



# Coroner's Inquests

## *Hilperton*

George Osborne and Frederick Dauntsy – 1853

### **TWO BOATMEN BURNT TO DEATH**

At the Rose and Crown, in the parish of Woodborough, on the bodies of two young men, George Osborne and Frederick Dauntsy – the former belonging to Hilperton, near Trowbridge, and the latter supposed to have come from Gloucester – who were in the employ of Mr. John Stratton of Hilperton. Hannah Jennings stated that she lived in Honey-street, and on Saturday morning last, a little after 2 o'clock, whilst lying awake from the face-ache, she perceived a light through her window. She got out of bed to see what it was, and on looking out, she saw a barge on the Kennet and Avon Canal in flames. Not waiting to be dressed, she rushed out in her night-clothes to the burning barge, and having thrown a stone upon the after-cabin, the Captain awoke and came up. He then saw his perilous situation; for had he remained asleep a few minutes longer, the barge must have sunk, and both he and a lad also there would have been drowned! With assistance the Captain succeeded in saving the barge; and witness, after the fire was extinguished, saw the bodies of the deceased, who had been burnt to death. Alfred Miller, the captain of the barge called the "James," stated that on Friday evening last he laid up for the night at Honey-street Wharf, being on the way to Reading with coals. Witness went to the after-part of the barge about 11 o'clock that night, with a lad, and the deceased to the fore-part at the same time, when they wished each other "good night." Witness said that they were not intoxicated, and corroborated the fore-going evidence as to his being awake by Hannah Jennings, and the finding of the remains of the deceased in their cabin, which exhibited a most appalling spectacle, their flesh having been destroyed. There was a stove in the cabin, but witness was unable to throw any light as to the origin of the fire.

Verdict – Accidentally burnt.

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