

## RUNCORN GUARDIAN 1914 to 1915

### 1 2 January 1914

#### BOATMAN'S STARTLING EXPERIENCE FALLS INTO THE RIVER AT ANDERTON

**A TIMELY RESCUE** A canal boatman named **Thomas Morris**, who belongs to the Potteries and is employed by the Salt Union, had a marvellous escape on Monday morning from being drowned in the river Weaver at Anderton. He was "shafting" his boat along the river, when he slipped off the plank, fell into the water, and immediately sank.

The incident was witnessed by a number of the employees of Messrs Brunner Mond and Co, who raised an alarm. Messrs **W Mills** and **A Barker**, the crew of the *Triumph*, which belongs to Brunner Mond's, at once launched a boat and proceeded to the scene of the accident, where they were joined by **Mr Riding**, captain of the Northwich Carrying Company's boat *Jarver*, and **Mr H Musker**, mate of the Carrying Company's boat *Harold*. They succeeded in finding the man with the aid of a boat hook, but experienced great difficulty in lifting him out of the water. Meanwhile a number of ambulance men from the works of Brunner, Mond and Co had arrived on the river bank, and when Morris was removed from the water in an unconscious condition, they at once resorted to Schafer's method of artificial respiration.

The ambulance men were Messrs P Halpin, J Wickins, J W Lamb, J Harrison and S Hough, and they took with them a tube of oxygen, which was also used. Dr Stowell was sent for, and nearly half an hour elapsed before the man showed signs of reviving. He then gradually regained consciousness and, after being attended to by the doctor, he was placed in bed on his boat.

Great credit is due to the watermen who effected such a timely rescue, and also to those members of the ambulance corps at Winnington works who rendered first aid in such a timely and efficient manner.

### 2 2 January 1914

#### RUNCORN BIGAMY CHARGE

**WOMAN COMMITTED TO ASSIZES** The bigamy charge, in connection with which Elizabeth Jane McKenna has twice been before the Runcorn Bench, was proceeded with at the Court on Tuesday. The woman was now charged under the name of Bleckhill. It was alleged against her that she feloniously married **John Dickenson** at Hulme, Manchester, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1904, her husband, Francis McKenna, to whom she was married at Liverpool on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1901, being then alive.

William Richard Pythian, deputy parish clerk at the Church of St Peter, Liverpool, produced the registry of marriage at that church, proving that Francis McKenna and Elizabeth Bleckhill were married there on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1901.

Michael Ferns, manager of a common lodging house in Field Street, Liverpool, said he knew the prisoner, and lodged with her husband in Richmond Road, Liverpool, in 1901. He had repeatedly seen him since, the last occasion being Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

The prisoner said she did not know Ferns at all.

Questioned by the acting Clerk (Mr W E Hough), witness said he had only once seen the prisoner with McKenna. He was not at the wedding.

Mary Hannah Allman, wife of Frederick Allman, 17 King Street, said she had known the prisoner for six or seven years and had received letters from her. She had seen her write on several occasions. She recognised the signature in the register as being in the prisoner's handwriting. She produced postcards she had received from her.

**WATERMAN'S MARRIAGE** John Dickenson, 17 King Street, Runcorn, a waterman employed by the Manchester Ship Canal Company, said he met the prisoner in October 1902 in Deansgate, Manchester. He married her at St Stephen's, Hulme, Manchester, in May 1904. He produced the certificate of this marriage. He identified the handwriting in the St Peter's Church register as hers.

She was married to him in the name of Steele. She had gone under the name of Fulton, but told him, prior to the wedding, that her real name was Steele, and that Fulton was only an assumed name.

Prisoner : I told you I was married since I had seen you last time. I knew you years before we met in Deansgate. I had been living with you months before I was married to you.

Witness : I admit that.

Prisoner : You knew perfectly well what my name was. He told me he was the only one who could get me locked up, and not to marry as Bleckhill or McKenna, as then they would never find me out.

Witness denied this.

ACCUSED'S STATEMENT Detective Sergeant Davies said that he received a warrant for the arrest of the prisoner on the 13<sup>th</sup> December. He apprehended her at Northwich on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, and brought her to Runcorn. He cautioned her and read over the warrant to her. She made no reply, but afterwards at the Police Station, she said, "Dickenson knew I was a married woman before I married him, and he told me to use my maiden name so that no one would know".

Witness saw Francis McKenna alive in Liverpool on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

When formally charged, the prisoner said, "I have nothing to say, only that I am very sorry. I did not know the consequences when I did it. He knew perfectly well that I was a married woman for the best part of eighteen months before I was married to him".

The Magistrate (Mr J Littler) committed the woman to await her trial at the Chester Assizes, and allowed bail in her own recognisance of £10, and with one surety in a like sum.

Mr Littler said there might be some mitigating circumstances, and no doubt every opportunity would be given the prisoner for stating these.

Mr Hough said he would help the prisoner in the direction suggested.

### 3 6 January 1914

#### EDDISBURY PETTY SESSIONS

BOATMAN'S THEFT OF COAL **Henry Morris**, canal boatman, was charged with having stolen 67 lb of coal valued at 8d, the property of the L and NW Railway Company. Moses Jones, station master at Calveley Station, said that on the afternoon of Saturday December 13<sup>th</sup>, he went to the canal wharf which adjoined the station. A goods train had been shunted into the siding and a number of canal boats were alongside. He walked about and kept a look out, and eventually saw the prisoner beside a stationary train. He came to a stand beside a coal truck and climbed on to it, picking up a lump of coal and throwing it down. He got off the truck and walked away with the coal. Witness intercepted him and asked him where he was taking the coal. He replied, "To the cabin". Witness told him he had no business to take it, and prisoner admitted that it was stolen property. PC Gregory spoke to arresting prisoner, who admitted the offence, saying he was so short of coal and intended taking it to the boat. The next day he visited the boat on which prisoner was employed and found 28 lb of coal on the forward part of the boat. Prisoner pleaded guilty and said he was very sorry. He had been in Knutsford eight days on remand. The Chairman said that in view of prisoner having already been in gaol, he would be sentenced to one day's imprisonment.

### 4 9 January 1914

#### RUNCORN CHILD'S DEATH

FATAL SCALDS FROM CUP OF TEA At the Runcorn Court House on Monday, Mr Ridgway, Coroner, held an inquest on **Thomas Green**, the two years and three months old child of **Henry and Edith Green** of Cooper Street, who succumbed to scalds on Friday.

The mother of the child said that between five and half past five o'clock on Friday week the family were having tea. Her husband sat on one side of the table and she was on the other side, with a young baby on her knee. The deceased child was standing against the table. She found suddenly that the child had pulled a cup of tea over himself. The tea was nearly boiling, and the child's chest and shoulders were scalded. She took his clothing off and applied Vaseline, the child afterwards being taken to Dr Murphy's surgery. Previous to the accident, the child had enjoyed excellent

health.

Henry Green, waterman, father of the child, said he had just turned to get some fruit from the dish, when he heard the child cry out. He found it had pulled a cup of tea over.

Dr J B Murphy said the child was brought to his surgery on December 26<sup>th</sup>, suffering from severe scalding on the side of the neck and the top of the arm. The child went on very well, and he thought it would have got better. Unfortunately, complications set in and the child died from peritonitis. A duodenal perforating ulcer developed, and but for this the child's life would have been saved. It developed as the result of the toxic products of the burning. It was not common, and it did not always prove fatal.

In reply to the foreman (Mr W Bankes), the doctor said a comparatively small amount of surface burns would be dangerous. A child's skin was very tender and, of course, a child had not the same power of resistance as a grown up person. In this case a square foot of skin was affected.

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

## **5 9 January 1914**

### **RUNCORN URBAN COUNCIL**

**CANAL BOAT INSPECTION** The report of the Canal Boat Inspector (**Mr James Percival**) showed that seven boats had been registered during the year, and the number now registered at Runcorn was 1,114, of which 591 were in commission. During the year, 310 inspections had been made, and 24 contraventions of the Acts and Regulations were reported. The matters complained of had been rectified. No case of infectious disease had been notified as having occurred on a boat during the year. Upon the boats inspected were found 428 men, 127 women and 143 children, the figures showing a decrease so far as women and children are concerned.

## **6 9 January 1914**

**MERSEY MISSION TO SEAMEN** The annual "treat" to seamen and canal boat people took place at the Mersey Mission on Wednesday evening, when Mr Ralph Gibbs presided over a large attendance. After a capital tea provided by the ladies of the congregation, Mr Gibbs spoke eloquently of the good work he knew to be performed at the Mission. An address was given by the Rev D W Hobson, superintendent chaplain, who mentioned that the mission, at all its nine branches, had entertained 2,000 people of all nationalities around the Christmas season. A splendid work had been carried on at Runcorn for thirty years by his old friend Mr Shaw. He took occasion to thank the local workers for the financial aid they had given during the year by a sale of work.

## **7 23 January 1914**

### **CHARGE AGAINST RUNCORN FLATMAN**

#### **ALLEGED ATTEMPTED MURDER**

**CASE DISMISSED** A well known Runcorn flatman named **Samuel Rogerson**, of Dover Street, mate of the flat *Joseph*, figured in the Birkenhead Police Court on Wednesday on a charge of attempted murder. It was alleged against him that he had thrown a lad named Peter Fernet into the East Float, Birkenhead, on Saturday night.

The Bench decided that there was not sufficient evidence upon which to commit the prisoner to the assizes, and he was discharged.

**PROSECUTION'S STORY** Mr R S Moore, who prosecuted, said the case was an extraordinary one. Fernet was 16 1/2 and had been practically living on the flat *Joseph* since January 11<sup>th</sup>. He joined the flat at Liverpool and came to Birkenhead on it on the 13<sup>th</sup> inst. As to how the boy came to be on the flat, Mr Moore stated that for some little time before this occurrence, the boy's mother had been living with the prisoner. For a day prisoner treated the boy kindly, but when at Garston he treated him roughly, and threatened him from time to time.

On Saturday last the prisoner and the boy left the flat and went to Liverpool, apparently to find the boy's mother. Fernet, after being spoken to in a rough manner by the prisoner, left him in Liverpool. Fernet arrived back at the flat in the East Float about 10.30 on the Saturday evening.

Prisoner was already there, and the boy going to the cabin asked if he could come down. Prisoner said, "I have told you not to come back", and after using offensive language to the boy, said he could come into the cabin. He told him to lie down on the locker and take his clothes off. Five minutes afterwards Rogerson used foul language to him, and telling him to put his clothes on, ordered him out. The boy left the cabin, and going on deck was followed by the prisoner, who went up to him and, seizing him with both hands round the waist,

**THREW HIM OVERBOARD.** Fernet struggled in the water, and fortunately he was able to get back on board the flat, the prisoner rendering no assistance. The prisoner, who was said to be drunk, again used bad language to the boy who, instead of leaving the flat and informing the police, again asked the prisoner if he might stop on the flat. Fernet took his clothes off and dried them before the fire, and then went to sleep. The next morning the boy told prisoner of his conduct, and about the dock incident, which he denied. Prisoner's case was that the boy had made the tale up. When the boy left the flat, he was told to do so by the prisoner, who said, "Clear out of this". The boy went to where his mother resided and made a complaint to her. The Liverpool police were informed of the affair, and subsequently the Birkenhead police were acquainted with the details.

Mr Moore went on to say that the boy's clothes were damp, and that he showed signs of having been in the water. On Sunday evening the 18<sup>th</sup> inst, prisoner was seen by Detective Sergeant Hughes, who told him of the boy's complaint against him, which he denied. When charged at the bridewell with the attempted murder of the boy, prisoner said he knew nothing about it. Mr Moore pointed out that there was no corroboration of the boy's story.

**FERNETT GIVES EVIDENCE** Fernet gave evidence corroborating Mr Moore's statement in detail. Asked how he got out of the water, he said his hand became "entangled with a rope hanging from the boat". When he got aboard, prisoner said he would cut his throat if he came into the cabin. Next morning witness told prisoner he had thrown him into the dock, and he denied it. Two days prior to Saturday, prisoner had threatened him.

The Magistrates' Clerk : Why didn't you go away? - I had nowhere to go.

You could have gone to the Police Station? - I was so excited.

Were you not afraid to go back on board again? - I had no idea.

Were you not afraid to risk it? - No, sir.

You knew policemen were about the dock and you could have told them?

Witness made no answer.

Answering Mr Moore, witness said there was a rail on the boat over which prisoner threw him into the dock.

The Clerk : Did you shout when in the water? - No, sir. I was scrambling for my life.

Prisoner questioned witness, and elicited that the flat *Joseph* was between two other flats. He did not see anyone on the other flats.

Replying to the Clerk, Fernet said he had been on board five minutes when the prisoner threatened to throw him into the dock.

**WOMAN'S EVIDENCE** Mary Elizabeth Fernet of West Derby Road said she was a widow and had lived with the prisoner on board the flat *Joseph*. She left him on account of his language. They were to have been married on New Year's Day.

Describing the condition of her son last Sunday morning, she said "he looked as if he had been in the water". Prisoner who, she said, was a violent man, had threatened to throw another child of hers overboard.

**Jonathan Underwood**, Ashville Road, Seacombe, master and owner of the flat, said he had heard prisoner threaten to hit Fernet, and also throw him into the dock. He never thought there was anything in his threats.

The Chairman said that, after hearing the case, they considered there was not sufficient evidence to commit prisoner to the assizes. He would therefore be discharged.

Rogerson : Thank you.

## 8 30 January 1914

### IMPUDENT THEFT BY RUNCORN BOATMEN

SEVERE PUNISHMENT At the Runcorn Police Court on Thursday, before Mr John Littler and Dr McDougall, **James Alfred Moores** and **John William Povey**, canal boatmen, were charged with stealing two bags of corn, value 6s 6d, the property of Miss E H Horsefield of Canal Street.

Daniel Basnett, an employee of Miss Horsefield, said he counted the bags of provender in the stables in Canal Street on the 27<sup>th</sup> inst. On the following day he again checked them and found that two were missing. He identified the corn now produced as Miss Horsefield's, but the sacks had been changed.

Detective Sergeant Davies spoke to visiting prisoner Moores's house and examining corn in his stable. He said that what he had he had obtained at Ashley, near Bedford Leigh. Witness asked him if he had obtained any from the man Povey, and he said, "No". Witness took him to the Police Station, as he was not satisfied. Later in the evening witness met Povey, and told him Moores was locked up. Povey said, "Did he put the blame on poor old Povey again?" Witness took him to the station, where he said, in the presence of Moores, "I took one sack and he fetched another". Moores said, "We fetched one each at six o'clock in the morning".

There were previous convictions against both of the men, one against Povey being for a similar offence.

He was sent to jail for two months with hard labour, and Moores for one month.

## 9 3 February 1914

BAD ATTENDERS At the Runcorn Sessions on Monday, the following were fined for failing to send their children to school regularly :- **Edward Osborne, John Grimes, Edward Spencer**, of canal boats.

## 10 6 February 1914

### EDDISBURY LICENSING SESSIONS

#### AN ISOLATED INN

RESIDENTS OBJECT TO RENEWAL OF LICENCE Mr E Cawley, solicitor, Tarporley, instructed by five residents in the Tiverton district, objected to the renewal of the licence of the Royal Oak beerhouse, Tiverton, on the grounds that it was not needed for the requirements of the district ; that the premises were situated in an isolated position, and that the premises were structurally unsuitable.

The names of the objectors were : Messrs Norman Dale, Frank Heath, Samuel Winward, William Aston and John France.

Mr Cawley said he was instructed to ask that the house should be referred to the compensation authority. They did not allege any ill conduct on the part of the licensee, and did not wish the magistrates to absolutely refuse to renew the licence. Mr Cawley went on to explain that the Royal Oak was on a cross road which led from Brassey Green to Beeston Castle, and was close to the canal. It was a road on which there was not much traffic, because the bridge over the canal was a dangerous one, and the neighbourhood was very thinly populated. There was only one house near to it, and with that exception there were no houses within a quarter of a mile, and only six within half a mile. It was evident, therefore, that there could not be a large custom from the people residing in the district, and the people who frequented the house would be free from observation. As to the structure of the house, the accommodation was very unsatisfactory, the tenant and his family having to pass through the smoke room in order to get to their private apartments.

The present licensee had only held the licence for a few months, and when he applied for the licence, he (Mr Cawley) then objected, but the magistrates said that it was a matter for the annual licensing sessions. The objectors had no pecuniary interest in the matter, but they believed that the house was not required.

Norman Dale, farmer, Brassey Green, stated that his house was a little over half a mile away, and in his opinion the Royal Oak was in the wrong place for a public house. The house had been a

nuisance to farmers in the neighbourhood owing to the men going drinking there.

Cross-examined by Mr Eustace Jones, solicitor, who represented the owners (Messrs Bent's Brewery Co Limited), the witness said that he and his friends would have raised an objection before if they had believed that the late tenant was unsatisfactory. There were two licensed houses at Beeston where boatmen could obtain refreshment, but they were some considerable distance from the canal. He agreed that as far as boatmen were concerned, the house did fulfil their requirements, and they were entitled to consideration. If the licence was taken away, the boatmen would have to go from 14 to 15 miles without being able to get refreshments. He had not raised an objection to the licence because one of his workmen was served at the house. The man in question would not be effected because he would walk ten miles for a drink. (Laughter).

John France, coal merchant, said he had no objection to the way in which the present tenant conducted the house. If the canal boatmen wanted refreshment they could get it at Beeston.

The Chairman : Does the Beeston Castle Hotel cater for the boatmen? Yes, all classes.

Acting Sergeant Worth, who had taken special observations of the house since the beginning of October, said that he had visited it about 25 times. He had never seen any food served in the house.

Cross-examined : There were no complaints against the house, which was admirably conducted.

William Reece and Samuel Winward both gave evidence in support of the objection, the latter stating that the house was a temptation to men employed on the farms in the district.

