

DERBY MERCURY
1881 to 1900

1 January 12 1881

MELANCHOLY DEATH OF A YOUNG WOMAN AT DERBY Mr Coroner Close held an inquest on Friday night, on the body of Sarah Benton, aged 21, a domestic servant, who lost her life according to the evidence set forth below.

Elizabeth Marshall of 97 Nottingham Road, said she was the wife of William Marshall, ironmonger's porter. The body she had just seen was that of Sarah Benton, who had been staying with her for three weeks. It was the intention of deceased to have got married at Christmas, and she came to witness's house for the purpose of awaiting that event. On the previous night the deceased slept with witness, and went to bed at ten o'clock. Between nine and ten o'clock she had been playing at draughts with witness and her husband. Witness went on to say : I noticed that she seemed very strange and startled. Her marriage, which was to have taken place at Christmas, was put off, and since that alteration was decided upon, she seemed very strange, and "has not seemed herself". On Friday last she went over to Belper to see the young man she was to have married, but she did not say anything about it when she came back. Whilst playing at draughts she "startled" and put her hand up to her head. This morning she got up at ten minutes past seven. She was "rambling" and saying, "Oh", in her sleep, and in answer to my inquiry she said she felt unwell. When she got up, she said she would go down and light the fire. When my husband went down a few minutes afterwards, he found the back door open, and we made search for her. A very short time afterwards her body was found in the canal.

In answer to various questions by the coroner and jurors, the witness said that the deceased had only got up once before to light the fire.

William Marshall, the husband of the last witness, corroborated her evidence in its chief particulars. He added that on Friday night, the 31st December, he went to meet the deceased on her return from Belper, when he saw her come out of a yard which leads to the towing-path of the canal. He said, "Hallo, Sarah, where are you going?" She answered, "I had thought to go on that way, but I have changed my mind". Witness added : When I got up this morning I found the fire was not lit. The back door was open. The back yard leads down to the canal, which runs at the back of my house ; there is a two or three feet fence which separates the yard from the canal. She was found 120 yards from my house. The deceased was a niece to me by marriage, and belonged to Walsall.

Robert Hodgkinson, a man living in Lodge Lane and a boatman in the employ of Messrs Leech and Neal, said on that (Friday) morning he was working the boat to Spondon on the canal, when he observed something black in the water just against the flour mills. He found what he at first took to be a retriever to be the body of a woman, which he recovered. He got the body to the bank side, and found that life was extinct.

Police-constable Goodall said the body of the deceased was given into his charge by the last witness. There were no marks of violence.

The Coroner said that was all the evidence he had to offer, but there was nothing to show by what means she got into the canal. He thought there must in such a case be an open verdict.

The Jury, after a minute's consideration, found a verdict of "Found drowned".

2 April 20 1881

BURTON ON TRENT COUNTY COURT, WEDNESDAY

THOMAS WOOD v **WILLIAM DUDDLELL** This action, which was to recover £50 for personal damages, was tried before a jury, Mr Mears appearing for the plaintiff, and Mr Argyle of Tamworth for the defendant. On November 5th 1879, the plaintiff, who is the son of a boatman belonging to Wolverhampton, was with a boat on the canal near Barton Turn, Barton-under-Needwood. Here several youths, including the defendant, who is a porter in the employ of the Midland Railway Company, were engaged celebrating Guy Fawkes's day in the usual manner, and the plaintiff joined them in their sport. The defendant had a pistol, and after he had fired it several times, he went to

the plaintiff, took hold of him by his jacket, and asked him “where he would have it”. The plaintiff naturally replied, “Nowhere”, but immediately defendant's pistol was fired, and the plaintiff was shot in the lower part of the back. The defendant admitted that he had shot the plaintiff, who was removed in the first instance to the defendant's father's house, and afterwards to Barton Cottage Hospital, where he remained five months. It was there found that he was seriously injured in the lower part of the back, and Dr Palmer, the medical officer to the institution, now stated that the injuries were permanent. He admitted that they had been caused by paper and powder only, and not by bullets. In addressing the jury for the defence, Mr Argyle expressed deep regret that the plaintiff had sustained such injuries, but he contended that they were the result of a pure accident, and mentioned that the case had formed the subject of a magisterial inquiry, and was dismissed because there was no proof of malice or intent to injure the plaintiff. He asked the jury, if they believed the defendant was liable, to take into account his position, and not to give damages which could not be paid. His Honour summed up, and told the Jury it was for them to decide whether the pistol went off accidentally or was deliberately fired. If they believed the latter, the damages would, of course, be larger than if the pistol went off accidentally. After a brief consultation, the Jury returned a verdict for the plaintiff for £15, and they expressed an opinion that the injuries were the result of an accident. His Honour thereupon ordered the £15 to be paid in three months into the savings bank in the name of the Registrar, and to be kept there until the plaintiff is 18 years of age.

3 June 8 1881

MOUNTSORREL

SAD ACCIDENT On Thursday evening, a sad accident occurred here. A large number of people were down by the river, among whom was William Baker, son of Mr George Baker of the Granite Company. It appears that the deceased, aged 16, accompanied by three other youths, had taken his father's pleasure boat and rowed to what is known as the Old Soar – a backwater between Barrow and Mountsorrel – for the purpose of bathing. On arriving at the place they got on the banks, some on each side. Deceased seems to have walked in, not knowing anything about the depth, and not being able to swim descended into from eight to twelve feet of water. Becoming entangled in a thorn, he never rose alive. The other youths missed him in a minute or two, and instantly called him by name but, getting no answer, concluded that he must be under the water. One only could swim, and he instantly made an effort to rescue the deceased. The others gave the alarm, but as the place is a mile from the village, half an hour elapsed before the youth's body could be recovered. A man named **Smith alias Bromigham**, a boatman, with very commendable courage, dived three or four times, groping his way upon the bottom till he came across the deceased's arm, when he quickly brought him to the surface. He was of course quite dead. He was carried home in a sheet as quickly as possible by some workmen, and Dr Skipworth was called in. An inquest was held, when the jury returned a verdict of “Accidental death”. Much sympathy is felt for the bereaved family.

4 June 22 1881

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT

DISPUTED OWNERSHIP **William Day**, boatman, was charged with stealing on the 31st May a windlass, the property of **Joseph Lacey**. The prosecutor is in the employ of the Sanitary Authority, and on the day in question the two men were in a boat together. Prisoner took the windlass produced and claimed it as his own. Prosecutor was however sure that it was his, but rather than have any bother, he allowed the man to take it. Prisoner said it had been taken from his cabin three months since, but witness had had it for 27 years. There were certain marks on the windlass which each party referred to as his reason for stating that the windlass was his. After hearing the evidence, the Bench came to the conclusion that there was a *bona fide* belief on prisoner's part that the windlass was his, and dismissed the case.

5 July 6 1881

RIPLEY PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY

FELONY AT ILKESTON Thomas Broadhurst was charged with stealing a shirt and neckerchief, value 2s 6d, the property of **George Wathey**, at Ilkeston on June 26th. Complainant is a boatman, and the property was taken from his boat. The stolen articles were afterwards found in the prisoner's possession. Prisoner was committed for trial at the Assizes.

6 October 19 1881

BELPER PETTY SESSIONS

THEFTS **William Walters**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a tin bucket at Crich on the 8th August, of the value of 1s 6d. Being an old offender, he was sentenced to three calendar months. He was also charged with stealing 2 lbs of potatoes at the same time and place, then growing in an open field, the property of Mr Cursham. This was not gone into.

7 November 16 1881

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

ILLEGAL FERRY AT SAWLEY **James Woolley**, boatman, was summoned for illegally ferrying a person across the Trent for hire at Sawley on the 20th ult, Mr Briggs defended. The summons had been taken out under the section of the old Act of Parliament, which enacted that no person should ferry people across the Trent within the *soke* of Sawley for hire. The case was adjourned from last week, in order that the Bench might ascertain how far the *soke* extended. Mr Whiston now stated that the *soke* extended from Barton to Wilne, and the spot where defendant ferried the man over was therefore in the distance. Defendant was fined 20s and costs.

8 November 16 1881

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT

A VIOLENT ASSAULT **Frederick Harrison**, a coal boatman, was charged with assaulting a ragged boy named Jonathan Storer in Bridge Gate this morning. The boy, who said he was 14 and could read a little but could not write, told a scarcely intelligible story about catching a donkey, and then said that the prisoner ran full kick at him and knocked him senseless, and kicked him severely about the thighs. The Bench sent Harrison to gaol (much to his surprise) for two calendar months' hard labour.

9 November 30 1881

FENIANISM AT BRADFORD

THE DISCOVERY OF ARMS On Wednesday morning, a boatman on the Bradford Canal recovered from the bottom of the canal nine revolvers and delivered them to the police authorities. They were no doubt cast into the canal on the fact of the discovery in Tobin's house being made known. The police were aware that 100 revolvers were in the district through Tobin's agency, and they recently dragged the canal in expectation of finding revolvers privately reported to have been deposited there, but they found nothing. The recovery of an additional nine by the boatman on Wednesday led to another search of the canal, and up to last evening the number recovered had been increased to 26 and, with the 40 seized at Tobin's house on Sunday week, the total number of revolvers now in the possession of the police is 66. The chief constable has returned from London, whither he journeyed to have an interview with the Home Office authorities.

10 December 7 1881

CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH PETTY SESSIONS, THURSDAY **Charles Needham**, boatman, was fined 10s and costs or 14 days for refusing to quit the Navigation Inn, Bugsworth, on Sunday the 6th of November.

11 December 14 1881

COUNTY POLICE CASES On Tuesday, **John Trowell**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a quantity of rope, the property of Mr Leech of the Spondon colour works, and was remanded to Friday.

