstances attending the death of Joseph Priest (50), a locksmith of 143 Field Street, Bloxwich, whose body was found in the canal on

Thursday morning last.

Emma Priest, wife of the deceased, gave evidence of identification, and stated that her husband had been in the employ of Mr Shaw, Willenhall. She last saw him alive a week ago that (Friday) night about eleven o'clock. When she awoke next morning, he had already gone to work. He did not return, and she began to get anxious on Saturday night. Deceased had relations at Wolverhampton, and she thought that he must have stayed with them. She did not tell the police until Tuesday night. She had made enquiries both at Wolverhampton and Willenhall previous to informing the police.

Maria Clark, landlady of the Albion Inn, Cross Street, Willenhall, stated that on the afternoon of Saturday last, deceased came into her house with other men. He left her house at twenty minutes to six. He drank beer only in the house, and left to catch a train. He was quite sober when he left.

Job Sommerfield, 52 Profitt Street, Walsall, insurance agent, said that he saw the deceased in North Walsall shortly after seven on the Saturday night. He was leaning against a wall. He was very drunk, and was apparently waiting for a tram.

Arthur Stafford, 30 William Street, Walsall, tram conductor, gave evidence that at North Walsall deceased endeavoured to get on his car, which was going to Bloxwich, but in consequence of his intoxicated condition, witness refused to allow him to do so.

John Lakin, 187 North Walsall, agent for the Birmingham Canal Company, said that on Thursday morning he was at the office, Pratt's Bridge, and about eight o'clock was told by his assistants that they thought there was a man in the canal near the bridge. He went down, and saw the body of the deceased floating face upwards about forty yards from the bridge. Witness stopped a boatman with his boat, got the body out, and then sent for the police. The water there was about five feet deep. The body looked as if it had been in the water for some days.

Police-constable Morris (39) gave evidence that on Thursday morning he was called to Pratt's Bridge. He found the body of deceased there, and conveyed it to the mortuary. On searching the clothes, the only money found was one penny.

Inspector Marshall stated that he went over to Willenhall to make enquiries respecting the deceased. On going to the works where he was employed, he was told that the deceased was at work on Saturday morning, the 19th inst, and that he left at 1 pm. He was paid, and received 23s 6d. After he had received his pay, with other workmen he went to the Albion Inn. There were no marks of violence on the body of deceased, but it had the appearance of having been in the water several days. There were holes in the trousers pockets, through which money might have escaped.

The Coroner, in summing up, said that, having looked up a timetable, he found that no train left Willenhall for Walsall at 5.58, which was the train which Mrs Clark said that deceased had left her house to catch. There was, however, a Midland train, which would bring him to the North Walsall Station at eight minutes past seven, two minutes before the tram conductor saw him. That would leave an hour spent in Willenhall unaccounted for.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

14 30 November 1901

INQUESTS IN WALSALL On the body of Robert Caldicott (60), ironworker, 168 Pleck Road. Harriet Caldicott, wife of the deceased, 168 Pleck Road, Walsall, said that her husband had been unable to work for about two years through short-sightedness, and used to do odd jobs, such as getting coal in. On Sunday last, she left her husband downstairs, and went to bed. Deceased could see fairly well in the daylight, but not at dark. Sunday was a very foggy day, and he went out in the afternoon. Being unable to find out where he had gone, witness sent to the Police Station. She did not see him again alive. Deceased was a cheerful man, and had no trouble of which she was aware, and she was certain that he did not commit suicide. Mary Jane Caldicott, daughter of the last witness, stated that on Sunday deceased went for a walk, saying that he would not be long. It was a very foggy day. He had no trouble to witness's knowledge. Frederick King, 52 Pleck Road, said that on Tuesday morning he was passing along the towing-path at the canal near Bridgeman Street, and saw a boat passing along with the line dipping. The line dipped in the water and brought up a body. Witness told the boatman, and the body was got out. The body was that of the deceased.

Sergeant Haycock stated that he examined the body of deceased, and found no marks of violence. It would be about three or four hundred yards from where the body was found in the canal to the deceased's house. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned", and added a rider that the jury would like the gate in Bridgeman Street opening on to the canal to be kept locked, and the wall raised.

15 30 November 1901

WALSALL POLICE COURT

A CANAL "HIGHWAY" MAN Henry Benton (30), labourer, Navigation Street, was charged on a warrant after summons with stealing 2 cwt of coal, value 2s, the property of the Johnson Iron and Steel Co, on October 10th. Mr Caddick of West Bromwich appeared to prosecute, and stated that the charge was one of stealing coal from a coal boat. As the boat was coming through the locks, the prisoner, with several other men, stopped the boat in the locks, terrorised the boatmen and threw the coal on the bank, where the other men secured it. He would press for a heavy sentence in consequence of the prevalence of such offences, as boats were continually stopped in the district as they were conveying coal from the collieries to the works, and coal taken by force or threats. **Richard Parkes** of West Bromwich, captain of a boat, the property of the Johnson Iron and Steel Co, said that on October 10th he was engaged in bringing a load of coal from the Fishley Colliery to the firm's works at West Bromwich. When they got to the fourth lock in Walsall, prisoner, with three other men, came to the boat and took several lumps of coal and put them on the towing-path. The other men took them away. **William Smith**, boatman with the last witness, gave corroborative evidence. Prisoner pleaded guilty. The Mayor said that prisoner was a perfect canal highway man, and warned him that next time he would be still more harshly dealt with. Sentenced to three months' hard labour.

16 14 December 1901

BENTLEY

UNLAWFULLY WOUNDING A WALSALL YOUTH At the Willenhall Police Court on Monday, a boatman named **William Turner** (17), Parkbrook, Walsall, was charged with unlawfully wounding Samuel Longmore (17) of Rayleigh Street, Walsall, on the 11th ult. Mr Thursfield (Wednesbury) defended. The prosecutor said he was in the cabin of a boat which was loaded with sand near his father's brickyard at Bentley. There were a number of other youths there. They "commenced to lark". The prosecutor went out and walked down on the plank along the boat, and picked up some small pebbles, which he threw at the cabin. He went to the extreme end of the boat, and while getting up on the deck he was hit in the eye with some hard substance. He was knocked down, and was dazed for a moment. His brother called out that "Weary" had done it, meaning the prisoner. One of the workmen from the brickyard conveyed him home, where he was seen by Dr Deakin. He afterwards went to the Birmingham Midland Eye Hospital, where his left eye was taken out. He was still an out patient at the hospital. Cross-examined, he had known the prisoner about two years, and had never quarrelled with him. He had no business on the boat, but he was never ordered off. He did not shut the cabin door, but he pulled the slide down, and also when outside he stopped the funnel up by placing his hands on the top. Howard Longmore, brother of the prosecutor, who was in the cabin, said that after his brother left the cabin, a noise occurred as if some stones had been dropped on the top. Prisoner then asked for a piece of coal, and after he had secured a piece he went out exclaiming, "I'll shift the ----, and he will go to work then". Dr Brinton of the Eye Hospital gave evidence as to the nature of the injuries, and said that he and the house surgeon removed a piece of coal the size of a marble from the eye. The wound did not heal, and after waiting until the 25th ult they removed it. Police-constable Slater said he arrested the prisoner who, in reply to the charge, said, "I was in a bit of a temper at him throwing, but we have always been good friends". On the way to the station he said, "It was not a stone I threw, but a piece of coal". There was no attempt on the part of the prisoner to get away. Mr Thursfield expressed on behalf of the prisoner great contrition and regret for the unfortunate accident, and suggested that the

charge should be reduced to one of common assault. After a short consultation, the Bench decided to commit the prisoner to the Sessions. Bail was granted.

17 18 January 1902

DARLASTON

A BRUTAL ACT OF CRUELTY At Wednesbury Police Court on Tuesday, **Frederick Smith**, boatman, Cramp Hill, Darlaston, was summoned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for torturing a dog on the 22nd ult. Evidence was given that defendant had a small brown dog, which he was seen to carry out of the house and, holding it by the hind legs, to beat its head on a wall until blood dropped to the ground, and was also bespattered on his hand. When he had finished, the animal was evidently in great agony, and died soon afterwards. A neighbour remonstrated with defendant, who replied that the dog was his own, and that he could do as he pleased with it. Defendant now pleaded that the dog ate some meat which he had brought home for his children's dinner, and this caused him to lose his temper, for which he was sorry. The Stipendiary described it as a case of brutal cruelty, and sent defendant to gaol for 21 days.

18 22 March 1902

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THEFT OF COAL William Teece (22), 60 Green Lane, was summoned for stealing three cwt of coal, of a value of 2s, the property of Walker Bros Limited, on March 3rd. Mr H H Jackson appeared to prosecute. **Bertie Benton**, 36 Forrester Street, stated that on Monday the 3rd inst he was shafting a boat by Raybould's Bridge. Defendant jumped on to the boat, and threw off between two and three cwt of coal. There was another man on the towing-path. The coal was the property of Walker Bros. Defendant said that he stood on the bridge, and two other men threw the coal from the boat. The witness only knew him out of the three men. A fine of 5s and costs, or seven days, was inflicted.

19 21 June 1902

BROWNHILLS

MAN DROWNED On Thursday morning about 6.30, the body of a man was found in the canal near the Anchor Inn by Mr E Wilcox, who was on his way home from work. Seeing the body floating about, he procured assistance, and it was got out of the water. From enquiries made, the deceased's name is supposed to be **Charles Whitehouse**, a boatman who hails from Smethwick. His body is believed to have been in the water about ten days.

20 6 September 1902

MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF A RUSHALL BOATMAN An inquest was held at the Navigation Inn, Alrewas, on Wednesday afternoon, touching the death of **James Green**, a boatman, whose body was found in the Trent and Mersey Canal at Fradley Common in the parish of Alrewas, at about 8.30 pm on Monday. Mr T E Andon, deputy coroner, conducted the enquiry. In consequence of the suspicious appearance of the body, two boatmen were arrested by the police and remain in custody. After having been sworn the jury viewed the body, which was laid out in an outhouse on the premises. They were accompanied by the widow, who wept bitterly on seeing her husband's remains. It was noticed that many villagers assembled outside the house while the enquiry was on. The inn is situated close to the canal lock, and about half a mile from the spot where the body was found, and appears to have been the last place called at by deceased and his comrades prior to going to the boat. *A post mortem* examination was ordered, and the following evidence was taken.

Elizabeth Green of the Radleys, Rushall, identified the body viewed by the jury as that of her husband, James Green, who lived at Radley and worked for **Mr Woodward**, a boatman of Daw End. Deceased travelled with a boat on the Trent and Mersey Canal, and was 33 years of age. **John Turner** was captain of the boat, and also lived at Radley. The other man was **Fred Hathaway**. Witness last saw her husband alive on Wednesday morning at two o'clock. He then left

to go to Burton, after bidding herself "Good morning" and kissing the little girl. Deceased had been boating since he was seven years of age, and they usually reckoned three days to travel to Burton and back. Witness expected deceased back about midday on Saturday, because it depended upon the wet whether they could empty the lime or not. On Monday she told the police-sergeant that her husband had not returned, although the other two men got back on Saturday afternoon. Turner lived with them, and had done so for four years. He came back on Saturday at four o'clock. Witness asked him where her husband was, and he told her that he had left him in a public house on the canal side. Deceased had before let his mates come on, and followed later, and she therefore did not think anything unusual had happened. Frederick Hathaway came to see her at ten o'clock on Sunday morning, and said, "Has Jim come, Mrs Green?" Witness replied, "No", and that was all that was said. Turner did not say anything else about deceased being away, and he left at ten o'clock on Sunday morning, but witness could not say what time he returned. He had gone on Monday when she got up, and returned at eight, when witness sent for him. She told him he was to go down to the sergeants, whom she had seen at four o'clock that afternoon. She was much upset, but did not have any conversation with Turner about her husband's absence. When Turner came home on Saturday afternoon he was wearing a belt, but she did not examine it. She could not say whether it had a buckle or not. Witness's husband had been away from her since last August twelve months, and returned about three months ago. Turner lived in her house during that time. It was not owing to Turner's presence in the house that her husband left her. Witness had not seen Hathaway since he called on Sunday morning.

By Inspector Hickling : Turner left with her husband on Wednesday morning. The sergeant told her that Turner had said when her husband was found he would be found in the canal. When the sergeant came to see her on Tuesday, he said, "What should you say if your husband was found in the canal?", and she replied, "I hope not".

By a Juryman : Turner had never quarrelled with her husband. They had always been like two brothers.

By the Foreman : This was the only occasion upon which she had been to the sergeant when her husband had been away. He had been away as long as four days, but he was then with relatives at Birmingham.

By the Coroner : She did not say anything to John Turner after the sergeant had told her her husband had been found in the canal, because she had not seen him since to speak to. He got back on Monday after she was in bed, and left again on Tuesday before she got up.

Frank Hawkins, Fradley, aged 14, stated that he was fishing in the canal about half past three on Monday morning at the Plaster Mill Lock, at the end of the weir, in Alrewas parish. Harry Hackett was with him, and whilst they were fishing something came up in the water. Witness saw it was a man's head, and it came up as the water was let out of the lock. He told some boatmen who were near, and then went back to his fishing.

John Lucas, Fradley Junction, canal inspector, said that on Monday he was in the house about 8.10 at night, when Charles Perry came to his door and said there was a man in the canal below the Old Plaster Mill Lock. Witness got a lamp, and with assistance took a barrow down to the canal. He found the body in an upright position, about eight yards from the bottom lock. Witness, with the help of Thomas Pendry, gamekeeper, got the body out of the water. They noticed there was a mark over the right eye, but there was no froth at the nose, and nothing in the man's hand. The body was perfectly straight, and remained so in the wheelbarrow whilst they wheeled it to the public house with the assistance of Police-constable Morrey. If the body had fallen in above the locks it could have come through, but would have been badly bruised. It was almost impossible for the body to have come through the lock in the position in which it was found. In his opinion, the body fell in not far from where it was found. Witness examined the towing-path, but could find no suspicious marks, either of a struggle or of blood. The place where the body was found would be 250 yards from witness's house.

By Inspector Hickling : Assuming that the man received a blow whilst on the towing-path and proceeding in the direction of Lichfield, he would get it on his right side.

John Norton, medical practitioner, Alrewas, stated that with Dr Palmer he made a *post mortem* examination of the body of deceased. Externally, there were some abrasions on one shin, which appeared to be *post mortem*. There was an incised wound on the right temple, an inch and a quarter long, down to the bone. The skin of the body presented a goose skin appearance, and appeared to have been three or four days in the water. The wound on the temple might have been caused by any hard moderately sharp instrument. He believed it was an *ante mortem* wound. It would not be caused by a knife, because the bone underneath was not marked. It might have been caused by the buckle of a belt. Some froth, slightly bloodstained, came from the nostrils and mouth when the body was moved. The external wound was not sufficient to have caused death. Internally, he found the venous system generally congested. The right side of the heart was engorged with blood, distended and spongy. Frothy mucus could be pressed out of the tubes. The heart and the liver were enlarged and unhealthy, and on opening the stomach there was little fluid, but some remains of undigested food. The brain was engorged, but healthy. In his opinion the cause of death was drowning.

By Inspector Hickling : The blow would not necessarily have stunned the man. It would depend upon the weight of the instrument with which he was struck.

By a Juryman : If a man fell against the edge of a stone, the wound on the temple might have been caused by that means. The condition of the heart and liver pointed to habits of drink.

At the conclusion of the doctor's evidence, the Coroner announced that the inquest would be adjourned until Monday the 15th inst, at one o'clock.

ACCUSED BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE At eleven o'clock on Wednesday, the two men, James Turner, The Radleys, Rushall, a boatman aged 30, and Frederick Hathaway, aged 30, a labourer of Daw End, Rushall, were brought up at the Burton County Police Court (before C Harrison Esq) upon suspicion of having caused the death of Green at Alrewas on August 29th.

The men, who were both small of stature, were dressed in their working garb, and their demeanour indicated that they fully comprehended the gravity of the charge against them.

Superintendent Hicklin said : The body of James Green was found in the canal yesterday, and from circumstances that came to my knowledge, I had these two men arrested at Rushall on suspicion of being concerned in the death of Green. Upon this statement I ask that they shall be remanded for twenty four hours.

The application of the Superintendent was granted and the men removed to the cells, the proceedings only having occupied three or four minutes.

Yesterday, at Lichfield, John Turner, The Radleys, Rushall, boatman, and Frederick Hathaway, Daw End, labourer, were charged with causing the death of James Green, a boatman, at Alrewas. Sidney Williams, painter, Alrewas, spoke to some words the prisoner Hathaway and the deceased man had in the Navigation Inn on August 2nd. Hathaway told deceased he would give him a "tank" over the head with a waist belt, lifting his hand in a threatening attitude. Turner remonstrated with Hathaway, whereupon the latter put his belt back round his waist. Deceased afterwards said he would give Hathaway something for pulling his belt off at him ; he would shove him in the "cut", adding, "Dead men tell no tales". The three were seen together afterwards on the towing-path. Prisoners were remanded till the 16th inst.

[I have not managed to find the conclusion of this case ; (23) may be relevant].

21 13 September 1902

NORTON CANES

TAKING COAL FROM THE CANAL At the Cannock Police Court on Monday, Solomon Freeman and Edward Bentley, two young miners of Norton Canes, were charged with stealing a quantity of coal, value 4s, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company. Mr Horton (Wragge and Co, Birmingham) appeared on behalf of the Canal Company. Police-constable Treacey gave evidence that on July 9th he saw Bentley who was in the water stripped, getting coal out of the Birmingham Canal at Norton. Freeman was on the towing-path loading a wheelbarrow with the coal. After watching them for half an hour, he went to the defendants, and told Freeman to empty

the coal out of the barrow. He refused to do so, and said he intended to take the coal home. Witness emptied the barrow, whereupon Freeman commenced to reload it, and picking up several lumps, threatened witness with violence. There was about 6 cwt of coal. Thomas Martin, Walsall Road, Great Barr, a detective in the employ of the Canal Company, gave evidence, and said the defendants had not had permission to take the coal from the canal. Police-constable Treacey, recalled, said he heard Bentley ask a passing boatman to "chuck a lump off", but the latter, who had caught sight of witness, replied, "Next time". It appeared that warrants had been issued against the defendants, who could not be found. A short time ago, however, they surrendered themselves. They both pleaded guilty, and elected to be dealt with summarily. Lord Hatherton said it was a bad case. From the large quantity of coal recovered from one spot, it seemed that it had been placed in the canal for the purpose. It was clear there was a collusion between the boatmen and somebody. Freeman would go to prison for six weeks in the second division, and Bentley for a month. At the end of the Court, the Bench, in view of the defendants' previous good character, decided to accede to an application to remit the sentences. Freeman was fined £2 and 14s 9d costs, and Bentley £1 and 14s 9d costs.

22 22 November 1902

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THEFT OF COAL FROM A CANAL BOAT Thomas Carless (23), iron worker, 2 Brook Street, was charged with stealing one cwt of coal from a boat in the canal, value 11d, the property of Thomas Boston and Sons of Birmingham, on November 20th. Police-constable Marston (42) stated that early on Thursday morning he saw the prisoner come out of an entry and go in the direction of the canal. Witness concealed himself, and observed the prisoner conveying coal from a boat to the towing-path. He arrested him in Bridgeman Street. **John Hooper**, boatman, 6 George Street, Birmingham, said that he was in charge of the boat from seven o'clock that night, but about ten o'clock he went to sleep, and was awakened by the officer about one o'clock in the morning. He examined the boat, and found that a large quantity of coal was missing. Prisoner was sent to Stafford for 14 days.