**A HOUSE WITH A GOOD TRADE** Mr Jones remarked that he had a petition which contained 150 signatures, and which had been obtained without any canvassing at all. Those who had signed the petition were desirous of the licence being renewed. One tenant had held the licence for nine years, and it was obvious that during that time he was making a living. He thought that trade done in the house was a good criterion as to whether the house was required or not. It was a place which was largely used by boatmen, because there were stables attached, and as many as six horses were "put up" during one night. It was true that the canal bridge was dangerous, but it was a cross road, and one which was used by motorists. As to the accommodation of the house, he ventured to submit that it was as good as could be found in most country public houses. There might not be many houses in the immediate district, but it was in a good central position.

It also provided what could be termed a working men's club, and it was a house where respectable men might go to have a comfortable smoke and drink. During the daytime, they accommodated travellers with food and drink and, in the season, they had a number of anglers and trippers who visited Beeston Castle ; but he wished to emphasize the fact that the house served the purposes of the boatmen, who contributed quite half of the trade. It was ridiculous to say that such men could be supplied at the Beeston Hotel as, apart from the fact that it was over 200 yards from the canal, it was not a house for that class of trade. During January, 46 horses had been stabled at the Royal Oak, and since the present licensee had been there – a period of four months – the trade had been 56 half barrels of beer and 112 dozen bottled beer and stout. Assuming that each customer had a pint, it worked out to 585 customers a week.

The licensee (Samuel Vickers) told the court that he was quite satisfied with the trade he did and, in fact, had saved money since he had been at the house.

Charles Williams, a groom, Brasseley Green, said he was a regular customer, and there was always "a nice company" in. Some of them had read the papers during the day, and they told men who had not all the news. (Laughter).

The Chairman subsequently announced that the licence would be renewed.

## **11 20 February 1914**

### **RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS**

**SCHOOL CASES** **Thomas Deakin**, canal boats, (two cases) and **John Grimes**, canal boats (two cases) were fined for not sending their children to school regularly.

## 12 27 February 1914

### THEFT OF ROPE

RUNCORN WATERMEN IN TROUBLE Two men of unblemished character found themselves in serious trouble over the weekend, and cut forlorn figures at the Petty Sessions on Monday. They were charged with the theft of 80 lb of rope belonging to the Manchester Ship Canal Co on the 7<sup>th</sup> February, and also with loitering at the Old Quay Yard on Saturday evening last, with intention to commit a felony.

The men were **Henry Smetham** of Okell Street and **James Cavanagh** of Cooper Street, both members of families well known in the town for "following the water".

Mr Knowles appeared for Cavanagh, and Mr Laycock for Smetham.

Mr Knowles suggested that it would be a reasonable thing for the Bench to try the pair on the charge of stealing the rope and, in sentencing them, take into consideration the fact that they were found loitering round the place from which it had been stolen on Saturday night.

Mr Laycock concurred.

The Chairman : It makes a very serious offence.

Mr Knowles : They are going to plead guilty.

The Bench agreed to the course suggested.

Superintendent Owen said that on Saturday evening he directed Constable Tudor to proceed to the Old Quay Yard, in consequence of complaints received. About 7.40 Tudor heard someone moving about the door at the back of the yard, and saw someone looking under the door. After a few minutes the person went away. Thereupon the constable rushed from his hiding place and saw Cavanagh near the door, with Smetham a few yards away. Cavanagh had three sacks under his arm. He questioned both of them and then brought them to the Police Station. Cavanagh said he met Smetham in the Waterman's Arms, and they agreed to go for some rope together to the place where Smetham was employed. This was on February 7<sup>th</sup>. He said they had got three or four shillings for the rope.

On Sunday PC Tudor accompanied the master of the tug *Minnie* and Mr Deakin, and in the place indicated by the prisoners, there was a large quantity of rope. Smetham, when charged, said, "I have been tempted to do it. First one and then another asked me to get them an old "fender". It will be the last". It was ascertained that the 80 lb of rope had been sold to Messrs Pritchard.

John Forbes of Mersey View, Weston, said he was the superintendent of the dredging department of the Manchester Ship Canal. He knew Smetham as being mate of the tug *Minnie*. The rope now produced was similar to that used on the tug, and no one had any right to take it away. It was the duty of watermen to hand over all old rope to the department.

Cross-examined : Witness said that Smetham was a respectable man who had spent all his working life in the service of the Canal Co.

Police-constable Tudor gave evidence bearing out Superintendent Owen's statement. Smetham told him the rope was pieces of old "fendery" that he had given to Cavanagh. Cavanagh said that he sold it and got 3s 6d for it. When formally charged, Smetham said, "Yes – that's right", and Cavanagh made no reply.

In reply to Mr Knowles, witness said he thought Cavanagh was a respectable man. He understood he was married and had four young children, and that his earnings of late had been very small. He knew nothing against Smetham. Smetham did not mention whether he had got anything out of the sale of the rope.

SOLICITORS' PLEAS Mr Laycock said that Smetham met Cavanagh in the Waterman's Arms, and if he had not got drunk so frequently, he would not have been in his present plight. He gave the ropes to Cavanagh, who was hard up.

Mr Knowles drew a comparison between the case and that of a wealthy lady charged with stealing jewellery. The same law with regard to criminality applied to the rich as to the poor. Possibly a different law should apply, because wealthy people had no occasion to steal. The two prisoners were highly respectable men. One, no doubt, felt sorry for the other, who had been earning nothing and had a wife and family to support, and no doubt gave him the rope to sell for a little to keep the

house going. He suggested that the men should be placed on probation.

The Chairman said the Bench could not deal with the prisoners under the First Offenders Act, but they were dealing leniently with them in fining them £1 and costs (£1 13s 6d) each, the alternative being 14 days' hard labour.

The money was paid.

### **13 27 February 1914**

#### **EXCITING INCIDENT AT ANDERTON**

**RUNCORN MAN FALLS IN THE RIVER** An exciting scene was witnessed at Anderton, near Northwich, on Wednesday morning. A man named R Sidwell of Runcorn was handing a parcel to a boatman in Anderton Basin, when he slipped off the wall and fell into the water between the boat and the wall.

Three employees of the Weaver Navigation, J Gilbert, W Sutton and T Gerrard, hastened to the spot and, with some difficulty, succeeded in rescuing Sidwell with the aid of a boat hook. Fortunately the man was little the worse for his immersion.

### **14 6 March 1914**

#### **WIDNES WOMAN DROWNED**

**BODY FOUND AT RUNCORN** A few minutes before noon on Saturday, a young man named Johnson, coming up the Runcorn Locks, was horrified to see the dead body of a woman in a kneeling position on the sill of the gate of No 1 of the "new line" of locks, almost directly under Waterloo Bridge. He raised an alarm, and PC Reeves and PC Wareing were soon on the spot with Mr W Shaw sen and others.

The body was dragged ashore with a boat hook, and proved to be that of a middle aged woman, well dressed and of respectable appearance. It was clear that the deceased had not been in the water long, as there were no marks such as would have been caused in the other event by the craft using the canal.

The woman was a stranger to the local police, but identification was speedy. On the body was found a card "Madam H Wilkinson", bearing an address in Mersey Road, Widnes, together with a billhead which went to show that a person of the same name had formerly carried on a fancy goods business at Bootle. The Widnes police were communicated with and announced that the lady had been reported as missing from home since the previous day.

**THE INQUEST** Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquest at the Runcorn Court House on Monday afternoon. Mr W Bankes was foreman of the jury.

Annie Mary O'Connor, 127 Mersey Road, Widnes, said the deceased was her mother and was 68 years of age. She was the widow of John Wilkinson, a retired stationer of Bootle. On Monday of last week she was seen by Dr Hutchinson, who ordered her to bed. On Friday evening, witness left her in the house when she went to the theatre. Upon her return her mother was missing, and she did not see her alive again.

The Coroner : Has your mother ever said she would do away with herself? - She has said it, but I did not think she would.

In further reply, witness said her mother had not been well for years. For the last two years she had suffered a good deal. She went out of the house very little, and scarcely ever at night. It was about 11 o'clock on Friday night when witness got back to her house. As soon as she found that her mother was missing, she reported it to the police.

The Coroner inquired if the deceased knew anyone in Runcorn.

Witness : She only knew my sweetheart's mother. She promised often to go to see her.

The Coroner : It was rather a peculiar time to go.

Witness said the lady in question lived at 12 Arthur Street, Runcorn.

Police-constable Wareing said that if the deceased had walked up Waterloo Road, it was possible for her to have kept straight on and got in the canal at Top Locks instead of turning up on to Waterloo Bridge.

Mrs O'Connor said her mother's eyes were not good.

**William Henry Johnson**, waterman, Duke Street, said he was coming up the locks about 11.30 on Saturday morning when he saw the body of the deceased on the sill of the first of the new line of locks. He held it with a boat hook until the lock was filled and the body could be got out. It was half in the water and half on the sill when he first saw it. In his opinion, the body must have got in the lock when the gates were opened.

George Hayes, a harness cleaner who lodged with the deceased and her daughter, said that the deceased remarked to him on Friday night, "Will you look after me until my death?" He replied, "Yes". On the 25<sup>th</sup> February she told him she felt like doing away with herself. He said to her, "Don't talk silly ; you will live us out", meaning himself and her daughter. She had been suffering for a long time, and witness did not think she had left the house since Christmas Day prior to Friday.

Police-constable Wareing spoke to searching the body, and finding letters and a purse. There were marks on the eye and cheek which might have been caused by the deceased falling against the canal wall. None of her clothing was torn, but her hat was missing. He understood she had her hat on when she left home.

The Coroner remarked that the case was not a very clear one.

After a short retirement the jury returned a verdict of "Suicide while temporarily insane".

## **15 10 March 1914**

THE "THREE MILE LIMIT"

SUTTON PUBLICAN FINED

WHAT IS A *BONA FIDE* TRAVELLER? Popular fallacies concerning the "*bona fide*" travellers and their right to obtain refreshment at licensed premises on Sundays were mentioned at the hearing of a charge at the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday.

The defendant was William Thomas Richardson, licensee of the Aston Arms Hotel, Sutton Weaver, and the charge against him was that of selling during prohibited hours. Nearly three hours was occupied in the hearing of the case.

The police were represented by Mr W E Hough, and Mr R K Mile of Messrs Berry and Co, Liverpool, was for the defence.

THE POLICE CASE Mr Hough, in opening, said the question between him and Mr Milne would probably narrow itself into one as to whether certain men were *bona fide* travellers. These men were found on the licensed premises of the defendant at 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning. The legal position, it was only fair to say, was that even if the licensee failed to prove that the people were *bona fide* travellers, if he thoroughly believed they were and took reasonable precautions to ascertain if they were, then the Bench were entitled to say that he was blameless. This was a case in which, he contended, reasonable precautions had not been taken.

On Sunday morning, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Acting Sergeant Brown and Police-constable Cotterill visited the Aston Arms, Sutton. At 11 o'clock, they saw two men named Hulse and Cook enter the premises. They went to the door and found it unlocked. They entered and found eleven men in the taproom, sitting round the table. There were ten pint pots containing beer on the table, together with a glass, which contained something else, and another glass, which had contained what the Sergeant thought to be rum and coffee. Sergeant Brown had a conversation with the licensee, who was in the house, and he asked him what the men were doing there. He said, "They have come from Runcorn – they have come the limit". The Sergeant said, "Have you satisfied yourself that they are *bona fide* travellers?" The licensee replied, "My son asked them where they were from, and they all said Runcorn". The son said, "I asked Jim" – meaning a man named Bebbington, whose name actually was John – "and he said they had come the limit".

The licensee then said to the Sergeant, "What is the limit?", and the Sergeant told him that some parts of Runcorn were within the three miles limit and some were not. When a man named Senior was pressed by the police as to whether he had been asked where he came from when he entered the house, he admitted that he had not. It appeared, however, that he had entered with two other men

from Runcorn, and the licensee's son might have been satisfied owing to his having come with them. Measurements had been taken, and it was found that five of the men who were in the house lived within the three miles limit. Two of the men, named Reid and Gilgrass, lived near the Big Pool, and the distance to their homes measured along the nearest highway was 547 yards short of the three miles limit. Other men, named Pugh, Brazendale and Bebbington, lived 140 yards short of the limit.

Even if all the men had resided outside the three miles' limit, it did not follow that they were entitled to be served at that time. They must be *bona fide* travellers. Men were not entitled to take a journey of three miles for the purpose of getting beer. If it was proved that they had walked three miles in search of beer, they were not *bona fide* travellers. The police contention was that not one of the eleven men who were in the house was a *bona fide* traveller, and that the landlord did not take reasonable precautions to ascertain whether they were or not. The landlord was not in a position to satisfy their lordships that he believed these men to be *bona fide* travellers.

**POLICE EVIDENCE** Sergeant Brown of Sutton Weaver said he went to the Aston Arms Hotel on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February with PC Cotterill at 11 o'clock in the morning. He had previously seen two men come from near Rigby's yard and go to the house. About two minutes later, he and Cotterill entered by the front door, which was unlocked. There were 11 men in the taproom, and on the table were ten pint pots containing beer and an empty glass. Witness saw the licensee and asked what the men were doing there, and he said, "They have come from Runcorn – they have come the limit". Witness asked him if he had satisfied himself that they were *bona fide* travellers, and he said that Albert (his son) had, and they said they had come from Runcorn. Witness said that some parts of Runcorn were not outside the three miles limit, after the defendant asked what the limit was.

One of the men, named Senior, admitted that he had not been asked where he came from. The son said that Senior came in with the other men, and that he possibly did not ask him, taking it that he had come from the same place as the others. Witness had measured along the nearest highway to the houses of Reid and Gilgrass, who lived next door to each other in Poole Dale. The distance was two miles 113 yards, being 547 yards short of the three miles limit. Pugh lived in Sutton Street, which was 158 yards short.

PC Cotterill gave corroborative evidence. The licensee did not say that he had done anything else but ask the men where they had come from.

Cross-examined : The door of the house was on the catch, but was not fastened. When the licensee was asked why it was not fastened, he said he had been "breaking up" rum, and he had forgotten it. His son admitted that he ought to have fastened it, and witness said it seemed to be a loose way of doing business.

**THE DEFENCE** Mr Milnes said his defence was that, even if the men had not slept outside the three miles limit on the previous night and were not *bona fide* travellers, the landlord and his son believed that they were, and took all reasonable precautions to ascertain they were before serving them. Five out of the eleven men found in the house lived within the three mile radius, and the other six had been found to live outside it. The men would give evidence which showed that they had not gone direct from Runcorn to the Aston Arms by the nearest route.

They did not set out for the purpose of obtaining drink, but for the perfectly legitimate purpose of enjoying a walk in the country. Sunday was the only day of the week on which men of their class could go for a country walk. It was reasonable for the licensee to accept their statement. The licensee did not personally admit any one of the five. His son admitted them, and the licensee would tell the Bench what his instructions to his son had been. It was sufficient for the licensee if he could prove the giving of those instructions. Mr Richardson had had the house for over six years, and had previously been a manager for 20 years. He bore an excellent character, and that was the first complaint of any kind that had been made against him.

William Thomas Richardson, the defendant, said his instructions to his son were to let no one in the house on Sundays unless they had come from Runcorn and from over the three miles limit. He did not know the men. None of them had been there on a Sunday morning before to his knowledge. He thought his duty ended in asking a man where he had come from. He would not think it necessary

to ask a man what he came out to Aston for. He did not say anything to them at all. He could not say how long the men had been in before the police came, or how long they remained.

Re-examined, the defendant said the reason the door was not locked was that a new door had recently been fitted, and the lock on it was not a snap lock, such as they had been accustomed to.

Albert Richardson, son of the defendant, spoke to admitting a man to the house at 10.45 a.m. The man asked if he was entitled to a drink, and witness asked him if he had come the limit, and he replied, "Yes". Other men followed. The first man had not been in the house more than a quarter of an hour before the police came.

Cross-examined : His father told him to ask anyone who came on Sundays if they had come the limit and were *bona fide* travellers. They only stayed on the house about a quarter of an hour. He never allowed anyone to stay more than 20 minutes on Sundays. Witness believed that if a man had come three miles on a Sunday, he was entitled to a drink.

John Bebbington jun, Union Street, Runcorn, said he left his house at 9.30 on the day in question to go for a walk round the country. He met a man named Watson, and together they went by way of Rocksavage fields and Frodsham Marsh until they came to the Aston Arms. He suggested they might have a drink, and on knocking at the door it was answered by the son, who asked them where they had come from. They told him they had come the limit from Runcorn. He admitted that the way he went was the most direct way to the Aston Arms, but he did not set out for the purpose of getting a drink, but rather to have a walk for pleasure. They returned via Halton. They had two pints of beer each. Defendant's son served him.

Daniel Gilgrass was called, but the manner in which he took the oath led to the Bench declining to hear him, and Mr Milne said that he could not press for his evidence to be taken.

The Chairman (Sir F J Norman) and Mr Hough both remarked that the position was unfortunate, as he was the principal witness for the defence.

Samuel Reid, Heath Road, labourer, said Gilgrass called for him and they went to Halton, past Hallwood, past Halton Station and on to the Aston Arms. They would have walked five or six miles.

Defendant's son asked him where he came from, and he said, "Runcorn". Defendant's son then said, "Come in". They had been in the house about twenty minutes when the police came. He knew now that his house was short of the three miles limit. It was not for the sake of the drink he went for the walk. He would not have gone if he could have got his drink at the Bull's Head or the Ship Inn. (Laughter).

**Edwin Brazendale**, Halton Road, boatman, spoke to going for a walk through Halton, Aston and Sutton on the Sunday morning in question, and calling at the Aston Arms for a drink. He had been in the house before some months ago – about twice on Sundays. The defendant's son asked him if he had travelled over the limit, and he said, "Yes". He would not have had a drink at the Bull's Head if he had been able to. He wanted the walk.

**CONVICTION RECORDED** The Bench considered the case in private and, on returning into Court, the Chairman said they had decided to convict. They thought that the licensee had not taken full precautions, but in view of the heavy costs which included an advocate's fee of £3 3s, the fine would only be £1 and costs.

