

ANOTHER BATCH OF MURDERS AT CATHAYS



The Friends of Cathays Cemetery



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1 Edward Stelfox (1849-1876)

PLOT M 41

Edward Stelfox was born in the north of England and arrived in Cardiff in 1849, at the age of 29, with his wife Hannah. He had been involved in building the Menai Bridge on Anglesey as a foreman for a building contractor. Stelfox was a man with ambition to run his life his own way. A steady income from a public house allowed him to try his hand at other things. His third pub was the Marquis of Bute Hotel in Bute Road where he was living in 1858 with Hannah and their youngest daughter.

AUSRENDEZVOUS DES FRANCAIS.
EDWARD STELFOX,
FISHERMAN,
MARQUIS OF BUTE HOTEL,
147, BUTE ROAD, CARDIFF.
FRESH FISH AND SHRIMPS EVERY TIDE.

N.B.—Dealer in Natural Curiosities, and Curator of Birds, Quadrupeds, and Reptiles, &c.

Stelfox next bought a boat and became a fisherman but not always endear himself to the local seafaring community, he began to make a few enemies. He tried his hand at ship owning with an old boat and obtained a council contract to remove wrecks from the dock approaches by blowing them up with dynamite. But Edward Stelfox was not averse to making an odd penny wherever he could by illegitimate means. Twice he was brought before the court, firstly for assault and the second time for stealing a case of dynamite, but he was not convicted on either occasion.

Stelfox met with a John Webber, a man from Stowford near Bridgwater. Webber was a well-travelled man and had spent some time in Australia and America where he dug for gold in the gold rushes. Even once shipwrecked on an uninhabited island with six other men and, so it was said, forced to eat their dog to survive. Webber returned to fishing in Cardiff in 1866 when he was 54, fishing being the trade of his younger days. He kept a small shop selling fresh

fish and in time became well known and well liked around the dock area. He often drank in the Museum Tavern in South William Street, a pub that had been previously owned by Edward Stelfox. Webber bought a fishing smack with his cousin and set about earning a modest living. His cousin met an untimely end when he took part in a pigeon shooting match, and Webber then met Stelfox. From the outset, the two men had an uneasy relationship and often became quarrelsome. Though Webber was more the accomplished fisherman, they occasionally worked together. At one time, they employed a Spaniard as a hired hand and there was a great deal of speculation as to his fate when he suddenly disappeared. Stelfox and Webber held often held secrets from each other. Shortly before the tragic climax to their relationship, Webber was telling closest friends that he was expecting a lot of money from Stelfox and there were rumours they both were involved in smuggling.

Much of the time though they were in competition with each other and there were many tensions, especially over fishing. Stelfox had secured the fishing rights to the Roath Fisheries, a stretch of foreshore between the docks and the Rhymney River. Webber had been in the habit of beaching his fishing smack, the "Wem", on the foreshore and selling fish in competition to Stelfox. This irritated Stelfox because he was paying rent for the privilege and Webber was not. He had previously been to the Bute Trustees, who owned the foreshore, to complain about Webber and others who were poaching fish there. When Webber once again anchored his smack in sight of a shack owned by Stelfox, ready to beach it on the next spring tide, some of the beaching planks mysteriously disappeared from the smack.

In November 1874, at the age of 54, Stelfox had suddenly left the Marquis of Bute Hotel and his family, to live in the shack, built on the foreshore. It was a lonely piece of moorland and a place remote from any other habitation. He took with him Annie James, a young, pretty, woman who had been his wife's servant. The shack was a small stone cottage with just two ground floor rooms. Outside was a fish hut, a fowl hut and a pigsty and a painted iron sign- "Fresh fish, shrimps and ginger beer," a squalid scene projecting poverty and loneliness.

On the morning of Monday the 13th March 1876, Edward Stelfox rose at about 6.30am. Thomas Sellick, a fisherman working for Stelfox, who lived close by, arrived with some fish and both men went into the fish hut to weigh it. Just after 7am John Webber arrived upset carrying a double-barrelled gun. Stelfox was in the fishing hut when he was confronted by Webber, who accused him of removing the planks from his fishing boat. Stelfox of course denied it. Webber

raised the gun as Stelfox cried out- "Don't shoot me Jack." But Webber fired, hitting Stelfox in the side. Stelfox staggered across the cottage, stumbled and fell to the floor. Annie James, alerted by the shot, came running from the bedroom and quickly locked the outer door before holding Stelfox in her arms.

Meanwhile Webber was outside and went to the kitchen window smashing two panes of glass with the muzzle of the gun. He pushed the gun through the broken window, aimed and fired the second barrel at Stelfox, hitting him in the groin. Stelfox now lay dying. Annie James pleaded for her life saying- "John please don't shoot me." Webber however did not harm Annie or Sellick, who had witnessed everything. Sellick tried to get the gun off Webber, who eventually walked calmly away and a few yards from the cottage, meeting 20-year-old John Dunn, to whom he gave the gun and asked him to take it to his house. He told Dunn what he had done and a few minutes later he approached Bute Dock Police Constable George Seddon in the East Docks to give himself up. He told PC Seddon that he had fired two shots at Stelfox and was taken to the police station where he was charged with the murder of Edward Stelfox.

