

RUNCORN GUARDIAN
1916 to 1919

1 7 January 1916

KNUTSFORD

ONLY CHANCE OF REDEMPTION **Ethel Moore** (19), a mill hand, a native of Middlewich, pleaded guilty to three charges of breaking and entering dwelling houses and stealing at Macclesfield.

A police officer said the girl, who had been under probation for twelve months, was of a roving disposition, and never remained long in a situation. Her father was a respectable boatman.

The Chairman said the only thing which could redeem her was to send her to a Borstal Institution, where she could be taught a trade. She would be detained in a Borstal Institution for three years, and one day on each other indictment.

2 11 January 1916

YOUNG LADY'S SAD DEATH

BODY RECOVERED FROM THE RIVER

INQUEST STORY AT NORTHWICH The circumstances of the mysterious disappearance of a young Northwich dressmaker, Miss Gladys Marshall of Castle – who had been missing for nearly five weeks – formed the subject of an inquiry conducted by Mr H C Yates, coroner, and a jury of which Mr M Conneeley was the foreman, at the Police Station on Friday afternoon. Her body had been recovered from the river Weaver on Wednesday morning.

DISCOVERY OF THE BODY **James Cowley**, a lock-keeper at Hunt's lock, stated that on Wednesday morning about nine o'clock, a man came to him and told him there was something in the water. He went to look, and saw an object in the water against the boom – a piece of wood which crosses the old river Weaver. There was also a dog's body near it. With the aid of a hook he got the dog away, and then recovered the body of a young woman. Just at the time, the Barnton Grappling Corps was about to commence dragging operations, and with their aid he got the body on the bank. It was fully dressed. He knew that Miss Marshall was missing, but did not know her.

BROTHER-IN-LAW'S EVIDENCE William Joseph Young, a private telegraphist residing at 12 David Street, Castle, identified the body as that of his sister-in-law. She was 23 years of age and her home was at Ashford in Kent. She had lived with his wife and himself since August, and was a dressmaker on her own account. The last time he saw her alive was on December 4th about 2.30 pm. She asked him if he wanted to go out, because if he did not, she wanted to go into the town and also to see Mrs Yarwood of Greenbank, for whom she had been doing some work. He told her he did not want to go out, and she then left the house. He did not see her take an umbrella. He expected her back to tea.

The Coroner : Your wife was doing good work for the Red Cross Society, so there was only yourself at home at the time?

Witness : Yes. Proceeding, he said he became anxious as Miss Marshall had not returned at 8.20, and he then began to make inquiries, but without result. He went to Mrs Moore's on Castle Hill, and found she had been there but had left. He was aware an umbrella had been borrowed from Mrs Moores.

The Coroner : Was she cheerful?

Witness : Always a most cheerful girl.

The Coroner : And liked this part of the world – was not fretting about home?

Witness : That is so.

The Coroner : Was she progressing with her dressmaking?

Witness : She was establishing a nice little connection.

The Coroner : Was she quite cheerful when you last saw her?

Witness : Yes.

NO LOVE AFFAIR The Coroner : Was she in love or was there any engagement?

Witness : No.

The Coroner : Is there any insanity in the family?

Witness : No, I have never heard of any.

CHEERFUL WHEN LAST SPOKEN TO Mrs Moore of 37 Castle Hill, said she had known the deceased since August. On Saturday afternoon, December 4th, she came to her house, and brought back an umbrella, which witness lent to her sister the day before. She did not enter the house, but simply gave her the umbrella and thanked her.

The Coroner : Was she cheerful?

Witness : Yes, very cheerful.

The Coroner : Did she say where she was going?

Witness : Yes, in town.

The Coroner : Had she a mackintosh on?

Witness : Yes.

The Coroner : When you have conversed with her have you ever noticed whether she had any trouble or anything?

Witness : She was always bright and cheerful.

CONSTABLE'S EVIDENCE PC Williams said he had the body removed from the river bank to the mortuary. It was properly dressed and the hat was on. On searching the clothing, he found a purse containing 1s 3 1/2d, and a pocket handkerchief.

The Coroner said the police had found another witness, Mrs Clarke of Vale Royal Lockhouse, and she could tell them she saw a person on December 4th walking along the riverside, dressed as Miss Marshall was described in the police report. She could not however give any further information, so he thought it was unnecessary to summon her to be present.

WHAT THE *POST MORTEM* REVEALED Dr Doonan deposed that he had made a *post mortem* examination of the body. All the marks on the body were *post mortem*. There was a large cut on the forehead, which had been done since death. All the organs of the body were quite healthy. In the absence of anything else, one could only come to the conclusion that death was due to drowning.

The Coroner : Was the brain healthy?

Witness : It was in such a state of decomposition I could not say. I was sorry to leave the body in the state I did, but the water was cut off while I was making the examination.

The Coroner : Is there any councillor on the jury, so that we can get an explanation?

The Foreman : No.

The Coroner (to the doctor) : Then death is due to asphyxiation by drowning?

Dr Doonan : Yes.

A SAD CASE The Coroner said that was the evidence, and a very sad case it seemed to be. There was a young lady quite cheerful and happy, living with her brother-in-law and sister, and establishing for herself a good dressmaking business. There was no love affair and nothing else to cloud her brain in any respect. It was a very difficult verdict to come to. Did she commit suicide? He asked questions as to the state of her mind, which was absolutely sound, and there was no insanity in the family. There was no reason which she should take her life. The question of suicide did not enter into the matter, because there was apparently no reason for it. Then, did she come by her death by accident? They were thrown back to the open verdict which was always an unpleasant one.

The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

3 8 February 1916

BOATMEN AND INSURANCE

COMPANY OR CAPTAIN RESPONSIBLE? At the Chester County Court on Friday, his Honour Judge Moss heard an appeal under the National Health Insurance Act which aroused much interest. The appeal was brought by the Shropshire Union Railway and Canal Co, against a decision of the Insurance Commissioners on an application made by **Charles Sandford** of the boat *Ella*, Chester,

and the point at issue was whether the captain or steerer of the boat or the company were liable to pay the contributions, under the Act, of Sandford, a hand employed on the *Ella*.

Mr E Owen Roberts appeared for the Canal Co, and the Insurance Commissioners were represented by Mr Comyns Carr. The latter explained that he appeared not necessarily to support the view of the Commissioners, but to give his Honour any assistance on the grounds on which they arrived at their decision.

Mr Owen Roberts replied that it had been a friendly matter all through, and was to test an important principle.

For the company it was argued that they were common carriers and owners of the narrow boat *Ella*, employing as the captain or steerer of the boat **Ernest Twigg**, who was provided with horse, gear and provender for the purpose of working the boat. They paid Twigg's insurance contribution. With Twigg was engaged a hand named Charles Sandford, who assisted in the working of the boat. The payment to Twigg was recognised to be sufficient to allow him to obtain the assistance of a hand in working the boat.

The captain engaged, and alone had control over the hand, and was liable for the payment of his wages. Therefore the hand was not controlled by the company, and the captain, and not the company, was responsible for the payment of the insurance contributions of the hand. Counsel added that the difficulties facing the company if they had to collect the contributions from such a casual class would be insuperable.

For the Commissioners it was contended that the captain being the servant of the company, and therefore under their control, the company were able to exercise full control over the hand by instructions given to the captain, which he was bound to obey. The hand was engaged on the company's boat, and he was necessary for the proper working of the boat. His wages were paid out of the money provided by the company. The captain engaged the hand with the consent and authority expressed or implied of the company, and on their behalf, the hand, in law, was the servant of the company.

His Honour reserved judgement.

4 15 February 1916

BOATMEN'S "PERQUISITES"

COAL STEALING CHARGE AT RUNCORN **John and Harriet Eastup** of Ellesmere Street, Runcorn, were charged at the Runcorn Police Court on Friday with having stolen 6 1/2 cwt of coal slack from the canal boat *Four Brothers*, the property of Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co, and valued at 6s 6d.

Charles Pownall, cashier in the employ of Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co, said Eastup was employed by that firm on the boat named, and was assisted by his wife. On the 1st inst, he took charge of a cargo of slack at Marsland Green for the United Alkali Co at Wigg's Works, Runcorn. The slack belonged to Eastup's employers, and he had instructions to deliver it to Wigg's Works, where it was weighed and paid for by weight. He was supposed to deliver all the slack that was in the flat, and had no authority to take any away. On December 23rd, witness served a copy of a notice produced to the female prisoner, and pointed out it prohibited boatpeople taking away any coal or slack. The coal produced to witness at the Police Station was worth 6s 6d.

Eastup : You know that it was always the rule before this new Order came out for boatmen to have all the coal that was left in the boat?

Witness : No, I don't.

POLICE EVIDENCE Sergeant Worthington said that at eight o'clock on Thursday morning he was on the canal bank between Nelson Street and the Sprinch Works, when he saw Eastup with a handcart laden with bags of slack. His flat was alongside the canal bank, and the woman was on board talking to her husband. Immediately witness came in sight, she moved to the tiller and the boat started away. Eastup, assisted by a young man, commenced pushing the handcart in the direction of his home in Ellesmere Street. Witness stopped him and asked him where he had got the slack from. He replied, "Out of my flat. I am captain and it is the sweepings left on the bottom".

He said he was taking it home.

In reply to questions, he admitted that his wife had been served with a copy of the warning notice. He had not, he said, "signed his hand to anything". After taking him to the Police Station, witness met the woman, and she said, when questioned, "We have a right to take the slack out of the boat". She admitted that she had been served with a copy of a notice regarding the matter two months ago. Neither of the prisoners had any statement to make to the Court.

In reply to the magistrate, witness said the coal was not "sweepings", but really good slack, and more in the nature of what was called "nuts".

DEFENDANT'S STORY Eastup said he "reckoned he had better plead guilty to taking it". It was stuff that was left on the bottom of the flat by the dischargers at Wigg's Works, and if he had not swept it up and put it into the bags, it would have been covered up by the cinders with which the flat was subsequently loaded. He had been going down to Wigg's Works for 43 years, and that was the first time he had ever been inside a court, or had any stain on his character. There was always a bit of coal left in the boats.

Superintendent Owen said that both the man and the woman bore excellent characters.

In reply to the Chairman, Mr Pownall said that the prisoners should have delivered all the slack they had on board.

Mr Posnett : But if the men at Wigg's refuse 6 1/2 cwt, it shows great carelessness on their part.

Mr Pownall : They are instructed to deliver all they take on board.

The Chairman (Alderman A R Norman) : Has it not been a practice, in years gone by, for the boatpeople to have the "sweepings"?

Mr Pownall : No, sir. Besides, this was not "sweepings" but the best of slack.

Mr Posnett : If Wigg's men leave it there, what is to become of it?

Mr Pownall : Eastup should have delivered it, or pointed it out to the men.

The Chairman : If the people who empty the boats see that they are emptied, there would be no temptation.

Mr Pownall : If they had delivered this 6 1/2 cwt, Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co would have been credited with the amount.

The Chairman said the Bench had decided to take a lenient view of the case. The prisoners would be allowed to go on payment of 15s costs. It must be a warning to them for the future.

5 22 February 1916

BOATMEN AND INSURANCE

JUDGEMENT IN TEST CASE His Honour Judge Moss has given judgement in an important appeal test case brought by the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Co against the National Insurance Commissioners, who held that the appellants were the proper persons to pay the national health insurance contribution of a man employed on the canal boat *Ella*.

The company's case was that the man was not directly in their employ, but was employed by the steerer, who was the only person responsible to the company.

The Commissioners held that the hand was engaged on the company's boat, and he was necessary for the proper working of the boat. The company received the benefit of his labour, and his wages were paid out of the money provided by the company.

His Honour, basing his decision on a similar case at Wicklow, Ireland, where the County Court Judge held that the captain was the agent of the owners for the purpose of procuring the necessary hands for the working of a vessel, held that the Commissioners were right and the appeal must be dismissed.

Leave to appeal was granted.

6 10 March 1916

FIRE AT RUNCORN At 4.30 on Thursday morning a boatman passing Top Locks, Runcorn, saw smoke coming from the premises of Messrs S Crosby and Sons. He raised an alarm, and it was found that a fire was in progress in one corner of the milling room. Mr Warburton of the Derby

Arms obtained access to the premises, and with buckets of water got the blaze extinguished almost before the arrival of the brigade, who turned out very smartly. The damage done was comparatively trifling, the timely discovery of the fire being most fortunate. The outbreak is supposed to have originated in a dustbin.

7 21 March 1916

PERMITTING DRUNKENNESS

RUNCORN LICENSEE FINED The Runcorn Bench were asked to say, at Monday's Petty Sessions, that a man who was drunk in the parade room of the Police Station at 9.15 at night was not necessarily drunk in the bar at a public house half an hour earlier. The Bench did not express any opinion on the proposition, but found the facts of the case proved.

Thomas Anderton, the licensee of the New Inn, High Street, Runcorn, was summoned for permitting drunkenness on his licensed premises on March 9th at 8.15 p m.

Mr A Browne (Warrington) represented the defendant, and pleaded not guilty.

THE POLICE CASE Superintendent Owen said that at 8.45 p m on Thursday, Sergeant Worthington and PC Wareing visited the New Inn, High Street, Runcorn. When they entered the bar, they found the defendant in charge, and they noticed that he moved quickly to the other end of the bar. He also moved his head and hands as if he was ordering someone out of the house. The bar was divided into two compartments, and on opening the door separating the two places, the sergeant found the licensee directing his attention to a man named **William Barber**. This man was staggering about the bar, and was drunk. In the presence of the licensee, the sergeant said to him, "What have you been drinking?" He replied, "A glass of whisky". The sergeant then asked who had served him, and the licensee replied, "I have served him, sergeant". The sergeant pointed out to him that the man was drunk, and he said, "I don't think so sergeant. He is all right." While this conversation was going on, Barber was staggering about the bar trying to find the latch of the door. The sergeant held the door open for him and he went out, supporting himself by the door posts. He also staggered about when outside, but his wife and another woman each caught hold of one of his arms, and offered to take care of him. The sergeant consented, and allowed him to go in their charge. The licensee and PC Wareing followed them some little distance. Shortly afterwards, the sergeant went in the same direction, and saw Barber turn into Lowland Road. There was then no one with him, and he bumped into the wall and staggered across the footpath, afterwards falling into the gate of the Co-operative Society's wharf. For his own safety, the sergeant decided to take him into custody.

A DOCTOR CALLED The man was placed in the cells. At 9.15 the licensee came to the Police Station, in company with Dr McDonnell, and the licensee requested that the doctor should be allowed to examine Barber. This was agreed to, and the man was brought out of the cells into the parade room. As soon as he looked at him, the doctor said, "I have seen enough. There is no mistake about him being drunk". He then said to the man, "What have you been doing?" He replied, "I have been getting drunk". The doctor then smelled Barber's breath, and said, "You have been drinking whisky – I can smell it". The licensee said, "I admit serving him with two whiskies. I went out to see if he was all right. I have been deceived. It is the first time I have made a mistake in 25 years".

Evidence would be called to show that Barber went into the New Inn between eight o'clock and the time of the sergeant's visit, and that he was served on two occasions. The Superintendent added, "It is really the worst case of permitting drunkenness I have ever had to do with. His condition was so apparent that it seemed utterly impossible for the licensee not to have noticed it. He appears not to have taken the care he should have taken, and the care which the Licensing Act says he must take, to prevent drunkenness on his premises".

THE EVIDENCE Sergeant Worthington gave evidence bearing out this statement.

Mr Browne strongly objected to witness reading from his notebook, but the Clerk held that he was entitled to refresh his memory from the book.

Witness said that Dr McDonnell made the remark that to smell a man's breath was no test, because

if he had been ill he might have been given whisky.

Mr Browne : You will admit that there is a moment when a man first shows signs of drink?

Witness : I don't think it comes on suddenly. He does not collapse at once.

Mr Browne : No. A drunken man does not always collapse. It depends whether he is drunk in the head or in the legs. There is a moment when he is sober, and a moment when he becomes the worse for drink.

In further reply, witness said that Barber did not say that he was actually going out of the house as witness entered. Witness did not know that Barber suffered from rheumatism in his knees and had done for many years. When the defendant said, "He is all right", witness did not say, "I think he is staggering". It was true that the audience was coming out of the Empress Hall at the time, and that Barber had to thread his way through the crowd. Witness had seen a man named Carman, who was in the house at the same time as Barber, and taken his statement, but he did not propose to produce that statement.

Mr Browne appealed to the Bench to call for the statement.

Superintendent Owen said that it was not taken in the presence of the licensee, and was therefore not evidence.

Mr Browne said he would have no hesitation in advising his client to apply for a *mandamus* for the production of the statement.

The Magistrates' Clerk suggested that the witness might say what Carman thought of Barber's condition.

Witness replied that Carman said, "I could not say that Barber was perfectly sober".

By Superintendent Owen : Witness had not previously heard that Barber suffered from rheumatism in the knees, but that did not alter the fact of his condition that night.

Police-constable Wareing gave corroborative evidence. The licensee said to him, "He is not so bad". Witness said, "He is staggering about a lot", and the licensee then remarked, "He is not interfering with anybody".

Detective-sergeant Davies spoke to seeing Barber in the cells. He was very drunk and quite unable to stand. Witness corroborated as to what took place when Dr McDonnell called with the licensee. The doctor said that the man was drunk.

Elizabeth Barber, wife of the man referred to, said she saw her husband have one whisky in the house, but that he was not drunk. She denied that she got hold of his arm outside to prevent him from falling.

By Mr Browne : Her husband had never been summoned for being drunk previously.

Emma Sidwell, wife of Richard Sidwell, a niece of the man Barber, spoke to being in the house when the police arrived. She could not say if her uncle was then sober, or had had too much to drink.

By Mr Browne : She thought he was fit to be served. He had rheumatism in his knees, and she had seen him stagger worse than he did that night when he had had no drink at all.

Ann Cotton, wife of Thomas Hugh Cotton of Brook Street, and sister to Mrs Barber, said she was also in the house when Barber and his wife came in. She and her sister got hold of his arm as he left to help him to go to Top Locks, where his boat was lying.

Asked if Barber was sober, witness said she thought he was "betwixt and between". She could not say that he was drunk. She had seen him worse than he was that night many a time.

Superintendent Owen bore out on oath the statement he had made as to what happened at the Police Station. When the man was brought out for the doctor to examine, he was falling all over the place. Witness was afraid he would hurt himself.

In reply to Mr Browne, witness said that a statement was taken from the man when he was released on bail next morning.

Mr Browne : I never heard of such a thing. Is this a Star Chamber? What was the object of it?

Superintendent Owen said it was customary to take a statement under such circumstances, but it was not intended to use it against the man.

THE DEFENCE Mr Browne called the defendant, who said he had had long experience as a

licensee, and endeavoured to conduct his house properly. He was personally conducting the trade of the bar when Barber came into the house on the evening in question. Witness had reduced his whisky in strength in accordance with the new regulations of the Licensing Board sanctioning this procedure. It would be weaker whisky than that sold up to a few weeks ago. There was no sign of drunkenness about the man when he was served.

