

**RUNCORN GUARDIAN**  
**1908 to 1913**

**1      25 January 1908**

**ASSAULTING WORKMEN AT MARSTON**

**BOATMEN IN TROUBLE** At the Northwich Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before Mr J W Deakin and other magistrates, **Harry Morris jun** of the canal boat *Marston* was summoned for assaulting Samuel Yarwood ; and **James Morris** and Henry Morris were summoned by James Rayner jun, Salt Works Manager, for damaging an oil lamp by destroying it with fire, and doing damage to the extent of 2s 6d on January 10<sup>th</sup>. James Morris, captain of the canal boat *Dane*, belonging to the Salt Union Limited, was summoned for assaulting William Howard, fireman, Marston, on January 10<sup>th</sup>. He was also summoned for assaulting Samuel Yarwood, fireman. Mr Sword, solicitor, Hanley, represented the defendants.

The first case taken had reference to the lamp, and in connection with it, James Rayner jun said he did not witness the occurrence. He simply came to speak to the damage done, and the danger to the workmen by its removal. The lamp came from the stores, and he valued it at 2s 6d.

Samuel Yarwood stated that at 10.30 on the night in question he went to the back of the pan to look at a damper, and missing his lamp he asked Harry Morris where it was. In reply he received a very abusive answer from the two men, whereupon he told them if he did not receive an answer he would have to report the matter. By Mr Sword : He hung the lamp in front of the pan, and when he returned two minutes later it was gone. He spoke to Harry Morris. No people passed the pans at night. He did not know there were other boats tied up except those of the defendants. He afterwards found the lamp in the fire.

Mr Sword submitted there was no case, and the magistrates dismissed it.

With regard to the cases of assault, James Morris pleaded guilty to assaulting William Howard, but not Yarwood, and Harry Morris acknowledged assaulting Samuel Yarwood.

William Howard said he was a fireman, and was on duty about 10.30 at the Adelaide Works, Marston, when he heard Yarwood shout. He went to the slack hole to see what was the matter. As soon as he reached there, James Morris said, "Here is his mate ; we'll serve him the same", and thereupon struck him . Defendant's wife got hold of him and told him he should not have done that as the man had never spoken to him. She took him to their boat. Witness said his lip was burst by the blow. By Mr Sword : He did not see what took place between Yarwood and the other Morris. He did not say anything to defendant. Morris never asked him what he was going to do, but rushed clean at him. Yarwood shouted, "Howard", and he went to see what was the matter, and on reaching there he saw his mate on the floor.

Samuel Yarwood stated that when he asked Morris for the lamp, and the moment he turned away he was knocked senseless on the slack heap by Harry Morris, and later was struck by James Morris. When he got up he was knocked down again, and Harry said to James, "Fetch the spade and let us bury him". As Howard arrived on the scene, they said, "Let us serve him the same". Harry struck him first, and James hit him whilst he was down. By Mr Sword : He did not in any way threaten them, further than saying he would have to make a report about the lamp. The defendants were employed by the Salt Union. They made the onslaught upon him without the slightest provocation. He had never had a wrong word with them in his life. They were not sober. After they had threatened to bury him in the slack, they went to Howard. Witness then got the handle out of a besom.

The Chairman : You did not want the premature burial? (Laughter).

Witness : No.

Mr Sword said he thought their Worships would think it extraordinary that the two men who worked for the Salt Union, and might be discharged for perpetrating such an outrage as that described would act as they did without any provocation. The probability was that Howard and Yarwood, smarting under the wrong that had been committed, exaggerated what took place by the men, and minimised their own action. He contended that Yarwood, who thought the men had

destroyed his lamp, went up to them in a rough uncouth manner and asked for his lamp, and they gave him some sharp talk back, and then probably the blows were given, but they were not serious. The threatened burial he thought must have been a form of humour on the part of the men. The assaults in his opinion were neither cowardly nor aggravated.

The Bench imposed a fine of 10s including costs on James Morris for assaulting William Howard, but dismissed the summons for assaulting G Yarwood. The language used was no credit to the defendants. Harry Morris would have to pay 10s for assaulting Yarwood. Their employers wished them to work in peace.

## 2 6 June 1908

### WIDNES FLATMAN DROWNED

#### BODY FOUND AT WARRINGTON

**THE INQUEST** An inquest was held by Mr Coroner Brighthouse at the Warrington Police Station on Monday morning, touching the death of **Thomas Jones Moss**, a flatman of 22 Terrace Road, Widnes, whose body was seen floating in the river Mersey near Quay Fold, Warrington, on Friday afternoon.

Alice Holland, Beaumont Street, Widnes, mother-in-law of the deceased, said he was employed on the flat *Mary Ellen* of Runcorn, and he was 22 years of age. She last saw him alive between nine and ten o'clock on Monday March 30<sup>th</sup>. The flat was then lying at West Bank Dock, Widnes. The day afterwards, witness heard that he had been drowned by falling off the flat. On Saturday morning last, she saw a body at the mortuary and recognised it as that of Moss.

The Coroner : How do you recognise it? The body was unrecognisable.

Witness said she could recognise the vest he was wearing, the tar mark on the back of the shirt, and the tab on the collar.

The Coroner said he wanted to be perfectly satisfied about it.

The clothes were then brought up at the Coroner's request, and after a brief inspection in another room, the Coroner said there was a very characteristic muffler, quite out of the ordinary. The captain of the flat said the clothes were those of Moss.

**John Lovatt**, the captain, said that at about 12.15 on March 31<sup>st</sup>, the flat was lying in the river, and he asked Moss to cast the anchor overboard. When he was throwing it over, he fell over himself, and the tide quickly carried him away. Witness could not see whether the anchor caught him or whether he overbalanced himself.

A young man named Enos Woods, residing in Plumpton Street, Warrington, said that at 12 noon on Friday he was in company with two others named William Lamb and Percy Green near Quay Fold, when he saw the body floating in the water. He secured the body to a boat and then gave information to the police.

PC Woolacott said he went to the spot and found the body. There were no marks of violence, and there was nothing in the pockets.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

A reward of £1 for the recovery of the body, which had been offered by the Upper Mersey Watermen's and Porters' Association, Runcorn, was divided between Enos Woods, William Lamb and Percy Green.

## 3 26 December 1908

### ELLESMERE PORT BOATMAN'S DEATH

**INQUEST AT CHESTER** At the Chester City Police Court on Monday, Mr E Brassey, city coroner, held an inquest on the body of **John Johnson** aged 71, captain of the boat *Paris*, who died on Saturday en route to the Chester Infirmary.

It appeared that the deceased on Friday was assisting his grandson, J H Bannister, in loading the boat with grain at the North Wall Warehouse, Ellesmere Port. A bag was being lowered on the quay when it burst, and deceased, in trying to prevent the grain being spilled, stumbled over the log rope and fell on the quay side on his chest. The accident occurred at 3.30, and deceased did not

complain of being hurt until about five pm the same day. Dr Finney of Ellesmere Port was called to see deceased, and he ordered his removal to the Chester Infirmary, but he died on his boat en route. Evidence of identification was given by the widow, who said deceased had done no work for a long time.

James Henry Bannister, grandson of the deceased, described how the accident happened. The bag had come out of the chute, and deceased turned round to get something to stop it when he fell over the log rope and caught his chest on the quay side. It was no part of the deceased's duty to help with the loading of the bags.

Dr Newall said he had made a *post mortem* examination, and in his opinion the man died from the shock following upon rupture and strangulation of the bowels.

The Coroner : Was death caused by any accident, or was it a natural death. Witness : That is a matter of opinion.

You cannot say? No, it's impossible to be quite accurate.

Witness added that deceased had an old rupture. The cause of death was shock. Death might be due to natural causes, but his own opinion was that it was due to an accident. If the symptoms had come on more rapidly, he would have had no doubt about it.

The Coroner said deceased was not knocked over by anybody, and the only other question for the jury to consider was whether the man died from the effects of the accident, or whether he died from disease. If Dr Newall could not say after a *post mortem* examination, he did not think there was any occasion for the jury to say whether it was due to the accident. If the widow had any claim upon anybody, it was not a matter that the jury could further one way or the other. He thought the jury had better be satisfied with a verdict that he died at the Infirmary by natural causes – whether by accident or not they could not say.

The jury returned a verdict of “Accidental death”.

#### **4      2 January 1909**

##### **NORTHWICH FLATMEN MISSING**

##### **WINSFORDIAN'S TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE**

**SALT UNION BARGES SUNK IN THE RIVER MERSEY** The receipt of the news at Northwich on Tuesday of the foundering of two of the Salt Union barges in the river Mersey near Liverpool during the early hours of the morning, and the accompanying disquieting intelligence that two Northwich men were missing, caused a profound sensation in the town and district. Mid Cheshire, in common with other parts of the country, had felt the severity of the blizzard which had raged to the fullest extent, and being the home of a number of flatmen and others engaged in navigating the river, the thoughts of many naturally turned sympathetically to those whose lives were being jeopardised. Little, however, did anyone think of the terrible happening which was taking place in the beating boisterous waters of the river Mersey, and how local crews were struggling to control their craft against the wind and stormy waves, assisted in their terrible might by the tremendous hurricane. Yet things heart-rending were occurring on the wide expanse of water almost under the shadow of the great shipping city. According to old watermen and others who can claim a long association with the waterway, the night was by far the worst experienced for 40 years. It was pitch black, freezing hard, the wind was blowing a hurricane, and fine powdery snow was being carried through the air with blinding force. The vessels were being buffeted about unmercifully on the troubled waters, and when once the tow ropes broke, the chances of the unfortunate “hands” escaping with their lives were very remote indeed. At the mercy of the waves in such a wild and surging sea, and under conditions terrible to contemplate, their sufferings can be more readily imagined than described.

The two Northwich men, **John Blower** (61) of 11 Beeston Street, Castle, and his son, **Herbert Blower** (26), of the same address, it is feared have gone down with their craft, for it sank, and when last seen both poor fellows were seen clinging for their lives to the pump, the heavy waves meanwhile sweeping the deck, and the vessel being tossed about. Two Winsford men, **Reuben Hough** (captain) and **Thomas Perry** (hand) escaped providentially with their lives, after most cruel

suffering through exposure and terrible fear of being drowned.

The ill fated voyage was commenced on Monday, when the steamer *Bengal* with the barge *Mary Jane*, containing a light cargo, in tow, left Winsford. The latter was manned by **Reuben Hough** (Captain) and **Thomas Perry** (hand). At Northwich, the barge *Mountaineer*, in charge of **John Blower** (Captain) and **Herbert Blower** (hand) was picked up. The three vessels were proceeding to Liverpool, and left Eastham locks about one o'clock the following morning. On leaving the locks, the *Mountaineer* and the *Mary Jane* were being towed abreast with a space between them to allow room for the backwash from the steamer. Immediately on entering the river, the fury of the storm was encountered, and a heavy sea running, the vessels were buffeted about in an alarming manner. On arrival at the "Blinking" buoy, between Eastham and the tail end of the "Devil's Bank", one of the crew of the *Mountaineer* shouted that the tow rope of his boat had broken. She got very close to the *Mary Jane*. Thomas Perry shouted to Captain Blower that her rope was all right, and hailed the *Bengal* to go ahead. With the *Mountaineer* being out of line, the rope was suddenly pulled taut, and the result was that it snapped. The rope of the *Mary Jane* was still attached to the *Bengal*, and the latter going astern to pick up the *Mountaineer*, the result was that the rope carried away the mast and caught on the windlass. The men on board were powerless to lift the rope, and it was quickly cut in two, thus cutting the *Mary Jane* adrift. The anchor of the *Mary Jane* was dropped, but it proved of little use in the boisterous sea. The *Bengal* went to the assistance of the *Mary Jane*, but she was hailed to go and endeavour to help the *Mountaineer*, which appeared to be in greater difficulties. The *Mary Jane* eventually commenced to drift, and for nearly four hours she was like a derelict. The small boat had been torn away from her, the mast had gone, and everything loose on deck had been swept overboard. The whole of the time, a piercing wind and

**A BLINDING SNOWSTORM** were being experienced, and the two men on board, almost frozen to death, had a most terrifying time. They hailed a passing ferry steamer, but evidently their cry for help was not heard, as the steamer was soon lost to sight in the darkness. The barge drifted helplessly on the ebb tide, and the strong south easterly gale was blowing her on the Cheshire side. About five o'clock she went in the neighbourhood of Seacombe, and struck the stage. At this moment, Captain Hough and Perry, the hand, seized the one opportunity of escaping with their lives. There was a chance to jump ashore, and accomplishing it, they **ESCAPED CERTAIN DEATH** for in a few minutes, the vessel drifted under the ferry bridge and was dashed to pieces. The luggage gangway of the Seacombe stage was badly damaged through the buffeting of the boat.

The crew of the *Mountaineer* were, as previously intimated, not so fortunate. Their boat was laden with about 200 tons of rock salt for Liverpool, and was therefore lying low in the water. She quickly lost her "cockboat" mast and anchor, and soon became a practical derelict. The *Bengal*, seeing her predicament, tried hard to get a rope aboard, but the wind made it impossible. She also made efforts to get near her, but was unsuccessful, and during the time she was circling round to get astern of her, the *Mountaineer* sank, her hatches having been carried away and her hold filled with water. Nothing was afterwards seen of the men that were aboard, and it is conjectured that they were drowned.

**ANOTHER MIRACULOUS ESCAPE** Another barge, the *Doctor of Winsford*, was in a similar plight to the *Mary Jane*, her head rope having broken whilst in tow of the *Indefensible*. She, however, drifted to Seacombe, and a rope being luckily got on board, she was tied up and escaped damage of any kind.

**WINSFORDIANS RETURN HOME** Thomas Perry returned home to Winsford later the same day, but Reuben Hough remained at Liverpool until Wednesday. They were both very hospitably received at Seacombe by the pier officials, but as they were both drenched to the skin and all their belongings were on board, they had the unpleasant experience of remaining in their wet clothes for nine hours.

**THE MISSING MEN**

**ESTEEMED CASTLE RESIDENTS** The missing crew of the *Mountaineer* are father and son, John Blower (61) and Herbert Blower (26), and in addition to being well known and highly

respected amongst those engaged on the rivers Weaver and Mersey, they are held in the greatest esteem in the Castle district of Northwich, where the family reside.

FIFTY YEARS ON THE RIVER Captain Blower has just completed 50 years' service on the river, and before the formation of the Salt Union, he was employed by Deakin's. To Mrs Blower and to his three sons and three daughters, the deepest sympathy is extended.

The Blower family have long been associated with the Castle Wesleyan Chapel, in connection with which they are enthusiastic workers. Herbert was one of the most active and promising young members, and on Sunday was present at both services, whilst in the afternoon he attended Mr A Birtwistle's Bible class, of which he was also a member. A pathetic incident is the anxiety with which he has been looking forward to a mission in connection with the chapel, and which commences on Sunday. Last Sunday, he expressed the pleasure with which he awaited it.

HERBERT'S DREAM OF DISASTER Herbert Blower, it transpires, often expressed the idea that he thought he would die in his bed, and on Sunday he related a remarkable dream which he had the previous night. His vision was that their barge was sunk, but both he and his father were saved.

THE BREAKING OF THE PAINFUL NEWS It was not until Tuesday afternoon that the family were made acquainted with the terrible news, and then Captain Blower's eldest son, George, was informed of the disaster. Wishing, however, to spare his mother's feelings as much as possible, he made the fullest inquiries before conveying to her the sad intelligence, but he quickly confirmed the fact which had been reported to him. Quite naturally, Mrs Blower and her family are grief stricken at the pathetic happening. Up to Thursday evening, no further tidings of the missing men had been received.

INTERVIEW WITH A SURVIVOR Our representative had an interview with Mr Thomas Perry, the mate of the *Mary Jane*, who was fortunate enough to escape a terrible death by leaping ashore at Seacombe.

Asked how long he had been sailing on the *Mary Jane*, Mr Perry, with a tone of regret, replied, "I have been "hand" on her since 1887, 21 years, and was with old Captain Hough, the father of Reuben Hough".

Our representative next asked if it was the worst experience he had ever had in the Mersey, and Mr Perry replied, "I have had some rough times when the wind has been blowing a hurricane, but taking everything in consideration, it is the worst experience I have ever had. The cold was intense, and there was a perfect blizzard the whole of the time we were on her".

"Had you given up hope when you were not picked up?", asked our representative. "We knew we were at the mercy of God and in His hands to lead us where He wanted us to go, but thank that we were saved", replied Mr Perry.

"Was there any other chance of escape, excepting at Seacombe?" "None. The night was dark, and it was no use hailing, as the wind was blowing too hard. She went clear of everything until she got to Seacombe stage.

"Had you no small boat?" "No, the painters soon broke and the little boat went adrift. My mate suggested a lifebelt, but I said, "If I am to go, I am going quickly. My hands are frost bitten now at the finger ends".

"Supposing a rope had been thrown?" "I do not think we could have stuck to it, we were that starved. They threw a rope from the *Bengal* over the *Mountaineer*, but they were that starved they could not take it in from fore to aft".

"Did you see any boats that could have helped you?" "Yes, when we were going past Birkenhead stage, a ferry boat went by. We hailed her, but could not make anyone hear".

"Did they see you?" "They must have seen us, but took no notice".

"Would they think there was anything wrong?" "No, I don't think they would, because they would most certainly have rendered assistance if they had seen us in difficulty. There would appear no danger".

"Did you save anything belonging to you?" "No, we were glad to save ourselves".

"Did you hear anything of the *Mountaineer* again after you went away drifting?" "No, we never saw the poor chaps again.

“Did you hear anyone call from the *Mountaineer*?” “I heard the captain shout to the *Bengal*, “Try to get us aboard ; we are sinking””.

“Did the *Bengal* try her best?” “Yes, she did everything possible, but the night was terrible, and the wind blew her everywhere. She threw a rope over the *Mountaineer* once, but missed her mark, and it was while she was taking a turn to try the rope again that the *Mountaineer* foundered”.

Mr Perry added that he believed if the rope which was attached to the *Bengal* and *Mary Jane* had not got a foul of the *Mountaineer* and set them all adrift, the *Bengal* would have been able to pick the *Mountaineer* up again.

## 5 9 January 1909

### RIVAL CANAL BOATMEN

CASE AT KNUTSFORD SESSIONS At Knutsford Quarter Sessions on Thursday, **Ernest Poole**, aged 20, boatman, surrendered to his bail, charged with maliciously wounding James Buckley at Odd Rode on November 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr O F Dowson prosecuted and Mr Colt Williams defended.

The case was stated by Mr Dowson, and after James Buckley and Dr Riddell of Sandbach had given evidence, the jury found the prisoner guilty of common assault, and prisoner was ordered to pay 40s.

## 6 10 February 1909

### RUNCORN LICENSING SESSIONS

POLICE REPORT Superintendent Ennion reported that there were 44 licensed victuallers, 49 beersellers and three others who sold off the premises, a total of 96, giving an average of 234 of the population to each licence, according to the population of the division in 1908, and an average of 219 to each licence according to the population in 1901. Seventy nine persons had been proceeded against for drunkenness during the year, 69 of whom were convicted. Of the persons proceeded against, 69 were apprehended and 12 summoned. Of those, four were skilled workmen, 9 were sailors and boatmen, 40 were labourers, 15 were married women and widows, and one farmer, one prostitute and nine tramps. Of this number, 44 were residents of the district and 35 non resident.

## 7 26 June 1909

### RUNCORN BOATMAN'S NEGLECT

GAVE HIS DAUGHTER AWAY At the Runcorn Police Court on Wednesday morning, before Messrs E Imison and John Littler, **William Gough**, a boatman, was charged with neglecting to maintain his three children, leaving them chargeable to the Guardians of the Runcorn Union.

Mr Thomas Cooke, relieving officer, said that proceedings had been taken against the prisoner by the NSPCC, and he was sent to prison for three months. Two of the children were sent to the workhouse. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> April last, **Mary**, the eldest child, presented herself at the workhouse and said that her father had given her away to some boatpeople at Stockton Heath, but they thrashed her and ill-treated her so much that she ran away. Prisoner was able to work and maintain his family if he would do so. He should have taken the children out of the workhouse on the 28<sup>th</sup> September last, but he made no inquiries and no attempts to repay the Guardians.

Mr W E Hough, deputy clerk to the Guardians, said that the prisoner's family had cost the ratepayers 15s a week during the time they had been chargeable.

Superintendent Ennion said that the prisoner had been arrested on a warrant. The warrant had been taken to Salford, Manchester, Liverpool and different parts of Yorkshire. He was arrested on the towing-path at Sale.

The clerk (Mr P Johnson) asked the prisoner if he had made any inquiries about the children.

Prisoner said that he had been looking for work, and some of his relatives had promised to look after the children. He had never earned more than 2s or 3s a day. Sometimes he had earned 16s in a week. He had to clothe and keep himself out of this and he had nothing left.

Mr Imison said it was evident that the prisoner had never taken any interest in his family at all, and never inquired what was being done by the relatives. He must go to prison for a month with hard

labour. He advised him that when he came out of gaol he should do his duty by his family.

## **8 10 July 1909**

**RUNCORN FLATMAN DROWNED** A sad drowning affair occurred at the Brunswick Dock, Liverpool, on Tuesday. **William Burrows** (18), one of the hands working on the flat *Excelsior*, was engaged with a small boat making fast a line to the dredger *Tantalus* with the object of hauling the flat round to get into Coburg Dock. The young man's father, Thomas Burrows of 52 Cawdor Street, Runcorn, went to see how the operation was proceeding, and was horrified to find his son missing from the boat. An alarm was raised and grappling at once commenced. The body was recovered an hour later at eight o'clock, and removed to the Prince's Dock mortuary. Deceased could not swim. An inquest was held by the Liverpool Coroner on Wednesday morning. The verdict was "Accidentally drowned".

## **9 4 August 1909**

**GALLANTRY AND DEATH**

**YOUNG HERO'S LIFE LOST**

**ATTEMPT TO RESCUE CHILD**

**CHILD SAVED** An inquest was held at Stretford Town Hall on Saturday morning by Mr J McDonald, sitting as deputy coroner, concerning the death of Richard Thompson aged 16 of Lacey Street, Stretford, who lost his life on the previous Thursday in a gallant attempt to save the life of a boy named Norman Shaw, aged nine, who had fallen into the canal. Shaw was rescued by a boatman.

Mary Thompson, wife of George Thompson, labourer, mother of deceased, gave evidence of identification. Her son, she stated, was employed at Williams and Smith's boat building yard, Edge Lane, Stretford, and was a smith. She last saw him alive when he left home at 1.20 pm on Thursday to start work at 1.30.

John Jones, 4 Pembroke Street, Seedley, said he was a clerk employed at the boat yard, and about two on Thursday afternoon he heard shouting by some men on the Bridgewater Canal. He ran out of the office and saw deceased swimming in the canal and he watched him. He was making for the towing-path side and swimming very slowly – witness had heard there was a child in the canal, and he took it deceased was making towards the child, though at the time there was no child visible in the water. When a little more than half way across, deceased showed signs of trouble and stopped swimming. The water appeared to turn him round, and he shouted twice and suddenly disappeared. They could not hear what deceased said. The body of deceased came up once and then sank. Meanwhile a boatman had jumped from the canal side into the water and rescued the child, a boy of about nine years. The boatman entered the canal again and made an attempt to find Thompson using a boat hook, but was unsuccessful.

In answer to a juror he said deceased was a good swimmer, but he was afraid he was weighted down by his clothes and apron. He was wearing heavy clothing.

In answer to the Coroner, he said the child rescued would be only about three yards from the side of the canal when taken from the water.

In answer to another juror, he said that he and others raised an alarm when deceased sank, and no time was lost in an attempt at rescue except the time occupied in the procuring of a rope by the boatman. When he saw the first sign of trouble, he thought it was simply caused by the splash made in the water when the boatman went in for the child, but deceased disappeared almost instantly afterwards. There was at the moment no one on the bank who could swim.

Constable Gardner said he hastened to the canal bank in response to a summons about 2.25, and he recovered the body with grappling irons from about the middle of the canal. He and Dr Hart, who was sent for, used every means to restore animation, but without success.

The Coroner said the act of deceased in attempting the rescue had been very plucky, and he was doing a worthy action at the time of his death. That was the lesson they learned.

A verdict of "Accidentally drowned" was returned.

Several jurors stated that the boy Shaw had been rescued on a number of occasions from the canal, one juror saying that his boy had saved him twice.