Mr W E Hough said the police did not propose to offer any evidence on a summons which had also been issued against the defendant for opening his premises.

The Chairman said the Bench appreciated that a licensee was placed in an extremely awkward position. They hoped that publicans would be careful. The men in this case were not travellers and they did not bear the stamp of commercial travellers.

**THE MEN FINED** Samuel Reid, Arthur Gilgrass, Albert Pugh, John Bebbington and Edward Brazendale were then charged with being on licensed premises during prohibited hours.

They all pleaded guilty, but two of them stated that they believed that they had gone beyond the three miles limit.

The Chairman said they were mistaken as to the law regarding the limit. They had put the publican in a very serious position. They must each pay the costs, 4s 6d.

**16 13 March 1914**

MIDDLEWICH LICENSING  
SPIRITS FOR BOAT PEOPLE

LICENCE FOR THE BIG LOCK REFUSED Mr R R Edelston, solicitor, Crewe, applied on behalf of Mary Roberts, licensee of the Big Lock, Middlewich, for a spirit licence.

The application was opposed by Mr John Holland, solicitor, on behalf of the Middlewich branch of the British Women's Temperance Association, and on behalf of a number of property owners and residents.

Mr Edelston observed that the Big Lock comprised commodious premises where there was every accommodation for an hotel. It stood on the canal side and was used more like a railway refreshment room. There was stabling for nine horses and every facility for the particular trade done. He had a petition signed by 600 people who approved of the present application. All the signatures had been taken either by Mrs Roberts or her son, and none had been sought. The licence was required on various grounds.

It had been the custom of Mrs Roberts to give away spirits in the case of illness or accident. It no doubt seemed funny that after the justices had been considering the question of taking licences away he should make that application, but the house in question stood out by itself as one supplying the needs of a moving population. They were simply making the application for the benefit of the boat people who travelled along the canal. Mrs Roberts, and her husband before her, had held the licence 33 years, and never a complaint had been made.

The licensee was most particular in the conduct of the house and would not allow anyone to stay more than 20 minutes, unless it was at night when the boats were tied up. The boatmen liked to carry spirits with them in case of illness or accident.

Mrs Roberts supported the application.

Mr Holland asked : Do you think it is a reasonable request to make to the Bench to ask them to make you a present of this licence and to put something in your pocket? - Yes, because it is a public necessity.

Is it not because you thought the licence of the Lord Hood would be taken away that you decided to make this application? - No, I don't think so.

Is it reasonable to expect the magistrates to take away one licence and grant you a new one? - Yes, I think it is reasonable.

Don't you think it is a risky thing to sell spirits to boat people? - No.

Don't you think it is dangerous? - They are not a spirit drinking people, but a beer drinking people. Witness said the only reason why they would not go to any other house in Middlewich for their spirits was because it was not on the canal side. The Navigation was on the other side of the canal. She did not think she would get many people from the town for whisky, except in cases of illness or accident on the works.

Mr Holland : If you get this licence, it will be in the nature of a grocer's licence? - We are not like the shops in the town, because we have no trade in the town and our place is where people get their groceries and then leave. We have no order trade.

By the Superintendent : While it would be inconvenient she would undertake not to sell drink in the stores, only in the taproom.

Replying to the Chairman, witness said that two thirds of her trade was with boatmen.

Frank Roberts, son of the licensee, also gave evidence in support of the application.

**William Jones**, Canal House, canal inspector, said it would be particularly convenient to boat people if a spirit licence was granted to Mrs Roberts, who was a fit person to hold one.

Mr Holland : Do you think it would not be better to keep drink from the boatpeople altogether?

Witness : Can you do so?

Without calling for any other witnesses or on Mr Holland to address them, the magistrates decided not to grant the application.

## 17 24 March 1914

### DEAD IN BED

RUNCORN WOMAN'S SAD END On Saturday morning **Mrs Jane Bolton**, wife of a lock tender, living in Cawdor Street, was found dead in bed. Her husband had left the house at 5.30 in the morning to go to his work, and had noticed nothing unusual about her appearance.

On Monday Coroner Ridgway held an inquest at the Court House.

**William Bolton**, 64 Cawdor Street, Runcorn, a waterman, said his wife was 65 years of age. He got up at 5.30 on Saturday morning to go to work. His wife was then lying on her right side as usual. She had asked him, at 3 o'clock, what time it was, and remarked that she had had a poor night. He thought he would not disturb her when he got up. About a year ago, she had a stroke that affected her speech. On Friday night she had complained of a pain in her heart, and she sat in a chair till bed time.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said that she appeared to have got over the stroke all right. Dr Murphy had occasionally attended her, but she had not thought she was ill enough to require the doctor lately.

Mrs Smitham, wife of Frank Smitham of Cawdor Street, said that at about 9.15 on Saturday morning, the deceased's niece – Mrs Lydiate – asked her to go with her to look at her aunt. She went to her house, and found the deceased lying on her right side with her arm out of bed. She found she was quite cold. Dr Murphy was sent for, and said she must have been dead for several hours. Witness had known the deceased for two years. She had been poorly, but had not complained of anything “special” except a pain in the legs.

The Coroner : She must have found it difficult to get up those stairs. It's a wonder she did not fall down. I thought they were rather dangerous.

Dr Murphy said he had attended Mrs Bolton three or four times within the last eighteen months. She suffered from breathlessness and stomach trouble. He had not seen her recently – the last occasion would be about six months ago. She complained of wind in the stomach and breathlessness. She was an obese woman. Her sudden death was not a surprise under the circumstances. Her heart must have been affected. The cause of death was probably syncope, brought about by fatty degeneration of the heart.

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

## 18 31 March 1914

### RUNCORN SEPTUAGENARIAN'S DEATH

THE INQUEST Mr Coroner Ridgway conducted an inquest at Runcorn Police Station on Monday afternoon on the body of David Leadbetter (78), a retired ship's carpenter of 14 Brackley Street, Runcorn, whose death occurred on Saturday.

**Mary Ellen Jones**, the wife of **John Jones**, waterman of 14 Brackley Street, said deceased was her father and lived with her. About 3.30 on Friday afternoon he went out for his usual walk. Some 20 minutes later she went to the front door and saw him walking up the street. She went into the house and waited for him. Some time elapsed but he failed to come in, and she ran to the door but he was nowhere in sight.

She ran into the entry and discovered deceased lying on his back. He was bleeding at the nose, and his face was bruised. **Mr Summerfield**, a neighbour, assisted her to take him indoors. He complained of having injured his arm, and refused to go to bed. He sat up in his chair all night. On the following afternoon she found him lying on his back in an outhouse in the yard.

Her husband and Mr Summerfield carried him indoors, and Dr Macdonald was sent for. Deceased complained several times about his arm, and died before the doctor's arrival.

By the Coroner : Deceased was very feeble on account of old age, and she had expected he would meet with an accident for some time.

John Jones, the last witness's husband, said deceased had enjoyed good health, notwithstanding his old age.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said it was deceased's ambition to attain the age of 80 years, so that

he could claim Mr Taylor's 2s 6d.

William Summerfield, a waterman of 4 Portland Street, Runcorn, gave evidence to the effect that on Friday afternoon Mrs Jones called him to assist her to carry the deceased into his home after his accident. Deceased was lying on his back in the entry, and complained to witness of having injured his arm and face.

The jury returned a verdict of "Death from shock, following upon the injuries received in consequence of a fall".

## **19 3 April 1914**

**FLATMAN FOUND DEAD AT RUNCORN** **Aaron Stanley** (50) of 9 Woodger Street, Garston, a flatman employed on the boat *Great Western*, was found dead at the Weston Point Docks on Sunday evening. He had left his own flat an hour previously in order to "pump out" another flat for a friend. His captain, becoming anxious over his absence, went to look for him, and found the body lying on the deck of the boat face downwards. An inquest will be held today (Tuesday).

**THE INQUEST** The inquest was held at Weston Point on Monday evening.

The widow, who gave evidence of identification, said that the deceased had never complained of any illness since she had known him.

**William Houghton** of Tate Street, Liverpool, the captain of the flat, said the deceased joined her at Garston on Sunday week. They went to Weston Point docks with a cargo of sulphur ore. On Sunday they had tea together at about seven o'clock and remained in the cabin together till about nine. At that hour, the deceased went to pump a flat named the *Stanley*. He was doing this to oblige the man who had charge of this flat and had gone away. At about ten o'clock witness thought he had been away a long time and went to look for him. He shouted but got no answer. He then went to the other flat to look for him, and found him lying across the pump with his face resting on the acid bottles which formed the cargo. Witness picked him up and saw that he was dead. He gave information to the police, and Constable Worth removed the body to the mortuary.

Dr McLennan said the deceased was a fine man from outward appearance, but the *post mortem* revealed an unusual thinness of the right wall of the heart. The exertion of pumping upon a distended stomach had brought about a rupture of the right ventricle, which had caused death. Witness remarked that he had not previously seen a case of this kind.

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

## **20 10 April 1914**

### **BABY DROWNED**

**RUNCORN PARENTS' SAD LOSS** About a quarter to five o'clock on Saturday evening, several little boys were playing at the "Ferry Hut" (near the Transporter), Runcorn, when one of them, Edward Osbourne, was startled to see the body of a baby floating quite close to the side of the canal. He ran and told the nearest man, who promptly got the body out and tried artificial respiration with, unfortunately, no success.

The child turned out to be the little son of Mr and Mrs Keogh of Alcock Street, Runcorn, to whom much sympathy has been extended.

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

Patrick Joseph Keogh, the father, was very distressed over giving his evidence. He said the child was two years and three months old, and was named Joseph Patrick. At 2.30 on Saturday, word was brought to him at work that it was missing, and he at once went in search of it. His wife told him that she had missed the child at about 12.15, and had last seen it on the front doorstep. The body was brought home about five o'clock.

In reply to the Coroner, the witness said that he had never known the child to go near the Ferry Hut or the Transporter Bridge previously, but on two occasions it had come towards the Old Quay to meet him when he left work. It was then in charge of two older sisters. He did not know the spot where it had been drowned, and he could not bring himself to go to see it. He thought it possible

that the child was going to meet him coming from work.

James Twigg, a flour mill labourer of 14 King Street, Runcorn, said he was standing near the Transporter Bridge at a quarter to five on Saturday evening when he heard a little boy shout that a baby was in the water. He ran down to the canal and got the baby out. He tried artificial respiration without avail, and then carried the child to the Transporter, where the police assisted in a further attempt, but it was not successful. He asked the little boy if he knew how the baby had got into the water, and he said he did not. The spot where the body was floating was about ten yards from the Transporter, and it was only in about a foot of water. Witness thought it had either walked into the canal or fallen off the jetty.

The Coroner remarked that the witness appeared to have done all he could, and had behaved very creditably.

Edward Osborne (10) of Gilbert Street gave his evidence very intelligently. He said he was playing near the Transporter on Saturday with two other boys – James Deakin and Harry Clifton – when he saw the body of the little boy floating in the water. He had only been there a minute or two and had not seen the baby before. The baby was lying quite still on his back with his eyes wide open.

The Coroner said that no one seemed to have seen the child get into the water. He might have gone to meet his father and lost his way. There was no evidence as to where he had got in. It was very sad that a little lad should lose his life like that. He was sure they all felt very much for the parents. He did not know that they could suggest anything – he was sure the Ship Canal would be as glad as anyone if they could stop children going to the Ferry Hut.

The jury returned a verdict of “Found drowned”, and expressed their sympathy with the parents. Captain Heasley expressed the sympathy of the Manchester Ship Canal Company.

## 21 1 May 1914

### MAN IN THE RIVER WEAVER

#### TIMELY RESCUE AT WINNINGTON

**GOOD WORK BY AMBULANCE MEN** A timely rescue from drowning was effected in the river Weaver at Winnington on Friday afternoon. It appears that about five o'clock a boatman named **Thomas Jackson**, aged 18, was sculling across the river in a small boat when, losing his oar, he fell into the water. A young man named Philip Anderson (brother of Mr G Anderson, the treasurer of the Witton Albion FC), who is employed by the Mersey, Weaver and Ship Canal Carrying Company, on hearing the cry, “A man in the water”, at once rushed to the scene and, without divesting himself of any of his clothing, plunged into the water and swam to the man. Just as he got to him, he sank for the third time.

The barge *Africa* was lying a short distance away, and the hand, **Joseph Johnson** of Falcon Street, Salford, seeing what had occurred, put away from his vessel in a small boat. **George Capper** of Barnton, the captain of the barge *Harold*, did the same thing, and getting to the spot where the man was last seen, they plunged their boat hooks into the water and succeeded in securing the man at the first stroke. On being brought to the surface he was unconscious, but several of Messrs Brunner, Mond and Company's ambulance men – Patrick Halpin, J W Lamb, John Harrison, John Wickins and Edward Stubbs – were in readiness on the river bank to render first aid, and their prompt action undoubtedly had much to do with saving the man's life.

The plucky action on the part of Anderson is also worthy of commendation, and his discomfiture after his gallant act can be imagined when it is known that he had to walk home to Lostock in his drenched clothes.

Mr Anderson has already saved two persons from drowning.

## 22 15 May 1914

### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

**THE WIFE'S LOT** **Henry Jones**, waterman, Wellington Street, was summoned for using bad language. Defendant's wife appeared on his behalf and pleaded guilty. Defendant was fined 5s, the Chairman remarking that he ought to have appeared himself, and not sent his wife to answer a case

of that sort.

### 23 12 June 1914

#### RUNCORN WATERMAN DROWNED

SEQUEL TO COLLISION IN CANAL The tragic death of a Runcorn man named **Henry Hulse**, aged 24, of 37 Nelson Street, a waterman, was the subject of an inquiry by the West Cheshire coroner at Ince on Tuesday. Deceased was employed on the flat *Mary B*, and whilst it was in dock at Ellesmere Port on April 8<sup>th</sup>, a steam barge collided with it, and deceased fell overboard.

Thomas Hulse, the father, of 37 Nelson Street, Runcorn, stated that deceased left home on April 8<sup>th</sup> to join the flat. He was an experienced boatman. About midnight on April 8<sup>th</sup>, witness received a message that his son had been drowned. Nothing was seen by him of the body until Sunday last, when he was called to identify it. This he did by the tattoo marks on the arms.

John Henry Parson, an Ellesmere Port iron worker, said that at 1.30 pm last Saturday he was walking along the canal bank at Ince, when he saw the body of a man face downwards on the Mersey side, apparently having been left by the tide. He informed the police.

Acting Sergeant Postons of Helsby spoke to seeing the body. It was in an advanced state of decomposition, the features being unrecognisable. The body was taken to the mortuary. The clothes were nearly all washed away. On the right arm was tattooed the figure of a sailor, a horseshoe and the words "Good Luck", and on the left arm was a bird with an envelope and the word "Harry".

Evidence was called with respect to the collision at Ellesmere Port. Deceased was putting a fender between the two barges when the collision occurred. He was knocked overboard and afterwards disappeared under the water. A boat was lowered, but he could not be found.

**George Mills**, captain of the steam barge *Cambria*, owned by Messrs Brunner, Mond and Co and lying at Barnton, spoke to the accident and said he looked about for deceased, but could not see him.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

### 24 16 June 1914

#### BOATMAN'S FATAL RIDE

#### FALLS UNDER MOTOR TRAILER

INQUEST AT NANTWICH Mr J C Bate, coroner, conducted an inquest at the Nantwich Police Station on Saturday on the body of **Albert Wood**, aged 37 years, boatman, who died in the Nantwich Cottage Hospital on Friday morning from injuries sustained through falling under the wheels of a trailer attached to a traction engine. Mr T Chesworth was foreman of the jury.

The father of the deceased, **John Wood**, canal boatman, Burland, identified the body, and said that his son had been lately employed at the Chirk coalpits. Witness saw him at Barbridge on Thursday as he was going through with the boat. He told him that he was going back to work next day, and witness asked him to go and see his mother. He was sober. Later the same afternoon, he was informed of the accident to his son in Barbridge.

A WITNESS OF THE ACCIDENT James Latham of Barbridge stated that he knew the deceased, and on Thursday afternoon saw him following a traction engine and trailer in the direction of Nantwich. At first he tried to climb on the back of the trailer, but did not succeed. Then he went between the locomotive and trailer, and seated himself on the draw bar, which was triangular in shape. The locomotive had not travelled forty yards when he noticed the deceased lying in the road. Apparently the near wheels of the trailer had passed over his body. A cripple who had seen the accident had gone to his assistance before witness got to him.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said the traction engine did not stop, but the driver was evidently not aware of the accident. There was a high load at the back of the engine, and there was no one on the trailer. Wood was quite sober.

THE ENGINE DRIVER'S STATEMENT Albert Skitt of Beeston stated that on Thursday afternoon he was driving a heavy motor lorry from Beeston to Nantwich. He passed through

Barbridge about three o'clock. The first intimation he got of the accident was from a boatman who came galloping up on a horse and told him that he had run over a man. He did not know that the man attempted to get on the engine.

In reply to the Coroner, witness said that whenever he found anyone on the engine he stopped and ordered them off. When going through towns that sort of thing often happened, but he had never seen anyone ride on the draw bar. A distance of a yard and a half separated the motor from the trailer. At the time of the accident he was travelling about four miles an hour. The trailer weighed 18 cwt, and there were two tons on it.

**DYING MAN'S REMARK** Acting Sergeant Webberley of Barbridge stated that, on being informed of the accident, he went to the place where it occurred, and found the man lying on the side.

He was apparently seriously injured and he got the driver of a passing motor car to take him to the Nantwich Cottage Hospital. On the way to the hospital witness asked how the accident happened, and Wood replied, "I jumped on for a ride and fell off".

Elizabeth Cotterill, matron of the Nantwich Cottage Hospital, stated that Wood was admitted about 3.30 o'clock on Thursday afternoon. He was seen at once by Dr Jack Munro. It was seen that the man was suffering from severe internal injuries, and there were marks across the front of the body consistent with having been run over by a heavy vehicle. He died on Friday morning about 2.30 o'clock.