23 13 December 1902

BOATMAN DROWNED AT THE BIRCHILLS The enquiry on the body of **James Turner**, aged 21, a boatman of 36 Upper Green Lane, Walsall, whose body was discovered in the Birmingham Canal at the Birchills, was conducted by the Borough Coroner (Mr T Howard Stanley) at the Engine Inn, Wolverhampton Street, Walsall, on Tuesday afternoon last. Evidence was given by Mary Turner (mother of the deceased), who stated that her son was a boatman, and was employed by Mr Wilkes, coal merchant of Birmingham. He had previously been working in a brickyard where his father used to work. He lived, she believed, at 110 Wellington Street, Winson Green, but frequently came to see her, as he travelled between Birmingham and Cannock Chase, and the distance between the canal and Green Lane was about 600 yards. He was very healthy. The deceased called upon her on Saturday last at midnight, and was in his usual health, but went to his boat at the top lock, where he had left it. On the following day deceased called, and was the worse for beer. She chastised him for drinking such a lot, but he said, "I am all right, mother". He gave her two half crowns, and shaking hands made the remark, "Good bye, mother ; God bless you". He then left the house, saying that he would see her again about midday, but did not say that he was going off to enjoy himself. He returned shortly before midnight, but left the house again. Early on Monday morning, she was awakened by a man named **Faulkner**, who worked with the deceased, and who asked for her son, because he had not been to the boat the previous night. Gertrude Day, a single woman residing at 2 Short Acre Street, said that she had kept company with the deceased for a considerable time. She had had a child by deceased, but he had promised to marry her. On Sunday last she went to the top lock with deceased, and being very cold he asked her to enter the cabin, where Faulkner and a boy about twelve years of age were present. They chatted together until six o'clock in the evening, when they all went to the Boat Inn, where they stayed until ten o'clock. Afterwards they

went to the house of Charles Evans in Green Lane, and enjoyed themselves until 11.30. When they left the house, the deceased was under the influence of drink, and went in the direction of his mother's house, but said that he would be back in a few minutes. They waited for some time, but he did not return, and she went home. William Dutton, a puddler, stated that on Sunday night about 11.30, he was passing through Green Lane and heard a splash of water, which was followed by some shouting from the direction of the canal. Witness could not hear the words, but was quite certain it was a man's voice. He proceeded towards the canal, and entered near the lock through a small door, but it was so dark that he could not see anything. He however heard sounds as of a man swimming. Witness went in search of a policeman, and met one in Dalkeith Street. Three quarters of an hour had elapsed between the time he heard the splash and found the officer. Witness in the dark could do nothing to assist deceased, the lock being half empty. Police-constable Taylor said that at about 12.30 midnight on the date in question, he received information about a man having fallen into the canal. He went to the place, entered the lock, and turning on his light saw a hat. Witness then stirred the water with a rake, and felt something very heavy. He afterwards, with Sergeant Atcherley, went to the lock-keeper, who came and filled the lock in order to make the body float. Sergeant Atcherley spoke to assisting Police-constable Taylor and the lock-keeper in discovering the body. He had examined the lock gate, and found it to be very slippery. It required great attention in crossing it, and there was no possible chance of getting out of the lock. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

24 3 January 1903

BOATMEN'S REST, TOP LOCK, BIRCHILLS The annual tea and entertainment in connection with the Walsall Branch took place on Monday last, when about 25 sat down to the repast prepared by Miss I Kirby and friends. The Rev Cusworth presided, and during the evening there was an illustrated lecture on the "Duke and Duchess of Cornwall's Visit to the Colonies" by Mr R Grierson, whose limelight lantern was operated by Mr M W Harrison. Songs were also given by Miss D Clark, Mrs Bird and others. The proceedings terminated with a hearty vote of thanks to Miss Kirby.

25 24 January 1903

GREAT BARR

ALLEGED THEFT FROM A WAGGON At a special sitting of the Rushall magistrates on Wednesday, before Mr A E Greatrex, a young boatman named **George Summerfield**, 110 Wellington Street, Winson Green, Birmingham, was charged with stealing a horse cloth, nose bag and a quantity of corn at Great Barr on the 20th inst, the property of the Old Union Mill Company Limited, Holt Street, Birmingham. Police-constable Jackson gave evidence that at 8.15 pm on the date named, he received a complaint from a carter named George Bates, who was employed by the prosecutors, that the articles in question had been stolen from his cart. Prisoner, who was standing by, said some passer by might have picked them up. Shortly afterwards prisoner went away towards the canal. Witness followed him, and next saw him on a boat named *General French*. He told prisoner that he was looking for the horse cloth &c, and prisoner assisted him to search the cabin of the boat. He then went to the fore end of the boat, and prisoner hurried away down the canal side. Witness found the horse cloth (produced), stamped "Old Union Mill Company, No 16", lying in the boat. Afterwards he went in search of prisoner, and at midnight found him lying in the cabin of another boat on the canal. On being accused, prisoner replied, "No one saw me take it". Prisoner was conveyed to Wednesbury, and in reply to the charge said, "It is all right". That morning, whilst conveying prisoner from Wednesbury to that Court, he said he picked the horse cloth up in the gutter, and took it to the boat and threw it in. He knew nothing about the nose bag or corn. Prisoner, who pleaded not guilty, was on this evidence remanded until Monday next.

26 31 January 1903

WALSALL POLICE COURT

WINDOW BREAKING **Peter King** (17), boatman of Rosebery Street, Birmingham, was charged

with wilfully and maliciously breaking a plate glass window at the Leopard Inn, Stafford Street, and doing injury to Martin Egan, the landlord of the house, to the amount of 30s, on January 23rd. The prosecutor stated that on Friday last he was in the bar, when he heard a crash and, on going into the street, saw the prisoner in custody of a policeman. Police-constable Robinson (23) said that on the date in question he was on duty in Stafford Street, and saw the prisoner coming down the street. As soon as prisoner got close to the Leopard Inn, he took a piece of brick from his pocket and deliberately threw it at the window. Witness asked him what he did it for, and had the reply, "I've done it on purpose to get three years. I am now under supervision for two years". Prisoner had been convicted several times at Birmingham, and was under police supervision. He was sent to Stafford for two months' hard labour.

27 18 April 1903

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CHARGE OF SHOOTING AT A BOY **Herbert William Downes** (19) of Granville Street, Birmingham, a boatman, was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm upon Horace William Lawley, aged six, by shooting him in the thigh with a revolver. Mr T H Stanley (Stanley and Jackson) explained that this incident occurred on Saturday the 11th inst. Three boys were playing on the canal side, and began throwing stones at some boatmen. One of the boatmen eventually discharged a revolver at the boys, and the shot entered the thigh of one of them. On medical examination it was found that the boy had his thigh fractured, but this would be done by a fall. The bullet had not yet been extracted from the thigh. The affair took place on the borough boundary, and prisoner was arrested by an inspector of the County Police and handed over. The doctor suggested that it would be five or six weeks before the lad would be able to come forward. Harold Hunter Lawley (11 1/2) of 207 Darlaston Road, said that about twenty minutes to two on Saturday afternoon he was on the canal side near Boys' brickyard, together with his brother Horace and another lad. A boat came along laden with coal. They did not throw any stones. One lad asked to be allowed to cross on the boat, but one of the men said if he put his foot on it he would drown him, and at the same time with a frying pan he threw water at the three of them. The boatman afterwards produced a revolver, and shouted to witness and his companions that "if they moved a yard he would fire". Witness heard the hammer click on the revolver, but there was no fire. Prisoner then came out of the cabin and took the weapon from his mate, remarking that there was no cap on it. He "pulled something back and did something else", then put the revolver out at arm's length and fired. The brother of witness fell down crying, and witness saw something strike the water. Blood was running into his brother's boot. It came down his trouser leg. Prisoner laughed, and another man who was on a bridge carried the lad home. Witness next saw prisoner at Bradley's Furnaces, Darlaston. The Chief Constable opposed other than substantial bail. He must endeavour to find the other boatman. They had had the canal dragged for the missing revolver. A statement had been made that it was a five chambered revolver. Mr T H Stanley said this, of course, was an *ex parte* statement. He was instructed that it was a pure accident. The weapon was only discharged with a view to frightening the boys. The magistrates adjourned the case for a week, and allowed bail, prisoner in £50 and two sureties of £25 each.

28 25 April 1903

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THE SHOOTING CASE **Herbert William Downes** (19), boatman of 51 Granville Street, Birmingham, was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm upon Horace William Lawley, aged 6 years, living with his parents at 207 Darlaston Road, by shooting him with a revolver ; and **Thomas Bill** (18), boatman, Ladywood, was charged with attempting to shoot the boy with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm on the 11th April. Mr H H Jackson (Stanley and Jackson) defended. Harold Hunter Lawley of 207 Darlaston Road, stated that on the day in question he was on the canal side near Boys' brickyard with his little brother and a boy named Alfred Gnosill, who was nine years old. There was a boat passing at the time, and Gnosill asked one of the men if he could go

across the boat to the other side. Bill said, "Put a foot on the boat and I'll drown you". He then took a frying pan and began to scoop a lot of water on to them. When the boat had gone about twenty yards, Bill picked up something, and pointing it at them, said, "Shift a yard and I'll shoot you". Witness then put the two smaller boys behind him, and he heard a click from the revolver, as though the trigger had been pulled. The revolver did not go off. Downes then came on the scene and asked Bill for the revolver, and at the same time said, "There's no cap on it". He did something at it, and then put it at arm's length and fired. Horace immediately fell down crying, and witness noticed a hole in the side of his knickerbockers, and blood was running down his leg into his boot. Prisoner and his mate commenced to laugh and continued their journey, and a man who was on an adjoining bridge came down and carried the lad home. Subsequently witness went with his father to Darlaston, where they saw the prisoner Downes. Witness and his companions did not throw stones at the boatmen because they were not allowed to cross the boat. Between the place where the shooting took place and the place where witness and his father found Downes, he could have got off his boat twice. When witness's brother fell, prisoners did not come near to see what was the matter. Alfred Gnosill gave evidence which differed in some respects from that of the previous witness. He stated that it was Downes who threw the water over them, and who first tried to discharge the revolver. It was Bill who fired the shot which injured the lad. George Butler of Bush Street, Darlaston, said he was carrying some birds over the canal bridge when he saw a boatman throwing water on the lads. He watched and saw the prisoner fire the shot. Replying to questions, witness said he had his arms full of birds, and could not go immediately to the assistance of the little lad when he saw him fall. Another man on the opposite side of the canal got to the spot before witness, as he had to put the birds down carefully, so as not to hurt them. At first he thought the men were only trying to frighten the boys but, as soon as he saw what had happened, he shouted to the prisoners, and he could not say whether they heard him or not. Herbert Twigger, 4 Oak Row, Darlaston, stated that he saw the prisoner Downes fire the revolver. He thought at first it was only fooling, but when he saw that the little boy had been injured, he realised that the matter was a serious one. He took the boy home. Downes was holding the revolver in one hand and steering with the other. Bill, when witness saw him, was on the towing-path driving the horse. Dr Harry Shore stated that he attended the injured lad on his admission to the hospital. He was suffering from a bullet wound in the left thigh and a fracture to the thigh bone. The fracture would be caused by a fall which would follow on the shock from the shot. The wound was practically healed, and the thigh bone was setting. It would be six weeks before the lad could leave the hospital. The bullet was probably a small one, and had not been extracted. It could not be found, and there was no X ray apparatus at the hospital. Inspector Williams of the county police, stationed at Darlaston, stated that in consequence of a report received at his station, he proceeded from Moxley down the Birmingham Canal, and when he got to Bagot's Bridge he found a boat laden with coal, and with both prisoners on the boat. Bill was steering, and a man named **Lightfoot** was driving the horse. He afterwards arrested Downes, who said, "All right, I'll give you no trouble. I am sorry to say it was me that shot him. They were throwing "bibbles" at us". After witness had cautioned and charged him, he replied, "It is me that shot him. I hope the little lad will get better. I shot the revolver up in the air, but it jumped". On the way to the station, Downes pulled his cap off and said, "Do you see these cuts at the back of my head? Well, they were done by someone throwing stones on the canal while I was working on the boat". Bill also made a statement, but at the time witness was not aware that he was connected with the affair. Witness cautioned Bill before he made any statement that he was not obliged to say anything and implicate himself. He said that when they came to James Bridge, Walsall, they saw some boys fishing, and Bill asked for the shovel and threw some water over them to drive them away. The boys commenced throwing stones, except the injured boy who was lying down. Downes had brought a six chambered revolver with him, and taking it up said, "If you throw again, I shall shoot". One of the boys replied, "If you b---- well shoot you'd know about it". Then Downes pointed the revolver up into the air, and it went off and shot the boy. When Bill told Downes that he had shot the boy, he replied that it was not possible. Detective Jones said he received the prisoner Downes into custody. He said, "I did not point the

revolver at the lad. I fired in the air and it hit the boy". Witness searched the canal, but could not discover the revolver. Witness arrested Bill that morning as he was coming to the police station to surrender himself. He read over the warrant to him, and Bill replied, "I did not have the revolver at all". The magistrates retired, and on their return announced that Bill would be dismissed as the evidence against him was not sufficiently strong. The prisoner Downes, who admitted shooting the lad but denied that he intended to do so, was committed for trial at next Stafford Assizes, bail being granted, prisoner in £50 and two sureties of £25 each.

29 16 May 1903

WALSALL WOOD

STEALING COAL FROM A BOAT At the Rushall Police Court on Monday, a lad named **Charles Godfrey**, son of a boatman living at Aston, was charged with stealing a quantity of coal from a boat belonging to Frank Knight, Chester Street Wharf, Birmingham. Police-constable Lockley deposed that at 11.50 pm on May 7th he was on duty near the Beehive Inn, when he saw defendant take a quantity of coal from a boat belonging to prosecutor and throw it to a woman. Afterwards, defendant proceeded to another boat belonging to Messrs Hockton of Birmingham, and started taking coal from it, when witness put in an appearance and stopped him. The lad pleaded guilty, and said he did it to get a few coppers. It appeared the lad's father was engaged on the boat, and during his temporary absence taking refreshments in a public house, the lad disposed of the coal without his knowledge. Prosecutor stated that the weight of the coal scarcely ever tallied. It was one weight at the colliery, another when it passed through the canal company's hands, and when it got to its destination there was often one or two tons short. Mr Clark enquired what had become of the receiver of the coal, when it was stated that that person would be dealt with another day. The lad was fined 5s and 13s costs.

30 30 May 1903

WALSALL WOOD

BAD LANGUAGE At the Rushall Police Court on Monday, **William Godfrey**, boatman, Avenue Road, Aston, Birmingham, was charged with making use of bad language on the 7th inst. Police-constable Lockley proved the case, stating that defendant was the father of the lad who stole the coal from a boat on the same night. Defendant said he stopped for refreshment, and if he did make use of any bad language he did not remember it. Ordered to pay 7s 10d costs.

31 27 June 1903

BROWNHILLS

DRUNKENNESS At the County Police Court, Lichfield, **William Vaughan**, boatman of Hockley, Birmingham, was charged with being drunk and disorderly at Brownhills the previous day. Police-sergeant Whiston at 1.20, in company with Police-constable Dean, saw defendant lying on the roadside in a very drunken condition. When woke up he began to use bad language, and was very violent. They had to throw him down to handcuff him to take him to the Police Station. He had £13 11s on him, which his master had since claimed. Fined 10s and costs.

32 25 July 1903

THE WALSALL SHOOTING CASE At Stafford Assizes yesterday, before Mr Justice Ridley, **Herbert William Downes** (19), a boatman, was indicted for shooting with a loaded revolver at Horace William Lawley on April 11th at Walsall. Mr Lewis prosecuted, and pointed out that the allegation was one of shooting with intent to do grievous bodily harm. The boy and an elder brother were fishing or playing on the canal bank when the prisoner and another man of the name of Bill came along in a boat. The boy asked Bill for permission to get on the boat, which Bill refused. Bill made use of some threats, and then splashed some water over the children. He then put his hand in the cabin, brought out a revolver, and tried to fire, but the weapon would not go off. Prisoner asked for the revolver and fired himself, hitting one of the boy's legs and breaking it. The

Judge asked what had become of the man Bill. Mr Lewis replied that the charge against Bill was dismissed by the magistrates. The Judge expressed surprise. He thought if he had been in the place of the magistrates he should have sent the man for trial along with the prisoner. Evidence was given by Lawley's elder brother, and Inspector Williams deposed to arresting the prisoner, and to receiving from him a statement, which was to the effect that he fired the revolver in the air, and that it "kicked" and fell into the canal. Prisoner also stated that the boys had been throwing stones at the boat as it went along. Witness, in answer to the Judge, said that boys were in the habit of throwing stones at passing boats. A verdict of guilty was returned. In passing sentence, the Judge said he would make allowance for the fact that boys were in the habit of throwing stones at boatmen. He would not send prisoner to penal servitude. Prisoner, however, had no right to use an unlawful weapon, and he must go to gaol for twelve months' hard labour.

33 3 October 1903

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CRUELTY TO A HORSE **Henry Gorton jun** (15), boatman, 11 court, 13 house, Blews Street, Birmingham, was charged with ill-treating a horse by walking it on The Bridge whilst in an unfit state on September 26th, and **Henry Gorton sen** (42), boatman, was charged with causing the animal to be ill-treated on the same date. Police-constable Jones (66) stated that on Saturday morning he saw the younger defendant leading a horse across The Bridge. The animal was very lame in the near foreleg, and it could not lift one foot off the ground. He called the defendant's attention to its condition, and took the horse to Mr Paley, who pronounced it to be unfit to be taken to Birmingham, where the boy said he was going. The boy was leading the horse, and it was not drawing anything. The boy also told him that he and his father had been working it on the canal on the previous day, and that it had always been lame since he had known it. Mr A E Paley, veterinary surgeon, stated that he examined the horse in question. It was extremely lame in both forelegs from chronic sprained tendons. The near fore hoof was very much worse at the toe, and the animal could only stand with difficulty. It must have been in this condition for months, and must have been in great pain. The boy said the horse had been worked that day and on the previous day. Witness recommended that the animal should be destroyed. The elder defendant said the horse was not lame on the Friday morning when he took it out. Next morning he noticed it was lame, and sent it back by the road. Mr Paley said the horse had been in this state for a long time. It must have been noticeable, because it could not lift the near fore foot from the ground. Gorton sen was fined 10s and costs, or 14 days, and the case against the son was dismissed, as it was considered that he was under the influence of his father. Defendant agreed that the horse should be at once destroyed.

34 7 November 1903

SUDDEN DEATH OF A BIRMINGHAM BOATMAN On Monday afternoon, the Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) held an inquest at the Municipal Buildings, Bloxwich, on the body of **Josiah Smith** (49), boatman of 154 Camden Street, Birmingham, who died suddenly in his boat. **Rebecca Smith**, deceased's wife, stated that her husband was a boatman employed by Messrs Bowater Limited, Soho Wharf, Hockley, Birmingham. He had been suffering from rupture, and had been under the treatment of Dr McLynn of Birmingham. On Thursday the 29th ult, deceased left home about midday to go to his work. Before he went he complained of being unwell, and witness told him to get someone to go with him. She did not see him again until Friday, when she saw him dead at the Bloxwich Mortuary. **James Priddy** of 5, back of 64, Fleet Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, a boatman also in the employ of Messrs Bowater, said that he had been working with deceased for about three weeks. On Thursday the 29th ult, they were ordered to take the boat to the Leacroft Colliery, Cannock, to be loaded. Before they started for the journey, deceased did not make any complaint about being ill, and they were taking turns in driving and steering. When they passed the locks at Walsall, deceased remarked that he did not feel very well and, meeting a man named **Whitehouse**, asked him to take his place at the helm, promising that he would see to it. Deceased then went to his cabin, and witness and Whitehouse started for Cannock. As they were at

Little Bloxwich, witness went to the cabin and asked deceased how he felt, and deceased said that he felt very middling. Deceased also asked for some whisky, and drank it. Witness stayed with the deceased during that night, but must have gone to sleep, for when he woke up he found that it was three o'clock in the morning. He noticed deceased was lying peacefully, and thinking he was asleep did not disturb him. Witness went to feed his horse, and on his return discovered that Smith was dead. Inspector Marshall said that he received information from the last witness that someone had died in the boat. He went to Little Bloxwich and brought the body to the mortuary in the police ambulance, and then sent for a doctor. Witness also went to Birmingham to see Dr McLynn, who told him that deceased had been under his treatment for two years. Dr M Berry said that he saw the deceased at the mortuary, and made an outward examination of the body. In his opinion, death was due to strangulated hernia. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence.

35 26 January 1904

GREAT BARR

TWENTY FOUR DAYS IN THE WATER On Tuesday, the coroner for the district (Mr H A Pearson) held an inquiry at the Bell Inn, Birmingham Road, into the circumstances attending the death of **George Alfred Arrowsmith** (34), a boatman residing at 6 Coltshill Terrace, High Street, Saltley, Birmingham, whose body was found in an overflow of the canal near the Bell Inn on January 17th. Deceased had been missing since Christmas Eve, when he left the Bell Inn to join his mate in his boat, which had been fastened up for the night not far from the inn. The night was an exceedingly dark one, and it is surmised that the unfortunate man fell over a brick culvert near the place where his body was found and, partially stunned by the blow, was drowned without being able to do anything to save himself. Everything was done by the police to recover the body, parts of the canal even being emptied, but their efforts did not meet with success until the 17th inst, twenty four days after it is supposed the man lost his life. **Maria Arrowsmith**, 6 Coltshill Terrace, High Street, Saltley, widow of the deceased, gave evidence of identification, and stated that on the day before Christmas her husband left home to go on a voyage with his boat, in company with his mate, a man named **Frederick Davies**. He said he would be back about ten o'clock at night. He was in his usual health, except that he had got a sprained wrist. In the evening, a man named Alcock called and told her that her husband would not be back until very late. Davies called the next day, and asked her if her husband had come home. She said he had not, and he then said that he had been to the hospitals and the gaols and could not find him, so he must be drowned. To the best of her knowledge he had never had a quarrel with Davies. Frederick Davies, the deceased's mate, of 103 College Road, Saltley, stated that he was on very friendly terms with the deceased, and had never quarrelled with him. They left Birmingham on the 24th December at about 5.30, and went to Walsall Wood for a boat of coal. They went on to Great Barr and, as the night was very dark, they tied up the boat till the morning. The horse was stabled at the Bell Inn, where they both had refreshments. Witness left the inn about nine o'clock, Arrowsmith remaining behind to have his sprained wrist poulticed. Witness went straight to the boat and, as he was very tired, he at once fell asleep in the cabin. He awoke about four o'clock next morning, and finding that his mate had not arrived, he gave information that he was missing. There had never been any quarrel between them, and they were on the best of terms. Andrew Barnes, landlord of the Bell Inn, stated that he knew deceased as an occasional customer. About 7.30 on Christmas Eve, he arrived with Davies at the inn. Deceased was quite sober, and only had two pints of ale in the house. Davies left about nine o'clock, Arrowsmith remaining behind to have the poultice on his wrist. He left the house about 9.30, and witness did not see him again until he saw his body in the canal on the 17th inst. The men were on the most friendly terms in the house, and there was no quarrel at all between them whilst they were there. He did not know of any trouble that Arrowsmith was in, and he seemed to be in very good spirits. Joseph Barrand, a boy of eleven, living at Shustoke Farm, Great Barr, said that on Christmas Eve about 9.30, he heard a noise in the direction of the canal. There was a gurgling noise and a sound like a man crying for help. He went into the house, but there was no one there that could give any assistance, and later he informed the police. Police-constable Jackson, stationed

at Great Barr, stated that at eight o'clock on Christmas morning Davies came to him, and asked him if he had locked up his mate on the previous night. He told him that he had not locked anyone up, and the man then said that he had lost his mate and that, if he was not locked up, he must be drowned. The canal was dragged for a number of days, and part of it which deceased would have to pass to reach the boat was emptied, but nothing was found until last Wednesday, when it was discovered that there was an obstruction in the weir on one of the overflows. The water was drained off, and deceased was found lying at the bottom on his back. Witness removed the body and searched it, but there was nothing in the clothes which threw any light upon the case. The overflow would be on the man's way when he went to the boat. He made enquiries, and found nothing which would lead him to suspect foul play. Christmas Eve was a particularly dark night, and he himself had had considerable difficulty in keeping on the footpath. Dr J B Garman stated that he had made a *post mortem* examination of the body, which, considering the length of time the evidence appeared to show it had been in the water, was very little decomposed. There were some slight abrasions on the face, and there were two large bruises on the back of the head. Deceased was a perfectly healthy man, and the bruises would not have been sufficient to cause death. His opinion was that the man fell and bruised his head before getting into the water, and in consequence of his being partially stunned, was the more readily drowned. The lungs showed that death was due to drowning. He thought that deceased must have got fastened in something when he fell into the water, as the fact that he had been under water for such a long time would be the only thing to account for the body being so little decomposed. The Coroner, in summing up, explained to the jury that there was no evidence as to how the man got into the water, but from the medical testimony it seemed that there had been no foul play. It therefore lay with the jury to bring in either a verdict of accidental death or an open verdict of found drowned. The jury took the latter alternative, and returned an open verdict.