He denied that he had motioned for Barber to leave the house when the police came in. Barber was just leaving the house at that moment, and said "Good night" to witness. When he got outside, Sergeant Worthington said that Barber was drunk. Witness said that he was not. Witness followed, with PC Wareing, after the man as he was going to his boat. He walked in the middle of the road, and witness remarked to Wareing, "There is nothing wrong with him. He goes without any assistance". Witness did not see him bump into the wall or into the gate mentioned. Wareing said that he staggered a bit. Witness replied that anyone might stagger, and that he was "all right" and wanted no assistance. When witness got to the Police Station with the doctor, he noticed a vast change in the condition of the man.

Superintendent Owen : Do you wish the magistrates to believe that the man was sober in your house at a quarter to nine o'clock, and that soon after a quarter past nine he was helplessly drunk?

Witness : He was all right on my premises.

I submit that the man was helplessly drunk on your premises. No, no, I say not.

Did he add any more water to his whisky? That I could not say.

Mr Browne : It was a hot whisky. A man might be perfectly sober at one moment and then become under the influence of drink at once, and without having any more drink.

Barber went into the box, and said he had suffered from rheumatism in the knees for four or five years. On the day in question, he had come from Manchester in very rough weather. After putting up his horse, he went into the Waterloo Hotel and had a glass of hot whisky. Later he had another at the Masonic Arms. He then went to the New Inn, and was served with a glass of whisky hot by the defendant. Mr Anderton did not motion to him to go out, or tell him to go out. Witness was not drunk, and remembered all that happened when the sergeant and constable came in. He also remembered the doctor seeing him at the Police Station. He had been employed for 21 years by the Salt Union, and for seven years by Messrs Simpson, Davies and Co, and there had not been any complaint against him during that time.

George Carman of Hope Street, Runcorn, a boatman, said he was conversing with Barber in the New Inn on the night in question, prior to the arrival of the police. Barber was talking quite sensibly to him. Barber was about to leave the house just as the police came in. Witness did not think that he was drunk, and considered that he was quite capable of going to his boat alone. Witness could see he was "sober in a manner of speaking". He had had a drink. Witness had known him for twenty years.

John W Gibson, greengrocer of Devonshire Square, said he was in the New Inn at the same time as Barber. In his opinion Mr Anderton was justified in serving him. He personally would have served him had he been the licensee of the house. The sergeant said to him, "You are drunk". Barber appeared to be surprised, and said that he was not drunk. Witness was a casual customer at the house.

In reply to the Superintendent, he denied he was a regular customer, and Mr Browne protested against the insinuation.

Addressing the Bench, Mr Browne said it did not matter if Barber was drunk at the Police Station, and the defendant was not liable for his condition half an hour after he had left his premises. The question was if he was drunk at the time he was in the house, and sufficiently drunk for the landlord to be able to see his condition. Permitting did not take place in a minute. Mr Anderton knew the importance of conducting a house properly. He was a member of an old Runcorn family, and had been a licensee for 25 years, and it was not likely that he would risk his reputation for the sale of a sixpenny glass of whisky. Four glasses of whisky might seem to the Bench to be a large amount, but four glasses today were not what they were six weeks ago. Licensees were now allowed to dilute their whisky 25 per cent to 50 per cent, and this whisky was diluted in accordance with the

new scale. Not one of the independent witnesses called for the prosecution would say that the man was drunk when on the licensed premises. There was a difference of opinion, and the defendant was entitled to the benefit of the doubt.

CONVICTION RECORDED The Bench retired to consider their decision and were absent for some time. Upon their return, the Chairman (Alderman Norman) said they considered the case proved. They had hesitated in coming to their decision on the ground of the excellent character of the tenant, who had been known to them for a good many years, and who had had 25 years in the trade. In view of the serious condition of the country, and the warnings that had been recently issued, they felt that they could do no other than impose a fine of 40s.

Upon the application of Superintendent Owen, witnesses' fees were allowed.

BARBER FINED William Barber was then charged with having been drunk and incapable on the occasion in question. He pleaded not guilty.

Sergeant Worthington gave evidence, and a fine of 5s was imposed.

8 24 March 1916

RABBIT TRAPS AND SHEEPSKIN

THEFT CHARGE AT RUNCORN At a Special Court at Runcorn on Saturday, before Alderman A R Norman (chairman) and Mr E Imison, **J Povey**, a boatman, and **Walter Povey**, his son, were charged with stealing 16 rabbit traps and a sheepskin, of the value of £2 2s, the property of John Dufton, sheep dealer of Stockton Heath.

John McGreal, a shepherd in the employ of the complainant, stated that on Sunday the 12th March he went to Astmoor Marsh, and inspected a hut which he used as a store house. The contents included 20 rabbit traps and a dried sheepskin. When he went to the hut again two days later, he found that the lock of the door had been forced, and upon going inside he saw that sixteen rabbit traps and the sheepskin had disappeared. As he was unable to see anything of the things outside the hut, he gave information to the police.

Detective Sergeant Davies gave evidence of receiving information of the theft at 10.30 am on Tuesday and of going to the hut, which he found as described by last witness. He noticed several clog marks, and took an impression of them. Hearing that the prisoner had been seen in the vicinity of the hut, he made inquiries, and later went to Leigh, where he met the prisoner in the street. Witness told him what he was inquiring about, that he was in possession of certain information, and that he wanted the whole truth from him. Prisoner hesitated for a time, and then said, "I put the traps in the canal near the hut ; there would be half a dozen of them or more. My lad was with me at the time. Sunday afternoon". Later the same day, witness saw the younger prisoner in his father's presence. He admitted that he was with his father on the Sunday afternoon, but denied that he went right up to the hut. He said that his father put the rabbit traps into the canal. Both prisoners were taken to the Runcorn Police Station and made no reply when charged. On Thursday witness and McGreal dragged the canal with a rake. They recovered all the missing traps, but did not find the sheepskin.

The elder prisoner pleaded guilty to the theft of the traps, but not of the sheepskin, which he said he had not seen.

He was sent to prison for two months.

The younger prisoner was discharged with a caution.

9 4 April 1916

FOUND DROWNED

WIDNES FLATMAN'S FATE At Widnes Police Station on Monday, Mr F A Jones, deputy coroner, conducted an inquest on the body of **Henry Herbert Foster**, aged 35, flatman, who was found drowned on Friday in the Widnes and St Helen's Canal.

Thomas William Foster, a brother, said the deceased was a single man, and at weekends stayed at his (witness's) house. The last time he saw him was on Saturday 18th March. Some days later he heard he was missing, and gave information to the police.

John Hughes, 6 Alcock Street, Runcorn, captain of the Runcorn and Widnes Grappling Corps, said he received information that the deceased was supposed to have been drowned in the canal, and on Friday last he and four others commenced dragging operations. A short time afterwards they found the deceased, about 40 yards distant from the flat *Sarah*, upon which he was in the habit of sleeping. **Richard Kenwright**, a flatman, said he had no fixed abode, and slept on the flat *Sarah*. The deceased, when in Widnes, slept with him. On Saturday evening March 21st, he left Widnes to buy some soap and to pay for some papers. In order to board the flat *Sarah*, he would have to cross the flat *Julia*.

William Cooper, assistant manager for William Cooper and Sons, flat owners, said the deceased had been employed by them, but not on the flat *Sarah*. He had no permission to sleep there, and had been warned not to do so.

Henry Devonport, newsagent, Church Street, said the deceased called at his shop on the night of March 21st, and left after paying for some papers. He was quite sober. It was very dark.

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned.

10 16 June 1916

NORTHWICH SOLICITOR'S CLERK'S DEATH We regret to record the death of Mr Alfred Atherton, who for nearly 40 years had been a clerk in the office of Messrs A and J E Fletcher, solicitors, Northwich. He was 54 years of age and was a native of Winsford, being a son of the late **Mr Atherton**, a well known waterman, who was for many years the captain of the Salt Union's steamer *Argosy*.

11 14 July 1916

COOPER STREET MAN IN HOSPITAL Mrs Russell of 36 Cooper Street, Runcorn, has received a field card from her elder son, stating that he has been admitted into hospital and will write later. The nature of his wounds is not stated, but he states that he is going on all right. Private **George Russell** is the elder of two sons of Mrs Russell who are serving their King and country in France, and both have been together in the same company until George fell wounded. Private George Russell is 21 years of age, and joined the Cheshires in March 1915, and was drafted out to the front in March of last year. Before joining up he followed the calling of a waterman. He was connected with the Camden Wesleyan Church.

12 18 July 1916

"AIRING HIS VIEWS"

RUNCORN BOATMAN SMARTLY FINED The lesson that the liberty of speech which is the right of every Englishman must not be abused as this time of turmoil was smartly impressed upon **Leonard Sinnott**, New Street, captain of a canal boat, at Runcorn Sessions on Monday.

Sinnott was summoned for making statements likely to cause disaffection amongst his Majesty's subjects at Runcorn on July 5th. Proceedings were taken under one of the sections of the Defence of the Realm Act.

Superintendent Owen said that on the date in question, between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning, defendant was working on canal boats near the Highfield Tannery. He was seen talking to four other men, and was overheard to say that "our men have done the same as the Germans have done", and he asked the other men how much better they would be for going to France and coming back without an arm or a leg. Mr J G Davies, contractor of Frodsham, who was on the canal bank, heard the remarks and went to the man and asked him how it was that he was not in khaki. He replied, "I have more common sense – that is the reason. They can put you in a suit of khaki but they can't make you fight. I have more sense". Mr Davies told him he would report the matter to the police.

Mr Davies gave evidence bearing out this statement. He asked the defendant if he was sticking up for the Germans. He replied, "No, but our men have done the same as the Germans". Witness told him he would report him, and he replied that would do him no harm nor no good.

Defendant said he was only talking to one man, and he said there was good and bad in every nationality. Mr Davies interrupted him, and asked him if he was a German. He replied that he was not, but he liked to look at both sides of the question. Mr Davies told him he should only look at one. He also told Mr Davies that he would choose to go into the Navy when he was called up.

James Cavanagh, Percival Lane, captain of the flat *Elm*, spoke to being present when Sinnott remarked that he had “better sense” than to be in khaki, and that though they could put him in khaki they could not make him fight. He also said that our soldiers were only the same as the Germans, and if they were short of food they would steal.

Joseph Clare, boatman, Irwell Lane, gave corroborative evidence, and mentioned that Sinnott said it was a “capitalists' war”.

Sergeant Nolan spoke to interviewing the defendant on the canal bank on the day in question. He told him he was making inquiries with respect to certain statements he was alleged to have made that morning. He replied, “It's like this, sergeant, it's a pity if a fellow can't speak nowadays. I was talking to a man named Cavanagh on the boat, when Mr Davies asked me whether I was a German. I told him I was not. He told me I ought to be in khaki, and I told him I had more sense, and that if I went to France and lost a leg or an arm, the Government would not compensate me. I did say something about it being a capitalists' war. I did not see the seriousness of it at the time, but I do see the seriousness of it now, and I will see that I do not repeat it again”.

Defendant said he was speaking confidentially to a man, and was remarking that there were good and bad in every nationality. He lost his temper when Mr Davies spoke to him, and said things he did not mean. He was a munitions worker, and had been working night and day for the local tanneries and other works.

A SERIOUS OFFENCE The Chairman (Mr James Pritchard) said the offence was a very serious one, and the defendant was liable to a fine of £100 or six months' imprisonment, or both. Statements likely to cause disaffection at a time like this were very grave. Having regard to the fact that this was the first case of its kind in the district, the Bench were disposed to take rather a lenient view, seeing that the defendant had possibly been irritated into saying something more than he meant. He would be fined £2 and must pay £1 witnesses' fees.

13 28 July 1916

RUNCORN OBITUARY The death has occurred this week of a well known local resident in Mr **Henry Peacock**, a retired waterman, who had lived in the Citizens' Homes for the last few years. He was 84 years of age.

14 28 July 1916



PRIVATE WARING Captain J H F and Mrs Waring, Mill Street, Runcorn, have now received the official notification of the death in action of their son, Private **Ernest Fairhurst Waring** of the King's Liverpool Regiment (Pals). The official notice stated that he was killed in action on July 1st. In a letter to the parents from a chum, Corporal Woodward, the writer, says, “I feel I must on behalf of the boys remaining in Ernie's platoon send you a few lines expressing our deepest sorrow at your sad bereavement, and to tell you also that we, pals of his, keenly feel the loss of so good a soldier

and a man. Words of ours are surely but little sympathy to you in your great loss, but it may be a little comforting to you to know how highly we thought of Ernie during our 14 months soldiering together, and that he fell fighting for his country on the opening day of the great battle, July 1st 1916. He was in my section, and I can say he was killed instantaneously by a shell along with two other pals of his. One (David Williams) was Ernie's special chum and they were always together both during the winter in the trenches and in the little pleasures away from it. It was a coincidence that both should fall together. Please accept these few words of condolence from pals who do miss him so much”.

Private Waring was the only son of Captain and Mrs Waring, and enlisted in the “Pals” in January 1915 and went out with the regiment in October last. Before enlisting, he was the captain of the tug *Cormorant* belonging to Messrs R Abel and Sons. He commenced his employment as a lightship boy and then went to the river steamers, being successively employed on the *St Winifred*, the *Bridgewater* and the *Dagmar*. Later he went to the *Cormorant* as mate, and at the early age of 20 he was given the captainship. He had also been temporary captain of the *J M Stubbs*. Both he and his family are very well known in the town and among the watermen and tugmen on the river and canals. He has a brother-in-law and two cousins serving with the forces.

15 15 August 1916

BOATMEN IN TROUBLE At Runcorn Sessions on Monday, **William Atkin**, boatman on the *Isabella*, was fined 10s for having used obscene language on a boat on the river Weaver at 10.30 pm on 19th August. PC Passey explained that as there had been a fight, there were a lot of people about. Witness had previously spoken to the defendant about his conduct, and had told him that if he gave any further trouble he would be summoned. **Charles Atkin**, boatman, was also fined 10s.

16 25 August 1916

MILITARY TRIBUNALS, NORTHWICH

BARNTON MAN'S GOOD CASE An apprentice waterman, aged 19, belonging to Barnton, claimed exemption on the ground that he had had three brothers in the Colours, one of whom had been killed and another wounded. He said his father, who was in poor health, had a small pension. He was the only remaining son at home, and if he was called up serious hardship would ensue. Temporary exemption until December 31st was granted.

17 25 August 1916

LIFE LOST IN STORM

WIDNES COMPENSATION CLAIM At Widnes County Court on Friday, before his Honour Judge Shand, **Thomas Fyldes**, aged 19, a waterman, claimed from Messrs **W Cooper** and Sons, flat owners of Widnes, a partial dependence allowance by reason of the death of his father, **William Fyldes**, through drowning. The deceased was employed as mate on one of the respondents' flats, and during a storm on February 16th of this year, the flat was wrecked in the Mersey, and Fyldes, who was better known as “Downer”, and the captain were drowned.

Mr G S Rees MP (instructed by Mr G I Lynskey, Liverpool) was counsel for the applicant, and Mr Adshead Elliott (instructed by James Chapman and Co, Manchester) appeared for the respondents.

APPLICANT'S CASE Mr Rees stated that the man Fyldes, the father of the applicant, died on February 16th, and that his death arose out of and in the course of his employment. The son was 19 years of age, and for years had suffered from a weak chest. The claim was for 15s weekly, but he frankly admitted that the evidence he would bring before the Court would not justify him in claiming such an amount. Prior to the marriage of his daughter, Martha Alice, the father lived with her and paid her 20s weekly for the board of himself and his son, the present applicant. The daughter was married five years ago, and the 20s weekly was continued. During the last three years, the applicant had been working off and on when his chest was not so bad. He worked about six months out of 12, and earned about 20s to 24s weekly. Out of that he paid his sister 10s weekly. Twelve weeks after the death of his father, the applicant went to work for Messrs Cooper, and he

was paid 24s a week. At the time of the death of his father the boy was partially dependent upon him, and he contended that 7s 6d was about the amount of the dependency.

Thomas Fyldes gave evidence bearing out counsel's statement.

In cross-examination by Mr Elliott, applicant said in the last twelve months before his father died, he worked about half time. The highest he got was 25s and the lowest 7s. He used to give his sister 10s to 14s. He didn't pay anything for the weeks he was ill. When he was ill, his father bought him all kinds of medicines.

Counsel : Before November 1914, hadn't your father been out of work eight or nine years? - If he didn't work on the water he worked ashore. He did odd jobs.

What sort of odd jobs? - Ran errands for people.

Didn't he visit the public houses a good deal? - He cleaned the yards and ran errands.

He was never in regular employment until November 1914? - No, sir.

He was a well known character in Widnes? - Yes, sir.

Continuing, witness said from January 8th to February 12th he worked continuously for Messrs Cooper, and his average earnings worked out at £1 12s 6d. One week he earned £2 5s. When he earned such an amount, he gave his sister £1.

Counsel : What would you do with the £1 5s? - I went on holiday for my health.

But you couldn't because you worked the next week. You suggest that while you were spending this money, your father was paying 15s a week to keep you? - Yes, sir, he always did.

Your father's average earnings were 30s, and your average for the five weeks I have mentioned were £1 12s 6d. If your words are true, you were getting £1 12s 6d weekly and the benefit of 15s paid by your father, a total of £2 7s 6d, while he was only earning 30s weekly. Now do you seriously suggest that you were dependent upon your father? - I do suggest it.

Continuing, witness said he was still working and earning good wages. Messrs Cooper gave them £25 to enable them to bury their father and to buy clothes.

Re-examined by Mr Rees, witness said he was ill seven weeks in May and June.

Martha Alice Carter, sister of the applicant, said before her brother worked, her father used to pay her £1 weekly to keep him and her brother. During the last four years, her brother had only worked about seven months out of the year. He paid her 10s weekly and sometimes £1.

In answer to Mr Elliott, witness said prior to November 1914 her father did odd jobs. He liked a pint of beer, but it was not within her knowledge that he was a well known character in public houses.

THE DEFENCE Mr Elliott, for the defence, submitted that the applicant had not been dependent upon his father, and the claim ought never to have been brought. The question was : Was the applicant in fact at the time of his father's death dependent upon his father's earnings, and the answer, counsel submitted, was no ; neither then nor for a considerable time before then. This case seemed to have been an afterthought. The father died on February 16th, and no claim was made until May 10th.

His Honour, in giving judgement, said personally he had great doubt as to the 20s being paid weekly to the daughter, but there was no evidence to contradict it. The son was earning good wages when he was well, and he could only find there was a small partial dependence. He fixed it at 2s weekly for three years, or in a lump sum £15. Costs were allowed.

18 15 September 1916

NORTHWICH CAPTAIN'S FUNERAL

THE LATE MR W M GORST The remains of the late Mr **William Massey Gorst**, one of the oldest watermen on the river Weaver, and for many years captain of the steamer *Agnes* belonging to Messrs Brunner Mond and Co, were interred in Witton Cemetery on Sunday afternoon. The cortege left the deceased's late residence, Osbourne House, Manchester Road.

19 19 September 1916

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES

RUNCORN OFFENDERS Daniel Higgins, a boatman of Cawdor Street, was summoned at the Runcorn Petty Sessions for failing to produce his National Registration Certificate when requested by the police.

Police-constable Powis spoke to asking the defendant for his card in High Street. He said he had not been registered.

The defendant said he was in Liverpool “when the man came round with the papers”. During the night his boat was shifted from one dock to the other, and perhaps the man lost sight of him in that way. He was not able to read or write, and when he heard he should register he visited the Police Station to see about it.