**THE CORONER'S COMMENTS** The Coroner, in commenting on the evidence, said that the man, in attempting to balance himself on a narrow bar of a vehicle in motion, was doing a difficult, dangerous and foolish thing. The result was he fell under the vehicle, and the two wheels, upon each of which there were 14 cwt, passed over him. A man of his years ought to have known better than to have attempted it, but he was evidently a person deficient in the sense of danger.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

## **25 23 June 1914**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS** **Joseph Robinson**, a boatman, was fined 5s for having been drunk and disorderly in Public Hall Street. PC Gallimore proved the case.

## **26 30 June 1914**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS** At these Sessions on Monday, William Peck, Regent Street, was fined 7s 6d for not sending his child to school regularly. **William Twigg**, a canal boatman, and William Reid of Wivern Place, were each fined 5s for similar neglect. Attendance Officer Howard proved the cases.

## **27 4 August 1914**

**SCENE AT RUNCORN HOTEL**

**EX INSPECTOR'S EXCITING ENCOUNTER** **James Bate**, a flatman of Liverpool and formerly of Runcorn, created a scene at the Railway Hotel, Lowland Road, Runcorn, on Sunday night. When he decided to "be rough", he made an unfortunate choice, for the landlord, ex police inspector Egerton, is about the biggest man the town holds and knows something of handling unruly characters.

At the Runcorn Court on Monday, Bate was charged with having been drunk and disorderly. He was also charged with having damaged Mr Egerton's waistcoat to the extent of 8s.

Mr Egerton stated that at 7.40 on Sunday evening, the man came to the hotel and asked the barman for some cigarettes, afterwards beginning to kick up a row. Witness told him he was taking advantage of the fact that the barman was a stranger and he would not allow it. He went into another room and heard the prisoner "carrying on" and cursing a little later. He then ordered him out of the house and, as he would not go, he was put out. He came in again, and in putting him out a second time the prisoner snatched at his watch chain and tore his waistcoat down the front. A few minutes later, a young lady brought witness his gold watch, which had been presented to him when

he was made inspector, and which he valued very highly. Witness had not missed it, but prisoner must have snatched it out of his waistcoat pocket when they were struggling. Later prisoner forced his way into the house again at another entrance, and witness then held him until the arrival of the police. He was very violent and might have done a lot of damage if opposed to an individual not used to handling rough characters.

Sergeant Worthington spoke to arresting the prisoner and to seeing the damage to Mr Egerton's waistcoat.

Bate said he did not remember anything of what had occurred. He was very "heavy in drink".

For having been drunk and disorderly, the prisoner was fined 10s. He was also ordered to pay 8s for the damage done to the waistcoat.

## **28 14 August 1914**

### **MISHAP ON THE WEAVER**

**SERIOUS DAMAGE TO SALTERSFORD LOCKS** The Saltersford locks on the river Weaver, about four miles from Northwich, were on Saturday afternoon seriously damaged, and the mishap was of such an alarming character that it is fortunate the enormous rush of water did not result in still more serious consequences.

Inquiries show that the *ss Victoria*, belonging to the Northwich Carrying Co, was proceeding up the river with a cargo of about 200 tons of macadam. In entering the lower half of the Saltersford large lock, the boat came in contact with the gates, one of which, we are informed, was carried away. The rush of water from the upper level met the *Victoria*, and forced her out of the lock stern first.

The lock-keepers secured the bottom gates by means of ropes, but the tremendous flow of water from the upper level carried the gates past the mitre, seriously damaging them, and rendering them practically inoperative. The upper gates were then closed, and they were likewise carried a little beyond the mitre. These gates, however, were not so badly damaged, and were sufficiently stable to impound what is known as the Northwich pond water. Otherwise the consequences might have been very serious to the river banks and the adjacent works and buildings.

A telephone message was sent to Colonel Saner, chief engineer of the Weaver Navigation, and he proceeded to the spot, followed by a breakdown gang on the steam tug *Pioneer*. Measures were at once adopted for securing the stability of the upper gates, and traffic was able to proceed through the small lock, which is quite equal to taking any of the craft at present using the Weaver.

## **29 21 August 1914**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS** At these Sessions on Monday, **David Wood**, a boatman, and **Ellen Wood**, his wife, were summoned for being drunk and disorderly and drunk and incapable respectively on Saturday. Sergeant Clague said that he went to Astmoor Bridge on Saturday in consequence of a telephone call. He found the man trying to pull a boat to the side, although it was already there, and using very bad language. The woman was lying across the footpath helplessly drunk. Both the defendants denied that they were drunk, but the man admitted having used bad language. Superintendent Owen said that both were drunk when arrested. A fine of 5s was imposed in each case.

## **30 1 September 1914**

### **THE COLLISION IN THE CANAL**

**INQUEST ON RUNCORN VICTIMS** The Manchester County Coroner held an inquest on Friday on the bodies of **Fred Crompton** of 38 Parker Street, Runcorn, engineer, and **William Owen** (14) of 38 Surrey Street, Runcorn, the victims of the collision in the Manchester Ship Canal at Irlam on Monday night, between the *ss Yorkshire* and the steam tug *Walter*, in which the tug was sunk.

Owen's body was recovered on Wednesday, and that of Crompton was brought out of the canal on Friday morning.

**John Smetham** of Runcorn, captain of the steam tug, stated that on Monday the night was very dark, but not foggy. When passing the Carrington Wharf he saw the *Yorkshire* leave the Irlam

Locks and go down the south side of the canal towards Liverpool. He stopped his engines, cast off the barges, and put his helm to starboard. The *Yorkshire* struck the tug near the bows on the starboard side. She sank in three minutes. Crompton went down with the tug and Owen was thrown into the water. He cried for help, but the rescuers could not see him. The lights of the tug were burning properly.

**Albert G Spicer** of Durell Lane, Rock Ferry, captain of the *Yorkshire*, stated that he was on the bridge. The *Yorkshire* was on the north side of the canal, and witness felt sure that he would pass clear of the tug when it suddenly turned and ran broadside across the bows of the *Yorkshire*. Everything possible was done to avoid a collision. Witness thought that the windows of the tug being open, and the water rushing in, she tilted over. The *Yorkshire* was only travelling at a speed of two knots an hour. Lifebuoys were thrown into the canal, but they did not illuminate the water as they were expected to do.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

### **31 23 October 1914**

SMASH ON THE WEAVER

SERIOUS DAMAGE TO LOCK GATES

RUNCORN CAPTAIN SUMMONED

AN IMPORTANT CASE At a special sitting of the Northwich magistrates on Tuesday, more than three hours were occupied in the hearing of a summons against **Robert Brown** of 12 Portland Street, Runcorn, the captain of the *ss Victoria*, owned by the Northwich Carrying Co.

The case was the sequel to a recent smash at Saltersford Locks on the river Weaver, near Northwich, and Brown was summoned that he, being in command of the *Victoria*, did unlawfully allow the vessel to enter the locks with too much way on, whereby it caused the vessel to strike and damage the lock gates.

The proceedings were instituted by Mr Ernest S Inman, general manager of the River Weaver Navigation, on behalf of the trustees.

Mr H Hatt-cook, solicitor to the Weaver Navigation Trustees, conducted the prosecution, and the defendant, who pleaded not guilty, was represented by Mr Goffey of the firm of Messrs Hill, Dickinson and Company of Liverpool.

The magistrates were Messrs J W Deakin (chairman), H Bratt, A J Thompson and Russell Allen.

AN UNUSUAL CASE Mr Hatt-Cook handed in to the Bench some plans, explaining that they might be useful to enable them to follow the case.

In answer to the Chairman, Mr Hatt-Cook said it was the large lock which was affected.

Mr Hatt-Cook said he appeared on behalf of the River Weaver Navigation Trustees in the matter. The case was a somewhat unusual one. The man was summoned for a breach of the bylaws as defined in the summons. The bylaws were duly approved by the Board of Trade, and had been made and altered from time to time for the regulation and good management of the Weaver and the using of the Weaver. They were a code which bore the approval of the Local Government Board and the whole of the trading community on the river, and there was an obligation of the part of those using the river to obey them and the Weaver Navigation Trustees to see they were obeyed. It was a matter of extreme pain to the trustees to have to take proceedings against the man.

There was no vindictive spirit on the part of the trustees, but if the Bench were satisfied with the evidence which he would produce, he hoped they would mark the offence with their disapproval. It was many years since he had had to support a similar action for the Weaver Navigation.

It appeared that on August 8<sup>th</sup>, about 4.30 in the afternoon, the steamship *Victoria*, of which the defendant was then in charge – they alleged entirely through negligent navigation – did damage which cost between £3,000 and £4,000 and had made the lock absolutely useless for a period of about eight months. He had some photographs which might assist the Bench, and he intended to call before them **William Hancock**, the senior man in charge of the locks, who had been there 23 years, and also **Enos Wilkinson** and his wife, as actual witnesses of the accident.

THE BYLAWS PRODUCED Ernest Stobart Inman, manager and clerk to the Weaver Navigation

Trustees, said he had been empowered to take proceedings, and he also handed in a certified copy of the bylaws.

The Chairman : Is this the first case of the kind you have ever had?

Mr Hatt-Cook : I cannot say, but I cannot say how long it is since they had one. Mr Saner says he does not remember one.

Mr Inman was cross-examined at length with regard to the bylaws, but eventually Mr Goffey agreed that they had, as submitted, been approved by the Local Government Board.

THE LOCKTENTER'S EVIDENCE William Hancock, senior locktenter at Saltersford, stated that he had been at the locks for 23 years. At 4.30 p m on August 8<sup>th</sup>, he was at the locks when Robert Brown came up in charge of the *Victoria*. Witness stood at the bottom gates, and as she passed him he noticed she had too much way on. The "hand" threw witness a rope, and he hung it on the middle "mushroom". He then ran to the stern rope and hung that on the mushroom next to the bottom gates. Noticing the ropes were not bringing the vessel up, he cried out when the vessel was about two yards from the gate, "Go back". The ropes were canting a bit from the off side to the mid feather side. She canted in the middle of the gates and struck them. He saw the mid feather gate go back, and then he saw the water. The gate came down from its hinges and fell to the bottom of the lock. He heard Wilkinson cry, "Go back", when the vessel was half way in the lock.

The Chairman : Did the gate actually tumble to the bottom of the lock?

Witness : Yes ; wrenched from its hinges. Proceeding, he said the force of the water rushed the vessel out of the lock and brought her stern first to the hauling side. He put the turbines on. The water took the machinery out of his hands, and the top gates and the bottom gates came down simultaneously. He ran across to the hut to inform Mr Saner about the accident. When he returned, Brown came from the steamer. Witness approached him on the matter, and he said the engine was not going back quick enough. Since the accident Brown had been very careful, and drew up before he got to the lock.

Cross-examined by Mr Goffey : He first saw the *Victoria* when she was about 400 or 500 yards from the locks. He was on the mid feather at the time, and it did not take her above three or four minutes to come the distance. He knew the vessel had too much speed on to enter the lock, but he could not say at what speed she was travelling. It was only when she had got her nose to the entrance to the lock that he noticed she was coming too quickly. He did not tell the man he was going too fast, because he knew himself what he could do with his vessel. He first put the rope on the middle "mushroom" between the middle and bottom gates. The stern rope was put on the next "mushroom" to the bottom gates.

Re-examined by Mr Hatt-Cook : He was not going to give an opinion about speed. It was too fast. He did everything in his power to help the vessel to pull up. She was loaded with 200 tons of macadam. With two locks on their hands, he and his mate had quite enough to do to look after the ropes and work the turbines. A man who had been up the river hundreds of times ought to know how to come up to the lock without his assistance. Witness was at attention when the vessel came, and received the ropes.

Enos Wilkinson, assistant lock-keeper at Saltersford Locks, gave similar evidence, and added that they (the lock-keepers) had to see that in working the locks the gates were mitred. At the time when the *Victoria* was coming in, the gates were properly mitred. Witness crossed the gate when they put the *Dauntless* up, to see that there was a full mitre, and there was one. If the gates were not properly mitred, a little bit of a tap would knock them out of mitre.

Mr Hatt-Cook pointed out to the magistrates that the witness was talking about a "tap" with a boat loaded with two or three hundred tons, so they would know what sort of a "tap" he meant.

In answer to the Bench, Mr Hatt-Cook said a captain of a boat could have the large lock or the smaller one, just as he chose.

Cross-examined by Mr Goffey, Wilkinson said he did not anticipate anything happening when he first saw the vessel. Defendant had plenty of time to pull up when he called to him in the lock. He saw the ropes put on the "mushrooms", but they did not break, because the "hand" had not enough turns on. It was a heavy blow against the gate, but there was a bigger noise when the gate came

down.

By Mr Russell Allen : The *Victoria* had gone through half a lock before.

Answering the Chairman, witness said the engines were stopped as the vessel came in.

Re-examined by Mr Hatt-Cook : At that particular time the paddles were down, the gates were mitred, and the lock was full of water. He had to be a little bit careful about calling out to people about their speed, because after attending to the turbines, they had to be on the look out for the ropes. If they told a man he was going too fast and he stopped his engines, and an accident occurred, it would be a very serious thing for him. He called out to the man when he was half way through the lock.

Elizabeth Wilkinson, wife of Enos Wilkinson, stated that she was about thirty yards from the locks when the accident happened. She saw the boat coming in, and heard her husband call out when it was about half way up the lock, "Come back".

THE ENGINEER'S EVIDENCE Mr J A Saner said he had been engineer to the Weaver Trustees since 1887, and had a very great experience in all matters pertaining to canals and canal construction. The lockmen who had been in the box really took their orders from him with regard to the regulating of the locks. Witness was responsible for the whole working of the Weaver. On August 8<sup>th</sup> about 5 p m, as a result of a telephonic message, he went to Saltersford Locks, and found that the middle gates of the lock were missing, and the top and bottom gates were unmitred in the way shown on the photographs produced. It was a very grave question whether the gates, which were badly damaged, would hold up the Northwich Pond, but all he could do that night was to apply wire ropes.

Mr Goffey, interposing, said they were summoned for entering the lock at too great a speed, and it was immaterial in that Court as to what happened afterwards. If Mr Saner would give what he saw had happened to the gates, or something on the question of speed, it would be all right.

Proceeding, Mr Saner said he examined the gates after they were recovered. When he got there, one of the gates had gone. So far as the standing gate was concerned, there was no mark on it. That was, however, not necessary, for a push from a boat weighing 300 tons would of course unmitre them. Then again the weight of water was about one hundred tons. He saw Captain Brown, and as far as he could see, he was much upset by the accident. He said it was caused through his engine not going back quick enough or soon enough. That was his excuse. It was obvious great inconvenience had been caused to traffic, as the lock could not be opened for some time.

The captain of a vessel was responsible for entering the lock at such a speed which would enable him to draw up before he struck the gate or did any injury. He could go as fast as he liked in the river, providing he paid due deference to the safety of other vessels. A custom, which was much to be deprecated, was that men would rely on their engines to pull them up, and nearly all the damage they had suffered to gates in the past was due to some fault of the engines or drivers not pulling up.

By the Chairman : They had an accident similar to that at Dutton Locks in 1885 or 1886.

Cross-examined by Mr Goffey : There were no preventors on the gates.

THE DEFENCE Mr Goffey said the master of the *Victoria* was charged with having entered the lock at too great a speed. That he would deny. When the bows of the vessel were in the entrance to the lock, the engines were put at "stop". A rope was thrown to Hancock, placed on the first "mushroom", and the engines were put on full steam astern. The rope was then carried forward to be put on the other bollard. He submitted they entered the lock at a perfectly proper speed.

THE CAPTAIN DESCRIBES THE ACCIDENT The defendant said he had been in the employ of the Northwich Carrying Co for twelve years. At half speed, his vessel did three or three and a half knots, and slow about two. He generally came up the river at half speed, and slowed down when meeting boats or passing them. On the day in question, when he was entering the mouth of the lock, he stopped his engine, and was going about a mile an hour. The mate threw the rope to Hancock, and he hung it on the bollard just inside the gate. Nothing was said to him about his speed. When he got within three or four feet of the gate, the mate sang out, "Go full speed astern". They made forty or fifty revolutions and then stopped.

The order to go full speed astern was obeyed. His head was falling slightly to the starboard. They

had a bow rope and a stern rope. The water was boiling in the lock just by the middle gate, which had an effect on the vessel's head to swell her off. As a result, the vessel fell over on the gate and eased the mitre, but he did not feel the blow. The vessel was absolutely dead still before she touched the gates, and the flush from the paddle caused her to touch it. There was no calling from the men on the locks to him to go astern. He never said he had too much way on.

Cross-examined by Mr Hatt-Cook : He did not suggest the two lock tenters had come there to deliberately deceive the Court. He distinctly said they never called out to him. He did not run into the middle gates. He fell into them and unmitred them. The flush of the water from the paddle caused him to go into the gate. It had the tendency to draw the boat ahead.

**THE MATE'S VERSION** **William Allcock**, mate of the *Victoria*, stated that he had been in the employ of the Northwich Carrying Company for six years, and had been mate of the *Victoria* for three and a half years. When the boat passed the White Bridge, he was on the forward part, and was standing by so that he could throw out the rope easier on reaching the locks. At that time the engines were going quite slow, and as they approached the locks, he called out to the captain that there was only "half a lock". The boat was reducing speed all the time, because the engines were going slower.

On reaching the locks, he threw out the rope to Hancock, who carried it up ; and a dog was pulling at the "bight". He carried it over the gates, and the dog was still pulling at it. Hancock put the rope on the first "mushroom", and the boat was brought square along the wall. When the boat got halfway into the lock, the captain rang "Full speed astern". He could tell that by the vibration of the boat. The boat had lost absolutely all "way", and was brought to a standstill. Hancock then carried the rope past the middle "mushroom", and hung it at the side of the gates.

Mr Goffey : Did Hancock run with the rope?