12 December 21 1881

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

THEFT OF ROPE **John Trowell**, a boatman, was charged on remand with stealing six yards of rope, value 3s 6d, the property of Messrs Leech and Neal of the Spondon Colour Works. The rope was left on Saturday at noon by a workman on a derrick in the canal near the prosecutors' works. At one o'clock it was missing, and it being known that one of Mr Fletcher's was the only boat that had passed during the hour, Inspector Borritt followed it, and found prisoner at Branston Lock, Staffordshire, in possession of the missing rope. Defendant denied the theft, but was found guilty and sentenced to 14 days' hard labour. Mr Whiston said it was lucky the theft was found out so soon, for the cutting of it off endangered the lives of men working on the derrick.

13 June 7 1882

EXTRAORDINARY CHARGE OF KIDNAPPING A BOY IN DERBY A canal boatman named **Joseph Thay** was brought up on a warrant at the Derby Borough Police Court on Friday last, charged with having, on the 8th of December last, feloniously and unlawfully by force enticed away and detained James Howe, a child of ten. Prisoner was remanded till Monday, when he was again brought up, before Mr Turner, Mr Swingler and Mr Bowring. The boy was called, and said he lived with his mother in Cambridge Street, Derby, his father being a soldier stationed in Ireland. One morning in December last, instead of going to school he went down with three other boys to play by the side of the canal. When he had been there a short time, a boat came past with prisoner and a lad on it. One of the boys, named Stafford, said, "Please can we have a ride?" The boy on the boat said, "Yes", and witness, a boy named Roe and another boy got on the boat. Prisoner was then asleep. When they wanted to get out the boy would not let them, but after going some distance Roe and his companion jumped out near an iron bridge when the boat was close to the side, but witness had not time to jump. Prisoner was still asleep, and witness cried and asked the boy to let him go, but he said he would not, as they wanted a boy to drive the horse. Prisoner woke up some time afterwards, and witness was then crying and said he wanted to go home to his mother. Prisoner said he wanted him to drive the horse, and he could not go. When night came on, prisoner told him to get off the boat and go home again, but as it was dark witness did not try to walk home. He slept under a hedge, and as it rained during the night, he was wringing wet in the morning. In the morning prisoner asked him to drive the horse, and he did so. He continued to drive the horse all day, and the only thing he had to eat was a boiled turnip, which was given to him by the boy. That night he was told to stay in a stable where the horse was put, and the boy said if he went away he would throw him into the canal. The boy did dip his head in once. Next morning prisoner asked him to drive the horse again, but he would not do so, and as he was crying, prisoner lifted him into the boat, and drove the horse himself. Next day being Sunday, the boat was tied up all day. They went on to a place beyond Wolverhampton where the boat was unloaded, it having been laden with pig iron. Witness, at the bidding of the boy, helped to unload the boat, and the boy also told him to go and steal a hammer, and said if he did not do so, he would throw him in the canal. They unloaded in one day, and then went on further from Derby, prisoner saying he was not coming to Derby any more. When they got to a place where prisoner's mother lives, witness ran away and walked home to Derby. It took him two days and two nights to walk home, and the only thing he had to eat was some bread which a man, who was also tramping, gave to him. He slept at night under a hedge. He was with prisoner altogether nine days, and during that time he only had boiled turnips and dry bread, except on Sunday, when he had some bread and butter. He asked the boy frequently to let him go home, but he did not ask the prisoner, as he was not much in the boat. In cross-examination by prisoner, the lad admitted that he had some bread and meat the first day. He

did not sleep in the cabin the first night, but he was in the cabin one afternoon and prisoner burnt his head with the fire. He did tell his mother that he had slept in the cabin. He denied that prisoner sent him home by train from Birmingham, and gave him a bun and a penny. Prisoner asserted that the lad's story was a lot of lies. After an adjournment for luncheon, a lad named George Stafford, aged 9, living in Portland Street, was called and gave evidence partly corroborative of Howe's story. He said that he, Howe and two other boys took it in turns to drive the horse and to ride on the barge until it got past Allenton. He and the other two boys got off near the iron bridge, but Howe could not get off because the barge went into the middle of the canal. He heard the prisoner tell Howe that he was not to get off the boat, as he wanted him to drive his horse. Walter Roe, aged 10, said that when they got past Allenton, the prisoner told him and the other two boys to go home, but said he was going to keep Howe to drive his horse. Harriet Howe, wife of Edward Howe, a soldier in the 10th Regiment now stationed at Kinsale, said she lived with her three children at 11 Cambridge Street, Derby. On the day in question she left her son James at home, and he ought to have gone to school. She did not see him again until about a fortnight afterwards. She went to the canal locks every day in the hope of seeing him return home. While she was at the locks one day, an officer came and told her he had come home. She went home and found him there. He was in a very weak and exhausted condition, and in a filthy state. He was very hoarse, and had in fact been ill ever since. He was suffering from a cough now, in consequence of his ill treatment. Detective Clamp deposed to having received the prisoner into custody from the Birmingham police on June 1st. In answer to the charge, he said that he told the boy to go home because his mother would want him, but that the boy said that she would not do so as she had seven children and her husband was a soldier. He kept the boy a week, and then he and his wife took him to the Birmingham Railway Station, gave him two buns, paid his fare, and sent him home by train. Prisoner, in defence, made a long statement. He said that when the barge got near Swarkestone, he told the boy to go home, but he would not do so, saying that his father was a soldier and his mother had too many children. The boy had the same kind of food – bread and meat, and bread and butter, &c – as he and his son had, and always slept in the cabin along with him and his son. He received a letter from Mr Fletcher of Ilkeston, telling him not to come down again as it was so near Christmas, and he was therefore short of money. They went to Birmingham, and he and his wife took Howe to New Street Station. He bought the boy a ticket, gave him a bun and a penny, and put him in charge of the guard of a train to go to Derby. Prisoner was committed for trial at the next Borough Quarter Sessions.

14 September 6 1882

THE LEICESTER MYSTERY On Friday afternoon, the body of an unknown woman was found in the canal at Leicester. Strange to say, the body was again seen by the boatman **Griffin**, who reported having seen the body on Thursday. He called to a policeman who was near, and he recovered the body, which is that of a respectably dressed female, over forty years old, and 5ft 6in high ; but there are no marks of violence. The body was removed to Birstall to await the inquest.

15 December 6 1882

ALVASTON

DEATH BY DROWNING On Thursday morning, the wife of Amos Woodward, labourer of Alvaston, was found drowned in the canal, near the Navigation Bridge. She came to Derby on Wednesday for the purpose of transacting some business, and when returning home called at the Navigation Inn, where she was occasionally employed. After remaining there some time she left the premises by the front door, and was never seen again alive. On Thursday morning, some boatmen found her basket floating on the surface of the canal, and this having been identified, led to a search being made for the missing woman. Eventually her dead body was found in the canal near the bridge. It is supposed that the deceased lost her way and fell into the canal. Her death may possibly be in some way attributable to the fact that she was in the habit of taking opium. When the body was discovered, a quantity of the drug was found in her possession. The sum of 2 1/2d was also found tightly clasped in her hand.

16 June 20 1883

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT **William Turbefeild**, a boatman, was charged by Inspector Coleman of the RSPCA with cruelly working a horse on the canal bank on June 12th. The animal was drawing a boat on the canal. It was very lame in both hind legs, and upon inspection by Mr Flower, veterinary surgeon, proved to be badly spavined. Defendant was fined 10s and costs.

17 February 20 1884

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

SHOCKING BRUTALITY : KICKING A DONKEY TO DEATH **Samuel Trowell**, a canal boatman, was charged with cruelly ill treating a donkey. Joseph Challener said that he was near the canal at Alvaston when he saw the prisoner coming along the towing-path with his two donkeys and a pony, which were drawing a couple of boats. There was something amiss with one of the asses, and the defendant began to kick it. He kicked it in the stomach 23 times, until it fell helplessly upon the bank, where the prisoner left it. It died in a short time. Inspector Coleman of the RSPCA proved that the animal was kicked to death, that the prisoner left it a mass of bruises, and that he buried it on the canal bank. He accused the prisoner of killing it by his violence, and he said that he only kicked the ass a few times. The prisoner said he had only given 25s for the donkey on the day before the "poor thing died". He was drunk, and the donkey was lazy, or he should not have kicked it. Inspector Borritt said that on the day previous to that mentioned in the charge, a gentleman who met him at Spondon told him that a man was ill using a donkey there. He went to the place pointed out by the gentleman, and he found the prisoner. He had two donkeys, which were pulling a boat laden with pig iron. The load was too much for them. The donkey which had since died was in excellent condition, except that it had a number of bruises underneath it. The prisoner made an attempt to cry, and told how he had tried all he could to get the donkey to walk, but without avail. It had been stupid ever since he had left Ilkeston. The Bench said the prisoner had been guilty of atrocious brutality, and he would be sent to gaol for as long a term as the law allowed. He would be imprisoned three months with hard labour.

18 June 4 1884

SWADLINCOTE PETTY SESSIONS, TUESDAY **George Wildsmith** of Willesley, boatman, was charged with taking trout otherwise than by angling on the morning of the 12th May at Willesley, being the property of the Earl of Loudoun. Mr Musson defended. Fined 2s 6d and 11s 6d costs.

19 July 16 1884

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT **James and Martha Slater**, man and wife, were brought up on a warrant charged with violently assaulting James Day on the 8th inst. Slater is a canal boatman and Day is a drayman in the employ of Mr George Corbett. Slater accused complainant of sending an inspector after a man named **Trowell**, which he denied. Slater said he was a liar and challenged him to fight, and struck him. He pushed Slater out of the stable, upon which the female prisoner threw a lock at him which hit him in the eye, and also threw a weight, which however missed the mark. Both prisoners were very drunk. Slater said Day knocked him down and kicked him, and the woman said she only took her husband's part. They were each fined £1 and costs, or one month.