Police-constable Powis : I brought him. (Laughter).

Defendant explained that he was going, and met the policeman on the way. (Laughter).

The Chairman (Mr A T Smith) said he understood that the defendant lived in Runcorn.

Defendant : I stay with the boat. I never come home. (Laughter).

The Chairman : Then what's the use of having a home?

Defendant was fined 5s.

George Evans, a boatman, was similarly fined for the same type of offence.

20 19 September 1916

SESSIONS MISCELLANEA At Runcorn Sessions on Monday, **James Stokes**, a boatman, was fined 10s for keeping a dog without a licence.

21 3 October 1916

FAILING TO PRODUCE REGISTRATION CARDS Edward Lewis, a boatman, was summoned at Runcorn Sessions on Monday for failing to produce his National Registration Card when called upon to do so by the police. PC Powis gave evidence. Defendant said he was registered at Wigan, but the boat left before he got his card. He had since been to Manchester, Liverpool and Eccles Town Halls in an effort to get one. He lived on the boat, so had no fixed abode. Mr Imison said the Bench could see the difficulty in which the defendant was in through living on his boat, but he ought not to have been satisfied until he had secured a card. He would be fined 2s 6d. **Samuel Pritchard jun**, another boatman, was summoned for a similar offence. He was represented by his father, who produced a card. Police-constable Powis spoke to asking the defendant for his card. His reply was, “I do not remember having one”. Asked if he had had the form to fill up in August 1915, he said that he had, but he did not know if he had received a card or not. Defendant's father said the card was at home all the time, and defendant could not very well produce it when it was there. A fine of 2s 6d was imposed.

22 3 October 1916

THE TRIBUNALS, RUNCORN

SINGLE MEN MUST GO “We cannot see our way to exempt the three single men”, observed the Chairman to the representative of a local carrying firm, who applied for the exemption of a number of their bargemen, three of whom were single.

Mr Hough, who applied on behalf of the firm, said they had now 10 barges tied up simply because they were short of labour. On some of the others, the men's wives were assisting.

Conditional exemption was granted in the case of the married men, but the appeals in respect to the single men were refused.

23 10 October 1916

STREET ROWDYISM Three young flatmen, **Lancelot Hallwood** of Surrey Street, **John William Taylor**, Shaw Street, and **William Handley**, Handley Street, were each fined 10s at the Runcorn Sessions on Monday, for rowdyism in the street on Sunday night. The Chairman observed that the

streets were already dangerous enough without the added danger of horseplay such as theirs, and the Bench were determined to stop it.

24 7 November 1916

HIS REGISTRATION CARD **Thomas Shaw**, a young waterman hailing from Lymm, was charged at the Runcorn Sessions on Monday with failing to produce his registration card when requested to do so by a police officer. PC Powis proved the case, and said when spoken to, the defendant said he had never registered. At the Court, the defendant produced his certificate and said his parents had had it and he knew nothing about it. A nominal fine of a shilling was imposed, and the defendant was advised to carry the certificate with him in future.

25 14 November 1916

BOATMAN FINED At Widnes Police Court on Monday, **Michael Devaney**, a boatman, 44 Wellington Street, pleaded guilty to having stolen 138 lb of coal belonging to the L and NW Railway Company, and 44 lbs of sugar, the property of the Sankey Sugar Co. PC Tobin saw the prisoner place a sack on a small truck in charge of one of Devaney's boys. When the prisoner saw the officer he ran away. Tobin took charge of the sack and found it contained coal. When his house was searched the stolen sugar was also found. The accused was fined £1 in each case.

26 17 November 1916

A MERRY PARTY **Andrew Moores**, a boatman, was summoned at the Sessions on Monday for not reducing the light from his boat. PC Collier said his attention was attracted by a very bright light, and on going in the direction of Norton he came across the defendant's boat, the door and hatch of which were open. The defendant was inside the cabin with three women, drinking out of a bottle. When spoken to by the officer, defendant said he had forgotten the light. He was ordered to pay 10s for his forgetfulness.

27 28 November 1916

CARD TRICKS AND THE SEQUEL Patrick Thomas Regan, charge hand of a block and fall gang; **William Williams**, boatman ; and George Higgins, block and fall gang, were summoned for neglecting their work.

Mr Pendry, for the employers, said the men were caught by Mr Battersby at 3.10 on November 11th playing cards in a boat. On that particular afternoon, time and a half was allowed.

Regan said he went with Higgins to make a collection for a man who had lost a pound note the night before and could not afford it. There was an old pack of cards on the boat, and they commenced to show each other a few tricks. He had already been penalised by being reduced from the position of charge hand.

Williams said he was not neglecting his work, which was to look after the boat.

The Chairman said it was a somewhat difficult case. They thought Regan had been punished and the charge against him would be dismissed. There was a doubt in Williams's case, and he would be given the benefit of it, and the case dismissed. Higgins must pay 10s, to be deducted from his wages at 5s a week.

28 15 December 1916

YIELDED TO TEMPTATION

RUNCORN WOMAN'S THEFT When Sarah Alice Wadcock of Grove Street, Runcorn, pleaded guilty at the Sessions on Monday to the theft of £8 belonging to her father-in-law, Superintendent Owen mentioned that he thought the housekeeping money allowed her by her husband for the keep of both them and six children was hardly sufficient. She had been pressed for money, had got into debt, and yielded to the temptation offered her by the money.

The circumstances of the case were that **Charles Wadcock** of Wellington Street, father-in-law of the prisoner, added a £1 note to a little store he had in a drawer on November 26th, making the total

amount therein £8 10s. He locked the drawer up before leaving the house to follow his calling as a waterman. He returned home on December 1st, and then found the money to be missing.

Sergeant Davies spoke to investigating the theft. He saw the prisoner at her home in Grove Street, and questioned her. At first, she denied any knowledge of the money, but afterwards said, "I will tell you the truth. I went there on Monday evening of last week at seven o'clock. No one was in. I went upstairs and took out a drawer in the front bedroom. I put my hand into the back of the next drawer and took £8 out of it. I went straight home. I knew the money was there – my mother-in-law told me". The woman added that she had spent some of the money in paying small debts, and in redeeming a ring from pawn. She handed him a purse containing £1 4s 4d, and also gave him two £1 notes. When charged at the Police Station later, she made no reply.

The prisoner had nothing to say.

Sir Frederick Norman told her she had placed herself in a very serious position, but fortunately for her there was a magnificent Act in existence of which she would get the full benefit – the First Offenders Act. She must pay the costs, 15s, and the Bench hoped she had had a lesson.

29 19 December 1916

THE TRIBUNALS

A BOATMAN'S ERROR A labourer at Ettiley Heath (35), married, applied for an exemption on his own behalf on personal grounds. He had been a canal boatman till October, and had two brothers serving in the army.

The Military Representative : You have left a skilled occupation and gone on an unskilled one. As you are a Class A man I must press for you to go. It is a pity you left the canal.

Appellant : Well, we lived on the boat, and the children could not get a proper education.

The application was refused, the Military Representative promising that the man should not be called up before the 7th January.

RUNCORN

AGED 25 YEARS A firm of carriers by canal applied for conditional exemption for three men – two bargemen and a clerk. The bargemen were aged 40 and 38 respectively, and married.

Mr H N Linaker said the clerk was a C3 man. He was engaged on freightage and similar work and, he suggested, it was in the national interest that the man should be allowed to stay.

The Chairman : You know how exacting the regulations are for single men under 25.

Mr Linaker said he appreciated that. It was impossible for a woman to do the work.

The Chairman : What are his wages?

The Employer : Twenty five shillings a week.

The Military Representative (Lieutenant Linaker) : Can a 25s a week man be all that important?

Mr Linaker : If they cannot get a man to replace him, how are they to carry on?

Lieutenant Linaker : He is a single man. If he was a married man and older, there might be some argument.

Mr H N Linaker suggested that the Tribunal might take the view that the case was one for substitution.

The Chairman : Clerks do not become cases of substitution.

The application was declined, the man not to be called up until January 15th.

30 22 December 1916

WATERMAN'S SUDDEN END

FOUND DEAD IN HIS CABIN

MEMBER OF OLD MID-CESHIRE FAMILY A painful sensation was occasioned amongst the watermen on the river Weaver when they learned that a highly esteemed colleague, Mr **George Buckley** of London Road, Northwich, had died with tragic suddenness whilst on his boat. Mr Buckley, who was well known to everyone connected with the Weaver from Liverpool to Winsford, was 52 years of age, and his position was that of engineer on the *Acme*, one of the Salt Union's boats. He went to Liverpool with his boat last week, and when at Eastham Locks he was taken

suddenly ill. He proceeded to the cabin with the intention of resting, and later he was found dead. An inquest was held at Eastham Hotel on Tuesday, when a verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

The deceased, who belonged to an old Mid-Cheshire family, was a son of the late Henry Buckley of Middlewich Road, Northwich. He had followed the career of a waterman from his youth onwards, and for the last 29 years had been an engineer on the river Weaver. He was first employed by the Verdin Brothers on the boat *Calcutta*, and with the formation of the Salt Union he became one of their employees and had proved a true and faithful servant to them. For some years he was engineer on the *Chili*, and then joined the crew of the *Arabia*, and afterwards the *Chanticleer*. His next boat was the *Express*, on which he served as engineer for eleven years, and about five months ago he was appointed to the *Acme*.

Mr Buckley was a man who had everybody's good word. A devout Christian, he was a regular worshipper at Davenham Parish Church, with which the whole family have for many years been closely identified. He was also a member of the Rector's Bible Class. His kind and generous disposition and his desire at all times to help those less fortunately situated than himself made him universally respected, and the news of his sudden demise was received with feelings of sincere regret.

One of the deceased's sons, Private Albert Buckley, is on active service, and it was impossible to arrange for him to obtain special furlough in order to attend his father's funeral. Another son was killed in action some time ago.

31 22 December 1916

WOUNDED

PRIVATE W TAYLOR Private **Willie Taylor** of the King's (Liverpool Regiment), son of Mr John Taylor, shipwright, of 4 Albert Street, Runcorn, has sustained a severe wound in the thigh and has lost his left arm. He is at present in North Evington Military Hospital, Leicester, and is progressing as well as can be expected.

Previous to his enlistment in the early days of June 1915, Private Taylor was in the office of the Upper Mersey Waterman's Union, of which organisation his grandfather, Mr Ellis Gatley, is secretary. He has been at the front since Easter of this year. Not quite 20 years of age, he is married and has one child. He was at one time a member of Brunswick Sunday School.

32 12 January 1917

VALUE OF A GOOD CHARACTER

BOATMAN'S THEFTS AT RUNCORN The sequel to pilfering from a canal boat was heard at the Runcorn Police Court on Thursday, when **William Henry Cawley**, a boatman residing at 27 Princess Street, was charged with having stolen nine plates, value 5s 6d ; nine cups and saucers, value 9s ; one dish, value 2s 6d ; nine basins, value 1s 6d ; three jugs, value 3s ; the total value of 21s 6d, the property of the Manchester Ship Canal Company, from a crate in transit between Runcorn and Liverpool, between August 1st 1916 and January 10th 1917.

Evidence was given by William John Dowdall, in charge of the crate department, who said prisoner was employed by the company as captain of the flat *John Chapman*, trading between Runcorn, Manchester and Liverpool, and occasionally his cargo to Liverpool consisted of earthenware and china. Prisoner had no right to any of the articles produced.

Sergeant Davies said that in consequence of certain information which came in his possession, he visited the prisoner's house in Princess Street, and saw the prisoner. He asked him to account for the china and earthenware found in his house. Prisoner replied, "I own up to taking the basins six or seven weeks ago. I got the cups and saucers six or seven months ago. I took them out of a crate between Runcorn and Liverpool".

Prisoner made an appeal for leniency. He had worked for the Canal Co all his life and had a good character. He was very sorry for what he had done, and if they would give him another chance it would never occur again. He had a very large family.

The Chairman (Mr E Imison) said prisoner was fortunate in having a good character, and they had also taken into consideration what he had told them about his family. Still it was a serious offence which they could not allow to pass unpunished. Their decision was that he must pay the costs, 17s 6d.

33 26 January 1917

BOATMAN FINED FOR STEALING WHEAT

“CUSTOMERS” ALSO PUNISHED At the Middlewich Police Court on Friday, before Messrs G Garfit, O B Whitehead, J A Kay, and E B Harlock, **George Brookes** of the Salt Union canal boat *Sandbach*, was charged with having stolen 220 lb of wheat, value £2 4s, the property of the Mersey and Weaver Carrying Co, from the canal boat *Don* at Kinderton on December 26th. He was further charged with having stolen 250 lb of wheat from the boat *Don* at Moston on December 28th.

Oliver Moore Dunning, licensee of the Kinderton Arms, was charged with receiving the 220 lb of wheat from Brookes knowing it to have been stolen, and a similar charge was preferred against Robert Walter Dutton, Moston Mill, Moston, in regard to the 250 lb of wheat.

Mr Adams, solicitor of Tunstall, prosecuted on behalf of the police and the Mersey and Weaver Carrying Co, and the prisoner Dunning was defended by Mr A E Stringer, solicitor of Sandbach.

The evidence of Robert Taylor, foreman warehouseman in the employ of the Mersey, Weaver and Ship Canal Carrying Co Ltd, was to the effect that on December 22nd he loaded the boat *Don* with 180 bags of wheat similar to the one produced.

Owing to complaints as to some of the wheat being missing, inquiries were made by the police and N S Railway Co (Inspector A Phillips). The latter was accompanied by Sergeant Bithell to the Kinderton Arms on January 5th, and as the result of a conversation the licensee took them to an outhouse and pointed out the sack of wheat produced. The three officers visited Salford Locks on the 8th inst, and there saw the prisoner Brookes. At first he denied all knowledge of the wheat, but afterwards admitted that on the night of December 26th a bag of wheat was taken off Hales's boat and carried across to the Kinderton Arms. He had previously asked Dunning if he could do with a bit of wheat. Dunning gave him 9s, which he handed to Hales. When charged, Brookes replied, “Yes, I helped him ; he asked me to get him a customer, which I did”.

The district manager from Stone informed the Court that the value of the bag of wheat was between 45s and 50s.

LICENSEE'S EVIDENCE Oliver Moore Dunning, the licensee of the Kinderton Arms, stated that the prisoner Brookes came into the bar on December 26th and asked him if he could do with a little fowl corn. He replied, “Yes”, and paid him 9s, Brookes assisting him to carry the bag into the outhouse. He opened the bag about three days later, and on finding it was not fowl corn he gave instructions that the wheat must not be touched until he saw Brookes again. He had no suspicions but that the bag merely contained sweepings up.

In cross-examination witnesses stated that Dunning was quite straightforward and did not act underhanded in any way.

Inspector Phillips repeated his evidence as to the interview with Brookes at Salford, on which occasion the prisoner also made a statement that on December 28th he arrived at Booth Lane Top Lock at 3.30 pm. The prisoner Dutton was at the mill, and Brookes asked him if he wanted a bag of wheat, as he had one over. Dutton replied in the affirmative, and Brookes took him down a bag of wheat to the mill, receiving 10s for it.

This statement was corroborated by Sergeant Dalziel.

Evidence was given by Brookes as to delivering up the wheat to Dunning and Dutton.

Joseph Daniels of Burslem, employed as a chief clerk at Longport, said in consequence of a complaint he went to Congleton on January 1st and saw a cargo of wheat which was taken from the *Don*. There was a shortage in 49 bags, and one bag was entirely missing. The actual amount short was 943 lb.

Dunning pleaded not guilty, and an eloquent appeal on his behalf was made by Mr Stringer.

The magistrates ultimately decided to fine Brookes £5 in each of the two cases. The other

defendants were also fined £5 each.

34 26 January 1917

RUNCORN MAN'S SUDDEN DEATH

FOLLOWS EXERTION OF CLIMBING STAIRS Mr Coroner A E White conducted an inquiry at the Runcorn Courthouse on Thursday morning, relative to the death of **Charles Henry Cresswell**, 81 years of age, a retired boatman of 81 Nelson Street, who died suddenly on Monday night.

William Cresswell, labourer, 81 Nelson Street, Runcorn, said deceased was 81 years of age, and was a retired boatman, and lived with the witness. He had been ailing for the last six years. The last time witness saw him alive was downstairs at his home at half past six on Monday evening.

Blanche Peck, 79 Nelson Street, said that about half past seven on Monday evening she was in her house when she heard a knock on the wall from No 81, and she went round to the house. The deceased's wife was sitting half undressed on the couch. She asked witness to go upstairs, adding, "I think the old man is dead". Witness brought another neighbour, Mrs Rose, and they both went upstairs. They found the old man lying on the bedroom floor with his head on a box. He was quite dead. Witness did not notice any injuries to the head, and at the request of Mrs Rose, witness went for the police. Mrs Cresswell told witness that deceased was sitting on the side of the bed taking his shoes off. When she got out of bed and went round to pick him up, she found he was dead. Mrs Cresswell was also 81 years of age, and was not having good health.

The Coroner remarked that he had asked for the latter fact, so that the jury might know why he had not considered it necessary to call Mrs Cresswell as a witness. She was an old lady and in delicate health, and he thought it a pity to bring her out.

Dr Murphy said he had examined the body, and concluded from the man's age and the inquiries he made, that the cause of death was failure of a senile heart, following on and arising out of the exertion of climbing the stairs. He did not think the fall had anything to do with the cause of death. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence.

35 2 February 1917

THEFT FROM A CANAL BOAT

CHARGE AGAINST TRADESMAN DISMISSED "The astounding amount of pilfering from canal boats" was referred to at the Northwich Petty Sessions on Tuesday, when John Burgess, grocer and provision dealer of Canal Side, Rudheath, was summoned before Messrs J W Deakin (chairman) and A H Darwell, for receiving a sack of flour, knowing it to have been stolen, on December 24th 1916. Mr H W Adams of Tunstall appeared for the prosecution, whilst the defendant was represented by Mr W Bancroft.

Mr Adams said he appeared on behalf of **Arthur Phillips**, who was in the employ of the Mersey, Weaver and Ship Canal Carrying Co. The facts were that a boatman named **Brookes**, in the employ of the Mersey Weaver Co, was in charge of two boats, the *Liverpool* and the *Sandbach*, on December 21st, and was taking a cargo of flour, amongst other things, from Manchester to Longport (Staffordshire). In the *Liverpool* there was a consignment of 16 small bags – weight 140 lb each – of flour. When the boats arrived at Broken Cross the 16 bags were in the *Liverpool*, and Brookes would tell them that he took one of the bags and put it on the *Sandbach*. He arrived there at midday, but did not take the flour from the boat until dark. He then went to Burgess, asked him if he wanted a bag of flour, and on him saying he did he took it across. No price was asked by Brookes from Burgess, but Burgess offered him 8s, which he received, and stabled his horse during the night for nothing. Burgess was a provision, corn and flour dealer, and the value of the flour stolen was £1 12s. It must have been obvious to him that he could not have bought 140 lb of flour for 8s and the putting up of the horse. The whole facts must have been patent that Brookes, as a boatman, was not entitled to sell flour.