Witness : No, he walked.

Did he walk quickly? About the speed of a man 90 years of age. She was going that fast. (Laughter).

By saying that, you mean a man 90 years of age doesn't walk quickly? He doesn't ; that is a fact. You have to wait his time. (Renewed laughter).

The witness went on to state that the boat had no "way", and that the water was "boiling" through the paddles being half up.

Allcock was subjected to a lengthy cross-examination by Mr Hatt-Cook as to his evidence being in direct conflict to that of the two lock tenters, but he adhered to the statement that the paddles were not down.

**James Juliffe**, an able seaman on the *Victoria*, deposed that as the boat was entering the lock, he had the stern rope, and threw it ashore to Hancock. The boat was going very slow, and the rope never tightened at all.

In cross-examination, witness was asked what then, in his opinion, caused the boat to go into the lock gates, and he replied that it was the "boiling" water coming from the paddles.

Evidence was also given by **William Henry Allen**, the chief engineer. He corroborated the captain and mate as to its taking them about ten minutes to get from the White Bridge to the locks. First of all he received an order to go slow ; and about four minutes later, he got the order to go quite slow. As they were approaching the locks, he was ordered to stop the engines, and then a couple of seconds later, "Full speed astern". After that he was again told to stop, and immediately afterwards "Full speed astern". The next he knew was that the gates were on top of them.

Mr Hatt-Cook : You say you got two orders in quick succession, "Full speed astern". Is that usual?

Witness : What orders I got were from the telegraph. That can't speak, and it can't tell lies. (Laughter).

I ask you is it a usual thing to get two orders to go astern, one after another in this way? I tell you distinctly I work to the telegraph.

Mr Hatt-Cook : I see ; you don't want to answer me.

Answering a question by the Chairman, Mr Goffey said the steamer was not damaged in any way.

**THE DECISION** The Bench retired, and on their return into Court, the Chairman said that in view

of the importance of the case, they had given it very careful consideration. They were of the unanimous opinion that the charge had not been proved against the defendant Brown, and the charge would be dismissed with costs. They thought the defendant ought to have all his costs. After some discussion, the Bench allowed an advocate's fee of three guineas, and the Clerk stated that the court fees were 17s 6d.

### 32 30 October 1914

NORTHWICH WATERMAN AND HIS WIFE

MATRIMONIAL DIFFERENCES

STORY OF ANOTHER WOMAN At the Northwich Petty Sessions on Tuesday, **Mary Barker**, 10 Beeston Street, Castle, asked for a maintenance order against her husband, **Thomas Barker** of the barge *Ann Poole*, on the ground that he had deserted her.

Mr W Bancroft, who represented the complainant, said it was a very extraordinary case. The parties were married on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1875, and there was one son – 38 years of age. For eleven years after they were married they lived together and apparently everything was all smiles. The parties then separated for a period of 20 years, during which time defendant never contributed anything whatever towards his wife's support. The reason of his leaving her was perfectly obvious ; there was another woman in the case. After twenty years he came back to his wife, expressed the greatest sorrow at what had taken place, and asked her to forgive him, which she did. They lived together for four or five years down to last May, when he left her again. Since then he had been paying her 10s a week, with the exception of the past few weeks. Again it was the same thing ; another woman in the case.

The Magistrates' Clerk : Is it the same woman or another?

Mr Bancroft : Another one, I suppose, this time. (Laughter). Proceeding, Mr Bancroft said he understood the defendant's excuse would be that the complainant would not go to live with him at Liverpool, but she was not likely to do so because he had been seen there with a drunken woman on his arm. His standing wages were 25s a week, and he received a similar amount for tonnage and demurrage.

Complainant bore out her solicitor's statement, and added that she first left the defendant because he was with a woman in Burleigh Street, Liverpool.

Florence Johnson, 25 Park Street, said she saw the defendant in Liverpool on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. On the first occasion she was in an hotel where the defendant was. A woman came up to him, and they left the house together. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, she saw him with a drunken woman on his arm in Bank Hall Street. She had a friend with her, who remarked, "That is nothing new. I have seen him putting a woman aboard many a Sunday morning".

Defendant stoutly denied that the witness Johnson saw him on the dates named. He alleged his son caused trouble when he lived with his wife. When he left her the last time, he asked her to come and live with him at Liverpool, but she declined. He promised to give her time to consider, and said he would allow her 10s a week for so long, which he had done. His wages only averaged 35s a week.

The magistrates made an order for the payment of 8s a week and costs.

### 33 27 November 1914

RUNCORN FLATMAN DROWNED The body of **Luke Speed**, a boatman of 27 Queen Street, Hulme, Manchester, was found in the Bridgewater Canal on Monday morning, and was recovered by two dock constables. He had been missing from his boat *Lill* since Saturday morning. The boat was lying in the Tidal Basin. Speed lived in Runcorn for many years, but had been residing at Hulme for some time.

THE INQUEST Deputy Coroner White conducted an inquest at the Runcorn Police Court on Wednesday.

**George Bisley**, a dock labourer residing at 35 Bradshaw Street, Hulme, Manchester, gave evidence of identification. The deceased was his father-in-law and followed the occupation of a waterman.

He was 64 years of age.

**George Goodier**, 73 Percival Lane, Runcorn, waterman, said on Saturday he was employed with the flat *Lill*, belonging to the Manchester Ship Canal Company. Deceased was the master. On the day in question they were in the Runcorn tide dock, and at 2.30 in the afternoon witness and deceased parted on the pier head. Speed told witness that he was going to buy a loaf and something for his tea. Witness loaned him a shilling and then went home. Speed was not a teetotaller, but witness had never seen him drunk.

**Joseph Bayley**, a lock tender in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, said he saw deceased on Saturday night at the foot of Waterloo Bridge. When he left him, deceased went up the bridge in the direction of the place where his boat was. He had had some drink and staggered a little. Witness thought he was sober enough to take care of himself under ordinary conditions. Witness did not think it necessary to go with him, and he could not have left his post.

**Robert Moores**, canal constable in the employ of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, residing in Rutland Street, said that on Saturday evening at 7 o'clock witness was at the bottom of the (?old) line of docks, when he thought he heard someone shout, "Help". Another officer who came shortly afterwards from the direction which the noise proceeded, said he had heard nothing, and witness concluded he had been mistaken. It was very foggy. The body was found five or six hundred yards away from that particular place. Early on Sunday evening witness was told deceased was missing, and he got permission to "draw" the No 7 basin, where he thought the noise had proceeded from. He found the body of deceased lying on the bottom, and with the assistance of Messrs Clarke, E Gatley and Banner, he recovered it. There was a cut over the eye.

George Clarke, Bentinck Street, spoke to seeing deceased on Saturday evening. He was sober. Witness assisted Moores to get the body out of the water.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned".

### 34 4 December 1914

#### DEATH OF MR ALFRED CAPPER

#### MEMBER OF AN OLD MID-CHESHIRE FAMILY

A LOSS TO UNITED METHODISM A gloom was cast over the neighbourhood of Northwich and Barnton on Wednesday by the news of the death of **Mr Alfred Capper**, which occurred at his residence, Nether Lea, Beech Road, Hartford, in the early hours of the morning. Mr Capper, who was in his 60<sup>th</sup> year, had been ailing for several months, having suffered from a serious internal complaint. He had been under the constant care and attention of Dr Terry, but his condition gradually got worse and, despite all that medical skill could suggest, the end came as stated above.

Mr Capper was one of the best known men in Mid Cheshire, and his genial presence will be greatly missed by a wide circle of friends. For many years he had played a prominent part in the religious and social life of the district, and the thoroughness with which he entered into any movement that was intended for the general good of the community gained for him the esteem and respect of his fellow men.

He belonged to an old Barnton family, and though of late years he had identified himself with various institutions in Northwich, he never forgot his native village ; in fact, the claims of Barnton and its inhabitants always appealed to him in a very real sense. He was a son of the late **George Capper**, who was a bargeman, whilst his grandfather was engaged in the salt industry, and many years ago had a salt works at Winsford.

As a young man, Mr Capper did a lot of coasting work with schooners in association with his father, but afterwards he was, for a number of years, a most highly respected servant of the firm of Mack and Co of Liverpool. He held the position of a captain, and his last command in their employ was as the commodore of the *Bright Star*, which in those days was an important coasting schooner.

It is about 24 years ago since Mr Capper became traffic manager to the Northwich Carrying Co, and in that capacity he had throughout this long career enjoyed the complete confidence of the directors and the respect of all sections of the trading community. A man of sound business qualifications and of strict integrity, he proved himself worthy in every way of the trust reposed in him. He was

most conscientious in all his dealings, and those who knew him could not fail to admire his many noble qualities.

Though an exceedingly busy man, Mr Capper gave up a great deal of time to public work of various kinds. For many years he was chairman of Barnton Parish Council, an overseer of the township, and in numerous other ways he served the village of his birth faithfully and well.

By his death the United Methodist Church in the Northwich circuit has sustained a very severe loss. He was one of the leaders of Non conformity in the district, and was most devoted to Mount Tabor Church, of which he was one of the senior trustees. A few years ago he laboured with untiring zeal and energy in connection with the scheme for the rebuilding of the church, and was largely instrumental in raising the money necessary to carry out this important undertaking. No effort was too great for him in seeking to promote the interests of United Methodism, and those connected with the cause at Barnton will deeply mourn the death of one who had done so much for it, and had lived up to the highest ideals of true Christianity.

Mr Capper was also an educational enthusiast and took an active interest in everything pertaining to public education. For several years he was Chairman of the Verdin Technical Institute Committee, and was an original member of the local education authority. In the days of the founding of the Brunner School at Barnton he was appointed a manager, and in this capacity he also did much useful work on behalf of the village.

Mr Capper was a Liberal in politics, but was not a man of extreme views.

He married a daughter of the late Mr James Lamb of Barnton, and for Mrs Capper and her family much sympathy is felt in their bereavement. There are five sons and four daughters. One son, Mr Wilfred Capper, recently returned from Buenos Aires to join the New Zealand contingent of his Majesty's forces, while a younger son, Mr Edgar Capper, is in the "Pals" regiment.

The funeral, which will be of a public character, will take place tomorrow (Saturday) afternoon, the service at Mount Tabor Chapel being timed for 2.30.

### **35      11 December 1914**

#### **FISHERMAN'S DEATH**

#### **BODY RECOVERED FROM CANAL**

**TIVERTON LICENSEE FINED** An echo of a drowning accident at Tiverton was heard at the Eddisbury Petty Sessions on Monday before Mr H E Williamson and other magistrates, when Samuel Vickers, licensee of the Royal Oak, Tiverton, was summoned for having permitted drunkenness on his premises on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Mr W H Churton prosecuted on behalf of the police, and Mr Eustace Jones, Chester, defended. Defendant pleaded not guilty.

**A FISHING EXPEDITION** Mr Churton, in opening the case, characterised it as an extremely grave one, and a very sad one. The facts were that on Saturday October 24<sup>th</sup>, a man named Thomas Green, accompanied by his brother and three other men, started from their home at Wigan a little before six o'clock in the morning to go to Beeston to fish. When they got to Beeston, they went to the Castle Hotel and each had a pint of beer. "I venture to suggest", remarked Mr Churton, "that this sort of policy of going drinking early in the morning was one that ought to be stopped by everyone who had a right feeling in the matter".

Mr Churton, continuing, said the men went to the canal to fish near to the Royal Oak at Tiverton. They fished for some time, and then a little after one o'clock, they went to the public house and remained there without a break the whole of the afternoon, doing nothing in the world but drinking until 5.20 in the evening. He could not say what quantity of drink the men had, but they were there long enough to have had a considerable amount, and instead of fishing they were simply "fuddling". Most of the men, however, were more or less the worse for liquor when they left the house at 5.20. Thomas Green was followed by a man named Showell, and when he got about 132 yards from the house, Green appears to have collapsed. He was found by Showell sitting on his basket on the canal side. He saw he was the worse for drink, and Showell tried to get him up, but he would not succeed. He left Green and followed the other three men.

He never saw Green again. Showell overtook the other men and spoke to Green's brother, but for

some reason or other Green would not go back, with the result that his brother was left alone on the canal bank.

The next thing was the introduction of two boatmen, who saw the man Thomas Green sitting in the middle of the towing-path. They found he was so drunk that they had to place him on the side of the towing path to prevent him from being kicked by the boat horses. They also saw the other four men, and they would tell the Bench that they were all more or less the worse for drink.

Showell would be called, and he would say that soon after leaving Green, he ran into something which he could not see, but which turned out to be a boat horse. Sunset did not take place until 4.46, and therefore it could not have been very dark. He suggested that Showell himself must have been "pretty well on", otherwise he would not have come in contact with a horse. In the meantime Green apparently travelled about half a mile, but when he was again seen by the boatmen, he was perfectly helpless. There were no bottles about him, so that he had not had any drink from the time he left the Royal Oak.

They put him to lie down with his head on his basket, and then went to the Royal Oak and told the landlord what they had seen. Nothing more was seen of the man Green, but on the following Tuesday he was reported missing, and eventually his body was found in Wharton's Lock.

Mr Churton pointed out that no precautions were taken by the publican to ascertain whether the man Green was drunk or otherwise, and no attempt had been made to stop his supply of liquor, the result being that the unfortunate man lost his life. It was a grave and serious thing, and surely it was the duty of a publican to exercise some superintendence to see if men were drunk or sober.

He had seen the evidence given before the Coroner, and there was a strong conflict between the evidence of the publican and the witnesses for the prosecution. The latter would say they went in the house at 1.20, but the defendant said it was two hours later, and they only had three pints of beer, while he would prove they had at least six.

**DECEASED'S BROTHER'S EVIDENCE** James Green, collier, New Springs near Wigan, stated that the deceased man, John Thomas Green, was his brother, was 43 years of age, and was a collier. Five of them left Wigan on October 24<sup>th</sup> to go fishing at Beeston, where they arrived at 10 o'clock. After having a drink at the Castle Hotel, they went to the Canal to fish, where they remained until about 1.15. Witness and his brother went to the Royal Oak and had a pint of beer each. They stopped until about 5.20, and they had about five pints each, including a pint each from the landlord.

What condition were you in when you left the house? We were not drunk.

Witness went on to state that they walked along the canal towing path, his brother being behind with Showell. He did not see his brother again after leaving the house, but Showell caught them up afterwards. Showell said that he had left the deceased man sitting on his basket singing. He asked witness to go back to him, but he refused. Before going to the station, they called at the Beeston Castle Hotel and had half a pint of beer each. They had no bottles with them. They left by the 6.(? 40) train and arrived home at nine o'clock. Witness reported his brother was missing, and on the following Wednesday he identified his dead body.

Witness was cross-examined by Superintendent Johnson at the inquest, and he there said they were all drunk.

Cross-examined : He did not remember his brother leaving the house at all during the afternoon. He would not say that they were all drunk, in fact they were served at Beeston Castle and at Wigan.

You would not have left him on the towing path if you had thought he was hopelessly drunk? No, I should not.

Mr Churton : Did you say before the Coroner that you would not have left your brother on the towing path if you had been sober? Yes.

Is that the truth? Yes.

**COLLIER'S STORY** Thomas Showell, collier, New Springs, Wigan, said that when he got to Beeston he went straight to the canal and commenced fishing. He remained until shortly before one o'clock, and then went to the Royal Oak, where he had a pint of beer. He then went to fish again, and about 2.05 he went to the public house again, and there met the two Greens, who had just gone

in. Green had four pints of beer with witness, but he did not see the landlord stand treat. Witness said that when they left the house shortly after five o'clock they were not drunk, but under the influence of drink. Witness was the last to leave the public house, and as he was going along the towing path, he saw the deceased man sitting on his basket on the towing path.

He took his rods, thinking that he would follow him, but he did not do so. Witness did not say before the Coroner that deceased was the worst of the party as far as drink was concerned. He was the same as the rest of them. Witness went along the towing path and ran into a horse pulling a canal boat. It was foggy at the time.

Mr Churton : When you left deceased on the towing path, what was Green's condition as far as drink was concerned? He was capable of taking himself home.

Cross-examined by Mr Jones, witness said he would not have left Thomas Green on the towing path if he had been in such a condition that he could not have looked after himself. It was a very dark night, and it was owing to that that he ran into the horse.

**WHAT THE BOATMAN SAW** **William Grimes jun**, a boatman of Sandbach, deposed that on the date in question he was in charge of a boat going towards Ellesmere Port, when he saw a man sitting on the towing path. Witness told him to be getting along, and the man tried to walk, but fell down. He then got up again and went towards the lock. After tying the boat up, witness went back to the man and found him lying on a ruck of stones. He put him on two planks with the basket under his head, and left him. The man was drunk. Later he went to the Royal Oak and told the landlord what he had seen. He saw the other fishermen going to the station ; they were not sober, but not drunk.

Cross-examined : In spite of the man being so drunk, witness allowed him to go along the footpath and under a bridge where the path was very narrow. He had to do so because he had his horse to look after. Witness and another boatman offered to take deceased to the station if he would pay them 1s each, but he said nothing.

**William Williams**, boatman, King's Lock, Middlewich, spoke to steering a boat on the canal in the direction of Ellesmere Port, when he saw a man sitting in the middle of the towing path, and later he and Grimes went towards the lock, where they found the deceased man. He was drunk, and said that his mates had gone and left him. Before he saw deceased, witness saw some other men, but they appeared all right.

Mr Jones : This man was very drunk, and it was a dark night, and yet you left him on the towing path? Yes, but we had something else to do.

Did you not offer to take him to the station for 1s? Yes.

**THE RECOVERY OF THE BODY** Acting Sergeant Cotterill stated that he made inquiries with regard to the matter, and called at the Royal Oak. In consequence of what he was told, he caused the lock of the canal to be dragged, and later recovered the body of Thomas Green. He had measured the distance from the Royal Oak to where Green was first seen by the boatman, and it was 132 yards. The towing path was about eight feet wide. The distance from the planks, where deceased was left, to the lock, was about 12 feet.