36 12 March 1904

THE BOATMAN'S REST The third anniversary of the opening of the Boatman's Mission Room, Birchills, was held on Monday night. A capital tea had been provided, about forty persons sitting down. After tea a meeting was held, at which Mr Arthur Cameron occupied the chair, supported by the Rev R D Cusworth (district superintendent) and Messrs Howard Bratt (Birmingham), W S Wolverson (Hednesford) and Mr J Eveson, all missionaries of the society in the Midland District. Mr W S Wolverson expressed his pleasure at being at the meeting, and said that he was also pleased to see such a large number of mothers present, for he believed the mothers were a very important factor in the work of their mission, and they held a high place in their estimation, not only in their society but all over the civilised world, and there was no kind of work but was marked, ornamented and blessed by the influence of women. The mothers were invaluable in domestic affairs, and always liked to have a hand in the spending of the money, and he knew of a good many mothers in his own district who could make a sovereign go a good deal further than the fathers could. He was very well satisfied with the work at Hednesford. There they had a large and enthusiastic band of young workers, who were willing and ready to do everything he told them, and he hoped that they would do nothing but what they should do. This day they were all celebrating the hundredth birthday of the British and Foreign Bible Society. It had been a hundred years ago since a company of faithful workers decided to form an association which had been instrumental to a wonderful degree in circulating the Scriptures throughout the world. The society owed its existence to a discussion that took place a century ago at a meeting of the Religious Tract Society, when a Welsh minister told a story of a small girl who walked twenty five miles to obtain a copy of the Scriptures. The question was asked at the meeting why a society for the circulation of the Book should not be formed for the benefit of the Welsh people. That question was enlarged upon, and the resolution was finally carried into effect, by means of which they had now at the present day the satisfaction of knowing that the Bible had been printed in 400 different languages, and 180 million copies had been printed and circulated during the century. It had been estimated that if they were faithful workers, and each one of them tried to convert one fellow being in a year, the world would be

converted in seven years. There were forty million Christians in the world, and if those forty millions each added one at the end of the year the number would have doubled, and so on until the end of seven years there would not be a heathen in existence. There was still plenty of work to do, for according to the *Daily News* half the population of London never entered a church from year's end to year's end. Wesleyan Methodism had provided religious accommodation for a tenth of the population of London, and they were now pursuing the right course by going amongst the people and identifying themselves with every part of their existence – (applause).

The Chairman said that he was pleased to be there that night, for the occasion was a most important one, as it was the third anniversary of the opening of that room. But there was a greater anniversary than theirs being held throughout the whole world. He alluded to the centenary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which came upon that day. The society had a mighty influence, which in some way concerned every one of them. They could not realise the incalculable good done by that society. A hundred years ago, it was a difficult thing to get a Bible. The spreading and teaching of the Bible was the greatest literary effort that had ever been performed in the world. It was a work for Christianising the earth. There were a great many deaf and dumb and blind people in the world, and this society had printed the Bible to be read by these people in 300 different languages. The Bible was held to be a very common thing, but that was not so, for it was the emblem of truth throughout the world – a fact which was recognised from the King down to his lowest subject – and it was the nations who accepted the Bible that were prosperous and progressive. The society had a thousand workers, who were employed solely to distribute the Bibles. Referring to their own mission, it was three years ago since the late Mr Alfred Stanley presided over the committee in whose hands the building of the room rested. He had gone ; and there was also another of their workers who figured at the opening ceremony who had taken his last leave of them, but he hoped the mission would still continue and grow in its good work.

Mr Howard Bratt (assistant missionary to the Birmingham district) said that it was a new experience and a keen pleasure for him to address a meeting of that description. It was really the starting point in his career, for he was now confronting his first audience. His work in the missionary world chiefly laid in visiting the canal men and talking to them while pursuing their daily avocation. He had met with numerous comical incidents in the carrying out of his work, and yet it had not been altogether void of pathos, and he had had many occasions for sorrowful thought. He thought the biggest evil they had to contend with was public houses, and more particularly those which were on the side of the canals.

The Rev R W Cusworth said that the work in which they were engaged was often considered by the outsider as altogether unnecessary, as the canals were antiquated and were rapidly becoming things of the past, but they would be surprised to learn that the number of men, women and children floating in the canals and rivers of England amounted to between 40,000 and 50,000. Railways had extended in all directions, and there was a perfect network covering the country, and some people supposed that they had supplanted the canals, but in their own district here they had a network of canals, and with the exception of Leeds and South Yorkshire, the largest network in England. The Birmingham Company had no less than 160 miles of canals, and in the whole of England and Wales they had 2400 miles of navigable river and canal. The barges at Leeds, he said, were much bigger than they were here, and could carry a weight of 160 to 180 tons, and it was a usual thing for them to put to sea. Their mission was doing a great amount of good amongst the boatmen, about 6,000 of whom during the year called at their own little room. He was pleased to see that they were fond of their horses and knew how to take care of them, and also that they had erected a stable for the horses out of their own pockets, with the exception of £5 given by the Company. He was also pleased to hear they had four services every Sunday, besides the meetings during the week. He concluded by wishing them every success in the future.

One or two songs were given, and a few hymns sung during the evening, and a vote of thanks to the chairman concluded the meeting.

37 11 June 1904

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CHARGE OF STEALING WHEAT **William Flatley** (42), boatman, 15 Kinsmore Road, Kidderminster, **Samuel Flatley** (17), boatman, 15 Kinsmore Road, Kidderminster, and Thomas Flatley (32), collier, 68 Brunswick Street, St Helen's, were charged with stealing 42 pecks of wheat, valued at 42s, the property of the Severn and Canal Carrying Company Ltd on the 7th inst, or receiving the corn knowing it to have been stolen. The Chief Constable asked for a remand until Friday, and this was granted, but Mr Clark (the presiding magistrate) asked for sufficient evidence to justify the remand. The Chief Constable said that the men were employed by the Severn and Canal Carrying Co, and were unloading a quantity of wheat at the Flour Mills, Wolverhampton Street, and were seen to take a quantity of the wheat from various large bags and put it into small ones. They were arrested the previous night. A witness named Benjamin Usherwood, 37 Forrester Street, stated that he was in the employ of Smith Bros, Flour Mills, and on Tuesday the prisoners were unloading the wheat under the warehouse. He saw two of them deliberately take wheat from the larger bags and put it into smaller ones. When witness was receiving the wheat, it struck him that he was having short weight, and upon weighing the corn he found that there was 30 lbs short. He also saw the elder prisoner scoop up flour that had fallen from one of the bags and empty it into a small bag, afterwards putting it into the cabin of his boat. He saw the younger prisoner several times open the larger bags and take some of it out. Samuel and Thomas did not ask for bail, but the elder prisoner did, but it was refused. The latter had previous convictions against him.

CRUELTY TO HORSES **Aaron Drakley**, 33 Summer Street, Birmingham, was summoned for cruelly ill-treating a horse on the 4th inst. Inspector Riding stated that the horse was working on the canal, and was very lame as a result of stones on the path which had injured its legs. Mr Paley also gave evidence, and defendant was fined 10s and costs.

FRIDAY

THE CHARGE OF STEALING GRAIN **William Flatley** (42), boatman, 15 Clensmore Lane, Kidderminster, **Samuel Flatley** (17), boatman, 15 Clensmore Lane, Kidderminster, and Thomas Flatley (32), collier, 68 Brunswick Street, St Helen's, were charged with stealing 42 pecks of wheat, valued at 40s, the property of the Severn and Canal Carrying Company Ltd, and also with stealing a plank valued at 2s 6d, the property of Smith Bros, Albion Mills, Wolverhampton Street, on the 7th inst. Mr T H Stanley, who appeared to prosecute, stated that there were 260 sacks of wheat consigned by the Severn and Canal Carrying Co, to be delivered from Stourport to Smith Bros, Wolverhampton Street. The wheat was delivered to William Flatley, the elder of the prisoners, who had charge of a boat called the *Eagle* on the 3rd inst. The unloading was commenced on the 7th inst, and Benjamin Usherwood, in the employ of Smith Bros, received some of the sacks, which struck him at the time as being short weight. He had two bags weighed and found them 30 lbs short. He then went and watched prisoners, where he saw two of them, William and Samuel, take wheat out of the large sacks and fill smaller ones with the stolen wheat. Another workman named Beatie also watched the prisoners, and saw two of them filling the smaller sacks with wheat. Instead of 260 sacks being delivered at the works, there were only 259. There was a shortage on 15 bags, amounting to 377 lbs. Prisoners were arrested by the police, and 6 bags of wheat were found in the boat, which weighed exactly 343 lbs. **Barrie Starr** of 12 Loughard Street, Stourport, a clerk in the employ of the Severn and Canal Carrying Co, said he had known William Flatley for three years, and he had charge of a boat called the *Eagle*. On Friday the 3rd inst, he was present when the *Eagle* was loaded at Stourport, and saw the wheat put on the boat. There were 260 sacks. Prisoners should have delivered all the bags of wheat at Walsall. Benjamin Usherwood repeated the evidence given by him on Wednesday. A fellow workman named Beatie also gave evidence, and said that he watched the prisoners by the boat, and found William Flatley making a hole in one of the bags, allowing the wheat to fall in the boat. John Thomas Blewitt, a warehouseman in the employ of Smith Bros, stated that he drew up the sacks from the boat, and noticed that they were coming up

short weight. He weighed nearly all of them, with the result that 14 were short weight. Charles Bishop, also employed at Smith Bros, said that six bags and one sack of wheat were taken out of the boat and weighed in the presence of the prisoners, and they were found to contain 590 lbs. Police-sergeant Atcherley said that he searched the boat and found the stolen wheat in the cabin. Detective Burrell deposed to arresting the prisoners. Thomas Flatley was discharged, the evidence being too slight against him. The youngest prisoner, Samuel, pleaded guilty, but William pleaded not guilty, and stated that he had known nothing about the smaller sacks of wheat, which he supposed had been filled by his son. The magistrates sentenced both prisoners to 28 days' hard labour.

38 11 June 1904

PELSALL

COAL STEALING At the Rushall Police Court on Monday, **John Whitehouse** and **George Warsey**, Birmingham, boatmen, and Charlotte Boswell, Pelsall, were charged with stealing on May 12th about one cwt of coal, the property of Christopher Lurgin, coal dealer, Birmingham. Police-constable Milner deposed that on the date in question he was on duty near York's foundry, when the boatmen passed with a boat load of coal, and they handed some coal to the woman Boswell. The defence was that the coal was given in return for odd jobs that Boswell's husband had done for the boatmen at different times. The Bench said there was a great deal of trouble with coal stealers, and fined them 5s and 18s costs each.

ANOTHER THEFT OF COAL At the same Court, **Harry Clark**, boatman, Upper Green Lane, Walsall, and Laura Morgan, married woman, The Wood, Pelsall, were charged, the former with stealing and the latter with receiving knowing it to have been stolen, about a hundredweight of coal belonging to Messrs John Russell and Co, Cyclops Ironworks, Walsall. Laura Morgan junr, daughter of the defendant of the same name, was also charged with being concerned in the robbery. Evidence was given that the woman sent the girl out for a packet of cigarettes, with which she sent her to the canal to try and get some coal. Police-constable Milner saw the girl accost several boatmen, who refused to yield to the temptation held out to them, but eventually Clark came along with one of Messrs Russell's boats, from which he threw some coal in exchange for the cigarettes. The coal was about to be removed when the constable arrived on the scene. It was stated that offences of this kind were of frequent occurrence, and the Bench fined the woman 40s and costs, the man 20s and costs, and the girl was bound over.

39 6 August 1904

WALSALL POLICE COURT

REMANDED A boatman named **Abetha Malpass** (33) of the Paddock, Kinver, was brought up in custody on a charge of embezzling £2, received for John Wood, coal merchant of the Birchills, Walsall, his employer. On the application of Mr J Armstrong, who appeared to prosecute, prisoner was remanded for a week.

40 13 August 1904

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THE CHARGE OF EMBEZZLEMENT **Abitha Malpass** (33), boatman, was charged on remand with embezzling the money of his employer, John Wood, coal dealer, Birchills. Mr Morgan (from the office of Mr J Armstrong) appeared to prosecute, and said he only proposed to deal with three items. The prisoner was formerly employed by the complainant to deliver coal and collect the money for it. He worked until April, and during his last week delivered coal of a value of £8 8s 11d. On the Saturday he said he was going out to collect the money, but he did not return, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The prosecutor, having given evidence bearing out Mr Morgan's statement, denied that there was a second man concerned in the affair. Prisoner said it was the Easter week when it happened, and Wood had refused to pay him his wages. Rebecca Cutts, 73 Old Birchills, who paid prisoner 1s 8d ; Alice Davies, 28 St Paul's Street, who paid him 3s 11d ; and

Elizabeth Moseley, 3 Box Street, who paid him 2s 5d, gave evidence. None of these items had been accounted for. Prisoner said there was a fortnight's wages owing to him ; but this was denied by Wood, who said there was only the week in which prisoner left. Prisoner was sentenced to one month's hard labour.

41 24 September 1904

INCORPORATED SEAMEN'S AND BOATMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY

“LIFE ON OUR CANALS” At the annual meeting of this society, which has a number of Mission Stations in Walsall and the neighbourhood, the following address upon “Life on our Canals” was delivered by Mr Joel Cadbury, who has always taken a deep and active interest in the work of the mission :-

By the kind invitation of our friends at Liverpool, the workers connected with the various mission centres of the Incorporated Seamen and Boatmen's Friend Society have the opportunity this year of meeting at the world renowned port of Liverpool, the second port in the United Kingdom. Holding such a high position as this, it is not surprising to those of us who come from a distance to find that Liverpool, by its benefactions and institutions, has shown and is showing keen, practical interest in the material and spiritual welfare of those “who go down to the sea in ships and do business in the great waters”. A glance at the map shows us that Liverpool is not only connected with the sea and therefore interested in sailors and ships, but is also vitally connected by means of river and canal with many of our large inland cities and towns. Statistics recently obtained make this fact still clearer. At Ellesmere Port, an average of 163 canal boats leave for the Midlands and the Potteries every week, while on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal during the past twelve months, the number of outward journeys from Liverpool made by the Companies' boats and by boats owned by private traders was close upon 13,000. Now it is with the view of promoting in some measure the best interests of the men and women employed on our inland waterways that I venture to address you this morning.

The Incorporated Seamen and Boatmen's Friend Society has two distinct sections of work, as its title plainly indicates, namely :- A Mission to Seamen and Fishermen, and Mission to Bargemen and Canal Boatmen. Details of the Society's work among sailors and flatmen in this port will be furnished by Captain Simpson, the chairman of the local committee, while we may be allowed to give some particulars of its work among the canal population.

It may not be generally known that the history of canals in England dates from the time of the Romans, who constructed the Caer Dyke, 40 miles in length, extending from Peterborough to the river Witham, near the city of Lincoln. But it was not till the 18th century that extensive canal schemes began to be formed. In 1759, under an Act of Parliament, the construction of the famous Bridgewater Canal was begun. A romantic incident accounts for its origin. The third and last Duke of Bridgewater fell in love at the age of 22 with one of the celebrated “beautiful Miss Gunnings”, who was then the widow of the Duke of Hamilton. His Grace of Bridgewater proposed marriage, and was accepted, but a hitch occurred ; he wished his fiancée to give up the acquaintance of her sister, Lady Coventry, and this she refused to do. The match was broken off, and the Duke broke up his London establishment and retired to his Lancashire estates. There, to occupy his mind, he devoted himself to the making of canals, and became “the father of inland navigation”, as he is described on a monument in the park of Brownlows at Ashridge, Herts. Brindley was his engineer – Brindley, who had but one thing to say when told that a canal would not hold water, “Puddle it again”. And, if the water still ran out of it, why then, “Puddle it again”. The Duke spent vast sums on his canals, borrowing when his cash was spent. But the tide turned. After he had made 42 miles of canals, connecting the Worsley coalfield with Manchester and Liverpool, he was very rich (strange to say, he dreaded most the competition of tramways). He founded the famous Bridgewater Trust, which was to last 100 years, and it is interesting to note that this Trust has just expired. Lord Ellesmere took personal possession of the immense estate in October 1903, so we lose sight of one link with the founder of English canals, though his work remains.

The success attending the making and working of the Bridgewater Canal gave a great impetus to

similar schemes elsewhere, so much so that within the next 30 years, dating from 1772, more than 2,000 miles of canal had been constructed in England and Wales.

But this canal "boom" received a shock when the era of railways dawned in 1830. From 1845 to 1848, more than 1,000 miles of English canals were bought up by railway companies, who dreaded their competition. In 1830 there were about 2,500 miles of navigable canals in England and Wales, but since that time (if we except the Manchester Ship Canal) scarcely any addition has been made ; whereas the great industrial nations of Europe have greatly improved their waterways - "their great island arteries" - realising how great a part they play in the business of the country. As an instance of this, we may mention that in the early part of this year there was introduced into the Lower House of the Prussian Diet five measures to regulate canals and waterways, and of those one includes a proposal for a new ship canal from the Dortmund-Hess canal at Beverhen to Hanover, thus establishing canal communication between the Rhine and Hanover ; and also a canal for large vessels from Berlin to Stettin, as well as other improvements. About 400,000,000 marks (£20,000 sterling) was asked for these works.

With regard to the number of men, women and children employed on the canals of England and Wales, it is difficult to speak with exactness. But Mr O J Llewellyn, HM Inspector under the Canal Boats Act, in his last report, states that 12,624 boats have been registered as dwellings, of which less than 8,000 are in actual use at the present time, showing a smaller number than the previous decade, owing to the increase of steam traction, thus necessitating the use of open (or unregistered) boats. Mr Llewellyn estimates that about 16,000 persons sleep at night on canal boats registered as dwellings, and this number is made up as follows :- 10,000 men, 4,000 women, 2,000 children (mostly babies). But it must be remembered that, in addition to the 8,000 boats referred to, registered as dwellings, there are large numbers of boats making short journeys between our large industrial centres and adjacent collieries, which do not come under the Canal Boats Act, and are each generally worked by two men. Bearing these facts in mind, we shall not be far wrong in estimating the canal population to number from 40,000 to 50,000 persons.

When the Incorporated Seamen and Boatmen's Friend Society began its work in 1848 among the much neglected workers upon the canals, their condition was sad indeed. The cabins were small and dirty ; whole families were huddled together, and in the case of nine tenths of those employed upon the boats the cabin was their only home. Drunkenness and immorality prevailed to an alarming extent ; the marriage ceremony was frequently ignored ; the poor children were neglected, for the parents, having received no education themselves, were absolutely careless about the education or even the moral training of their offspring. Happily, a great change for the better has come over this floating population during recent years, a change largely due to the labours of this society, and to the passing of the Canal Boats Act of 1877 and 1884, initiated by the late George Smith of Coalville. It may be said with confidence that the administration of the Acts referred to has made it easier for this society to carry on its beneficent work in visiting the cabins and homes of the boatmen, and in helping them to lead moral, decent and Christian lives.

Compared with the state of things which obtained on the canals 50 years ago, great advances have been made in every direction. Marriage is now the rule, not the exception ; there are fewer children of school age on the canals than formerly (not more than 400, one authority estimates) ; the parents are anxious for their children to know reading, writing and arithmetic ; and the majority of the men have not only a floating home, but also a home on shore.