"ASTOUNDING AMOUNT OF PILFERING" The Mersey, Weaver and Ship Canal Carrying Co had had to put up with an astounding amount of pilfering between the Potteries and Liverpool, and he asked the Bench, if they came to the conclusion that Burgess knew the flour was stolen, they

would visit him with an exemplary punishment, as an effort to stamp out the extraordinary amount of pilfering. They might ask why Brookes was not there charged with the theft of the flour. The answer was on that particular journey Brookes also stole some wheat, and he was up a few days ago before another Court, and very heavily fined for that offence. The prosecution therefore thought, having regard to the heavy fine, he had purged the offence committed.

George Henry Grubbe, a check clerk in the employ of the Mersey, Weaver and Ship Canal Co at Manchester, said he checked the boats *Liverpool* and *Sandbach* on December 21st. They contained sixteen 140 lb sacks of "Warvis" flour.

Charles William Shirley, local manager of the Mersey, Weaver and Ship Canal Carrying Co, stated that the cargo on the boats belonged to the company as bailees. The value of 140 lb of "Warvis" flour on the date named was 32s.

BOATMAN'S EVIDENCE **George Brookes**, the boatman in charge of the boats *Liverpool* and *Sandbach*, said on December 21st he left Manchester with a cargo of flour, and on Sunday December 24th he arrived at Broken Cross. He transferred a bag of flour from the *Liverpool* to the *Sandbach* at six o'clock in the evening, and about a quarter of an hour later he carried it to the stable. It was pretty dark at the time. He saw Burgess, and said to him, "I have a little bag of flour", to which he replied, "All right". He gave him 8s for it. Witness stabled his horse there that night, and left the next morning about breakfast time. He told the defendant he would pay him for (?baiting) the horse when he came back.

Cross-examined by Mr Bancroft : He had been fined £5 at Middlewich for doing the same thing.

David Lyth, a boatman employed by Brookes, said he saw Brookes take something from under the stern cloth of the *Sandbach* at dark on December 24th. It was a bag, and he took it to Burgess's stable.

Ernest Bolton, foreman warehouseman at the Port Vale Wharf, Longport, stated that when the boat arrived, a 140 lb bag of flour was missing.

THE DEFENCE Mr Bancroft, for the defence, asked the Bench if sufficient evidence had been given for them to convict the defendant and so take away the character of a respectable man who had been 24 years in his present shop. The defendant would go into the box and say that what Brookes had said was a tissue of lies. He had been waited upon by many people in connection with that alleged offence, and to each of them he said, "I know nothing about the bag". It would be Brookes's oath against the oath of a man with a 24 years' character. He contended there was no corroboration in the case, and if the man had put a sack of flour in Mr Burgess's stable it was done entirely without his knowledge. Brookes had invented a tissue of lies to save himself. Defendant said every ounce of flour sold in his shop during the last 24 years had been bought from Messrs Hesketh's, and he had invoices for it. In the back yard at Burgess's there were 12 houses, and taking the inhabitants of each to be four, there were 48 people near the place, and yet there was not a single independent witness to connect Burgess with receiving the flour. He did not dispute that the receivers in that class of case were worse than the stealers themselves, and he could quite understand the Carrying Co trying to get a conviction against the receiver, because if there were no receivers there would be no thieves.

Defendant said he had heard the evidence of Brookes, and there was not a single word of truth, according to his knowledge, in what he had said. Brookes did not bring a bag of flour to him, nor did he give Brookes 8s. As far as the name of the flour was concerned he did not know anything about it. If Brookes had brought the bag of flour to his place, as he stated, it was there yet. He produced a list of receipted bills for white flour supplied by Mr Hesketh.

Mrs Burgess also gave evidence.

CASE DISMISSED The Bench retired, and returning into Court after an absence of about five minutes, the Chairman said there was a direct and complete conflict of evidence in the case, and they had decided to dismiss it.

36 23 February 1917

RESCUE FROM DROWNING AT WINSFORD

WATERMAN'S PLUCKY ACT A narrow escape from drowning and an exceedingly plucky rescue were witnessed on Friday afternoon in the river Weaver at Winsford, near Mr T Boden's boathouse. A number of children were playing on the bank, when one of them, a girl of nine named Mary Ann Warburton, who lived at 145 Weaver Street, went on the ice. This appeared to be safe, but evidently it decreased in thickness near the centre of the river. As the little girl approached the middle of the river, the ice suddenly gave way, precipitating her into the water. The river at this point is from 12 to 15 feet deep. An alarm was raised by her companions, and their screams were heard by **Mr James Atherton** of 126 High Street, who is the mate of the Co-operative Society's barge *Progressive*. His boat was 40 yards away at the time, but jumping on to the bank he ran quickly to where the child was struggling in the water.

Fortunately he is a good swimmer, and soon was able to reach the girl. He held her up with one hand, and then commenced to fight his way back to safety.

In the meantime the child's companions had brought further assistance, in the persons of Mr Jabez Fitton, an employee of the Co-operative Society, and two other young men. Mr Atherton had been about seven minutes in the water, and had managed to get the girl two or three yards nearer the side ; but he was rapidly becoming exhausted when Mr Fitton appeared on the scene. He waded in the river almost to his arm pits, and was able to give the rescuer a hand. Both were then quickly assisted to the bank. Mr Atherton states that he believes that if help had been delayed much longer, both he and the girl would have been drowned.

The child was at once taken home and given a hot bath, and shortly afterwards was none the worse for her immersion. Mr Atherton obtained a change of clothing on the boat, and suffered no ill effects.

In the course of an interview, Mr Atherton said he was formerly a member of the Winsford Swimming Club, and this was his first case of life saving. He also spoke of the difficulty he experienced in making progress through the ice, which he had to break as he went along. Added to this was the weight of the girl and his own clothes, and the icy coldness of the water.

The facts have been reported to the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society.

37 9 March 1917

RUNCORN MAN'S DEATH An inquiry was held at the Runcorn Court House on Thursday afternoon by the Deputy Coroner (Mr E A White) and a jury, relative to the death of **William Bowker Wrench** (60) of 40 Irwell Lane, Runcorn, a watchman on the dredger *Harry*, who died early on Tuesday morning.

Mary Reece, daughter, gave evidence of identification. Deceased was a waterman, had suffered from pains in the stomach, and had been medically treated for indigestion. When he came home on the day previous to his death, he complained of pains in his chest. He worked up to March 6th, when he reached home about 6.20 pm. He had a hearty tea and a pint of beer for his supper, and was reading the newspaper during the evening. He retired about nine o'clock, and when witness went upstairs shortly before 10 o'clock, the deceased called out to her and complained of the pain in his chest. He asked her for a cup of hot water, which she obtained. As he said he was not much better, witness suggested he should go downstairs to the fire, which he did, and she put some hot flannel on his chest and between his shoulders. He said he felt better, and she continued with the hot flannels until 3.30, when he asked to get up from the couch. While witness went into the back kitchen to heat the flannel about 3.30, the deceased called to her, and on going to him immediately she found him lying on his side on the floor. As he did not speak, she went for one of the neighbours, and also for a doctor, but when the latter came, her father had passed away.

Alfred Taylor, grandson of the deceased, spoke to assisting his mother with the hot flannels until 2 am, when he went to bed. He was called down at 3.30, and found the deceased lying on his back apparently dead, and witness at once went for Dr Murphy, who arrived at 3.40. Witness suggested to the deceased about 11 pm that he might fetch a doctor, but he refused.

Dr Murphy said that as a result of his examination and inquiries, he was of the opinion that death was due to cardiac syncope due to some gastric affection rising from chronic indigestion.

The Coroner suggested that, if the man had allowed a doctor to be called in the night, the inquiry might have been rendered unnecessary.

A verdict in accordance with the medical evidence was returned.

38 23 March 1917

THE TRIBUNALS, NORTHWICH

CANAL BOATMAN'S CERTIFICATE WITHDRAWN Some interesting points were mentioned during the hearing of an appeal by a Carrying Company in respect of a canal boatman. Mr C E Newell represented the appellants.

The man had been previously exempted and the arrangement was that the military were to supply a substitute.

Answering the Chairman, Lieutenant Durrant said that a new rule had been issued that they were to have for the Army all men under 25 and single.

It transpired that the man was 22 when he attested, and was now 24.

Mr Newell informed the Tribunal that at present the firm had 42 narrow boat loads waiting at Liverpool, representing about 900 tons. That cargo must be discharged ; it was mostly lime. They would have to tie this man's boat up if he were taken, and they were asked by the Director of Transports to do all they could. On January 26th, they were asked to supply a list of the men for whom they required exemption, and that return had been sent to the Director, but so far all they had received was an acknowledgment.

Lieutenant Durrant explained that he was rather doubtful about the new Order instructing them to take all men under 25 off canals, and he accordingly wired to the War Office, and they had replied confirming the Order.

Mr Newell : That is a case of one department pulling against the other. If he has to go, it will mean another boat less, and that is a serious matter.

Proceeding, Mr Newell read the communication which had been addressed to canal owners and carriers requiring them to make a return to the Government.

The Chairman : You have had no communication in reply to the list you have sent in except an acknowledgment from the department?

Mr Newell : They have evidently passed it on to someone to deal with. I don't know as yet how they are dealing with it.

The Tribunal decided that the certificate of exemption be cancelled.

39 6 April 1917

BOATMEN ASK FOR LEAVING CERTIFICATES

TO JOIN THE ARMY Two boatmen employed on "work of national importance" by the Manchester Ship Canal Co, Bridgewater Department, at Runcorn, applied at the Warrington Munitions Court on Monday for leaving certificates to enable them to join the Army. The Canal Company were not represented. The applicants were **Arthur Critchley**, 29 Church Street, Runcorn, 34 years of age and married with five children, and **James Farrell**, 54 Hanley Street, Runcorn, 19 years of age and a single man.

Critchley complained that he could not get a living wage, and would be better off in the Army or on other work. He was employed on a barge which carried about 130 tons. His wages were £1 per week with 7s 6d war bonus until that week. He attested under the Lord Derby scheme, but the Canal Company had obtained his exemption against his will. About three weeks ago the flats were tied up, and for the following three days they were kept waiting about for orders. They then received orders not to go near the barge any more, and were put on moving rubbish and similar work, which he said "could be done by women".

The other applicant corroborated.

The certificates were granted, the applicants to join the Army.

40 6 April 1917

DEATH OF MR E R ROYLANCE, RUNCORN The death occurred on Sunday, after an illness of several months, of **Mr E R Roylance** of Eaton Street, Runcorn, who was for the long period of 58 years an employee of the Bridgewater Trustees and their successors, the Manchester Ship Canal Co. He was a marine engine driver, and well known to all local watermen. He was a regular attender at St Michael's Church. His surviving family consist of a son and two daughters.

41 18 May 1917

LOCK-KEEPER DROWNED

FALLS INTO THE RIVER WEAVER In the early hours of Monday morning, a respected employee of the River Weaver Navigation – **Albert Lyon**, one of the lock-keepers at Dutton Locks, between Northwich and Weston Point – was drowned. Following the heavy thunderstorms in the district late on Saturday night and again on Sunday evening, there was a heavy slow of water down the river, and as a consequence it was necessary to regulate the sluices at Dutton Locks. For this purpose Lyon and the head lock-keeper (**Thomas Stubbs**) went to drop the gate of one of the sluices shortly after midnight. It was very dark, and what actually happened to Lyon is not quite clear. Stubbs, however, suddenly missed him, and it is presumed that whilst engaged at the sluice gate he overbalanced himself and fell from an overhead gangway into the river.

An alarm was at once raised by Stubbs, and the other men employed at Dutton Locks were quickly on the scene. They made a careful search for the body, and continued their efforts throughout the night, but without success.

On Monday morning the members of the Barnton Grappling Corps proceeded to the scene of the accident, and after working hard for several hours they recovered the body shortly before two o'clock below the sluices in the flood course of the river.

Lyon was 28 years of age and a widower, his wife having died a short time ago, leaving him with three children, all daughters. He was a son of Mr John Lyon, the outdoor foreman of the Navigation, who now lives at Hunt's Locks, but was formerly in charge of the Saltersford Locks. The deceased's father is prominently connected with the Primitive Methodist cause in the Northwich Circuit, and much sympathy is felt for him and the other members of the family.

During the time Mr Lyon sen was at Saltersford, he and his family were for many years actively connected with the Primitive Methodist Church and Sunday School at Barnton, the deceased being at one time a teacher in the Sunday School and an energetic worker in connection with the chapel.

THE INQUEST The Coroner's Inquiry took place on Tuesday morning, and was conducted by Mr J C Bate in the Parish Room at Acton Bridge. Colonel Saner, engineer to the Weaver Navigation, attended as representing the trustees. Mr J Nicholas was foreman of the jury.

Prior to the inquest, the jury, after viewing the body, had visited Dutton Locks and inspected the scene of the accident.

Enoch Lyon, 1 Broadway, Barnton, identified the body as that of his brother. He was 36 on June 21st last. He had been in the employ of the Weaver Trustees and had worked at the Dutton Locks for five or six years. He was a widower and had left three girls, aged 15, 13 and 11.

HEAD LOCK KEEPER'S STORY Thomas Stubbs, the head lock-keeper at Dutton Locks, deposed that he and Lyon came on duty at midnight on Sunday. They found that the water was rather too high for working the lock, and they proceeded to drop one of the sluices in order to let the water over the top.

The Coroner : In order to lower the sluice I think you have to wind it down with a handle?

Witness : We don't wind it down. We simply get hold of a lever while we pull the clutch off, and then it goes down on its accord.

You mean that you pull the clutch out, and the sluice goes down itself? - Yes.

Proceeding, witness said that he pulled the clutch out and Lyon was at the lever. By pulling the lever it slackened the clutch, and when the clutch was out he should let go the lever.

The Coroner : Is that what is always done?

Witness : It has always been done to my recollection for the last 22 years.

The Coroner : I gather from you it is necessary for one man to pull the lever which releases the clutch, and another man to pull the clutch? - Yes, one man cannot do both jobs.

It always has to be done by two men? - Yes.

Witness went on to state that the platform on which they stood was three feet six inches wide. It lay right across the sluices, and on one side there was a handle.

Asked if he could explain how the deceased got into the water, he said he could not. He had never heard of anyone stumbling on the platform before, and this was the first accident to his knowledge in 22 years. It was not a very dark night. The stars were shining, though it was inclined to be a little misty.

DID YOU SEE HIM FALL? You cannot explain to us, you say, how it was he fell in the river? - I cannot tell you ; I didn't see him go.

What position were you in when you were working the clutch? - I was nearly down on the floor, and he was a little higher up on his knees.

Did you see him fall? - No ; I only just saw a shadow as he was near to the water.

Continuing, witness said that Lyon had pulled in the lever, and the clutch had been released, and the sluice went down. They had both been accustomed to this work, and it was difficult to account for the deceased falling into the water.

The Coroner : Is there any possibility that when he let go the lever it caught his clothing?

Witness : I don't think so. It might have done, but I could not see that his clothes were torn when we pulled him out of the river.

The witness went on to say that it seemed hardly possible for the deceased's clothing to catch in the lever, having regard to the fact that his arms would be outstretched to work it.

The Coroner : Did he call out, or make any noise?

Witness : I never heard any sound from him.

Stubbs added that the deceased dropped right into the current of the water. He was not aware until the previous day that Lyon could swim, but during the dragging operations his father told him that he was a clever swimmer.

Answering Colonel Saner, witness said that the levers at the sluices were not difficult to work. As a rule, the lever could be worked quite easily with one hand. He thought that Lyon was stunned before he reached the water, as he would have to drop twenty feet. He did not think he ever came to the top again. The reason why there was no hand rail on the side of the platform where the lever was situated was because the "crab" was there, and it had to run along a set of metals.

Colonel Saner remarked that the sluices had been working in the same manner since 1874, when they were built, and this was the first time that an accident had occurred.

Replying to the foreman, Stubbs explained that the duty of the man at the lever was to let go immediately the clutch was drawn.

The foreman suggested that there must be a dragging tendency on the lever, and the witness answered that there was a slight pressure of water against it all the time. To work the lever, it was better to be in a kneeling position than standing.

RECOVERY OF THE BODY William Burrows, banksman in the employ of the Weaver Trustees and living at Crowton, stated that about seven o'clock on Monday morning he learned of the accident, and went to assist in searching for the body. He used a boat shaft, and eventually found the body about 60 or 70 yards below where the deceased had fallen in. The water would be from ten to twelve feet deep.

PC Niddrie, stationed at Weaverham, gave evidence to the effect that he assisted in the dragging operations, and was present when the body was recovered. He examined the body, and found a bruise over the temple and another on the bridge of the nose. There was also an abrasion under the left eye. The deceased was fully dressed, and his clothing was not torn at all. His watch had stopped at 12.50.

By the Coroner : The distance from where he fell to the water would be about fourteen feet.

Colonel Saner : That was to the higher water level?

Witness : Yes.

Colonel Saner : It would be about 24 feet before he would touch the lower water.

THE TRUSTEES' SYMPATHY Colonel Saner expressed the great regret of the Weaver trustees at the accident, and more especially as the family of Lyon were very much respected on the river. Three of them were in the employ of the Trustees and had been for many years, and the deceased's father held the position of outdoor foreman. The Trustees did all they could to safeguard their employees, but with a waterway like the Weaver, they were bound to have an accident occasionally. The Coroner asked if there was anything that Colonel Saner could suggest by way of ensuring greater protection to the men in regulating the sluices.

Colonel Saner replied that he did not see how it would be possible to put any fencing that would serve any useful purpose, because the men would have to move the fencing before starting to carry out these operations.

THE VERDICT The Coroner remarked that it was impossible to say what actually happened. The deceased might have had an attack of giddiness, or he might have been knocked off the platform by the lever.

The jury returned a verdict that the deceased was accidentally drowned.

The Coroner spoke of the sad circumstances connected with the case. They had been told that the deceased had left three young girls, and their sympathy was extended to them and the other relatives in their bereavement. The children had previously lost their mother ; now they had lost their father, and they must feel it very severely. They were orphans, and one little knew the difference which the loss of their father would make to them in the future. It was a very sad thing, and he was sure they sympathised with the young children in their great loss.

The foreman endorsed the remarks of the Coroner, and said the jury associated themselves with the expressions of sympathy.

42 15 May 1917

MILITARY FUNERAL AT NORTHWICH

PRIVATE WILLIAM LITLER Signs of mourning were general in the Station Road and Church Road neighbourhoods of Northwich on Sunday afternoon, when the funeral took place in Witton Churchyard of Private William Litler of the Cheshire Regiment, who died of wounds received in action. Military honours were accorded. Private Litler died in a hospital in the South of England, and Mr J Arthur Cowley, the hon secretary of the Northwich War Fund Committee, arranged for the body to be brought home and for military honours to be accorded the interment. Private Litler was one of the four soldier sons of **Mr William Litler**, waterman, and prior to enlisting was in the employ of the Northwich Carrying Co.

43 18 May 1917

RUNCORN WOMAN'S THEFTS

PILFERING FROM UNCLE At the Runcorn Sessions on Monday, Beatrice Santley of Mason Street was charged in custody with having stolen two rings and a watch chain, value £2 5s, the property of a boatman, **William Clutton**, on May 10th. Superintendent Owen said the warrant had been issued on Friday last. It was then found that the woman had left the town, and she had been apprehended at Warrington that morning. He only intended to offer evidence of her arrest, and would then ask for a remand until Wednesday. PC Oakes gave evidence of arresting prisoner, and she was then remanded in custody until Wednesday.