20 September 3 1884

ILKESTON

DISGRACEFUL REVELATIONS On Friday afternoon, Mr Coroner Whiston held an inquest at the Bridge Inn, Ilkeston, to inquire into the circumstances attending the death of **John William Beardow**. The mother of the deceased stated that her husband was a boatman. They had lived in a boat without moving for about three years. There were five of them, the two daughters being aged respectively seven and ten years. The boy was taken ill on Wednesday, and never spoke again. Dr Hill sent some medicine, but the boy died the next day. He had never complained of illness until he

was taken. The lad was not seen by a doctor at all, although two were sent for. The jury made some adverse remarks on this statement, thinking it was very unsatisfactory. Dr Hill stated that he had seen the lad's body, which was in a very emaciated condition. Evidently, in his opinion, the cause of death was convulsions. He did not think the boy's life would have been saved, even if he had been seen by a medical man at once. The boy's father stated the lad's life was insured in the British Workman Office. A juryman stated that he had heard that this was not the only death that had taken place in this family in a boat, one child having been smothered a while back. The Coroner added that, while there was nothing suspicious about this case, he thought the Erewash Canal Company ought not to allow the man to live in the boat. The jury brought in a verdict of "Death from convulsions".

21 October 15 1884

RIPLEY PETTY SESSIONS, OCTOBER 6 **Henry Bonsall**, a boatman, was charged with having stolen a duck and a fowl, the property of William Gibson, farmer and beerhouse keeper of Lower Hartsay, Ripley, on the 4th October. The prisoner pleaded guilty and was committed to gaol for a month with hard labour.

22 January 7 1885

EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCE Shortly before five o'clock on Wednesday night, two boatman, **William Barnham** and **William Hudnott**, employed at Maynard's boat house, Strand-on-the-Green, heard cries of, "Murder!", "Don't!", proceeding from the opposite side of the Thames, about a quarter of a mile below the boat house in question. They rowed to the place whence the sounds came, and to their great astonishment they discovered a woman and two girls between six and eight years of age in the water, and apparently lifeless. They pulled the bodies into the boat and took them to the boat house, and, with assistance, placed them in warm blankets. Two medical gentlemen promptly arrived and used restoratives, with the result that the two girls soon came to consciousness. The woman at a late hour last night was still in an insensible condition, but hopes are entertained of her recovery. The police have ascertained that the woman is Emily Retson, age 16, a servant with Mrs Weir, 93 Percy Road, Shepherd's Bush, and that the two girls are daughters of Mrs Weir. It appears that the servant, who had a quarrel with her mistress, had been left in charge of the house and the two girls ; but when Mrs Weir returned she found the door locked and almost every article of value smashed to pieces. From the statements of the little girls to the police, there seems to be a suspicion that a double murder and suicide were attempted. The police are investigating the matter.

23 April 15 1885

LOUGHBOROUGH

CHILD DROWNED On Monday morning, a child named **Ellen Rogers**, the daughter of a boatman living on the canal bank near Henshaw's Lock, fell in the water between a barge which was at the side and unmoored, and the canal bank. The child was about to step on board the barge, when it moved into the middle of the canal, and the child fell into the water. The child's mother attempted to rescue the child, but owing to illness could not walk without support, and was therefore powerless to save her daughter.

24 July 29 1885

THE TRENT CONSERVANCY At the County Police Court, Leicester, on Wednesday, **John Dormer**, boatman, was fined 30s and 18s costs for taking fresh water fish in the river Soar at Aylestone during the prohibited period on the 19th April. Mr Eddowes of Derby prosecuted on behalf of the Trent Conservancy Fisheries Board, and on his application, the Bench agreed to hand over half the fine to the Board.

25 September 30 1885

Thomas Green, aged nine years, son of a boatman residing at Wolverhampton, has died from the effects of eating unripe pears.

26 November 4 1885

SERIOUS ACCIDENTS A serious accident occurred to a Staffordshire boatman at Spondon on Wednesday. **Edward Garner**, aged 66, of Branston, near Rugeley, was driving a horse along the canal side near Spondon, when the animal suddenly took fright at a passing engine, and kicked Garner severely on the body and head, knocking him to the ground and rendering him unconscious. The unfortunate man was afterwards admitted to the Infirmary.

27 June 2 1886

A BOY DROWNED IN DERBY Mr Harvey Whiston, on behalf of the Borough Coroner (Mr Close) held an inquest at the Town Hall on Saturday, touching the death of a lad named **Valentine Joseph Wilkinson**, who was drowned in the canal by St Mary's Bridge on Friday afternoon. **Joseph Wilkinson**, Lloyd's Yard, Bridge Gate, boatman on the river Derwent, identified the body as that of his son. He was four years of age, and witness saw him at home shortly before three on Friday afternoon. He was then playing with some other children. William Tipper, labourer of George Yard, said that he was at the Bridge Inn at about 3.30 on Friday afternoon. Witness saw Wilkinson in the water of the canal as he walked out of the inn. He was not struggling, and appeared to be sinking. As soon as witness saw him, he pulled off his coat and hat and jumped in. He caught hold of the boy's hair, but was not able to save him. Mr Steer then went up with a boat, and witness got out of the water. There were no other children about. The canal was fenced off from the road at this point, but any child could creep through the fencing. Police-sergeant Waldron deposed to having received information of the occurrence. Several drags were used, and in about half an hour's time the body was brought out and taken to the mortuary. The bank was somewhat steep, and it would be very easy to step into the water, which was six or seven feet deep. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned", and thanked Tipper for the attempt he made to save the boy's life. The foreman of the jury thought that the canal ought to be better fenced off at the point.

28 September 1 1886

ILKESTON PETTY SESSIONS, THURSDAY

CRUELTY **Samuel Trowell**, boatman, Sandiacre, was summoned by Inspector Warren of the RSPCA for cruelty to a horse. The animal suffered from lameness induced by contracted tendons, ringbone and spavin in the hind leg, together with a lacerated collar wound. Defendant was cautioned by Colonel White of Stapleford on the 6th inst, and also warned by a policeman. He notwithstanding drove the animal attached to a canal boat to Tipton. A previous conviction for cruelty was proved against him, and he was now fined £5 or two months in default. He was committed to prison.

29 November 24 1886

HEANOR PETTY SESSIONS, MONDAY

AN OLD OFFENCE **Thomas Camp** was charged with stealing the sum of 19s 10d and some pawn tickets, the property of **George Henry Dennis**, at Burton-on-Trent in October 1882. **Ann Dennis**, the wife of George Henry Dennis, deposed that at the time named the defendant was in his service as boatman. On October 11th 1882, the boat was lying in the canal at Stanton Works. She told defendant early in the morning to look after the horse. He went, as she supposed, to do so, but never returned. Police-constable Smith deposed to apprehending the defendant at Burton-on-Trent on November 13th this year. When charged, he admitted the fact, and said he had been to America and spent the money. Defendant was committed for trial.

30 May 18 1887

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE NEWS

CRUELTY **William Tuckwood**, a canal boatman of Long Eaton, was summoned by Inspector Warren, RSPCA, for cruelly ill treating and abusing a mule by kicking it on April 21st. Frederick Allen deposed to having seen defendant kick the mule very violently several times. Tuckwood did not appear, and he was fined 20s and costs, or a month.

31 August 31 1887

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE NEWS

ALLEGED THEFT William Rose and Joseph Day were charged with stealing, on May 7th last, an overcoat, value 15s, from the mess room, No 4 platform, Midland Station, the property of the MR Company. Sampson Johnson, clerk, and George William Brittan gave evidence, the latter stating that on the day of the theft he hung the coat in the mess room at 6 a. m. He missed it shortly after, and then reported the case to the foreman. Last night he was shown the coat by Police-constable Hunt, who saw prisoners trying to pawn it on Friday. Both prisoners, when accosted by Hunt, denied the theft, Day stating that he was a stoker on the Midland, and the coat belonged to him, afterwards he contradicted this statement, and both men alleged that they had bought the coat. **Ferdinand Walker**, boatman in the employ of the Derby Sanitary Authority, said that about nine months ago he lent Day 5s with which to buy a coat. The Bench remanded the case in order that the men might produce additional witnesses.

32 October 19 1887

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT

WEDNESDAY

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A BOATMAN **Joseph Wood**, a boatman, was charged with stealing a silver watch, a metal chain, a silk handkerchief and a sovereign from a boat, the property of **Charles New**, a boatman in the employ of Mr Gandy. Police-constable Solomon stated that on Monday night the prosecutor and the prisoner were drinking together at the Cock Inn. They left together at 11 o'clock, and went into a boat. The prosecutor went to sleep, and on awaking missed the articles enumerated, and found the prisoner gone. He was arrested on his return in the boat at two o'clock in the afternoon. The prisoner denied all knowledge of the property, and he was remanded until Thursday.

THURSDAY

THE CHARGE AGAINST A BOATMAN **Joseph Wood**, a boatman, was brought up on remand from the previous day, charged with stealing a silk handkerchief, a silver watch, metal chain and a sovereign, the property of **Charles New**, also a boatman, in the employ of Mr Gandy of Derby. The Chief Constable said the police had information that led them to ask the Bench to discharge the prisoner, as they had received some information which would enable them to bring up the guilty party shortly and to recover the lost property. Wood was then discharged.

33 November 16 1887

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT, FRIDAY

ILLEGAL FISHING **Thomas Millington**, who did not appear, and who is described as a boatman, was summoned for illegal fishing in the canal at Swarkestone on the 22nd ult. A keeper saw the defendant cast a net in the canal, and as soon as he saw witness he put his net on the bottom of the boat. He did not take any fish, and refused to give his name until the services of a policeman had been secured. Mr Poyser had the right of fishing at that spot. Fined 10s and the costs, or 14 days.

34 March 13 1889

BURTON-ON-TRENT

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE At the Police Court on Thursday, Ann Maria Penn, a girl 18 years of age,

was charged with attempting to commit suicide in the Trent and Mersey Canal the previous day. An employee of the L and NW Railway Company saw the girl jump from the bridge into the canal, and he ran up and rescued her. The man's suspicions were aroused in consequence of the girl asking a boatman which he considered the deepest part of the canal. Mr Bright, who appeared for the girl's relatives, said that she was a very respectable, well educated and virtuous girl, and no explanation beyond that she had recently been unwell could be given for her act. The Bench ordered the girl to be handed over to the care of her friends.