Speaking of the character of canal boatmen, His Majesty's Chief Inspector under the Canal Boats Act says :- "Boat people are the nicest and kindest set of the labouring class and, as for cleanliness, nothing is more true than their stock remark to my inspectors, "Go home and look at your dirty cottages on shore, and don't come bringing mud and dirt into my cabin". They are kindness itself to their kind, and I would back them in honest and true gentlemanliness against any class of persons I have ever met with".

It is the aim of the society to provide suitable mission halls at or near the great centres of canal traffic, in which religious services, Bible meetings, mothers' meeting, etc, may be held, and lectures given. At Birmingham, Walsall, Liverpool, Hednesford, Leeds and Shipley there are also coffee

and reading rooms connected with our institutions which, if they do not prove a very profitable pecuniary investment, are resting places for the men and, being provided with games and papers and made bright and attractive, are in many instances a counter attraction to the public houses.

It is found that open air services held on Sundays (during the summer months) on the canal side are an excellent way of announcing the Gospel to the boatmen, who gather round the preacher attracted by the singing, led in most instances by a portable harmonium. Such services are held on our Bristol, Birmingham, Leeds and Plymouth Mission Stations ; while at Liverpool and Ellesmere Port galley services are conducted at certain docks on week days.

An important part of the work of our missionaries is the systematic visitation of canals and wharves within a given district, which often affords an opportunity for a word of counsel and sympathy with the bargemen while he is proceeding on his way, or is awaiting orders from his employers. Sometimes in the course of visitation temperance pledges are taken, for it is needless to say that wayside, or rather "canal side" public houses are a great temptation. As the missionary trudges along the towing-path in all weathers, he circulates tracts, books, copies of the Scriptures, and the society's own monthly magazine, *The Waterman*, the distribution of the latter often leading up to a profitable conversation with the men. This publication, *The Waterman*, is under the able editorship of the Rev R W Cusworth, and has a yearly circulation of 50,000 copies. It is much appreciated by the boatmen and their families, for it contains a message of love and hope to them and, moreover, is a valuable link between the society's mission stations.

The substitution of mechanical traction for horse haulage on the canals is yet by no means general. Indeed the vast majority of boats are still hauled by horses and donkeys. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the missionaries of the society take every opportunity of impressing the men with the wisdom and importance of being kind to their animals. Nor has the society been content with gratuitous advice on this subject ; it has shown its practical interest by the erection of a horse shelter on the towing path at Walsall, at the top of the eight locks, where in busy season horses and men alike have to "wait their turn" for sometimes two or even five hours at a time.

The society, in its work among sailors and boatmen, has made steady progress of late, especially since its incorporation in 1899. In its early years the total income was about £300, which has now increased to £2800. In addition large sums have also been raised on some of the stations for the erection of suitable buildings, such as mission halls, coffee rooms and the like. At the present time, the society has twelve mission stations (connected with which are thirteen additional visiting centres), viz London, Liverpool, Seacombe, Leeds, Shipley, Sheffield, Birmingham, Hednesford, Walsall, Bristol (2) and Plymouth, each of which is under the supervision of a local committee. The missionaries of the society number thirteen, but three, it should be remembered, have around them many voluntary helpers, without whose generous aid the aims of the society could not successfully be carried out.

In conclusion, it will be seen from what has been said how much our sympathies are called out for those on whose behalf we appeal to you. In the case of the sailor and canal boatman there are exceptional circumstances which make them a class apart from their fellows. The isolation of the sailor is the more complete in his enforced absence from all home ties for long intervals, but the canal boatman is also cut off from most of the humanising interests of social life, and has very solitary hours on the towing-path, even though he may have a wife and child in the cabin. That this loneliness is keenly realised is shown by the warm welcome given to our missionaries, and by the grateful acceptance of literature of an improving and interesting character. As the aim of the society is to provide what may lessen the privations in the lives of sailors and canal boatmen, and also for the protection of their best interests, we can confidently commend its aim and its work to the consideration of the Christian public.

42 22 October 1904

WALSALL QUARTER SESSIONS

ACQUITTED **Thomas Wood** (32), a boatman, was indicted for unlawfully wounding Emma Bucknall by striking her with a poker on the 1st October. The case for the prosecution was that late

on the evening in question, during the course of a family quarrel, the prisoner struck the woman on the head with a poker. A severe wound was inflicted, and the woman was conveyed to the hospital in an unconscious condition. Prisoner stated that a sister of Mrs Bucknall threw the poker at him, and he threw it back, with the unfortunate result that it struck prosecutrix. He had no intention of injuring her. A man named Perry, called for the prosecution, supported the statement, which was accepted by the jury, and the prisoner was found not guilty.

43 26 November 1904

DAW END

REFUSING TO QUIT At the Rushall Police Court on Monday, **James Dolley**, boatman, recently residing at Daw End, was summoned for refusing to quit licensed premises. Samuel Clare, landlord of the Royal Oak, deposed that on the 4th inst defendant came into his house the worse for beer, when prosecutor refused to supply him and requested him to leave. Defendant refused to leave, and he was ejected, but went into the house again, saying that he should not leave either for the landlord or the police. In reply to the Bench, prosecutor said defendant did not have anything to drink on his premises. Defendant was also summoned for assaulting **Frederick Woodward**, by whom he had been employed. Complainant stated that on the same occasion as above he was leaving the Royal Oak, when defendant struck him twice in the face, making his nose bleed profusely. In reply to the Bench, complainant said he could not account for the assault. Defendant had been in his employ, but he discharged himself on the previous day. Defendant did not appear to answer either of the charges. Police-constable Bailey deposed to leaving the summonses at the lodgings of defendant, when he found the house empty, and he was informed that defendant had gone to West Bromwich. For the assault, defendant was fined 10s and 9s 6d costs, and for refusing to quit 5s and 9s 6d costs, or 14 days in each case in default of payment.

44 31 December 1904

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CHARGE OF BREAKING INTO A PAWNSHOP Walter Ernest Richardson (24), brewer's carter, 7 Thompson's Yard, Upper Rushall Street ; James Thomas Grazher (28), asphalter, 29 Old Birchills ; and James Sharp (34), labourer, 2 Rupert Street, were charged with breaking and entering the pawnshop at 69 Burrows Street, and stealing eight pairs men's boots, three pairs children's boots, one pair lady's boots, three pairs men's trousers, two silk handkerchiefs and one waistcoat, of the total value of £2 18s 0d, the property of Arthur and Horace Causer Fisher, between the 7th and 8th December, otherwise receiving the same knowing them to have been stolen. Thomas Henry Hughes, 50 Drayton Street, Wolverhampton, manager of the pledge shop, 69 Burrowes Street, stated that on Wednesday afternoon the 7th inst he locked up the shop and left everything safe. The goods produced were inside of the shop. Next morning when he visited the shop, he found the place in disorder, and the articles mentioned in the charge were missing. Michael Gavan, labourer of 90 Blue Lane, stated that on Monday December 12th, Richardson came to his house and asked him to buy two pairs of boots and a pair of trousers (produced). He asked 6s for them, but accepted 3s. He also asked him if he would have an overcoat. Witness then said he thought there was something wrong with the goods, and he would not have anything to do with them. **Enoch Astley**, 4 Hollyhedge Lane, a boatman, stated that about a fortnight ago Grazher and Richardson came to his home. Richardson was wearing the overcoat (produced), and they asked him to buy that and a handkerchief as well. He did so, giving 6s 6d for the coat and 9d for the handkerchief. Witness subsequently went to the Navigation Inn, where he found all three prisoners. Prisoners were remanded in custody until the following day, bail being allowed in the case of Sharp only, as he stated that a child of his was to be buried that day.

COMMITTED TO THE SESSIONS Walter Ernest Richardson (24), brewer's carter, 7 Thompson's Yard, Rushall Street ; James Thomas Grazher (28), asphalter, 29 Old Birchills ; and James Sharp (34), labourer, 2 Rupert Street, were charged with breaking and entering the pawnshop

at 69 Burrowes Street, and stealing eight pairs of men's boots, three pairs of children's boots, one pair of lady's boots, three pairs of men's trousers, two silk handkerchiefs and one overcoat, of the total value of £2 18s, the property of Arthur and Horace Causer Fisher, between December 7th and 9th, otherwise receiving the same knowing them to have been stolen. Dora Richardson, in answer to questions put by Chief Inspector Ballance, acknowledged that on Thursday the 8th inst, when at home, prisoners Sharp and Grazher were with her husband in the back, and they had in their possession a large bag containing the stolen clothing. When the two men left the house, her husband took the things upstairs. Richardson : We all sorted them out on the floor. Sharp (to fellow prisoner : Shut up ; I am not speaking to you. James Morton stated that when in a public house, Richardson came to him and told him that if he would give him a shilling and pay for some beer, he could have a good pair of boots which were at his house. He went there and received the boots produced. About ten days after, witness was working in the labour yard at the workhouse with prisoners, when Grazher remarked to him, "Where did you get the boots you have on from?" Witness told him he bought them, whereupon Grazher added, "I think he (Richardson) has stole them, and you might have them took off you". James Grazher stated that on Sunday December 11th, he went into the closet in the yard and saw a bundle lying on the tank. He examined it, and found it to contain a pair of trousers and two pairs of boots. He interviewed his son (prisoner) and Richardson, and he told them he should not have them in the house. Detective Burrell stated that he made inquiries respecting the robbery, and on December 23rd he arrested Richardson in the Bradford Tube Works, where he was wearing the trousers produced and a pair of the stolen boots. He found six keys at prisoner's house, and found one of them to fit exactly one of the doors at Fisher's pawnshop. Richardson's children were wearing two pairs of the stolen boots. The other articles were pawned with three pawnbrokers in the town. He afterwards arrested the other two prisoners at the labour yard, and charged them. Sharp replied, "I say nothing ; I'll have my say when it comes off". The other two prisoners said nothing. When in the cells, Grazher said, "I am to blame for having anything from Richardson. He planned the job, and asked us to go with him". Sharp said, "I knew this job would be found out". Richardson made a written statement whilst in the call, but now said that he should not have done this had not the detective remarked to him that it would go in his favour when he took his trial. The detective denied saying that, but stated that he told prisoner that if he wanted to make a statement he would have to consult the Chief Constable first. Prisoners had nothing to say, and were committed to the Quarter Sessions, bail being allowed in sureties of £10 each.

45 18 February 1905

On Tuesday, the Wolverhampton police arrested **Peter Kelly**, a boatman, and formally charged him with the murder of James Doley on the night of December 21st 1902.

46 4 March 1905

WALSALL POLICE COURT

COAL STEALING **Alfred Genders** (18), boatman of 33 Upper Green Lane, was charged with stealing six cwt of coal, value 4s 6d, the property of George Crockett, 50 New Road, Willenhall, on February 17th. Prosecutor stated that he had a wharf in Green Lane, and he had been missing coal from it for some time. On Saturday he set a watch, and saw three men push an empty boat up to a full one. They then took some of the coal, and moved their boat to a yard in Green Lane. There they commenced to empty it, and witness sent for a policeman. Police-constable Ashby stated that having been told what was occurring he went round to this yard, and on arriving there found two men in the boat emptying out coal and another (the defendant Genders) carrying it into a house. He arrested Genders, but the other two men got away. Defendant, who said he was only carrying the coal for the other man, was fined 10s and costs, or fourteen days.

47 8 April 1905

WALSALL POLICE COURT

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST TWO YOUNG MEN Isaac Astley (24), boatman, 1 Charles Street, and Thomas Wilkes (21), bracket maker of 73 Bloxwich Road, were charged with stealing by violence £1 4s from the person of Charles Henry Thomas of 145 Blue Lane West, on April 2nd. The prosecutor Thomas stated that on Sunday afternoon he and a friend named Carrington were coming from Bloxwich, and turning up Hospital Street went across some waste land, which was a short cut to Northcote Street. On this land, near the old Isolation Hospital, a gang of young men were engaged spinning coins in the air and gambling. He and his friend looked on for a few minutes, but did not play themselves. Suddenly the prisoner Astley, who was one of the gang, "clipped his arms round him", and then, withdrawing one of his arms, dealt him a violent blow, bruising his cheek and blackening his eye. He continued holding him, and then Wilkes, who was another of the gang, got his hand into his right trousers pocket, and tore his trousers in doing so. Wilkes also put his hand into his hip pocket, and took out of that pocket £1 4s. He only left 1s, and there was 7d left in another pocket. After his money was gone, he was knocked down and kicked. Not only the prisoners, but some others of the gang he did not know also took part in kicking him, and as fast as he got up he was knocked down again. Eventually he was able to get up, and Wilkes, handing him back his collar, which had been torn off, said, "If I was you I should get off home now while I was safe". Witness went home with his friend Carrington, and afterwards reported the robbery to the police. He identified the prisoner Astley the same night in the Oak Inn in Green Lane. In addition to a black eye, he had an injury to his chest, so that he had a difficulty in breathing. This was owing to the kicks he received, but the doctor who had examined him said that there were no ribs broken. Cross-examined by Astley, prisoner denied emphatically that he had anything to do with the gaming, or that he started cheating. It was not true that he tossed up five coins, and then put his foot on two of them. He also denied, in answer to questions by Wilkes, that he pointed to a man with a yellow muffler, and said that he was the man who had had his money. Prosecutor also said that he did not lose his money in the fighting. The gang of men did not scramble for the money as it fell out of his pockets. He was sober at the time, and it was not true that he was "mad drunk". George Carrington of Blue Lane corroborated, and said he distinctly saw his friend robbed. When they came away, his friend showed him 1s 7d, and said, "They have taken me down for all I had got except this". The prosecutor Thomas was recalled, and said it was true that after the robbery he "hobbled after" two men in Forge Street who, he thought, were the prisoners, but they proved to be two other men. He thought it must have been a planned job for the men to attack him because he never spoke to them, or took any part in the game, before he was seized by Astley. The gang never touched his friend Carrington, but if Carrington had attempted to interfere he would also have been assaulted. This, prosecutor added, was not the first time people had been set about and robbed by this gang, and he thought an example should be made of the two prisoners. Detective Lloyd proved the arrest of the two men on Sunday night. Astley said, "I will say what I have to say in the dock", and Wilkes made no reply. The prisoners were remanded in custody until Tuesday, in order that they might have an opportunity to get witnesses to attend Court on their behalf.

TUESDAY

THE CHARGE OF ROBBERY WITH VIOLENCE The two young men, Astley and Wilkes, were again brought up on this charge. Mr H H Jackson now appeared for Astley. Mr Loxton (magistrates' clerk) said that the case was adjourned from the previous day in order that the prisoners might obtain witnesses. If Mr Jackson called witnesses, the Chief Constable would also call the Police Surgeon, who had examined Thomas, which would add to the evidence for the prosecution. Mr Jackson said he did not intend to call any witnesses, and would reserve his defence. Prisoners were then committed to the next Assizes for the county, bail being allowed – each prisoner in £50 and two sureties of £50.

48 27 May 1905

BOY DROWNED AT THE PLECK

A BOATMAN'S BRAVERY An inquest was held at the Guildhall on Monday afternoon, by the Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) on the body of Frederick Millington (10), who resided with his parents at 303 Darlaston Road, and who was drowned in the canal at the Pleck on May 19th. Harriet Millington, mother of the deceased, stated that the boy had his dinner at half past three on the Friday afternoon, and then went out with his two younger brothers to play. About four o'clock, her son Josiah told her that Frederick had been drowned in the canal, and the body was soon afterwards brought home. John Francis Hollingshead (10), 309 Darlaston Road, stated that on Friday afternoon he went down to the canal by Boys' brickyard with Frederick Millington and his younger brother. The deceased undressed, and although he could not swim, rushed into the middle of the canal, where he sank. Witness shouted to some boys who were playing football near, and also told a man on a boat that passed a few moments later. The boatman went in the water and got the body out. Alfred Taylor (13), 339 Darlaston Road, stated that he was one of the boys who was playing football near the canal. He heard the last witness shouting that Millington was drowning, and ran down to the canal with other boys. They could not see anything of the deceased, and told a boatman, who at once jumped in with his clothes on, and eventually recovered the body. **James Smith**, boatman, 3 house 4 court, Cross Street, Darlaston, stated that he was with his boat proceeding to Darlaston, and when he was close to Boys' brickworks some boys told him that a lad was drowning in the canal. He threw his coat off and jumped in at the spot pointed out, but it was a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes before he could find the body, which was in about six feet of water. He could of course swim, but the exertion in his clothing greatly exhausted him. Dr J Scott Wilson gave evidence that death was due to drowning. The Coroner, in summing up, said that Smith had shown himself to be a very plucky fellow, and it was evident that he had done everything within human power to save this lad. They heard through the papers of many callous persons who stood aside and let others drown, and he thought Smith ought to be congratulated on his bravery. The jury, in returning a verdict of "Accidental death", asked the Coroner to recommend Smith to the Royal Humane Society for his bravery. The Coroner said he would forward their recommendation to the proper quarter.

49 3 June 1905

WALSALL POLICE COURT

A DISMISSED CHARGE OF ROBBERY FROM THE PERSON **John Wain** (23), boatman of 5 Alma Square, was charged with stealing a watch and chain, value £1, from Francis Causer on the 28th of May. Prosecutor stated that he, with prisoner and two companions, were drinking at the Victory Inn on Sunday, and he (prosecutor) started to walk home across Reed's Wood. Prisoner and his companions brought out some beer, and invited him to join them in drinking it. He did so, and afterwards he went to sleep in the grass. Shortly afterwards, he was awakened by one of the prisoner's companions kicking him in the ribs. He saw prisoner had the watch in his hand, and asked him for it. Prisoner said he would give it back, but did not do so, and he had not yet got it back. Thomas Swindells said that he saw the three men on the grass, and saw the prosecutor awakened up. Prosecutor then became abusive and quarrelsome, but witness saw the watch handed back to Causer. Afterwards Causer said he had not had the watch, and Wain denied that he had it. Detective-sergeant Jones said that when prisoner was arrested he simply said that he took the watch for safety, and gave it back to Causer when they got him up. George Brown, who was with the party, was afterwards called, and confirmed the statement of Swindells. The charge was dismissed.

50 1 July 1905

WEDGES MILLS

STEALING AND RECEIVING At Cannock Police Court on Monday, **John Statham**, a boatman of 16 Little's Lane, Wolverhampton, was charged in custody with stealing coal, the property of Mr Thomas Jones, coal merchant. Julia Dawson (50), Mary Dawson (17), mother and daughter of

Wedge's Mills, were together charged with receiving the coal, knowing it to have been stolen. On June 20th the accused was seen to hand two large pieces of coal to the women when at the lock near Wedge's Mills. When arrested, the boatman said that the women asked him to give them the coal for a small loaf of bread. The boatman's employer gave him a good character. The daughter was discharged as being under the influence of her mother. Statham and Julia Dawson were each fined 10s and costs.

51 1 July 1905

INCORPORATED SEAMEN AND BOATMEN'S FRIEND SOCIETY It is with great regret that we have to report the death of Mr J Eveson, the Society's Walsall Missioner, of the Boatmen's Rest, Birchills, which occurred on Monday last. For some two or three months past, Mr Eveson had been in failing health, and the doctors attending him gave little or no hope of his recovery. Though gradually sinking, he continued almost up to the last to guide and counsel the voluntary workers connected with the Boatmen's Rest. The last service which he was able to attend was the Sunday School Anniversary, conducted by the Rev R W Cusworth (District Superintendent) in the Croft Street Council Schools, on Sunday evening June 4th. Mr Eveson was reported caretaker and visitor at the Boatmen's Rest by the Walsall Committee in March 1901, on the recommendation of their Chairman, the late Mr Alfred Stanley, who had known both Mr and Mrs Eveson for some time previously. It was no easy post to fill. The work was new and arduous, but both Mr and Mrs Eveson soon won their way to the hearts of the boat people and others. In the coffee room, on the towing-path, in the houses of boatmen resident in Walsall, and especially in religious and temperance work among the young. Mr Eveson made his influence felt. There can be no doubt that the success attending the society's work in connection with the Boatmen's Rest is largely due to the hearty and earnest way in which the late Mr Eveson threw himself into the work. The funeral took place yesterday at Rushall Church, and a memorial service will be conducted at the Rest on Sunday evening, July 9th, by the Rev R W Cusworth of Birmingham.

52 15 July 1905

BRAVERY REWARDED At the Walsall Police Court on Wednesday, before the ordinary business of the Court commenced, His Worship the Mayor (Alderman Holden) made a presentation of the Royal Humane Society's vellum certificate to a boatman named **John Smith**, of Cross Street, Darlaston, for a gallant but unfortunately unsuccessful attempt to save a little boy from drowning. The Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) explained that on the afternoon of May 19th a schoolboy named Frederick Millington, aged three years, who had been bathing in the canal, was seen to disappear under water. Smith, who was passing in his boat, at once flung off his coat and plunged into the water, which was 6 ft deep at that part. It was not, however, until after some fifteen or twenty minutes had elapsed that he succeeded in recovering the body from the middle of the canal. He conveyed it to the bank, but unfortunately the boy was dead. Smith was very much exhausted by his efforts. The jury at the inquest commended his conduct, and requested him (Mr Stanley) to make an application to the society for their vellum certificate to be presented to Smith. The Mayor said it gave him great pleasure to hand that certificate to Smith. He expressed his appreciation of the humanity of those who attempted to rescue poor creatures struggling in the water at the risk of their own lives. Smith did not succeed in bringing out the boy alive, but he did his very best, and for that the town of Walsall had to thank him.