Sergeant Bromilow, in answer to a juror, said children reached the towing path from a field at the back of Lacey Street.

Mr G H Robinson and Mr W Shawcross (jurors) raised the question as to whether the Ship Canal authorities could not be asked to do something with a view to making an iron fencing at the spot referred to, so close as to prevent children from walking on to the canal side.

The Coroner said doubtless the Press would make mention of this, and in that way the matter would come before the notice of the canal authorities.

The witness Jones, on behalf of the workpeople employed at the boat yard and the firm, expressed the great sorrow occasioned by this young hero's death. Thompson, he said, was a good lad and diligent at his work.

The Coroner said he and the jury joined in this expression of sympathy with the parents.

## **10 14 August 1909**

### **BOATWOMAN AND THE BUTTER**

**THEFT AT NORTHWICH** At the Northwich Police Court on Monday, before Messrs H Bratt (chairman) and T B Moreton, **Mary Ann Hodson**, a boatwoman residing at Wheelock, was charged with stealing 3 lb of butter, value 2s, from the counter in Worsley's pawn shop in Leicester Street, the property of Emma Dudley.

The prosecutrix stated that she was a married woman and resided at 2 Moss Bank Cottages, Winnington. At 3.15 on Saturday she bought 3 lb of butter for which she paid 2s, and afterwards went to Worsley's pawn shop in Leicester Street to make a purchase. She left the butter on the counter, and did not miss it until she got to the Town Bridge, on the way home. She sent her boy back for it, but he returned without it. She then went back herself and met the prisoner carrying a bag. She had a conversation with Mr Dutton, assistant to Messrs Worsley, and again leaving the shop met the prisoner in High Street. Witness asked her had she taken three pounds of butter off Worsley's counter, and she said, "No". She said she believed she had, and asked the prisoner to let her look in her bag, but she would not. Witness told a man to fetch a policeman, and when he had gone, prisoner pulled the butter out of the bag and, offering it to her, said she had never done anything in her life like it before.

Samuel Dutton, residing at 41 Moreton Street, Winnington, said he was a pawnbroker's assistant in the employ of Messrs Worsley. At 3.30 on Saturday afternoon Mrs Dudley made a purchase at their shop, and then left. Shortly afterwards her son came back and asked had they seen anything of a parcel of butter. The prisoner was in the shop at the time, and could hear what was said. A little later Mrs Dudley returned, but they failed to find the butter in the shop.

PS Worthington stated that at 3.45 on Saturday afternoon he was called to High Street, and there saw the prisoner and the prosecutrix holding a conversation. The prisoner was holding the butter out in her hand as though she wanted to give it to the prosecutrix. She said, "Do take it back ; don't have me locked up. I never did anything like this before". He took her into custody, and on charging her with the offence she made no reply.

Prisoner : I picked it up off the floor. I did not steal it.

The Clerk : If you picked it up off the floor you stole it. It was not yours.

Prisoner : It is the first time I have ever been in a court.

Superintendent Cooper : There is nothing known against the prisoner. She has a house at Wheelock but comes to Marston with her boat.

The Chairman said it was fortunate nothing was known against the prisoner. She would be bound over under the Probation Act for six months.

## **11 21 August 1909**

**"SLEEPING OUT" AT RUNCORN** Police-constable Wynne of the Runcorn force made a search of Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co's boatyard at Runcorn in the small hours of Thursday morning,

with the result that Albert Oakes, a Runcornian, was found sleeping on the cabin of one of the canal boats. PC Wynne told Mr Imison, at a Police Court held later in the day, that the foreman had made several complaints of the nuisance sleepers out caused. The prisoner said he was a native of Runcorn, and had last worked at Galloway's, Manchester, twelve months ago. He had tried to get work at Wigg's works on Wednesday, but found they had stopped fifty men that day. PC Wynne said that the prisoner had earned 4s 6d on Tuesday by emptying a canal boat, but had spent the money in drink. Oakes was sent to gaol for seven days.

## 12 21 August 1909

### BOAT PEOPLE'S SQUABBLE

SEQUEL AT RUNCORN POLICE COURT **William Atkins**, a Staffordshire boatman, was summoned by an elderly bargee named **Thomas Harrison** for assault at the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday, before Messrs John Littler and Thomas Wright.

Defendant pleaded not guilty.

The complainant said that he was captain and owner of the boat *Mary Ann*. On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July about three in the afternoon, the defendant came to his boat, entered the cabin and struck him on the nose with his clenched fist. He said, "I will put your lights out". Prosecutor got out of the cabin as quickly as he could. He had not spoken to the defendant that day before he was struck by him. He had known him all his life. He (complainant) belonged to Milton, near Leek, while defendant was a Tunstall man. He had never had any row with the man before. At ten o'clock the same evening, defendant came to the boat again. He was drunk and began cursing. Complainant was in bed, but he got up. Defendant "chucked" the water can down the cabin, flooding the floor. He then got the tiller shaft and poked at complainant through the scuttle. Complainant got hold of the shaft and pulled it into the cabin. Then defendant got a shaft from another boat, but he could not get that through the scuttle. Complainant's horse remained in its stable all Sunday without any food, as in consequence of the defendant's threats, he did not care to go out. Defendant was hanging about the bank all day watching for him.

Defendant said he went to see the complainant because complainant's mate had waved a flag at him and he wanted to know what the action meant. Defendant was his "great big uncle". (Laughter). He had married two of his (defendant's) father's sisters. (Laughter). Defendant explained that the cause of the bother was that the defendant (*sic*), in his opinion, had been paying marked attention to his sister, whose husband, Joseph Bailey, was ill in hospital. Addressing the complainant, defendant told him he was a disgrace to his family and ought to be ashamed of himself. When he went to see him on the boat, complainant struck him on the forehead, drawing blood, and tried to strangle him. He was trying to break Bailey's home up and this was what defendant resented. He denied any assault whatever.

**Isabella Alice Atkins**, wife of the defendant, spoke to advising her husband to "have nothing to do with such trash". When her husband came out of Harrison's boat's cabin, he was bleeding on the forehead.

Complainant : You weren't there.

Defendant was fined 5s and 10s 6d costs.

## 13 11 September 1909

### RUNCORN MAN'S DEATH

#### JURY AND WITNESS

UNSATISFACTORY EVIDENCE On Tuesday evening at Runcorn Police Court, Coroner Ridgway held an inquiry into the death of **Walter Hough**, captain of the canal barge *Peter*; belonging to Messrs Thomas Rigby and Sons of Frodsham Bridge Mills. On Friday August 27<sup>th</sup> at Northwich, deceased met an accident by being crushed between his barge and another barge. He succumbed on Sunday night. Mr Wardle (Burton and Wardle) was for the relatives of the deceased, and Mr C H Wright (Ayrtton, Radcliffe and Wright, Liverpool) and Mr W D Ringrose represented Messrs Rigby.

The first witness called was **John Herbert Hough**, 6 Chaucer Street, Runcorn, waterman in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Co, who said the deceased was his father and was 57 years of age. Deceased was brought home at six on Friday night, the 27<sup>th</sup> August. He was injured. Deceased told him how the accident had happened. The barge was at Northwich, in the Weaver, at noon on Friday. Deceased sent the crew down to have their dinner, and when they were halfway through, the captain or the mate of the steam packet *Russia* shouted, "*Peter*, ahoy". The deceased went ashore to let go the stern rope and the mate went forward to give the steam packet a rope, and the packet pulled ahead and the bow rope broke. After he had let go the rope, deceased tried to jump aboard, but the boat was too far off and he could not manage it. They shouted to him to go to a barge lower down and they would pick him up. He did so and he jumped up to get aboard the *Peter*. He seized the rail and shouted to the mate, "Hard a starboard", but the flat did not sheer off as he expected and he was crushed between the barge and a floating blacksmith's shop. He was then pulled aboard by the mate. He had always enjoyed the best of health.

By Mr Wardle : Deceased was a sober, steady man, and had been with Rigby's for 30 years.

**Thomas Edward Hayes**, 10 Galton Street, Liverpool, mate of the *Peter*, said if the deceased had tried to jump on the barge he would have dropped into the river. Deceased got on the Navigation (blacksmith's) flat, and as the *Peter* was passing, deceased got hold of the timber head. Witness starboarded the helm, but deceased was jammed between the door of the flat and the *Peter*. The door ought not to have been left open ; it should be locked. When deceased got on board, he got hold of the tiller and shouted, "I'm all right, go on". The captain of the *Russia* cast off the barge, because he thought deceased was badly injured and refused to take it to Liverpool. They moored the barge, and deceased stayed on board two hours. Witness wanted to fetch a doctor, but deceased would not have one. A packet named the *Dauntless* afterwards took the barge to Rocksavage Bridge, and deceased was taken home in a cab. The captain of the *Russia* never told anybody at any of the locks of the accident, and it would have been all the same if the man had been dead.

By the Foreman : The breaking of the bow rope had nothing to do with the accident?

The Coroner : How does a man get on board usually when he loosens a rope? - The best way he can. The packet was in that big a hurry there was no time to do anything.

By a Jurymen : If the captain of the packet had not been in such a hurry, deceased could have got on board?

By Mr Wardle : It was frequent that a man had to jump aboard when the barge was moving. The *Russia* belonged to the Salt Union.

**Richard Parry Roberts** of Hartford, Greenbank, Northwich, said he was captain of the steam packet *Russia*. He had instructions to pick up the *Peter* at Yarwood's Dockyard. They whistled to the barge when they were up the cut, but evidently the crew did not hear the whistle, and when they got near they hailed the barge. He expected people to hear the whistle if they were in the cabin. When deceased let go his ropes off the quay, the boat swirled off with the backwater and, of course, deceased could not get aboard and, in consequence, he had to go along a couple of hundred yards lower down the river. He got on the floating blacksmith's shop, with which they repaired locks, and then got on board his own barge. He did not see the accident.

The Coroner : Why was he not able to get on his boat from the side? - Because she had swirled off with the backwater.

Is it usual to make backwater? - Oh, yes.

Replying to further questions, witness said he was employed by the Salt Union, and they did towing for Rigby's or any other outside firms when they could. A runner named Molyneux at Winsford instructed him to pick up the *Peter*, if he chose. That meant if it would not be an encumbrance to his work. He did not go full speed when he picked the *Peter* up.

The Coroner : They say you were too quick? - Nothing of the kind. We brought her up.

Didn't you exactly stop? - Not exactly, but almost.

There is a difference between almost and stopping? - If I were to say we stopped I should tell a lie, and I am not going to do that.

The man has to pull his ropes off ashore, and if your boat never stops, is it possible for the man to

get aboard? - Yes. Witness added that when they were abreast the boat, he told the engineer to back up while they hung on the rope.

What was the hurry? - There was no hurry.

Did you do what was usual in picking up flats? - Yes. If we had stopped altogether, the flat would have come off as soon as the ropes were loosened. Witness proceeded to say that he saw the mate pulling deceased on board ; he thought he was hurt, but the deceased and his mate said he was not. He did not like the looks of him, and so refused to tow the flat to Liverpool. He thought it best for deceased to stay where there was a doctor and an Infirmary, and be attended to. He went to Cannon Dock, Liverpool, reaching there about eight pm, and he did not tell anybody about the accident, because he did not know the man was hurt.

Would it not have been as well to have told somebody on the way down, or at the docks? - I don't see that it would have made any difference at all.

By a Jurymen : Deceased walked abreast the packet until he got to the blacksmith's barge.

The Coroner : How long have you been with the Salt Union? - Since it was formed. I have had this boat 24 years.

And you have got so accustomed to it that you don't give anybody much time? - If I don't know what to do with a boat it is time I cleared off. I think I have been there long enough.

I don't say you don't know all about it, but this time you did not give this man time to get the barge ready? - I consider myself that we did everything necessary in regards to stopping and not pulling him. The thing could not have been done easier and quieter.

Dr Cullen said deceased had sustained a fracture of the pelvis and severe injury to the pelvic organs, which set up peritonitis. Death ensued through the injuries. Deceased was a healthy, well nourished man.

The Coroner, in summing up, said Roberts' evidence might have been straighter. The jury had simply to decide whether death occurred through injuries received by the accident, and to be satisfied that no one contributed to the accident.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death", and added that they thought Roberts ought to have used greater care in picking up this barge. He was in too much of a hurry. They were not quite satisfied with his evidence either.

The Coroner conveyed this to Roberts, who said, "I don't consider we were in any hurry".

The Coroner : Never you mind. If you want to speak you must stand up and speak properly. I think your evidence has not been as satisfactory as it ought to have been from a man of your experience.

Mr Wright said Messrs Thomas Rigby and Son Ltd desired to express their sympathy with the relatives of the deceased in their loss. Walter Hough had been in the employ of the firm for over a quarter of a century, and they had always found him an excellent servant, faithful in every respect, and they had sustained a great loss by his death.

The Coroner and jury added their condolences.

## **14 22 September 1909**

### **AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS**

**RUNCORN MATRIMONIAL FAILURE** At the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday, **Arthur Houghton** of Church Place, Belvedere, Runcorn, applied for a separation order to be made against his wife, **Elizabeth Houghton**, on the ground that she was an habitual drunkard.

Defendant pleaded "not guilty".

Samuel (sic) Houghton, waterman, Belvedere, said he had been married to the defendant for 15 years, and had three children aged 14, five and two years respectively. He had recently had to complain a lot of his wife's conduct. She was in the habit of getting speechlessly drunk. The children were neglected in consequence and she had not looked after the house. For fourteen years she had gone from bad to worse. If her sister and the neighbours had not taken them in, they would have starved. She had neglected washing them.

Defendant said her husband was the cause of the drunken habits.

Complainant said she had been teetotal for several weeks at a time, but then she would break out for

three weeks and strip the house. He had had to go to the Police Station about her several times.

Mrs Atherton, a neighbour, corroborated. Defendant had drinking bouts now and again.

**George Houghton** (14), son of the parties, said his mother had been in the habit of having sprees now and again. When she broke out in this way, the children were neglected.

Inspector Preston of the NSPCC said he was called on by the plaintiff on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September. He made a complaint, in consequence of which witness went to his house that day. He saw the parties and the child **John**. The child was dirty, but fairly well nourished. **Samuel**, the other child, was in similar condition. The children's room and bedding were very dirty. Mrs Houghton was drunk, dirty and untidy, and had the appearance of having been on the drink. Her husband accused the defendant in his presence of immorality, and she partially admitted it was true. He found that she had been under the supervision of his predecessors in the district, and was often under the influence of drink.

Superintendent Ennion said that Houghton had made complaints to him, and he had seen the defendant under the influence of drink.

Defendant elected to give evidence and said she was not an habitual drunkard. She had provided food for the children. She was not drunk when the superintendent called. Her husband had treated her scandalously. She proceeded to make allegations of immorality and, in reply to the Clerk, she said that she could call witnesses to testify the truth of what she said.

The Bench thereupon remanded the case till next Monday's Sessions in order that the woman might have an opportunity of bringing her witnesses. The complainant raised no objections to the remand.

## **15 16 October 1909**

### **RUNCORN BOY DROWNED**

**FATALITY AT TOP LOCKS** Mr Thomas Ridgway, district coroner, held an inquest on Monday afternoon at the Runcorn Court on the body of **Thomas Jones**, aged nine years, son of Thomas Jones of 10 Shaw Street, Runcorn, who was found drowned on Sunday. Mr Charles Dutton was foreman of the jury, and Mr F Wilkinson represented the Ship Canal Company.

The father of the deceased said he was a labourer in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, and he last saw his son alive on Friday night. He was then in the best of health. He had been subject to fits up to four or five years ago, but to his knowledge he had had none since then. At seven o'clock on the Friday evening they went to bed together. He first missed him at one o'clock on Saturday afternoon when he didn't meet him on Waterloo Bridge for his "Saturday's penny". He was last at home at 11.30 on Saturday morning, when he went out to play. He informed the police and searched all over Runcorn Hills on Saturday night and early on Sunday morning. The lad was found in the canal on Sunday morning.

The Coroner : Had he been in the habit of playing around the canal where he was found?

Witness : No. I cautioned him very severely about it, and he did not frequent there as far as I knew. Boys were always playing up and down Pig Lane.

**Joseph Bayley**, lock tender in the employ of the Bridgewater Department of the Ship Canal Company, said he saw the deceased boy about a quarter to five on Saturday afternoon, running up and down on a flat called *Tom* lying in the Bridgewater Canal at the bottom of Pig Lane. Three boys were playing with him. He shouted at them to clear away, and they ran off. As soon as he had gone away, they returned to their play on the flat. He did not see the lad again. Boys were continually playing about there around the flats.

**George Simpson Rinds**, an employee of the Ship Canal Company, spoke to recovering the body on Sunday about 100 yards from the flat. He did not think he had fallen off the flat.

The Coroner, in reviewing the evidence, said the boy had undoubtedly fallen from the canal side. It was very sad that he should be drowned in this way, but there was a good deal of water about Runcorn, and the risk was, of course, very great to boys like this. He felt sure had anyone seen him fall in they would have tried to rescue him. They saw in the local papers from time to time many cases where rescues had been effected and lives saved after very brave conduct.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

## **16 20 October 1909**

### **CABINET MAKER FOUND DROWNED DEPRESSED THROUGH LOSING HIS WIFE**

**AN OPEN VERDICT** Deputy coroner F Jones held an enquiry on Friday afternoon at the Padgate Stocks Inn, into the circumstances surrounding the death of William Andrew Malcolm, aged 33 years, who had lately resided at Mrs Byrne's, 29 Wellington Street, Warrington.

David Malcolm, an assistant registrar in Scotland, said the deceased was his brother. He last saw him when he was on a visit to Scotland twelve months ago. His brother had been working for Garnett's, cabinet makers, Warrington, for two months. There was no reason, so far as he knew, why he should take away his life. He (the deceased) was married about a year ago, but his wife died on August 22<sup>nd</sup> from cancer on the breast. Since then he had been very depressed.

Louisa Byrne, 29 Wellington Street, said the deceased had lodged with her mother for about a month. About six p m on Sunday October 3<sup>rd</sup>, she went to church and left him on the sofa. When witness returned he had gone out, and she had not seen him since. During the time he had lodged with her mother he seemed very depressed about losing his wife. Witness had never heard him threaten to take away his life.

William Smith, 85 Algernon Street, cabinet maker, said he had known the deceased several years, and was in his company on Monday night, October 4<sup>th</sup>. Witness left him about 11.30 in Manchester Road. Malcolm told witness he was going for a walk, and he also said he felt as if he could sleep. Witness said, "If I were you, Bill, I'd go home". Witness had known him for ten years as a steady man.

**John Rathbone**, lock-keeper at Paddington, said that about 3.30 pm on Wednesday he was walking alongside the river Mersey, when he noticed the body of a man floating in the water. Witness went for the drags and pulled him to the side. Witness gave information to the police, and the body was conveyed to the Stocks Inn. The deceased was fully dressed, but his cap was missing.

Constable Caleb Metcalfe, stationed at Woolston, said he found in deceased's clothes 1s 0 1/2d and a bill relating to his wife's funeral, which led to his identification. Deceased was wearing his wife's wedding ring.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned", and expressed their sympathy with the deceased's brother.

## **17 30 October 1909**

### **NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS**

**THAT LANGUAGE!** The following fines were imposed for the use of obscene language : **Henry Wright**, boatman, 2 Tunnel Road, Barnton, 10s.

**RUNCORN CYCLIST IN THE DARK** **Daniel Russell**, a flatman, 56 Ellesmere Street, Runcorn, was mulcted in a fine of 2s, for riding a bicycle without the light in Runcorn Road, Barnton, at 2 am on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Defendant said the wind kept blowing his light out. PC Manley proved the case.

## **18 10 November 1909**

### **RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY**

**CHILD NOT AT SCHOOL** **William Barber**, canal boatman, was fined 7s 6d, including costs, for failing to send his child to school regularly. Attendance Officer Bowyer said the boy was 14 years of age at Christmas, but had only passed Standard II. Mr A Lightburn prosecuted for the Education Authority.

## **19 11 December 1909**

### **RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY**

**TWENTY FIVE BOTTLES** Thomas Radley, Heath Road, and **Samuel Ellis**, a boatman, were charged with having used obscene language. They admitted the offence. Superintendent Ennion and PC Prince proved the case. The Superintendent said there were seven men and two women in

Radley's house at one o'clock in the morning, and two men left just before. There were 25 half pint stout and beer bottles on the table – most of them empty. The majority of people in the house were advanced in drink. Each of the defendants was fined 10s.

## **20 11 December 1909**

**COUNTY COURT JUDGE AND COMPENSATION** At the Runcorn County Court on Tuesday, Mr Wardle, solicitor, made an application to his Honour Judge Shires Will KC on behalf of **Miss Lily Evelyn Hough** of Havergel Street, for the payment out of £300, compensation awarded at the last Court. Mr Wardle explained that the applicant's father was killed whilst following his employment as a waterman with Rigby and Sons of Frodsham, and this money was in respect of compensation. She purposed meeting current liabilities and investing the remainder in London and North Western Railway four per cent pref stock. After some consideration his Honour said the experience of county court judges was that compensation money when paid out was squandered. It was the usual thing to invest it in the Post Office Savings Bank, which brought in two and a half per cent. It was the duty of the Court to take care of it for her, but as the applicant was so confident she could look after it, he would make an exception and grant the application.

## **21 22 January 1910**

### **NEGLIGENT TERRITORIALS**

**FINED AT RUNCORN** At the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday, before Messrs F Boston and J M Frith, **Arthur Guest**, waterman of Seacombe, **Frank Ashley** of Shaw Street, Runcorn, waterman and Mark Waterworth, seaman of Runcorn were summoned for having failed to make themselves efficient members of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment, of which body they are recruits. Guest and Waterworth pleaded guilty and Ashley not guilty.

Mr W E Hough, who prosecuted, said that the men had enlisted in the Territorial Army for four years. Guest was a first year recruit. Whatever might be said in favour of the old Volunteer force, it was clear that a high standard of efficiency was not required. The state of things was now considerably altered, and the Territorials were entitled to the dignity and glory of the British soldier. At the same time they were required to make themselves efficient as such soldiers, and there was a certain annual training they had to put in. The annual training gave, as the first year, for recruits 40 drills, and opportunities had been afforded the defendants on two nights per week to put in two drills per night, a total of four per week. The men were also required to attend camp for a period of not less than eight days and to put in some musketry drill, which meant one pleasant trip to Altcar and the firing of 50 rounds of ammunition down the miniature (...) at the Drill Hall. Guest had put in only 27 drills out of 40. He did not attend camp, but he had obtained leave in the ordinary way. He had not put in any musketry training. The men who joined the force were thoroughly acquainted with the obligations which they undertook when they enlisted. The result of a member of the force being inefficient was that there was a loss of grant to the association amounting to 22s and, of course, the man was incapable of properly performing his duty as a soldier. The offence was not a trivial one, as an inefficient soldier would be of no use on the field of battle. He was not, however, instructed to press for a heavy penalty and the object of the proceedings was to obtain proper discipline in the Territorial Force, and to let the public understand that they were getting a real, sound, substantial branch of the Army for what it was costing them.

Colour Sergeant Peers of Frodsham, drill instructor, produced the defendants' attestation forms.

Arrangements could be made for a recruit who was called upon to reside in another town to put in his drills there.

Guest said he had been living at Seacombe for some time. He was a waterman and never could tell when he would finish work.

In the case of Ashley Mr Hough said he had only put in 13 drills out of 40, but he had been to camp and had received an allowance of 2s a day and his railway fare, which was further loss to the battalion. He had not completed his musketry course.

Defendant's excuse was that his work on the water had prevented him putting in his drills.

The Clerk : Why didn't you go to the commanding officer?

Defendant said at the time he enlisted he was a dock labourer, but his firm afterwards transferred him to work on the boats. Before he went to camp he went to Mr Hollingsworth, his superior, and asked him to write to Colonel Ashton about his drills, but someone was there, and the note was mislaid. He got a letter about the encampment and he went to camp.

In reply to the Clerk, Mr Hough said that Territorials could withdraw on giving three months' notice to the commanding officer, forfeiting £5 and returning their clothing in good condition. These conditions could be varied by the officer under any special circumstances.

Waterworth said that he came out of work after enlisting, and as he had to get work of some sort he went to sea, and had been away on a steam boat for twelve months.

Mr Hough : He has been in the force for 18 months.

The Chairman said that all the cases appeared similar in character. The men knew the responsibilities which they had taken upon themselves, and they were liable to be fined as much as £5. As the case was not pressed, they would each be fined 10s and costs, with the alternative of 14 days' imprisonment.