35 January 1 1890

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT, MONDAY

STEALING COAL **William Large** and **Samuel Barks**, youths, were charged with stealing, on the 29th, 56 lbs weight of coal, value 4 1/2d, the property of Mrs Emma Johnson, who has a wharf in the Mill (?Fleam?). The coal was missed from the wharf, and **George Commander**, boatman, for whom the prisoners worked, stated that they had been on Johnson's boat in the course of the morning. Further evidence having been given, the prisoners pleaded guilty. It appears there was nothing but slack on Commander's boat, and the youths took some coal away from Johnson's. They were given a good character and were fined 10s each including costs, or seven days.

36 May 21 1890

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

THEFT OF A WATCH &c Thomas Dicken was charged with stealing a silver watch and chain, value 35s, the property of Julia Munford, parlour maid at Etwall Vicarage, on Good Friday. He was also charged with stealing a pair of trousers, the property of the Rev D C Cochrane of Etwall. The facts of the case were reported last week, and it will doubtless be recollected that the things were missed from the vicarage after the prisoner and another man had been seen about the neighbourhood, and the next day the watch was pledged at Ilkeston by a man who gave the name of Arthur Joyce. The prisoner subsequently sold the ticket to a boatman named **Warner**, who comes from Leicester, for 2s 3d. He told him that the watch the ticket related to was his own, and that he gave 50s for it. He also sold the trousers. The Bench sent him to prison for two months.

37 July 23 1890

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

UNLAWFUL FISHING **William Slater** was summoned for fishing with a night line in the canal at Shardlow on the 14th inst. Mr C R B Eddowes appeared to prosecute on behalf of the Trent Fishery Board, and called James Barber, a water bailiff, who said the defendant was a boatman and committed the offence at three o'clock in the morning. He only had one night line set, but when witness tried to get his name, he covered the name of his boat over and refused to give it. Defendant now admitted the offence, and Mr Eddowes said the proceedings were taken in no antagonistic spirit, but simply to preserve the waters of the Pride of Derby Angling Club, but they did not wish to press the case severely. The Bench fined him 5s and costs.

38 December 31 1890

IMPROVING THE NAVIGATION OF THE CHESTERFIELD CANAL For a considerable time, the navigation of portions of the Chesterfield Canal has been attended with serious hindrance on account of the weeds and silt, necessitating greatly reduced loads. This has been particularly the case along the portions from above Shireoaks and into Derbyshire. A few weeks ago, the boatmen of Retford and Worksop joined in a petition to the Canal Company, asking that a steam dredge should be placed on the canal for permanent use. This request has been acceded to by the company, and by the new year a steam dredge will begin to work the entire length of the canal.

39 February 11 1891

SAD DEATH OF A BIRMINGHAM BOATMAN AT SWARKESTONE An inquest was held by

Mr W H Sale, coroner for the district, at the Crewe and Harpur Arms, Swarkestone, on the body of a boatman named **William Henry James**, aged 29, of Langley Green, Oldbury, near Birmingham. **Charlotte James** identified the body of deceased as that of her late husband, who left home on Tuesday the 3rd inst, at about 8.15 in the morning, to go by a tar boat named the *Dove* – of which he was the steerer – by the Oldbury Canal to Derby. When he left Oldbury, he seemed in good health. He had, however, been subject to fits when lying in bed asleep, but to her knowledge he had never had one during the daytime. The last time he had one of these fits was about two months ago. When seized with one, deceased generally made a noise with his throat, but did not struggle. Witness had been married for about nine years, and deceased had been subject to these fits for eight years. **James Butler**, a boatman, stated that he was with deceased in the boat on Tuesday last, on the way from Oldbury to Derby. They arrived at Swarkestone on Thursday about five o'clock. They tied up the boat and witness went into the cabin with deceased, and after some conversation they both lay down to sleep. About ten o'clock at night, witness was awakened by the feet of the deceased “bobbing” against his head, as he slept with his head near James's feet. He called to deceased, who was making a peculiar noise in his throat. He received no answer, so he lit a piece of paper and fetched a man from another boat. On returning they found deceased lying on a sack of corn, with his head over the side, and his arms hanging over the sides. He was quite dead. Witness had known him for four or five years, but did not know that he was subject to fits. **Isaac Green**, a boatman, corroborated the evidence of the last witness. The Jury returned a verdict of “Death from natural causes”.

40 May 20 1891

RESCUED FROM DROWNING Police-constables Hind and Coles report receiving information from Dr Wright of Full Street on Wednesday that a man had been found in the canal, near the Sanitary Depot, Nottingham Road. On arriving, the officers found that a man named Thomas Jordan of 46 Whitecross Street, who works at the Sanitary Depot, had been bathing in the canal and had got out of his depth, not being able to swim. He was believed to be drowned, and had been got out by a boatman named **Henry Birch**. Thomas Riley of 74 Osmaston Road, and a member of the Yeomanry Ambulance Corps, happened to be passing at the time, and assisted Dr Wright in restoring the man to consciousness, which was accomplished successfully, and Jordan was sent home in a cab.

41 September 30 1891

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT

BREACH OF CANAL REGULATIONS **William Sharpe**, Exeter Street, boatman, was summoned by George Corbett, manager to the Derby Canal Company, that on the 9th and 14th September he did lay and cause to be laid a certain quantity of sand upon a certain part of the wharf, the Cockpit Hill wharf belonging to the Derby Canal Company, other than such part of the same wharf which is set apart for the purpose by the wharfinger of the said Company for the time being ; contrary to the bye laws of the said Company. Mr Livesey appeared for the defence. Mr Corbett produced the bye law of 1808 made for the protection of the wharf of the company at Cockpit Hill. On the 9th, he saw defendant unloading a boat of sand under the crane, where such a thing is forbidden by Act of Parliament. Defendant had been repeatedly cautioned about the same thing before. Witness cautioned the defendant then and left the wharf. On the 14th, however, on going down to the wharf, witness found that the defendant had unloaded another boat of sand under another crane. Thomas Freak also gave evidence as to the offence. For the defence, Mr Livesey submitted that the bye law had not been broken, as it was perfectly silent on the subject of unloading sand, timber only being mentioned, but the Bench overruled this, and fined the defendant 20s and costs. Sharpe was also summoned by Thomas Freak for threatening, on September 9th, to “throw him into the canal”. Mr Livesey appeared for the defence. This case arose out of the last threat being made, when Freak ordered Sharpe to discontinue loading the sand. Defendant was bound over in his own recognisances of £10 and one surety of £5 to keep the peace for six months,

and ordered to pay the costs of the case.

42 December 16 1891

BRUTAL OUTRAGE ON A PARAMOUR At the Leeds Assizes on Thursday afternoon, **John Routledge**, 34, a boatman, was sentenced to penal servitude for life for a terrible outrage at Doncaster. The prisoner had gone home drunk on July 18th and quarrelled with a woman named Elizabeth Holmes, with whom he lived. He pulled her out of bed, kicked her in the back, and then burned her in various parts of the body with a red hot poker. She was able to appear in court to give her evidence, but was very weak. She stated that the prisoner was very drunk at the time, having broken out after being a teetotaller for eight weeks. He promised to marry her when she went to live with him. He was kind when sober.

43 July 19 1893

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

THREATS **Joseph Chapman**, boatman of Sawley, was summoned for threatening to beat Louisa Roe of Sawley on the 26th January. Complainant said that prisoner threatened to cut her ---- head off. She could assign no reason for his conduct. He was bound over in his own recognisances of £10 to keep the peace, and to pay the costs, or in default to go to prison for 14 days.

44 July 11 1894

LONG EATON

DROWNING CASE On Wednesday, Mr Whiston held an inquest at Long Eaton, touching the death of Maud Rose, 16 years of age, daughter of Mr Rose, joiner, Long Eaton. The evidence showed that the girl left home on Tuesday morning as if to go to business. She was an apprentice to dressmaking at the Co-operative Society, and her family did not think anything was wrong. She was seen on the canal bank near Sawley, and was walking about during the morning. A workman missed her, but heard no cries. About three o'clock, a boatman picked the body out of the canal in the parish of Hemington, and it was removed to the Harrington Arms, Sawley, and then taken home by her father and Inspector Reed. There was no suspicion of foul play. The jury returned a verdict that she drowned herself while of unsound mind.

45 July 25 1894

INQUESTS IN DERBY

THE SAD DROWNING FATALITY Mr J Close, Borough Coroner, held an inquest at the Town Hall on Tuesday morning, on the body of John Webster, aged 22 years, of 94 Warner Street, who was drowned in the Derwent near the Folley Houses, Darley Meadows, while bathing on Monday morning. Ellen Webster, wife of the deceased, said she did not live with her husband, she was residing at 4 Parker's Place. Witness saw him alive on Monday morning, when he was going bathing with a man named Hart. He was not sober, but parted on friendly terms. Joe Hart, driller of 18 Parker Street, said he left home with the deceased at about five minutes to nine on Monday morning. Neither of them were sober, and they called at the Nottingham Arms, Bridge Gate, and the Seven Stars Inn, Nottingham Road, and had half a pint of beer each at both places. Any ordinary person could see that they were under the influence of drink. They then went to the Coach and Horses, Little Chester, and witness had half a pint of beer and Webster had two bottles of soda water. The deceased wanted to have ale, but he (Hart) persuaded him to have the soda water as he had had enough drink. At neither of the public houses did they refuse to serve witness with beer. They were both about as intoxicated as each other. When in Darley Fields, deceased suggested a bathe. They undressed, witness going in first. Webster was a very good swimmer, but witness was only a moderate one. Webster swam across the river and back again, and they sat on the bank for some time. He asked witness to try and swim across the river, but he refused, and the deceased jumped into the water again. Witness called to his companion to come back, and he was doing so when witness dived in. On coming to the surface, Hart saw the man disappear, and did not see him

again. They would then be about forty feet away from each other, and witness ran to the Folley Houses and then to the Town Hall. Witness thought the deceased was in a condition to go into the water as he appeared to be much more sober after he had the soda water. The affair happened about half past ten. Before breakfast, he and the deceased, who had slept at his house the previous night, had two half pints of beer each at the Elm Tree, Watson Street. On the Sunday night the deceased was not sober, nor was witness, and they lay on the sofa all night. **William Gregory**, living in the Furnace Yard, Duke Street, boatman, said he recovered the deceased's body with the boat hook on Monday afternoon. Sergeant W Hawke deposed to removing the body to the Mortuary, and Inspector C Morrell also gave evidence. The Coroner, in summing up, said he thought it was very wrong for the landlords or landladies of the public houses to serve the deceased with drink as they did. The authorities of this town would not be doing their duty if they did not take steps against the publicans and prosecute them. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