53 22 July 1905

WALSALL WOOD

THEFT FROM A COLLIERY At Rushall Police Court on Monday, a Birmingham boatman named **Charles Bennett** (48) was charged with stealing 36 yards of copper cable and three lead accumulator plates, value £1, the property of the Walsall Wood Colliery Company, on July 5th. Mr W C Checkley (Duignans and Elliott), who appeared to prosecute, explained that about 7.30 on the evening in question, a stoker named Albert Wadey of Camden Street, Walsall Wood, was oiling the

pulleys of the colliery frames, when he saw the prisoner take up the cable and the battery plates and go away in the direction of the canal. He called out to a banksman, Edwin Parr, who, with another man named Anslow, followed him and saw him drop the stuff into the water. The inference was that he meant to leave it there until he happened to be passing again in a boat. Evidence was given by the witnesses named corroborating this statement. Bennett's evidence was that he was drunk at the time, and did not know what he was doing. It was prisoner's first offence, and he was ordered to pay 10s and costs, £1 18s 8d in all.

54 7 October 1905

SHORT HEATH

ACCIDENTALLY OVERLAID Mr W Gough Allen (Deputy County Coroner) held an inquiry on Saturday at Short Heath relative to the death of **Alice Potts**, aged three weeks, daughter of a canal boatman named **Henry Potts** of Bentley Lane, Short Heath. The evidence was to the effect that the deceased was taken to bed on the 28th ult, and slept in the same bed as her parents and another child aged two years. The deceased was fed from the breast at 3.30 am, and half an hour later was found dead by its mother. The fingers of the child were clenched and the mouth discoloured. A verdict of "Accidentally overlaid" was returned.

55 18 November 1905

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THEFT OF AN OVERCOAT Thomas Crosby (25), labourer, 4 Court, 2 House, High Street, and **Enoch Astley** (24), boatman, 25 Birchills Street, were charged with stealing an overcoat, value £2, the property of Messrs Buxton and Bonnett. Mr H H Jackson defended Astley. It appeared that the men went to the shop, where Astley purchased an overcoat. After they had left, a coat which Astley had tried on was missed. It was afterwards found at a house where Crosby had left it. Crosby pleaded guilty, and said that Astley had nothing to do with stealing the coat. Astley was discharged, and Crosby was sent to Stafford for 21 days.

56 3 March 1906

WALSALL WOOD

ALLEGED THEFT OF WEARING APPAREL At Rushall Police Court on Monday, **Charles Print** (42), boatman, formerly of Birmingham but recently of no fixed abode, was charged with stealing four petticoats, two shirts, a bodice, a pair of drawers &c, the property of Mrs Westley, wife of the landlord of the Travellers' Rest, on February 22nd. It appeared that on the date in question the clothes were on a line at the back of the premises, and prosecutrix saw prisoner with them on the canal side. When she accused him of the theft, he said the clothes were his property, and as he would not give them up, she called for assistance. Joseph Selvey deposed to seeing prisoner with the clothes, and he took them from him. Police-constable Walley deposed to arresting prisoner. Sergeant Needham said that when prisoner was brought to the station, he made a statement to the effect that he had had a lot of drink or he would not have taken them. Prisoner reserved his defence, and was committed to the Quarter Sessions, a number of previous convictions having been recorded against him.

57 14 April 1906

WALSALL POLICE COURT

A BOATMAN'S CONFESSION **Peter King** (22), boatman of no fixed abode, was charged with breaking and entering the lock up shop of John Adams at 2 Wolverhampton Road, between Saturday and Monday morning, and stealing a 2 lb cake, 12 rock cakes and a tin of pineapple, the total value being 1s 7 1/2d. Prosecutor said that he locked up the shop at 10.50 on Saturday night, leaving all secure. That (Monday) morning he was called up at three o'clock by the police, and on going to the shop found the plate glass window smashed. A half brick was inside the shop. The damage to the window amounted to £2. Police-constable Jones (66) said that at 1.50 that morning,

prisoner went to him on Town-end Bank and confessed to having broken into a shop in Wolverhampton Street and taking the 2 lb cake. Afterwards at the Police Station he was searched, and six smaller cakes and the tin of pineapple were found on him. He admitted that he had eaten half a dozen small cakes. He said that he had done it because he was hungry. King now declined to make any statement, and was committed for trial at the next Quarter Sessions.

58 **2 June 1906**

WEDNESBURY

CRUELTY TO A HORSE At the Police Court yesterday week, **William Turberfield** and **Samson Whitehouse**, boatmen of Toll End, Tipton, were summoned for working a horse whilst in an unfit state on the 12th inst. **George Vale**, foreman boatman, was charged with causing the horse to be worked. Police-constable Watson saw the horse on the towing-path of the Birmingham Canal at Moxley on the date in question. The animal was suffering from a raw wound on the near shoulder. Turberfield and Whitehouse were each fined 11s and Vale £1 9s, including costs.

Frederick Cooke and **George Cooke**, boatmen, were summoned for working a horse in an unfit state on the 10th inst, and **George Appleby**, foreman, also of Aston, was charged with causing the animal to be worked. Police-constable Savery saw the horse on the canal side at Moxley. The animal was in poor condition, and was very lame on the hind legs. The Cookes were each fined 11s including costs, or seven days' imprisonment ; and Appleby was fined £1 21s 6d, or 14 days' imprisonment.

59 **23 June 1906**

WEDNESBURY

EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE AT AN INQUEST On Monday afternoon, Mr Lyon Clark (Deputy Coroner) held an inquest at the Law Courts, West Bromwich, concerning the death of Joseph Henry Roden (51), formerly living in Albert Street, Wednesbury, whose dead body was recovered from the Birmingham Canal at Crankhall Lane, Wednesbury, on Saturday last. The widow, Elizabeth Roden, stated that deceased left home at 6.25 on Friday night last, saying he was going to have a walk around the town to the Liberal Club, of which he was a member. The next she heard of him was about seven o'clock on Saturday morning, that he had been pulled out of the canal. Witness had never heard him threaten to take his life, but he had complained of feeling bad in his head, and in consequence he had been unable to follow his usual employment for the last fortnight. This had not worried deceased, who had been a steady man, and had had no difficulty in keeping the home on. There was no insanity in their family. The body was found by an Oldbury boatman named **Herbert Harris** about 4.30 on Saturday morning near the Crankhall Lane Bridge and close to the path that led up a steep embankment on to the public highway. A gas fittings maker named William Joseph Bostock, of Corporation Street, Wednesbury, said that about nine o'clock on Friday night he was walking along Crankhall Lane in the direction of Wednesbury. He was with two other men named Arthur Silk and Fred Savage, and they were gaming with each other. They noticed a man pass them on the opposite side of the canal, and as he was looking on the ground and it was rather dark at the time, they did not recognise him. However, after the lapse of ten or fifteen minutes, and when they had gone a distance of 300 yards, something came over witness and he looked round, at the same time remarking to his companions that he felt something had happened. His friends laughed at him, and thinking he saw something floating about, he asked them to go back with him. As they neared the spot, witness thought he saw an object floating about, but when they got close to it he missed sight of it. They however found deceased's cap, and took it to the Hill Top Police Station. Witness admitted that neither he nor his colleagues could swim, but asserted that if they had seen the man struggling in the water they would have had a good try to rescue him. He also denied that they heard a splash whilst walking along the canal. It was simply inspiration that made him think there was someone in the water. Corroborative evidence was given by Silk and Savage, who were with the last witness. Both denied that when they went back they saw deceased struggling in the canal. It transpired that , after information was conveyed to the police of the

finding of the cap, they dragged the canal, but without success. Police-constable (.....) said deceased was a respectable man, but had been much addicted to drink, and that had caused congestion and inflammation of the liver. The Deputy Coroner commented upon the extraordinary evidence of the three men, who all told a straightforward story, whether it was a straightforward lie or not. The jury returned an open verdict of "Found drowned".

60 18 August 1906

AN OLD MAN DROWNED IN THE CANAL On Thursday afternoon, Mr T H Stanley (Borough Coroner) conducted an inquiry at the Guildhall into the circumstances attending the death of Thomas Perkins (71) of Pargetter Street, whose dead body was recovered from the canal near the Bell Inn, Birmingham Road, on Wednesday morning.

John Thomas Perkins (son), journeyman bridle cutter, said that deceased was formerly a spring bar filer, but for the last 2 1/2 years he had been unable to follow his employment in consequence of old age and infirmity. His (witness's) mother died about two years ago, and for the last 18 months his father had lived with him, and he had supported him, deceased having no income from any source. Latterly he had enjoyed fairly good health, considering his age ; in fact, he was better than he had been for some twenty years past. On Tuesday witness left home at about 6.20 am to go to work, deceased then being in bed. When he returned home for dinner, he was surprised to find that his father was not there, but he afterwards came to the conclusion that he had gone to a relative's. When he returned to work however, at 2 o'clock, he met deceased at the work gates (Messrs More's), and he told witness that he had had a letter from his daughter who lived at Cleveleys, near Blackpool. If witness had stopped then he would have been locked out, so he told his father he would see him at 6.30, but when he came out at that time, although he waited for some time, he did not see anything of him. Neither was he at home, and witness went to bed at 11.30, leaving the door unfastened, as deceased had occasionally come home late at night. When he got up the next morning, deceased had not appeared, and at 9 o'clock his wife went to the factory to tell him that his father's dead body had been found in the canal. He at once went to the mortuary and saw it there.

The Coroner : Have you any reason to think that he would commit suicide?

Witness : No sir. I don't believe that he did commit suicide for a minute. He had always appeared to be comfortable, although he was at times "a bit down" when he thought of his wife. On several occasions he had said he wished he was with her. Witness had made a careful search of deceased's belongings, but had found nothing whatsoever to throw any light upon the matter.

Fanny Perkins, daughter-in-law, said that when she went out to business on Tuesday morning, she left deceased at breakfast. When she returned to dinner, she was rather surprised to find the house locked up and deceased away, because he had been in the habit of getting the dinner for them. The last time deceased spoke to her was on the previous Saturday, but she was on good terms with him, and it was not unusual for him to go so long without speaking to her. About 8.45 on Wednesday morning, she was told that his body had been found in the canal, and at once went and informed her husband. She had no reason to think he would take his life.

Charles Handley, lock-keeper of the lock house, Birmingham Road, said that he was on duty on Tuesday night, and on the following morning at about twenty minutes to five, he was told by a boatman that he thought there was something in the pound. He went with him, and noticed what appeared to be a man's head just under the water, in the middle of the canal. The water there would not be more than 4 feet deep. Witness at once sent the boatman for the police, and then got the body out with a boat hook. The man was quite dead, and he noticed no injuries with the exception of a slight scratch on the nose, which was bleeding a little. He could not say how long the body had been in the water.

The foreman of the jury remarked that one arm was badly bruised and swollen, and asked witness if he could give any explanation of it, but he said that he could not.

Inspector Ingram deposed, with other officers, to removing the body on an ambulance to the mortuary. In the pockets of deceased, he found 2 1/2d, a Christmas card, a pair of spectacles and two letters from a daughter, but neither of the letters contained anything of importance. In witness's

opinion the bruises on the arm were caused by a passing boat.

Dr Harry (?Shore) said that death was due to drowning, and although there were slight bruises about the face, he should not for an instant associate them with foul play.

The jury returned an open verdict of "Found drowned", the foreman intimating that the jury did not consider that deceased had any intention of committing suicide.

61 15 September 1906

WALSALL POLICE COURT

A BRUTAL ASSAULT James Joyce, 66 Dalkeith Street, was charged with assaulting **James Henry Hodgkinson**, boatman of Monument Lane, Birmingham. Mr Walter Barrow (Birmingham) appeared to prosecute on behalf of the Birmingham Canal Company, and Mr H H Jackson defended. Mr Barrow said defendant was one of the canal loafers who were a nuisance to the company. On the 27th ult, complainant was going along the Walsall locks with his boat, when a number of children got on the boat, and he chased them off. Defendant was near, and said to complainant, "I suppose you would rush me off like that", to which he replied that he had nothing to do with him, on which defendant struck him, rendering him unconscious. Complainant bore out this statement, and added that he was bending down when defendant struck him, the blow blackening both his eyes and rendering him unconscious. His nose was also broken, and he had a bad bruise on his side, evidently from a kick, but he did not say that defendant kicked him. Cross-examined by Mr Jackson, complainant said he had been in the canal that day, but it was not because he was drunk ; he had overreached himself on the lock side. He was not bleeding when he got out of the water. **Thomas Russell**, a boatman at the Walsall locks, said he saw defendant strike complainant in the pit of the stomach, knocking him down. When he asked defendant what he had done it for, he said, "If you come shouting, I'll give you something". Mr Jackson, in defence, said the complainant pushed defendant with the boat hook, and he merely retaliated in self defence. Complainant provoked a quarrel and got the worst of it. Defendant, sworn, said that complainant was drunk, and as he looked as if he was going to fall into the water, he simply got hold of his arm. Complainant bodged at him with a boat hook, and he merely defended himself. Mary Goodyear, aged 13, said that defendant told them complainant had fallen into the canal, and he had blood on his face. He thought he would fall into the canal again, and took hold of him, but complainant "bodged" him with the boat hook. The man staggered about, and nearly fell into the canal. There was not a blow struck on either side. Complainant tumbled down when defendant got hold of him. He was beastly drunk. Mary Ann Joyce, a girl of about 15, told a similar tale, adding "the fellow that was with him was speechless drunk and himself". A fine of £1 and costs, or 14 days in default, was imposed.

62 27 October 1906

WILLENHALL

A HORSE AND A BOAT At the Walsall County Court on Thursday, before his Honour Judge Smith, **Samuel Tift**, a boatman of Green Lane, Walsall, sued William Stephens of Monmore Lane, Willenhall, to recover £21. Plaintiff's case was that he agreed to let defendant have a boat in exchange for an old boat, a horse, and £3 10s. Defendant sent him a horse, but as it was broken winded he refused to have it and sent it back. Subsequently defendant let him have another horse, but after he (plaintiff) had had it for about seven weeks, defendant took it out of his field, and he had not seen it since. Defendant had not given him the £3 10s or the old boat. Defendant contended that the agreement entered into by plaintiff and himself was later done away with by consent of both parties. Judgement was given for the defendant.

63 27 October 1906

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGED THEFT OF METAL **William Stanley** (23), boatman of 5 Day Street, and Samuel Bruce (21), miner of 67 Green Lane, were charged on suspicion of stealing a quantity of engine

brasses found in their possession on Tuesday. Chief Inspector Ballance, in applying for a remand, said that a brickyard at James Bridge, which had not been used for some time, had recently been practically dismantled. The prisoners asserted that they found the metal near the brickyard, and the police wished to make further inquiries. Prisoners were remanded in custody for a week.

64 3 November 1906

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGED THEFT OF ENGINE BRASSES **William Stanley** (23), boatman of 5 Day Street, and **Samuel Bruce** (21), miner of 67 Green Lane, were charged on remand with stealing 18 engine brasses, value £9, the property of the Cyclops Firebrick Co, between October 18th and 22nd. On the application of the Chief Constable, prisoners were further remanded till Friday.

65 8 December 1906

DARLASTON

STEALING PIG IRON At Wednesbury Police Court on Tuesday, **Charles Henry Wilkins**, boatman, Wellington Street, Winson Green, and **John William Coggins**, boatman, King Edward Street, Springhill, both of Birmingham, were charged with stealing a quantity of pig iron, value about £2, the property of Messrs Tolley, Sons and Bostock of The Green Ironworks, Darlaston, on the 29th ult. It was alleged that about 11.30 on the night of the date named, Benjamin Thomas, employed at prosecutors' works, was passing along the towing-path of the Birmingham Canal, when he saw the two prisoners. Coggins was on a stack of pig iron in the works, and was throwing the iron to the prisoner Wilkes, who was standing in a boat. The man Thomas communicated with the night manager, Mr Firkin, who caught the prisoners and detained them, afterwards sending for the police. Prisoners were arrested by Inspector Williams and Police-constable Baker. In reply to the charge, the prisoner Wilkes said, "I don't know how it is, I always get into these scrapes when I am in drink. You have got a snip this time". Coggins said he was very sorry for what he had done. He added, "This is doing a turn over". The prisoner Wilkes was under the influence of drink at the time. Both prisoners pleaded guilty, and were each sentenced to three months' imprisonment, with hard labour.

66 2 February 1907

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CASE ADJOURNED **Harry Bullingham** (30), 108 Dalkeith Street, **Charles Lowe** (22), caster, Green Lane, and **Henry Benton** (36), boatman, Back 16 Portland Street, were charged with stealing 203 lbs of brass, value £10 3s, the property of B Bunch and Sons, the Staffordshire Ironworks, between the 26th and 27th January. The Chief Constable said there had been several of these robberies lately, and he applied for a week's remand. The application was granted.

67 9 February 1907

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGATIONS OF STEALING AND RECEIVING **Henry Benton** (36), boatman of back of 16 Portland Street ; **Harry Bullingham** (30), tube worker, Dalkeith Street ; and **Charles Lowe** (22), caster of Green Lane, were charged on remand with stealing 203 lbs of brass, value £10 3s, the property of Messrs B Bunch & Sons, Staffordshire Ironworks, Birchills, between 4 pm on January 26th and 6 am on the 27th ; otherwise with receiving the same knowing it to have been stolen. **Samuel and Maria Mills** of 76 Bridge Road, Tipton, were summoned for receiving the metal with the knowledge that it was stolen. **Mr C H Darby** (West Bromwich), who appeared for Mills and his wife, said that Samuel Mills was ill in bed, and he had a doctor's certificate stating that he was unfit to attend. He was prepared to go on with the case, but his instructions were that Mills was at home in bed at the time the metal was bought. The Chief Constable : Unfortunately he was downstairs, and was seen to pay the money over. **Mr Russell** said that the certificate did not state what Mills was suffering from. **Mr Darby** said he had just been remarking that doctors did not state on

certificates sent to the Court what a man was suffering from, but he thought they ought to do so. Maria Mills said the doctor told her that her husband had had a narrow escape of typhoid fever. He had not been out of the house for a fortnight. The Chief Constable : Well, I will ask for a further remand for a week. Asked if they had any objection to this, prisoners expressed a desire for the case to be proceeded with at once. Charles Robbins, employed by Messrs Bunch, was then called, and deposed that he saw the metal, which was worth 1s a pound, safe in a cupboard at the works between three and four o'clock on January 26th. The following morning, he found that the cupboard had been opened and the metal taken. The prisoner Lowe said he was quite innocent of this charge, and he could call the other prisoners to prove it. If the case were further adjourned, he should ask for bail. The Bench adjourned the case for a week, and remanded the prisoners in custody.

68 16 February 1907

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGED EXTENSIVE THEFT OF BRASS **Henry Benton** (36), boatman, back of 16 Portland Street ; **Harry Bullingham** (30), tube worker, 108 Dalkeith Street ; and **Charles Lowe** (22), caster, Green Lane, were charged with stealing 203 lbs of brass, value £10 3s, the property of Benjamin Bunch and Sons, between 4 pm on the 26th ult and 6 am on the 27th ult. **Samuel Mills** and his wife (**Maria Mills**), 76 Bridge Road, Tipton, were summoned for receiving the brass knowing it to have been stolen. Mr C H Darby (West Bromwich) was for the defence, and Mr H H Jackson watched the case on behalf of James Thomas McGill. The evidence showed that Bullingham sold the metal to Mrs Mills for 6d a lb. Prisoners were committed to trial at the next Quarter Sessions, bail being allowed – a personal surety of £25 and another surety of a similar amount in each case. The charge against Mr and Mrs Mills was dismissed.