## **22 19 February 1910**

MISSING NORTHWICH POSTMAN

BODY FOUND IN CANAL AT WINWICK



On Thursday January 6<sup>th</sup>, Mr Alfred Barratt of 91 Middlewich Road, Northwich, who had been a postman in the town for a number of years, mysteriously disappeared. He had been of a bright and cheery disposition until a few weeks before, when he was seized with an attack of nervous debility and had to relinquish his postal duties on Christmas Day. On Wednesday January 5<sup>th</sup>, he left home shortly after 3 p m for the purpose of going to Weston, near Runcorn, to spend a brief holiday with his sister, in the hope that a change might have a beneficial effect on his health. He arrived there safely at 4.30, and stayed the night, and also the next day. He wrote a couple of letters, one to his wife and another to a relative in India, and left at 7 p m, presumably to post them. Nothing was heard of him afterwards until last Friday night, when his body was found in the Sankey and St Helens Canal at Winwick, and conveyed to the Swan Hotel. Deceased was fully dressed and had in his possession £4 and some insurance papers. The body was identified by deceased's son on Saturday.

The late Mr Barratt was very well known and much respected in and around Northwich. He had been in the postal service for many years, and was of such a genial disposition that everybody who had the pleasure of his acquaintance was completely shocked when he was missed from his home. The deceased was an enthusiastic sportsman, and a keen supporter of Witton Albion Football Club. He was also a prominent member of the local lodge of Buffaloes, and ever since his initiation has greatly interested himself in the affairs of the society, and was most regular in his attendance at the weekly meeting of the lodge. In addition to that, he was officially connected with the Witton Mutual Benefit Society.

The news of the finding of deceased's body was received with feelings of sincere regret by his numerous friends in Northwich and the immediate district.

**INQUEST AT WINWICK** The inquest was held at the Swan Hotel, Winwick, on Tuesday afternoon, by Mr F A Jones, deputy coroner.

Thomas George Barratt said he had seen the body which had been found in the canal. It was that of his father, who lived at 91 Middlewich Road, Northwich. The deceased was 42 years of age last birthday. He last saw his father at home, before going to business, and he was depressed, as he had been for a fortnight previously. On Christmas morning, the deceased was granted a month's sick leave owing to nervous debility. He had been medically attended. The nervous debility was, in witness's opinion, due "simply to overwork". Deceased made up his mind to go to Weston and he wrote home saying he intended to stay until the Saturday. He posted the letter on the Thursday evening, and was not seen again alive by any member of the family.

The Coroner : Except for the nervous debility, was there any reason why he should take away his life?

Witness : Nothing whatever. He was a most popular man, and one without an enemy of any description I should say.

The Coroner : By the courtesy of the representative of the *Warrington Guardian*, I have been shown a newspaper cutting relating to the deceased, who appears to have been greatly respected in Northwich. The Coroner then read an extract taken from that day's *Northwich Guardian*.

**William Bate** said he was a waterman employed at Hulme Lock, Winwick. On the 11<sup>th</sup> February he saw a body in the canal at 11.45 a.m. He got it out. It was fully dressed, but the cap was missing. He put the body on one side, and then went for the police.

PC Wilson Woof, stationed at Winwick, said that on Friday he received information from the last witness of the finding of the body, which he had removed to the Swan Hotel. There were no marks of violence on the body. He found a sum of £4 1s on the body, a silver watch and chain, a split ring, ten keys, and several books – apparently insurance club books – and other papers and books. The place where the body was found was very dangerous.

The Coroner : I don't think you can deal with the question of a dangerous spot, because the deceased may not have got into the water at that spot. You see he had come all the way from Weston. This nervous debility may have caused him to take away his life, but there is no evidence of that. All the jury will be sorry to hear of his death, whichever way it came about. He appears to have been a man who was well respected, and we can only offer our sympathy with the relatives in the loss they have sustained. I suggest that you should return a verdict of "Found drowned".

The jury did so, and added that there was no evidence to show how the deceased got into the water.

**THE INTERMENT – IMPRESSIVE SCENES** The body of the deceased was conveyed from Winwick to Northwich on Tuesday night, and the funeral took place at Witton churchyard on Wednesday afternoon. In the neighbourhood of Middlewich Road, where the deceased had resided for a number of years, there were signs of mourning on every hand, and the manifestations of sympathy with the bereaved widow and family were most marked. From the deceased's late residence right to Witton Street, blinds were drawn at every house, and evidence of the high esteem in which he was held was furnished by the large attendance of postal officials, members of the Buffaloes Society and personal friends at the funeral.

## 23 26 February 1910

### A RUNCORN TRAGEDY

SEPTUAGENARIAN FOUND DROWNED At the Runcorn Court House on Tuesday, Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of Patrick Dolan (73) of Fryer Street, whose body was found in the Bridgewater Canal near the Sprinch yard on Saturday morning. Mr Charles Dutton was foreman of the jury.

**Charles Tomkinson**, 6 Wivern Place, a waterman employed by the MSC, said he was pulling a boat up to the Sprinch dockyard at nine o'clock on Saturday morning when he saw the body of the deceased. The body was standing upright, the top part of the head being out of the water. He pulled the body out and went for the police. Deceased would only be a foot from the towing-path.

By the Foreman : The body was floating. The feet were not touching the bottom. The canal was from five feet six inches to six feet deep at this place. It was blowing hard at the time. Artificial respiration was tried by men from the Sprinch yard, but was of no avail.

Robert Dolan, 6 Stonehills Lane, Runcorn, labourer, said the deceased was his father. He was 73 years of age and was employed by the United Alkali Company. He lived in Fryer Street. He had been bad for three years. At that time he lost one of his eyes and had not enjoyed good health. His remaining eye was affected and he found it difficult to see his way. Witness last saw him on Friday morning when he appeared much as usual. He often walked along the canal bank to get to witness's house, because it was quieter and there was no danger from bicycles and vehicles. He had never threatened to take his own life.

Annie Conway, daughter of deceased, said he lived with her at 33 Fryer Street. She last saw him alive between half past seven and eight o'clock on Saturday morning. He then went out suddenly without saying anything to her. She went to look for him. She went to her two brothers' houses, looking for him, but failed to find him. He often went out early in the morning and generally made his way along the canal bank. He had never threatened to take his own life.

By the Jury : He was in good spirits. The reason she went after him when she missed him that morning was because it was windy, and she was afraid he would be blown down, as he was very weak.

**Joseph Firkins**, waterman, 24 Penketh Lane, said he saw the deceased at 8.35 o'clock on Saturday morning. He was going up the Sprinch yard towards the canal bank, and was walking at a good pace.

The Coroner said that that was the whole of the evidence. No one had seen how the man got into the canal.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

## 24 12 March 1910

### NORTHWICH WATERMAN'S TRAGIC END

BODY RECOVERED BY RUNCORN GRAPPLING CORPS The residents of Northwich learned with regret on Friday of the tragic end which had befallen **Mr Thomas Cowley**, a native of the town, whose dead body was found in the Alexandra Dock at Liverpool on the previous afternoon. The deceased, who was 52 years of age, belonged to an old Northwich family, and for 21 years was in the employ of the Salt Union Company Ltd (formerly Messrs Verdin Bros). During the greater portion of that time he was mate, and afterwards captain of the *ss France*. Later he was with the *ss Weaver Belle*, belonging to Mr Harry Seddon. For the last nine years the deceased had resided in Liverpool, being in the successive employ of the African Liner Company, Berrington and Company, Liverpool Salvage Company, and lastly, Messrs T K Hayes and Son, shipowners, Liverpool, for whom he served as captain of the barge *Invermack*. About five o'clock on the afternoon of Monday the 28<sup>th</sup> ult, he left his vessel to go home, his residence being in High Park Street, Liverpool. The boat was then lying in the Alexandra Dock, and the deceased made arrangements to relieve his mate at eight o'clock in the evening. This he did, and beyond the dock constable bidding him "Good evening" between nine and 9.30, he was never again seen alive.

He was missed from the vessel early on Tuesday morning, his cap and handkerchief being found in

the dock alongside the boat. An alarm was raised, and on ascertaining that the deceased had not been home all night, the authorities commenced grappling operations, which were continued until late in the day, but without success. The following day (Wednesday), the grappling was resumed, but no trace of the deceased could be found. The sad news was communicated to his son, Mr T W Cowley of Northwich, who proceeded to Liverpool, and after seeing the Dock Board authorities he got into communication with Captain Byfield of the Runcorn and Widnes Grappling Corps. In the course of about three hours, the members of the corps, in charge of Captain Byfield, had arrived at the Alexandra Dock. Grappling was commenced on Thursday afternoon, and in a short time the body was recovered.

**THE INQUEST** An inquest was held at Bootle Police Station on Friday, and was conducted by Deputy Coroner Jones.

Evidence of identification was given by Mr T W Cowley.

Captain Byfield spoke as to the recovery of the body, and the Coroner highly complimented the captain and his corps for their smart work on this and other occasions.

**Abraham McCann**, mate of the boat on which the deceased was employed as captain, gave evidence as to finding the deceased's cap. He stated that he left the cabin securely locked at 7.30 on Monday night (February 28<sup>th</sup>), and met the deceased at 8.10 in Hill Street. He was then in his usual robust health and spirits, and intended to be on duty on the vessel all night. The next morning the cabin door was found unlocked and everything pointed to the deceased having been aboard. During the night he had apparently gone on deck, missed his footing and fallen overboard. He was a strong swimmer, and, beyond an accident, could easily have saved his own life. When found there was a huge wound over the left eye, and the deceased had evidently struck against something in falling and was thus rendered unconscious.

The Coroner, in summing up, expressed sympathy with the bereaved family, and the jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

With regard to the Runcorn and Widnes Grappling Corps, it is interesting to note that this is a voluntary organisation, under Captain W Byfield, and was founded in 1894. The members of the corps have succeeded in finding the bodies of 120 persons who lost their lives by drowning, while through promptness they have saved 14.

**THE INTERMENT** The remains of the late Mr Cowley were interred in Smithdown Road Cemetery, Liverpool, on Monday.

## **25 19 March 1910**

**WIDNES MAN'S SUDDEN DEATH** On inquiry at the Widnes Police Station on Wednesday, we were informed that a retired flatman named **Thomas Williamson**, aged 65, of Beaumont Street, Widnes, fell down dead the same morning at West Bank Docks.

The circumstances of the case are that deceased, who was in fairly good health and earned his living by doing odd jobs at the docks, left home about seven o'clock in the morning, telling his wife that he was going to the docks to help load a flat. He arrived at his destination about 7.30, and was at once engaged by Captain **James McVey**, of the flat *Sutton*. The captain gave the deceased his breakfast on the flat, and about 9.30 both went ashore, and while talking together, Williamson suddenly fell on to the ground. McVey, who said deceased appeared to be in good health and was cheerful, rendered all aid possible and sent for Dr Hutchinson, who on arrival pronounced life extinct.

## **26 19 March 1910**

### **HUSBANDS AND WIVES**

**SAD WIDNES CASE** **Ellen Kirby**, a Widnes woman, summoned her husband, **Timothy Kirby**, Mersey Road, Widnes, for persistent cruelty, and applied for a separation order. Mr Knowles appeared for defendant. Complainant said defendant was a waterman. They had been married nine years and there were four children. On one occasion – March 5<sup>th</sup> – defendant came home at night and told her he was going to keep her teeth clean during the weekend. She did not stay with him and

secured lodgings. She had summoned defendant once before for assault. The cause was drink. Whenever defendant came home the worse for drink, he kicked her and thumped her “from pillar to post”.

Replying to Mr Knowles, complainant admitted she had a glass at supper time, but she did not abuse it as defendant did.

Alderman Wareing : Is he jealous?

Complainant : Yes, sir, I think he must be.

Mr Knowles said, on complainant's own admission, she had lived in the same house with defendant on the Thursday after the summons was granted. This being so, proceedings could not be taken, as was shown in the case of Williams v Williams heard in the Probate Court. At the same time there was no evidence to show that defendant was guilty of persistent cruelty. The bother commenced when he discovered on Friday night, March 4<sup>th</sup>, that his goods had been taken by the bailiffs. He found his children alone in the kitchen and his wife out.

The Bench granted a separation order, defendant to pay complainant 10s a week, the latter to have the custody of the youngest child.

## **27 26 March 1910**

**RUNCORN LOCK TENTER DROWNED** On Saturday evening **Samuel Ellis** (75) of 19 Heath Road, Runcorn, a veteran lock tenter in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, was following his occupation as usual at the old line of locks when, by some means, he fell into a lock. The water was low at the time, and it is thought probable that the unfortunate man hit the sill with his head. He was got out in a few minutes, and artificial respiration was resorted to, but life was extinct. The body was removed home on the police ambulance.

**THE INQUEST** Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquest at the Runcorn Court House on Tuesday afternoon. Mr G H Kirkham was foreman of the jury. Mr Bowen of Messrs Grundy, Kershaw and Company, Manchester, appeared for the Ship Canal Company.

**Samuel Ellis**, 19 Heath Road, Runcorn, flatman, said the deceased was his father. He was 76 years of age and lived with witness. Witness last saw him alive at five o'clock on Saturday night, near the market. Deceased was going to his work. He seemed all right, and he enjoyed good health. Deceased had never threatened to take his life – he was too fond of living.

By Mr Bowen : He was a cripple and carried a stick with him.

**Robert Moores**, 9 Rutland Street, Runcorn, canal constable, said he last saw the deceased just after noon on Saturday. He was then leaving off work. He was due back at six o'clock. At a quarter past six, two lads came to witness and told him they had seen something in the water. He went to the spot they pointed out and found Constable Leach holding the body of the deceased with a boat hook. Deceased was floating – feet downwards and face in the water. There would be eight or nine feet of water there. Deceased was close to his work, but further away than witness would have expected. He was got out at once, and artificial respiration resorted to for 40 minutes, but it was of no use. Deceased was found in the Frances Basin.

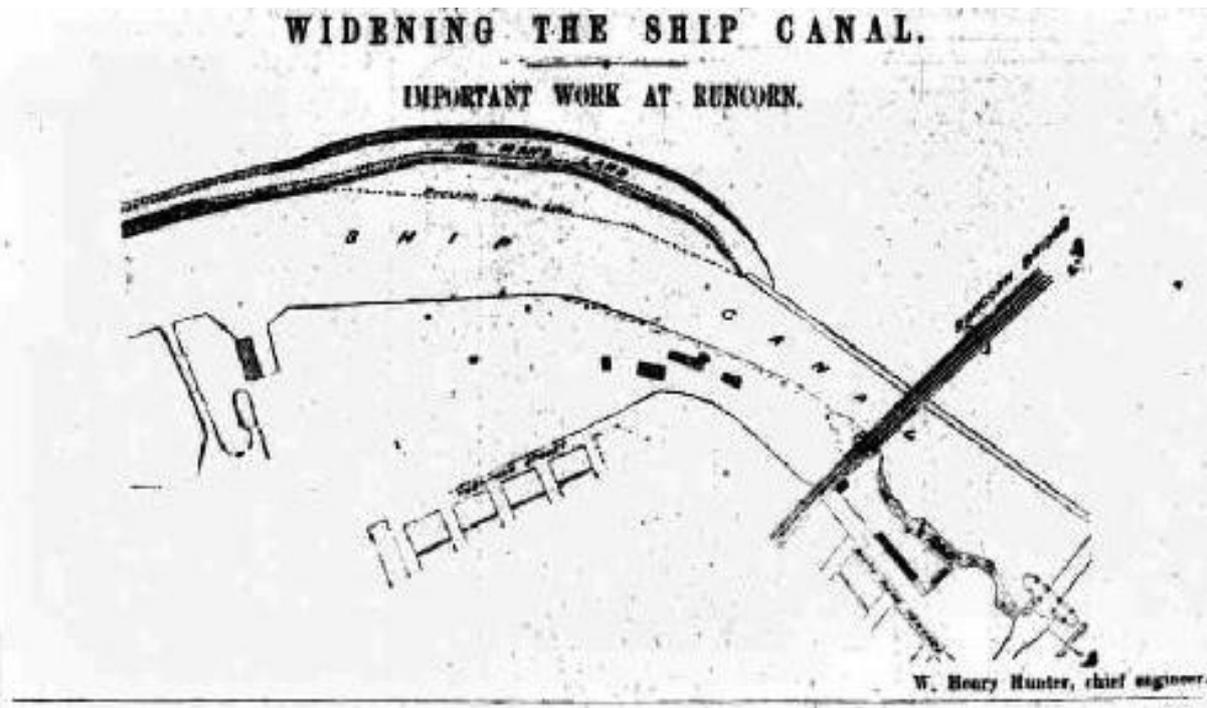
Thomas Leach, 19 Crescent Row, Runcorn, night watchman in the employ of the MSC Co, said he heard a man from one of the boats “sing out” that there was someone in the lock. He assisted to get the deceased out. It was daylight and dry under foot. There was nothing deceased was likely to trip over.

The Coroner said that was all the evidence, and there was only one verdict the jury could return.

The jury returned a verdict that the deceased was “Found drowned”.

## **28 2 April 1910**

**WIDENING THE SHIP CANAL** As most people are aware, large steamers now navigate the Manchester Ship Canal, and may be seen almost daily passing under the two fine bridges of which Runcorn boasts. Their progress at this stage of the journey to the great port is often watched with interest and a little anxiety, for the bend in the canal, approaching Runcorn Bridge from the Eastham end of the waterway, is notorious as being the most awkward upon the canal.



It is intended that still larger steamers shall be brought to use upon the waterway, and this consideration has led the directors of the Canal Company to undertake the widening of the Runcorn Bend.

The bottom width of the canal at Runcorn Bend is now 150 feet, and it is proposed to increase this by 70 feet, making a total of 230 feet. The plan above shows what the visible effect of the widening will be – the increase of width which will be effected at water level.

A party of engineers, distinguished both in shipbuilding and navigation, recently passed down the canal, and agreed that, when the widening is completed, steamers of 600 feet in length by 85 feet in width can use the canal with absolute safety. These steamers are the largest which can use the larger locks on the upper part of the canal.

The works required for the widening are now in hand and can be witnessed any day at No Man's Land. They are being proceeded with under the direction of Mr W H Hunter, the chief engineer of the Canal Co, and are being carried out by the Canal Co's own men, no contractors being employed. Part of the material excavated has been used to raise the level of the ancient promontory of "No Man's Land", which was converted into an island many years ago by the Duke of Bridgewater's Trustees, and which now forms part of the embankment dividing the Ship Canal from the Mersey estuary. The object of the raising is to make the embankment a more effective wind screen for large vessels negotiating the turn.

In order to complete the widening, the removal of a considerable quantity of rock will be required. The shattering of the rock will be performed by means of the Lobnitz rock cutters, which have proved very effective in carrying out work of a similar type in the higher reaches of the waterway, for the purpose of deepening the canal from 26 feet to 28 feet, a work which was completed some time ago. The widening of the Runcorn Bend will be carried out so as to provide a minimum depth of 28 feet throughout.

## 29 9 April 1910

### CHESHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS

**THEFT AT ELLESMERE PORT** **Thomas Trelfer**, 39, boatman, pleaded guilty to stealing one overcoat, one pair of trousers, one vest and one cotton shirt, the property of John Griffin and another, at Whitby on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Mr Artemus Jones prosecuted, and said the articles would amount altogether in value to 13s. Prisoner lived on a canal boat, which was tied up at Ellesmere Port, and a boy named **Flowers** was in charge of the boat. Prisoner was seen on the boat with Flowers on the day in question, and on the following day the articles were missing. The day

following, prisoner was arrested, and was actually wearing the clothing. After being cautioned, he said, "I will own up, these are the things I am wearing. I took them off the boat yesterday morning while the lad was asleep". There was a long list of previous convictions against him. Acting Sergeant Wilding said the money prisoner got by working on canal boats he generally spent in drink, and when he got hard up he appropriated things from boats whilst they were unoccupied. The Chairman : He has been convicted, I see, fifteen times. Witness : Yes, sir. Sentence of three years' imprisonment was passed.

### **30 28 June 1910**

#### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

SCHOOL OFFENCES **Thomas Drinkwater**, a boatman, represented by his wife, was fined 5s on each of two summonses for having failed to send his children to school regularly. In one case a boy had only made 12 out of a possible 120 attendances and the girl, in the other case, 20 out of 120.

### **31 19 July 1910**

#### STRETFORD TRAGEDY

BOY HOLIDAY MAKER DROWNED A sad ending to a holiday was related at an inquest held by the Deputy County Coroner (Mr J S Macdonald) at the Stretford Town Hall on Saturday, on the body of William Henry Stevens (11), the son of a collier living at Marsden Green near Astley. The boy, as a holiday treat, accompanied his grandfather – a bargeman – on a canal boat from Astley to Stretford. The boat arrived on Thursday, and the following morning the boy was missed from the deck. On a search proving unsuccessful, the canal was dragged, and subsequently his dead body was recovered from the water by Police-constable Eastwood.

A verdict of "Accidental drowning" was returned.

### **32 26 July 1910**

#### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS MONDAY

SCHOOL CASES **William Roscoe**, a boatman, was fined 5s and costs in each of three cases in which he had failed to send his children to school with anything like regularity.

### **33 16 August 1910**

#### RUNCORN BARBER IN TROUBLE

SENT TO QUARTER SESSIONS At the Runcorn Police Court on Friday, before Mr Thomas Wright, John James Entwisle of Percival Lane, Runcorn, a barber, who has been for some time in the employ of Mr William Shaw of High Street, Runcorn, was charged with feloniously breaking and entering the dwelling house of James Tatlock, of 115 Percival Lane, Runcorn, and stealing therefrom one gent's metal watch and chain, a lady's silver Geneva watch, a gent's gold signet ring, a lady's gold dress ring, a metal bracelet and three scarf pins, of the total value of £3 2s, between 9<sup>th</sup> July and the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1910.

James Tatlock said that on the Saturday before Bank Holiday, he took his wife and family to Willaston for a few days' holiday. Prisoner lived next door, and the key was left with his wife, who undertook to look after the pet bird and feed the few fowl during their absence. On returning on the Tuesday, witness found that the house had been ransacked. The bedroom was in great disorder and the articles enumerated in the charge were missing.

William John Shaw said that his father kept a hairdresser's shop in High Street. The prisoner had worked for him for about eighteen months. On the 4<sup>th</sup> August, Superintendent Ennion and Detective Davies called at the shop and saw the prisoner. In consequence of the prisoner's curious behaviour afterwards witness examined the iron tank in the private lavatory of the shop, and there found the articles produced, wrapped in a handkerchief. He informed his father, who sent for the police.

**Jane Horth**, wife of **Harry Horth**, a boatman of Wharf Street, Wheelock, Sandbach, said she was passing the house in Percival Lane on Monday night the 1<sup>st</sup> inst, when she saw the prisoner leaving by the front door, which he closed behind him. At half past nine the same night, she saw him in

Tuckey's public house in Percival Lane.

**John Bloor**, master of a canal boat belonging to the Anderton Company, said that he was in the Duke of Wellington public house in Percival Lane on the evening in question, when the prisoner came in. He showed witness a couple of watches and a ring, and said that he had "plenty more like those", and that he lent money on them to customers at the shop. He afterwards put them back into his pocket.

Detective Davies spoke to examining Mr Tatlock's house after receiving information of the robbery. The place was ransacked. The back bedroom window was open. There was a footmark on the window sill and a little dirt on the dressing table. Witness and Superintendent Ennion interviewed the prisoner at Mr Shaw's shop afterwards, and he made a statement to them. He said that at four pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, he saw his son Will standing at his house door. He told him that his mother had "gone up the street" to visit Mrs Smidy in Peel Street, and he could not get in. He (prisoner) then went to Tuckey's public house and remained there until 9.30. He said he was not in his house during that period. He was wearing a blue serge suit and a cloth cap. On the 4<sup>th</sup> August, witness went to the rear of Shaw's shop and was shown the articles now produced, which were wrapped in a handkerchief. He apprehended the prisoner. On the way to the Police Station, the prisoner said, "Have you anyone locked up yet for that job?" Witness replied, "No", and prisoner said, "I wish you had, as since you have been questioning me the suspense is something awful". Witness formally charged the prisoner, who made no reply.

Asked if he had anything to say, prisoner replied, "I plead guilty".

He handed a written statement to the Bench.

Prisoner was further charged with stealing two razors, the property of Mr William Shaw.

