

THE ALVINGHAM DROWNING FATALITY.

INQUEST.

The inquest on the victims of the double drowning fatality in the Canal at Alvingham—George Wm. Stebbing (19) and Reginald Phillipson (12)—was conducted by the Deputy Coroner for the Louth District (P. Allison, Esq.) at Mr. Charles Thompson's house, Alvingham, on Friday afternoon last week. The jury was composed as follows:—Messrs. Geo. Bett (foreman), Samuel Shucksmith, Charles Dowse, Henry Shucksmith, Charles Graves, George Topliss, Harry Dowse, Charles Emerson, Wm. Lucas, Jno. Wright, George Bett, junr., Thos. Shucksmith.

The Deputy Coroner said the jury were well aware that there had been an unusually large number of inquests in this district during the last few weeks, but he ventured to think that there was no sadder case upon which a jury had been summoned than that one. In most, if not all of the inquests, there had only been one death to enquire into, but in the case before them they had to enquire into the death of two—a young man and a lad. The circumstances were as simple as they were sad. Narrating the circumstances of how Stebbing, an expert swimmer, was taking Phillipson across the Canal on his back, the Deputy Coroner said there could be no direct evidence as to how the affair really did occur, but one could imagine that if Phillipson was alarmed he might give an extra grip on Stebbing's neck. As Stebbing was an expert swimmer, there must have been something out of the ordinary to account for his going under. He thought they would have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that it was a pure accident, and their sympathies, including his own, would go out to the bereaved parents.

Jane Stebbing, living at South Somercotes, mother of George William Stebbing, said the deceased would have been 20 a week the following day. It would be a month or five weeks since she saw deceased. He lived at Alvingham. She came to Alvingham the previous evening after she learned what had occurred.

Robert Phillipson, of Alvingham, father of Reginald Phillipson, identified the body, and said deceased would have been 13 years of age next September.

The Foreman: I suppose you had an idea that he was bathing in the Canal?—Witness: He had my consent to go.

The Deputy Coroner: Had he bathed in the Canal before?—Witness: Not in the Canal; he had been in the beck.

The Deputy Coroner: Could he swim?—Witness: No, I don't think he could swim.

What time did you last see him?—About a quarter to eight. From half-past seven to that. I called him back and told him he had better not go, but he had been reckoning of this bathing business, and he seemed very disappointed. I had confidence in the lad he was going with, and I said he could go.

Thos. Shucksmith, aged 13, who witnessed the accident, said when they went down to the Canal to bathe on the Thursday evening, George Stebbing went in and had a little swim and came out. Witness went in and got hold of a piece of wood, and Frank Hay went across the river. Afterwards Stebbing came to the bank where Phillipson was, and told him to get on his back. He told him to put his arms round his neck, and his legs round him, and he would be all right. They started off, and soon after Phillipson shouted "Don't, don't." They kept going a little way, and then Stebbing began to sink, and had only his nose above water. Phillipson kept shouting, and soon afterwards they sank altogether. Witness thought Stebbing was only "ducking" Phillipson, but they saw the two come up and sink again. Frank Hay, who had been standing on the other side of the river, swam across, and they got their things on as soon as they could. Young Turner was there, and they sent him to Mr. Betts' for a pole, and put it in. At first it seemed to pull heavy, but then it went easy. They saw three young men coming and shouted to them. The three did not take any notice at first, but afterwards they commenced to run. Some of them then went round to Mr. Thompson's.

The Deputy Coroner: Were you on the bank all this time?—Yes.

You got out of the water, got dressed, and then stood on the bank?—Yes. And then Mr. Thorpe and others came, and they tied this long pole to a rake and put it into the water. They drew one up, and Harry Dowse got hold of his hand and drew him out.

Which was drawn up first?—George Stebbing. They took him away, and they were fishing about a bit longer and they found Phillipson at last at the side. They brought him out and carried him home on a stretcher.

Had you hold of the pole when it was in the water?—Yes.