69 15 June 1907

WOMAN FOUND DROWNED On Tuesday afternoon the Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) held an inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of Sarah Ellen Rutter (38) of 65 Camden Street, whose body was found in the canal near the Five Ways Bridge on Friday the 7th inst. **William Henry Rutter**, saddle tree rivetter, husband of deceased, gave evidence of identification, and said his wife was a healthy woman. On the previous Friday morning he went to work at 8.30, when his wife was apparently in her usual health and spirits. He returned about eight o'clock in the evening, and found that his wife had gone out. He was informed by his wife's mother that she had left home at 7.30 pm to visit a particular friend of hers named Mrs Stringer, who was very ill. When he found his wife did not return home, he went to Mrs Stringer's, where he arrived at five or ten minutes to eleven. He was told that she had been there during the evening, but left at about 8 pm. He then went down to her sister's home in Navigation Street, and on finding that she had not been there, he returned home. She was still away, and he was proceeding towards Mrs Stringer's again when he was informed by a police officer that a woman's body had been taken from the canal. The following morning he identified it as that of his wife. Every time she had been to Mrs Stringer's she had been very distressed on her return, on one occasion weeping bitterly. The only reason he could give for her being in the direction of the canal was that she might have called on somebody named Mrs Poole, whom she knew, and who lived in a lane which led up to the canal. Sergeant Haycock presented the evidence of deceased's mother, who was old and too infirm to attend, which was to the effect that she had resided with her daughter about eleven years. She was a healthy woman, but very recently she seemed somewhat depressed and quiet. She and her husband had lived on very good terms together, and witness could give no reason for such a thing taking place. **Eliza Hughes**, 107 West Bromwich Street, said she had known deceased for five years, and during that time had seen her a great deal in consequence of her visiting her sister-in-law, Mrs Stringer. She saw her there on the previous Friday, and remarked to her that she looked depressed, and she replied that her head was bad. She then told her that she had got a surprise for Mrs Stringer, having brought her a photo of her children and their grandmother. She then went upstairs to Mrs Stringer, and came down again at eight o'clock, and after a little conversation with witness she went

out. She always seemed a happy woman, and was very fond of her children. **John Mellors**, boatman, Shadwell Street, Birmingham, said that at 8.30 on Friday night he was going along the Birmingham Canal in the direction of Birmingham near the Five Ways Bridge, when he noticed a small wicker basket in the centre of the towing-path. His suspicions were aroused that something might be wrong, and on looking into the canal he noticed a black object, but could not tell whether it was a man's jacket or a woman's dress. He however obtained a boat hook, and on getting the object to the side, noticed it was a woman's body fully dressed. With assistance he got the body from the water, and communicated with the police. At the place he found the body, the water was 6 feet deep. Police-constable Wright gave evidence of removing the body to the mortuary. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

70 5 October 1907

BLOXWICH

BOATMAN'S SUDDEN DEATH AT GOSCOTE Yesterday (Friday) afternoon, Mr T H Stanley (borough coroner) held an inquiry at the Bloxwich Police Station into the circumstances attending the death of **William Hall** (39), canal boatman, 2 Cox's Yard, Lower Bradley, near Bilston. **Sarah Jane Hall** (widow) gave evidence of identification, and said that when deceased rose on Tuesday morning he complained of a cold. She gave him some bread, pig's pudding and liver and bacon. She did not see him again alive. She also had some of the pig's pudding and liver and bacon, and felt no ill effects from it. **Charles Higginson**, deceased's mate, said that when he first saw deceased just after 5 o'clock on Tuesday morning, he complained that he had had to sit down several times on the road to work, but then felt better. They afterwards went to the Cannock Chase Colliery to fetch a loaded boat, and put up for the night at Goscote on the way back. They went to sleep on the boat, but just before 11 o'clock deceased woke him, and complained of feeling very ill with pains in the stomach. He got him on to the bank, and he afterwards remarked, "Charlie, I think I shall die. I shan't live another five minutes". He staggered, and would have fallen, but he and another man laid him on the ground. Witness fetched some brandy from the Barley Mow, but deceased was unable to take any of it. He then went for Dr Martin, but when he returned Hall was dead. Stephen Jones said that, after Higginson had gone for the doctor, he and another man took Hall into the boatmen's hovel, where he died soon afterwards. Dr Martin said that the bowels were twisted, probably owing to flatulency ; having a diseased heart, the shock caused syncope, from which he died. A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

71 29 February 1908

SUDDEN DEATH FOLLOWS INFLUENZA Yesterday (Friday) afternoon, the Borough Coroner held an inquest at the Guildhall concerning the death of **Emma Fletcher** (65), the wife of a canal boatman, living at 36 Navigation Street. She was seized with influenza on Sunday, and had been more or less confined to her bed since then. She died on Thursday night. Dr H Shore said that the deceased had suffered from influenza and bronchitis, the immediate cause of death being syncope. A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

72 7 March 1908

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THEFT FROM CANAL BOATS **Thomas Wynn**, 192 St Andrews Road, Birmingham ; Joseph Till, 1 Court, Adams Street ; Rose Hadley (17), 1 Court, Blue Lane ; and Ellen Griffin (16), 8 Francis Street, were charged with stealing 1 1/2 cwt of coal, value 1s 6d, the property of Messrs T Boston and Sons, Birmingham, on February 13th. Mr Norris Foster prosecuted on behalf of the company, and Mr J F Addison appeared for Wynn. Evidence was given to the effect that at 9 pm on the date named, Police-constable Allen was on the canal side at the Birchills, when he met Till with a bag of coal in his possession, and when interrogated he said it had been given him by the boatman (meaning Wynn). A little later. Police-constable Allen and Detective Lloyd met Hadley and Griffin each carrying a bag of coal across the lock in close proximity to prosecutors' boat. They afterwards

boarded the boat, and saw two other bags of coal ready to be brought away. Wynn said he had no one on the boat, but in the cabin the officers found three other girls hiding under sacking. Wynn was in charge of the boat, and was assisting by "looking on". Detective Lloyd and Police-constable Allen confirmed the learned counsel's statement. Mr Addison contended, on behalf of Wynn, that the evidence was not sufficient to convict. So far from aiding and abetting, he was anxious to assist the police in getting rid of the others, when, to his astonishment, the handcuffs were put on his own wrists. Wynn said he left the boat for a few minutes, and when he returned to the cabin he found the girls there. He asked them to go, but they only laughed at him. Till said some other boatman gave him the coal. Till, who had many previous convictions, was sentenced to three months' hard labour, Wynn to six weeks, and the girls were remanded with a view to being sent to a home.

73 25 April 1908

WALSALL POLICE COURT

BEGGING **Henry Kibble** (28), boatman, no fixed abode, was charged with begging for alms in Birmingham Road on April 22nd. Police-constable Lewis deposed to seeing prisoner go from house to house, and in his pockets he found a quantity of bread. Sentenced to seven days' hard labour.

74 9 May 1908

WALSALL POLICE COURT

COAL STEALING FROM THE CANAL **Henry Benton** (38), boatman, 3 Court, 3 house, Wolverhampton Street, was charged on a warrant after summons with stealing 2 cwt of coal, the property of the Birmingham Canal Navigation Company, on April 11th. Police-constable Woolley (60) said that while on duty in Dalkeith Street on the evening of the date named, he saw prisoner getting coal out of the canal with a rake. As soon as prisoner saw him he ran away, but witness caught him, and prisoner then said he was trying to get a windlass from the canal. Detective Burrell gave evidence of arrest, and prisoner, who had a number of previous convictions, was sentenced to one month's hard labour.

75 6 June 1908

FOUND IN THE CANAL The dead body of a man was found yesterday afternoon in the canal at Gillity Greaves. It was recovered from the water by **Isaac Barnes**, a Birmingham boatman. The body, which was removed to the mortuary by Police-sergeant Nunn and Police-constable Thomas, has since been identified as that of a saddler named Harris, aged 50, of 20 Cobden Street. It appears that he left home as usual yesterday morning to look for work, and it is thought that in despair at his non success he committed suicide.

76 18 July 1908

ESSINGTON

THROWING COAL INTO THE CANAL At Willenhall Police Court on Monday, **John Hughes**, boatman of Park Road, Hockley, Birmingham, was charged with throwing coal into the Birmingham Canal on the 7th inst. Mr W Barrows (Birmingham), who appeared for the canal company, said the case was an unusual one, but was of that class they wished they could get hold of more frequently. On the date mentioned, Police-constable Hadley of Newtown was in plain clothes underneath the Lang Lane canal bridge, Essington, and for a distance of 260 yards saw the defendant throwing lumps of coal, weighing from 20 lbs to 1/2 cwt, into the water from a boat he was in charge of, travelling from the Great Wyrley Colliery. The defendant said he was only throwing the coal on to the front of the boat to make it easier to unload, and one or two pieces went overboard. Defendant was ordered to pay £1 8s 6d, the amount of the costs, and the solicitor's fee.

77 5 September 1908

LEACROFT

STEALING COAL FROM A BOAT At the Cannock Police Court on Monday, an elderly man

named **George Higgins**, a boatman residing at 23 Liverpool Street, Birmingham, was charged with stealing a quantity of coal, the property of the Cannock and Leacroft Colliery Company, on August 15th. Mr F Cooper (of the firm of Addison and Cooper, Walsall) appeared to prosecute on behalf of the company. He stated that in consequence of the coal that was missed, the canal wharf was watched. The defendant, who was in charge of a boat laden with slack, went and took a quantity of lump coal from another boat and put it on his own. The company did not wish to press the case, but simply to put a stop to pilfering. Evidence was called to prove that the coal taken was worth 1s 9d, and weighed over 3 cwt. Mr Stavely Hill said the defendant had made this case worse by giving a wrong name and address. The fine and costs amounted to £1 13s.

78 5 September 1908

DEEPFIELDS BOATMAN'S DEATH An inquest was held at the Hospital on Monday afternoon, before Mr T H Stanley (borough coroner) touching the death of **John Court** (37), a boatman of Anchor Road, Deepfields, Bilston. It appeared that Court was engaged in taking an empty boat from Deepfields to be loaded with coal at the Conduit Colliery, Brownhills, when he was taken ill en route at Pelsall. A doctor was fetched, and he advised his removal to the Walsall hospital. The man expired some few hours after admission. Medical evidence showed that the cause of death was haemorrhage in the right lateral ventricle of the brain. A verdict was returned in accordance with the medical evidence.

79 14 November 1908

WALK MILLS

CRUELTY TO A HORSE At Cannock Police Court on Monday, **Joseph Hodges**, an elderly boatman of Worcester, was charged with cruelty to a horse at Walk Mills, Bridgtown. Evidence was given showing that the defendant was seen in charge of a roan mare on the canal side. The animal was being held up by two men, as it was paralysed and had totally lost the use of its hindquarters. Mr Henry Cartwright, veterinary surgeon, Wolverhampton, said the animal had suffered from partial curvature of the spine for some time. A fine of 5s and costs was imposed.

80 13 February 1909

THE LIFE OF THE CANAL BOATMAN The Lord Mayor of Birmingham (Alderman G H Kenrick) presided at the forty sixth annual meeting of the Midland District of the Mission to Canal Boatmen. This was held at the Boatmen's Hall, Bridge Street, Birmingham, and was prefaced by a reception and tea. Supporting the Lord Mayor were the Rev R W Cusworth, Councillor Rudland, Messrs W Barrow and Herbert A Pepper (hon district secretary). Apologies were read from Messrs Joel Cadbury (chairman of committee), Councillor A Gameson and Messrs J A Leckie and F J Overton (Walsall). Mr Pepper presented the annual report, which summarised the work conducted in the main on behalf of the canal boatmen in Birmingham, Hednesford and Walsall. During the summer and autumn, 38 open air services have been conducted on the boats at such centres as the Shropshire Union and the Bar Lock, while throughout the year there had been Divine worship at the Mission Hall. The society publish monthly "*The Waterman*", a magazine which for twenty three years had been distributed gratuitously amongst boatmen and their families trading on the canals of the Birmingham district. In the whole district there had during the year been 882 meetings held in connection with the society, and 16,754 persons, chiefly boatmen, had visited the coffee rooms. The expenditure had exceeded the income by £39.

The work at the Boatmen's Rest, Walsall, continues to give the local committee great satisfaction. The voluntary workers who assist our lay agent (Mr G Sanbrook) are thoroughly united, and spare no efforts to make the mission successful. At the Sunday evening services, conducted by Walsall and Birmingham friends, the mission room has frequently been filled by boatmen and others. The PSA, when compared with that of the previous years, shows an increased attendance. The 7th anniversary of the opening of the Rest on Sunday and Monday March 8th and 9th, and the harvest thanksgiving services on Sunday and Monday October 9th and 10th were alike very successful. At

the Sunday School there has been an average morning attendance of 50, and afternoon of 68, showing a slight decrease on the previous year. The Sunday School anniversary services held in the Croft Street Council Schools were largely attended, though the collections were below those of former years. Of the week night meetings, mention must be made of the Mother's meeting, which has been restarted, with Mrs Marton as president. The Band of Hope still holds the premier position among the week night meetings in point of attendance. The members took part in the Walsall Band of Hope Demonstration in June last, and numbered 120. Open air services on the canal side, and cottage meetings in the homes of boatmen, have also been held. The work of home and canal visitations has been diligently attended by Mr G Sandbrook. The visitors to the coffee room have not been so numerous as in 1907, owing to the falling off in canal traffic but unquestionably the room supplies a felt want, and is greatly appreciated by boatmen and others. The committee have recently placed in the room an excellent bagatelle table at a cost of £7 7s 0d, and already this is proving an attraction. Some of the friends connected with the Rest have themselves painted and decorated the Mission Room and coffee room, thus saving the funds of the society and adding greatly to the attractiveness of the Rest. We thank them for their noble and self sacrificing effort. The annual boat trip took place on August Bank Holiday, when about 120 persons in two boats went to Wolverhampton and back. The friends worked so earnestly that a profit of over £3 was paid to the Society's funds. Your committee are greatly indebted to the honorary collectors at Walsall, both ladies and gentlemen, for their kindness in collecting the sum of £44 10s 3d in aid of the Society's work.

The Lord Mayor, proposing the adoption of the report, said he had always had a certain sympathy with the boatman's life. One felt that he was being rather left behind in the race. Things changed very little on the canals. He had in his possession a delightful sketch by David Cox, nearly 100 years old. It represented the side of the bridge under Broad Street, and the canal as depicted there did not seem to be very different from the canal as it existed today. Certainly the surroundings were different. Broad Street had been transmogrified, but not so the canal. The canal boatman himself seemed to belong to a past age. He still wore the magnificent scarlet waistcoat, the womenfolk wore the distinctive dress of days past ; even the horses seemed to belong to a bygone day – (laughter) – and he was not sure that the water was not the original. (Renewed laughter). It was extraordinary how that sleepiness seemed to persist over the canals, and one could not help feeling the fate of the boatmen was rather sad. He went on exactly as did his forefathers, whilst everything else was improving, whilst invention was revolutionising other businesses and industries, and social conditions became better and better. Others got more money than in days past, and greater opportunities for enjoyment. Meantime the boatman seemed to be left in the lurch, and he was glad to think there was such a society as theirs working to improve and brighten his life. Especially was he pleased to find that the unfortunate and elusive children of the boatmen were included in their sphere of enthusiastic services. They provided one of the greatest difficulties with which the Education Committee had to deal. The boatman's child was, in these days of perfect organisation, the only one who could and did snap his fingers at the Education Authorities. The child might for the time think he was living an ideal existence because he had no school to go to, and he was always in the fresh air, yet he grew up at a great disadvantage in comparison with all other children in that his mental equipment was sadly deficient. A society such as theirs, touching the boatman's life in so many places, was badly needed in Birmingham. It was a great canal centre and would, he believed, remain so. Some of them hoped that when the labours of the Canal Commission were concluded, Birmingham might have a still greater canal system, and that this might once more become a most important factor in the industrial and commercial life of the community. He recognised that the canal was one of the great features of English life, and a most useful aid to commerce of all kinds. That was not the general opinion today, and many seemed to be contented that canals should be gradually allowed to go out of existence. Whatever the future of the canal, however lamentable the condition of the boatmen, he trusted the society would continue their good work on their behalf, and in this he felt sure they would have the hearty support of Birmingham citizens. (Applause). Mr Walter Barrow, in seconding the adoption of the report, spoke of the

prospect of a ship canal being constructed between Birmingham and Worcester, and proceeded to a piquant sketch of the boatman's life. The report was adopted, and brief addresses on various phases of the society's work were given by the Rev R W Cusworth and Mr H Bratt.

Councillor Rodland proposed a vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor for presiding, which was seconded by Mr Herbert A Pepper, and unanimously passed.

81 6 March 1909

WHEATON ASTON

STEALING MONEY At Cannock Police Court on Monday, a young man named **Samuel Walter**, a canal boatman, no fixed abode, was charged with stealing £2 10s, the money of **William Withers**, also a boatman, at Wheaton Aston on February 14th. Complainant stated that when he was in bed in the boat at Wheaton Aston, he heard the prisoner rummaging about among his clothes. He asked him what he was doing, and he said he was only looking for matches. Later witness missed £2 10s. Two or three days afterwards witness met the prisoner, and told him he would forgive him if he would return the £2, but the prisoner only offered him 1 1/2d. Police-constable Rudd (Wheaton Aston) spoke to arresting the prisoner at Birmingham. When charged, he replied, "They have been saying it was £4". Prisoner was committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions, but afterwards, on pleading guilty, he was bound over to be of good behaviour for three months.

82 26 June 1909

WALSALL TANNER'S SUICIDE Yesterday afternoon the Borough Coroner (Mr T H Stanley) held an inquiry at the Guildhall into the circumstances attending the death of James Trump (55), tanner, of Upper Forster Street, whose body was found in the canal on Tuesday evening.

Selina Trump (widow) gave evidence of identification, and said that three months ago something came to her husband's left foot, which prevented his walking properly. At first he was treated locally, but about a fortnight ago he went to the Birmingham General Hospital, and had been attending since as an out patient. During the last month he had been unable to work, and in consequence he had appeared at times to be very worried and depressed. About a quarter to eight on Tuesday morning, he left home with the expressed intention of catching the 8.12 train to Birmingham to go to the hospital. She gave him 2s 3d for his expenses, intending that he should ride there and back. He appeared to be all right except that his foot pained him, and there was nothing in his manner to lead her to suspect he intended to commit suicide. They had always been on good terms. Questioned by the Coroner, witness said that her eldest son, a soldier, came back from India at Christmas. He was only a boy when he went, and had been absent about eight years.

William Burbidge, lock-keeper, Birmingham Road, stated that about 6.40 on Tuesday evening he saw the body of a man, fully dressed, in the water under the Birmingham Road bridge. He drew the body to the side, and he and a boatman afterwards tried artificial respiration for about ten minutes, but without avail. About forty minutes before he found the body, he saw deceased walking along the towing-path in the direction of Longwood, and noticed that he appeared to have a great struggle to get along.

The Foreman : Have you an idea that he fell in? Witness : Yes, my idea is that the wind blew him in. Witness added that it was very dangerous for a man who experienced such difficulties in getting along to walk there.

A letter, written in blacklead, was handed by the Coroner to the jury, and afterwards to the Press. He said he did not propose to read it, and he would leave it to the discretion of the reporters as to whether they published it or not. The letter contained serious allegations, and at the suggestion of the Foreman, the Coroner asked the widow whether there was any truth in the statement contained therein.

Mrs Trump : No truth whatever. I don't know what possessed him to do that. He had no reason for it whatever.

The Foreman : Had you any reason to think he was not in his right mind when he left home?

Witness : No; he seemed quite rational.

Police-sergeant Sheppard stated that on the body he found a large bottle of lotion and various other things, including a pipe, pouch and two pocket knives. Inside his shirt was a small ready reckoner, containing a hospital note dated June 22nd (which showed that he had been to Birmingham that morning) and the letter.

The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity", and added a rider expressing the opinion that this was one of those sad cases in which the Press might suppress the letter.

83 2 October 1909

WALSALL POLICE COURT

THEFT OF PIG IRON **Joseph Morton** (16), boatman, 258 Green Lane, was charged with stealing 64 lbs of pig iron, value 1s 6d, the property of John Russell and Co, Cyclops Ironworks, on September 30th. Police-sergeant Atcherley said that on Thursday afternoon he saw prisoner going along Pleck Road with a number of other youths. They were coming from the Cyclops Ironworks tip, and all were carrying bags. The bag which Morton had appeared to contain something heavy. Witness asked him what he (prisoner) had in it, and he replied, "Only some little "pigs" I found at the Cyclops Ironworks tip". Witness examined the bag, and found it contained the pig iron (produced). When charged at the Police Station, prisoner replied, "Yes". Prisoner pleaded guilty, and said that he was out of work and wanted to get a living. Prisoner was dealt with under the Probation Act, and was put under the supervision of Mr Davis for three months.

84 5 March 1910

DEATH OF THE REV R W CUSWORTH

FRIEND OF MIDLAND BOATMEN We regret to announce the death of the Rev Richard William Cusworth, which occurred on the 24th ult at his residence, Kelvedon Lodge, Ryland Road, Edgbaston. Mr Cusworth, who was in his sixty second year, and had been in ill health for a considerable time, will be greatly missed by many people, but particularly by the boatmen of the Midlands, in whom he had a very special interest. Born at Portsmouth in 1848, he entered the Wesleyan Methodist ministry as a foreign missionary in 1872, and was sent to India, where he laboured for about three years. He soon resigned his post however and, returning to England, his interest was aroused in the conditions under which the boatmen of the Midlands laboured. Induced to become a member of the Incorporated Seamen and Boatmen's Friend Society, he took up his residence in Birmingham almost immediately, and began the work with which he remained associated until the end of his life.

When Mr Cusworth first appeared in the vicinity of the Midland canals as the boatmen's first missionary, the only institution in existence at which meetings could be held was a somewhat cheerless building known as the "Boatmen's Bethel", situated on the Worcester wharf. But cheerless as it was it could not be done without, and the missionary was placed in an embarrassing position when the Midland Railway Company required the land for the extension of their premises. Miss Ryland, however, came to his assistance, and as a result of her generosity a new hall was erected on the Worcester wharf at a cost of £2,000. Only six years elapsed before the same difficulty reappeared owing to the Corporation requiring the site on which the hall stood for the purpose of making Holliday Street, but on this occasion land was given by Miss Ryland at the corner of Bridge Street and Holliday Street, and the present building, which was opened in 1885, was erected.

Under Mr Cusworth's vigorous leadership, the local branch of the Seamen and Boatmen's Friend Society rapidly became a great force amongst the boatmen. New ideals were brought into their lives, a watchful care was exercised in regard to the children before legislation provided for their registration, and for over twenty years a lay school was held to which the youngsters were admitted free, and in many other directions much was done to ameliorate the conditions of canal life. Naturally, after something like thirty five years' work amongst them, the missionary, who was always patient and temperate, became to be regarded by the boatmen and their families as their special friend, and his loss will be keenly felt, particularly in the summer months, when it was his custom

to hold open air meetings, using the top of a cabin as his pulpit.