46 January 23 1895

A DERBY MYSTERY CLEARED On Saturday a dead body was seen in the canal at Shelton Lock, Chellaston, about four miles from Derby. It was brought to the bank, and conveyed to the nearest inn, where it awaited identification. Later in the day, the deceased was identified as Sarah Smith, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances about a month ago. The young woman was a domestic servant in the employ of Mr John Coleman, estate and land agent residing at Friar Gate, Derby. She had a large number of things at her place of service, but she left the house and everything except the clothing she was wearing. This was on the 19th December and, as she did not reappear on the following day, the police were informed. An enquiry was also made from her friends, she being the daughter of a widow living at Sown Hill, Mauldon, near Ampthill, Bedfordshire. Neither her mother nor any of her friends had, however, seen her. The police dragged the Markeaton Brook, which runs near Mr Coleman's house, together with the river Derwent, but without success. In their search they were assisted by a young man to whom the young woman was engaged to be married. As these searches became unavailing, the operations were discontinued, and it was not until Saturday that the unfortunate girl's remains were accidentally discovered, and taken from the canal.

An inquest was held at the Bridge Inn, Shelton Lock, Chellaston, on Monday afternoon, on the body of Sarah Smith, aged 28, daughter of Lucy Smith, a widow residing at Maulden, near Ampthill in Bedfordshire. Mr W H Whiston conducted the inquiry, and Superintendent Clamp and Superintendent Airey were present. Considerable interest was manifested in the inquiry as the wildest rumours regarding the means by which the deceased met her death have been circulated in one of the Bedfordshire newspapers. The first witness called was Lucy Smith, who stated that her late husband was a farm labourer, and identified the body of the deceased as that of her daughter. Witness last saw her in August 1893, when she went down to Maulden Beds for a brief holiday. The girl was and had been for twelve months a domestic servant in the employ of Mr Coleman, house and estate agent of Derby. She was quite cheerful and contented then, but soon after she returned to Derby, she wrote to her old mistress and made complaints. Witness did not want her to go to Derby, but her sweetheart had been there for two years, and she wanted to be near him. Mr Whiston : Did she ever make any complaint to you? Witness : No, sir. Mrs Wilson, the former mistress referred to, told her about the complaints. Mrs Wilson lived in Maulden, but was obliged to give up her house and go into apartments on the death of her husband, and consequently had to part with Sarah. Witness heard once from her daughter after she went back to Derby in August. She received the letter on the Monday morning prior to the Wednesday on which the deceased was missing. Mr Whiston : Did she make any complaints in that letter? Witness : No, sir. There was nothing in it to give you any uneasiness? No, sir ; only that she said she was tired and weary. I can't exactly remember the words. Oh, did she say that? Here is the letter. I don't see those words in this letter? Well, it must have been in the other piece that's missing. She says she is sorry there is not so much work for you, and she has nothing to send you, but she says she will send you a few shillings by and by. Continuing, witness said that she thought it was strange that Mrs Coleman kept

sending her letters after the deceased was missed saying that if she came down to Derby she could do nothing towards finding her daughter, and so it was no good for her to come. Witness heard on the 21st December that her daughter was missing, but did not come up to Derby till Boxing Day. She then went to Mrs Coleman and asked why her daughter had left her, and she said she (Mrs Coleman) had accused her of theft and drinking whiskey. This however, witness averred, she had never been in the habit of doing. In fact deceased had never been known to take a drop of anything, and had never caused witness an hour's anxiety in her life through misconduct. Mr Whiston : Did you know that deceased had had her teeth taken out recently? Witness : Oh yes ; six weeks before. The next witness called was Mrs Miriam Coleman, who said that her husband was Mr John Coleman of 48 Friargate, Derby, and that Sarah Smith had been in their employ since the 25th November 1893 as a general servant. She was very satisfactory as a servant, a good cook, and nice in her manners. Witness, however, had recently had reason to find fault with her – in fact, she spoke to her on the day she left. Witness had found that she had been taking some whiskey – a very little – the evening before, that had been left by witness in the kitchen, and also during her absence with her husband at Brighton she had taken small quantities on several occasions. Witness said to deceased, “You have helped yourself to whiskey during the day”, for of course she (witness) had not, and the girl admitted that she had. This was on the morning she disappeared, and witness said, “Well, Sarah, you had better leave soon after Christmas”. Deceased seemed rather surprised, and asked her if she would forgive her, and witness said, “Certainly, Sarah, but you must leave after Christmas”. The deceased also took some note paper at one time and a few apples, but they were such trivial matters that witness never taxed her about them. Mr Whiston : You have had no words with her? Witness : Not in the least. She was in fact very fond of the girl, or she would not have kept her for so long. On the 19th of December, after witness and her husband had had dinner, deceased was called in to carry away the dinner things. She did so, and witness then went into the town, leaving Mr Coleman smoking. Later on, however, the girl was missing from the kitchen, and witness did not see her alive again. The girl must have gone out the back way into Agard Street, as the key was found on the rockery the following day. As she did not return that night, she thought she must have gone to Mrs Collis's, where lodged her young man, and she telegraphed there. Witness had never had any angry words with the girl besides those mentioned. Mrs Smith : When you accused her of theft, did you not threaten to send for the police? Mrs Coleman : Certainly not. A juryman : Have you ever given the deceased any whiskey? Witness : Yes. Have you ever seen her take it? Witness : Yes. Had she seemed at all worried lately? Oh yes ; she was worried about her teeth, and was continually talking about them. Was she weak in her mind? No ; she was very bright and punctual in her work. The third witness was Walter Grey, a labourer at Chaddesden Sidings, and who said that he lodged with Mrs Collis at 207 Nottingham Road. He had kept company with Sarah Smith for four years, and he last saw her alive on the 16th December. She was then in very good spirits, and appeared to be troubled by nothing but her teeth. She had had all the top row taken out, and had been under the influence of ether during the operation. The dentist ordered the girl to go home and go to bed, and Mrs Collis went to Mr Coleman's office and explained the matter. He said, “It's no good taking her to Mrs Coleman ; she can't look after servants”. In consequence of this, Mrs Collis took the girl to her own house on the Nottingham Road. Mr Whiston : Had she ever made any complaints to you about Mrs Coleman? Witness : She had seemed worried at times about it. About what? Well, she had to get the coal in sometimes. Nothing more than that? Oh no, sir. She made no complaint of any unkindness on Mrs Coleman's part? No, sir. Ever expressed a wish to leave? Not to me, sir. Continuing, witness produced a letter which he had received from the girl in which she asked his forgiveness for having been “a little cross” on the previous Sunday, and Grey explained to the coroner that he was going down to Maulden for Christmas, and deceased was cross because she could not go too. She was a weak girl and frequently fainted. He could not assign any other reason for her committing suicide than her mistress's complaints. He had never known her take drink, in fact she had always refused to take any. She was very sensitive. **Henry Withy**, of 59 Eagle Street, Derby, a canal boatman, deposed to finding the body last Saturday in the canal, and Police-constable Hodgkinson stated that the body

bore no marks of violence. The Coroner said that the Jury had before them no evidence of how the deceased got into the water ; all they knew was that the girl was found in the water, and that she had apparently been there some time. There were no marks of violence on her, and the probability was that she either fell into the canal accidentally or jumped in purposely. Certain accusations had been made against her, but the evidence was very conflicting, and it was impossible to know which side to believe, but at all events, when Mrs Coleman's back was turned, she left and did not return. One could scarcely believe the girl would try to make away with herself on account of the trifling accusations made against her, and it seemed rather more likely that she accidentally fell into the canal while wandering about. Under the circumstances, however, the jury would probably prefer to find an open verdict. The jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned".

47 May 29 1895

BELPER PETTY SESSIONS

ALLEGED FOOTBALL ON THE HIGHWAY **Samuel Hind**, boatman, Thomas Ford, brickmaker, John Clark, bobbin turner, Fred Yann and James Christian, labourer, youths of Bull Bridge, were charged with playing football on the 6th May. The cases were dismissed.

48 26 1895

ATROCITY IN SOUTH WALES A case of a shocking description was heard on Wednesday by the Pontypridd magistrates, resulting in the committal to the Assizes of four men, two being canal boatman and two colliers, charged with outraging a married woman named Mrs Emery, and the attempted drowning in the canal of Joseph Emery, her husband, employed as engine driver at the Albion Colliery. Emery and his wife were proceeding home along the canal towing-path late on Saturday night, when they were waylaid by four men, who among them threw the woman down and endeavoured to push the husband in the canal. Escaping with his life, Emery rushed for assistance, but meanwhile Mrs Emery was beaten by the fellows until she became unconscious, and then, it is alleged, all four outraged her and stole her handbag containing money. Mrs Emery remained unconscious for seven hours. One of the accused pleaded guilty. The case has caused a profound sensation throughout South Wales, especially in view of the frequency of such revolting scenes. Only a week ago, a married woman at Triorchy (Treorchy?) was set upon and stripped naked in the public streets at night.