You yourself felt something?—Yes.

About what time would it be?—It was ten minutes to eight, I think, when they went down the last time.

When did you get down to the culvert?—It would be about half-past seven.

How long had Stebbing been in the water before he took Phillipson across?—Five or ten minutes.

Phillipson went quite of his own free will, and that Stebbing had no intention other than of doing what he had done before with other boys, namely, taking him from one bank to the other, and that being the case there would be no blame attached to Stebbing. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that the deceased were accidentally drowned whilst bathing.

LOUTH BOARD OF GUARDIANS.

The fortnightly meeting of the Board was held on Monday, when there were present the Rev. F. Freshney (chairman), Mr. Henry D. Simpson (vice-chairman for the day), the Revs. Dr. Wyer Honey, H. S. B. Jollye, R. Dolby, B. Curtis, Messrs. M. Smith, S. A. Hillier, J. Baldom, B. G. Stone, H. Fletcher, S. Mackarill, J. F. Broughton, M. Fox, E. Bourne, L. W. Stephenson, W. S. Forman, J. Carter White, E. L. Motley, F. A. Cartwright, A. Moseley, F. C. Chard (clerk).

STATISTICS.

The returns for the week ending June 16th were as follows:—In-door paupers 136, against 130 for the same time last year; out-door poor 523 relieved at a cost of £66 19s. 9d., against 832 relieved at a cost of £111 12s. 9d. for the corresponding period of last year; for the week ending June 23rd there were 139 in-door paupers, against 125 for the corresponding week of last year; out-door poor for the week 520, relieved at a cost of £41 9s. 0d., against 829 relieved at a cost of £116 2s. 11d. for the same time last year.—The Master reported that there were 129 inmates in the Workhouse, against 124 for the corresponding week of last year.

COLLECTOR'S REPORT.

The Collector of Poor-Rate for Louth (Mr. F. C. Chard) in his monthly report showed that there had been collected since the previous statement £140 2s. 3d., leaving recoverable £698 9s. 11d.

The North Somercotes Collector (Mr. J. Loughton) reported collecting £43 1s. 3d. during the month, leaving recoverable £253 7s. 11d.

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BILL.

The Fulham Board of Guardians forwarded a resolution urging that in view of the diversity of opinion on the National Insurance Bill, the Government should not proceed with it until a more adequate opportunity had been afforded the country of ascertaining how the interests of the people are to be affected.

The Rev. Dr. WYER HONEY: Let it lie on the table.

Mr. HILLIER: A more convenient season is a very meagre date.

Mr. SIMPSON said he did not think the matter ought to be rushed.

The Rev. H. S. B. JOLLYE: I don't see that it is a question for Boards of Guardians to consider.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is.

The letter was laid on the table.

THE VISITING COMMITTEE.

recommended that Nurse Bancroft be allowed a fortnight's holiday, and that potatoes as required be obtained from Mr. Mountain, of Withern, at 8d. per cwt.—The minutes were confirmed on the motion of the Rev. Dr. Wyer Honey, seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

THE MASTER'S JOURNAL.

reported gifts of periodicals for the inmates from Mrs. Roberts (Eastgate), Mr. A. A. Hodgson (Mercer Row), two landmen of the Salvation Army, and Mrs. Topliss (Dyas' Terrace, Charles Street). The Rev. H. S. B. Jollye and Mr. Baldom took stock of the provisions and necessaries. The Rev. N. Heelas, vicar of Holy Trinity, Louth, sent a quantity of flowers, the proceeds of a flower service at Holy Trinity Church, for the infirmary. The Brabazon Workers and a few infirm inmates, during one of the usual drives, were invited to call at the Vicarage, South Elkington, where they were kindly served with cake, strawberries and cream.

The usual votes of thanks were accorded on the motion of the Vice-Chairman, seconded by Mr. W. Smith, and the officers were allowed the usual leave of absence, the dates to be left with the Visiting committee.

The relief lists were then discussed.