Daily Post

To the above succinct review of Mr Cusworth's assiduous and successful career at Birmingham, it should be added that his labours were by no means confined to the Midland metropolis. In 1883 it was resolved by the Central Committee to extend the work, and after mature consideration, Hednesford near Cannock was fixed upon as a suitable place for the erection of a Mission Hall, with coffee and reading rooms. It was opened in 1885. Mr Cusworth had much to do with the successful issue of this undertaking, so that he had completed 25 years of thoroughly efficient mission work amongst canal boatmen in that vicinity. A further development took place in 1900, when a new Boatmen's Rest was built on the canal side at the top lock at Birchills, near Walsall. It was opened in March 1901, and though partly managed by a local committee, Mr Cusworth, as superintendent of the whole Midland district, has always co-operated for the arrangement of the services and meetings held there, and conducted many of them personally. The mission has a monthly magazine of its own, called *The Waterman*, which was started in January 1882 with Mr Cusworth as editor. It has a circulation of about 5,000 copies a month. It has lately been enlarged, and is eagerly read by boatmen and by subscribers to the society. Mr Cusworth has also been Recording Secretary to the parent society, a post which added considerably to his labours, but he was always happiest when working the hardest. The society claims to be interdenominational, so that Mr Cusworth had no difficulty in securing helpers from various sects of Christian workers, and he has obtained pecuniary help from a still wider field of sympathisers with his good work. He was a man universally esteemed, both for his Christian character and his work's sake. Beaming with geniality and naturally optimistic, he ever looked on the cheerful and hopeful side, thoroughly believing that there was some good in the worst of men and women. This indeed was the secret of his success amongst the much neglected people who spend their lives afloat on our canals. Kindness and sympathy were written on his face, but he was at the same time courageous, energetic, self sacrificing and a good organiser – in fact, eminently fitted for his particular sphere of work. His loss will be sorely felt by the whole society. He generally enjoyed fairly robust health, but two years ago was struck down by a serious illness, which necessitated a severe operation for appendicitis. He appeared to recover, and resumed his labours, but early in the winter gastric trouble set in, followed by pneumonia, which proved fatal. He leaves a widow, two sons and four daughters to mourn his loss.

85 5 March 1910

YOUNG WOMAN FOUND DROWNED

AN OPEN VERDICT RETURNED The newly appointed Borough Coroner (Mr J F Addison) conducted an inquiry at the Guildhall yesterday afternoon, concerning the death of Louisa Mason (18), 49 Margaret Street, whose body was recovered from the canal near Longwood on Wednesday afternoon. The father, James Mason, stated that his daughter had been employed as a warehouse girl at Messrs Guests' for four years, and he had heard his wife say that the deceased complained of being unwell. On Monday and Tuesday of last week she did not go to work, but went the following two days. She was locked out on Friday morning, and later in the day left her home and did not return. He was not aware that she had not been at work that day until he was told the same night, and then he did not know her whereabouts. He was informed on Wednesday afternoon that her body had been taken from the canal. Deceased was a good daughter, and he could not suggest any reason for her leaving home. **William King**, a lock-keeper residing at Five Ways Bridge, Birmingham Road, said that on Wednesday he went to close No 5 lock, but found that it would not shut properly. He procured a lock rake, and eventually recovered the body of the deceased from the canal with assistance. At the spot from which the body was recovered, the water was six to seven feet deep when the lock was empty, and when full, fourteen feet. It was empty at the time. Alice Green (16), Dora Street, said she had been employed at Messrs Guests' in the warehouse, and she and the deceased had been great friends. On Thursday night week, she accompanied deceased home when they left work, and on parting with her at 9.30 deceased seemed quite cheerful and jolly.

Next day deceased did not come to work, and at night witness went and told her parents. She knew that deceased had never kept company with any young man, and she had complained to witness of being unwell. She could not suggest any reason why the girl should leave her home. Sergeant Shepard (Coroner's Officer) said that the disappearance was reported to the police on Saturday morning, and the same morning a passing boatman found a hat floating on the canal at Longwood. In consequence of this, the canal was dragged on Monday by the police, without any result. On Wednesday afternoon the lock-keeper, King, recovered the body. He had made enquiries regarding the girl, but no one could form any reason why the girl left home. The manager at Messrs Guests' had testified as to what an industrious and willing girl deceased was – one of the best in the factory. Dr Harry Shore spoke to making a *post mortem* examination. In his opinion, death was due to asphyxia from drowning. There was nothing from a moral point of view that would suggest a reason for deceased leaving her home. The Coroner remarked that there was an entire absence of evidence as to how deceased came by her death, and the jury returned an open verdict. The Coroner and jurymen expressed their deep sympathy with the parents in the loss they had sustained.

86 9 April 1910

STUBBERS GREEN

BOATMAN CHARGED WITH THEFT OF COAL At Rushall Police Court on Monday, **Thomas Sands** (37), 105 Rabone Lane, Smethwick, was charged with stealing a lump of coal, the property of the Birmingham Canal Company, on the 4th inst. Police-constable Ashley said that on the 3rd inst he saw five lumps of coal on the towing-path of the Birmingham Canal near Barnfield Bridge, Stubbers Green, and the 4th inst he was concealed near the hedge, when he saw prisoner in charge of a boat coming from the direction of Daw End. He picked up one of the lumps of coal, but dropped it when he saw witness and ran towards the horse. Witness spoke to him, and prisoner replied, "I only wanted it to put on the fire". Witness conveyed prisoner to Rushall Police Station where, when charged, he replied, "I only picked it up and threw it down again on the towing-path". Prisoner said that he had no intention of stealing the coal, and he picked it up thinking that it would do for his fire, and when he found that it was such rubbish he threw it down again. He worked for the Hamstead Official Coal Company, and it was the first time he had been summoned. Evidence was given by a man named Martin, who said that prisoner had no authority to take that or any coal, and there was so much coal stealing going on that the Canal Company had found it necessary to put up notices warning people, and he showed a specimen of these warnings to the Bench. There was very often a collusion between boatmen and outsiders. Prisoner was fined 1s and 18s costs.

87 9 April 1910

MISSING WALSALL SERVANT FOUND IN CANAL AT NORTON Mr Gerald C Lewis (Coroner) held an inquest at the Turf Tavern, Norton Canes, on Thursday morning, touching the death of Alice Sanders (18), domestic servant of Conduit Row, Norton Canes, whose body was recovered from the canal at Norton Canes on Tuesday morning. The girl had been in service at the residence of Mrs Evans, Tower House, Sutton Road, Walsall, and had been missing since Friday. Richard Sanders, father of the deceased, said he last saw the girl alive on the 27th ultimo, when she paid a short visit home. She was not engaged, and he did not know that she had a young man. Emma Sanders, sister of the deceased, said she was employed with her at Tower House. About 2.30 on Friday afternoon, deceased went on an errand into Goodall Street, Walsall, and said she would not be above an hour away. She saw deceased start off, and had not seen her since. She had not observed her sister with a young man, and did not know if she had one. They were very comfortable.

Mary Lyons, Bernard Street, Walsall, stated that deceased was supplied with a jar of tar at the Goodall Street shop on Friday afternoon. She seemed cheerful.

Police-constable Adams spoke to a Wolverhampton boatman named **Simpson** handing over to him a lady's hat, neck fur and a string handbag containing a jar of tar on the 2nd inst, which had been found by the canal near Harvey's dock. Witness eventually recovered the body on Tuesday morning.

Dr Smith spoke to having made a *post mortem*. He found that deceased was in a certain condition. Death was due to drowning.

The jury returned a verdict, "That the girl drowned herself in the canal by Harvey's dock, but that there was not sufficient evidence to show the state of her mind at the time".

88 16 April 1910

WILLENHALL

WALSALL MEN IN TROUBLE At the Police Court on Monday, before J T Hartill, J H James and T Vaughan Esqs, **Jeremiah Hooper** (32), a boatman of 113 Bridgeman Street, Walsall, was summoned with cruelty to animals by working a horse whilst it was in an unfit condition at Easington on the 18th ult ; and **George Hooper** (61), of the same address, was summoned for causing the animal to be worked, whilst **John Street** (56) of the Butts, Walsall, was charged with aiding and abetting. Jeremiah Hooper and John Street pleaded guilty. Police-constable Hodson of Great Wyrley said he saw Jeremiah Hooper, who was driving a horse, on the towing-path of the canal. The animal was drawing a boat of coal, and the defendant, John Street, was steering the boat. The horse was nothing but a frame of skin and bones, was very lame, and had a number of raw wounds, which were causing it great pain. Witness refused to let the defendants proceed. Street said, "I told my master (George Hooper) that it was not fit to work, and that I should not drive it". Witness had the horse stabled, and next day, when Inspector Slattery came to examine it, they found the animal had fallen in the stable and was too weak to get up. Police-constable Hadley (New Town) and Inspector Slattery (RSPCA) gave corroborative evidence. George Hooper urged that he had no knowledge of the animal being in such a condition, and that he had since had it destroyed. Dr Hartill said the Bench considered it a very serious case of cruelty, and both the Hoopers would be fined £2 and costs each (total £2 13s 5d) or go to gaol for one month. The case against Street, who had withdrawn his plea of guilty, was not of a serious nature, and it was dismissed.

89 23 April 1910

WILLENHALL

STEALING A DUCK At the Police Court on Monday, before L B Moreton and C Tildesley Esqs, **William Thurman**, boatman, 10 Park Lane, Tipton, and **John Durden**, boatman, 13 Lower Church Street, Tipton, were charged on remand with stealing a duck, value 5s, the property of Henry Soars of Wednesfield Road, Little London. The accused on Thursday afternoon were in charge of a boat passing along the canal, and when near the Dingle Bridge, Monmer Lane, Thurman was seen to throw at and injure a duck swimming on the water ; and Durden afterwards pulled it into the boat. Inspector Beech said complaints of the loss of ducks from the canal had been frequent of late. Thurman was fined 20s and costs, or one month, and Durden 10s and costs, or fourteen days.

90 28 May 1910

LEACROFT

STEALING COAL At Cannock Police Court on Monday, **William Smith**, boatman, who gave his address as Rowten House, Birmingham, was ordered to pay 40s, or in default suffer 14 days' imprisonment, for stealing a quantity of coal belonging to the Cannock and Leacroft Colliery Company. It appeared that on May 13th defendant was proceeding along the canal with a boat laden with slack, when he took about 2s 6d worth of coal from a boat as he passed.

91 28 May 1910

WEDNESBURY

DROWNING MYSTERY On Monday, Mr Lyon Clark (Deputy Coroner) held an inquest at West Bromwich on the body of John Albert Bott (5), whose parents reside in Camp Street, Wednesbury, and whose dead body was recovered from the Birmingham Canal at Hill Top on Saturday last. Moses Bott, stoker, employed at the Patent Shaft Works, identified the body as that of his son. He last saw the lad alive at about eleven o'clock on the 15th inst, when his mother was dressing him to

go out. He thought his son was going to visit some friends. Witness did not see or hear anything more about his son until the morning of the 21st inst, when he saw the body on the towing-path of the canal near the Aqueduct Bridge, Hill Top. From the child's home to where his body was found was a distance of about half a mile. Witness had known deceased go to the canal at the Aqueduct before, as he was in the habit of going walks with two or three companions. He did not suspect anything wrong about the lad's death, and he fancied he must have been walking along the canal side when something attracted his attention, and he fell into the water. A small boy named Moran was with deceased on the 15th inst, but he came back home, and said he had left him in the fields. Samuel Dudley, tailor, Perry Street, Wednesbury, said that at about 2.30 on Whit Sunday afternoon, he saw deceased sitting on some railings at the bottom of the embankment near the Aqueduct Bridge. The boy shouted to witness, and he replied to him. Witness did not consider there was any danger in a boy so young being near the canal. A boatman named **David Norton** of Old Row, Gold's Hill, spoke to pulling the body out of the canal about 12.30 on Saturday dinnertime. Police-constable Thompson said the lad appeared as if he had been in the water a considerable time. Witness found a bruise on the left side of the head, but this might have been caused by passing boats. The lad would be trespassing when sitting on the railings. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

92 6 August 1910

WALSALL POLICE COURT

WAREHOUSE BREAKING CHARGES **Henry Benton** (40), boatman, and **James Naughton** (48), labourer, both of no fixed abode, were charged with breaking into the premises of the James Foundry Co, and stealing brasses and other things. No evidence was taken, and prisoners were remanded until Monday next.

93 13 August 1910

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGED WAREHOUSE BREAKING **Henry Benton** (40), boatman, and **James Naughton** (48), labourer, both of no fixed abode, were charged on remand with breaking and entering the factory of the James Foundry Company, Bridgeman Street, between 6 pm on July 28th and 6 am on the 29th, and stealing a steam gauge, four brass lathe chucks, two rubber washers, two pieces of brass, one lead bush, one looking glass, one brass water gauge and 40 feet of sheet lead, value £6 10s. Edward Thompson Whitehouse, cashier in the employ of the prosecuting company, stated that when he left the premises on the evening of July 28th everything was safe. The following morning, from what was said to him, he went to the fitting shop and missed the articles mentioned in the charge. He saw that the roof had been stripped of about 40 feet of lead. The damage done was very considerable apart from the value of the articles and the lead. Police-constable Thomson of Willenhall gave evidence to the effect that at 8.10 pm on July 29th, he saw the prisoners in Willenhall Road pushing a handcart and coming from the direction of Walsall. He stopped and asked them what they had in the cart, and they replied, "Bags. Mr Griffin of James Bridge has sent us with them to Darlaston". He saw that the cart contained a quantity of lead and brass fittings, and he arrested the men. Detective-sergeant Burrell deposed to receiving the prisoners into custody from the Willenhall Police. In answer to the charge, Naughton said, "It's well being charged with so much". Benton said, "I know nothing about it". Prisoners were committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions for the borough.

94 20 August 1910

LEACROFT

STEALING COAL At Cannock Police Court on Monday, a young boatman named **Thomas Smith**, said to be living at Smethwick, was charged by William Henry Haycock, wharf manager at Leacroft Colliery, with having stolen about 3 cwt of coal, value 2s. It appeared that on August 10th defendant was in charge of a boat laden with slack coming from the direction of Hednesford and

going towards Norton Canes. On arriving at Leacroft, defendant was seen to take the coal off a boat laden with coal and put it on his own. Defendant was accused of the theft, and when asked for his name and address gave several addresses. Police-constable Wilcox stated that he was informed of the robbery, and went in pursuit of defendant. After going a long distance along the canal, witness overtook defendant at Great Barr, and as his answers to questions were not satisfactory, he took him into custody and lodged him at Cannock Police Station. Defendant said he took the coal for his own use on the journey, and did not consider he was stealing it. Defendant was fined £1 13s, including costs, or fourteen days.

95 3 September 1910

PELSALL

COAL STEALING FROM THE CANAL At Rushall Police Court on Monday, James Turner, 9 High Bridge Road, was charged on remand with stealing a quantity of coal, value 1s 6d, the property of the Birmingham Canal Navigation Co, on the 25th inst. Police-sergeant Lewis stated that at 4.40 am on the date named, he was on duty in High Bridge Road, in company with Police-constable Smedley, when he saw the prisoner's daughter carrying coal from the canal into the house. Afterwards they saw the prisoner getting coal out of the canal with a large rake attached to a line prop. When he saw them prisoner ran away, and they failed to find him. When spoken to, the wife said she did not think her husband was doing any harm. He was getting the coal out after he had bought it from a boatman. Police-constable Smedley gave confirmatory evidence. Prisoner denied all knowledge of the theft, and said he was at his sister's house at Heath Hayes at six o'clock the same morning, and he had to walk some miles. He produced a sketch of the position of the canal and his house, and remarked, "Perhaps you will find him (meaning the policeman) out as well as me". Agnes Turner, wife of the prisoner, also said her husband was not there at the time. The Bench imposed a fine of 10s and costs (18s), or in default 14 days' imprisonment, Mr Lloyd remarking that the practice of buying coal from boatmen must be stopped, apart from raking the canal.

96 3 September 1910

DAW END

A NEIGHBOURS' QUARREL At the Rushall Police Court on Monday, William Hendon, Daw End, was summoned for assaulting Lillian Mole, a neighbour, on the 22nd ult. The complainant said a bother arose over a fowl, and defendant struck at her thrice, but his wife got between her husband and complainant and rendered the blows ineffective. Complainant added that she had only been in the house a couple of months, and defendant was constantly insulting her. A woman named Jane Haywood said she saw defendant go at complainant, but his wife prevented him striking her. Defendant stated that the quarrel was entirely between his wife and the complainant. He was getting a load of coal in at the time, and he did not interfere at all. Inspector Platt stated that on three successive occasions the police had been called to the parties. A boatman named **Fletcher** stated that defendant did not go near complainant. A fine of 5s and 11s 6d costs was imposed, with the alternative of seven days' imprisonment.

97 7 January 1911

ALLEGED ATTEMPTED MURDER AND SUICIDE

MOTHER AND CHILD IN THE CANAL At the Walsall Guildhall yesterday (Friday) morning, before Messrs W Bayliss, W E Blyth, E J Shaw and A D Cozens, Louisa Shaw (36), married woman, 10 Rowland Street, was charged on a warrant with attempting to commit suicide by drowning, and also with attempting to murder her son, Harold Shaw, aged seven years, by drowning in the canal on December 28th.

Frederick Day, a boatman of 20 Brook Street, said that on the afternoon of December 28th he was steering a canal boat from Hednesford towards Walsall, and when he was about fifty yards from Pratt's Bridge, he saw the prisoner come to the canal side with a little boy and a little girl. The

woman went towards the water's edge, and appeared to be looking at the water, then the boy fell into the water and the woman on top of him. He could not say whether the woman overbalanced or pulled the boy in. The little girl started to scream when she saw what had happened. His mate, **Frederick King**, who was leading the horse which was pulling the boat, ran to the spot and jumped into the water. He brought the woman and child to the side, and with the assistance of another man they were got out of the water.

In answer to Mr Jackson, witness said the girl appeared to be bright and joyous before anything happened. The water was 2 1/2 ft below the tow-path.

Frederick King said he heard screams, and on looking round saw a girl on the towing-path shouting, "Mother, mother". He then saw a woman and a little boy in the water. He jumped in, and when he got hold of them their hands were joined. He called for assistance, and the woman and the child were got out. The woman was in an exhausted condition.

John Cockayne, tram driver, Essex Street, said he was passing over Pratt's Bridge, and on looking over he saw a man trying to get a woman and child from the water. He immediately went to the spot and gave assistance. The woman soon came round, and said, "Where's my child?" She was taken to a place in Forest Lane, and he informed the police.

Chief Inspector Ballance deposed that on the evening of the 28th ult he saw prisoner in the charge office, and had a conversation with her. She answered his questions properly, and seemed quite rational. She commenced the conversation by saying, "My husband will be off his head when he knows. Don't keep me longer than you can help. I don't know what made me do it. I have had a lot to deal with and am a bit run down". The canal where the woman and child went in was 40 feet wide, and the water was 5ft 4 in deep in the middle and 4 ft at the side.

Police-constable Williams said he went to a cottage in Forest Lane, where the woman and child had been taken. The woman's clothes were wet, and the child's were hanging on the line drying. He brought the woman to the police office, and in answer to the charge, she said, "I was a bit run down, and did it on the spur of the moment".

Dr Shore, medical officer of health (....) examined the prisoner the previous morning. She was in a very low condition. She had a bad headache and an internal complaint. Her mental condition was (....) She had a neurotic tendency, and her condition could rise to hysterical effects. He had suggested that her action on December 28th was a (.....) paroxysm.

Dorothy Louisa Shaw, the little daughter of the accused, stated that between two and three o'clock on the afternoon of the date named, her mother said she would take her and her brother Harry to Aunt Phoebe's, at (.....) Her mother seemed to be all right and was very pleasant. They missed the tram which went to Essington at the bottom of Hospital Street, and so they walked on to Pratt's Bridge and then on to the canal side, which was the way to Mrs Mansell's, an old friend of her mother. She was walking by the side of her mother, with her brother, who had hold of his mother's hand, nearest the water. Her mother appeared to reel, and then she and her brother both tumbled into the water. They went in together.

Questioned by Mr Jackson, the girl said she had a good home and a good father and mother.

Mr Jackson said the husband and wife were an extremely happy couple. During the last few months the wife had suffered badly from headaches. They could not get a better idea of the relationship between the husband and wife than what the latter said, "My husband will go off his head". Had it not been for the unfortunate missing of the tram they would have gone over to Essington, so that there was no intention in the first place of going near the canal.

The husband said his wife had lately been worried.

Mr Loxton informed the husband that, if the wife would see a doctor, she could be made a different woman as regarded her health in a very short time.

The husband promised that his wife should be attended by a doctor, and the accused was discharged.

Mr Bayliss, addressing King, said the magistrates were very glad to hear of his presence of mind by jumping into the canal so effectively, and he congratulated him on his brave act.