49 January 15 1896

SUPPOSED SUICIDE OF A DERBY MAN Mr W H Whiston, county coroner, held an inquest at the Crown Inn, Allenton, on Saturday morning, on the body of Amos Avern, 54 years of age, of 8 Regent Street, Derby, who was supposed to have committed suicide by drowning himself in the canal at Allenton on Thursday morning. Louisa Avern, the widow, identified the body, and said her husband was a wood turner employed at Holmes's Carriage Works, London Road. She last saw him alive at about half past eight on Thursday morning, when he took her a cup of tea to bed as she was not well. He was greatly upset at her ill health, and also at being on short time at work. He then went out as if he was going to his employment. He was secretary to a friendly society, and he was rather troubled about getting out a report. The deceased was very kind to her, and often said that he hoped he would not leave her behind, as no one would look after her as he had done. William Piggs of Boulton deposed to having seen the deceased on the Thursday morning on the Magazine Bridge, William Birch, of Nelson Street, Derby, said that at about 10.20 on the morning in question, as he was walking on the canal side, he saw the body floating in the canal under the Boulton Bridge. He was lying face downwards. Witness then went for a policeman, and assisted to get the deceased out of the water. Police-constable Snart, stationed at Allenton, deposed to being sent for to the canal side and removing the body to the Crown Inn. There were no marks of violence on the body. Witness had ascertained that some boatmen from Loughborough had picked up the deceased's hat and had taken it with them. There was only a knife, a bunch of keys and a couple of envelopes on the body. Mrs Avern, recalled, said she did not know whether her husband could swim or not. The

Jury returned a verdict of "Found drowned", as there was no evidence to show how or by what means the man got into the water.

50 August 19 1896

ILKESTON

DEATH FROM EXCESSIVE DRINKING On Friday, Mr R Whiston, deputy coroner, held an inquest at the Boat Inn, Shipley, touching the death of **John Mee**, aged 43. The evidence showed that the deceased was a boatman living at Leicester, and that on Thursday he arrived at Shipley to load the boat with coals. Deceased was suffering from the effects of drink, and was unable to do his work. On Wednesday morning he was found dead in the boat cabin, after raving nearly all the night. The jury returned a verdict of "Death from excessive drinking".

51 23 1896

ILKESTON POLICE COURT **Alfred Whitehouse**, boatman of Loughborough, was charged with stealing a quantity of coal, value 15s, at Ilkeston on the 30th July, the property of his mistress, Eliza Cook, proprietress of a coal wharf at Loughborough. The case was dismissed.

52 December 16 1896

THE EDUCATION OF PAUPER CHILDREN In spite of all enactments concerning free and compulsory education, a certain number of children grow up in almost complete ignorance. The offspring of canal boatmen, of travelling show folks, of tramps and casual paupers, manage to evade the provisions of the Education Act and the vigilance of School Boards. They are in no one's jurisdiction, and only the efforts of charity when encouraged by the wishes of parents can do anything to dissipate their ignorance. Occasionally they go into the workhouse for a day or two, but soon they can bear its restraints no longer and go off on tramp again, taking their children with them. In a week or two they may be in another workhouse, or even back in the same one. The children thus grow up ignorant and untrained, fit only for the shiftless nomadic lives their parents led before them. Mr Geoffrey Drage, speaking recently at Whitechapel, dwelt on the condition of these "ins and outs", and expressed the wish that some means could be devised for taking them out of the control of their parents. They should not, however, be shut up in large "barrack" schools, where they come to be regarded, and regard themselves, only as parts of a great machine, but rather boarded out in some poor but honourable household, where they may learn the ordinary duties and experience some of the affection and discipline of family life.

The Hospital

53 December 22 1896

DROWNING FATALITY IN DERBY

A MAN'S BODY FOUND IN THE DERWENT At twelve o'clock on Monday, the body of **Thomas Clews** of Drewry Lane, was found in the river Derwent, at the back of the Sand Yard, Duke Street. A man's legs were seen sticking up in the water, and the body was got out by **William Gregory** of House 4, Court 2, River Street, and Samuel Gregory of Darley Lane. Police-constable Bigley was sent for, and he, with the assistance of Police-constables Orme and Phipps, took the body to the mortuary, where it awaits an inquest. The man had evidently been in the water some hours.

THE INQUEST Mr J Close, borough coroner, held an inquest at the Town Hall on Monday, into the circumstances of the case. Eliza Robinson of 23 Drury Lane, wife of Robert Robinson, a brewer, identified the body as that of her brother, who was about 62 years of age. He had lived with her up to the time of his death, and was a boatman in the employ of Mr Boam. At about 1.30 yesterday afternoon, he left home saying that he would go down to his boat and sweep it out as he thought it was going to freeze. She did not see him again alive. He was in the habit of spending part of the week in the boat, and sleeping in the cabin. For the past twelve months he had complained of giddiness, and did so on Sunday morning. Before leaving, he said that if he was not

back before four o'clock he should stay in the cabin all night and prepare for going a voyage the next day. He was very jolly all day, and had never threatened to take his life. John McCoy of House 3, Court 4, Bridge Street, a labourer at a plaster maker's in Duke Street, said the deceased, whom he had known for many a year, came to the works at about two o'clock on Sunday morning. Witness last saw him alive at a quarter to three, when he said he should go to the boat and "clear up". He appeared to be in his usual health and spirits. William Gregory, a boatman living at House 4, Court 2, River Street, said that at 12.20 midday he was at the sand yard in Duke Street, when he saw something in the water. He got the boat hook, and with the assistance of his brother and another man, got the body out. He then went to the Town Hall and gave information to the police. On Sunday afternoon, witness went to the deceased's boat, and found that the fire had been made but the cabin door had not been locked, which was an unusual thing, as when he left the boat he always locked the door. It was with considerable difficulty that Clews was got out of the water, as he was jammed close to the wharf, as if when he had fallen into the river, he had laid hold of the piles on which the wharf was built in mistake for the bottom of the boat, and so got himself fast. Police-constable Bigley deposed to removing the body to the mortuary, and the jury, on the advice of the Coroner, returned an open verdict of "Found drowned".

54 February 24 1897

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE **Thomas Jones**, boatman of no fixed abode, was charged with attempting to commit suicide at Trent Lock on the 12th February. The prisoner jumped into the swollen Trent while in drink because the landlord would not row him across. When subsequently seen by a policeman, he was very excited and strange in his manner. Prisoner now said he did not remember getting into the water. He was discharged with a caution.

55 April 21 1897

SHOCKING DISASTER AT MATLOCK

FOUR VISITORS DROWNED The opening of the season at Matlock Bath on Friday was marred by a sad boating disaster, involving the loss of four lives. The resort was thronged with excursionists from all parts. The boating on the lower end of the river Derwent, owing to the death of the late tenant, Mrs Ratcliffe, has been taken over by the Matlock Bath Urban District Council, and boating to a great extent was indulged in during the day. Towards evening, a boat containing five occupants, two young men, two young women and a youth, proceeded towards the Masson Mills weir, and passed the floating buoy and danger signal, and the current becoming too strong for the rowers, the boat went over the weir. All the occupants except the youth, William Seedhouse, who was in charge, were precipitated into the water. Seedhouse was with great difficulty got to land, but in such a condition as to be unable to give any account of the occurrence. Later, at a considerable distance down the river, near the Glenorchy Independent Chapel, one of the young ladies was got out of the water, to all appearance dead. Dr Innes of Matlock Bath was soon in attendance, and his endeavours to obtain artificial respiration were watched by a crowd of people, but in spite of all his work, life was pronounced extinct after an hour's exertions.

Later details go to show that the first official intimation of the disaster was received by Police-constable Florendine, stationed at Cromford, but no one appears to have heard screams or any disturbance from the roadway, which runs close by. Sergeant Noble of Matlock Bath reached the spot below the Lady Glenorchy Chapel soon afterwards, and Dr J C Innes, Police-constables Florendine of Cromford, Clark of Shirland and Wild of Horsley Woodhouse, were then in charge of the body of the young lady, who was quite dead. He sent off a police-constable at once to Mr G H Brown of Cromford, secretary of the ambulance class, for a stretcher, and on his arriving, the body was carried to the adjacent Rutland Arms Hotel, and placed in the storehouse to await the inquest. The circumstances surrounding the disaster are necessarily obscured, but we learn that the boat was hired from the Urban District Council's landing stage. Seedhouse, who works at the Masson Mills for Sir Richard Arkwright and Co, and was only engaged by Mr W Jaffrey, the Council's surveyor,

for the day to help with the boat traffic, steered the boat. All that is known is the fact that the rowers lost an oar when near the weir used to back up the water to supply motive power to the Masson Mills, and they quickly floated over the edge into the torrent. The river, owing to the heavy rain and the mills being stopped, was running at a good force, which would have been impossible on any other day but Good Friday. The boat appears to have gone down stern foremost, and to have stood up on end with the bows in the air. This acute angle threw all the occupants head foremost into the river, but Seedhouse being at the lower end, fell backwards and held on to the boat. No one but Police-constable Florendine saw the others, and he states that he noticed two heads in the water. Superintendent Hollingworth, divisional officer, took charge at six o'clock, and it seems that a crowd soon gathered round the banks, but only Seedhouse was visible, and he appeared paralysed with fright. It was apparent that unless help soon arrived he would lose hold, or the boat would break loose and be capsized in the torrent below. However, Mr Thomas Walker, the council's water bailiff, and others shouted to him to hold on, and a line was obtained, while one youth tried wading out. Subsequently a line was thrown out, and Seedhouse tied to it and dragged safely to the bank. He was taken home to Cromford in an exhausted condition after his narrow escape.