FURTHER HEARING Prisoner was brought before the Bench on Wednesday morning, and was then charged with the theft of two gold rings, a suit of clothes, a quilt, three pillow covers, two glass jugs, one glass tumbler, twenty teaspoons, a jug, a pair of sugar tongs, a pillow case and three glass dishes, of the total value of £5 16s, the property of William Clutton.

William Clutton, boatman, Canal Street, said the prisoner came to live with him and act as his housekeeper eighteen months ago. She was his niece, and her husband was a soldier. She had two children. Witness only visited his home at intervals, being away with his boat most of the time. She remained at his house until May 7th, but he had not seen her since May 3rd, when she did not

mention going away. When he reached home he could not get into the house as the door was locked and the house empty. He managed, however, to gain an entrance through the window, and he then found the articles enumerated in the charge were missing. He identified the articles produced, and prisoner had no right to take them away.

Thomas H Brown, pawnbroker of Bridge Street, said prisoner's daughter pledged the silver guard with him in October last, and he advanced 2s 6d upon it. The coat of the suit was pledged in October for 4s, the trousers in June for 3s 6d, and the vest on May 20th. A gold keeper ring was pledged in September and a gold wedding ring in January.

Prisoner said these two rings were her own property, and this Clutton agreed.

PC Oakes said he saw the prisoner at Warrington Police Station on Monday. He told her he was making inquiries as to some property belonging to Mr Clutton. She replied, "With the exception of the two rings, a silver guard and a suit of clothes I have not touched anything belonging to him. Those you will find at Mr Brown's pawnshop". Witness then visited the address where she had been staying in Warrington, and on searching the house found the articles produced in a box upstairs in the bedroom. He afterwards took her to Runcorn Police Station, where he read the charge over to her. She made no reply.

Prisoner pleaded guilty and expressed her regret. If her uncle would forgive her, she would replace all she had taken. She did not take the quilt with the intention of keeping it, and one or two of the things produced were her own property. Her husband was at the front.

The Chairman said that seeing prisoner's husband was serving his King and country and the prisoner had two children dependent upon her, they were disposed to deal leniently with her. They could not overlook the fact that this pilfering appeared to have been going on systematically for some time, and they felt that she ought to think more of the difficulties and dangers her husband was facing. The penalty for such an offence was £20 or imprisonment without the option of a fine, but to mark their sense of the good her husband was doing in helping to defend his country, they would fine her £3, or in default of payment she would have to go down for a month.

An order was made for the goods to be returned to Clutton on the redemption of the pledges at Mr Brown's.

Prisoner was allowed until Monday to find the money.

44 22 May 1917

THE TRIBUNALS – RUNCORN

BARGEMAN EXEMPTED Application was made for the exemption of the captain of a canal flat trading between Runcorn, Manchester and the Midlands.

It was stated that the man had a certificate of exemption, but had now been called up.

Mr Jones (military representative) said that men who were covered by Munitions Department certificates and who also held exemptions from the Tribunal did not require both.

The man was stated to be 31 years of age.

Mr Lake : This man has appealed because he has been called up as a measure of protection.

The Tribunal granted conditional exemption, having in view the man's occupation.

45 22 June 1917

STOKER DUNBAVAND Mr and Mrs Dunbavand of Vine Street, Runcorn, have learned this week of the death of their eldest son, Stoker **Dunbavand** of the Royal Navy. A letter from the Admiralty conveys the information that he was reported missing on June 17th, as the result of an explosion that occurred upon the ship on which he was serving, and "in the circumstances it is feared that no doubt can be entertained that he was killed".

Stoker Dunbavand joined the Navy in July 1915, having previously been employed by the United Alkali Co as a waterman. He was a youth well favoured by nature, and stood six feet high. He returned to his ship from furlough only a fortnight ago. He belonged to St Michael's Church, and was a member of the Bible Class. His early education was received at the Victoria Road School, and later he attended Balfour Road Upper Standard School.



46 **20 July 1917**

**DROWNING ACCIDENT AT WESTON POINT
GALLANT ATTEMPT AT RESCUE**

A CURIOUS COINCIDENCE The circumstances of the death of **William Bracegirdle**, aged 6 years, of Wright's Dock, Weston Point, were investigated by the Deputy Coroner, Mr A E White, and a jury, at the Weston Schoolroom, Weston Point, on Thursday morning. Mr G Whitby was foreman of the jury.

The boy's father, **Jabez Bracegirdle**, a flat captain employed by the Salt Union, said he last saw the boy alive at 7.30 on Tuesday night, when witness left home to go to Runcorn.

Jabez Bracegirdle, a brother, seven years of age, said that on Tuesday night about eight o'clock, he and the deceased and several other little boys were playing near the Weaver Canal. Witness's brother saw a piece of wood in the canal and, leaning forward to take hold of it, he overbalanced and fell into the water face forwards. There was a lifebelt near, and witness tried to get hold of this to throw it into the water, but could not reach it. He and the other boys then shouted for help, and a youth named Joe Santley, who was standing at the corner of Wright's Dock Cottages, came along. One of the smaller boys shouted, "He's in the cut", and witness, who was the oldest boy, pointed out the place where the deceased fell in. Santley jumped into the water and swam about trying to find the body, but was unable to do so.

Joseph Santley, Wright's Dock Cottages, said that he was at home about eight o'clock on Tuesday evening, when he heard the last witness shouting that his brother was in the water. He went down to the canal, and was told by one of the boys that the deceased had gone into the water against a raft, and one of the others said he had got in by the lifebuoy. Witness took off his jacket, and swam about trying to find the body, he failed. He came out of the water and undressed himself, and then jumped in again, and for a further ten minutes attempted to find the body, but was still unsuccessful. A man named Dutton then came along from Castner's, and grappling operations were commenced. Witness was present when the body was recovered at about 9.10 p m. The body was found some distance further along from the spot pointed out to him, and had evidently been washed down by the flush.

Bert Dutton, Lydiate Lane, Weston Point, said he was working at Castner-Kellner's at 8.15, when he heard that a boy was in the water. He scaled a fence that ran along the canal bank, and obtaining some grapplers, started grappling operations. The grapple broke, and witness then proceeded to Weston Point Dock, and obtained a boat and a long rake. With this, he was successful in recovering the body about 9.10. It was about six yards from the bank of the canal where there was probably six

or seven feet of water. Artificial respiration was tried, but without avail.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned". On the suggestion of the Coroner, they also passed a resolution of commendation of Santley's gallant attempt at rescue, requesting the Superintendent of Police to bring his action to the notice of the Humane Society as being a gallant attempt to save life, even if unsuccessful. The Foreman suggested the resolution would probably be an encouragement not only to Santley, but to others.

Superintendent Owen was present, and promised to carry out the jury's wishes.

Santley was called into the room, and, addressing him, the Coroner said, "Santley, the jury have passed a resolution, expressing commendation of what they considered a very plucky attempt on your part to save the life of this boy. They regret, as we all regret, that the attempt was unsuccessful, but at the same time, we all feel that your conduct is worthy of commendation, and the jury have asked the Superintendent if he will bring it before the Royal Humane Society, and if they think it merits any special commendation, as we all think it does, they may make some special recognition of it".

It is a curious coincidence that three weeks ago the boy's father fell into the canal near the salt works, and was rescued by a man named Reaney of Halton Road, who has been awarded the certificate of the Liverpool Humane and Shipwreck Society, and also a monetary gift, in recognition of his conduct.

47 7 September 1917

THE TRIBUNALS, RUNCORN

BOATMEN OF IMPORTANCE "We might as well ask for a bit of the moon", observed the Military Representative to a suggestion that a young boatman of 19, passed Class A, should be left until a substitute, such as an ex boatman, could be provided. He did not know what the feeling of the Tribunal was, but his opinion was that no single man of 19, passed Class A, should be retained in any occupation.

A letter was read from the Secretary to the Canals Control Committee supporting the appeal, urging the extreme importance of watermen, particularly in view of the transference of so much rolling stock from railways to France, throwing additional work on the waterways.

Mr Hough, who appeared for the employers, said they had already had to tie up three of their boats owing to men joining the Army.

The Military Representative said the Tribunal knew the feeling in the town about young men being in offices and works whom the Tribunal could not touch, and here they had a case of a single young man over whom they had power.

The Chairman : Then the sooner there is someone who can go round and get at some of these people who are only nominally engaged on transport work the better.

It was decided to grant conditional exemption.

48 21 September 1917

RUNCORN BOY'S DEATH

EXHAUSTION AFTER ACCIDENT The Deputy Coroner, Mr A E White, held an inquiry at the Runcorn Court House on Tuesday afternoon, relative to the death of a boy named **James Thomas Stokes**, the 12 year old son of a boatman, **John Stokes**, of 4 Back High Street, Runcorn.

The evidence of the father showed that the boy was helping him with the narrow boats *Hannah* and *Mary*. The *Hannah* had been loaded with large bottles of vitriol at the works of the Weston Chemical Co, and was berthed in the wharf on the river Weaver at the works on Friday August 31st. In order to allow a flat to come into the wharf, witness and his son were pulling their boats out of the wharf, and witness left the deceased pulling the *Hannah* out by means of a rope. Hearing a noise, he returned to the boat, and saw some men handing his son across the flat and on to the canal bank. Witness did not see the accident, but he found one of the bottles broken, and his son's leg was burnt at the bottom from the knee downwards. He appeared to have fallen on one of the vitriol bottles, and to have broken it.

The Coroner : Why was not the boy at school?

Witness : We have not had the time with carrying for the Government as hard as we can.

The Coroner : You know that he ought to have been at school, and that you had no permission to keep him away.

Witness : Yes, I am aware of that.

John Grime of Norton Street, Runcorn, captain of the flat *Arthur*, said he was waiting for a berth at the Weston Chemical Works on August 31st, on the River Weaver Canal. He saw the deceased pulling his boat round with a rope. He heard a shout, and on looking, saw the boy on the beam of his boat. It was evident that he had had his foot in one of the bottles of vitriol, and this the boy told him, and that he had dipped the foot in the canal. Witness helped to get him to the canal bank. The deceased did not tell witness what caused him to fall with his foot into the bottle.

Arthur Thomas Hopwood of 14 Okell Street, a clerk at the Weston Works, said he was in the office on the day in question, when he heard a commotion on the canal bank, and on going outside saw that there was something the matter with the deceased's foot. Knowing what he had been loading, he came to the conclusion that he had had his foot in vitriol. Witness immediately took the boy's boot and stocking off, and cut away the trousers as far as necessary, and found the leg badly burnt. He dressed it with (?carron) oil, and took him into the laboratory to see if the burns had extended any higher, and then sent for a taxi to take the boy home. He understood that he was afterwards taken to the Cottage Hospital.

Florence Mary Blythe, a nurse at the Cottage Hospital, spoke to the boy being admitted to the Hospital suffering from burns and shock. Witness attended him while in the hospital, but he never informed her how the accident occurred. He died on the 14th inst.

Dr Scolah gave evidence as to attending the deceased on August 31st in the afternoon, first at his home. He was suffering from severe burns to the left leg from the knee downwards. He ordered his removal to the Cottage Hospital the same day, where he continued to attend him until his death on September 14th. Death was due to exhaustion, following the severe burns. He appeared to go on all right the first week, but afterwards he became worse.

The Coroner said it was a great pity that this boy was employed instead of being at school, as he should have been. At the same time they all knew the difficulty there was in getting labour at the present time, though the father had no business to have kept him away.

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

49 26 November 1917

SUDDEN DEATH OF CAPTAIN HARVEY Captain **William Harvey**, a well known Runcornian, died with tragic suddenness on Sunday afternoon. Captain Harvey, who was 59 years of age, was a native of Devonshire, and had been connected with the waterways all his life. As a boy, he went to sea on sailing vessels, and continued in the seafaring profession until about 25 years of age, when he came to Weston Point and entered the employ of the Weaver Navigation, being engaged on the pier head. Upon the opening of the Ship Canal, he was appointed lock master at the Old Quay Lock, and afterwards at the Bridgewater Lock, where he had been stationed for the past 20 years. He was particularly well known in the town and district, and was a familiar figure among the seafaring and watermen fraternity. For more than ten years he had been a member of the Order of Buffaloes, in which he had held several offices. Much sympathy is expressed with the family inasmuch as the fate of his youngest son is in doubt. He was second engineer on a Liverpool vessel which was torpedoed a fortnight ago by a submarine. The crew took to the boats, and two of them landed safely, while the third boat in which Mr Harvey found a place was washed ashore a few days later, but only two bodies were recovered. Mr Harvey was wearing a life saving jacket, and it is still hoped he and others may have been picked up by a passing vessel. The uncertainty of the fate of his son appears to have preyed on the mind of Captain Harvey, and quite possibly had much to do with his tragic death. Another son is engaged at sea as chief engineer, and another son, who was formerly a pilot on the Ship Canal, is now on active service.

EVIDENCE AT THE INQUEST An inquest was conducted on Tuesday at the Runcorn Court

House by Coroner A E White.

Lily Harvey, daughter of the deceased, gave evidence of identification, and said so far as she knew her father had been a healthy man, and had not been under the doctor for some time. On October 14th, he heard bad news of her brother, who was on a boat which had been torpedoed. On Sunday witness went upstairs, leaving her father downstairs. She was only away a few minutes, and on her return found her father lying by the sofa as if he had been trying to get on to the sofa. He was face downwards, and she tried to turn him over but failed to do so, and she ran for a neighbour, who assisted her to raise him on the sofa. She called, "Father", but he did not reply, and she ran for a doctor, but on his arrival he found that her father was dead.

Evidence as to conducting a *post mortem* examination on the body was given by Dr Murphy, who said he was of the opinion that death was due to syncope due to haemorrhage.

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

THE FUNERAL The funeral took place at Runcorn Cemetery yesterday afternoon, the officiating clergyman being the Rev F C Sellar, of the Parish Church.

50 20 November 1917

BOATMEN'S STRIKE

A THOUSAND MEN OUT AT MANCHESTER About a thousand boatmen and porters employed at the Manchester branch of the Bridgewater section of the Manchester Ship Canal came out on strike on Saturday afternoon. Their action is not authorised by their trade union, and has been taken as a protest against what they consider the dilatoriness of the Canal Control Committee in dealing with a wages application.

Last month, the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union, on behalf of the men employed on the Bridgewater section, the Rochdale Canal, and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, applied for the war bonus of 15s a week to be converted into a wages advance, and also asked for a further increase in wages of 5s a week. The application was passed on by the companies to the Canal Control Committee, which now administers the canals on behalf of the Government. No announcement having been made by the committee, the men felt that there had been undue delay in dealing with the request, and their dissatisfaction was intensified by the fact that the bonus of a similar amount given to the carters who work along with them was converted into wages last August.

On Saturday morning, Mr E Latimer, the managing director of the Ship Canal Company, informed the men that the war bonus would be converted into wages as from the first week of December. The announcement was considered by meetings of the men on Saturday night, and they decided to remain on strike. Their contention is that the award should be retrospective as from August, to put them in the same position as the carters, and to give them an advantage in the payment of overtime. They also ask that consideration should be given to their application for an additional 5s a week.

51 23 November 1917

THE TRIBUNALS, RUNCORN

BARGEMAN CERTIFIED A local firm of carriers appealed for a bargeman, a married man of 39, and a captain. He had only just been called up, and most of his work was Government work. The firm's representative pointed out that the man had only one eye and was passed Class C3. He had been with the firm for six or seven years.

The Military Representative said he should have thought a bargeman of 39 was in a reserved occupation.

Conditional exemption was granted.

52 4 January 1918

UNKNOWN MAN FOUND DROWNED AT RUNCORN The Deputy Coroner (Mr A E White) conducted an inquiry at the Runcorn Courthouse on Monday afternoon, relative to the death of an unknown man, whose body was recovered from the Bridgewater Canal on Sunday afternoon.

Jonathan Pickstock, a boatman of 38 Bridgewater Street, said he was on the towing path of the Bridgewater Canal near the Gas Works at 3.30 on Sunday afternoon, when he saw the body of a man on the tow rope of a boat which was being drawn by the tug *Ashton*. He shouted to the captain of the tug, and someone shouted, "Stop the tug". Witness said, "Do not stop the tug or you will lose the body". He assisted to take the body from the water.

Sergeant Robinson spoke to hearing of the recovery of the body and to taking charge of it at 3.40 on Sunday afternoon. He removed the body to the mortuary, and upon examining it, found it was dressed in a red, white and blue striped cotton shirt, blue flannel singlet as usually worn by firemen and gas workers, grey cotton socks, dark cloth trousers, dark braces with white stripe, dark cotton muffler tied in a sailor's knot, laced up boots with patent leather toecaps. There was no coat or waistcoat, and the boots had been recently soled. In the pocket of the trousers was a leather purse containing 22 £1 and one 10s Treasury notes, 6s in silver and a pocket knife. There was no name and no papers on the body which would lead to identification. With regard to the body, it was that of a man from 40 to 45 years of age, about 5 ft 8 in in height, a well built man of probably 15 stone, very muscular and about the best developed man he had seen for a long time. He had dark hair and a small dark cropped moustache, fresh complexion and brown eyes. On the right foot was an ingrowing toe nail. There were signs of an old injury to the nose, and there was a portion of the right ear missing, this also being an old standing injury. There were three vaccination marks on the right arm, and there appeared to be an operation mark on the left hip joint. There was a deep cut across the left side of the face and forehead, and below the hip, and the left leg was severed below the knee, and these had been caused probably by the propeller of a tug. The two front teeth were all right, and the two eye teeth were there, the right eye tooth being much decayed and the left one quite sound, and the remainder of the teeth in the top jaw were missing. The teeth in the bottom jaw were all right. The body was apparently that of a man of the labouring classes, and the body did not appear to have been in the water more than 24 hours at the most.

An open verdict was returned as to the time, place and cause of death, and the jury also agreed with the evidence of the officer as to the description of the body.

53 8 January 1918

RUNCORN MAN DROWNED AT WIDNES

TRAGEDY OF A DARK NIGHT At Widnes Police Station on Saturday, Mr S Brighthouse conducted an inquest on the body of John Williams, who was found drowned in West Bank Dock on Thursday. Mr C Poole appeared for Hutchinson's Trustees, the owners of the dock.

Mary Griffiths of Badger's Lodge, Ledsham, Cheshire, gave evidence of identification, and said the deceased was her father-in-law. He was 59 years of age and was a widower. She last saw him alive on December 27th, when he paid her a visit.

Joseph Radley said he was foreman over the navy gang in the engineers' department at Mathieson's Works of the United Alkali Co Ltd. The deceased had worked for him as a labourer for the past six months. On the morning of January 1st, the deceased commenced work at 6 am and worked until 5.30, when they left the works together. When outside they parted, the deceased going in the direction of West Bank Dock. That was the way he was accustomed to going. It was a very dark night.

Arthur Maddocks, waterman, 25 Cooper Street, Runcorn, said the deceased had lodged at his house for the last fourteen months. He was of temperate habits. On the morning of January 1st he left home to go to his work, and did not see him again. On Thursday he heard that he had been found drowned, and later he identified the body.

Detective Robinson said he examined the body and found a scar on the left side of the forehead. It appeared to have been caused by the deceased striking his head against one of the upright beams of the dock when falling. There was a chain around the corner of the dock where the deceased was found. The deceased appeared to have got inside of the chain, and fallen into the dock in the dark.