William John Shaw said that he examined the stock on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, and found a "Fram" razor and a "Robinson" razor to be missing. Witness asked prisoner about them and he said that he had taken the "Fram" home on the Monday to shave himself with. On the 4<sup>th</sup> August witness was shown the razor now produced, and identified it. The two razors were worth about 9s.

Prisoner said that the "Fram" razors cost 2s 3d each – 27s a dozen.

Witness said they sold retail at 4s 6d.

George Grayson of 101 Percival Lane said that he was in the taproom of the Duke of Wellington public house on the 1<sup>st</sup> August about 12.15, when the prisoner came in and entered into conversation with him. Witness bought the "Fram" razor from him for 2s 6d, paying him 1s 6d, and promising to give him the other shilling later.

Detective Davies spoke to charging the prisoner with the theft of the razors. He made no reply.

Prisoner : Didn't I say, "Only one".

Detective Davies said that was so, but not when the charge was read over. Prisoner made that statement later.

Prisoner had nothing to say. He was committed to take his trial at Chester Quarter Sessions, which commence on the 19<sup>th</sup> October. Bail was not applied for.

### **34 19 August 1910**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS** At these sessions on Monday, **Robert Gough**, a boatman, who was represented by his mother-in-law, was fined 5s for using obscene language. Defendant sent word that he could not appear, and admitted the offence. There was one six year old previous conviction against him at Barnton.

### **35 19 August 1910**

**RUNCORN MAN FINED AT SANDBACH** At the Sandbach Petty Sessions on Tuesday, **Edward Osborne**, 40 Gilbert Street, Runcorn, was summoned for working a horse while in an unfit state at Hassall Green. PC Lloyd said that at Hassall Green, Bechton, he saw the defendant with a horse attached to a canal boat proceeding towards Wheelock. He examined the horse, and saw a large wound which had previously been caused by the collar. On lifting the collar, he found the wound to be about four inches, and the collar had cut into it. There was blood and matter running from the

wound, and the horse was in a poor weak condition. He asked the defendant why he was working it, and he replied that he was very poor and could not stop. He hoped the matter would not be reported. Inspector Thompson said he visited the horse and measured the wound which was four inches. Defendant was fined 13s including costs.

## **36 2 September 1910**

### THE EDUCATION ACTS

### REMINISCENCES OF RUNCORN'S SENIOR PUBLIC OFFICIAL

### NO II – CANAL BOAT CHILDREN



You will observe that the proceedings taken under the Canal Boats Act of 1877 have been very considerable owing to the large floating population with which the educational authority have had to contend, and owing also to the very large number of canal boats registered at Runcorn only lately after the passing of the Act.

The duties under this Act may be summed up in the two words arduous and enormous. No other authority throughout the country has had to perform such an amount of labour as the (.....) authority of Runcorn in carrying out the Canal Boats Act of 1877 for the education of the canal boat children.

In the education of canal boat children I have always taken the deepest interest, and in the paper on the subject read at a conference of the Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales Federation of School Attendance Officers, I strongly urged the necessity of a more stringent enforcement of the Canal Boats Act of 1877.

This paper, I am glad to say, was well received by the different newspaper critics, and I have frequently been requested to again read the paper at different conferences in various parts of the country in the interests of the canal boat children.

At these conferences, which I have attended from time to time, I have gained considerable knowledge and read several papers. One of these, entitled "How to obtain a good attendance", was read in the Blackpool Council Chamber. It created a considerable amount of debate. The debate on this paper was adjourned for a further conference, which I was asked to attend.

As the question has frequently been asked by those who are interested in educational work of what is being done for the education of the children of our floating population who are compelled to earn their livelihood on our various waterways, inland rivers and canals, I think I could do no better than to relate my experience in administering the Canal Boats Act of 1877.

Having had considerable experience in this work, I am in a position to speak from practical knowledge of what has been done and what is being done at the present time by the local education

authority which I have the honour to represent, and will endeavour to describe the (.....) labour which has been performed on behalf of canal boat families trading to and from Runcorn, and to state that a vast improvement in the moral, social and sanitary conditions of the canal boat population has taken place since the passing of the Canal Boats Act of 1877, which I attribute to the arduous duties of our education authority and the increased advantage of education.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1875, a Royal Commission was set up for the purpose of making inquiries into the working of the Factory and Workshops Acts, with a view to their consolidation and amendment, and in which the question was asked what could be done for improving the position of the canal boat population where families live on board and have no settled habitation. From this inquiry emanated the Canal Boats Act of 1877.

It was considered impossible to place boat people under the factory laws, and that it was impossible to secure education for the children as long as the family continued to have no residence but the canal boat.

Nothing, it was said, short of prohibition of the residence of the children in the boats, appears to us adequate to this end.

Apart from the impossibility of the children receiving education, there are mischiefs arising from the crowding together of whole families in a small cabin, and the withdrawal of the inmates from all religious and social influences, which appear to us sufficient to justify a strong (.....). It was also suggested that the residence on canal boats of female young persons and children above the age of three years should be forbidden. This recommendation, I am sorry to say, has not yet become law. I would here very much like to say that, owing to the energies and writings of such men as Mr Smith of Coalville, Leicestershire, and the effective measures adopted by the different sanitary authorities, a much better state of things exists than has hitherto been the case. In the whole of England there are 99 different sanitary authorities having the jurisdiction over as many different canals and rivers, who are held responsible for the education of all children found travelling with the boats, if registered as belonging to their district. Runcorn has the largest number registered of any authority in England, and in this town I have had considerable experience in administering the Canal Boats Acts 1877 and 1881.

First, then, by way of introduction, I should like to say that we in Runcorn are peculiarly situated with regard to the Canal Boats Act. Runcorn, as most of you are aware, is situated on the banks of the Mersey, some 18 miles by (.....) from Liverpool and about ten miles from Eastham, the entrance to the great undertaking, the Manchester Ship Canal. It is also the terminus of a large network of canals. Formerly it was a seaport, until the great city of Manchester aspired to that distinction, when our good old town had to part with her title for the benefit of the city of Manchester. Runcorn is a very old town. Its history, which has been written by a Runcorn young man who is now engaged in literary pursuits, dates back to the year 913. If any of my friends would like a good long sail and will come to the terminus of our canal, he will there be able to sail to Manchester, Leeds, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and London. So you see what scope we have for administering the Canal Boats Act of 1877 and 1884.

The first section of this Act makes it compulsory for every owner of a canal boat, which expression means any vessel, however propelled, which is used for the conveyance of goods along the canal, and which is now a ship registered under the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854, to register with any registration authority hereinafter mentioned as a dwelling for such numbers of persons of the specified age and sex as may be allowed under the provisions of this Act, and the boat shall be used only as a dwelling for the number of persons for which it is registered. But the portion of the Act which particularly applies to the various education authorities is Section VI, which reads as follows :-

“A child in a canal boat registered in pursuance of this Act and his parent shall for the purpose of the Elementary Education Acts be deemed subject as hereinafter mentioned to be resident in the place to which the boat is registered as belonging, and shall be subject accordingly to any by-law in force under the said Acts in that place”. Runcorn, as I said, has the largest number of boats registered by any registration authority in England.

The last report presented by our registration authority gave the numbers as 1090. You will therefore consider that, so far as my authority is concerned, there has been plenty of work to visit periodically and enforce the attendance of all the children who are found travelling with the large numbers of boats. I can assure you that when I was first instructed to administer the Canal Boats Acts, I felt somewhat appalled at the difficulties I met with ; I hardly knew where or how to begin, or what method of visiting to adopt. Many of these boats are away from our terminus for weeks and months to (.....) which entails endless correspondence in tracing them from place to place. Frequently some communications from other authorities make reference to children found on the boats working in other districts, boats which are simply registered in Runcorn and which never trade in the district at all. The Act in this respect must be amended so that any other authority where the boats are trading could enforce the attendance of these non resident and migratory children instead of holding the education authority at Runcorn responsible simply because they are registered as belonging to the district. It is a fact that I have often dealt with cases before the magistrate, without ever having been able to see the parent or children dealt with, and various notices sent by post are simply (.....) and proceedings are taken against the parent. The canal boat children are all dealt with in the same manner as the town's children. That is, as often as they are available. The method adopted now is to supply every child travelling with the boats with a school book with every date in the year printed in it, so that wherever the boats may be staying, the child takes its book, presents itself at a school on the route, and ask the head teacher to mark the attendance for any period it has been present at school. By this means one can see at a glance when and where the child has attended last. It has been my duty, when (.....) canal boats, to examine the content of these books and see whether they are attending as often as they might and, if not, to deal with them in the ordinary way. Since the Act came in force in 1877, my authority have, in dealing with these cases before the justices, achieved (.....) convictions to June 30 1910. The amount of the fine inflicted has varied from 5s to (.....). The percentage of attendances including boat children was only 66 when the Act was first adopted in 1877. The percentage of attendances, including boat children and (?gipsies?), now stands at 88 per cent for seven (.....) including June 30 1909, which may be considered to be very good when we consider the floating population with which we have to contend. You will observe from these few returns that the education authority is not lacking in administering this Act. But you may ask, "What is the result of all these proceedings? Have you been able to enforce any regularity of attendance of this particular class of children?" I am sorry to say that, with all our visitation, with all the number of cases dealt with by the magistrates, we have not been able to secure much more than 30 per cent of their attendance. Then you may again ask, "Where is the failure?" My answer is that so long as the law allows the parents to take their children with them on these boats for weeks together, so long will their education be neglected.

The one great defect of the Act is in allowing any children of school age to travel with the boats, and until this is prohibited and the law amended in this direction, it will be impossible for any education authority to enforce any regularity of attendance at school of this particular class of children.

Formerly a very large percentage of the canal boat people had no other residence beside their boats, but owing to other measures adopted by the sanitary authorities, and the more stringent measures adopted by our authority, a lesser number are now non resident than hitherto. It is my one consolation after 23 years of administering this Act that the parents of canal boat children are beginning to see the value of education, and if our education authorities will continue to administer this Act firmly, a much better state of things will continue to exist amongst the canal boat population. Morally, the life of the canal boat children is anything but elevating, and when they come in contact with the town's children, their presence is not very acceptable. Very few elementary teachers care to have them in their schools. It is impossible, they say, to teach them anything because of their irregular attendance. They seldom get above the first standard. What other result could there be when the greater part of their lives is spent sailing from town to town, and when the sanitary condition of their lives is taken into account? Just fancy a father, mother and several children with only 60 cubic feet of free air space for each adult and 40 cubic feet for each

child under the age of twelve years, as against 130 cubic feet allotted to each child in our public elementary schools – eating, drinking, sleeping, washing and dressing together without any sanitary or lavatory accommodation. Is it not time, I ask, in these days of advanced education, that something more should be done for the canal boat child? Adopt stronger measures, prohibit all children under 14 years of age from being taken on the boat. Then, and not until then, will you have a better state of things existing. The one great cry of the canal boat parent has been that their earnings are insufficient to maintain their families on shore. It is only the indolent, intemperate and negligent boatmen who make this cry.

It is a fact that their earnings are considerably in advance of those of many labouring men who maintain large families on shore, and my experience has taught me that the boatmen's wages would be quite sufficient if wisely spent. The one great reason why this class of parent desires to take his children with him on the boats is that he may employ them to a certain extent in driving the horse, steering the boat, or assisting in a small way with the cargo. “Then”, you may ask, “why not deal with the parents for employing them?” Easier said than done. Both parents and children are intelligent enough to know that it is illegal to employ children, especially during school hours, and it is very difficult to detect them in the act when sailing within the boundary of the district in which their boat is registered, and to whose by laws they are amenable. The canal boatman knows that his boat is as much his castle as a house on shore. If the attendance officer had the same authority as the canal boat registration inspector of boarding the boat, it would give him more power in dealing with these cases and facilitate his duties very considerably.

The duties of canal boat inspector for registration purposes and the duties of attendance officer ought to be combined ; he would then be able to see to the sanitary conditions of the canal boat child, and to see that it was sent to a school in a clean and proper condition.

It was my duty a short while ago to deal with two canal boat boys who had evaded the Acts for a considerable time. My instructions were to capture and convey them to the Training Ship *Clio* in the Menai Straits. It took me months to do it, because of the difficulty in finding them and the boats in which they were sailing. How they managed to avoid me was astonishing. They knew the exact boundary of my district. General de Wet was not in it with these travelling youths. Eventually, after considerable correspondence and tracing them from town to town, I managed to apprehend them. It had to be done at midnight when they thought I should probably be asleep. It was a treat I can assure you to handle these juvenile boatmen. Their geographical knowledge of our inland waterways was surprising.

I said to one little fellow, “Where have you been voyaging lately?” “Oh”, he said, “I have been trading between Runcorn, Wolverhampton and Birmingham”. “Very good”, I said, “you shall now have a voyage with me” ; and I am glad to state that he and his comrade have done well on the training ship *Clio*, and were trained for the merchant service or the King's Navy.

The two youths whom I have mentioned are at the present time doing well for their parents ; one of them is the main support for his widowed mother, and every time I see them, they salute me as though I were an admiral, and tell me that it was the best day's work I ever did when I captured them and conveyed them to the training ship *Clio*.

Perhaps there is no one thing that interests me more than the welfare of canal boat children, owing to their migratory habits. They have not been able to receive that educational training which is the due and blessing of every child, and if there is one authority which ought to be thanked for its educational work, it is the Runcorn Educational Authority.

Its services on behalf of the canal boat people have been such as no other education authority have ever had to perform. Its duties have been materially increased owing to the administration of the Canal Boats Act, on behalf of the large floating population who are constantly visiting our town.

Our sanitary authorities have performed their duties very satisfactorily. The President and Secretaries of the Upper Mersey Waterman's Association, the Seamen's and Boatmen's Missioners, both at Runcorn and Manchester, have done excellent service in elevating the moral, social and sanitary conditions of the floating population.

In the general condition of our canal boat children's parents, there is a vast improvement, and there

are few now who have not homes on shore, and the numbers are gradually growing less who constantly travel with the boats. Education even amongst boatmen I am glad to say is much more appreciated than hitherto. The general condition of the children has also been considerably advanced in cleanliness and in conduct, which I attribute to the arduous duties of our education authority, and the result of education in our elementary school.

Although a great improvement has taken place since the passing of the Act, there remains much to be done with the lower element of our floating population who, like General Booth's submerged tenth will, I am afraid, be always with us, and must therefore be dealt with by the various education authorities.

THOMAS BOWYER

Chief School Attendance Officer

Runcorn Urban District Area

August 1910

### 37 9 September 1910

JOTTINGS Mr Thomas Bowyer's reminiscences, which conclude in today's *Guardian*, have provoked much interest and gained for the author quite a number of pleasant letters of appreciation. But criticism is always the sauce that gives flavour to the meat, and I am sure he will value as much as any a letter forwarded to me, and probably intended to go in the correspondence columns. The writer is a canal boat man "reared on the boats from a babby", and though he breaks ten times over every rule governing communications to newspaper offices, his sincerity and his shrewdness atone for lead pencil and poverty of literary style, and compel me to say for him his say.

"I don't agree with Mr Bowyer's remarks concerning canal boat children. Few teachers care to have them in the school, though "Gaffer" Jordan was an exception, and always used to say, "Hello boys, back again, always glad to see you". Then he goes on to defend the adult dweller on the canal boats. "There are cabins as clean and a great deal cleaner than many houses in Runcorn. I work for a Runcorn firm that are owners of 30 boats, and we have no women and children on any of them. But we get better wages than the up country canal boatmen do, and our cabins are fit for gentlemen to dine in. They are built in the same style as they built them seventy years ago and not like they are built now – dog houses".

"Mr Bowyer says", continues this humble champion, "That only the indolent, intemperate and negligent boatman cry that the wages are insufficient. How would he like to manage with £2 for a trip taking perhaps ten days, with a horse to provide food and stabling for? How can a boatman in these circumstances pay two men to take the place of his wife and children, and keep his house open?"

He advances a curious plea for the bad attenders among the boat children. "The town children laugh at their dress and poke fun at them. Then when they defend themselves the teacher says they are ignorant and always fighting. Why doesn't the teacher defend the poor boat child from the snubbing of the town child? They are both the same flesh and blood".

My Richmond of the river does not even sign his name and there are evidences that his *nom de plume* of "One who dodged Mr Bowyer" is pretty well justified. "They dress gaudy", he says of his class, "but don't judge them by that". I won't. And I won't judge him by his little errors of syntax or the evident difficulty he finds in the manipulation of the pencil. I prefer to consider him from the spirit in which he writes, from the sturdy way in which he champions the people whom he fears may be a little hurt, and from the ring of sincerity which runs through his by no means badly chosen words. My friend has his human failings, but is an honest man. Therefore, as the poet tells us, "one of the noblest works of God".

### 38 27 September 1910

RUNCORN BOATMAN'S DEATH

THE INQUEST At the Runcorn Court House on Saturday, Mr Thomas Ridgway, coroner, held an inquest on the body of **Paul Jones**, a flatman, who died suddenly at his house in Vine Street,

Runcorn, on Friday,

Mr F W Wilkinson represented the Manchester Ship Canal Company.

John Edward Jones said deceased was his father. He was 53 years of age. Witness had lived with him up to the time of his death at (?23) Vine Street, Runcorn. He was a flatman employed at the Bridgewater Department of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, and was captain of the flat *Isabella*. Deceased had enjoyed good health up to the time he fell in the water. About five weeks ago, his father was pushing a boat along by means of a boat hook. He stuck the hook in the wall and was pushing off, when the hook suddenly went up a hole in the stonework for about a foot, and deceased lost his balance and fell in the water. This was about ten o'clock at night. He was pulled out of the water by the mate. On reaching home that night he complained of feeling chilly, with being in the water, and said he had a pain in his stomach. Deceased did not complain of any bruises or knock. He had fallen in the water once or twice before. He went back to work the same night and continued to follow his employment for three weeks.

The Coroner said he had received a statement from the man who pulled deceased from the water, as that witness was not able to be present.

Dr Robinson said he was first called in to see the deceased on the 5<sup>th</sup> inst. He complained of a pain on his left side. Witness was told the circumstances of the case. Deceased had no external injury. Witness formed the opinion that deceased was suffering from the early symptoms of general paralysis. He also complained of a pain in his head. He had had a good deal of illness during his life. Witness attended him a number of times, but he died on Friday morning. The cause of death was general paralysis which, he thought, was accelerated by his immersion in the water. Deceased did not appear to have had a proper physical reaction after falling in the water. He did not think a *post mortem* examination would assist the case.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence.

### **39 4 October 1910**

**RUNCORN SESSIONS John William Edwards**, boatman, Loch Street, was fined 10s for keeping a bull terrier without having taken out a licence. Defendant showed his prophetic powers by sending a neighbour to represent him with the exact amount of the fine.

### **40 14 October 1910**

**POLICEMAN IN A WARM CORNER**

**WHAT HAPPENED AT BARNTON**

**CHEMICAL LABOURER FINED FOR ASSAULT** Edward Mills, chemical labourer, 14 Canal Side, Barnton, was summoned at the Northwich Petty Sessions on Tuesday, before Mr H Bratt (chairman) and other magistrates, for being drunk and disorderly on Canal Side on October 1<sup>st</sup>, and also with assaulting PC Manley whilst in the execution of his duty at the same time and place. Mr W Bancroft (Northwich) appeared for the defendant.

PC Manley stated that at 10.15 pm on October 1<sup>st</sup> he was in Tunnel Road, Barnton, when he heard someone using obscene language by the canal side. He went to see what was the matter, and he found a great number of persons – mostly boatpeople – collected together. The defendant was in the midst and he was using obscene language to Thomas Haspell. He advised the defendant to go into the house, and after a bit of persuasion he did so. He there appeared to be quarrelling with his wife, and in a minute or two he came rushing out at the back door, cursing and threatening to throw Mrs Moores into the cut. He rushed at her and witness caught him by the “scruff” of the neck to protect her, as she had a baby in her arms. Defendant then struck him on the ear causing it to bleed, and also on the top of the head with a stick. Blood ran down his face something “chronic”, and he had to let go of the defendant. He saw a number of people ready to have a cut at him, and he dashed through the crowd. His cape was taken off, and when he went for Mills again he was struck. Between one and two o'clock the next morning he saw Superintendent Cooper and showed him his wounds.

In cross-examination by Mr Bancroft, witness adhered to his previous statement that the defendant

struck at him with the stick. Witness struck back at the man in self defence.

By Superintendent Cooper : He retaliated because he had his ear and head cut.

Mr Bancroft said the defendant pleaded guilty and apologised for what he had done. He denied using the stick. The defendant lived a short distance away from the spot where the incident took place, and had a large family – twelve children. For some time he had complained of the annoyance caused by a certain rabble collecting round a gas lamp near his home. On this occasion, he went out to expostulate with the crowd, and the crowd and he immediately got at variance. It was perfectly obvious that the man did not use the stick on the constable, but someone else in the crowd might have done it. The man had been 21 years in the service of Messrs Brunner Mond and Company, and that fact that he had never missed a holiday showed what sort of man he was. He had the very best of characters.

The Chairman said they did not wish to be severe with the man, but they could not let him off. He would be fined 5s for being drunk and disorderly and 10s and 2s 6d costs for assaulting the police.

**BOATMAN OBSTRUCTS THE POLICE** **George Beech**, boatman, 28 Canal Side, Barnton, was summoned for obstructing PC Manley whilst in the execution of his duty on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

The officer stated that whilst he was dealing with Mills, the defendant rushed at him from behind and knocked his cape off. He also broke witness's stick in two, and gave one portion to Mills. At the same time, he said, "There goes your stick, and we will give you what for". Witness got into the crowd, and the defendant again rushed at him.

William Haspell, labourer, residing with Thomas Haspell, 6 Canal Side, Barnton, said he saw the constable with the crowd, and the defendant came along with his hands in his pockets.

Superintendent Cooper : And what else did you see?

Witness : Nothing.

Superintendent Cooper : Have you not signed this document? - Yes.

And does it not say this, the next line above your signature, "the defendant interfered and did his utmost to stop the constable from apprehending him?"

Yes ; but I did not hear it all read.

PS Jones : I read it over to him on Saturday, and PC Manley read it over to him yesterday.

The Chairman : He signed a document which he says he never heard read. I do not know what we should do with him. He deserves a week in Knutsford for it.

Witness : For what? I was in a hurry.

The Chairman : You had no right to sign it then. You can sit down now. We withdraw your expenses.

The defendant said Manley struck him with the stick first, and broke it across his arm.

Mr Deakin (magistrate) : What did he hit you for?

Witness : It was done in a mistake.

Superintendent Cooper : Did you not put it across your knee and break it, and also pinion the man from behind and tell him he was lucky not to get thrown into the canal? - No.

**Thomas Blain**, boatman, Barnton, said Beech was struck first as he came round the corner. He was not aware the bother was going on at the time.

The Chairman said they were unanimous in believing the officer. The defendant would be fined 10s including costs.

#### **41 28 October 1910**

##### **RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS**

**A NOVEL IDEA** **James Cooke**, boatman, Princess Street, was summoned for having used obscene language. The man should have appeared at the last Sessions, but was represented by his wife, who pleaded that he was away with the boat and asked for an adjournment. He did not appear now. PC Goodwin said that the man's wife told him that he had not "come up" yet with the boat, but would arrive today. The Superintendent expressed the opinion that defendant was waiting till he had the money to pay the fine with. The case was adjourned for a week.

## 42 1 November 1910

### BOATMEN AND COWS

**CRUELTY NEAR RUNCORN** At the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday, a somewhat peculiar case of alleged cruelty to animals was investigated. **Albert Henry Salt** (16) and **Henry Southall** (17), Wolverhampton boatmen, were charged with having ill-treated two cows, the property of Mr Robert Shepherd of Parkside Farm, Aston.

They were defended by Mr W E Hough, and pleaded not guilty.