For some time it appeared probable that no one would be found to identify the only body then recovered, and in the meantime Mr Jaffrey, Mr Bunting of Cromford and Police-constable Florendine dragged the river, drags being brought from Matlock Bridge for the purpose, but without result. The only things recovered were a hat belonging to one of the young men, and two jackets, also their property. They had presumably taken these off while rowing in the boat. At a late hour, a man was found who gave his name as Herbert Henry Cunnington, and said he was a cleaner working for the Midland Railway Company at Westhouses, near Clay Cross. He said he could identify the two coats as those of two of his friends, named Arthur Whitaker, aged 21, cleaner on the Midland Railway at Westhouses, who lodged at No 11 Midland Terrace, Westhouses, single, and the other as Henry Smith, also a cleaner at the same place, aged 21 to 24, single, lodging at the Villas, Westhouses, with a Mr Jones. He said they all came by excursion to Matlock Bath, arriving at eleven o'clock, and they started from Stretton Station by the Sheffield trip. He left them on reaching Matlock Bath on the platform, and never saw them again. He could not identify the ladies, but said they were with his two deceased friends in the train.

At ten o'clock, Mrs Woodward of Higham, and her sister, Mrs Pollard, informed the police that the former identified the body recovered as that of Miss Annie Holmes, and the missing young lady would be her sister Lizzie. There is a brother living at Higham named John Holmes, who carries on business as a builder. The informants could not say the occupation of the deceased with certainty, but believed Miss Annie Holmes had been recently with Mr Cupit, Cupit Lane, near Stretton. The watch of the deceased had stopped at ten minutes to four, and there was a ticket on the body from Wingfield, which is the next station to Stretton. She appears to be 21. Dragging stopped at dark, and was resumed at daylight. The body recovered had gone 300 yards down the stream, and it is feared that the rest will have been carried still lower. The accident is unfortunate, as the Council had only that day really started as owners of a fleet of boats and the lovers' walk. It is some years since lives were lost at this spot.

CORONER'S INQUIRY

TWO MORE BODIES RECOVERED Some of the mystery surrounding the boating accident at Matlock, by which four lives were lost, was elucidated on Saturday. The evidence of a gentleman who was on the bank at the time shows that the boat stuck safely after crossing over the weir, and he shouted to the occupants to hold on to their seats. But the young men, with the plucky intention of saving the lives of the ladies, sprang into the rapids, and took the ladies in their arms to wade to the shore. All, however, were washed away. Below, some hundred yards away, people observed coats and living beings in the water floating down the stream, and it was when Miss Annie Holmes was seen below the Lady Glenorchy Chapel that an attempt was gallantly made to bring her to shore. Mr William Boden, the son of Mr J W Boden, the South End confectioner, dived in at the risk of his own life, and brought the body to shore, but life was then extinct. Dragging was resumed by members of the Matlock and Wirksworth Petty Sessional police force at daybreak on Saturday, and

Mr W Jaffrey, the Urban District Council Surveyor, lent a willing hand. A systematic search was made from the Masson Mills downwards, with the result that a lady's muff was brought to shore by Police-constable Hill. Later, the same officer was dragging in front of Willersley Castle, the residence of Mr F G Arkwright JP, CC, when he caught in the clothing of one of the young men. He called out to Inspector Musson and Mr Jaffrey, who were close by, and all three drew the remains on to the bank. From here they were afterwards taken to the Rutland Arms Hotel, where the other body lay. A search of the deceased proved nothing as to his identity, excepting that he had in his pockets a return half ticket by excursion train to Stretton from Matlock Bath. Subsequently there arrived the relatives of the whole of the four victims, and it was soon established beyond doubt that the young man recovered is Arthur Whittaker. He was identified by his brother, Joseph Whittaker who, in an interview, stated that he was an engine driver on the Midland Railway at Westhouses and Blackwell, near Alfreton. He heard of this disaster the night before from Mr Cunnington, who was the one to identify the clothing of the two men. The parents of the deceased are both living, and Mr Whittaker senior is a farmer, living at the Butterley Farm, Ashover. The informant said he knew deceased was not keeping company with Miss Holmes, because he knew he left home to catch the 9.10 train to Matlock Bath from his house, as he lodged with him. He was to have gone with a young lady from Morton, but she did not arrive. The deceased was not a swimmer, and was not familiar with boating, though he had been to Matlock often enough. The family consisted of two other brothers and two sisters, all of whom live at Westhouses, with the exception of one who resides at Sheepbridge. Deceased, he added, had worked for two years on the Midland Railway, and he had formerly lived at Bolehill, Wirksworth, as coachman to Mr Winfield, after which he had resided at Alfreton. He was 21 years of age last August. His brother, he said, was engaged to a young lady, but he did not know her name. Mrs Joseph Whittaker came with him, and she was very much distressed at the sad occurrence.

The Coroner's inquiry into the disaster was opened on Saturday evening at the Rutland Arms Hotel, before Mr Deputy Coroner S Taylor of Buxton. The District Council was represented by Mr J E Lawton JP, the chairman, and their solicitor and clerk, Mr F C Lymn, and surveyor, Mr W Jaffrey, and the police were represented by Superintendent Hollingworth and Sergeant Noble.

John Holmes, sworn, said he lived at Higham, and was a carpenter. He identified the body of the young lady as that of his late sister, Annie Holmes. He was not quite sure as to her age, but he had received a telegram from the family stating that she was 21 last October. In answer to further questions, witness said she lived at Higham with him whilst she was out of employment ; she was a domestic servant.

Joseph Whittaker was the next witness. He said he lived at Westhouses and Blackwell, near Alfreton, and was an engine driver. He identified the body as that of his late brother, Arthur Whittaker, who was 21 years of age. He was what was known as a past engine cleaner on the Midland Railway. Witness was not in Matlock on the previous day.

The Coroner asked if any idea could be given as to how the young man was who was in charge of the boat. Was he likely to be able to give evidence in a few days?

Police-constable Florendine replied that he had not seen Seedhouse during the day, but he had it reported to him that he was in a very poor way indeed, and was suffering very severely from shock.

The Coroner went on to say that he wished to be guided by the condition of the only survivor of the disaster as to when the inquest should be adjourned to. Only formal evidence had been taken to enable the relatives to procure the burial orders, because it was no use the bodies remaining where they were. He suggested they adjourn for a week or ten days, or in the event of either of the other bodies being recovered, the jury would at once be called together, and if Seedhouse was fit to attend they could then proceed to the proper inquiry. He did not want to call the jury together two or even three times when they could conclude their duties at one sitting. They would, however, understand it was impossible to fix anything definite until the other bodies had been found.

The Foreman remarked that he should think a week would be quite long enough to adjourn.

The Coroner, after some further discussion, bound over the jury in recognisances of £10 to attend the inquest when required. He also said he should like to express sympathy with the families of the

bereaved in their name, who had unfortunately met with their deaths in the river, and he was sure it was a feeling in which the jurymen and people of Matlock generally would join. (Hear, hear).

Mr Lawton, rising, said : Mr Coroner, I am here as chairman of the District Council, and on behalf of the members of the Council I desire to express in words similar to those which have fallen from you, the deep and profound sympathy we all feel for those relatives. And I want to add just one word more on the part of the District Council. They were for the first time on Good Friday in authority over those boats ; they sought and obtained the authority very largely because of a feeling of responsibility in regard to the safe traffic on the river. A committee of the District Council was specially appointed to devise regulations and means so that the public might enjoy the boating on the river and also enjoy it in perfect safety. The utmost possible care was being exercised, very much greater than had ever been taken before.

The Coroner (intervening) : It is important we should not go into that yet. That is a matter I don't want to take this evening. It is better not to do so.

Mr Lawton : The Council are desirous of offering every possible help to ascertain the true cause of this deplorable accident.

The Coroner : That is a matter I was going to speak to Mr Lymn about before I go, because there is some evidence I should like to have on that matter.

This closed the proceedings.

SENSATIONAL STATEMENTS The facts relative to the boating disaster have now been ascertained by a Matlock reporter from the only survivor of the terrible catastrophe, and the intelligence throws altogether a new light upon the incident which shows that the lives were lost sensationally. William Seedhouse, the youth who was steering the ill fated boat, has been in a shocking state since the occurrence, in fact he has bordered on delirium the whole time. The tragedy appears to have preyed on his mind to a very serious extent, and on Sunday night he had to be held down in bed by three of his attendants and a neighbour. He frequently bursts into tears, and Mr J C Innes of Matlock Bath, who is in attendance, has vetoed his attending any inquest to give evidence this week. The reporter found on Monday that he had risen from his bed and was downstairs. He looks very ill. In answer to questions, he said he worked at the Via Gellia Mills, Cromford, for Messrs Hollins and Co, the well known Nottingham firm of cotton and silk spinners. He will be nineteen years of age next August, and is the son of the late Joseph Seedhouse, who died sixteen years ago. Seedhouse lives with his widowed mother at No 34 Cromford Hill. He had a holiday on Good Friday from the mills, and being anxious to earn something for his mother, he took a day's engagement under the Matlock Bath Urban District Council to help with the boat traffic on the Derwent. He is a willing youth, and has had considerable experience on the Derwent as a boatman, having been engaged on the same length of the river all last summer for the late owner of the boats, Mrs Ratcliffe. Coming to the actual circumstances of the fatal trip, he said he could not tell what time it was when the party of two young men and two ladies engaged a boat at the landing stage near the ferry, across to the Lovers' Walks. It was afternoon, and he got into the boat in the stern, at the tiller. The boat took a trip down the river right away, and he told them to turn round when opposite the New Bath Hotel Restaurant, which is about one hundred yards above the weir. Here it is absolutely imperative a return journey should be made because of the proximity of the Masson Mill weir. The young men from the first assumed charge of the boat, and replied to Seedhouse that they knew more about the water than anybody else, or him ; they had been on rougher water than that. They would go onward. Asked as to whether it was true they dropped an oar in the water, Seedhouse said they did do so, but it was opposite the Switchback, which is half a mile above the weir, and they soon recovered possession of it. Then they willingly rowed right on to the weir? Yes. What about the wire rope which is placed across the river with a danger board in front of them? They all saw it, but simply rowed under it. I said to them, "You see the board marked danger". They replied, "Oh, never mind that ; we are used to the water". Then they went straight on to their death? Yes, they rowed right over the weir. Now, what happened afterwards? I cannot tell you ; I never saw any more. You cannot tell whether it is a fact the boat turned round and drifted over stern foremost? I cannot tell you whether it turned round ; I stuck to the stern.