The Coroner : Is it easy for anyone to get inside the chain?

Witness : Quite easy, if a person misjudged where the chain was.

The Coroner : He could easily have fallen into the water in the dark?

Witness : Yes, sir.

The jury returned a verdict of "Death from misadventure".

Mr Poole, on behalf of the owners of the dock, expressed regret at the accident, and said the deceased was really trespassing when going the way he did. There was a proper way provided.

54 8 February 1918

RUNCORN FOOD CONTROL COMMITTEE

WATERMEN AND SUPPLIES The question of watermen and sailors and their supplies of meat and groceries was discussed. One part put forward was that in the case of a gang of men coming into the town on constructional work, provision was made for obtaining a special supply of foodstuffs. The opinion was expressed that if provision could be made for these, provision should also be made for the sailors coming into the port, and the watermen and boatmen, and the floating population generally. It was decided to write to Wolverhampton to ascertain what had been done on the matter there.

55 8 February 1918

RUNCORN FIREMAN DROWNED

NIGHT ACCIDENT ON STEAM TUG The body of **John Blease**, a fireman employed on the steam tug *Eastham*, was recovered from the Manchester Ship Canal at Runcorn on Wednesday morning. He had been missing since January 13th. The same day, Deputy Coroner White conducted an inquest at the Runcorn Court House.

Thomas Blease, 42 Egerton Street, Runcorn, retired publican, said that the deceased was his son, and aged 41.

John Roberts, captain of the steam tug *Eastham*, said the deceased was a fireman. On January 13th the boat was at the Old Quay, and just after four o'clock in the afternoon, witness went ashore, leaving the deceased on board. It was deceased's duty to attend to the fire before going ashore. The boat was roped to the quay, and was about seven feet below it, access to the deck being gained by means of a ladder. If anyone using the ladder stumbled, they would fall on the deck as the ladder was amidship, and there was no space between the boat and the quay wall. When witness got back to the boat at four a m on January 14th, he thought the deceased was on board. At 5.30 it was found that he was not on the tug, and a parcel belonging to him, and containing clean underclothing, was found on the deck.

By Superintendent Sudlow : The deceased was a moderately sober man.

William Wrench corroborated. Apparently the deceased had been to the boat on the evening of January 13th, and banked up the fires.

Amelia Ann Wainwright, 26 High Street, said the deceased made his home with her when ashore. On January 13th, he came to the house at about nine in the evening, when he left to go to the boat, taking clean clothing with him. He was then sober. He had good health, and was in lively spirits that night.

J Pickstock, captain of the barge *Amy*, spoke to recovering the body of the deceased from the canal about 100 yards from the swing bridge.

Constable Price said the body was attired in a flannel shirt, a boot and a sock. It was much decomposed, and minus a leg. He thought it had been mutilated by the propellers of boats.

The Coroner said there was no very direct evidence as to how the deceased came by his end. The night in question was a dark one.

The jury found that the deceased was drowned by accidentally falling into the water. They expressed their sympathy with the relatives, as did the Coroner and Captain Acraman, on behalf of the Manchester Ship Canal Co.

56 15 February 1918

WIDNES FLATMAN DROWNED A Widnes flatman named **Ernest Ball** (24), of 14 Bank Street,

was drowned in the Alfred Dock, Wallasey, on Tuesday night.

He had gone ashore from the flat, and shortly before midnight a gateman heard cries of "Help". He ran to the assistance of the drowning man who, however, disappeared before his arrival. The body came to the surface later, and was recovered.

57 22 March 1918

SHIPPING DISASTER ON THE MERSEY

STEAMER SUNK

TWO RUNCORN MEN AND A BOY DROWNED A shipping accident involving the loss of three lives occurred in the Mersey at Widnes early on Friday morning. The vessel was the *Severn*, owned by the Abel Lighterage and Ballast Co, Liverpool. She was carried out of her course by a strong current and, colliding with the approach of the Widnes and Runcorn Transporter Bridge, sank, and the crew were drowned. The victims were **John Hall**, aged 48, 11 Lowlands Road, Runcorn ; his son, John Hall, aged 14, and **Richard Bebbington**, aged 19, Lock Street, Runcorn.

Shortly after midnight, the watchmen of the Transporter Bridge on the Widnes side heard a tremendous crash against the uprights supporting the approach to the bridge. At that time the tide was reaching its height, and at this particular spot the water rushes with great force. One of the watchmen ran along the approach and heard cries for help. It was very dark at the time, and they were unable to see anything. The other man rushed along the promenade with a lifebelt, but nothing more was heard. When daylight came, it was found that a small steamer had collided with the iron columns which support the approach, and only the mast was visible. When the tide receded, the identity of the vessel was established.

A representative of the owners made an investigation of the ship, and found that a chain connecting the rudder of the steering gear was broken, but he expressed the opinion that the chain was probably broken as a result of the impact. He was quite at a loss, he stated, to account for the vessel being in such a position. The vessel, which is engaged in the sand carrying trade, left Widnes on Wednesday morning, and at the time of the accident was returning, intending to enter Widnes docks.

BODIES RECOVERED Later in the morning, the body of the captain's son was found in the cabin, and the bodies of Hall and Bebbington were found on the sandbanks opposite St Mary's Church, a distance of about 300 yards from the scene of the accident.

Two of the iron columns of the bridge approach were smashed clean off, top and bottom, and although the damage was not sufficient to necessitate closing the bridge, it was found necessary to stop heavy traffic along the approach.

Alfred Bennett, one of the watchmen of the bridge, in an interview, said the shock of the collision was felt through the entire approach. At the moment, he thought that a Zeppelin or aeroplane had dropped a bomb. The cries for help, which appeared to come from the middle of the river, were quite agonising. They grew fainter and fainter, and gradually died away.

It is believed that the cause of the disaster was that the steamer was caught by the extremely strong current which runs at this spot, and she was soon out of her course, the captain losing control. The approach of the bridge runs out into the river for a distance of about 40 yards, and as it was one of the highest tides of the year, the current would be stronger. There was about 20 feet of water at the spot where the vessel sank.

THE INQUEST An inquest was held on Monday morning by Mr S Brighthouse. Mr W Hough, Runcorn, appeared on behalf of the owners of the *Severn*, and Mr Hodgson represented the National Union of Dock Labourers and Riverside Workers. Mr T Craik, Deputy Town Clerk, was present on behalf of the Corporation, the owners of the Transporter Bridge.

John Daniel Shaw, ship canal pilot, 9 Victoria Road, Runcorn, said at 12.10 on Friday morning he was standing on the bridge of the steamer *Jane*, which was lying at West Bank Dock, Widnes, when he saw the steamer *Severn* sailing in the direction of Widnes. She had four lights burning brightly. There was a strong tide coming in at about four or five knots an hour. It was about an hour off high water. When the *Severn* went past witness's ship, she was near mid stream. She sailed through the north arch of the railway bridge, and witness then lost sight of her. What happened was one of the

mysteries of the water. It may have been the engine, or steering gear, or the tide.

John William Heath, driver of the Transporter Bridge car, said that at 12.13 he was in the toll house and heard a tremendous crash, which effected the whole bridge. Witness and Alfred Bennett, the watchman, ran out, and heard cries for help. Witness got a life belt, and ran round to the promenade. The cries then sounded in midstream. When on the promenade he failed to hear the cries again. Witness afterwards went to the west side of the bridge approach, and saw a mast, which he afterwards discovered belonged to the steam barge *Severn*, which had foundered against the bridge. The impact had been so violent that two iron columns of the bridge were carried away, and the girders of the bridge approach were strained. The navigation lights on the bridge were full on when the accident occurred.

A witness from the firm said Hall had navigated the river for some years. He was, however, only occasionally on this particular run. He was more on the lower part of the river. The barge had recently been overhauled, and in January this year had a new boiler put in her. The engineer, Bebbington, was there at the time, and orders were given that he was to have anything he required done.

The jury returned a verdict of "Misadventure", and expressed sympathy with the relatives.

Mr Hough, on behalf of the owners, also expressed regret at the accident, and said the deceased were all excellent servants.

FUNERAL OF THE VICTIMS The remains of the three victims of the disaster were laid to rest in Runcorn Cemetery on Wednesday afternoon. The popular imagination had been touched by the sadness of the circumstances, and crowds lined the streets through which the cortege passed. The flag at the Mersey Mission to Seamen floated half mast high.

Bebbington was interred from his parents' house in Vicar Street, and the funeral procession joined that of the Halls at the corner of Greenway Road. The officiating minister was the Rev C E Killick, vicar of Holy Trinity.

The chief mourners were Mrs Bebbington (widow), Mr and Mrs Bebbington (mother and father), Mr Robinson (father-in-law), Mrs Keogh (sister), Mr W Bebbington (grandfather), Mr and Mrs L Bebbington (uncle and aunt), Mrs Parry (aunt), Mr W Bebbington (uncle), Mr and Mrs Done (uncle and aunt), Mr and Mrs Grainger (uncle and aunt), Miss Grainger and the Masters Grainger (cousins), Mr and Mrs Farrington (uncle and aunt), Mrs Neesham (aunt).

The bearers were Messrs T Houghton, E Rowe, W Rowe and T Owen.

Wreaths were sent by Messrs Albert, Abel and William Hopwood, fellow workers at the Abel Lighterage and Ballast Company, Fred and Mrs Ellison, Loch Street neighbours and friends, "Brother-in-law and sister-in-law Jim and Amy", Mr and Mrs Fred Abel, staff of Abel Lighterage and Ballast Co, Mr and Mrs Cook and "Jack", Uncle Louis and Aunt Bebbington and "Cousins", neighbours and friends, Vicar Street (two), Jim Mainwaring, workers at fertiliser plant Wigg's Works, "Uncle J W and Aunt Jessie", "Aunt Sarah, Uncle Jack and Sam in France", friends and neighbours Dover Street, "Brother-in-law and sister-in-law Bob and Lizzie", "Uncle Arthur and Aunt Sarah", "Loving wife and child", Liverpool discharging men of the Abel Lighterage and Ballast Co, Mr and Mrs Parry, "Father and mother, sisters and brother".

The Halls had been associated with the Salvation Army, the youth, John, having played a cornet in the band of the local corps for several years. He was also associated with the Sunday School. The service was conducted by the Rev H Hoole (superintendent Wesleyan minister), the Rev J E Howard and Ensign Rees of the Wigan Corps of the Salvation Army, and formerly of Runcorn.

The chief mourners were Mrs Hall and daughters, Mr Eastup (foster father), Mr and Mrs Edge (brother-in-law and sister), Mr and Mrs Morgan of Rochdale (brother-in-law and sister), Mr and Mrs Hill (nephew and niece), Mrs Jeffs (niece), Mr Rutter (nephew), Mr and Mrs Brown (nephew and niece), Miss Edge (niece), Mr George Edge (nephew), Mrs Shaw (niece), and "Ronnie", Mr J Lamb (cousin), Mr Will Wright, Miss Cissie Matthews, Mrs Smith, Mrs Jackson, Mrs W Jackson (Widnes).

The Salvation Army was represented by Ensign Rees of Pemberton, and the following members of the local corps : Capt Gleghorn (officer in charge), Bro Cannon (treasurer), Bro Bennett (secretary),

Sister Attwood, Mrs Cannon, Mrs Leathwood, Bro and Mrs May, Sister G May, Sister Stubbs, Sister Edwards, Sister Smith, Sister Moores, Ernest Stubbs, James Edwards, Bro and Sister Johnson (Widnes), Bro and Sister Bennett (Garston). The draped flag of the corps was carried by Bro Bennett.

Ensign Rees, in a brief address at the graveside, spoke of the worth of Bro Hall and his son, "than whom there was not a more beautiful boy in Runcorn". Bro Hall was one who fought his way through many difficulties, and was faithful unto the end. It was not the man that had the most to say that was grandest in the sight of God.

"Shall we gather at the river" was sweetly sung by a lady member of the corps.

Beautiful wreaths were sent by : Wife and daughters, Mr and Mrs Edge and family, Mr and Mrs Morgan and family (Rochdale), Mr and Mrs Hill and family, Mr and Mrs Brown, Mr and Mrs Jackson and family (Widnes), Mr and Mrs Robert Smetham, Mr and Mrs Smith and family, neighbours in Lowland Road, Mrs Hewitt and family, Miss Cawley, Miss Mort, Lily Henderson, Albert and Abel and William Hopwood, Mr and Mrs Fred Abel, Mr and Mrs Gough and family (Garston), the Salvation Army (Runcorn Corps), workers of the fertiliser plant, Wigg's Works, fellow workers of the Abel Lighterage and Ballast Co, staff of the Abel Lighterage and Ballast Co, Mr Will Wright, "His pals" Balfour Road Boys' School, children of the Salvation Army.

There was a large attendance of the general public and the workmen and staff of the Abel Lighterage and Ballast Co, together with a number of watermen. Mr William Hopwood represented the owners of the *Severn*, and Mr Thomas Williams and Mr Dutton represented Mr Fred Abel.

58 7 June 1918

WIDNES

CRUELTY TO HORSES At Widnes Police Court yesterday, **Michael Devaney**, a canal boatman of 44 Wellington Street, Widnes, was fined £5 for cruelty to a horse by causing it to be worked in an unfit state, and his son, **Joseph Devaney**, was fined 20s for working it.

59 14 June 1918

ALLEGED BURGLARY AT LYMM

INSPECTOR'S SMART CAPTURE **William Henry Baldwin** (18) of 10 Cope Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, was charged at Altrincham on Friday, before Mr J W Sidebotham (presiding) and Mr G F Armitage, with burglariously breaking into and entering the dwelling house of Mr W H Winstanley, Dairy Farm, Lymm, between May 28th and 29th, and stealing money orders and goods of the value of £2 7s 6d.

Mr Winstanley said that everything was left safe on the night of May 28th. Next morning the drawers in several rooms had been ransacked. The articles now produced were his property.

Inspector Sharp said he had reason to believe that the burglary had been committed by a youth named Baldwin of Birmingham. Witness happened to be in Birmingham on other business, and made several calls at Baldwin's home, but without success. He saw the prisoner in Monument Road, Birmingham and he eventually admitted breaking into the farmhouse at Lymm. He was wearing a cap stolen from the farmhouse. When brought to the Altrincham Police Station and charged with the offence, prisoner said, "That's right, that's true. The money order for £1 a boatman changed for me, and I gave him the other order for 3s 9d for changing the £1 order".

Mr Sidebotham : It was a very smart capture.

Prisoner said he was working on one of Horsefield's boats between Manchester and Runcorn. On returning to Runcorn, his calling up papers had arrived at the office. He asked the captain could he stay on until June 10th, but the captain would not let him. He tried to get a job, but no one would employ him for so short a time. He called at the Altrincham Police Station and asked for a railway warrant to Birmingham, but was told he could not have one. For three days he walked about without food, and then he broke into the farmhouse at Lymm and stole the money orders and goods mentioned. A boatman gave him a ride to Liverpool and changed the money order for £1. At Liverpool he took train to Birmingham.

The magistrates committed Baldwin for trial at the Knutsford Quarter Sessions.

60 **5 July 1918**



NAVAL HERO'S DEATH A Runcorn naval hero, who took part in the blockading raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend, has lost his life as a result of an explosion. This is **Henry Massey**, AB of the Royal Naval Reserve, the son of Mrs Ellams, 67 Heath Road, Runcorn. A telegram from the Admiralty was as follows : "Deeply regret report received that Henry Massey, deckhand, RNR, has died from injuries sustained as the result of an explosion. Written information follows". Massey, who was 19 years of age, joined up on August 1st of last year. In the second raid on the Belgian coast, he was on board the British launch which had to be destroyed. He had had a brother-in-law in the RGA, a cousin in the Navy, and three cousins with the forces. An uncle, Private Henry Cooper, after whom the deceased was called, lost his life in Zululand when fighting with the battalion of the 24th Foot Regiment on January 22nd 1879, and he had previously fought in the Kaffir War, for which he received a medal.

Seaman Henry Massey attended the Victoria Road Council School as a boy, and also the Mill Brow Sunday School. He was employed as a waterman by the Manchester Ship Canal Co, and was a member of the "Duke of Devonshire" Lodge of Oddfellows, and of the Dock Wharf Riverside and General Workers' Union. The body was brought to Runcorn, and was interred in the Runcorn Cemetery on Tuesday. The bearers were gunners of the Royal Navy and members of the Royal Air Force.

61 **9 July 1918**

CHESTER ASSIZES

CHARGE OF FORGERY AT RUNCORN **William Corcoran** (19), waterman, pleaded guilty to forging and uttering a Post Office order for the payment of money at Runcorn on May 15th 1918. The order was for an Army payment due to him, and he tampered with the figures of the amount due to him. Prisoner was bound over.

62 12 July 1918

DROWNING FATALITY AT WESTON POINT

PLUCKY ATTEMPT AT RESCUE An inquiry was conducted at Weston Point on Tuesday relative to the death of William Frederick Mather, aged five years and nine months, the son of George Mather, Wright's Dock Cottages, Weston Point, who fell into the canal on Sunday afternoon, and in spite of a speedy rescue from the water, lost his life.

George Mather, the father, gave evidence of identification, and said about 4.15 on Sunday afternoon the boy left the house with his sisters to play. About 4.45 his daughter Lizzie came to the house and shouted, "Willie and Agnes are in the water". Witness ran along to the swing bridge at the junction of the Runcorn and Weston Canal and the River Weaver, and found that Agnes had just been taken out of the water by means of a boat hook. A man whom he did not then know dived into the water, but could not find the body, and Mr Miller then brought grappling irons and handed them to witness and a boatman named **Tranter**, and the latter managed to recover the body and witness lifted it from the water. The boy, he thought, had only been in the water for five minutes, and artificial respiration was at once commenced, but without success. Dr Scolah, who had been sent for, then arrived, and suggested taking the boy home and putting him in a hot bath, and this was done, but without any result.

Agnes Mather, aged nine years, said she, her sister Lizzie and George and the deceased went to play on the cop near the swing bridge. She sat down with George and Lizzie, and Willie ran down the cop and said he was going to wade. He had his shoes and stockings off, and Lizzie shouted to him to come away, but he went in and commenced to wade on a ledge just below the water near the bridge. George followed him and shortly afterwards he shouted, "Willie's in the "cut"". Witness ran down and got on the ledge, and managed to take hold of Willie's hand, but he was just going down and he pulled her in, and in so doing she let go his hand.

Joseph Miller, a clerk residing at Tonnage House, stated that he saw the deceased and his brother George with their shoes and stockings off, wading in the water on a ledge by the swing bridge. He ordered them away, and they went towards home while witness returned to his house. About ten minutes later he heard screams, and ran with a boat hook, and saw two children in the canal. He got the girl out, and tried to find the boy with the boat hook but failed to do so, and he then ran home for grappling irons, which he handed to the father and another man, who quickly recovered the body. He saw a man he did not know at the time jump into the water before witness had time to warn him about the ledge below the surface of the water, and the man's head came into contact with this ledge, partially stunning him. He dived into the water again and tried to find the boy. In witness's opinion it was a very plucky action, as the water was full of chemicals, and a bad place in which to dive.