98 4 March 1911

LEACROFT

DISHONEST BOATMEN At Cannock Police Court on Monday, **Thomas Hadley** and **Joseph Hadley**, father and son, boatmen of Smethwick, were charged with stealing a quantity of coal, the property of their employers, Messrs Lones, Vernon and Holden Limited, Smethwick. Mr H H Jackson (of the firm of Stanley and Jackson, Walsall) appeared for the prosecution, who said it was a common occurrence for boats of coal to be a ton and a ton and a quarter short, which was a serious thing for traders and manufacturers. Albert Young, wharf manager for the prosecutors, said he received the coal in question, and it was much less than what was issued to his firm. William Henry Haycock said he had been wharf manager at the Leacroft Colliery for 26 years, and he knew defendants well. Numbers of complaints had been made recently of the weight being short, and it had been decided to find out if possible how it had occurred. On the morning of January 24th, defendants left the wharf at Leacroft with a boat laden with coal for the prosecutors. Soon after the boat started, witness secretly followed the boat, and when the boat got to Kingswood Bridge, in the vicinity of Norton, he saw one of the defendants throw at least a ton of coal off the boat into the water. Witness made himself known, and told them he should report the matter to the police. Police-constable Wilcox deposed that on the morning in question, he received information of what had taken place, and went in pursuit on his bicycle. Witness went to the Birchills at Walsall, and found defendants had not arrived, but on proceeding along the canal path, he met defendants at Little Bloxwich. He could see that coal had been removed from the boat, and charged them with throwing it off. When he informed them that the wharf manager at Leacroft had seen them throw the coal off, one of the defendants said Haycock had got a grudge against them. Defendants, in reply to the charge, said they were not guilty, and stated that what they threw off the boat was water. When they got to the Birchills the boat was gauged, and was four tons heavier than when it left Leacroft, there being quite three tons of water. In reply to the Bench, witness said they had not got the ticket for the weight when at the Birchills. Defendants were fined 40s and 15s 6d costs each.

99 11 March 1911

WALSALL POLICE COURT

CRUELTY CASE Samuel Evans, Winterly Lane, Rushall, was summoned for cruelly ill-treating a mare on the 8th ult ; while his employer, **Frederick Woodward**, Daw End, Rushall, was summoned for causing it to be ill-treated. Police-constable Travers said that on the date named he saw a brown mare belonging to Woodward, who was a haulier and boatman, in charge of Evans in Lower Rushall Street. The animal was pulling a wagon containing 14 bags of cement, weighing altogether about 23 cwt. He noticed that the mare was lame, and on speaking to Evans about it, he replied that it was all right and that he did not know there was anything wrong with it. Witness had the animal taken to Mr Prickett's, veterinary surgeon. Evans afterwards admitted that he knew it was lame on the off hind leg, and also that he had told his master of its condition. When witness saw Woodward, he said he did not know of the animal's condition, as he had not seen it for three days before. Later, on making enquiries as to what had been done with the horse, he learned that Woodward had taken it along the towing-path to Hanley, North Staffordshire, a distance of 46 miles. In consequence of a communication sent by the local police to the police at Hanley, Woodward was stopped there and arrested for working the animal in an unfit condition, the mare afterwards being slaughtered. Mr Prickett, veterinary surgeon, said that the lameness was quite palpable to anybody. When the animal was brought into his yard, it was distressed and was suffering acute pain. The injury was of long standing, and the animal was quite unfit for work. He asked Mr Woodward not to work it. Woodward said he did not think the mare was lame, and it had three days rest between the time it was stopped by the constable until he took it into North Staffordshire. Woodward was fined £1 and costs, or 21 days' imprisonment in default ; and Evans 5s and costs, or seven days' imprisonment.

THEFT FROM A BOAT William Turner (43), labourer, Bull's Head Lodging House, Green Lane, was charged with stealing a quantity of coal, value 7d, the property of Messrs Lones, Vernon and

Holden, Sandwell Ironworks, Smethwick, on March 6th. A boatman employed by the prosecuting firm, residing at Smethwick, said that he was in charge of a boat load of coal coming from Hednesford Colliery en route for Smethwick, and on reaching the Bridgeman Street bridge he left the boat in charge of his brother whilst he went to stable his horse. This was about 7.20 in the evening, and everything was then safe. A few minutes later, from what was said to him, he went back to the boat and found that a number of lumps were missing from the top. A police inspector came up a few minutes afterwards, and witness pointed out to him where the coal was missing from. He then accompanied him to the Junction Inn, where he identified the two lumps of coal as having been taken from his boat. Inspector Haycock stated that at 7.30 the previous night he was passing by the Bridgeman Street canal bridge, when he saw prisoner leaving the canal towing-path. He was carrying two lumps of coal weighing about 70 lbs, and when witness seized hold of him, he dropped them. After a struggle, prisoner said, "I have "pinched" it off a boat. I shouldn't think you would lock me up for two lumps". Later witness saw the boatman, who pointed out from where the coal was missing, and later identifying that taken from prisoner as his property. When charged, Turner made no reply. Prisoner pleaded guilty, and a list of previous convictions was found against him. The Bench sentenced prisoner to fourteen days' hard labour.

100 10 June 1911

BOARD OF GUARDIANS

A FINE COMPENSATION POINT Mr Laban (pay clerk) gave a report on the case of a Walsall boatman at present in the hospital, whose wife and children had been receiving relief to the extent of £5 and five loaves per week. It was stated that the man was a boatman, and some time ago the open boat, of which he was in charge, was held up at night. The man went to spend the night in a hovel, which in some way caught fire, and as a result the man was badly burned. His employer thought he must have been drunk to get so badly burned, and he also denied that the accident occurred during the time the man was employed by him. The insurance company had been written to with regard to compensation, but they denied liability and refused to pay.

Mr Bonner said it was a very fine point. If the boat was held up, the man had not got to his journey's end, and therefore he was still in charge of the boat. He thought compensation could be obtained.

Mr Sanders said he thought the man was at work at the time.

Mr Dean : So do I.

Mr Sanders : What is the position with regard to the compensation?

The Clerk : We can't get it.

Mr Bonner said the wife and children of the man had been granted relief, and he took it they were entitled to some of the compensation, if there was any.

It was decided to adjourn the matter for further inquiries to be made.

101 15 July 1911

TWO SCHOOLBOYS DROWNED

THE DANGER OF PLAYING ON THE CANAL SIDE The circumstances surrounding the deaths of two schoolboys, whose bodies were recovered from the canal last week end, were investigated by the Borough Coroner (Mr J F Addison) at the Guildhall on Monday evening.

The first one was concerning the death of a Chuckery lad named Arthur John Bailey, the five year old son of Robert James Bailey, a journeyman portmanteau maker of 33 Lumley Road, who fell into the canal near the Red House, Sutton Road, on Saturday.

The father of the deceased said that his son went out to play about the middle of Saturday morning, and as he did not return at dinner time, they became anxious and made enquiries of various lads about him. At 7.15 that evening, they heard from a boy named Grew that he had fallen into the canal.

A little boy named Harold Grew, aged eight years, who resides with his parents at Lumley Road, gave evidence, and said that he knew the deceased well, as he had often played with him. On

Saturday morning he and Bailey went out together down the Sutton Road to the canal. They had to climb an iron fence to get onto the towing-path. The deceased lad later sat on the edge of the towing-path with his feet dangling in the water, saying, "You watch me put my two feet in the water". It was then that he slipped into the water and sank. Witness however added that Bailey stood up in the water, but Sergeant Shepherd (coroner's officer) said that the water was about 8 feet deep at this point.

The Coroner (to the boy) : And what did you do then?

Witness : I went home alone.

Further questioned, the little boy stated that he met several people when going home along the Sutton Road, but did not tell them anything about the accident, nor did he tell his parents. However, he informed the little boy's mother about it.

Another little boy aged 8 named Albert Davis, of 52 Kinnerley Street, who accompanied the deceased and the other boy down the Sutton Road, gave evidence, and said that he did not go onto the towing-path, but stood on the road and watched his companions. His story of the accident was similar to that of the other boy Grew, and he said that afterwards he went and told two lads, aged about 11 and 7, who were on the road, about it, but the elder had merely laughed at him and would not believe him. He did not tell his parents about it when he got home.

Harry Worthy (23) of 28 Lumley Road said that on hearing of the accident, he accompanied Police-constable Fisher to the canal, when the spot where deceased had fallen in was pointed out by one of the boys. He swam about for some time trying to find the body, and eventually discovered it lying under the surface against some weeds. Artificial respiration was tried, but to no avail, and the body was conveyed to the mortuary.

Dr Layton said that when he examined the body the lad was quite dead, and had been so for some hours. Death was due to drowning.

The Coroner said that it was an extraordinary thing that deceased's two companions should not have felt something within them impelling them to say something about the accident. It seemed almost incredible that they should not have told someone.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death", and the Coroner, on their behalf, commended Worthy for the action he took in the matter, and expressed their thanks and appreciation.

The Coroner's attention was directed to a water main running under the Sutton Road bridge over the canal on which children climbed, and were liable to fall into the water. The opinion was expressed that this pipe should be spiked to prevent children going across it.

The Coroner promised to inspect it himself, and if he agreed that it was dangerous, he would make some representations to the Canal Company about the matter.

The second inquiry was relative to a drowning fatality in the canal at the Birchills, and was touching the death of a six year old lad named Frederick Walters, the son of Ellen Walters of 101 Burrowes Street.

The mother of the deceased said that her husband was a sweep, but had not lived with her for two years, and she did not know where he was. The deceased had always been strong and healthy, and had attended St Patrick's School, Blue Lane. On returning from school on Friday morning, she gave him his dinner, and later he went out with the intention of going to play with some children in Short Acre. As he did not return at 4.30, she commenced searching for him, but although she made inquiries off several (.....) none of them had seen him. In the evening the police were informed of his disappearance, and on Saturday morning she was told that his body had been recovered out of the canal running at the back of Dalkeith Street. On going there, she identified it as her son.

Benjamin Russell, a canal boatman of 43 Pleck Road, said that at 7.30 on Saturday morning he was talking to a fellow boatman near No 2 lock, when he noticed what appeared to be a human face near the bottom gate of the lock. There was a boat in the lock at the time, and on making further investigation he was able to see that it was a lad's body in the water. He pulled it out with the aid of a boat shaft, but the lad was then quite dead, and had evidently been in the water some hours. There was a good deal of traffic along this canal, and it would be impossible for boats to avoid (.....) the

body in the position in which it was. This, in his opinion, accounted for the bruises on the lad's face.

William Cassell, a lock-keeper employed by the Birmingham Canal Navigation, said that he was told on Saturday morning that a body had been recovered from the canal, and on going to the spot, recognised it as that of a lad whom he had seen many times round about the canal, and whom he had continually warned about going there. On the afternoon of the previous day, he had seen this lad hanging over a weir hole washing a piece of linen. Witness pulled him away, and hitting him with his belt warned him not to be there again. He was not on the towing-path but on the other side of the canal. This side was bounded by a stretch of about 200 yards of open land running to Burrowes Street, which was used by the Corporation for a tip. This had been fenced off by the Canal Company as many as four or five times during the last two years, but even while the men were putting the fencing up the children were pulling it down and carrying it away.

A juryman : That is so, Mr Coroner ; I see it every day.

Witness added that there were hundreds of children playing about this land in the course of the day, and some of them went on to the canal side. When they saw him coming, they ran away. He again saw the deceased lad on the canal side on the Friday, when he was shouting to boatmen, "Give me a ride in your boat". That was the last time he saw the deceased alive.

Dr Harry Shore, Medical Officer of Health for the Borough, stated that he had conducted a *post mortem* examination of the body, and found that death was due to drowning. In his opinion, the bruises on the lad's forehead were caused by passing boats, and he had no suspicion of foul play at all.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

102 22 July 1911

BREWOOD

SCHOOLBOY DROWNED At Brewood on Monday, Mr T H Stokes, county coroner, held an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of a ten year old schoolboy named George Newman of Coven, whose body was recovered from the canal at Brewood on the previous Friday. The extraordinary suggestion had been advanced that the boy was pushed into the water by a boatman who, it was alleged, became annoyed at Newman's conduct. Mr Brodie, schoolmaster at Brewood, stated that Ferreday, a school lad, first threw out the suggestion, but several other boys who had been bathing with Newman denied it. A boatman named **John Jones** said he was in a canal boat on the day in question. He saw five boys, but he did not molest any of them. They did not speak to him, nor did they throw stones. At the time, there was another boat in sight. The Coroner remarked that the allegation fell to the ground. The mother of Newman said she had warned the boy about bathing. On one occasion her husband chastised him, and said, "Georgie, you will be brought home a drowned boy one of these times". The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

103 19 August 1911

CHURCHBRIDGE

SAD SUICIDE OF A WOMAN Evidence of a distressing nature was given at the inquest held on Saturday afternoon at Churchbridge by Mr S W Morgan concerning the death of **Annie Elizabeth Bradbury** (44), whose body was found in the canal on the previous Friday morning at Leacroft, Cannock. The husband of deceased, **William Bradbury**, lock-keeper residing at the Lockhouse, Leacroft, Cannock, gave evidence under stress of great grief. For the past nine months, he stated, his wife had been in ill health. She had been low spirited and depressed. She had been under several doctors, most of whom said she was suffering from a nervous breakdown. A month ago, she returned home after having undergone an operation at Birmingham. Her mental condition did not improve, and on the 9th inst her sister came over and stayed the night with her. The following day the sister left, and at night deceased asked to be allowed to sleep with the servant girl. She did so, and witness slept with his son. Witness got up next morning just before six o'clock, and a few

minutes later a boatman came to the house and said there was a woman's body in the first pound of the canal. Witness remarked to the boatman, "I hope not", never thinking it was his wife. His fear was that if a woman was drowned it would add to his wife's depression, and also add to the difficulty of her getting better. He went and looked over the gate, and recognised his wife's clothing in the water. He rushed upstairs to see if his wife was there, and was told by the servant girl that her mistress had gone downstairs. The body was subsequently recovered from the water. The following note in deceased's handwriting was found in the back kitchen :- "These are the things that stupefy me. I am in the first pound, with the 7lb weight round me. My sufferings were intense. A wrong operation. It was not fat ; it was pain. Wife and Mother". Questioned by the Coroner, witness said his wife had remarked that if she had the courage she would drown herself. His wife's condition varied, and she had been watched very closely. Witness was of the opinion that the visit of the sister and her leaving after one night upset his wife. She asked her sister to pray the Lord to take her. Witness said he did not know what his wife meant by "These are the things that stupefy me". His wife was under the impression that the operation she had undergone was a wrong one. With regard to the words, "It is not fat, but pain", witness explained that he had told his wife she was putting on flesh, but she disagreed with him. His wife had been constantly saying, "Oh dear, oh dear", and as she repeated the words her voice became stronger, so that it could be heard some distance away. She would occasionally say, "Oh, the stillness. It is too much for me, the stillness of the brain". The servant girl, Harriet Smith, **Harris** (the boatman) and Police-constable Wilcox gave further evidence. The latter said deceased was partially dressed, a skirt being over her nightdress. The 7lb weight was strapped round her body. The Coroner said the case was an extremely sad one. They all extended their deep sympathy to Mr Bradbury. One could scarcely imagine a sadder case. A verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity" was returned. Mr Bradbury said he was glad to have the sympathy of the jury. He had a clear conscience in the matter. "I have fought", said the bereaved husband, bursting into tears, "for her life as I would have fought for my own".

104 16 September 1911

WALSALL POLICE COURT

BOATMEN AT LOGGERHEADS **Harold Wall**, boatman of 40 Fisher Street, Great Bridge, was summoned for assaulting another boatman named **John Davis** of 24 Bentley, on September 5th. Complainant alleged that there was some quarrel between him and defendant as to whose boat should have preference and go first along the canal. Defendant steered his boat against that of witness, and later struck him in the ear and made it bleed. He had not been able to hear properly with it since. Defendant denied that he struck Davis, but admitted that he shoved him and he tumbled against the boat horse's collar and hurt his ear. Complainant provoked him a great deal, and it was the custom that the boat with the larger horse should go first when it caught another one up. Complainant was in the wrong. Mr Loxton remarked that it must have been a violent push, and after evidence on behalf of complainant had been given by William Ralph, the Bench fined defendant 2s 6d and costs.

105 16 September 1911

WALSALL POLICE COURT

DRUNKENNESS AND ASSAULT **John Kimberley**, 36, boatman, Providence Lane, Bloxwich, and John Stokes, 23, miner of 629 Bloxwich Road, were charged, the former with being drunk and disorderly in Bloxwich Road, Leamore on the 9th inst, and the latter with assaulting the police. Police-constable Knowles said that at 11.15 pm on the night in question he was on duty in Bloxwich Road, Leamore, and saw the prisoner Kimberley, who was drunk, creating a disturbance and making use of bad language. He told him he had better go, but prisoner refused. He thereupon took him into custody, and on the way they were met by Stokes, who struck witness a blow in the face. He had to call the assistance of Sergeant Cattermole, who gave corroborative evidence. Stokes was fined 20s and costs, or 21 days, for the assault, and Kimberley 5s and costs, or seven days.

106 23 September 1911

WALSALL POLICE COURT

ALLEGED THEFT **George Freeman**, 26, boatman of 29 Proffitt Street, was charged with stealing a watch and wristlet, the value of 20s, the property of Florrie Astley, on the 7th inst. The Chief Constable stated that on the invitation of the father of the prosecutrix, prisoner stayed at her house on the night in question because he was destitute. The next morning the prisoner disappeared, and the watch and wristlet were missing, and upon being questioned the prisoner admitted that he had sold it to a boatman at Oldbury. The goods had not yet been found, but if prisoner would give information that would lead to their recovery, he would be satisfied with a remand until Monday next. However the information was not forthcoming, and prisoner was remanded for a week.

107 23 September 1911

WALSALL POLICE COURT YESTERDAY

BASE INGRATITUDE **George Freeman** (26), boatman, 20 Proffitt Street, was charged on remand with stealing a watch and wristlet, value £1, the property of Florrie Astley, Queen Street, on August 7th. James Astley, father of the prosecutrix, stated that on the night of August 6th he met the prisoner at the corner of Queen Street and Bridgeman Street. He told witness he was destitute, and he took him in, gave him some supper, and allowed him to sleep on the sofa. Before he went to bed, witness went into the parlour and saw his daughter's watch and wristlet lying on the table. The following morning at four o'clock, he got up to go to work. At that time the watch was still on the parlour table, and the prisoner was asleep on the sofa. Later on, from what was said to him, he returned home and found that the prisoner and the watch had disappeared. On September 30th, prisoner was brought to his house by the police, and he then admitted that he had stolen the watch, and asked him to give him time to get it back, as he had sold it to a boatman at Oldbury. Police-constable Bates said that on the evening of Wednesday September 13th, he was on duty in Bridgeman Street, and from what was said to him by Florrie Astley, he went with her into Station Street, where she pointed out the prisoner. Witness took him into custody, and when questioned prisoner said, "She has made a mistake ; it is my twin brother. I have not slept there". Afterwards he admitted the theft, and asked for time to get it back. The Chief Constable said prisoner told the detective a lot of lies. Prisoner : No, I have told the detective the truth. He now pleaded guilty, and asked for another chance, as he had a crippled mother. The Chief Constable said he was informed that the prisoner was continually robbing and annoying his mother. He appeared at Handsworth last year as "John Smith" for loitering with intent, and in the same name he was sentenced in Birmingham, whilst he had previously appeared at Walsall as "John Trueman". Detective-sergeant Burrell said **Trueman** was the prisoner's proper name. Sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment.

108 30 September 1911

RUSHALL

SAVED FROM DROWNING On Tuesday, as a boatman named **James Skidmore** was proceeding along the canal side near the Cement Works at Daw End, he noticed a man in the water, and at once proceeded to fetch him to the towing-path. He turned out to be William Lynn, of no fixed abode, but who is said to be a native of Birmingham. Soon after his rescue, Police-constables Moore and Patrick of the Rushall Police Division, were on the scene, and after using artificial respiration for about three quarters of an hour, succeeded in restoring animation. Lynn was then conveyed to the Walsall Workhouse Infirmary, and is expected to recover.

109 7 October 1911

GAILEY

CRUELTY TO A HORSE At Penkridge Police Court on Monday, **Samuel Walters**, boatman, 16 Albion Street, Monmore Green, Wolverhampton, was summoned for cruelty to a horse by working it in an unfit state at Gailey on September 19th. Police-sergeant Woolley spoke to seeing the animal

attached to a boat loaded with coal, which was being taken to North Wales. The horse was very lame, and had raw sores on both shoulders. Inspector Slattery, RSPCA, said that the animal had since been destroyed. Defendant's employer attended the court, and explained the former's absence. The Bench imposed a fine of £3 and 12s 3d costs, or in default 21 days' imprisonment.

110 21 October 1911

PENKRIDGE

IN PURSUIT OF GAME At the Police Court on Monday, before Lord Hatherton and A J Hoole Esq, **Thomas Whitehouse**, boatman of Henry Street, West Bromwich, was charged with trespassing in pursuit of game on the 11th inst. Florence May Turvey gave evidence that she saw defendant in a turnip field throwing stones at some pheasants. Stephen Turvey, gamekeeper to Mr Wilkinson, said that he sent for Police-sergeant Woolley, and together they met defendant, who was in charge of a canal boat, and charged him with the offence, which he admitted. Defendant now said that he only did it to see the pheasants run, as he had never seen any before. Lord Hatherton pointed out that it would have been a serious matter if he had killed one of these pheasants. A fine of 1s and costs, 11s 6d in all, was inflicted.