Superintendent Ennion said the police had undertaken the prosecution in consequence of a complaint by Mr Shepherd. On the morning of Friday last at 11.30, Mr Shepherd was on his farm in the neighbourhood of the river Weaver, when he saw the defendants running after some of his cows. The defendants had evidently come down an embankment which adjoined the towing-path of the river on to the meadow. They swung on to the tails of cows and kicked them. Mr Shepherd asked them for their names, but they refused to give him the information. The captain of the boat they were with also refused, saying that what had happened was only a "lad's prank". It was certainly a very serious prank. On a different occasion -

Mr Hough objected to the Superintendent referring to anything which had happened on a previous occasion. If anything was mentioned, it could only be with the purpose of prejudicing his clients' case. Unless what was to be said was given in evidence against the defendants, it was inadmissible. The Superintendent said he was making no allegations of any previous misconduct on the part of these youths, but Mr Shepherd on two or three occasions had found cattle in the meadow with their tails broken. He did not suggest that they had been broken by the defendants or even by other boatmen. When the defendants refused to give their names, Mr Shepherd telephoned to the Police Station, and the police intercepted the boats between Northwich and Middlewich and got the names. Robert Shepherd, Parkside Farm, Aston by Sutton, said that on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October, he was in the neighbourhood of the Weaver meadows on which he had two hundred cattle grazing. He heard the men shouting and saw the cattle stampeding. The cows were galloping and the two defendants shouting at them. The cattle ran on the meadows and the men got hold of the tails of cows and swung on to them, also kicking them. Salt ran nearly a hundred yards hanging on to the cows' tails. The other young fellow first kicked a cow and then seized it by the tail. Afterwards he kicked another cow on the hindquarters. Salt stuck to the cow until he was exhausted. There was no fence between the towing-path and the meadow. On more than one occasion he had found cows with their tails broken. One had the tail broken in two places. Another cow had its hip broken. Witness cut across the meadow and followed the defendants to the narrow boats to which they belonged. He asked the defendants for their names and they used bad language and refused to give them. They assumed a somewhat threatening attitude. The captain shouted to him to loose the horse, and he asked the captain to give him the names of the defendants. He refused and asked if witness could not take an apology. Witness replied that it was too serious a matter. He could not get the names so he communicated with the police.

By Mr Hough : He was 200 yards away from the cows at first. The cows were grazing over an area of one and a half miles. Witness had a perfectly unobstructed view of the scene. There had never been any fence there. He did not know that people had a lot of trouble to get cows off the towing-path.

For the defence, Mr Hough said that the men came along the Weaver, and when they got to a point near the farm, at Aston, they found they could not get their horses past the cattle that were obstructing the towing-path. They said that there had formerly been a gate or a fence at this point to keep the cattle from straying on to the path. The men were in a hurry to get along with their boats and they had considerable difficulty in getting the cattle to move away. There was some danger of cattle being thrown into the canal by the towing rope when on the path. What happened was that the defendants struck the cattle with their small whips (produced), and only used a sufficient inducement to get them off the towing path. They denied that they went on to Mr Shepherd's land or ill-treated the cows in any way. Cows were very stubborn things, and it was sometimes very difficult to get them to move off the towing-path. He thought the defendants would satisfy the

Bench that no cruelty had taken place. If the Bench came to the conclusion that they had been unduly severe with the whip, he suggested that they might be bound over under the First Offenders' Act. Possibly Mr Shepherd, in his zeal in the care of the animals, had made a mistake.

Henry Southall said he worked for the Crosby Boat Company of Wolverhampton. When entering the woods near Shepherd's Farm, a lot of cows were coming along the embankment. He chased them away with a small whip. Mr Shepherd came up and asked him for his name, but he refused to give it. Shepherd made no allegation about him swinging on the cows' tails. There were twenty cattle on the towing-path meeting the horse. He used no bad language, but the reason he refused to give his name was that he thought he had not done anything that justified his name being taken.

Cross-examined : He was driving the second horse. He did not want to call Mr Shepherd a liar, but he was absolutely incorrect when he said he saw defendants in his meadow. Salt drove the cows off the path first, and they had got back again by the time witness had got there with his horse.

Albert Henry Salt corroborated. He could not get his horse past the cattle. The danger of the cows being there was that his horse might have been knocked into the river. He drove them off the towing-path with the whip now produced in court. He never entered Mr Shepherd's meadow at all.

**William Smith**, captain of a Wolverhampton boat, bore out this evidence. He declined to give the names of the lads because they had done nothing wrong.

Cross-examined : He admitted that he could not see from his boat what was taking place in Mr Shepherd's meadow, which was below the level of the towing-path, but he denied that the lads had ever left the towing-path.

The Bench considered the case proved and fined the defendants £1 each including costs.

Mr Hough applied for time to pay, and said the defendants had not the money with them.

Superintendent Ennion said he would do his best to assist them in the matter.

#### **43 9 December 1910**

##### RUNCORN BOATMAN'S FIND

A CELLAR EL DORADO A Runcorn boatman had a most remarkable "find" on Monday.

About five weeks ago **Hannah Eastup**, the wife of a boatman named **John Eastup** of 19 Sutherland Street, Runcorn, died following an operation at the Liverpool Infirmary. She had been employed, together with her husband, on two narrow boats belonging to Messrs Taylor, Frith and Co. Her husband knew her as a very thrifty woman and suspected that she had saved a considerable amount of money. He made a search of the house and found a basin full of threepenny pieces and a quantity of half crowns. Thus encouraged, he tried the effect of a systematic search, and going into the cellar to investigate, he noticed a brick loose in the flooring and raised it. A jar was disclosed, which was found to contain 552 sovereigns.

In his excitement Eastup called in two neighbours to watch him count his newly acquired wealth. The money was afterwards banked.

It is thought that a considerable amount may yet remain undiscovered.

#### **44 16 December 1910**

##### AN ELECTION DAY TRAGEDY

VALE ROYAL YOUTH FALLS INTO THE RIVER On Friday, Mr H C Yates and a jury of which Mr J Marrow was foreman inquired at the Verdin Institute, Moulton, into the circumstances surrounding the death of Horace Stanley Hulse, 20 years of age, a chemical labourer of Vale Royal Locks, who was drowned in the river Weaver on Wednesday evening.

**William Hulse**, father of the deceased, stated that he was keeper at Vale Royal Locks, and on Wednesday his son went to fetch him in a motor car to go to Davenham for the purpose of voting. The car was in the drive of Vale Royal Park, and deceased had to cross the lock by himself in order to fetch witness. When they were returning, witness crossed the lock bridge first, deceased following behind. When witness had got to the other side, he turned round involuntarily and saw his son in the act of stumbling and falling underneath the rail into the river. Witness called for help and the body was recovered within four minutes. Dr Terry was sent for, and though he arrived in

ten minutes, he pronounced life extinct.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said deceased had not been subject to attacks of fainting, and he knew his way about the locks. He had been hurrying. He did not think the bridge was slippery.

**William Elson**, a lock-keeper, stated that deceased asked him to accompany them in the motor car in order to vote, but witness said he could not go off duty. He did not see deceased fall, but he heard the last witness call out, "Stanley is in the water". Witness attempted rescue by means of a pole, but could not see the body. He then obtained a grappling iron, the body being recovered at the first throw. Deceased appeared excited and was anxious to get back to Davenham. In witness's opinion, deceased had swung round the corner of the bridge in his hurry and had slipped and fell under the bar. The depth of the water would be about eight feet, and the distance from the bridge to the surface of the water ten feet. Artificial respiration was resorted to, and deceased was wrapped in hot blankets, but without result.

Dr Terry stated that everything was done to restore animation, and in his opinion death was due to shock. The fact that deceased did not struggle at all in the water pointed to the fact that his heart failed him at once.

The jury returned a verdict of death from shock, due to accidentally falling in the river.

On behalf of the jury, the foreman extended sympathy to the parents, and the Coroner associated himself with the same.

**THE FUNERAL** The funeral of the late Stanley Hulse took place on Saturday afternoon at Davenham. A short service was held at his home, the hymn "For ever with the Lord" being sung, and prayer offered by the Rev J Irwin. Afterwards a service was held at the Davenham Wesleyan Chapel, conducted by the Rev J Irwin, the chapel being filled with mourners and friends.

#### **45 30 December 1910**

##### **RUNCORN MAN DROWNED**

**A SAD AFFAIR** Peculiarly sad circumstances surround the death of **John Hughes Davies** of 16 Portland Street, Runcorn, who was drowned in the Frances Basin at the docks on Monday evening. Mr Davies was a well known and highly respected member of the little Welsh community that has its home in Runcorn.

Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquest at the Police Station on Wednesday.

Catherine Davies, widow of the deceased, said he was a weigher in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Co. She last saw him alive at 2.30 on Monday afternoon. He talked of going to Warrington to a performance of the "Messiah" at the Parr Hall. She thought he had gone there, but when he did not arrive home on Tuesday she began to be anxious. On Tuesday, Detective Davies met her and her daughter in Greenway Road, and it was through him asking if the deceased was at home that led to the identification. Her husband was a steady man and not subject to fits or anything of the kind.

John Jones, a sailor and member of the crew of the *SS Red Rose*, said he was in the Mariner's Arms public house on Monday evening when the deceased came in. They got into conversation and had two drinks together. Witness was "tight".

The Coroner : Were you drunk?

Witness : I was pretty full, sir. Continuing, he said the deceased volunteered to help him on board his boat. He did not remember anything after leaving the beerhouse until next morning, when he woke up to find himself in the forecastle of his vessel.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said that if he had been sober there would have been no need for the deceased to have gone down the docks with him. He had not had very much to eat that day and the drink had got hold of him. He had to pay for his food himself that day.

The Coroner : It would have been better if you had bought something to eat. It is very unfortunate and discreditable that this man should lose his life simply because you happened to get drunk. I hope you realise the sorrow that has been caused to Davies's family and everyone else. A man, himself apparently perfectly sober, went out of his way to do a charitable act and lost his own life. I hope it will be a lesson to you all your life.

**Joseph Hollinghead**, a Tunstall boatman, captain of the canal boat *Histrion*, said he was sitting on his boat just before seven o'clock on Monday evening when he heard a noise in the Frances Basin. It sounded like a splash followed by a gurgle, and seemed to be about a hundred yards away. Witness lit a "duck" lamp and raised an alarm in the hope that the man might be rescued. He did not see the man in the water.

**Henry Moores**, Lockfield Cottages, inspector on the canal, spoke to hearing the calls of the last witness about 6.45 on Monday evening. He went to the spot and searched round about until nine o'clock. He went again at 11.15, just after the body had been recovered. In his opinion there was no sign of life, but artificial respiration was tried. The body was found in the Frances Dock of the Weston Canal, close to the spot indicated by the last witness. It was a very rough night and raining hard. Had the deceased been returning home from the Red Rose he could have gone that way, but it was not the best way.

Elijah Tuckey, licensee of the Wellington Inn, gave evidence as to receiving information from the last witness as to someone being in the canal. He sent three men down to assist, but they came back about 8.15, having been unsuccessful. He could not then leave himself as all his family were out, but at 10.50 he locked up the house and went down to the place. He put the shaft into the water and at once got hold of the deceased by the wrist. He had hold of a rope belonging to a fender of a boat and had probably been there since soon after getting into the water. There were signs of life as the deceased gripped his hands once or twice, but he failed to come round after artificial respiration. He believed there would be six or seven feet of water at that spot.

Detective Davies spoke to examining the body on the following morning, and to finding one abrasion, probably caused by the boat swaying to and fro.

The Coroner, in summing up, said he thought the case a particularly sad one, and they could not help feeling sorry for Mrs Davies. The evidence went to show that her husband was perfectly sober at the time and had gone out of his way to render assistance to a man who admitted he was drunk, and took him back safely to his ship. The night was a very bad one, and it seemed as if he had accidentally fallen into the canal. He had already spoken to Jones and told him what he thought of him. Certainly one could only hope it would be a lesson, but it was a very expensive lesson to apply. A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned, and on the suggestion of the Coroner, the jury expressed their sympathy with Mrs Davies.

#### **46 30 December 1910**

##### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

THE FESTIVE SEASON **Robert Gough**, boatman, Wellington Street, pleaded guilty to a charge of having been drunk and disorderly in High Street on Tuesday. PC Nutt said that when the prisoner was arrested the handcuffs had to be employed. Prisoner said the constable had struck him and pointed to scratches on his face in substantiation of the story. PC Nutt said the scratches were sustained through he and the prisoner falling to the ground together. Fined 2s 6d and 5s 6d costs.

#### **47 3 January 1913**

##### MERSEY MISSION

FESTIVITIES AT RUNCORN There was a large gathering of sailors of many nationalities, and the men and women who work the barges on the local canals, at the Mersey Mission Institute on New Year's night, when the annual distribution of mufflers and tobacco to those who "follow the water" took place. The hall was charmingly decorated with flags, bunting, holly, etc, and bore an appearance in keeping with the spirit of Yule.

Mr Rosenberg of Weston Point was the genial chairman, and those present on the platform included Canon Hobson (superintendent chaplain), Mrs Hobson, Mrs F A Lake, Mrs Cullen, Mrs Smith (Farnworth) and Mr W Shaw (missioner).

A capital concert was given, and the efforts of the artistes were greatly enjoyed.

#### 48 10 January 1913

##### RUNCORN URBAN COUNCIL

CANAL BOATS The Secretary (Mr E Marshall) presented the report of the Canal Boats Inspector (Mr Jas Percival) for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, as follows :- During the year, four boats have been registered, three being new boats and one an old one. The number of boats registered at Runcorn is 1,107,586, 588 of which are in commission. Five hundred and twenty inspections have been made during the year. The Inspector has reported 74 contraventions of the Acts and regulations. The Inspector has reported that the matters complained of have been remedied, except in cases where the time mentioned in the notice has not expired. No case of infectious disease has been notified as having occurred on a boat. The names of owners have been altered in respect of three boats. Ten certificates have been cancelled. 710 men, 291 women and 290 children were found on the boats inspected, an increase of 161 women and an increase of 163 children, as compared with the previous year, when 279 inspections were made.

#### 49 10 January 1913

##### RUNCORN DROWNING FATALITY

CARDIFF ENGINEER'S DEATH On Tuesday Mr Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquiry at the Runcorn Court House relative to the death of a ship's engineer, **John Cooper** of Grangetown, Cardiff, whose body was recovered from the Bridgewater Canal on Monday morning.

Mr W Shaw was foreman of the jury.

David George Cooper, an insurance agent of Wood Street, Cardiff, said the deceased was his father and was 63 years of age. He was engineer on the *SS Lewis*. The last time witness saw the deceased was on November 1<sup>st</sup>, when he had tea with him. On the following morning deceased left Cardiff for Fowey in Cornwall, where he was to join his ship.

Witness had in his pocket a letter which his father had posted in Runcorn on the night he was reported missing, and this was handed to the Coroner, who remarked that it was just a homely letter, saying he would be writing again on the following day.

John Nickols, grocer of Percival Lane, said he was with the deceased in the Old Bridgewater Arms on the night of December 11<sup>th</sup>. He was in conversation with him for about 20 minutes – from 8.50 to 9.15 – and as they left the house the deceased shook hands with witness and said he hoped to see him again the next night. The deceased told him he was the chief engineer on the *Lewis*. He was quite sober when he left and said he was going to the Post Office to post a letter, get something to read, and then return to his ship immediately. Witness understood that the steamer was unloading china clay at the Alfred Dock.

Mrs Nickols, wife of the last witness, said she was standing at her shop at 9.20 on the night in question, when the deceased passed and wished her good night. Her husband then came up and said the gentleman who had just passed was the nicest gentleman he had ever spoken to in his life and that he was engineer on the *Lewis*. He was quite sober and was well dressed.

**Isaac Bellfield**, a boatman residing at Taylor's Row, Halton Road, said he was on the boat *Lizzie and Mabel* in the Francis Dock about 10.30 on Monday morning, when his father called his attention to something in the water and they asked the captain of the gangway if it was a man. Witness got hold of the object with a boat hook and found it to be the body of a man. They got it to the side of the dock and held it there with a rope until the arrival of the ambulance. A steam packet had just come up the locks and had moored near the big offices, and he thought the propeller must have disturbed the body and brought it to the surface. The best way to get to the Albert Dock from Percival's Lane was over the bridge at the Francis Dock, but this was locked after 5.30 at night.

Detective Davies said the deceased had been reported as missing since December 11<sup>th</sup> and inquiries had been made throughout the county and grappling operations had been carried out. He received notification of the recovery of the body, and on an examination of the clothing he found cash in the pockets, keys, spectacles and other articles, and noticed that the watch had stopped at 9.15. Deceased also had a newspaper of December 11<sup>th</sup> in his pocket. His opinion was that finding the gate over the Francis Dock closed, he had gone down Percival's Lane and along the side of the

Francis Basin, in some parts of which it was very narrow and dark. The night of December 11<sup>th</sup> was very stormy and boisterous, and it would be very dangerous for a man unfamiliar with the district to go that way.

The Foreman (Mr Shaw) said it seemed rather strange that a body which had been missing for so long should not have been recovered before. As chairman of the Runcorn Grappling Corps he would like to say that everything possible had been done to recover the body by the corps, the members of which had worked very hard for several days, but there was nothing whatever to show whether the deceased had got into the water, or where. They had grappled in the Francis Dock, and the son of the deceased, who came over, actually saw the grapplers at work.

The Coroner said he was sure such a statement was satisfactory to the relatives. From his own knowledge of the Grappling Corps, he knew that if there was the slightest chance of recovering a body, the corps did not give up operations.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

Mr Cooper expressed his appreciation of all that had been done in Runcorn in reference to his dear father. He wished to thank Mr Shaw and those who had helped him for their services, and Superintendent Ennion for his kindness. The Superintendent received him, a perfect stranger, with great kindness, entertained him as a father, and he felt that it was only due to these good friends at Runcorn that he should express his thanks in this way.

The Coroner replied on behalf of the Court, the Superintendent, and those concerned, and said he knew that in these circumstances everything possible was done, and no doubt Mr Cooper's thanks would be appreciated, unsolicited as they were.

Superintendent Ennion said Mr Cooper was welcome to anything he had been able to do. They had done what they could for him when he came to Runcorn and ever since.

## **50 14 January 1913**

### **CANAL TRAGEDY**

**BOY DROWNED IN LOCK AT ALSAGER** An inquest was held on Friday by Mr J C Bate and a jury at Hassall Green, Alsager, on the body of **George William Berrill**, aged 15 years, who assisted his parents on the canal boats. The boats were going along the canal through Hassall Green, having left King's Lock, Middlewich, at 7.30 am on the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. When they got to Hassall Green the boy, who was on the first boat called the *Wey*, fell into the outside lock. The boy's father went to his assistance, and after dragging the lock recovered the body. Life was extinct. The body had been in the water from ten to fifteen minutes.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

## **51 24 January 1913**

**RUNCORN WOMAN'S FATAL FALL** On Tuesday evening about 9.30, the discovery was made that **Mary Bellfield** (62), widow of a boatman, residing in Taylor's Row, Halton Road, had been killed by falling down the stairs of her house.

At nine o'clock in the evening, a neighbour, Mrs Johnson, was talking to the deceased at the front door of her house. Later another neighbour called, but could not make anyone hear. Recollecting that Mrs Bellfield had fallen downstairs upon an occasion three years ago he became alarmed and the door of the house was burst open by a man named Worrall. Mrs Bellfield was found at the bottom of the stairs quite dead.

**THE INQUEST** Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquest at the Court House on Thursday. Mr G A Kirkham was foreman of the jury.

Arthur Bellfield, a labourer at Highfield Tannery, said the deceased was his aunt. She was the widow of a workman and lived alone. Witness last saw her alive on Tuesday evening just before five o'clock. Deceased lived on the compensation money received after the death of her husband. She was not perfectly sober when he last saw her. He gave her some advice as to her drinking. He next saw her at the house at 9.45, when she was quite dead. He thought she had fallen backwards downstairs. She went to bed rather late as a rule.

Mrs Johnson, 17 Taylor's Row, said she spoke to the deceased at 8.50 on Tuesday night. When they exchanged "good nights" deceased had had some drink.

John Worrall, tanyard labourer, Halton Road, said he had known the deceased all his life. Between 9.30 and 10 on Tuesday evening he was told she had fallen downstairs. The next door neighbour, a Mrs Eastup, said she had heard her fall. Witness, assisted by two other men, broke open the door and found the deceased lying at the bottom of the stairs with her legs pointing upstairs. Her boots and stockings were off.

Police-constable Robinson said he was called to the house about ten o'clock. Deceased's heart had ceased to beat. She had a large cut over one eye. There was a broken jug at the bottom of the stairs. There was a lighted lamp in the bedroom. He thought she had been taking some water upstairs in the jug. The water was on the fourth stair of the twelve.

The jury found that the deceased had died through accidentally falling down the stairs.

## **52 11 February 1913**

**RUNCORN WATERMAN'S DEATH** The death took place on Sunday at Weston of **Mr Ralph Hill**, a well known Runcorn waterman who, up to six weeks ago, lived at 40 Hope Street, Runcorn. He had reached the age of 73 and would soon have celebrated his golden wedding. Prior to the cutting of the Ship Canal, deceased was captain of a number of coasting schooners. Since the advent of the canal, and up to his retirement just before Christmas, Mr Hill was employed at the locks. He was associated with St Paul's Church, and was a member of the "Rose of Sharon" Lodge of Oddfellows.

## **53 14 February 1913**

**MISSION WORK AMONG SAILORS** At the annual meeting of the Manchester and Salford Sailors' and Boatmen's Mission, over which the Lord Mayor presided, at the Town Hall on Monday, the Rev G B Barry pointed to some of the perils which beset "the sailor home from the sea", and to the need for a more strongly organised and better equipped Christian Mission to combat them.

The Lord Mayor said the Mission had cause for great pride in the amount of work it had been able to perform during the year for the small outlay of £310. He instanced, among other things, the visits paid to steamers, flats and canal boats by the representatives of the Mission, which numbered 13,174.

## **54 4 March 1913**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS**

**OBSCENE LANGUAGE** **Joseph Santley**, boatman, was fined 5s, or seven days, for having used obscene language in the public street. He was represented by his wife, who said he pleaded guilty, but could not attend owing to his "having run on a sandbank".

## **55 4 March 1913**

**BOATMAN'S TRAGIC DEATH**

**FATAL FALL AT WESTON POINT** **Richard Houghton** (55), a boatman of no settled address, met his death under tragic circumstances while following his employment on the Weaver Canal, Weston Point, on Friday evening. He was endeavouring to climb from the bank of the canal on to his boat, and in doing so he overbalanced and fell into the hold. Dr Brunton was called, but found life to be extinct.

**THE INQUEST** Mr T Ridgway, coroner, conducted an inquiry at the Weaver Hotel, Weston Point, on Monday.

**Joseph Helps**, 11 Vicar Street, Runcorn, said he was captain of the boat *Marjorie*, belonging to Miss Elizabeth Horsefield of Runcorn. He had known deceased for many years. He had always known him by the name of Richard Bent.

A friend of the deceased said his real name was Richard Houghton, but he was always known as Richard Bent. He and deceased returned from the Sutton Bone Works to Weston Works at a quarter

to eight on Friday night, and the boat was tied up. He saw deceased getting from the bank over the side of the narrow boat, and he fell in the hold. The boat was empty. Witness picked him up, and the last words he said were, "It's all up with me". He did not complain. The top of the boat was about 4ft above the towing-path and deceased overbalanced in the jump.

By the Foreman : Deceased had had three pints of beer during the day. He had the first about 11 o'clock, and the last about three o'clock.

In answer to the Coroner, witness said deceased had no drink on the boat. As far as he knew, he had no proper home.

Mary Daffley, a married woman of 5 Renshaw Street, Lostock Gralam, said she had known deceased all her life. His name was Houghton, although he was always known as "Dicky Bent". He was the eldest child by his mother's second marriage.

Mary Ankers, daughter of the last witness, corroborated.

Dr Brunton of Runcorn said he was called to Weston to the boat, and got there at 9.30 p m. The man was then dead. The next morning, he made a *post mortem* examination. He found all the organs quite healthy. The cause of death was a fracture of the spinal column. He thought it was a curious thing the way boatmen had in jumping on to the side of canal boats – other men would take a great deal more caution.

The Coroner said he thought it was clear now that deceased's name was really Houghton.

A juryman thought it was rather unfortunate they had only two witnesses to prove it.

The Coroner agreed that it was a very important matter. The evidence of those connected with the deceased was really the last to rely upon, because they came prejudiced, as they would be interested in the question of the insurance policy. However, the name given to him (the Coroner) was Houghton, and this was given to the papers.

The witness Helps, called by the Coroner, said he had been round with PC Brown to some men at Weston Soapery, who had always known the deceased, and they gave the name as Houghton in his hearing.

The Coroner thought this strengthened the evidence, and that the jury would be satisfied.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence.

## **56      4 March 1913**

### **RUNCORN FLATMAN DROWNED**

**FALL BETWEEN BOAT AND BANK** At the Runcorn Court House on Friday, Mr Ridgway (coroner) held an inquiry relative to the death of **Samuel Cotterill**, a boatman, who was drowned in No 3 Rope Walk Basin on Thursday night.