John Carr, a contractor's labourer residing at the Old Weaver Hotel lodging house, said at five o'clock on Sunday afternoon he was near the Weaver Canal, when he saw some people running in the direction of the swing bridge. He followed them, and heard someone say there was a boy in the canal. He pulled off his coat and muffler as he ran, and directly he was told where the body went down he jumped into the water. His head came in contact with a stone ledge, which he could not see, and this stunned him for a time. On recovering he dived into the water twice, and on some people pointing out some air bubbles a distance away he dived again, but without success. As he was feeling very sick through swallowing some of the water, he got out of the water and went away to change his clothes.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

The Coroner warmly complimented Carr upon his very plucky attempt at rescue, and asked the police to bring the matter before the proper authorities in order that his conduct should be recognised in some tangible form.

63 16 July 1918

FLATMAN'S LONELY DEATH

INQUEST AT RUNCORN The dead body of a veteran flatman named **John Hillyer**, generally

known as “Yorkshire Jack” was found on Friday morning in the cabin of the flat *Laura*, on which he had been employed at Top Locks, Runcorn. The body was removed to the mortuary.

Deputy Coroner White conducted an inquest at the Runcorn Court House on Monday afternoon.

Richard Hillage, Tuckey's Yard, Percival Lane, waterman, said he had known the deceased about 30 years. About nine years ago he worked with witness on the flat *Annie*, and subsequently on the flat *Laura*. He was nearly 70 years of age, and for some time had been living on the flat. For five years, and particularly during the past year, he had suffered from asthma, and had to rest sitting up. Witness last saw him alive on Wednesday of last week, when he was sitting on the deck of his flat. Witness had not been working with him since before Christmas. He asked him how he was, and he replied that he was no better.

By Mr W Shaw : Deceased had sailed the flat alone for some time.

Dr Murphy spoke to examining the body of the deceased on Friday. He was apparently about 70 years of age, and had been dead about 24 hours, in witness's opinion. The cause of death was heart failure due to asthma and bronchitis. He probably died suddenly and peacefully. Witness recollected the man as an occasional caller at his surgery. He was treated for bronchitis about a month ago.

John Thomas Shaw, canal boat inspector to the Urban Council, said that he found the deceased sitting dead in the locker in his cabin on Friday. Witness knew he had suffered from asthma.

Sergeant Clague spoke to removing the body to the mortuary. Deceased appeared to have died quite peacefully.

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

64 3 September 1918

YOUNG COUPLE SEPARATED

RUNCORN YOUTH'S SECOND CHOICE **George Nicholls** (22), a waterman and discharged soldier, was summoned by his wife, **Gertrude Nicholls**, at Runcorn Sessions on Monday, for having deserted her.

The complainant said she married the defendant two years ago when he was “soldiering” at Oswestry, where she lived. They had a child 16 months old. On the 6th May her husband asked her to help his sister with her household work. As she (complainant) had been working hard at the jam factory all week, she refused. Thereupon he told her to go. She left the house and went to her sister's at 44 Gilbert Street. She did not hear anything more from him for a month, and she had found employment at the Salt Works. She had since found out that he had been living with another woman in Liverpool almost the whole of the time since May. She had seen the other woman, and now produced her photograph. Defendant earned from £3 to £5 per week. She had asked him what he proposed to do for her, and he told her he did not intend to return to her. He had given her £1 10s in all since they parted.

Defendant admitted telling his wife to “go” because she would not help his sister – with whom they lodged – with the housework. He alleged that when they were at Oswestry, his wife went out when the baby was ill, and was brought home drunk late at night. She had been sitting in public houses with soldiers. He alleged extravagant spending of the housekeeping money he gave her, with the result that he had to depend upon his sister for food. His earnings varied from nothing to three or four pounds a week. He admitted that he had made the acquaintance of another woman since he had parted from his wife, and was now living with her.

The Chairman said the complainant ought to have come before the Court earlier. An order for 30s a week for maintenance would be granted her.

Defendant said he was quite willing to allow his wife that.

The Chairman suggested that, as an ex soldier, he ought to “play the game” by paying the money for the weeks that had elapsed since the separation in May.

65 13 September 1918

PRIVATE JAMES COOKE Mr and Mrs A Cooke of Rutland Street have been notified that their

son, Private **James Cooke**, is in the Charing Cross Hospital suffering from severe burns. A letter from a sister in his ward says :-

“A bomb burst in his dug out while he was sleeping, and his face and hands got badly burnt, but we have every hope that in a week or two he will be much better and able to see his relatives. At present he is not allowed visitors, but if he gets any worse I will wire you. There is no need for you to worry too much”.

Private Cooke, who is 25 years of age, joined the Army on February 1st 1917, prior to which he was engaged as a waterman on munitions service, employed by Messrs Abel and Stone. He went to the front in September of last year. He received his education at the Parish Church School and attended Brunswick Sunday School. He has three uncles and a cousin serving with the Forces.

66 20 September 1918

ROLL OF HONOUR

KILLED

SERGEANT J W ELLISON



Mrs A Ellison, the widowed mother of Sergeant **John Wesley Ellison**, 21 Collier Street, has received news that her son was killed in action, having been shot by a sniper when trying to save one of his men. His lieutenant writes :

“I regret to have to inform you that your son, Sergeant J W Ellison, A Co, Royal Fusiliers, has been killed in action. He was a man who was loved by all who came into contact with him, and his men were his first thought. It was whilst endeavouring to save one of his own that he was shot by a sniper. No greater love hath any man than he lay down his life for his brother”.

Sergeant Ellison enlisted in September 1914, and took part in the famous landing at Suvla Bay, where he was seriously wounded and sent back to England. He left for the front early in 1916, and was recommended for gallantry in the field the same year. As a boy he attended the Parish Day and Sunday Schools, having an unbroken record for regular attendance for seven years at the day schools. He was 27 years of age, and prior to enlisting, was a bargeman in the employ of the Ship Canal Co, and later the Shropshire Union. He was a member of the Conservative Club. His brother, Private J A Ellison, was taken prisoner on May 8th 1915, and has since been at Grenasen, Germany. Another brother, Ernest, is a signal boy in the Merchant Service.

67 11 October 1918

ACCIDENT TO A RETIRED WATERMAN **Captain Fisher**, a retired waterman, fell downstairs

at his residence, 2 Queen Street, Runcorn, about midnight on Wednesday, and now lies in a critical condition suffering from a fractured skull. How the old man came to fall is not known, but his son, with whom he lives, heard a noise, and on getting up found him at the foot of the stairs. He ran for assistance, and met Sergeant Worthington, who rendered first aid. Dr Murphy was summoned and found the man to be suffering from a fractured skull, and gave very little hope of recovery. He is 74 years of age and well known in the town.

68 **18 October 1918**
DIED IN HOSPITAL



PRIVATE RICHARD ASPEY A cablegram has been received by Mrs Aspey of 5 Stone Street, Runcorn, informing her of the death in hospital of her husband, Private **Richard Aspey** of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Private Aspey, who was 24 years of age, enlisted in December of 1915, and went out on May 2 1916. He was severely wounded. He had not the good fortune to be sent home, but was expected home at Christmas on the completion of his three years' service. In his last letter home, Private Aspey says he has been playing rugby football with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers team, and they had succeeded in getting through the first round of the cup ties. As a boy he attended the Parish schools, and before enlisting was employed by the Bridgewater Department as a flatman. He has three brothers-in-law in the Army and one in the Navy, and another brother-in-law is reported missing.

69 **29 November 1918**
ANOTHER MILITARY MEDALLIST

GUNNER TOM WATTON News has been received by his parents that Gunner **Tom Watton** of Surrey Street, Runcorn, has been awarded the Military Medal for "gallantry in action and devotion to duty" in September last. Gunner Watton joined the Army in September of 1914, and went to France in June of the year following. He has seen much fighting, and was badly burned by a shell some time ago, which resulted in his being a patient at Southampton Hospital for 14 weeks. He is an old boy of Victoria Road School, and was associated with Camden Wesleyan Church and the late Mr Page's Bible Class. He is a waterman by calling.



70 **17 December 1918**

RUNCORN WOMAN'S DEATH

A VICTIM OF "NERVES" The body of Mrs A Brown, who had been living with her brother in Greenway Road, Runcorn, was recovered from the Bridgewater Canal at Top Locks on Saturday afternoon. She had been missing since the previous Tuesday morning, and her relatives were alarmed owing to the poor condition of her health.

Mrs Brown was a daughter of the late Mr George Goldsmith, and a member of a well known local family.

Deputy Coroner White held an inquest at the Runcorn Court House on Monday afternoon.

Frank Brown of Brooklyn, Birtles Road, Orford, Warrington, crane driver, said the deceased was his wife, and was 34 years old. They had been married eight years. There was no family. In August he noticed his wife's health failing, and she was treated by Dr McKee for nerve trouble. She was attended by him until she came to Runcorn to live with her sister in November. While at Runcorn she consulted a specialist. Witness last saw her alive on Monday evening of last week, when she left him at the Transporter Bridge. She then seemed fairly well. She had said occasionally that she could not stand the strain of the complaint, but she had not actually threatened to take her life. She had assured him that she would not do anything of the kind. They were very happy together. She left a note : "My darling Frank, all the strain is more than I can bear. No one seems to understand me. It is not that I won't work, but I have not the slightest idea I have had one of the best husbands, and I do long to make everything nice. I don't know which way to turn..... This terrible feeling. I have no feeling for anybody".

In reply to the Coroner, witness said the "work" his wife referred to must mean her household duties.

Phoebe Goldsmith, 79 Greenway Road, Runcorn, said her sister, the deceased, had been living with her for six weeks. She was in very poor health and depressed. On Wednesday night she and the deceased went to bed at nine o'clock. When witness woke at five o'clock on the following morning her sister was missing. Apparently she had put some clothing on over her night clothes, and was also wearing a hat and a waterproof cloak. Since she had been at Runcorn she had seen Dr Glynn of Liverpool, who prescribed for her, told her to keep her spirits up, and visit him again in the New Year. Deceased was suffering acutely from nerve trouble, and complained of a "terrible feeling". She had not threatened to end her life, but had remarked that if she did not get better, she would "have to do something". She was very temperate, and did not take drugs.

John Hoxworth, 55 Percival Lane, Runcorn, waterman, spoke to grappling at Top Locks on

Saturday in consequence of hearing that the deceased was missing. He recovered her body near Savage's Bridge. It was clothed, but deceased had no shoes or stockings on.

PC Oakes spoke to having examined the body. The cause of death was apparently drowning. There was a fracture of the left leg behind the knee, which he judged had been caused by the propeller of a tug boat. There were marks on the head apparently caused by the grappling irons.

The Coroner said there was no direct evidence that the deceased had committed suicide, although the letter and other circumstances made it highly probable that her mind was deranged. There was the possibility that she had fallen into the water accidentally while wandering about, and the verdict he proposed to return was "Found drowned".

71 28 February 1919

RUNCORN WATERMAN'S DEATH An old Runcornian, in the person of Mr **Thomas Clare** of 36 Bridgewater Street, died on Sunday night from the effects of influenza and pneumonia. He was taken ill while away a fortnight ago, and after three or four days in bed, came home but made no progress. During the whole of his working life he had been a waterman, and had over half a century's service, first with the firm of Thomas Hazlehurst and Sons, and later with the United Alkali Company. A native of Runcorn, he was 65 years of age. He had a long connection with the Bethesda Congregational Church, where he was a regular worshipper when at home. He leaves two daughters.

72 18 March 1919

RUNCORN

THE CHURCH STREET NUISANCE When four youths were summoned at Runcorn Sessions on Monday for obstructing the footpath, Superintendent Sudlow said the obstruction to pedestrians in Church Street on Sunday evenings was a real nuisance. The condition of things was disgraceful, and it was an annoyance to respectable people to try to pass along. The youths, George Bracegirdle, 17 Cooper Street ; **Thomas T Hulse**, bargeman of Winsford ; Joseph Griffiths, 19 Cooper Street and George Bibby of Granville Street, were each fined 10s.

73 11 April 1919

BARNTON

ONE CHARGE LEADS TO ANOTHER

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST YOUNG MEN How one charge led to another was told at the Northwich Police Court on Monday, when **William Giblin** (30), a boatman hailing from Runcorn, was charged with doing damage to the extent of 10s to the property of the Weaver Navigation Trustees at the bridgeman's hut at Little Leigh between 12 midnight on April 5th and 9.30 am on April 6th.

John Rutter, a bridgeman employed by the Weaver Navigation Trustees, said at midnight on Saturday he left the hut in order. On going there at 7.45 on Sunday morning he saw a man going up the bank in the direction of Barnton. Just afterwards he discovered that the shutter protecting the window of the hut had been broken and also the glass. He called to the man, but he did not stop. Witness then informed a cyclist who was passing.

PC Ellis said at 8.50 on Sunday morning he was told of what had happened at the hut, and also received a description of the man who had been seen in the vicinity. He later met the prisoner in Barnton, and asked him where he had been sleeping. He afterwards admitted that he had been in the hut. When he charged the prisoner with committing the damage, he made no reply.

Superintendent Ennion said the man had been in the Army from the outbreak of the war up to about three months ago.

The defendant was fined 10s, and was ordered to pay 10s damage.

Thomas Haspell, William Beech and Herbert Lyon, three Barton young men, were next charged with stealing an overcoat, value £2, belonging to William Giblin.

Superintendent Ennion explained that when Giblin was arrested he said the three men had been in

his company. A quarrel ensued, and he took off his overcoat to fight, but was knocked about by the three. He afterwards missed his coat. Enquiries were made, and the coat was found at the home of Beech.

Giblin said he was employed on the boat *Nonpareil* belonging to the Salt Union Ltd. About 1.45 on Saturday, he left his boat in Witton Brook, Northwich, with the intention of walking to Runcorn, where he resided. He mistook his way and got on the Chester Road, but afterwards got to Acton Bridge. He went into the Leigh Arms at 6.40 and left just before nine o'clock. At that time he was wearing an overcoat. One of the defendants had hold of his arm, and they went through a wood. After going a short distance a row started. He took off his overcoat, but he was knocked about by the three men. When he went to look for his overcoat, it was gone. He also lost a wallet containing £21 from his jacket pocket.

Superintendent Ennion said he should like a remand until Wednesday.

The Chairman : Is it true you three men set on Giblin?

Prisoners : No.

PS Worth said in the company of PC Ellis he went to the Leigh Arms at 2 pm the previous day, where he saw the three defendants. He interviewed Beech first, who said Mr Brock called them in his yard to put a man out who was drunk. He then asked Beech did he lose an overcoat, and he said, "Yes, a light coloured one". Witness then inquired had he found anything or taken an overcoat home which did not belong to him, and he said, "No". He next told him that PC Ellis had found an overcoat at his house which belonged to Giblin, and to that he replied, "I must have picked up Giblin's coat in mistake for my own after fighting". Lyon said Beech had lost an overcoat the night before, and Haspell said the same. On charging them at the Barnton Police Station, Beech replied, "Not guilty". Haspell answered, "I have no knowledge about it".

Defendants were remanded until Wednesday, bail being allowed in the sum of £5 each.

When the defendants appeared on remand before Messrs W Miles Bratt (chairman) and G H Brock, they were represented by Mr W Bancroft, and pleaded "Not guilty".

Giblin repeated his evidence, and added that Beech said to him, "Give me 2s and the others 2s each, they are special constables". (Laughter). They had a little white terrier with them.

Chairman : Are you sure you only saw one white terrier? (Laughter).

Witness : Yes.

Superintendent Ennion : Have special constables ever asked you for 2s before? (Laughter).

Witness : No.

Witness, continuing, said he broke the window of the hut because he had lost his overcoat, and he thought the defendants had got it, and were inside.

Superintendent Ennion : And you got locked up for unlawful damage? - Yes.

Superintendent Ennion : Do you know either of the defendants?

Witness : No. I only know their features. I recollect their features by giving them 2s each.

The Clerk : Did you lose any money?

Witness : I lost £21 I had in my Army wallet, and also my ring paper.

The Chairman : Are you perfectly certain about that? - Yes.

Where did you get it from? - It was my Army gratuity. I drew £23 10s from the Runcorn Post Office in February, and I have since spent £2 10s.

Mr Bancroft said that the police had got to prove that the coat was feloniously stolen, and no evidence had been brought to that effect. Beech took the coat in mistake for his own, which was a much better one, and he was thankful to the police for recovering it. With regard to Haspell and Lyon, they had nothing whatever to do with it.

Defendant Beech said he only had two drinks on Saturday night. As he, Haspell and Lyon were returning home, Mr Brock, the farmer, drew their attention to Giblin, who was lying on the ground in the farmyard in a helpless state of drunkenness. They removed him, and took him a short distance away, when he struck him (defendant), pulled his overcoat off and wanted to fight. He (defendant) had his overcoat on his arm, and he threw it down. He must have picked the wrong one up. He did not know until his mother called to him upstairs the next morning.

Haspell said he did not know Beech took the overcoat. Giblin was romancing when he spoke about giving them 2s each.

The Chairman said they thought that the chief witness (Giblin) was too drunk to know what he was really doing, and they could not convict on the evidence. They therefore dismissed the case.

74 15 April 1919

A NORTHWICH MYSTERY

BOATMAN FOUND DROWNED Mr H C Yates, district coroner, held an inquiry at the Wincham Primitive Methodist Sunday School on Friday into the circumstances surrounding the death of **Thomas Minshull**, a boatman of no fixed abode, who was found drowned in the Witton Brook on Wednesday morning of last week.

Robert P Houghton of 71 Lydyett Lane, Barnton, an employee of the Salt Union, identified the body as that of his uncle. The deceased was about 62 years of age, a bachelor, and had no fixed abode. He was last employed by the Salt Union, and his boat was engaged in carrying cinders from Weston Point to Witton Brook. He was a big, powerful man, but gave way to drink.

The Coroner : He has no enemies here?

Witness : None whatever.

John Curson, a boilermaker living at 3 Witton Brow, Marston, said that whilst he was standing in the road outside his house between nine and ten o'clock on the night of Saturday the 5th inst, he heard two people talking in Wincham Lane, but the only words he could catch were "Barge", "You had better go to Northwich", and later, "You will be getting drowned". Proceeding, witness said about nine o'clock the following morning, he was walking along Wincham Lane, and when he had passed the barge *Nonpareil*, which was moored close to the road, he heard some boys by the side of the brook, and one of them shouted, "There's a cap".

John Harrison, a member of the Barnton Grappling Corps, who resides at 13 Snowden Street, Barnton, said he was grappling in Witton Brook on Wednesday the 9th inst for the body of the deceased, which was found at 9.40 am, about 15 yards from the spot where the barge had been moored. The arms and legs were slightly drawn, otherwise there was nothing to show that there had been any struggle.

PS Brown said that when he saw the body of the deceased on the bank of the brook, the cap was missing. The clothing had not been disarranged, and he found 5s 8 1/2d in the pockets. He had seen the mate of the barge, a man named **William Giblin**, who told him that there was also the captain on board, and he thought his name was **Bracegirdle**. The latter was the last to leave the vessel. Giblin also told witness that if he was needed, his boat would be at Weston Point, but on inquiries being made by the Runcorn Police, they discovered that the barge was not there, and that Giblin had not turned up at his home in Runcorn.

The Coroner : Is there anything to show that he is implicated?

Witness : There is no suspicion at all.

The Coroner : There is no suspicion of foul play?

Witness : Not the slightest.

The Coroner said he had decided to adjourn the inquest in order that the police could trace either the captain of the barge or Giblin, and call one or other of them as a witness.