WEST BUTTERWICK ESTATE SOLD.

A TOTAL OF £19,532.

The West Butterwick estate sold by Sir Berkeley Sheffield to the Dennis Estate Company, Limited, was offered in lots by public auction at the Guildhall, Doncaster, on Saturday. There was a large attendance of farmers and landowners, Messrs. Simons and Ingamella, Spilman and Glasier, Winterton, Doncaster; and Knight, Frank, and Rutley, London, were the auctioneers, and the actual selling was shared by Mr. Simons and Mr. Glasier. Messrs. Ellis, Munday, and Clarke, College Hill, London, acted as the vendor's solicitors. The estate has an area of 1,425a. 1r. 11p., and includes 14 farms from 50 to 150 acres, 50 allotments of from 1 to 10 acres, two fully-licensed publichouses, cottages, &c. The following lots were disposed of:—
"Hall Farm," including The Hall, and 95a. 2r. 3p. of warp land, in the occupation of Mr. Thos. Brown,
Mr. Chas. Milkman, Faddles-
thorpe Grange, Batley ... £5,000
104a. 1r. 2p. warp grass and arable land

Were you in the water at the same time as Phillipson got in?—Yes.

Can you swim?—No.

How long was it from the time of Phillipson first getting on to Stebbing's back to when they first went down? I understood he swam about a little bit.—Three or four minutes, may be.

In what direction?—They went out towards the opposite bank, while they got to the middle, and then they seemed to go down the river.

Did you hear what conversation took place between Stebbing and Phillipson before Phillipson got on to Stebbing's back?—Not from the start.

How often did Phillipson shout "Don't"?—Five or six times, I should think.

Was that when he first got on to Stebbing's back?

—When he got out into the middle.

Did Stebbing make any reply that you heard?

No.—I heard him grasping once or twice.

Did you hear anything that Stebbing said to Phillipson?—I heard him say if he held tight he would be all right.

That was before they got into the middle of the canal?—Yes, sir.

You didn't hear Phillipson make any reply to that did you?—No, sir.

Did you see Stebbing turn and go down stream?

—Yes; he was turning about several times. The water seemed to turn him round.

Did you see Stebbing strike out in the act of swimming?—Yes, with his arms, but not with his legs though.

Witness added in reply to further questions that Phillipson looked frightened. Stebbing was a fairly good swimmer, and witness had gone across the canal on his back.

Frank Hay, 13 years of age, gave corroborative evidence. When Stebbing first asked him to go Phillipson said he did not want to; but when he asked him again two or three minutes later he went. When they got nearly half way across witness heard Phillipson shouting "Don't." Stebbing did not say anything.

The Deputy Coroner: Did Stebbing continue swimming?—No; he tried to do so.

How long would he be swimming?—About half a minute.

From the time they left the bank to the time they went down?—Yes, sir.

When they went down witness said he fetched a stick, but he could not reach them with it. Neither of the deceased spoke when they came up twice, after going down the first time.

A Juror: Did he appear to be choking him?—Yes.

Robert Trafford, Alvingham, said a little after eight o'clock on Thursday evening he heard a report that someone was in the river, and he at once came down. He found the boys Hay and Shucksmith there, and they said Stebbing and Phillipson were in the Canal. They had to send for a rake from the farm, and when it got there it was not long enough, and they had to tie a pole to it. They got Stebbing out first, after he had been in the water just half-an-hour according to what the boys said. They did what they could towards artificial respiration, but they had no hope after that length of time. Witness had no doubt he was quite dead when they got him out. The others went on dragging for Phillipson, and eventually they found him near the wall. He had evidently been pulled across when they got the other body out. It was half-past eight when they got him, and he was quite dead.

The Deputy-Coroner said he thought the jury would find the evidence of the two boys satisfactory, and particularly creditable considering the circumstances and the unnerving experience they had gone through. The only point which he thought they would have to consider was whether there was any negligence on the part of Stebbing, but he must confess that he thought they would have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that