Cross-examined : Witness had seen a man named Howes who, in a statement, first said the man was the worse for beer, but afterwards said that was not so. Howes was in such a state that no further statement was taken from him.

**THE DEFENCE** Mr Jones, for the defence, said that he proposed to call two men, who were not friends of the five men but merely acquaintances, and he suggested that their evidence would be more impartial. He would also call the defendant, who would bear out their evidence, and who would state that when the men left his house, they were all sober. As to the deceased man, it would be proved that he had at least one and a half pints less beer than the other men, so that assuming the other four had five pints, deceased only had 3 1/2. He could assure them that a collier had a greater capacity than that. Before leaving the house, Green asked the landlord to cut him some flowers to put on his brother's grave, and he ventured to say that was not the sort of thing that drunken men would do.

He submitted for the magistrates' serious consideration that the man was not drunk but dead tired,

having had very little sleep the night before, and having been knocking about all day. It was quite reasonable, in the circumstances, that he should sit down and have a rest on his way to the station. Mr Jones went on to urge that if the man had been drunk, he could not possibly have got under the bridge over the canal and have climbed up to the lock level without having fallen into the water.

**DEFENDANT'S EVIDENCE** The defendant was then called and, in answer to Mr Jones, said the two Greens arrived at his house between three and four o'clock, and they were accompanied by three other men. They had all been fishing in the canal from his garden. The men were served with about three pints, but deceased had a pint and a half less than the others. James Green gave him a fishing rod, and he treated three of the men to a pint each. Deceased also missed a half pint, as he was out at the time. He asked witness for some flowers to put on his brother's grave, and they were given to him.

When the men left the house at 5.30, they were not drunk, and after packing up their lines and rods, left to go to Beeston. Witness knew the towing path well, and agreed that it would be a dangerous proceeding for a drunken man to pass under the bridge near Wharton Lock.

Cross-examined : He could not explain why Green sat on his basket on the towing-path excepting that he must have been tired ; he was not drunk. Witness only served James Green with three pints, but his wife might have served him with more. Witness only served deceased with two and a half pints. Witness was out of the house until 1.30, and the men were not in then. He told the Coroner that the men came in at 3.30, and that was about the right time.

**CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE** Emma Vickers, wife of the licensee, stated that she was in charge of the house until 1.30, when her husband came in. About 1 o'clock, three or four fishermen came in the house and she served them with a pint of beer each. She returned about 5.30 and saw five men packing their rods. They were all quite sober.

Mark Cooke, photographer, Chester, produced photographs of the towing-path, the bridge and the approach to the Wharton Lock. He had walked under the bridge, and he considered it dangerous, especially for a drunken man.

Charles Williams stated that he saw the five men in the Royal Oak just before they left, and was speaking to them. The men were all sober, and he saw them leave. The path under the bridge was very dangerous, and it was almost impossible for a man who was drunk to get under without falling in the water.

Cross-examined : The boatmen did not tell him that they had seen Green, and that he was drunk.

James Bromley, collier, Wigan, stated that he went to the Royal Oak about 3.20, and stayed until about 5.30. He saw the other five men in the house, including deceased, and they were all sober.

Cross-examined : Witness made a statement to the Wigan police to the effect that deceased was under the influence of drink.

Benjamin Hepplestone, collier, Wigan, gave corroborative evidence.

**William Howes**, a boatman, said that at Wharton Lock he met three men, who had been fishing. They were walking all right. Later he saw a man walking under the bridge, with his basket over his shoulder and a bunch of flowers in his hand. He then sat down on a heap of stones, and on witness going up to him, he noticed the man was sober "to his idea".

Mr Jones : Was this man drunk or sober? He was not drunk.

Mr Churton : Was he sober? No.

**THE DECISION** The magistrates deliberated in private, and the Chairman subsequently announced that defendant would be fined 40s and costs, with £2 2s advocate's fee.

### **36 15 January 1915**

**RUNCORN WATERMEN MISSING** Two men have been reported to the Runcorn Police as being missing. One is **John Sherriff** (32), a sailor belonging to the *Constance Mary*. He left Weston Point Docks on the 6<sup>th</sup> inst, visited a barber's shop, and has not since been seen. As the captain holds a sum of £3 belonging to the man and he has not claimed it, it is feared that he must be drowned. A description of him states that he was slightly lame and, at the time of his leaving the ship, he was wearing khaki trousers, black lace up boots, a black cap and an old blue jersey as an

undervest. The other missing man is a narrow boatman named **Thomas Helsby** (also known as **Thomas Frodsham**). He lived on board the narrow boat *Winifred*, and has been missing since Saturday last, when the boat was lying at Halton Crane. He is described as a well built man, with a scar on the left side of the forehead, and 35 years of age.

### 37 15 January 1915

#### FELL DOWN A CELLAR

#### FATALITY AT A WARRINGTON HOTEL

**CORONER AND HUSBAND'S ACTION** A singular accident occurred at the Royal Oak Hotel, Bridge Street, Warrington, on Saturday evening, resulting in the death of **Ann Marshall** (aged 58), wife of **Joseph Marshall**, lock-keeper, Lock Villa, Grappenhall.

Mrs Marshall was about to re-enter the hotel from the yard when she fell down some cellar steps, a distance of eight or nine feet. She was dead when got out of the cellar.

The inquest was conducted by Mr H C Yates, coroner, in the Large Room, Grappenhall, on Tuesday. Mr E A White represented the licensee of the hotel (Mr Sangster), and Mr V B Parker appeared for the insurance company.

Mr Joseph Marshall said that on Saturday evening he left home with his wife to go shopping in Warrington. They met Sergeant and Mrs McGregor, two friends, and all adjourned to the Royal Oak Hotel, going into the tea room. Mrs Marshall and Mrs McGregor left the room. Shortly afterwards, Mrs McGregor returned in an excited state and asked her husband to go outside. When witness followed them later, his wife, who was unconscious, was being brought into the kitchen, and a doctor was summoned. Witness and his wife had frequently been to the house. She was not short sighted, and was perfectly sober at the time. The doctor came and pronounced life extinct. Witness had the body removed to his home.

“THE LAW MUST BE OBEYED” The Coroner : Why? You know perfectly well I have cautioned you before. Continuing, he asked witness why he did not keep the body at Warrington until the police obtained the Lancashire Coroner's permission to remove it.

Witness said the Coroner's officer was present and he allowed the removal. “I was determined to bring her home”, he added.

The Coroner : You know the law must be obeyed.

Witness : I know. We had that controversy 12 months ago.

The Coroner : I quite appreciate that it was your own wife in this case. In another case, you would not do so? On this occasion, you say you had the authority of the Coroner's Clerk?

Witness : The Coroner's Clerk and the Superintendent of the Police.

The Coroner : You acted very wrongly.

Mrs McGregor, wife of Sergeant McGregor, 1 Nasmyth Street, Manchester, spoke to going out of the hotel with Mrs Marshall. Deceased led the way, and they went through the kitchen door. When Mrs Marshall was returning, she went towards the kitchen door. It was dark and witness could not see the door. Deceased remarked, “It is not this way (pointing to the kitchen door), it is this way”, (indicating the left hand side) and immediately disappeared. Witness could not see anything, and she ran back into the room where her friends were. A light was obtained, and the licensee, Mr McGregor and Mr Marshall's son (who had joined the party) went down the cellar and brought Mrs Marshall up. She was then dead. Witness could not account for the accident except that Mrs Marshall might have thought the door opened on the left, whereas it opened on the right. Witness had not noticed any opening when she came to the yard. It was absolutely dark.

**THEORY OF THE ACCIDENT** Mrs Allen, wife of Thomas Allen, 9 Orchard Street, Stockton Heath, who was also in the hotel at the time, agreed with Mrs McGregor's theory that Mrs Marshall mistook the side of the door. The opening leading to the cellar was small, and even a thin person had to go down sideways. Mrs Marshall probably got hold of the wrong handle, and witness thought her attention must not have been concentrated on what she was doing. The mistake was easy to make if one was not careful.

The Coroner : Had the door to the cellar been properly closed, this would not have happened?

Witness : I have never seen the door open when I have been in.

In reply to Mr White, witness said the cellar door opened towards one.

Dr Sutherland said there was a deep cut on the back of Mrs Marshall's head. He could not discover any other fractures.

The Coroner : Are you not rather surprised?

Witness : I was surprised. Continuing, he said the steps were fairly steep and the fall would be from eight to nine feet. He thought Mrs Marshall must have fallen headlong. In all probability, the base of the skull was fractured and the neck broken.

DOCTOR'S STATEMENT Witness added that the Coroner's Clerk was not present, and he told Mr Marshall not to remove the body but to wait until the police came. Two policemen came and asked whether they could remove the body, and Marshall replied, "Yes".

With regard to the doors, witness said the cellar door opened towards one and the kitchen door from one. The accident was very extraordinary, because the cellar door was concealed by clothes which were hanging on it.

LICENSEE'S EVIDENCE Mr Sangster, the licensee, said the cellar door was always closed, as it shut of its own accord. Near to the cellar door was the door into the kitchen, and on this occasion this door was partly open.

The Coroner : Can you explain why she should open the cellar door at all if the kitchen door was partially open?

Witness said he could not, and added that there was a light in the room and a good one shining from the passage into the yard.

AN EXTRAORDINARY CASE The Coroner said the case seemed very extraordinary, and the only reasonable explanation was that, instead of attending to where she was going, Mrs Marshall was talking to Mrs McGregor. Her attention was distracted, and she acted in a sort of absent mindedness, and involuntarily took hold of the wrong door. He did not think any blame could be attached to the licensee.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

JUROR'S QUESTIONS A Juryman : There is one question I would like to ask. Why was the body brought out of the borough and the expense put on the county?

The Coroner : You are quite right. Mr Marshall was very stupid in running contrary to the law. We have means to prevent that.

The juror asked why the police had given authority for the removal of the body.

The Coroner said the police had no right to give authority to move the body. One might consent if the person had only lived two yards away, but in this case to put the County Council of Cheshire to the expense, whereas the county of Lancashire was the proper authority to deal with the case and bear the expense, was most improper. He could, if he had been so disposed, have refused to hold that inquest and ordered that the body be taken back into Lancashire, but he did not want to give Mr Marshall such trouble. "I think it is most wrong", the Coroner continued. "He says he got the permission of the Coroner's Clerk, and there was no such person there. The police should never have given permission".

Mr White expressed the deep sympathy of the licensee with the relatives.

## **38 2 February 1915**

### **SOLDIER'S SAD DEATH**

ENLISTED THREE WEEKS AGO The funeral took place at the Runcorn Cemetery on Sunday of Private **George Goodier** (22), son of Mr George Goodier of 73 Percival Lane. The young fellow enlisted in the 14<sup>th</sup> Cheshire Regiment only three weeks ago. He was sent to Chester and afterwards to (?Prenton), Birkenhead, for training. Here he was taken ill with bronchitis and remained in hospital for three days. He resumed his military routine afterwards, but on Thursday last was taken suddenly ill, and expired from heart failure following pleurisy in a few hours. He was a waterman by calling, and a particularly sad feature in connection with his death is that he was to have been married this month.

About 30 soldiers in uniform walked in front of the coffin at the funeral. The service was conducted by the Rev W J Chant (superintendent Wesleyan minister). The chief mourners were Mr and Mrs Goodier (father and mother), Messrs Samuel, Albert, Edward and Joseph Goodier (brothers), Mr and Mrs Goodier, Lymm (uncle and aunt), Mr and Mrs Cartwright, Warrington (uncle and aunt), Mr and Mrs P Cartwright, Stockton Heath (uncle and aunt), Mr Joseph Cartwright (uncle), the Misses Cartwright (cousins), Mrs Bailey, Miss Goodier (cousins) and Miss Davies. A number of the neighbours and friends of the deceased's family also walked. Many wreaths were sent, including one of immortelles from the neighbours.

### 39 26 February 1915

#### CHILDREN ON CANAL BOATS

#### SORDID STORY AT NORTHWICH

**PARENTS SENT TO GAOL** A story of child life on a canal boat was told at the Northwich Police Court on Saturday, when **John Bunn** and **Mary Ann Bunn**, his wife, of the canal boat *Danube*, belonging to the Salt Union Ltd at Marston, were charged on a warrant before Messrs J O Brandrith (chairman) and P Flannery with neglecting their five children, John (11), Alice (7), Elizabeth (4 and a half), May (2) and Thomas (8 months).

From the evidence given by Inspector Cave of the NSPCC, PC Platt and Dr Mainwaring-White, it appeared that the presence of the children on the boat and their neglected condition was reported to Inspector Cave about three months ago, but before the officer could get to Marston to examine the little ones and their "home", the boat had left the district, and until the previous Monday the prisoners succeeded in evading his vigilance. Inspector Cave then received information that a boat boy at Marston had been trying to sell a lamp in order that he might buy some food, and on instituting inquiries, he found he belonged to the prisoners, for whom he had been searching so long. All the children mentioned in the charge were in a most filthy condition, badly clothed and poorly shod, whilst they were also badly developed. There was only one bed on the boat – which was a narrow one – and the bedding consisted only of horse cloths. On the boat was found sixteen empty beer bottles.

From a statement obtained from the man's employers, it appeared that he had drawn £24 2s in three months, and out of that he had paid £2 10s towards the purchase of his horse. He had no coal to buy nor rent to pay, and it was alleged he squandered his money in drink. The two elder children had never been inside a school in their lives. All the children had been born on boats in various parts of the country. When arrested, the male prisoner had 3s 1d in his possession.

Both prisoners were committed to gaol for two months with hard labour, and the children were removed to the Workhouse.

### 40 2 March 1915

#### NO BOOKS

**RUNCORN ROPE DEALER FINED** Thomas Moffatt, a local dealer in rope, was summoned at the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday for carrying on the business of a marine store dealer without keeping proper books.

Mr H N Linaker appeared for the defence, and pleaded guilty to a technical offence.

Superintendent Owen said that on January 20<sup>th</sup> Detective Sergeant Davies was at the Runcorn docks when he saw the defendant speaking to some boatmen. Davies spoke to the men, and afterwards saw the defendant and asked him where he had got two sacks of rope from, which he had on a barrow. He said that he had got some that morning and some on the previous night, but he did not know the men from whom he had got it. He said he had paid 3s for some to a man off Hazlehurst's flat, 1s 4d to another man and 2s 8d to one of Harris's flatmen for it. Witness asked him if he had inquired whether these men were allowed to sell it or not, and he replied, "No". He also said that he did not keep any books but sold the rope direct to Mr Howard, marine store dealer of Runcorn. Mr Howard was present and would say that between January 1<sup>st</sup> and January 28<sup>th</sup> the defendant sold to him over three tons of rope, for which he received £23 13s 9d. It was very necessary that books

should be kept, especially by men dealing with such large quantities of rope, otherwise there was an opening for illicit trade. The police had received numerous reports of rope being stolen from Liverpool and Garston.

Mr Linaker said that the defendant had worked for Messrs Howard at one time, and he had then authority given him by the Manchester Ship Canal Company to collect rope and other marine stores from vessels lying in the Runcorn Docks, provided that the goods were inspected by an official of the company. Defendant was under the impression that he was not acting as a marine store dealer because he simply bought from day to day and sold all that he bought to Messrs Howard at once. All he bought at the Runcorn Docks had to be submitted to one of the officials of the company, who had to be satisfied that it was bought in a proper manner. Counsel asked for leniency on the ground that the offence was only a technical one. Defendant had ten children, eight of whom were absolutely dependent upon him at the present moment. He suggested that the Bench might exercise the powers they possessed under the First Offenders Act. Defendant was a man of good character, and had nothing against him.

Superintendent Owen said that the defendant had been cautioned about not keeping proper books.

Detective Sergeant Davies : I have warned him once before.

The Chairman (Sir Frederick Norman) : He is not quite so innocent as his eloquent counsel makes out then.

The Bench fined the defendant 5s and costs.

#### **41 12 March 1915**

DEAD UNDER A FIRE HOLE

SALT WORKS TRAGEDY AT ANDERTON

BARNTON MAN'S SAD END Mr H C Yates, coroner, and a jury of which Mr Scragg was the foreman, sat at the Mission Room, Anderton, on Tuesday afternoon, to inquire into the strange circumstances associated with the death of **Joseph Fryer**, whose dead body was found under a fire hole on the Salt Works.

“DID NOT SEEM WELL” George Allen, 36 Runcorn Road, Barnton, a shiftman in the employ of Messrs Brunner Mond and Company, said the deceased was his brother-in-law, and was 56 years of age. He was formerly a waterman in the employ of Messrs Thompson, and at that time made his home on the flat *Amelia*. During a period of slackness of work, he became a labourer on a canal boat. He had no settled home, but was a native of Barnton. Witness last saw him alive three weeks ago, when he said he had been in the workhouse for about a week. He advised him to stay in the workhouse, because he did not seem well.

The Coroner : I suppose he would not ; the name frightens some people.

Witness : That is so. He had been a man who drank a great deal in days gone by, and as a result had neglected himself as regarded food and everything else. He was a very good waterman.

The Coroner : That is always the way – a good workman.

FIREMAN'S EVIDENCE Ellis Haspell stated that he lived at the Moss, Comberbach, and was a fireman in the employ of the Salt Union. On Monday morning he started work soon after six o'clock, and when he got to his fire, he saw the deceased lying underneath in the ash hole. He said to him, “Be coming out of this, I want to (?bass) this fire”. As he got no answer, he went to another fire hole. Returning a few minutes later, he touched the deceased with his feet and shook him but, getting no answer, he came to the conclusion that he was dead. He then sent for the foreman of the works and the police. The fire was burning above the hole where he was but the clinkers which had formed prevented the hot ashes from dropping on him.

The Coroner : It would be a snug bed?

Witness : Yes, it would be warm, but dusty.

The Coroner : I suppose you get a lot of these men?

Witness : Not lately.

The Coroner : They have all gone to the war. (Laughter). How do they get into the fire hole, legs first, I suppose?