**Martha Ann Cotterill**, Gilbert Street, the widow, said the deceased was 58 years of age, and was employed by Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co as a waterman. She last saw him alive about eight o'clock on Thursday evening, when they came to Runcorn. She went into the town, and her husband proceeded to take the horse to Tuckey's stable. She expected to find him on the boat when she returned shortly after nine o'clock. A search was commenced and the body subsequently found. Her husband was quite sober when she left him. He did not know the way which he had apparently taken very well, and he had only been that way twice before.

Elizabeth Ann Nicholls, a shopkeeper, said the deceased came to her shop to make a purchase about nine o'clock on Thursday night. He stayed talking to her for some time, and though he had had some drink, he was certainly not drunk. He told her his boat was tied up in the Iron Ore Basin, and said he was going down the old field to it. She strongly advised him to go down the road, as it was dark, but he insisted on going the way he suggested, and she saw him clear of the gates. Shortly afterwards, deceased's son called to see if she had seen his father, and she told him the way he had gone, and advised him to return to the boat and see if he had got there. Soon afterwards the body was discovered by Mr Taylor, canal constable. Witness could not account for the deceased getting into the water, unless he had gone too near the wall and had caught his head against the lifting boat. As the boat was not tied very tightly to the wall, it would allow of the deceased falling into the water between it and the wall. She was of opinion that he was drowned, as he was overhead in the

water when found.

**John Taylor**, 22 Suffolk Street, canal constable, said that upon hearing of the deceased being missing, he procured a lamp and, in company with Mrs Nicholls, made a search. They found the deceased at the Rope Walk Basin head first in the water, with his legs on the coping stones. His body was jammed between the wall and the flat, so deceased could not have gone any further into the water. There was an abrasion on his forehead, and one or two slight marks on the back of his head, which might have been caused by the rising and falling of the water from the lock moving the flat. The way deceased had gone was not the proper way to get to his boat, but flatmen often used it.

By the Coroner : If the flat had not been tied up at the spot, the deceased must have gone straight into the water. He was quite dead when found.

The jury found that the deceased was accidentally drowned, and expressed their sympathy with the widow and family.

Mr Chas Pownall, on behalf of Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co, expressed the sympathy of the firm with the family, and said that during the short time the deceased had been with them, he had performed his work very satisfactorily.

## **57 4 March 1913**

### **RUNCORN LICENSING**

**FORESTERS' ARMS RENEWED** Mr Greaves Lord (Liverpool), instructed by Mr Knowles, applied for the renewal of the licence of the Foresters' Arms, Canal Street.

Superintendent Ennion said the present licensee had held the licence since August last. The neighbourhood was working class, and the house was frequented by respectable working class people and boatmen and boatwomen. The Navigation Inn, the nearest public house, was a much better house, with superior accommodation. The facilities for police supervision were poor. If anyone was approaching the house from Canal Street, it was possible for persons within to leave by the door on the canal bank unobserved, and vice versa.

By Mr Lord : It was a well conducted house and was kept very clean. The nearest house, excluding those on the other side of the Bridgewater Canal, was 255 yards away. The house had probably improved since the present tenant went in.

Mr Lord : It is doing about 200 barrels a year.

Detective Davies said there were 66 houses in an area of 200 yards, all served by the one licence.

In reply to Mr Lord, he agreed that this house served a little colony, and the total population upon which it drew might be regarded as 500.

Mr Lord said that in an old town like Runcorn, magistrates were sure to be faced with the problem of a congestion of licences. It was obvious that, in the case of a house like this on the outskirts of the town, the magistrates must not merely take into account an arbitrary measurement, but also consider what the population served by the house was. In the case of the Moulders' Arms, it was shown that there were 162 persons to each licence in the area, and in the Queen's Head Vaults 177 persons. If there was to be a selection that day, undoubtedly the decision of the Bench ought to be in favour of the Foresters' Arms licence being renewed. He pointed out that at the last Licensing Sessions, his clients agreed not to oppose the referring of one licence, a course which they might not have adopted had they known that another house in the same district was to be claimed as being redundant. They might have reasonably supposed that the Foresters' Arms was a house the licence of which was not likely to be taken away for a considerable time. They had put in a desirable tenant as licensee, the tenant of a house that had been referred, that he might have an opportunity of earning a fair income, out of which he could make provision for his old age. One of the greatest objections advanced against ante 1869 beerhouses was that there was generally little living accommodation for the licensee. Here was a house that was absolutely unexceptionable so far as that was concerned. It served a considerable population and was carried on in a perfectly straight and proper manner. It was stated that the facilities for police supervision were not good, but it would be very easy to set a trap for such a house if it was suspected that it was not being properly

conducted.

Enoch Tomlinson, licensee, said he sold an average of over four barrels a week, and six or seven dozens of bottled beers. The house was largely used by boatpeople, local residents, and people attending the football matches.

Mr Lord put in a petition signed by 105 persons in the neighbourhood in favour of the granting of the licence.

Thomas Brown, Canal Street ; Joseph Gayter of Mason Street, and others said they sent to the house for supper beer. They found the house convenient for them.

After a conference, the Chairman said the Bench gathered that Mr Lord's clients felt it a bit of a grievance that, after they had given up the Manchester house, this house should be considered again.

Mr Lord said that was so. His clients felt it hard. They did not suggest anything in the way of bad faith, but they felt it was not playing the game.

The Bench decided to renew the licence.

### **58 7 March 1913**

RUNCORN URBAN COUNCIL

MARKET AND CEMETERY COMMITTEE This committee recommended that the following canal boats be registered :- The boat *Richard*, owned by the representatives of the late **Jonathan Horsefield**, the boat *Maggie* and boat *Nellie*, owned by **Mr Joseph Rayner**, Northwich.

This was agreed to.

### **59 11 March 1913**

MISSION TO CANAL BOATMEN

SATISFACTORY REPORT The Mayor of Chester presided at the annual meeting of the Chester Boatmen's Mission, held on Friday evening.

The committee, in their annual report, commented with much satisfaction on the continued progress, especially the extended interest which had been taken in the work of the Mission. "Too great stress", the report said, "cannot be laid upon the work among the children of the boat people, and no effort is spared to get in touch with the little ones as much as possible, by means of the Band of Hope, entertainments and the summer treat". The committee desires to express its sincere thanks to the SUR and Canal Company for kindly painting and repairing the Mission Room during the past season.

### **60 11 March 1913**

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE For not sending their children to school regularly, Martha Johnson, Cooper Street ; John Ray, Surrey Street ; Samuel Jones, Cawdor Street ; and **Chas Wardle**, a boatman, were each fined 2s 6d.

### **61 21 March 1913**

ILL-TREATING A HORSE A youth named **William Moore**, Brick Hill Houses, Runcorn, canal boatman, was summoned on Monday at Altrincham Sessions, for ill-treating a horse at Dunham Massey on March 7<sup>th</sup> by working it whilst in an unfit state.

Inspector Brian of the RSPCA said on March 7<sup>th</sup> he saw defendant in charge of a bay horse attached to a canal boat. The horse was in a poor emaciated condition, so he followed defendant and stopped him. He examined the horse, which was aged. All the muscles of both quarters and the back were wasted. The stomach was tucked up like a greyhound's. There was a wound on the left shoulder which was partly covered with black grease to hide it. Defendant promised to destroy the horse. On Thursday at Lymm he saw the horse still in charge of defendant.

Defendant said he had exchanged the horse for another one.

The Chairman said it was a very bad case, one of the worst they had had in that Court for a long

time. Defendant was apparently absolutely callous and indifferent to the suffering of the animal. He would be fined 40s and costs, in all £2 9s 6d, or one month.

## **62 1 April 1913**

### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

IRREGULAR SCHOOL ATTENDANCES James Hallwood, Percival Lane ; James Savage, Hankey Street ; George Randles, Bridgewater Street and **Charles Osbourne**, a boatman, were each fined 5s for not sending their children to school regularly.

## **63 8 April 1913**

ACCIDENT AT RUNCORN LOCKS **Harry Darlington**, a Runcorn youth, was admitted to the Cottage Hospital on Monday morning suffering from an injured knee, having met with an accident while following his employment at the locks.

## **64 8 April 1913**

CHILD'S DEATH ON CANAL BOAT AT RUNCORN On Sunday morning at 8.30, the seven months old daughter of **Joseph and Martha Ann Collins**, boatpeople of Kidsgrove, Staffordshire, was found dead in bed on its parents' bed. Dr MacLennan made a *post mortem* examination on Monday, and an inquest will be held.

[note : Name in next article is shown as Holland]

## **65 11 April 1913**

### CANAL BOAT TRAGEDY

SAD CIRCUMSTANCES AT RUNCORN On Sunday morning at 8.30, the seven months old daughter of **Joseph and Martha Ann Holland**, boatpeople of Kidsgrove, Staffordshire, was found dead in bed on its parents' boat. Dr MacLennan made the *post mortem* examination on Monday.

THE INQUEST Mr T Ridgway, Coroner, conducted an inquest at the Weaver Hotel, Weston Point, on Tuesday. Mr G Whitby was foreman of the jury.

Martha Ann Holland, the mother, said she lived at Harecastle Villas, Hardingswood, Kidsgrove, Staffordshire, and travelled with her husband on the narrowboat *Ivy*, owned by Charlie Holland of Kidsgrove. They arrived at Weston Point on Saturday morning, and she went to bed at night at 10.40 o'clock. In the boat there were three children, herself and her husband. There were two beds. Two children slept in one, and she, her husband and the deceased occupied the other one. The baby lay nearest to the side of the boat. Witness did not notice anything the matter with the child until 8.30 in the morning, when she found her to be dead. The child enjoyed good health and had been teething, but never showed any signs of convulsions.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said the Inspector had paid his visit to the boat, the cabin of which allowed for two or three children.

The Coroner wondered whether three children were too many for a cabin.

The Foreman said he believed it was according to the size of the cabin. He had been to the boat, and found everything in good order. The cabin was of a good size.

The Coroner said the conditions on boats were not always satisfactory, but they could not always be helped.

Dr MacLennan spoke to having made a *post mortem* examination. Everything about the body was practically normal, with the exception of the lungs. He found a thick whitish material in the lungs, similar to what was in the stomach. The probable cause of its presence was that the deceased had vomited from the stomach and had drawn some of the fluid into the lungs, causing suffocation. The child had probably kept in a single position, for if it had been on its face, it might have got rid of the matter. He did not think there had been quite enough room for the child to move about, and it might have been wedged in.

Joseph Holland, the father of deceased, said the bed would hold three grown up people lying on their backs, and was just like an ordinary large bed of a house. The child always did lie on its back,

and had even worn a little bare place on the back of the head with doing so. It was well cared for. The Coroner said he was not attaching any blame to the parents, and was very sorry for them. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, and offered their sympathy to the parents.

## **66** 11 April 1913

### BOATMAN'S THEFT

SMART PUNISHMENT AT RUNCORN **John William Povey**, a boatman in the employ of Miss Elizabeth Hannah Horsefield of Canal Street, Runcorn, was charged at Runcorn Police Court on Wednesday, before Messrs E Imison (in the chair) and J Littler, with stealing a sack of oats value 9s 6d and a sack of provender value 5s 2d, the property of Miss Horsefield, from a shed in Canal Street, between 5 pm on April 7<sup>th</sup> and 9 am on April 8<sup>th</sup>. He was also charged with receiving the same.

Superintendent Ennion said prisoner was mate of the narrow boats *Howard* and *Pink*, belonging to Miss Horsefield. He was employed along with the captain named **Twigg**. On the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> inst, Miss Horsefield supplied Twigg with four bags of corn for the horses to be used on the journey to New Mills (Staffordshire). The previous morning after the boats had gone, Miss Horsefield missed a sack of oats, which was then in the Police Station yard, and also a bag of mixed provender. Miss Horsefield came to the Police Station and reported the fact to the clerk, PC Mulrennan. The clerk telephoned to Sergeant White at Stockton Heath, and he intercepted the boats at London Bridge. Twigg was driving the horse, and prisoner was in one of the boats. The captain denied all knowledge of the missing corn. The sergeant searched the boat and found the corn in the cabin. Prisoner was taken to the Stockton Heath Police Station and witness saw him there, and he admitted to having taken the corn. He would like to say Miss Horsefield depended a great deal upon the honesty of the men. From time to time she was robbed by some of the men of not only corn, but of anything they could lay their hands on. Miss Horsefield had suffered considerably, and he asked the Bench, if the case were considered proved, to deal severely with the man for the purpose of protecting Miss Horsefield. She was willing to employ them, and they ought to recognise that she was a female, and assist her instead of robbing her.

Miss Horsefield bore out this statement, and added that the four bags she gave the men were intended to last until the following Saturday.

Prisoner said he thought the corn would not last.

Sergeant White spoke to finding the corn in the cabin. When prisoner was asked how he accounted for it, he said nothing. Twigg asked him where it had come from, and prisoner replied that he "got it this morning".

Prisoner pleaded guilty and made no defence.

Superintendent Ennion recorded a number of convictions against him.

Miss Horsefield, recalled, said she had missed horse provender on several occasions – some pounds worth – and had not just been able to find the culprit. She believed the corn was often "turned into money", as some boatpeople owned their horses and it was sold to them. In reply to Mr Littler, witness said even if prisoner considered his supply to be inadequate, he had no right to help himself to more.

William Twigg, in evidence, denied all knowledge of the theft, and said they had places on the journey where they could call for more provender if they ran short.

Mr Littler said it was very evident, as Miss Horsefield said, that this kind of thing had been going on for a long time, and it was clear that prisoner had committed the theft this time. It was only because Miss Horsefield was lenient and considerate that she had never taken action before. Prisoner would be fined £2, or in default one month's imprisonment.

## **67** 2 May 1913

### NORTHWICH RIVER MYSTERY

UNKNOWN MAN'S BODY FOUND The finding of a terribly decomposed body of an unknown

man in the old River Weaver at the rear of the Northwich Workhouse on Saturday afternoon was the subject of a Coroner's inquiry conducted by Mr H C Yates on Monday afternoon. Mr M Coneely was the foreman of the jury.

**William Rowbotham**, lock-keeper in the employ of the River Weaver Navigation, and residing at 4 Castle Bank, stated that on Saturday about 2.30 pm he saw something sailing down the old River Weaver near the viaduct. He obtained a hook, and with the help of a man named Rose, he got it to the bank, and then found it was the body of a man in a shockingly decomposed condition. The police were informed, and the body was removed to the mortuary.

Frank Coe, 49 Paradise Street, said on April 3<sup>rd</sup> about six o'clock, he was going along the footpath by the side of the old River Weaver near the viaduct, when he saw the coat produced. It was lying on the bank folded up. He looked in the pockets and found two pair of scissors. He also looked in the river, but failed to see anything unusual. He took the coat to the Police Station and told them where he had found it.

The Coroner : That is a good fellow.

Detective Sergeant Miller deposed that about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon he received a telephone message from Mr Pritchard, the Workhouse master, and as a result proceeded to the river bank, where he saw the body. He helped to remove it to the Workhouse mortuary. It was the body of a man between 50 and 60 years of age, about 5 ft 5 in in height, with dark brown hair and a sandy moustache. It was dressed in a blue cardigan jacket, dark corduroy trousers and red stockings, with lace up boots. The stockings, boots and trousers were in good condition, but the jacket was a bit worn. There was a silk muffler round the neck. He thought the body was that of a boatman. In the pockets he found four small keys on a ring and a pocket knife. It was impossible to recognise the features. In his opinion the body had been in the water not less than two months. He had made inquiries at the various lodging houses in the town about the jacket found on the footpath, but failed to get it identified. He did not think the coat would fit the deceased, who was a broad man. The footpath along the old river was a public one, but the body might have been carried down the river.

The Coroner said he was afraid that that was the only evidence they had got, and he suggested the jury should return a verdict that the deceased was found dead in the river, no evidence being forthcoming as to how he got there.

The foreman said the jury were unanimously of that opinion.

## **68      10 June 1913**

### **RUNCORN ENGINEER'S DEATH**

**BOARD OF TRADE INQUIRY** On Thursday, the circumstances attending a boiler explosion on the steam barge *City of Liverpool*, as a result of which **Arthur Inman**, a Runcorn man, lost his life, were the subject of a Board of Trade inquiry held in St George's Hall, Liverpool. The Commissioners were Mr A B Bence, barrister at law, and Mr A J Maginnis, consulting engineer.

Mr George C Vaux conducted the inquiry on behalf of the Board of Trade, and Mr Wimshurst (Batesons, Warr and Wimshurst) appeared for the owners of the ship, the North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company Limited, and also for the superintendent engineer and works manager (Mr Harry J Macklin).

Mr Vaux said the parties to the inquiry were the owners of the ship, Mr Macklin, the National Boiler and General Insurance Company, and Mr James Speir Fowler, their boiler inspector, the latter being represented by Mr Edward G Hiller. The *City of Liverpool* was a steam barge of 144.8 tons gross and 52.93 net register. She was registered in Liverpool, and owned by the North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company Limited of Ulverston, Lancashire. She was fitted with compound engines and a boiler made at Preston in 1903, with a pressure of 120 lb to the square inch. The boiler was of the single ended cylindrical marine type, 7.3 ft diameter and 9 ft long, with two plain furnaces 26 in diameter, while a dome 35 in in diameter was fitted on top of the shell. The vessel was employed in carrying pig iron, manufactured by the North Lonsdale Company, to Manchester and other ports, and Mr Macklin, their engineer and works manager, was responsible for the supervision and upkeep of the machinery of the vessel. The boiler was insured with the National Boiler and General

Insurance Company, and was periodically inspected by their inspectors. The engineer of the ship (Arthur Inman) had risen from the position of fireman, and he appeared to have been expected to have examined the boiler at sailing times, and to effect trivial repairs himself when the vessel was away from her home port. On February 12<sup>th</sup> 1912, Mr Fowler made an inspection of the vessel's boiler internally and externally when she was lying at Ulverston. During that month and March, repairs were effected to the boiler by employees of the owners at Ulverston, and Mr John Stephenson Rose, one of the Boiler Insurance Company's inspectors, visited the vessel from time to time and satisfied himself that the repairs recommended were carried out. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, she left Manchester about 3 p m for Widnes. She proceeded down the Manchester Ship Canal, and no leakage from the combustion chamber appeared to have been noticed by the fireman, Thomas Relph. About 6.20 the vessel had arrived about 3 1/2 miles above Runcorn proceeding at a speed of about 6 1/2 knots, with a pressure on the boiler of about 115 lb per square inch. While the fireman was standing in front of the boiler, and Inman, the engineer, was on the front platform, suddenly one of the screwed stays in the lower part of the starboard side of the combustion chamber was blown out of the back plate, leaving an opening about 1 3/4 in diameter, through which the contents of the boiler were discharged into the engine room. The fireman escaped up the ladder, but Inman was caught by the escaping steam, and was afterwards found lying dead on the port side of the engine. Upon examination afterwards, it was found that the stay which had been blown out had asbestos cord under the washer as the jointing material.

Evidence bearing out the facts was given by the captain of the vessel (**John Johnson**) and others.

Mr A E Leslett, engineer and surveyor to the Board of Trade, said he conducted an examination of the boiler, and found that the bottom stay on the starboard side had been blown right out of the plate. The back plate had been wasted away around the hole through corrosion, and he noticed that the stay had a fracture of some standing. In his opinion, the explosion was due to the wasting of the thread of the plate connecting the plate to the screwed stay in the first instance, but no explosion could have occurred had the stay not been fractured.

**THE JUDGEMENT** The judgement was given on Saturday.

The President of the Court (Mr A B Bence-Jones) stated that the inspections of the boiler undertaken by the National Boiler and General Insurance Company, were regular and satisfactory, and a hydraulic test that was made was an efficient one. In January last, when the vessel was in Glasson Dock, Lancaster, the engineer, Inman, found one of the boiler stays was leaking. He cut the nut, and instead of caulking around the stay, he wrapped it with asbestos cord and fitted a new nut on the stay.

This was the first circumstance which probably brought about the fatal explosion. Subsequently when the Board of Trade engineer made an inspection, he found that for some time this identical stay had been cracked and corroded. This defect might have been accentuated by the hammering which was of necessity used by Inman in carrying out the repair mentioned. The fact that the threads on the stay and the plate were completely wasted away allowed the whole of the strain to come on the flawed part of the stay. Inman appeared to have made no report to anyone of the leakage and of the method of repair he adopted, and nothing short of the removal of the stay would have revealed the flaw.

There was therefore no reason to take exception to the inspections made on various occasions. The working of the boiler afloat appeared to have been normal and its treatment workmanlike. On the day of the explosion the stay mentioned blew out without any warning about 6.20 p m. The fireman was close to the ladder and escaped, but the engineer was killed by the escaping steam. The cause of the accident was one of rare occurrence, and not more than one case resembling it had been made the subject of formal investigation.

The Court found that proper steps had been taken by the owners, the North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company Limited, Ulverston, to ensure that the boiler was worked under safe conditions, and absolved them and the National Boiler and General Insurance Company from blame.

## 69 24 June 1913

### GALLANT RESCUE

EXCITING RIVER SCENES AT WIDNES Conspicuous bravery was displayed by a labourer named William Taylor of Bank Street and **Horace Atherton**, a flat captain of Mersey Road, in saving the life of a little girl from drowning in the river Mersey on Sunday evening.

Taylor was standing in the vicinity of the Transporter Bridge when he heard some children shout, "Save her". They pointed to the water under the bridge, and on looking in that direction he saw a child being carried away by the strong ebb tide. He immediately took off his coat and entered the water. He reached the girl, but on returning he got into difficulties. Seeing the danger of both, a flat captain, Horace Atherton, entered the water fully clothed and swam to them. With great difficulty he brought them both to the shore, where many willing hands were ready to give assistance.

The child was apparently dead, but Atherton commenced artificial respiration, and in 30 minutes his efforts were rewarded. The child proved to be Eliza Roberts, aged three years, the daughter of John Roberts of Beaumont Street.

The affair was witnessed by a large crowd, including the ex Mayor (Alderman T Smith), who warmly commended the bravery of both men.

## 70 1 July 1913

### TWENTY SIX KICKS

RUNCORN BOATMAN'S CRUELTY TO A HORSE The story of how a Salt Union boatman lost control of his temper and kicked his horse time after time on the stomach after beating it with his fists was told to the Runcorn Bench on Monday.

The Magistrates marked their sense of disapproval by fining the defendant 5s and 24s 6d costs. The Chairman told the man – **George Beech** – that the smallness of the fine was due to the heaviness of the costs. They believed he had acted very cruelly, and they advised him to try to control his temper better.

The principal witness for the RSPCA, who prosecuted, was Geo Ennion, son of Superintendent Ennion, who said that on the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup> inst he was walking in the direction of the lay by, when he met the defendant, who was in charge of a brown horse that was drawing a pair of Salt Union narrowboats. The horse refused to pull, and the defendant appeared to lose his temper. He hit the animal in the mouth and about the head with his fists, and afterwards kicked it on the near side eight times with his clogs. The horse gave a sudden pull that broke the rope attaching it to the boat. The man made use of foul expressions and kicked the horse in the stomach again three times. After refastening the rope, he again kicked it three times in the stomach. When he got to a lock, he unhooked the rope, held the horse by the bridle and kicked it seven times on the near side and eight times on the off side, making 26 times in all. Witness did not speak to him, having no desire to be talked to in the way defendant had talked to the horse, but he reported the matter.

In reply to defendant, Mr Ennion said he did not see the horse bite him.

Ernest Haver and Owen Humphreys corroborated Mr Ennion's evidence.

Inspector Dee spoke to examining the horse in Crosby's stables, Top Locks. There was a swelling on the flanks on the near side. The defendant told him he was very sorry for what he had done, and that he had lost his temper. His wife and family would be the ones to suffer. At first he absolutely denied having kicked the horse at all.

Defendant's excuse for his action was that the horse was vicious and "unruleable". He had only had the animal about a fortnight when the incident happened. The man who had previously owned it could make it work because he was its master. Witness could not. The horse seemed to know that it had got a new master and wanted to do as it liked. It worked when it wanted, and was full of "dirty actions". What made him lose his temper was the fact that it had bitten him twice and "lashed out" at him with its hoofs.

## 71 1 July 1913

### GIRL DROWNED

**SAD TRAGEDY AT WIDNES** On Tuesday afternoon, a drowning accident involving the death of an eleven year old girl named Elizabeth McIverney, the daughter of John McIverney, a chemical labourer of 9 Wright Street, Widnes, occurred at Widnes.

