

Two Girls Drowned in the Canal

Summary of reports in the Liverpool Mercury, Daily Courier and The Albion, March 1870

An accident of a peculiarly painful character was reported at the Coroner's Court . . . two girls had fallen into the canal lock near Great Howard Street. A PC procured grapnels from the Stanley Dock and succeeded in getting both of them out assisted by Charles Hill, a dock messenger, and Frank Rothwell, master of the flat Dane lying in the dock.

The girls were taken to the receiving-house, Collingwood Dock, where Dr Cavanagh pronounced life extinct and the bodies were removed to the dead house. The first was identified by Margaret Ross as her daughter Jane Ross, 14, who had been looking for something to make a fire. The second was identified by Ann Baldwin wife of Edward Baldwin, master of the flat Edward now lying in the canal, as her daughter Sarah, 13.

(Sarah was named in two reports as Sarah Baldwin but was born in 1856 as Sarah Ann Forsyth to Samuel Forsyth and Ann nee Rosbottom, who was widowed and remarried Edward Baldwin in 1861.)

Ann said she had gone to the office that morning and left her daughter to bring the flat through the locks. Julia Dowling, 13, was on the canal bank and saw the deceased girls raising the paddles of the locks to let water through, when they both fell into the water and sank.

At the inquest next day it was reported that while getting the flat through the locks, Sarah Forsyth asked Jane Ross, who was on the canal bank, to assist her in lifting a paddle to let the water through. When they had raised it some distance it gave a jerk, throwing Forsyth into the water. As she fell she caught hold of Ross's frock and pulled her in with her.

The jury returned verdicts of 'accidentally drowned' and made the following presentment:-

'That in their opinion some person should be employed constantly to look after the locks in question, so as to prevent children and unqualified persons interfering with the paddles and lifts used in passing vessels through the locks.'