Witness : No ; they go in head first, and leave their feet outside.

John Johnson, a horse driver in the employ of the Salt Union Ltd, living at British Houses, Anderton, said he saw the deceased going towards Barnton about seven o'clock on Saturday night. He appeared to be in great pain, had his hand to his side, and was doubled up.

CONSTABLE'S WARNING PC Reece said the deceased came to him in Barnton on Saturday. He showed him a bottle of medicine, and he looked ill. He said he had got the medicine from Dr Gough's. He also said he was working for "Bill" Gleave. On Monday morning, witness was summoned to the Salt Works at 6.45, and found the deceased lying under a fire hole. There were no signs of violence. With assistance he removed the body and searched the clothing. There was nothing in the pockets except an empty medicine bottle, a pipe and a box of matches. He had known the deceased for 18 months, and during that time had frequently suggested he should go into the Northwich Union, telling him that if he did not he would be found dead some day.

Dr Gough deposed that two or three weeks ago the deceased called at his surgery and said he was suffering from diarrhoea. He gave him some medicine, and a few days ago he came again. He looked much as usual, and was very jovial, not appearing to trouble much. Witness had also seen him in the workhouse, but he did not require medical attention there. He thought there was no doubt he had suffered from fatty degeneration of the heart, and that he had died from angina pectoris.

In answer to the Coroner, witness said the deceased might have passed away quite peaceably.

The Coroner, in summing up, said it was very sad to see a man at the deceased's time of life found dead in the way he was. He must have had a good constitution, and had he only taken care of it, there was no reason why he should not have been living at the present time. It was a great pity that he did not take the officer's advice and go into the workhouse.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, adding that it was due to natural causes.

## **42 9 April 1915**

### **RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS**

DOG OWNERS' TRIALS William Fryer, farmer, Norton, was fined 2s 6d for allowing his dog to be at large during the prohibited hours and unattended. He said it was a "pure accident", the dog having broken its chain. A similar fine for the same type of offence was imposed upon **Fred Atherton**, waterman of Mersey Road, Widnes.

## **43 9 April 1915**

SCARCITY OF FLATMEN Since the outbreak of the war about 70 Runcorn flatmen have enlisted, and there is a local shortage of flat hands which has resulted in a number of boats having to tie up. The shortage is also to some extent due to the demand for labour ashore which has induced quite a number of men who formerly "followed the water" to take land jobs. Although they are hardly likely to make so much money ashore, the regular hours and home life come more congenial to them.

The situation is complicated by the delays at Liverpool, extending frequently to 14 or 15 days, before the flats can get discharged and reloaded.

It is stated that there are plenty of able bodied men of middle age who could well perform the work, but they are debarred by a trades union and to some extent by the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act. Of late years, "flatting" has become increasingly a "young man's job".

A statement which has been published to the effect that over 60 flats are tied up is authoritatively contradicted. We are informed that one third that number is nearer the mark, and that a proportion of these are awaiting repairs, labour in this direction being as scarce as in most others.

## **44 23 April 1915**

RUNCORN FLATMAN KILLED **John Cawley** (63), captain of the Manchester Ship Canal Co's flat *Dantzig*, was killed at the Duke's Dock, Liverpool, about ten o'clock on Thursday evening last.

Cawley's boat was the last of several being towed out of the dock. Owing to the "sweep", the flat struck the dock wall, and the captain was crushed between the tiller and the wheel, and also knocked overboard. A man named Howard quickly got the body out of the water, but life was extinct.

Mr Cawley was well known in Runcorn, having been employed as a flatman all his working life. He was a native of the town.

#### **45 18 May 1915**

##### **RUNCORN SOLDIER DIES OF WOUNDS ONE OF SIX BROTHERS SERVING**



The parents of Private **Robert Ravenscroft** of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cheshire Regiment have heard (through a letter sent home by Private George Walker to his wife) of his death from wounds.

No official notification has yet come to hand, but there is every reason to suppose that the statement is correct.

Private Ravenscroft was under 20 years of age. He joined the Army at the outbreak of the war, and had been at the front some time. A few months ago he was invalided home with frostbite, but made a good recovery and was drafted out again.

He was one of six brothers serving with the Colours, three being in the Navy. Their parents reside in Speakman Street. The deceased followed the occupation of a waterman prior to the war.

#### **46 11 June 1915**

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

**DRUNKENNESS** **Alfred Done**, a waterman who was represented by his mother, was fined 10s for drunkenness.

#### **47 15 June 1915**

**RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS** For failing to send their children to school regularly, the following were fined 5s :- Paul Jones, Shaw Street ; James Langley, Percival Lane ; Robert Williams, King Street ; Herbert Hough, Shaw Street ; and John Gayter, Norton Street. In the case of **Albert Mansfield**, canal boatman, a fine of 2s 6d was imposed. Attendance officer Howard proved

the case.

**48 22 June 1915**

RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

BOATMEN FINED **John Shaw** and **Joseph Holmes**, young boatmen, were charged with being drunk and disorderly in High Street on Saturday evening. Sergeant Upton said they were helplessly inebriated at Top Locks. They were fined 5s each.

**49 25 June 1915**

NORTHWICH PETTY SESSIONS

WATERMAN OVER THE LINE **Thomas Minshull**, a waterman, was charged with having been drunk and disorderly in New Road, Anderton, on the previous night. PC Rees deposed that at 10 pm he found the defendant drunk. He was using filthy language. In consequence of his disorderly behaviour, witness took him to Barnton Police Station. He was fined 5s.

**50 6 July 1915**

EXERCISING THE GREYHOUND **John Povey**, a canal boatman, was summoned at the Runcorn Sessions on Monday for trespassing in pursuit of game on land in the occupation of Thomas Houghton. Joseph Houghton, a gamekeeper employed by Sir Richard Brooke, said that the defendant and another man were seen by him on the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> going along the canal side towards Preston Brook with a greyhound. He saw them urge the dog to go into a newly harvested field, and it chased two hares, but witness could not say if they got away or not. He watched them for over an hour, and heard them encouraging the dog by shouts. He saw Povey afterwards and defendant told him he knew nothing whatever about the matter, and had been asleep on the canal bank. Povey denied the offence, and said the dog could not catch a hare if it ran for twelve months. (Laughter). Previous convictions having been proved, the defendant was fined 30s, with the alternative of 21 days in gaol.

**51 9 July 1915**

SANDBACH PETTY SESSIONS

WASTE OF CANAL WATER For wasting water of the North Staffordshire Canal, **James Roans**, boatman, was fined 10s, **John Bentley** £1, **John Bell** 15s, **George Cornwell** £1 and **George Morris** £1. Mr Jolly of Stoke appeared for the North Staffordshire Railway Co.

**52 9 July 1915**

FATAL SEIZURE IN THE STREET

OLD WOMAN'S DEATH AT NORTHWICH Mr H C Yates, Coroner, and a jury of which Mr M Conneeley was the foreman, sat at the Police Station, Northwich, on Monday afternoon, to inquire into the circumstances attending the sudden death of **Sarah Ann Clare**.

Mary Ann Gilbert, wife of Robert William Gilbert, gardener, Barker's View, Antrobus, said on Saturday she went to the mortuary, and identified the body of the deceased as that of her sister. She was 60 years of age, and was the wife of **George Clare**, a waterman, who she understood was presently working as a labourer. The deceased had been separated from her husband a great many years and, with the exception of a little out relief from the Union authorities, she had been dependent upon her own earnings and the kindness of relations. Witness last saw her alive at Christmas time, when the deceased stayed with her for a week. She suffered from rheumatism, and about two years ago had an attack of bronchitis. If it had not been for parish relief, the deceased would have been very badly off. She was a good hand at crochet work, and earned part of her livelihood with that.

Sarah Ann Pardoe, wife of Frederick Pardoe, 30 Meadow Street, stated that about three months ago the deceased, who was a stranger to her, came to her house and asked witness to provide her with lodgings. She consented to do so, and the deceased was to pay 1s 6d and provide her own food.

She said she had 4s weekly parish relief, and also did crochet work. During the time the deceased was with her she had good health up to June 29<sup>th</sup>. She then complained of feeling unwell, and on July 1<sup>st</sup> she said she was going to see the doctor. She came back about 10.30 am and said the doctor had told her to have a rest. She went to bed and stayed there until five o'clock, when she got up and had a little cake and tea. At 7.30 she went back to bed again, and at 6 o'clock on Friday morning witness asked her how she was, and she said she was better. When witness went upstairs again at 10.30 the deceased was asleep. At 5 o'clock the deceased got up, and had a cup of tea. She was under the impression it was Saturday, and that she must go for her parish pay, although witness told her it was not so. Deceased left the house at 7 o'clock, and witness never saw her alive again.

Mary Littler, wife of Isaac Littler, 27 Witton Street deposed that on Friday evening about 7 o'clock, she was in Crown Street when she saw the old woman staggering. Noticing her face was very grey, she went to her and asked her was she ill. She replied, "Yes ; I am very ill", whereupon witness took hold of her and placed her on Dodd's doorstep. As a crowd gathered round, she carried her in the shop and placed her on a chair, where she collapsed. Some cold water was given to her which she seemed to gulp, and she then became unconscious.

Dr Manwaring-White said, as one of the parish doctors, he had a record in his books of having attended the deceased. He examined the body on Friday, but did not find any marks of violence. It was very emaciated. Deceased had a large varicose ulcer on the leg. He attended her two years ago for that, and he then recommended her to go to bed and rest the leg, but she would not do so. In September she came to the surgery suffering from a bad attack of bronchitis. She was again told she must go to bed, but would not do so. Deceased continued to attend at the surgery, and at the time she was without doubt short of breath. She did not call at the surgery on Thursday. She had certainly died of heart failure, probably due to a clot from the varicose ulcer, or possibly muscular failure of the heart. He thought she had died from muscular failure of the heart.

The Coroner said if patients would not obey their doctors they could not expect medical men to make them well or keep them in health. It was a pity she had not respected the doctor's opinion and taken a rest. Judging from the appearance of the body, she had evidently suffered from the pinch of poverty, because the body was so emaciated. It was a pity she did not go into the workhouse, where her life might have been prolonged, and she would have been looked after.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, adding that death was due to "natural causes".

### **53 16 July 1915**

#### **WINSFORD PETTY SESSIONS**

A WARNING **Thomas Henry Weedall**, flatman, 11 John Street, was also summoned for having used bad language. PC Wood stated that at 11.15 pm on June 12<sup>th</sup>, he heard defendant, who was in his house, making use of bad language. He warned him, and later defendant went across to the Police Station. On his way back he again made use of bad language. He was fined 5s. The Chairman said they were determined that that class of offence should stop if fining or imprisonment would do it.

### **54 10 August 1915**

#### **WEAVERHAM**

#### **WOMAN CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED SUICIDE**

**"ARTHUR SAYS HE HAS FINISHED WITH ME"**

**PAINFUL DISCLOSURES** "I have nothing to live for. Arthur says he has finished with me".

This was a statement made by **Mary Smith** of School Bank, Weaverham, to a police-constable when asked why she had attempted to commit suicide. She is a married woman living apart from her husband, and on Monday she was brought before Messrs T B Moreton and J O Brandrith at an Occasional Court of the Eddisbury Petty Sessional Division, held at Northwich Police Court.

The accused was described in the charge sheet as a glass carrier, and it was stated that she has been employed at the works of the Weaver Refining Company. She was charged with attempting to

commit suicide by drowning in a pit on the farm of Mr William Ellis of Gorstage, Weaverham, about noon on Sunday.

The prisoner was greatly distressed, and wept bitterly during the proceedings. She was accommodated with a seat in the dock, and it was evident that she felt her position very acutely. Superintendent Johnson of the Oakmere Division, said he wished to explain to the Bench that the prisoner was a married woman, but for some time had lived apart from her husband. The latter was a boatman, and now resided at Runcorn. Up to a short time ago, she was in service at Acton Bridge, where she met a single man named Arthur Johnson of Weaverham. They struck up a friendship, and eventually went to live together as man and wife with Johnson's sister. After a while they separated, and the prisoner obtained a situation at Altrincham. The man Johnson followed her there, and later she came to Greenbank, where she was in domestic employ for a time. Johnson visited her there, and at last she went to reside with Johnson's parents, where they had been living up to the previous day.

A few days ago, the prisoner wrote a letter to her sister-in-law, and handed it to Johnson to read, with the result that some difference arose between them.

On Sunday morning, continued the Superintendent, the prisoner asked Johnson what was the matter with him, and he turned round and told her that he had finished with her. This upset her so much that about noon she left the house, and Johnson's father saw her going across a field on Mr Ellis's farm in the direction of a pit. Shortly afterwards she disappeared from view, and Johnson's father went to Mr Ellis, and requested him to go and order the prisoner out of the field. Mr Ellis went to her, and found that her feet were stuck in the mud on a slope leading to the pit. He assisted her out, and she was handed over to Johnson's father. On the way home, she said, "I should have been done for if it had not been for sticking in the mud". When seen by the village constable, she told him she had nothing to live for.

This was a case, added Superintendent Johnson, in which Mr Clarke, the Police Court Missionary, might be able to do something for the woman. He intended to call sufficient evidence to justify a remand for a week, and then Mr Clarke would no doubt see what could be done to get her away from the man with whom she had been living.

It was stated that Mr Clarke was at Winsford Petty Sessions, and the Superintendent promised the magistrates that he would communicate with him and explain to him the circumstances of the case. The woman, he said, was in the unfortunate position of having no friends to take her part.

**JOHNSON'S EVIDENCE** Arthur Johnson said he was a labourer, and lived at School Bank, Weaverham. He met the accused about two years ago, when she was in service at Acton Bridge. He struck up a friendship with her, and after a time they went to reside with his sister as man and wife.

The witness here interposed the remark that she had told him she was a single woman.

Continuing, he said he afterwards found out she was a married woman. He left her and went to live with his parents, and she proceeded to a situation in Altrincham.

Asked if he visited her there, the witness answered, "It was because I had to, nearly. She followed me about".

Superintendent Johnson : But you did visit her there?

Witness : Yes.

And afterwards she came to Greenbank? Yes.

And you visited her there? Yes.

About four months ago did she come to reside with you at your parents' house? Yes. She came for a week and she stayed on.

Mr Brandrith : You knew then she was a married woman?

The witness was proceeding to make a statement, when the Deputy Clerk (Mr H J Ford) said, "Don't make speeches. Just answer the questions".

Mr Brandrith repeated his question, and the witness answered, "Yes".

Further questioned by Superintendent Johnson, witness said on August 1<sup>st</sup> the prisoner wrote a letter to her sister-in-law. She showed it to him, and there was some trouble over it, and she smacked his

face.

Superintendent Johnson : Then was there a difference between you and her? Witness : Yes.

Did she say anything to you yesterday morning? She asked me what was between me and her, and I told her I had finished with her altogether.

He (witness) did not see her leave the house, nor was he present when she was brought back from the pit.

PRISONER SEEN GOING TO THE PIT Alfred Johnson, father of the last witness, stated that the accused had lodged at his house for about four months, and had worked at the Refining Company's works. On Sunday morning he was sitting in the kitchen, when he saw her take her jacket and leave the house.

Superintendent Johnson : Has your son and her been living as man and wife? Witness : They have been living with my daughter.

Superintendent Johnson : But you know they have been living as man and wife? Witness : Not at my house.

Superintendent Johnson : No, but at your daughter's? Witness : Yes.

Superintendent Johnson : You knew that before they came to your house.

The witness hesitated, and the Deputy Clerk told him to answer the question.

Superintendent Johnson : Didn't you know before the prisoner came to lodge at your house that they had been living at your daughter's as man and wife? Witness : Yes, sir.

Continuing, the witness said he did not know until the previous day that there had been any trouble between the two, and he had not inquired what the difference was about. When the prisoner left the house he went into the back garden, because he was told she had gone up the field. He saw her by the pit, and he stood watching her until she disappeared down the slope leading to the pit. He then went along the road and met Mr Ellis, and asked him to order the prisoner out of the field.

Superintendent Johnson : Evidently you had it in your mind she was going to do something to herself. Witness : Yes, I was afraid so. The witness went on to state that he saw Mr Ellis assist her out of the mud, and she said she would have been done for if her feet had not stuck.

Mr Brandrith : When you saw her at the side of the pit, you didn't go to her. You went to find someone else? Witness : I don't know.

Superintendent Johnson : Just answer the question "yes" or "no", and never mind fencing.

Mr Brandrith : You saw her at the side of the pit and, instead of going to her, you went to find someone else. How long would it be before you went back again? Witness : I went down myself and saw Mr Ellis.

Mr Brandrith : But you went to see Mr Ellis, you say, to order her out of the field? Witness : He was coming out of church.

Mr William Ellis of Handford Brook Farm, Gorstage, gave evidence to the effect that as he was returning from church on Sunday morning, he met Alfred Johnson and, in consequence of what he said to him, he proceeded to one of his fields. Johnson went in front of him, and as he entered the field, Johnson was returning from the direction of the pit, and he put up his hand and beckoned him. Witness proceeded to the pit and found the woman standing by the side of the water, her feet having become fast in the mud and clay. He assisted her out, and advised Johnson to look after her and take her home.

Mr Brandrith : You don't know whether Johnson had made any attempt to get her out before you got there? Witness : He left the pit when he saw where she was. I was in the highway, and he beckoned me to go towards him. The pit slopes down very considerably, and anyone at the side of the water would be hidden from view.

Mr Brandrith : But if any person had gone there prior to yourself, they would have had the same opportunity to get her out? Witness : Yes.

Superintendent Johnson : That is my point. If Mr Ellis could assist her out, so could Johnson.

STATEMENT TO THE POLICE OFFICER PC Niddrie deposed to receiving information of the occurrence, and seeing the prisoner. On asking her what all the bother was about, she answered, "I have nothing to live for". She seemed very depressed, and was crying. He saw her again later in

the afternoon, and she repeated that she had nothing to live for, and added, "Arthur says that he has finished with me". On being charged at Northwich Police Station with attempted suicide, she made no reply.