The deceased girl was in the habit of going along the towing-path of the Widnes and St Helens Canal to take dinner to her uncle, who was employed at Messrs Pilkington's works. On Tuesday afternoon she was returning from the direction of the works, and when opposite the Widnes Alkali Works was seen by a young fellow named Beesley struggling in the water. He ran for assistance, and a boy named Fred Davies, of 15 Walmsley Street, ran to the spot. All that could then be seen was a handkerchief. The body was recovered some seven hours later.

The inquest was conducted by Coroner S Brighthouse at the Widnes Police Station on Wednesday.

There was no evidence to show how she got into the water, and the jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

Sympathy was expressed to the mother in her sad bereavement, and owing to her poor circumstances, the Coroner and jury made a collection and 8s was handed to her.

## 72 22 July 1913

### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

**DISTURBED THE FISHERMAN** **John Disley**, a canal boatman of Leigh, was summoned for having used obscene language at Norton on July 12<sup>th</sup>. He pleaded guilty. Sergeant Upton said he was proceeding along the canal bank at Norton, with his boy, a stool, a basket and fishing rods, when he met the defendant, who was coming down the canal in charge of two boats and a horse. Witness waved the stool with the object of getting the horse to move over, whereupon the defendant used very obscene language and wanted to get off the boat and fight witness. Defendant : Have you the right to hit a horse when you meet one? Witness : Certainly not. I simply put the stool up to turn the horse round. The Bench said that as nothing was known against the defendant, he would be let off on paying the costs, 6s.

## 73 1 August 1913

### RUNCORN FLATMAN'S OFFENCES

**BRUTAL ASSAULT ON FATHER-IN-LAW** **William Billington**, a well built man described as a boatman, and a resident of Wivern Place, was charged at the Runcorn Police Court on Wednesday with having been drunk and disorderly. He pleaded guilty.

He was also charged with having assaulted his father-in-law, William Gore of Wivern Place. He pleaded guilty to this, saying he was so drunk that he did not know what he was doing.

PC Reeves said that he went to Wivern Place on the previous night in consequence of a complaint. He found the prisoner fighting with another man. He was exceedingly violent and witness had great trouble in getting him to the Police Station. He had to put the handcuffs on him when opposite the Egerton Arms, and they were struggling together on the floor until help was forthcoming.

William Gore, prisoner's father-in-law, said he was a baker. On Tuesday afternoon he went to bed at 5.30 to get his rest preparatory to his night's work. About 9.30 the prisoner came to the house and asked for his "missus". He was told that she was not there. He burst the front door open and called witness's wife all sorts of foul names. Witness shouted to him from the bedroom and brought a torrent of abuse upon his own head. Then the prisoner came upstairs and attacked him in bed, beating him unmercifully with his fists, scarring his arm and giving him a black eye. He tore witness's shirt to ribbons. Finally witness's wife and children got him away and his daughter brought the police.

Prisoner said : I was too drunk to know.

Susannah Fish, a sister of the prisoner, volunteered to give evidence for him, but admitted knowing nothing whatever of the assault.

Superintendent Ennion said that the man was sent to gaol for a month with hard labour a year ago

for an assault.

Prisoner said he would have no more drink if the Bench would give him a chance.

For having been drunk and disorderly he was sent to gaol for a month. For the assault he was committed for two months.

#### **74 1 August 1913**

##### **ROBBING THE FARMERS**

**BOATMEN FINED AT RUNCORN** The depredations committed by canal boatmen at this period of the year were mentioned to the Runcorn Bench on Monday, when **James Stubbs, Arthur Moore** and **Edward Harrison**, young boatmen in the employ of the Anderton Company, were charged with stealing 5 lb of potatoes from a field belonging to the executors of the late Mr John Fryer of Wharford (Whatford?) Farm, Norton.

They pleaded guilty.

Samuel Fryer, one of the executors of the late Mr John Fryer, said that he had had a good deal of loss during the last two years. Last year half a ton of potatoes were taken, and about 4 1/2 cwt had gone up to the present time this year. On the 21<sup>st</sup> July his attention was drawn to these men, who were in the field, and he went to them and caught them "on the job". Their boats were nearby, and they had two buckets and a spade. They had dug about 5 lb of potatoes, and these would have produced 1 cwt, if left.

The men had nothing to say.

Superintendent Ennion said that this sort of thing was going on to a great extent up and down the division.

The Chairman said he did not know if the men realised the seriousness of the offence. It was an offence for which they might be sent to prison. They would be fined 10s each, including costs.

#### **75 5 August 1913**

##### **THEFTS AT WIDNES**

**PILFERING FROM MARKET STALL AND ROPE STEALING** At Widnes Police Court on Monday, a waterman named **Richard Kenright**, of no fixed abode, pleaded guilty to stealing a quantity of rope from the flat *Hilda*, belonging to Messrs W Cooper and Sons.

Superintendent Foster stated that on Saturday prisoner made a trip on the *Hilda*, and when the crew left her, there was a quantity of rope on the stern of the flat. Soon afterwards PC Tobin, who was on duty near the Widnes canal where the *Hilda* was lying, saw prisoner loitering about. The constable's suspicions were aroused, and he watched the man. He saw Kenright board the flat and then leave after a few minutes, with a quantity of rope on his shoulder. The constable followed him in the direction of a marine store dealer's place, but before the store was reached, **Mr Battersby**, the captain of the flat, met prisoner. Stopping him, he ordered him to take the rope back to the flat, but the constable arrived on the scene and, ascertaining the facts, took Kenright into custody.

Superintendent Foster added that the man had been before the Court on 49 previous occasions. Three of the convictions were for similar thefts.

Prisoner was sent to gaol for one month with hard labour.

#### **76 8 August 1913**

##### **EDDISBURY PETTY SESSIONS**

**UNLICENSED DOGS** In a case against **George Parry**, lock-keeper of Tiverton, the defendant wrote stating that he had asked the local postmistress to get a licence for him, and a statement was received from the postmistress to the effect that what Parry had written was quite correct, as she had obtained his dog licence for five years. Acting Sergeant Worth informed the Bench that whilst it was true that Parry had asked her to get his licence he did not give her the money. A fine of 1s and costs was imposed.

## 77 8 August 1913

### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

**DRUNK ON LICENSED PREMISES** **Isaac Nicholls**, a boatman of Percival's Lane, was charged with having been drunk and disorderly on the licensed premises of the Stanley Arms, High Street, on Monday evening. Mr Benjamin Richards, licensee of the house, said the prisoner came in about 8.30 on the night in question and asked for a glass of beer. He refused to serve him owing to his condition. He then used very bad language and struck at witness over the counter. Prisoner : If the officer had been smart, you would have been "down below" instead of me. Sergeant Clague said he was called to the Stanley Arms by the licensee on Monday night. He requested the licensee to ask the prisoner to go out in his presence. He did so, and the man used bad language and struck at him over the counter. The Chairman said the licensee had acted quite properly in refusing to serve the prisoner, who would be fined 10s.

## 78 15 August 1913

### WHEELOCK CANAL FATALITY

**CHILD FALLS FROM A BOAT** The circumstances of a distressing tragedy involving the death of the four year old son of **Mr J H Turnock**, a boatman on the North Staffordshire Canal, were related to Coroner H C Yates at an inquest held at the Co-operative Reading Room, Wheelock, on Monday. It was stated that the child's mother was dressing him as he was standing on the roof of the cabin of the boat, which was moored alongside the bank near to Wheelock. She had occasion to leave the child and go into the cabin. When she returned the child had disappeared, and thinking that he had got off the boat and walked along the towing path, she searched the vicinity, but failed to find him. She shouted, but got no answer.

Fear was then aroused that the child had fallen into the canal. On returning to the boat, she observed the child in the water.

Assistance was called for, and a member of the Brunner Mond Ambulance Brigade, Mr Joseph Bennett, put in an appearance, and after the child had been taken from the water, he attempted artificial respiration without success.

Dr Riddell was summoned, but death had taken place when he arrived.

Commenting upon the circumstances, the Coroner stated that it was evident everything had been done to save the life of the child.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

## 79 22 August 1913

**RUNCORN WATERMAN INJURED** On Monday, whilst following his employment at Salford Docks, a waterman named **Frank Owen** (24), of Egerton Street, Runcorn, met with an accident and sustained a fractured thigh. He was removed to the Salford Hospital.

## 80 5 September 1913

### JUMPED IN THE RIVER AT WINSFORD

**SHOEMAKER CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTING SUICIDE** At the Winsford Police Court on Wednesday, before Messrs T Ivison and C Massey, William Crosswaite, shoemaker, 199 Weaver Street, was charged with attempting to commit suicide by jumping into the river Weaver the previous day.

Thomas Hodgkinson, salt boiler, 3 Winnington Street, Winsford, stated that at 2.30 on Tuesday he was standing on Winsford Bridge, when he saw a man dive into the river Weaver from an opening at the back of Mr Garner's offices.

He shouted to the flatmen who were on a barge close by that there was a man in the river, and pointed to the spot where defendant went in. He saw Albert Davies throw him a life buoy and afterwards get a boat hook.

**Albert Davies**, waterman, 276 High Street, stated that he was in the cabin of a barge when he heard a cry that a man was in the water. He immediately threw him a life buoy, but defendant was too far

away to grasp it. He then rushed and got a boat hook and hooked the defendant up by the sleeve of his coat. Defendant grasped the hook in his hand at this time, but he was under the water about eighteen inches. He then got another hook and hooked him under the arm. There was a steam launch close by and two men who were on it came and assisted him to get defendant out of the water. The police then came and took charge of him.

PC Smyth stated that at 3 pm on the date in question he was in Wharton Road, Wharton, in company with Inspector Foster, when he saw a crowd of people on Winsford Bridge and heard that a man was in the water. They went to the back of the Red Lion Hotel, and there saw defendant. His clothes were wet. Witness noticed that he was drunk and took him to Jonathan Hallmark's shop, where he had been previously employed. He was in a dazed condition, and witness took him to the Police Station. That morning he was charged with attempting to commit suicide and he made no reply.

On the application of Inspector Foster, prisoner was remanded in custody until Monday next.

## **81      3 October 1913**

### **A CALLOUS FATHER**

#### **MIDDLEWICH MAN SENT TO GAOL**

**HIS CHILDREN A NUISANCE TO HIM** A very sad case of a father's neglect of his children was heard at the Middlewich Police Court on Tuesday, before Messrs W Boosey and J A Hulme, when **Joseph Lea**, general labourer, was charged in custody with having neglected his two children, John, aged nine, and Robert, aged six.

Prisoner said he was guilty to a certain extent.

Mr H P Rigby, who prosecuted on behalf of the police, stated that prisoner was a widower, who lost his wife six years ago. He had no fixed place of abode, and had three children aged 9, 12 and 6 years. The eldest child was in the Northwich Workhouse at present, while the other two children were in from November 9<sup>th</sup> 1912 to September 9<sup>th</sup> 1913. Ever since the man had lost his wife, the children had been kept by the grandmother, the prisoner's brother and sister, or they had been in the Workhouse. His relatives had all complained that prisoner would not contribute reasonable maintenance for the children. Even when he was living with his sister, he used to ill-treat her and leave the house without any food. He was practically the means of breaking up the home. During the time the children were in the Workhouse, two maintenance orders were made against him, but he had gone to prison on each occasion in default of paying. After he had left prison in August 1912, the Inspector of the NSPCC saw Lea and told him that he would have to make provision for his children, and he then promised that he would do better. For a few weeks he kept his promise and sent money to his mother, but afterwards he was worse than ever, and in ten weeks only sent his sister 2s towards the maintenance of his children. Lea worked occasionally at odd jobs, but nearly all the money he got went in drink. On September 9<sup>th</sup> he took the two younger children out of the Workhouse. He took John, aged nine, with him to assist him on a canal boat, while Robert he left with his mother, who had married a second time.

Her husband objected to keeping the child, as he considered the proper person to look after him was his father. In consequence of the trouble, Inspector Turpin went over and arranged for the boy to be lodged at a neighbour's house. The inspector tried to find prisoner, but could not find him until September 26<sup>th</sup>, when the warrant was issued.

Prisoner ought never to have been a father, proceeded Mr Rigby, for he took no responsibility or care of his children, and did not mind who looked after them. Whether drink was the sole cause he could not say, but certainly it was one of the causes, for he was often seen under the influence of drink. He had been to prison on three occasions for failing to comply with maintenance orders, and that did not even bring him to realise his parental responsibility.

**THE EVIDENCE** Inspector Turpin said he had known prisoner for three years. He was first called to his house when he was living in Sproston Green in September 1910. His house was being kept by his sister, who complained that prisoner did not provide food and was always drinking. Witness went to see him where he was working, and asked why he did not provide proper maintenance, and

prisoner replied that he could not. He also asked him why he thrashed his sister, and he replied that she was impertinent to him. At that time the children were fed by somebody at Holmes Chapel. In October 1910, an affiliation order was made against prisoner at Manchester for the payment of 3s per week, and as he did not comply with it, he was sentenced to a month's imprisonment. Prisoner's sister and the three children then went to reside in Pepper Street with his mother, who had married a second time. Whilst the man was in prison, his mother received 5s a week for the keep of the children, and when he was discharged he went to stop with his mother, but his conduct became so outrageous that he was put out.

He went to live at Sea Bank, and though his mother said he had paid something, his sister said he had not ; all the money they had received was 2s in 10 weeks. The children were subsequently removed to the Workhouse, where they remained until September of this year. On July 23<sup>rd</sup> last he met Lea in Witton Street, Northwich, and he said he had been liberated from prison that day, and wished to see the Police Court Missioner. He then promised to look after his children. On September 13<sup>th</sup> he received a telephone message to say that, in consequence of prisoner having taken two of the children out of the Workhouse and having dumped them on his mother, there had been trouble at the house. He went over to Middlewich and arranged for the children to be lodged over the weekend at a neighbour's house. On the 17<sup>th</sup> he found prisoner on a canal boat, which was tied up below the town bridge.

He there told witness that he had made arrangements for the younger boy to go to live with a woman in Middlewich, and that he was taking the elder boy with him to Wheelock. Witness subsequently visited the town, and found that the prisoner had made no such arrangements, and that the boy was still with his grandmother, whilst the boy John was working on the canal boat with him. When the children left the Workhouse they were fat and healthy, but the boy John was now showing the results of his having worked on the canal boat at such a tender age. He was suffering from pleurisy, and was showing the ravages, not only of neglect, but of the hard work he had had to go through. Prisoner would not realise his responsibilities at all ; he dumped his children down where he could, and then went off to "shake a loose leg".

Prisoner : Did I not tell you I would make provision for the boy Robert? You did say so, but you never did. If you had made provision you would never have been brought here.

STATEMENTS BY THE POLICE Acting Sergeant Dudley said he had known prisoner three years. He would not have regular work, but hung about the district. For 18 months he followed threshing machines, and slept in outbuildings. Since then he had been "dodging" about canal boats. He was a drunken man, and all the money he got was spent in the public house. On May 27<sup>th</sup> he arrested Lea, under a warrant taken out by the Guardians, and he then told witness he never intended to make a home for the children, and if the Guardians would allow them to stay in the Workhouse, he would not mind paying an odd shilling or two, but he would never make a home for them.

Sergeant Nolan said that he had known prisoner two and a half years, and during that period he had never known prisoner to have regular employment. He was a drunken fellow, and witness had frequently seen him in public houses in the district. Witness had cautioned him on two occasions when he had been under the influence of drink. When witness arrested him in February last, under a warrant taken out by the Guardians, Lea said that the children were a nuisance to him, and the sooner he got rid of them the better. He understood the Guardians were going to adopt one, but he would be glad if they adopted the lot.

DOCTOR'S EVIDENCE Dr Melville's evidence was to the effect that he had examined John on Monday, and found him in a weak state, thin and poorly developed. His skin was dirty, and on examining his chest, he found he was suffering from pleurisy, no doubt due to the exposure while working on the canal boat with his father. The clothing was fairly good and clean. The conditions under which he would live on the canal boat would be detrimental to his health, and to the complaint from which he was suffering.

PRISONER'S EXCUSE Prisoner, in a statement to the magistrates, said he had never been given a fair chance. They had simply arrested him and sent him to prison. He asked that he should be

allowed to sign the pledge, and to be put under police supervision for six or twelve months so that he could have a chance of getting a home for the children. No doubt his mother would help him provide a home if he signed the pledge.

THE SENTENCE The Chairman said in his long experience he had not heard a worse case of neglect of children. Lea seemed altogether past redemption, and as far as his statement was concerned that he would sign the pledge, he (Mr Boosey) had no faith in it at all. He would have to go to prison for four months with hard labour.

## **82 17 October 1913**

### FELL INTO THE QUAY

RUNCORN MAN DROWNED AT LATCHFORD An accident occurred at Latchford Locks of the Manchester Ship Canal at four o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, resulting in the death of **Samuel Worrall**, a boatman of Spring Street, Runcorn. Worrall was stepping from his boat on to the quayside, when he fell between the boat and the wall and was drowned. Thomas James Green, a gateman employed at the Locks, began grappling operations, and the body was recovered at 4.20 pm. Artificial respiration was resorted to, and Dr Jago was summoned, but he pronounced life extinct.

## **83 24 October 1913**

RUNCORN CHILD SCALDED By pulling a pot of tea over it in the cabin of the canal boat which its father captains, **Robert Gough**, the infant son of Mr and Mrs Gough of Knight's Cottages, Wellington Street, Runcorn, was severely scalded. It is progressing satisfactorily under the care of Dr Murphy.

## **84 28 October 1913**

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS For failing to send their children to school regularly, the following were fined at Runcorn Petty Sessions :- **William Keen** and **Thomas Clutton**, canal boats. Attendance Officer Howard proved the cases.

## **85 31 October 1913**

### CYCLONE AT WIDNES

#### ENORMOUS DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

#### PEDESTRIAN'S STRANGE EXPERIENCE

#### THROWN ACROSS THE ROAD BY WHIRLWIND

REMARKABLE ESCAPES Widnes was on Monday night visited by a remarkable hurricane, lasting but a few moments yet approaching cyclonic force, and doing enormous damage to property in all parts of the town. Fortunately, however, no loss of life is reported, though several persons sustained minor injuries and considerable shock.

The hurricane occurred between half past eight and nine o'clock, and swept over the town in a north westerly direction. It was preceded by a long period of violent thunderclaps, vivid flashes of lightning, and a deluge of hail and rain. Suddenly the wind increased to an extraordinary velocity, and a whirlwind struck the centre of the town from the river Mersey to Farnworth.

Great havoc was caused, particularly to old property, and houses were partially destroyed, while the streets were strewn with wrecked house and shed roofs, broken chimney pots, hoardings, bricks and slates. In one thoroughfare, namely Kent Street, which is situate in the Simm's Cross district, no fewer than a dozen houses were rendered windowless, and extraordinary escapes from injury are reported.

In one house the plaster and paper were stripped from the wall, and it is feared that the brickwork has been seriously impaired. In the same thoroughfare the outward walls of another house were cracked from top to bottom, and the inmates had a wonderful escape. The properties adjoining the footpath leading from Frederick Street to Appleton were the more seriously damaged, and the road was covered with refuse.

In the Lugsdale and Moss Bank districts, house property has suffered greatly.

**OVERCOAT TORN INTO SHREDS** Probably the most remarkable escape from injury was experienced by Mr James Shingler, who lives in Gladstone Street. Mr Shingler was walking along Widnes Road, between St Paul's Church and the Parochial Hall, when he was suddenly lifted off his feet by the hurricane, whirled round and round, pitched from one side of the road to the other and back again, finally to be dashed into one of the excavation trenches dug in connection with the road raking work which is being undertaken in that district. Mr Shingler did not recover for some minutes, but when he was able to proceed on his journey he was astonished to find his overcoat had been torn into shreds. Mr Shingler is a strongly built man, but when seen by a Guardian representative at his home soon after the whirlwind had subsided, he bore traces of his remarkable experience. He complained of shock, and also of a pain in his side.

Explaining his experience, Mr Shingler said he was practically the only person between St Paul's and the Parochial Hall at the time. "I had been caught", he continued, "in a deluge of rain and hail soon after eight o'clock, and after having sheltered in the shadow of a building in the square, I was hurrying home. When opposite Vine Street, I was startled by a terrific noise – a noise which inclined me towards imagining that the whole block of houses on the other side of the road had collapsed. Before I had time to think further or look round, I felt myself lifted bodily into the air and pitched and whirled across the road. After that, I seemed to lose consciousness of what was happening, and when I came to myself I was lying in the roadway. The hurricane had gone, but I simply quaked with fear and shock, while my overcoat was reduced to shreds. How I got home, I don't know. My escape was nothing short of a miracle, and it is no wonder my overcoat and I are objects of wonder".

Several other people, including Mr George Aspey, the well known Widnes footballer, who was in the neighbourhood of Kent Street at the time of the whirlwind, had similar experiences. Mr Aspey was walking along Dickson Street, and before he could collect his own senses, had been hurled over a hundred yards up the road.

**PROSTRATE WITH SHOCK** Dozens of similar cases are reported, while several families have sustained serious shock as a result of the cyclonic gale having struck the houses in which they live. In one family, a grown up daughter was prostrated with shock for quite an hour after the whirlwind had struck the house.

In another case, a father who had been hurrying home when the hurricane was at its height, and was hurled across the road, found his wife and little daughter almost out of their senses as a result of the shock they had received. The windows of his house in Kent Street had been shattered, and the brickwork cracked.

**SKATING RINK DAMAGED** Serious damage was done to the Empire Skating Rink, which belongs to Councillor Paul Caldwell and his brother, and is situated behind Kent Street. Here, a number of people were witnessing a hockey match on skates, when the large wooden building was suddenly caught by the whirlwind and violently shaken. The roof, an eye witness states, was perceptibly raised two or three times as the wind whirled round the structure, but fortunately it was not blown away. The eastern wall, however, was seriously damaged, for it was "bulged in". The skaters and spectators, naturally, were terrified, and several ladies fainted, but only one girl, Mona Fyldes of Frederick Street, was slightly hurt.

The roof of the shed at Ward's cycle works in Gladstone Street was bodily lifted and flung a considerable distance away, while at Messrs Gossage's soap works a number of sheds were blown down and wrecked. No one was injured however, although the watchman, an elderly man, narrowly escaped accident, for the hut which he occupied was demolished by the wreckage falling upon it. He was extricated from an awkward position uninjured.

**CURIOUS EXPERIENCE AT LIBERAL CLUB** The Widnes Liberal Club came within the area affected by the hurricane, and a meeting which was being held was curiously disturbed. The members were transacting their business when everyone was suddenly terrified by the noises the wind made as it enveloped the building and whirled round and round. At one window the fastenings were rudely undone, and the frame, together with curtains and blinds and several hats

which had been placed on a ledge inside, were sucked out. The experience only lasted a few moments, but so terrifying was it that it was the subject of conversation the rest of the evening. The heavy rain and hailfall, which prevailed for nearly half an hour, seriously affected the proceedings at the Queen's Nurses Association concert, which was being held in the Borough Rink. The singers and speakers could scarcely be heard by the audience, and so intense was the excitement at the rear of the hall consequent upon the noise the hurricane made that several ladies fainted and had to be removed.

**LOSS TO PROPERTY OWNERS** The loss to property owners is estimated at several hundreds of pounds.

**A GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION** One of the most graphic descriptions of the storm is given by Mr James Gerrard, Corporation Gas meter collector, and a member of the Widnes Fire Brigade, who happened to be standing in the door of the Fire Station in (?Lacey) Street.

"I think it was about 8.30 when I happened to go to the door of the station", he said. "The thunderstorm was raging furiously, and flashes of forked lightning were exceptionally vivid and enough to cause consternation. The electric fire alarms in the station were affected. As the torrential downpour of rain abated, I was suddenly startled by a terrific noise, and as I looked over in the direction of Deacon's works and Gossages, I came to the conclusion that a serious explosion had occurred.

The heavens were lit up for a moment ; then everything went black, and I could feel cinders and dust falling all around me. It appeared as if something had been blown up, and the roofs of works' sheds screens had been lifted into the air and flung over the railway embankment into Lacey Street fields.