Still, it must have turned round to go over that way. Asked as to what was done when the boat got stuck over the weir, he said he stuck to his seat in the stern, and if they had remained with him, all would probably have been well. There were no other boats down that end of the river at the time that he was aware of, and all he could recollect was **Ernest Huddart**, another boatman, walking along the weir and fastening him to a rope by which they drew him to the shore. They lost no oars near the weir. When they started away from the landing stage, he asked the men to let him row them, but they distinctly refused. Then the men simply treated it as a huge joke to have a weir in front of them? Yes. Then they pulled right through to the weir? Yes : under the danger signal rope. Seedhouse pathetically said it was his last time if he got over this. From his relations it was gathered that he was brought home by Mr Boden, who lives in Victoria Row, Cromford, but before that he had been given brandy. His own relations do not think he will recover as the family is consumptive, and Seedhouse has been delicate from his youth up. His mind is a complete blank as to what happened after the boat turned over the weir ; he heard no screaming, and believed the young men jumped out into the water.

56 April 21 1897

WILLINGTON

DROWNING FATALITY Mr Reginald Whiston held an inquest at the Green Man Inn, Willington, on Wednesday afternoon, on the body of **Frederick William Savin**, the four year old son of **William Savin**, boatman in the employ of Mr Gandy, Derby, who was drowned in the canal near his home at Willington on Tuesday morning. It is supposed that while the child was playing on the towing-path between 10 o'clock and half past, he overbalanced and fell into the water. A neighbour called Mrs Haynes saw the child in the canal and called for assistance, and the lad's father jumped into the canal and got the deceased out. Dr Cronk tried for an hour and a half to restore life, but was unable to do so. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".

57 April 28 1897

THE MATLOCK BATH DISASTER The Coroner (Mr Taylor) opened the inquiry on Tuesday morning at the Rutland Arms Hotel, Matlock Bath, as to the death of Harry Smith, the third of the victims recovered from the River Derwent. Mr F C Lymn, solicitor for the Matlock Bath District Council, represented that authority, together with Mr W Jeffrey ; and Sergeant Noble appeared for the police.

James Jelf said he lodged with Mr Jones at Evelyn Villas, Westhouses and Blackwell. He identified the body as that of Harry Smith by the colour of his hair. (The head was much battered through contact with the rocky bottom of the river). Deceased lived at a farm at Shirland with his parents, but for two years he had lodged at Evelyn Villas, to be near his employment on the Midland Railway. Smith was 23 years of age, and he had known him three years.

Jelf said he had seen Seedhouse, and he told him he would be ready next week.

The Foreman (Mr Lennox) pointed out that there had now come forward a gentleman visitor from Manchester (son-in-law of Mrs Armour of Victoria Terrace, Cromford), who was on a short stay. He witnessed the whole of the catastrophe, and he believed that they would be better able to get reliable evidence from him than from the sole survivor, considering the cloudy condition of his mind.

The Coroner remarked that it was essential that they should get all the reliable evidence they could, and he would like the gentleman to be present.

Dragging operations have now reached as far down the Derwent as five miles from the scene of the disaster.

RESUMED INQUEST The Coroner's inquiry into the boating accident was opened on Monday at Matlock. The body of Miss Annie Holmes is still unrecovered. Mr Lymn, solicitor, represented the District Council. Evidence was given by Mr Boden, who saw a body in the river, and jumped in and brought Miss Elizabeth Holmes to land.

Sergeant Noble said Dr Innes used artificial restoratives without success.

The manager of the boats proved the competency of the boatman in charge of the boat. Mrs Lambert said she saw the disaster at the weir. All alighted upon the stonework, and the first lady was washed into the rapids below. A gentleman went to her assistance and was carried away with her, as were the other two who were afterwards saved. Miss Nutcombe deposed that she did not realise any danger. Mr Jaffrey, council surveyor, stated that the draught over the weir was 12 or 15 inches, and the boat drew 12. Mr Seedhouse, the boatman, and sole survivor, elected to give evidence, after being cautioned by the Coroner against incriminating himself. Witness said the men rowed heedless of remonstrance past the danger signals. The Coroner summed up, and said that if it was found that the boatman was negligent, it would amount to manslaughter. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death, with a rider recommending the Council to safeguard boat traffic on the river.

58 June 16 1897

DERBY COUNTY POLICE COURT

THEFT FROM A CANAL BARGE **John Skidmore**, boatman of no fixed abode, was charged with stealing two sacks of corn, valued at 2s, the property of Messrs Fellows, Morton and Clayton Limited of Brown's Wharf, Nottingham, on the 5th inst. Mr F Stone prosecuted and Mr F D Cooke defended. The prosecutors are canal carriers, and sent out a man named **George Betts** of Barton Turnings, Staffordshire, on a journey with their boat *Experiment*. Six bags of corn were taken on board at the depot at Trent Lock, and the night was passed at Swarkestone. When Betts went to sleep in his cabin the bags were safe, but the next morning two were missing. At Burton, information was given to the police. Inquiries were made, and on a search being made, a sack of corn similar to those missed was found on the prisoner's barge. Mr Cooke urged that there was great doubt in the case, and asked that Skidmore might be given the benefit of it. The Bench, however, decided to convict, and inflicted a fine of 40s and costs, or one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

59 November 24 1897

INQUESTS IN DERBY

THE DROWNING FATALITY On Monday afternoon at the Town Hall, the borough coroner, Mr J Close, held an inquest on the body of Thomas Redfern, aged 53 years, late of 6 Askew's Cottages, Waterloo Street, whose dead body was found in the canal on the Nottingham Road on Saturday morning last. Charles Redfern, fitter, son of the deceased, said that at midday on November 8th his father, who was a tin plate worker, left home to go to his work at Smith Bros, Abbey Street, and did not return. For about a month deceased had been very depressed owing to not being able to get on with his work. The day before his disappearance he hardly spoke half a dozen words and was very peculiar, but he had never threatened to commit suicide. Samuel Roddis, living at the back of 19 Nun Street, a rope maker employed by Messrs Banks and Son, Tenant Street, said he was at work on the rope walk, Nottingham Road, when a boatman called to him that there was a body in the water. Witness went there and, by tying a brick to a piece of string and throwing it into the canal, got the deceased on to the bank. Police-constable Hunt deposed to being called to the spot where the dead man lay, and conveying him to the mortuary. On the suggestion of the Coroner, the jury returned an open verdict.

60 December 13 1899

POLICE NEWS

DERBY BOROUGH POLICE COURT **Joseph Bennison**, a boatman of Stoke-on-Trent, was charged with stealing on Wednesday a top coat, pocket knife and handkerchief, valued at 7s 6d, from a warehouse in Albert Street, the property of Thomas Irvin Newton, general dealer of 48

Stockbrook Street, who also has a chip potato stall at the back of the Market Hall. The prosecutor was at his stall shortly before twelve o'clock last night, when he was called to the warehouse, where he saw the prisoner, who he ordered away. After he had gone, the coat was missed, and prisoner was followed and given into the custody of Police-constable Betteridge in the Corn Market. He was then carrying the coat on his arm, and stated that it was his own. Prisoner pleaded that he was drunk and did not know what he was doing. Fined 10s and costs (£1 10s), or 14 days with hard labour.

61 June 27 1900

THE LITTLE CHESTER DROWNING FATALITY

THE INQUEST At the Town Hall on Monday morning, Mr John Close (Borough Coroner) held an inquiry into the death of Albert Millward, aged 28, whose body was found in the river Derwent near Little Chester on Friday night. William Millward, labourer of 1 Erasmus Street, identified the body as that of his son, who had been living with him at that address. Deceased was last seen alive by witness on the morning of the 16th inst. It was then thought that he was going to his work at the Britannia Foundry. Deceased had been somewhat peculiar in his manners of late, and witness attributed this to the effect of the death of his mother, which occurred some time back. Questioned by Mr Close, witness admitted that deceased had been drinking rather heavily. Jane Kerney, living at 1 Erasmus Street, stated that the deceased and the last witness lodged with her. Deceased had been drinking fairly heavily during the last few weeks, and his behaviour had been very peculiar at times. On the 16th inst he was about to go out when he asked witness if there was someone in the entry waiting to kill him. Witness last saw him alive on the 16th inst. **Nathan Ormond**, a boatman living at 72 Bridge Gate, said he and two more boatmen were taking a boat containing sand down the river on Friday night. On returning, they discovered the body of a man. Information was then given to the police authorities. Sergeant Walker said that the body was found close to the bank, and it appeared as though it had been in the water for several days. No evidence was given of deceased having been seen between the 16th and 23rd inst. An open verdict of death by drowning was accordingly returned by the jury.

62 August 15 1900

STRANGE CONDUCT OF A BOATMAN On Thursday an inquest was held at Whitchurch, before Mr Deputy Coroner West, touching the death of William Henry Heycock (54) of Whitchurch, formerly head keeper to the late Lord Hamner. The evidence showed that the deceased was subject to fits. About four o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, he was walking along the canal near the Wrexham Bridge, and fell into the canal. Directly after, a boatman named **Bromley** went along with his boat. In his evidence he admitted seeing the body of deceased in the canal. When he passed it, it was between the boat and the towing-path. He did not try to get him out ; he went on, having had orders from the captain of the boat not to stop. The Foreman said the man could not have been in the water more than two minutes. The jury found that deceased met with his death by drowning whilst in a fit, and at the request of the jury, Bromley was severely censured.

63 August 22 1900

BOATMAN DROWNED AT TRENT LOCK On Friday night, an inquest was held at the Navigation Inn, Trent Lock, touching the death of **William Lockwood**, a boatman, who fell into the Trent last Friday night. He came from Leicester, and stopped to feed the horse at Trent Lock. On going aboard again, he slipped and fell into the river. His wife only saw him rise once. On Thursday the body was found in the river by Mr W H Baker, who was fishing not far from the mouth of the Soar. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned". Deceased lived at (?Orleash?) in Staffordshire.