The inquiry was accordingly adjourned.

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY The adjourned inquiry was held on Monday. The captain of the *Nonpareil*, **Jabez Bracegirdle**, living at 17 Cooper Street, Runcorn, was present, but Police Sergeant Brown explained that no trace had been found of Giblin, the mate.

Bracegirdle said he had known the deceased for about eight months. Minshull was not employed by the Salt Union, but witness took him on his boat out of compassion. He received no wages, but witness used to give him odd coppers. On Friday the 4th inst about 10 pm, they arrived with the barge at Mill Bridge, Witton Brook, loaded with cinders, and the following morning they moved to the top of the brook.

The Coroner : The deceased was on board?

Witness : Yes.

Witness stated that to get off the barge they laid a plank from the boat to a cinder heap which formed the bank. The plank was about nine inches wide, and witness left the boat about one o'clock, leaving Minshull and Giblin on board. He saw the latter on Wednesday last, and he informed witness that he left the deceased aboard at two o'clock.

The Coroner : Were Giblin and Minshull on good terms with one another?

Witness : Yes ; they were good friends, and never quarrelled.

The Coroner : We have been told that Minshull had great difficulty in walking. Would it not be a difficult job for him to cross the plank?

Witness : Yes, it would.

The Coroner : Have you ever seen him walk over a plank before?

Witness : Yes, but I have had hold of his hand.

The Coroner : Ah! I see.

MINSHULL SEEN IN WITTON STREET **Thomas Hulse**, captain of the *City of New York*, stated that he had known the deceased for over thirty years. He saw Minshull on Saturday night, the 5th inst, about eight o'clock in Witton Street, walking in the direction of the Bull Ring. He stopped and spoke to him, and in his opinion he was quite sober.

GIBLIN NOT NEAR THE SPOT Proof that the mate Giblin was not in the vicinity of Wincham was given by PS Brown who, answering a question put by the Coroner, said the police had traced his movements from 6.45 pm on the Saturday evening to the following morning, and had discovered that he was in the Acton Bridge district during the whole of that time.

The Coroner said that from what he could gather, the deceased was trying to get to his boat, and it was quite possible he missed the plank and fell into the water, but there was no evidence to justify him in recording that fact. "I shall say he was found dead in Witton Brook", concluded the Coroner.

75 16 May 1919

A BOATMAN'S NOTICE

CLAIM AT RUNCORN COURT An interesting case was heard at the Runcorn County Court on Tuesday, before his Honour Judge Parsons, when **Joseph Raynor**, canal carrier, claimed £12 16s damages sustained as a result of **James Littler**, boatman in his employ, leaving him without notice. Mr H N Linaker appeared on behalf of the plaintiff, and Mr W S Knowles was for the defendant.

Mr Linaker said the case was brought to establish what constituted a trip's notice. The defendant received his instructions at Runcorn to proceed to Derby and Burton with two loads. On January 27th he received a letter from the defendant to the effect he had been thinking over the work, and he would have to give notice. Mr Raynor wrote to him asking him to finish his trip, and they could then go into the matter on his return. He enclosed further instructions as to the remainder of the trip, which included loading with slack at Stoke. Instead of doing this, defendant returned to Runcorn "light", and Mr Raynor suffered the loss of £2 18s as a result of this. The boats were tied up for three weeks owing to his not being able to get another captain, and commissions were lost which meant a monetary loss of £9 18s, making a total loss of £12 16s, the amount claimed. There was a balance of wages amounting to £2 19s 10d, which they admitted.

Mr Knowles contended his client gave a trip's notice, which was the usual notice.

His Honour : Are you agreed as to what constitutes a trip's notice?

Mr Knowles : My interpretation is that starting at Runcorn we should be liable only until we returned to Runcorn.

Mr Linaker said if a man intended to leave he must give his notice before he started the trip.

Mr Knowles : I will take that, and I say we did.

His Honour : You contend that a trip's notice is Runcorn to Runcorn even if he does not go the full round?

Mr Knowles : If he gets back to Runcorn he has done all he can do.

Joseph Raynor gave evidence. Before leaving Runcorn the defendant did not give notice at all, the first intimation being the letter when part way on the trip. He had instructions to call at Stoke for

slack and then proceed to Middlewich. These instructions were sent by letter to Stoke, as was customary. He brought back the two boats light, and in addition brought two boats belonging to another company, with loads. He gave evidence as to how the damages were made up.

By Mr Knowles : He admitted that when the boatmen were returning light they had the privilege of picking up for other people for their own advantage, and though they were not paid for returning light, they had it included in the outward freight. Mrs Littler saw him before starting for Derby, and though there was some little dissatisfaction there was no mention of notice being given. He agreed that on their return Mrs Littler said she had given notice before they left on their trip, but this he did not admit.

Mrs Littler gave her version of the interview with Mr Raynor. She called Mr Raynor's attention to the pay, and said that it was not good enough, and he must take a trip's notice. Her husband afterwards wrote to confirm this, as she only wanted to be fair to the plaintiff. They brought down the Anderton boats because they gave better pay, and so that they would be able to commence immediately on their return to Runcorn with the expiration of their trip's notice.

His Honour said there had been some loose talk about notice being given, but in this part of the claim he must find that proper notice had not been given. He must find for the plaintiff for the £2 18s. On the remainder of the claim he did not think plaintiff had established his case, as there was no evidence to show he had attempted to find other men to work the boats during the time he said they were tied up. There was a debt of £2 19s 10d owing to the defendant. There was no counterclaim, but he supposed this claim would be met.

Mr Knowles said there would be a balance of 1s 10d in favour of his client. He was not sure if they were not entitled to an order for that amount. (Laughter).

His Honour : You have made no counterclaim.

Mr Linaker said he thought they were entitled to the full amount of the claim.

Mr Knowles said he had brought the claim as an example to others. He had obtained his example, and he was a wealthy man, while his client was a poor man.

His Honour made an order for the £2 18s without costs, and expressed the hope the other money owing to the defendant would be paid without further acrimony.

76 17 June 1919

MR ELLIS GATLEY Mr **Ellis Gatley** of 87 High Street, Runcorn, is the local secretary of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union, and has been engaged in trade union organisation for a period approximating twenty years. Until 1916, when it was absorbed into the above mentioned union, Mr Gatley was the general secretary of the Upper Mersey Watermen's and Porters' Association.

His elevation to the Bench in succession to the late Mr Harry Oakes makes him the second working man JP in Runcorn. For nine years he was a member of the Runcorn Urban District Council, but since his defeat by Mr George Duckett several years ago, he has not sought re-election.

Prior to undertaking secretarial work for trades unionism, Mr Gatley was employed by the Manchester Ship Canal Co as a bargeman, an experience which stands him in good stead in his present duties. He is very popular with the men, and not less respected by the employers, both parties recognising in his straightforward manner a valuable, clear headed and levelling influence.

Mr Gatley has served on the Runcorn Education Committee, is a member of the Old Age Pensions Committee since its formation, and is on the committee of the Aged Persons Trust. He was one of the founders of the local Trades and Labour Council, and in 1882 gave evidence before a Royal Commission on canal work when the late Earl of Derby was the chairman.

77 17 June 1919

CHESHIRE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

CHILDREN ON CANAL BOATS The sub-committee considered the difficulty of providing under existing conditions for the education of children resident on canal boats and in hawkers' vans, and it was resolved : "That the County Councils Association be requested to press upon the Government

the necessity for including in their reconstruction scheme legislation for the removal of all children of school age from residence on canal boats and in hawkers' vans”.

78 29 August 1919

RUNCORN WATERMAN'S DEATH The funeral took place on Friday of **Mr J Waterworth** of 27 Lightburn Street, Runcorn. Mr Waterworth, who was 78 years of age, was a well known local waterman, and for 35 years had been in the employ of Mr C R H Harrison of Bank Chambers.

79 24 October 1919

A RUNCORN MYSTERY

BOATWOMAN'S SAD FATE A rather mysterious accident occurred at the Victoria Dockyard, near the Sprinch, Runcorn, on Sunday night, when **Annie Caine** (32), a married woman, lost her life through falling into the Bridgewater Canal.

The circumstances were investigated by Mr Coroner Ridgway at the Courthouse on Tuesday.

Albert Ernest Caine, a canal boatman, said that Mrs Caine was his wife, and lived with him on the flat *Sir Edward*. They were married twelve months last February. His wife had been operated upon some years ago for appendicitis, and sometimes complained of abdominal pains. She was of a nervous and impatient disposition. She had a horror of rats. His boat was laid up for painting, and his wife went to stay with relatives at Manchester on Monday of last week. On Friday he wrote to her enclosing money, and promised to tell her when to rejoin him. On Sunday night she turned up unexpectedly, meeting him at the Derby Arms. There she had a glass of bitter beer, and left him in the house. He next met her, by chance, outside the Old Bridgewater Arms. She was then in the company of a woman named Lizzie Carroll, and was quite sober. They went along together to the boat. He left her on the bank, instructing her to stay there until he got the boat across the canal in order that she could get on board easily. He spoke to her, telling her not to be frightened, as he knew she would be nervous if she saw anything moving on the floor. As he was taking the boat across he heard a splash, which he thought to be due to the falling of a plank, but on looking round he missed his wife from the spot where she had been standing. He looked into the water and saw her hands, which he attempted to seize. She did not call out. He called for help and people from other boats came on the scene.

In reply to Inspector Dickens, witness said his wife was quite alone on the canal bank.

In reply to the Coroner, he said they had had no “row” of any kind.

Elizabeth Carroll, wife of William Carroll, boilermaker, 22 Mount Street, Manchester, said she was a friend of Mrs Caine, having known her for about five years. She and Mrs Caine came together from Manchester to Runcorn on Sunday. They called at the Derby Arms, where they met the deceased's husband. She and Mrs Caine then went to the Bridgewater Arms, where the latter had three bitter beers. She was quite sober. Witness did not know if the deceased was accustomed to taking beer. Later they again met the deceased's husband outside the “Bridgewater”, and she and deceased parted.

Questioned as to how Mrs Caine decided to come to Runcorn unexpectedly, witness said that she (witness) told Mrs Caine that she was going to Runcorn for the weekend, and deceased remarked that she would go with her.

William Henry Davies, 45 Victoria Road, said he had some grappling apparatus of his own. At 10.45 on Sunday night, he heard of the occurrence and ran to the spot. Within five minutes he recovered the body, which was taken to the engine room. Artificial respiration was tried, but there was no sign of life.

PC Oakes spoke to going to the engine room and examining the body. The woman was then dead. He had since made inquiries, and believed that she was absolutely sober when she left the hotel.

The Coroner found that the deceased was drowned as the result of an accident.

A QUESTION OF NOTICE

RUNCORN FIRM'S CLAIM A case of considerable interest to the Runcorn water going fraternity was heard at the County Court on Tuesday, when the executors of **Jonathan Horsefield** sued **Fred Moore**, a boatman of 26 St Mary's Street, Wolverhampton, for an amount alleged to have been overpaid to him, and for damages for loss sustained by his leaving work without giving proper notice. Mr Hough was for the plaintiffs, and Mr Linaker for the defendant.

Mr Hough said that Moore was engaged by Miss Horsefield (who managed the business for the executors) as a canal boatman, and had been given charge of the flat *Arthur*. He made several trips from Runcorn to Yorkshire. On the 23rd June he left without giving notice. The day previously he complained about having been detained at Manchester with the flat for several days waiting for a cargo. He was paid per trip. Miss Horsefield said she would see what could be done in the way of getting an allowance for this delay, and she gave him 10s herself. Arrangements were made for the defendant to take the boat away on Monday. The defendant had mentioned that his wife was ill and that he would try to get a man to help him. He left the boat, however, and although there was an important cargo in it, it had to be tied up because there was no one to take it. The complainants had suffered the loss of a sum of £1 16s, which was really a balance owing on a wages account, and also claimed £6 damages. There was a counterclaim for loss of wages due to delays on trips ; one such delay was due to the Manchester holidays, and not to any fault of the plaintiffs.

THE EVIDENCE Miss Horsefield said she had managed the canal carrying business for about 12 years. Moore was paid £6 for each trip to Yorkshire and back, horses, stabling and ropes being provided for him. The custom was that a man who wanted to leave gave a trip's notice. On Sunday June 22nd, the defendant arrived at Runcorn with his boat and complained about having to tie up at Manchester. The next day he left without giving notice, and she could not get anyone to take an urgent cargo. She would have received £12 for the trip to Yorkshire, out of which she would have paid Moore £6.

By Mr Linaker : When Moore was engaged he was told the work would be continuous. She did not recollect Mrs Moore complaining to her that the fore cabin of the boat was not fit to live in, and that the after cabin leaked. Nor did Mrs Moore complain that she could not move the carboys of acid, weighing about one cwt each, which constituted the cargo. She denied that Mrs Moore or the defendant gave her notice, offered her the keys, and asked her to check the stores. She agreed that, about Whitsuntide, Moore had been detained for several days at Manchester owing to no empty carboys being available for a return cargo. The works had not been using so much acid owing to holidays.

Mr Hough produced a letter written after Moore had left, saying that he found he could "get a better living elsewhere".

For the defendant, Mr Linaker said that Mrs Moore made the engagement with Miss Horsefield, who told her that the flat was adequate for her and her husband and family of five children. The arrangement was that they should be paid £6 a trip to Yorkshire. In consequence of the condition of the flat, defendant's children became ill. He decided to leave, and gave proper notice to Mr J Horsefield, the foreman, Miss Horsefield being away then on holidays. He also contended that in view of the condition of the flat he was entitled to leave at once.

His Honour said that if the flat were defective, defendant might have left after the first trip, but he remained with it for some considerable time.

Mr Linaker said that when the defendant learned that Miss Horsefield was away, he said to the foreman, "I was going to give her notice. I suppose it stands good if I give it to you". He smiled and asked defendant if he wanted any starting money.

His Honour said it was a bit curious that when Miss Horsefield wrote to the defendant and reproached him for leaving without notice, he did not make the obvious reply, "Why! I gave it to you".

Mrs Moore bore out Mr Linaker's statement in evidence.

Moore said he wife gave notice to the foreman in the absence of Miss Horsefield at Llandudno.

Long journeys into Yorkshire at £6 a trip would not pay him.

THE DECISION In summing up, his Honour said he accepted that the contract was not one of £6 for any trip, long or short. He came to the conclusion that the plaintiff's statement that Manchester trips were to be paid for at the rate of £3 each was correct, and that being so, he found that the defendant had been overpaid £1 16s in wages. It was fairly clear on Moore's statements that what was said to the foreman was said in so indeterminate a manner as only to elicit a smile from him. He (the Judge) could not hold that there was good notice. He had come to the conclusion that plaintiff was entitled to recover damages, defendant having left without due notice. He thought the claim for £6 was a little overstated, and there was something to be deducted for the saving wear and tear, both of the horses and the boat. He thought £3 would be a just allowance, and he gave judgement for the plaintiff for £6 16s altogether. On the counterclaim, he accepted the plaintiff's evidence that one item set down was for the ordinary weekend's delay, which was not an unreasonable one. An item for £3 15s on June 11th "waiting orders at Runcorn" he was not satisfied about, and concluded that Moore desired to remain at Runcorn over Whitsuntide holidays. The plaintiff, who had given her evidence remarkably clearly and very fairly, said that the delay for a period that was unreasonable should be paid for, and she agreed that 15s a day would be reasonable. He allowed £3 15s on the counterclaim in respect of the period when Moore was detained at Manchester awaiting empty carboys.

81 12 December 1919

RUNCORN LANDLORD'S CLAIM

COUNTY COURT ACTION An interesting sequel to an application heard by the Runcorn magistrates in August last was provided at the County Court on Tuesday, when **Albert Gibbons**, 12 Leinster Street, sought to obtain possession of the house, 29 Lord Street, of which he is the owner, and which is occupied by Thomas Ashley. Mr H N Linaker appeared for the plaintiff, and defendant conducted his own defence.

Mr Linaker said plaintiff had purchased the house in Lord Street for his own occupation on the 4th November 1918, and in August took proceedings with a view to getting possession of it. No order was made by the magistrates, but they advised defendant to get another house as soon as he could. Plaintiff was in a position to offer defendant the house in Leinster Street, which had exactly the same accommodation, apart from a bathroom, as the house in Lord Street. Defendant had known that the house was available for some time, and Mr Gibbons had gone so far as to offer to pay defendant's removal expenses, but he had refused to go. He suggested that the reason he had refused to go was that the alternative accommodation was not in so aristocratic a neighbourhood as the house in which he was now living.

Plaintiff said he had his wife, a daughter aged ten years, and a discharged soldier brother-in-law living in the house in Leinster Street, which was rented at 5s 3d per week, the tenant paying poor rates. The Lord Street house was rented at 9s 4d per week, the landlord paying rates.

His Honour : Why do you want to live in Lord Street instead of Leinster Street?

I would like to live in my own house, and it is nearer the town.

Is it a nicer house, and in a more pleasant neighbourhood? - Yes, your Honour.

Do not be shy about it, a man has a right to get as nice a house as he can.

Asked further questions, plaintiff said that Leinster Street was quite a decent neighbourhood, but very quiet.

His Honour : I suppose Lord Street is gayer? (Laughter).

Plaintiff said it was a front street, and more lively.

Cross-examined, plaintiff admitted that a smaller house than the one in which he was now living had formerly sufficed for the needs of his family.

Defendant : Are you a trades unionist? (Laughter).

His Honour smilingly said he could not have anything of an industrial or political character introduced. He did not think it had anything to do with the case.

Defendant said he was endeavouring to show that both of them as trades unionists had mutual

interests.

His Honour (to plaintiff) : You believe in mutual welfare? - Yes, your Honour.

His Honour (smiling) : Then you both believe in it. (Laughter).

Defendant said he was secretary of an approved society. He had three sons and a daughter living with him and his wife. The house had three bedrooms, bathroom, parlour, sitting room, kitchen and back kitchen.

His Honour : One sitting room and a bathroom less than in Leinster Street.

Defendant said the magistrates refused to make an order for him to go out, and the circumstances were now practically identical. The bedrooms in Lord Street were much bigger than in Leinster Street. Two of his boys had indifferent health, and it was desirable that one of them should occupy a room of his own, but under the circumstances as they now stood, he had to be content with accommodating him with a separate bed. The sitting room accommodation was of some value, because a good number of working people called to see him at the house for advice, and sometimes people called to see him in connection with the business of the Board of Guardians, of which he was a member. He had an office, but working people, who were only free at night, found ordinary business hours inconvenient. All the circumstances of the matter should be taken into account.

His Honour : I quite agree. And they are.

Defendant said that the plaintiff admitted that the house in which he was now living was quite sufficient for the accommodation of his family, and as the plaintiff was a waterman, defendant contended that any change of residence would not facilitate his business arrangements. It was not his (defendant's) intention to remain in the house any longer than he needed, and he was doing his best to find other accommodation. There were hopes of him having some success in that direction in a few weeks.

His Honour suggested an adjournment of the case.

After discussion between the parties, an adjournment until the next Court was agreed upon, it being understood that if the defendant had then entered into a contract for the purchase or tenancy of another house, a further month's adjournment would be agreed to.

If defendant has not succeeded in doing anything by that time, the case will come before his Honour again for his decision on the evidence already presented to him.