Clouds of smoke followed the cinders and dust, and I could hear a great noise as of escaping steam. The thought flashed over me that a railway collision had occurred on the opposite L and NW Railway embankment, and I immediately ran as fast as I could towards the lines. When I reached the railway bridge, I found out my mistake. The place was deserted, and I came to the conclusion it was as I had first thought, that an explosion had occurred at one of the neighbouring works.

I rushed up the steps of the wooden bridge which leads to the Widnes canal, and when commencing to cross, a man collided with me. He was shaking like a leaf.

**A REMARKABLE STORY** I tried my best to calm the man, and when sufficiently recovered, he told me a remarkable story. He said he had got halfway across the bridge on his way to work, when vivid flashes of lightning struck the woodwork around him, and dazed and blinded him. When he had recovered from the first shock, he was further startled by terrific ripping noises which proceeded from the adjoining works. He looked over the side of the bridge and was in time to see Gossage's shed torn up, and the roof and sides flung hundreds of yards into the canal and adjoining works. Then several boards were ripped away from the side of the bridge, and he turned round towards home and took to his heels. Just at that moment he was whirled round and round, and seemed to become charged with electricity".

Mr Gerrard, continuing his own narrative, said the works were in a hubbub of excitement. The workmen were terrified, and everybody seemed to be rushing away to find some place of safety.

On returning home, Mr Gerrard went along Cross Street, and saw that the road was strewn with cinders.

**A CLERK'S EXPERIENCE** Mr W H Easton, a clerk in the Borough Accountant's Office, Widnes, and residing in Elliott Street, also had an unpleasant experience.

Mr Easton said he was just entering Elliott Street from Widnes Road after posting a letter at the Simm's Cross pillar box when the hurricane commenced. The umbrella he was carrying was nearly torn out of his hands, and as he approached his home, he was picked up off his feet and whirled round three times and deposited heavily on the pavement. For a few moments he was "blinded" by an extraordinary glare, and it seemed as if an earthquake had happened, so terrific were the noises and lashes.

His face and hands were literally covered with soot and dirt, while hanging from his cap were large pieces of soot.

ITEMS OF INTEREST Eye witnesses describe the lightning which preceded the hurricane as of dazzling brilliance, the whole town being lighted up.

Persons who happened to be near Kent Street had alarming experiences. One man named Bellard, who was walking along the footpath leading to Appleton, was lifted off his feet into the air, and as he fell was compelled to cling to the wall for support.

Alderman E Wood's son and another young man had a similar experience when passing Dickson Street, for they had to clutch hold of the sleeper fencing to prevent the wind hurling them to the ground. Both suffered considerably from shock, and were a "bundle of nerves" when they arrived home.

Mr George Aspey, the well known Widnes footballer, in addition to his personal experience detailed elsewhere, was compelled to carry his wife home. Mrs Aspey was much buffeted about, and swooned, and it was some time before she recovered from the severe shock she sustained.

With the exception of two young children receiving cuts of the face from flying glass from a shattered window, no one was injured in the Kent Street houses, which suffered so much from damage.

When the wreckage was being cleared from Messrs Gossage's storing shed at Widnes Canal on Wednesday morning, many roots and branches of trees were discovered. These, it is surmised, had been uprooted from the adjoining marsh land.

Two houses in Park Road were flooded as the result of the sewers being choked, and considerable damage was done to the furniture.

The electric fire alarms at the Widnes Fire Brigade and Police Stations and electric indicators at the local telephone exchanges were disturbed, and at the latter place, business had to be suspended for some time.

A fall of an inch of rain was recorded in Widnes in thirty minutes.

The most damage to property was done at Gossage's storing sheds, where the hurricane or whirlwind originated, and at Kent Street, where it terminated.

The effect of the wind in some instances was almost whimsical. It tore the roof of a house in Kent Street, without doing the slightest damage to the bedroom, but reduced the kitchen to a state of chaos, ornaments and pictures being smashed, and the kitchen wall buckled.

Houses in Deacon Road, about a hundred yards distant from the Empire Skating Rink, felt the force of the whirlwind, for in several cases roofs and chimney pots were damaged, and the interiors of several were literally covered with thick soot and dirt.

The storm was repeated in a modified form on Wednesday and Thursday, and further damage to property was done by heavy rain.

#### EXTRAORDINARY SCENES AT GOSSAGE'S WORKS

##### WRECKAGE CARRIED 400 YARDS

£2,000 DAMAGE The disturbance caused greater havoc at the huge sheds used by Messrs Gossage and Sons for storing barrels of raw material, which are situated on the right bank of the Widnes Canal and "Spike" island, than anywhere else in the district. The whirlwind, it is presumed, originated here, and damage to the extent of £2,000 was done.

ROOF BLOWN OVER CANAL The principal shed is quite 600 yards long, and the roof, covering over eleven bays, was lifted bodily and completely destroyed. The sides were also demolished, while one portion of the roof was carried over the canal and hurled on to a footbridge, the steps of which were reduced to splinters.

Another piece of the roof was hurled quite 400 yards into the adjoining Gaskel Deacon's works of the United Alkali Company, and in its passage through the air, it grazed a small chemical works chimney, finally descending on a condensing tower, which was wrecked.

Other sheds suffered, and several workmen attending to boilers in one, quite 400 yards away from the wrecked storing "barn" had lucky escapes, for they only just managed to get clear of the building as a large piece of the roof wreckage crashed through the roof on to the boilers below.

One workman who was in the shed at the time told our representative that the noises the whirlwind made were terrible, and when the wreckage hit their shed, they were almost blinded with cinders

and debris, and all the gases were extinguished.

The Alumina Works, situate between Deacon's and Gossage's, was completely wrecked, all the roofs of the sheds being carried away, while the pipes of a steam engine supplying the motive power to the plant were torn from their sockets and twisted into every conceivable shape.

Fifty men are employed here, and the buildings were so badly damaged that only a few men could resume work on Wednesday morning.

**FLATMAN'S LUCKY ESCAPE** A Liverpool flatman named **R Ascroft**, who lives at 8 Rooney Street, Brunswick Buildings, Derby Road, had a marvellous escape from death. Ascroft was asleep in the cabin of a flat, which was lying in the canal near to the wrecked shed, when he was disturbed by many tons of timber falling on the boat, which was partially sunk. The cabin was blocked up, and it was some time before Ascroft's cries for help reached the workmen clearing the debris. When rescued, Ascroft was unconscious.

The rescuers had to saw through immense pieces of timber, and an hour and a half elapsed before Ascroft was reached. He was in a terrible state, suffering fearfully from shock and exhaustion, and it was some time before he recovered.

The watchman at Gossage's storing sheds, Mr Joe Walker, who resides in Halton View, also had a terrifying experience. He had left his hut about half past eight, and while passing the shed, which was wrecked, he remembered that he would want his overcoat. He hurried back to his hut, and as he got past the shed came tumbling down, as the whirlwind and lightning struck it. Mr Walker said he never heard or saw anything like it before. The air was full of weird noises, and full of cinders, splinters of wood and debris.

Mr John Mellor, another watchman at Gossage's, of 38 Kent Street, said he was caught by the whirlwind on the canal bank, and nearly pitched into the water. Had he not caught hold of a waggon, this would have happened.

An examination of the canal bank on Wednesday morning revealed an astounding state of affairs. Everything between Gossage's and Deacon's seemed to have been demolished, and the canal banks were strewn with debris for nearly half a mile. Sleeper fences had been reduced to splinters, railway lines and signal ladders twisted into all shapes, and railway signals smashed.

The flat which was partially sunk was successfully raised on Wednesday.

#### **MUCH DAMAGE AT RUNCORN**

**FOOTBALL GRANDSTAND UNROOFED** In common with a number of other places, Runcorn had the experience on Monday evening of a "natural visitation" of a peculiar and almost uncanny type. For about five minutes, a hurricane of phenomenal violence raged in one quarter of the town only, and did an astonishing amount of damage.

The north east corner – Halton Road vicinity – appears to have experienced the full measure of the violence of the concentrated gale, and the majority of the people in other parts of the town knew nothing of it. The population of Higher Runcorn heard nothing of the occurrence until next morning, and Duke's Fields also escaped the visitation, which was "local" in a perplexing and unusual degree. The morning papers provided the first intimation to fully ninety percent of the inhabitants, and the statement appearing therein to the effect that the grandstand at the football field had been unroofed by a storm was received with frank incredulity, although it proved to be quite well founded.

About 8.30 mutterings of thunder were heard all over the town and rain fell heavily. Several vivid flashes of lightning illuminated the heavens about nine, but the storm speedily died away. In the Halton Road neighbourhood there was, however, a more serious demonstration of the forces of nature. About 9.30, what seems to be best described as a gigantic "puff" of wind was suddenly felt. Its immediate effect was the unroofing of the grandstand of the Runcorn Football Club in Irwell Lane. The whole of one side of the roof was lifted off and deposited in the yards of, and on the roofs of, the houses in Wivern Place adjoining the ground. Five or six chimney stacks were demolished by the falling timber, and the bricks and chimney pots descended into the street beneath, and portions were carried across the thoroughfare into the gardens on the opposite side of the road. It has been freely stated that the stand was struck by lightning, but an examination of the debris

failed to show any signs of this. Much of the timber was splintered, but there were no signs of charring visible.

**ALARMING EXPERIENCES** A number of residents of Wivern Street had an alarming and very unpleasant experience. At the houses occupied by Mrs Ankers and Mrs Gore, bricks fell down the chimneys into the interior, and huge clouds of dust and debris half suffocated the perturbed inhabitants. A wringing machine in the yard of No 21 Wivern Place was smashed, the cast iron framework being broken in half by the falling brickwork. The inhabitants of the houses rushed out terror stricken, and a big crowd of the people of the neighbourhood were attracted to the scene by the series of heavy crashes.

Mrs Gore, interviewed on Tuesday, said two of her little sons were in bed when the crash came. She ran upstairs and brought them down. A large quantity of bricks and debris fell down the chimney into both the parlour and kitchen of the house, and the whole of the interior was enveloped in clouds of soot.

At Mrs Ankers house, huge holes were made in the roof by the falling stones. Bricks and pieces of fallen chimney pots crashed through the room on to the bed, ruining the bedclothes. Fortunately there was no one in bed at the time. The interior of this house presented a most dismal and depressing appearance on Tuesday morning.

Mr William Kelly of Wivern Place had perhaps the most terrifying experience of the lot. He did not feel very well on coming home from his work at 5.30, and went to bed. Soon after nine o'clock, he was awakened by a loud clap of thunder with vivid flashes of "blue" lightning followed by the gust of wind. The bed was shaken so violently that he was thrown out on to the floor. He rushed downstairs and, in the words of his wife and a neighbour, he "looked like a corpse".

"We expected the house to tumble down on our heads", remarked another woman. It is a curious fact that the water supply to the houses appears to have been suddenly cut off, and no water was available for a few moments after the occurrence. Quite a number of Wivern Place people freely confessed on Tuesday that they thought the end of the world had come!

A fence round the garden of Mr Hoffland, greengrocer, was blown down, and a hoarding on the canal bank opposite Halton Road was severely damaged.

At Mr S Taylor's residence, "Rydal Mount", Halton Road, the high, strongly built garden wall was blown down. Mr Crowther, baker, passed the wall on his way home at nine o'clock and it was then "*in status quo*". Three minutes later, his son came in and announced that the wall was blown down. The violence of the gust was testified to curiously by the way in which the wall collapsed. It presented the appearance of having been cut cleanly, and the bricks were deposited in the garden almost as neatly as if placed there by an unseen hand. There were no "ridges" in the wall.

Many people in the neighbourhood spoke of the doors of their houses being blown open, though latched in the usual way. In one house, a little girl had just opened the door to go into the yard for the purpose of filling the kettle when the wind came. She was blown back bodily into the house, and it was found impossible to shut the door for a minute or two. A resident in Halton Road stated that the back door of his house was latched and bolted at the top, but the wind forced the bottom of the door several inches inward.

Another resident in Halton Road was making his way home when he was lifted off his feet and carried from one side of the street to the other. Greatly unnerved, he took refuge in an adjoining house, where a stimulant was administered.

The area in which so much destruction was wrought is one of about 200 yards square. The wind played many freaks, and it is curious that light wooden railings and other constructions of a comparatively fragile character withstood its force, while stronger structures went down before it.

Two lady cyclists who were riding along Halton Road were blown violently against a wall, and had a narrow escape from serious injury.

Mr Davey, a contractor employed on the conversion work in the town, had a curious experience. The wind blew his hat off in Halton Road, carrying it up Windmill Street. He naturally gave chase, and was surprised when his hat was suddenly blown back again – in exactly the opposite direction – to find a resting place in the Canal.

## 86 18 November 1913

### UPSET OVER A LOVE AFFAIR

**YOUNG WOMAN ATTEMPTS SUICIDE AT LATCHFORD** At Daresbury Petty Sessions at Stockton Heath on Tuesday – before Mr A H Talbot (presiding) and other magistrates – Elsie Buckley, a young woman recently employed at Lymm, was charged with attempting to commit suicide by jumping into the Bridgewater Canal at Latchford Without on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Superintendent Owen stated that at 8.20 am on Thursday, **William Massey**, a boatman, was on his boat on the canal and saw accused on the bank. She appeared to be distressed and threw up her hands and jumped into the canal. The water was four feet deep at the spot. Massey moved his boat to the bank, got off, and arriving at the spot where the accused had been, found she had disappeared, but managed to get her out. He asked her why she had acted like that. She replied that she was going to be married and that the “young fellow had deceived her”. The boatman took her to Mr Caldwell's house and she was taken later to the Police Station.

Josiah Caldwell, Chester Road, Latchford Without, spoke to taking accused into his house and having her clothing dried.

PC Jones said, when charged, accused replied, “Yes, I did”.

Mr Thomas Ridgway, on the defendant's behalf, said the girl had for some considerable time been of a rather nervous temperament and was attended by a doctor some time ago for nervous depression. She had been upset about a love affair, and that had preyed on her mind. She came to Stockton Heath and in a fit of temporary insanity threw herself into the canal. She now regretted her action. Her father (who was present in Court) promised to take her under his control, which was probably the best thing, and he asked that the case should be dismissed on that understanding.

This was agreed to.

## 87 9 December 1913

### HASSALL DROWNING FATALITY

**BOY FALLS INTO THE CANAL** The heavy snowstorm which swept the country on Thursday morning was responsible for a sad fatality at Hassall Green, when **Arthur James** (14), son of Mr and Mrs **Philip James**, Needham Bank, Elton, fell into the canal and was drowned.

At the inquest conducted at Hassall Green by Mr J C Bate, it was stated that the deceased was sent with the canal boat in the place of his father, who had had the misfortune to dislocate his shoulder. He was accompanied by his brother, who was 18 years of age, and his mother was also on the boat. They left Rode Heath early on Thursday morning, and when they reached Hassall Green the elder of the two went on to operate the lock gates. Deceased was left to guide the horse along the towing path.

The morning was pitch dark, and a severe snowstorm was raging. A few minutes had elapsed when deceased's mother called to her son, but received no reply. The elder son failed to find him, and in consequence the boat was stopped and the canal dragged. The body was found about one hundred yards behind the boat.

The lock-keeper, **John Stanier**, attempted artificial respiration, but this was unavailing. This witness stated that, in his opinion, deceased had placed himself between the horse and canal in order to shelter himself from the wind and snow. It being very dark, he must have walked into the canal.

A verdict of “Accidental death” was returned.

## 88 23 December 1913

### RUNCORN STABBING CASE

**A FORGIVING HUSBAND** A charge of unlawfully wounding, preferred against **Mary Louisa Hayes** of Portland Street by her husband **George Hayes**, was investigated by the magistrates on Friday. The woman had been on remand since Monday. She was again represented by Mr W E Hough.

Superintendent Owen said that on the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> December Hayes went into the Devonshire Hotel, where he found his wife drinking with other women. As she refused to go home, he

remained with her till about eleven o'clock. She went first and he found the doors locked when he got home. He broke a window with a view to getting in the house, and the prisoner thereupon stabbed him in the face three times with a table knife. Prisoner's son bathed the wound, and the woman went into High Street and told PC Robinson what had happened. Hayes had the injuries attended to by Dr McLennan, and two stitches were put in one wound and one in another.

**A RELUCTANT WITNESS** George Hayes, husband of the prisoner, said he lived with her at 24 Portland Street, Runcorn, and was a waterman. On Saturday December 13<sup>th</sup>, he went to the Devonshire Hotel about nine o'clock. His wife was in what was called the "snug". Two women and a man were also in the snug. He asked her to come home with him, and she refused. He remained at the hotel until about eleven o'clock. His wife left before him. He went home on leaving the house. He did not remember if she was in when he got there.

The Clerk : Why? - I don't remember.

Why? - I must have been intoxicated.

Oh, you were intoxicated? - Yes.

Giving his evidence with some reluctance, witness said he could not remember what took place. He left the front door upon finding he could not get in, and went round to the back. He knocked, but did not get any answer. He shouted that he would knock the windows in if she did not open the door. He did not know who opened it. He felt something hit him in the face.

Superintendent Owen : Who was it that struck you?

Prosecutor : I could not say. I did not see anyone strike me, but I felt it.

Superintendent Owen : How many times? - I only remember being struck once.

Was your face bleeding? - It must have been. My son told me it was bleeding.

The Magistrate : That won't do. You must speak of what you yourself know.

Prosecutor : I did not know there was any wound until my stepson told me my face was bleeding.

Were you afterwards taken to a doctor's surgery? - I think so.

Have you been living with your wife since? - Yes, sir.

Are you out of danger? Is there any danger of the wound taking a more serious turn? - There was no danger. There was nothing to prevent me coming last Monday, only I was bad with a cold.

By Mr Hough : His wife was a respectable woman in the hotel. There had been some unpleasantness between them because he had refused to go out with her earlier that evening. She was quite sober. He broke the window, and it was quite possible that some of the injury to his face might have been caused by the broken glass. He and his wife had been living together since Tuesday, and were on very comfortable terms again. They were only too sorry that it had occurred. He had provoked his wife greatly.

Mr Hough : You have no desire to be here this morning? - No.

If you had had your way, you would not have taken proceedings at all? - No.

You are here simply because the Superintendent very properly made you come here? - Yes.

You would much sooner go home with your wife and live comfortably together? - Yes.

Are you living more comfortably now than for some time? - Yes.

**THE SON'S EVIDENCE** Albert Every Atherton (17), son of the prisoner, said that on Saturday last he went home at 11.15. He found Hayes in the kitchen. His mother was in bed. Witness took Hayes upstairs. He was intoxicated and could scarcely walk. He remained up for five minutes, and then said he was going out again. Witness brought him down. He went out through the front door, and was away about five minutes. Witness got up to let him in, but he went round to the back door. The window was smashed by the prosecutor, and witness's mother picked up a table knife and struck Hayes with it. She hit the door with it. He did not actually see the knife strike Hayes's face. Hayes came in and witness put a towel to his face, because it was bleeding.

Cross-examined : Hayes had been quarrelsome that evening. When Hayes went out at night, sometimes he went to his mother's house. Witness thought he had gone that night. It was not intended to lock him out. Witness's mother was excitable, and her temper was roused by the breaking of the window.

PC Robinson spoke to meeting Mrs Hayes in High Street, and in consequence of what she said, he

went to Portland Street. He found Hayes there, sitting in a chair holding a cloth to his face. He found three wounds on his face, one on the cheek being two inches long. The knife produced was picked up by the prisoner from the floor. She said, "This is what I did it with". He examined the knife, and found what appeared to be bloodstains on the blade. The knife was broken. He took Hayes to Dr McLennan's surgery, where three stitches were put in one wound and one in another. He brought the prisoner to the Police Station, cautioned her, and charged her with unlawfully wounding her husband by stabbing him. She replied, "I don't care had I killed him".

Cross-examined : The man was drunk, and the woman did not appear to be quite sober. She was very excited and distressed.

**THE CHARGE REDUCED** Mr Hough asked that the charge should be reduced to one of common assault. He thought that the Superintendent had served his purpose in bringing the facts before the Bench. The Bench would have observed the reluctance with which the husband had given his evidence.

After examining the wounds on Hayes's face, the Bench agreed to this course.

**GUILTY OF ASSAULT** To the charge of common assault, the prisoner pleaded guilty.

Mr Hough hoped the Bench would appreciate the position he was in owing to the husband and wife having gone to live together again, and to the husband's attitude. He could not, under the circumstances, submit him to a cross-examination on the lines he might have followed if there had not been a reconciliation. Such a cross-examination might have put quite a different complexion upon matters. Hayes had broken windows on previous occasions, and "the boot was on the other leg". Only in November, the prisoner was subjected to a severe assault, which left her with a black eye and other injuries. When she heard the man shouting and the noise of the window being smashed, she became very excited and upset, and did not know what had happened. She did not intend to harm him seriously. The man himself did not know how his injuries were actually sustained. The woman had a family, including twin babies eight months old.

**SMART FINE AND GOOD ADVICE** Mr Littler said he was doubtful in his mind, at first, if the case could be reduced to one of common assault but, having regard to all the circumstances and the fact that the couple were now living together again comfortably, and the man was out of danger, he thought the Bench was justified in reducing it. At the same time, looking at it in the best possible light they could, they could not forget that the assault had been a very serious one. It was very sad to see a young couple living as this pair appeared to have been living, and the Bench hoped that the proceedings would be a grave warning to them. Sometimes when troubles culminated in the Police Court the thing had its good side. Prisoner must pay a fine of 40s and 12s 6d costs, or go to gaol for a month.

## **89 26 December 1913**

### **CRUELTY TO A HORSE**

**RUNCORN BOY FINED** At the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday, **Joseph Keenan**, a canal boatman, was charged with ill-treating a horse by flogging it on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The case had been remanded for a week in order that the defendant might call evidence.

Sergeant Upton said that at 12.30 on the 6<sup>th</sup> December he saw the defendant driving two horses on the canal bank, going in the direction of Preston Brook. When he got near Delph Bridge, he started flogging the rear horse with the heavy whip produced, and continued flogging it as far as Miss Horsefield's stables. Witness followed along the road and intercepted the defendant near the footbridge. He found several weals on the horse's body where it had been struck. The man on the flat saw witness following and called to defendant, who then hung the whip on the gears.

Defendant said he only thrashed the front horse. The rear horse did not want any thrashing.

Witness : Neither of them wanted any. They were going along very well.

Fred William Moorefield, an engine driver of Highfield Cottages, corroborated.

Defendant called **Henry Green**, mate of the flat the horses were pulling, who said he never saw defendant hit the horse once.

The Chairman said it was only because the defendant had not been in trouble before that they were

making it as light as they could. He would have to pay the costs (14s).

**90 30 December 1913**

**DOMESTIC TROUBLES**

**WIDNES FLATMAN'S CONDUCT** A sad domestic story was disclosed on Monday morning at the Widnes Police Court, in a case in which a Widnes woman, **Emily Norcott**, applied for a separation order from her husband, **William Norcott**, a flat captain of 8 West Street, Widnes, on the grounds of desertion.

Mr William Knowles, who appeared for the complainant, stated that the parties had been married 31 years, and there were five children living. For some years, however, they had not lived happily together, the principal reason for this being the husband's drunken habits and the extraordinary insinuations he had made from time to time against his wife.

It was in November 1911 that the break in their union came about. For some time previously the defendant had been disgusting in his behaviour towards his wife, and on the last occasion she lived in the same house with him, defendant made an extraordinary allegation against his wife's integrity. This insinuation was made in the presence of the children, and so insulted were the sons that they straight away took their mother away and provided a home for her elsewhere.

During the intervening two years, the defendant had not contributed a penny towards the upkeep of his wife and family, and on her behalf he would ask the Bench to grant a separation order with alimony of 15s per week.

In reply to the Clerk, Mr Knowles stated that defendant was a flat captain in a good position, and earning anything from £2 10s to £3 per week.

Complainant gave evidence corroborating her solicitor's statement.

In cross-examination, Mr Knowles elicited from Mrs Norcott that during their married life defendant always refused to take her out, and used to remark that "the house was best for cats and women". Since they had lived away from one another, however, his opinion on that subject had apparently changed, for he was frequently seen walking his housekeeper out.

Mrs Norcott also added that on many occasions his conduct was so disgraceful that she had to sleep in an outhouse in the yard. He often called her "a beast".

Corroborative evidence was given by complainant's eldest son, **Ernest Norcott**, a flat captain.

Defendant denied the allegations, and said he had always been willing to provide a home for his wife and family, and had never been guilty of desertion. His present home was open to her.

Major Wareing : You are not fit to live with her according to the story.

The Bench granted a separation order with 10s per week alimony.