Superintendent Johnson formally applied for a remand until next Monday, and said that meanwhile he would communicate with Mr Clarke in order to try and do something for the woman.

In remanding the prisoner to Strangeways, the Chairman said the magistrates wished her to be cared for and kept under medical observation. At the adjourned hearing, they would like to know something of her character when she was living with her husband.

Mr Brandrith remarked that he would probably have more to say on the next occasion.

As the prisoner was being removed from the dock, she cried pitifully.

## **55 7 September 1915**

### RIVER FATALITY

**BOATMAN DROWNED AT ATHERTON'S QUAY** An inquest will be held at Warrington today into the circumstances attending the death of **William Law**, aged 19, of 3 Pitt Street, Widnes, mate of the flat *Cayman*, who was drowned in the river Mersey at Atherton's Quay, Warrington, on Saturday.

At 10.15 Law was on board the barge *Sankey*, leaning against a small rail along the side. He was talking to another man on the quay, and offering him threepence to "pump out" the barge. It is understood that the captain of the *Sankey* came up from the hold, and seeing Law with the threepence, jokingly made a grab at it. The rail gave way and both men fell into the water. Law sank immediately. His body was recovered an hour later. The captain of the *Sankey* was rescued.

## **56 28 September 1915**

### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

**BAD ATTENDANCE** For having failed to send their children to school regularly, the following were fined :- **Thomas Clutton**, canal boat.

## **57 5 October 1915**

### RUNCORN PETTY SESSIONS

**OBSCENE LANGUAGE** **George Tranter**, boatman, was fined 7s 6d for having used obscene language, the Chairman remarking that the Bench could not allow the ears of the public to be polluted by such utterances. **Henry Jones**, boatman of Wellington Street, was fined 7s 6d for a similar offence.

## **58 8 October 1915**

**RUNCORN BARGEMEN ENLIST** During the week between 16 and 20 tugboatmen, canal porters and bargemen belonging to Runcorn have enlisted for transport work, and left Runcorn on Wednesday morning. Several more are to go on Saturday, and another batch next week. The men are all thoroughly experienced in the handling of canal traffic. They are receiving from 3s per day upwards, with a clothing allowance and a separation allowance for their wives.

## **59 19 October 1915**

### PRICKED A PIMPLE

**WINSFORD MAN'S DEATH FROM BLOOD POISONING** Mr H C Yates and a jury, of which Mr Councillor Connellan was foreman, held an inquest at the Albert Infirmary, Winsford, on Saturday, relative to the death of a salt lofter named James Green, who died in the institution the previous day from blood poisoning. **Robert Davies**, waterman, 366 High Street, stated that deceased was his father-in-law and was 53 years old. On August 25<sup>th</sup> about 10 am, he complained of a pimple on the finger on his right hand which pained him. He pricked the pimple with a needle and bathed it in hot water, afterwards putting some Vaseline on. He was called back to his work at one o'clock and returned again at half past five, his finger then being inflamed and painful. He

bathed it again and put Vaseline on, and worked for two days. He then sent for Dr Okell on August 30<sup>th</sup>. He was subsequently taken to the Albert Infirmary, where he had his hand removed, but death took place on Friday morning at 8 o'clock. He did not complain of his finger before August 25<sup>th</sup>.

Miss Musgrave, matron, stated that deceased was admitted to the hospital on September 16<sup>th</sup> suffering from blood poisoning. He was attended by Dr Okell, and on October 2<sup>nd</sup> the forearm was amputated. It ought to have been done before, but deceased would not give his consent.

Dr Okell spoke to seeing deceased on August 30<sup>th</sup>. He had a whitlow on the right hand which, he told witness, he had pricked with a needle. The wound was then septic. He opened it and treated it with antiseptic, but the septicaemia had got a good hold. Deceased was removed to the hospital, and later the forearm was amputated. Death took place from exhaustion due to septicaemia. Deceased was a delicate man, and had arteries of a man of 90. Men in such a condition were more liable to septicaemia than healthy men.

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

## **60 29 October 1915**

**VETERAN RUNCORN MAN'S DEATH** **Mr Watton** of Albert Street, Runcorn, an old resident of the town, was found dead in his bunk on the canal boat of which he had charge on Thursday morning. He was father of the well known Runcorn NU half back, S Watton, and was very well known.

## **61 2 November 1915**

### **RUNCORN FLATMAN'S DEATH**

**THE INQUEST** At the Preston Brook Wesleyan Schoolroom on Friday, Deputy Coroner White conducted an inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of **Thomas Watton**, a flatman of Surrey Street, Runcorn, who was found dead in the cabin of his boat on Thursday morning. Mr Joseph Spruce was the foreman of the jury. Mr Ellis Gatley represented the Upper Mersey Watermen's Union.

**Elizabeth Watton** of 17 Surrey Street, Runcorn, said the deceased was her husband. He was 50 years of age and a waterman. Witness last saw him alive at seven o'clock on Wednesday morning of last week, when he was leaving the house to come to Preston Brook. He seemed to be in his usual health and made no complaint.

**Daniel Higgins**, 44 Cawdor Street, Runcorn, waterman, said he was employed on the flat *Lloyd* with the deceased. He had been working with him since Easter last. On an occasion about six or eight weeks ago the deceased said he did not feel very well. He did not describe his symptoms or make any further complaint. When they were coming up the river last Wednesday morning week, he remarked that he felt "as if he had got a bit of fresh cold". Witness last saw him alive about 9.30 that morning. About 3.30 in the afternoon, witness got up and found the deceased was not on deck. He concluded deceased had gone home. Witness attended to his duties on the flat until seven o'clock, when he went ashore. On Thursday morning, when the deceased did not turn up, witness thought he had better look in the deceased's cabin. He found him lying in bed, dead. He summoned assistance and the matter was reported to the police.

Police-constable Collier, stationed at Preston Brook, spoke to going to the flat. He found the deceased lying in a natural position in bed, partly undressed. He appeared to have been dead some hours.

Dr Bower of Stretton spoke to having made a *post mortem* examination. The body was poorly nourished. Witness thought death had taken place about 24 hours before – probably on Thursday morning. There was fatty degeneration of the heart. The lungs were extremely congested as from acute pneumonia. Witness thought the cause of death was acute pneumonia and heart failure.

In reply to the foreman, the doctor said it was quite common for people to do their work while suffering from pneumonia. Congestion of the lungs was sometimes quite painless in the case of elderly persons.

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

**62 23 November 1915**

**BAD ATTENDERS** At the Runcorn Petty Sessions on Monday, **Thomas Clutton** of the canal boat *Loretto* was fined 10s for not sending his child to school regularly. In the case of **Charles Brookes**, canal boatman, and William Robinson of Robert Street, fines of 5s each were imposed.

**63 23 November 1915**

**RUNCORN MAN MISSING** **John Bowen**, a married man residing in Loch Street, Runcorn, and employed upon a canal boat belonging to Mr C R H Harrison, has been missing since Wednesday last, and it is feared that he has been drowned. On Monday the Runcorn Grappling Corps engaged in grappling in the Alexandra Dock, Liverpool, where his boat was lying when he was seen.

**64 26 November 1915**

**RUNCORN MAN DROWNED** On Tuesday the body of a Loch Street flatman named **Bowen** was recovered from the Alexandra Dock, Bootle, by Mr W Shaw of the Runcorn Grappling Corps. He had been missing nearly a week. Bowen walked with a crutch, and would be at a disadvantage in the event of his tripping over a rope or having a similar mishap. He was a married man.

**65 21 December 1915**

**COAL STEALING CHARGE**

**CURIOUS CASE AT RUNCORN** At the Runcorn Court on Saturday, before Messrs E Imison and S D Timmins, **Joseph Jones**, **Emma Jones**, Nellie Peacock, Nellie Bagnall and **Emily Jones**, Cavendish Street, were charged with stealing and receiving 2 cwt 2 qr 24 lb of coal, the property of the Runcorn and Widnes Co-operative Society, on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr Linaker appeared for the prisoners and pleaded not guilty.

Sergeant Worthington said about three o'clock on the previous day, his attention was called by Police-constable Oakes to three women who were hurrying up Cavendish Street. He and the other officer followed them into the back yard of 17 Cavendish Street, the residence of Peacock and Bagnall, and there found three small bags of coal. They were lying on a heap of coal outside the coal place, and the heap of coal was dry and clean. He called Peacock, Bagnall and Emily Jones into the yard, and asked them if they had carried something into the yard. Peacock replied, "Yes, we have brought some coal in", and she went on to say it consisted of sweepings from the boat of which her father was the captain. The boat, she said, was at the bottom of Pig Lane, having been moved from the Co-operative Society's Wharf at Savage's Bridge.

When asked how many times she had been, she at first said twice, and afterwards said she had been three times. He asked her which bag she had had, and she said, "This one, the biggest". The coal was from the boat *Pet*, and they had taken all that was left. She further said that on the first occasion they went to the boat, they brought back about as much coal as he saw in the bags. He then spoke to Emily Jones, who said she resided on the boat of her parents, Joseph and Emma Jones. On Wednesday December 15<sup>th</sup>, she said they brought the narrow boats containing coal from Leigh to the Co-operative Society's coalyard. One of the boats, *Pet*, was discharged on Friday morning. When asked how much coal was left on the boat, she pointed to the bags and the heap of coal in the yard, and said, "Just what you can see there", and that she and Nellie Peacock and Nellie Bagnall had fetched three bags each, and that each bag contained as much coal as the bags produced. Witness asked her to whom the coal belonged, and she replied, "The Co-operative Stores". The prisoner Bagnall was then interrogated by witness, and she told very much the same story. Peacock and Emily Jones said the reason they had not emptied the bags was because it was cold.

The male prisoner then came into the yard. Witness said, "These women say you have given them this coal", and he replied, "I have given it to my daughter, Mrs Peacock". He said that the coal that witness saw was what had been left in the boat. Witness asked him if he had permission to give any coal away from the boat, and he replied, "As far as I know I have a right to give coal away to my daughter, but no one else". Emma Jones then came into the yard, and she said, "They do the

washing for us". Leaving PC Oakes with the prisoner, witness went to make further inquiries about the coal, and soon returning to the yard, he and PC Oakes filled the large sack produced with coal from the heap until the women told him he had as much as they had taken. There was then about another cwt of clean dry coal on the heap similar to that in the bags. In the four bags produced, there was a total weight of 2 cwt 2 qr 24 lb.

By Mr Linaker : The women were perfectly truthful over their statements and apparently had hidden nothing from him.

PC Oakes corroborated.

**SOCIETY MANAGER'S EVIDENCE** Walter Millar Morris, the manager of the Co-operative Society, said on December 15<sup>th</sup> he received two boats at the society's wharf, one laden with nuts and the other with cobbles. One boat was discharged on Friday. None of the prisoners had any permission to take coal away, and the boatmen had been repeatedly warned. He had also given instructions to the employees at the wharf not to allow any of the boatmen to take coal away. The coal produced was not sweepings, and even if it had been sweepings, prisoners had no right to it.

By Mr Imison : The society had their own regular dischargers, and were responsible for emptying the boats under the supervision of the foreman.

John Pendlebury, the foreman at the coalyard, spoke to the arrival and discharge of the boat in question. He himself inspected it, and there was nothing left in the boat. He had given instructions to the dischargers that no coal must be left in the boats.

By Mr Linaker : He went over every boat after discharging. He did not go into this particular boat, but looked over it from the top.

By Superintendent Owen : If any coal had been left, he must have seen it.

Charles Pownall, manager for Messrs Simpson, Davies, said the prisoners Joe and Emma Jones were employed by them. Notices had been served on all their boatpeople with regard to taking anything from the boats, but he could not swear that the prisoners had received any such notice.

By Mr Linaker : He had always found Emma and Joe Jones strictly honest, and had a very high opinion of them. It was the man's duty to clean out his boat before going for another cargo.

The Clerk : He has no authority to take anything that does not belong to him?

Witness : Oh, no.

**THE DEFENCE** Mr Linaker submitted that what had been done was simply a custom among boatpeople. It was the duty of the boatmen to clean out their boats, and they must either throw the sweepings on the canal bank or give them away, as was done in this case. It was a case in which felonious intent had not been proved, and while it was one for inquiry by the police, he submitted that it was not one for conviction. In fact he did not consider he had any case to answer, and there was no use troubling their Worships any further.

After a retirement, the Bench decided there was a case to answer, and Mr Linaker called the prisoner Joe Jones, who said he was the captain of the boats *Dot* and *Pet*. He brought them laden with coal to the Co-operative Society's Wharf and they were discharged by the Society's own men. When the boat had been discharged, he moved it away to the Pig Lane Wharf, where it was swept up. It was his duty to keep his boats clean. In this case, he told his daughter she could take the coal away which had been swept up. He had no intention of doing anything wrong, and all that was done was done openly and in full daylight. The coal was up against the cabin end of the boat when he left it.

Superintendent Owen : Who gives you permission to use the coal belonging to the Co-operative Society?

Prisoner : Well, we carry it. We can't afford to buy it and carry it at the same time.

Superintendent Owen : Does anyone give you permission?

Prisoner : They don't tell us to burn it.

Superintendent Owen : I put it to you that some of the coal went from the boat when it was at the wharf.

Prisoner : Nothing of the kind.

Superintendent Owen : Did you say to the constable, "It is the first time I have been in anything like

this, and I'll take good care it's the last".

Prisoner : Yes. If I get "shut" of this it will not occur again.

By Mr Imison : They generally kept enough coal on board the boat to carry them another trip in the event of the cargo being other than coal.

The magistrates decided to dismiss the case, and all the prisoners were discharged.

Superintendent Owen asked for instructions as to the coal.

The Clerk : The magistrates have decided that it has not been stolen, so it must belong to the prisoners.

Mr Morris : But it is our coal.

Superintendent Owen : The magistrates say it is not.

## **66 24 December 1915**

### **BOATMAN'S DAUGHTER**

**PROBLEM OF CHILD LABOUR AT NANTWICH** At the Nantwich Petty Sessions on Monday, before Mr E R Bellyse and other magistrates, **John Howard**, boatman, Poole, Nantwich, was summoned under the Education Act for the non attendance of his child **Agnes**, aged 12 years one month, at school.

Mr A O Bevan, who appeared for the defence, said that the case had been adjourned for a month in order to see if the child was sent to school in the meantime, and to ascertain if there was any legal argument in support of the child not going to school. Mr Bevan added that the child had not been to school. The facts of the case were admitted, and the only question was a question of law. The father was a canal boatman in the employ of Messrs Chesworth and Sons, coal merchants, Nantwich, and it was admitted that the child had kept away from school since June 25<sup>th</sup> to the present time, and she was in the fifth or sixth standard.

Defendant had five other children. He had had in his employ a man named **Allen**, who enlisted at the beginning of May. From May until June 25<sup>th</sup> defendant did not work, and could not work his canal boat, having no labour. From June 25<sup>th</sup>, the child was employed on the boat, and it was for defendant to show that they acted with reason in keeping the child from school. Mr Bevan proceeded to explain that with no one to assist in working the boat, the family would be in the direst poverty, and that position would arise if the child were sent to school. That, he held, was a reasonable excuse.

He cited the law on the question, and put forward the statutory excuses for a child not attending school, and pointed out that while they did not claim under any of these, the magistrates had power to accept any other excuse which they might deem to be reasonable.

The child, he said, was kept from school in order that mother and other members of the family should not suffer physical discomfort. They would be in the direst poverty if the child was prevented from rendering such service as would enable the father to earn money. He submitted in the circumstances that they were not acting unreasonably in keeping the child from school. The father would otherwise not be able to earn a penny, and there would not be a bit of coal in Ravensmoor and Burland, as it was brought entirely by boat.

The Chairman : Why cannot anyone else go?

Mr Bevan : You cannot get the labour. Boats are laid up along the waterway from here to Tunstall.

Mr Kane (school attendance officer) said that the man was not compelled to follow that particular employment. There was other work he could do.

**DEFENDANT'S PLEA** The defendant was called, and said his youngest child was seven months old. In order to work a canal boat, it was necessary to have two persons, one to steer and the other to take charge of the horse. The child rode on the horse's back while he steered the boat. He had made every effort to get another hand to work the boat, and could get neither man nor boy. He had applied at four workhouses without success. His employers had endeavoured to assist him, but they had been unsuccessful.

In reply to Mr Kane, defendant said he had made no effort to obtain other employment. It would not do for him to leave his boat after following that employment for so many years.

Mr T Hall, one of the firm of Chesworth and Sons, said after defendant had lost his assistant they endeavoured to find another for him, and in spite of numerous inquiries they had not succeeded. It was not any man that could do that class of work.

Mr Brocklebank : Yet you get a child to do it.

Mr Hall : But not the work that a man would do. His work, he proceeded, was to help with the loading and unloading. If the child had not gone, defendant would have been out of work. The firm advised him to take the child to look after the horse, and they employed extra men to load and unload. It was now impossible to get a man. There were scores of boats tied up. The girl did not do manual work. The boatman could not steer unless he had someone to work the horse. As soon as they could get a man or boy, the girl could be dispensed with. They were doing their best. Howard, in ordinary circumstances, was responsible for finding his own help.

Mr Kane suggested that the girl had taken a man's place, but witness said that she was not doing a man's work. His firm went to considerable expense in providing the extra labour.

An order was made for the child to attend school at Worleston after the Christmas holidays.

Mr Bevan gave formal notice of appeal.

## **67      28 December 1915**

**BOATMEN'S FISTICUFFS**      **Stephen Jennings**, employed on the canal boat *Elizabeth*, was charged at the Runcorn Police Court on Friday with committing a breach of the peace by fighting at Weston Point so long ago as October 26<sup>th</sup>. The evidence of PC Passey was that the prisoner fought with another boatman who had since been convicted. He was summoned but did not appear, and a warrant was issued. Prisoner was bound over to be of good behaviour for six months, and also had the privilege of paying 7s 6d costs.