Dr. Pratt went to the shack to find Stelfox lying dead. People soon gathered at the Marquis of Bute Hotel to pass on the news to Stelfox's wife. Webber's landlady, Mrs. Lewis, took a pot of coffee to him at the police station at 10am and was appalled to see him behind bars. He calmly asked her for ham and eggs because he was hungry. The prisoner was taken in handcuffs from the docks to the town police station, where crowds of on-lookers lined the streets and hundreds of people began gathering outside the police station and the town hall.

Rumours swept the streets with most docks people sympathising with Webber and gave little care about what had happened to Stelfox. Some claimed Webber had told them he intended to kill Stelfox 'cleanly' a few days beforehand. The washerwoman from the pawnbroker's shop reported that Webber had surrendered the pawn ticket to reclaim the gun on the previous Saturday. Police were called to a disturbance outside Webber's house in Adelaide Street where local women were arguing and fighting over the affair. But the prisoner John Webber, a grey bearded seafarer, was brought before Cardiff Magistrates and the case against him began. It continued the following day when he was committed to stand trial at the next assizes.

Stelfox's body lay where it had fallen on the floor of the fish house for several days and officers from the Bute Dock Police were detailed to mount a guard. A large crowd gathered outside joking and laughing. The crowd grew larger as

the day wore on, even though a man lay dead on his kitchen floor a few feet away.

George Hardy did the post mortem examination on Stelfox at the fish house on the day after the killing with several others in attendance. It was found that Stelfox had been shot in the chest and the upper thigh, either wound would have been sufficient to kill him. The body remained in the house for two more days before it was taken to the Marquis of Bute Hotel.

The verdict at the inquest was no surprise, murder; the funeral took place on Saturday the 18th March on a day with high winds and snow flurries but it did not stop the crowds from attending. Fifty Foresters led the funeral procession in front of the hearse and three coaches and a succession of cabs. All around the procession swarmed a hoard of children. Crowds lined the streets. The procession made its way to the New Cemetery where the body was interred.

The trial at Glamorgan Spring Assizes at Cardiff was held before the Judge Sir William Grove. It opened and concluded in one day, the 5th April 1876. Webber pleaded "Not Guilty" to the murder of Edward Stelfox. He did not deny the killing but his counsel maintained that at the time his actions were those of a lunatic and he had not been responsible for them. William Partridge told the court that he was a fisherman working for Webber, and he owned the gun that was used to kill Stelfox. He regularly shot wild fowl on the moors but being short of money before Christmas, he had pledged the gun at a pawnbroker's shop some three months earlier. John Webber had then bought the pawn ticket from him for two shillings and sixpence.

Webber was aged 64, being described in court- "John Webber sat meek, haggard, the face fringed with a grizzly beard of black and grey; the mouth overhung with a heavy moustache; dressed in a very old pilot jacket with a blue guernsey underneath, a red scarf around his neck; his hands nervously twitching the sides of the dock."

The jury returned after just ten minutes and unanimously declared Webber guilty of wilful murder. The judge sentenced him to death, "It is my duty now to pass upon you the sentence of the law which is that you will be taken from hence to the place of execution and there hung by the neck until you are dead and your body buried within the precincts of the gaol to which you were last removed." The prisoner stood leaning on the desk, breathing heavily for a few seconds, and was then removed.

The date for John Webber's hanging at Cardiff Gaol was set for Tuesday 25th April 1876. A few days before, an appeal for remission of the capital penalty was made direct to the Home Secretary on the grounds of the prisoner's age and his previous good character. It included a petition signed by 150 people but it was turned down. On the morning of the execution all the trains were stopped on the Taff Vale Railway line and Crockherbtown Station was closed to prevent the public from seeing the scaffold that had been erected in the prison yard. Policemen were stationed on the railway embankment to prevent people from gaining sight of the execution.

At 7.45am the bell on St John's church began to toll and it continued until 8.15. At 8am the prisoner was taken to the scaffold and without any undue delay, the executioner, Marwood, from Bristol, pulled the lever to open the trapdoor. John Webber went to his death quietly and calmly and a black flag was run up over the prison. Public opinion was largely on the side of John Webber who was considered to be a gentle old man who had been goaded too far. In his will he left a small fishery and two cottages in Stowford near Bridgwater as well as £500 to his brother's son.

Later Thomas Sellick took over the shack and the fishing rights along the foreshore on behalf of Stelfox's widow, Hannah. But the buildings were demolished a few years later when the Roath Dock was built. Within a few years of the murder of her husband, the widow Hannah Stelfox retired from the hotel and took rooms with Henry Fewings and his family at 26 Maria Street. Fewings was a railway policeman and it is an intriguing twist that the widow of a murdered fisherman, was now living with a policeman and his family.

Edward Stelfox lies in an unmarked grave in Section M, close to the Bier-house.

Story adapted from Headline.org.uk.

2 Mary Sheen (1868-1893)

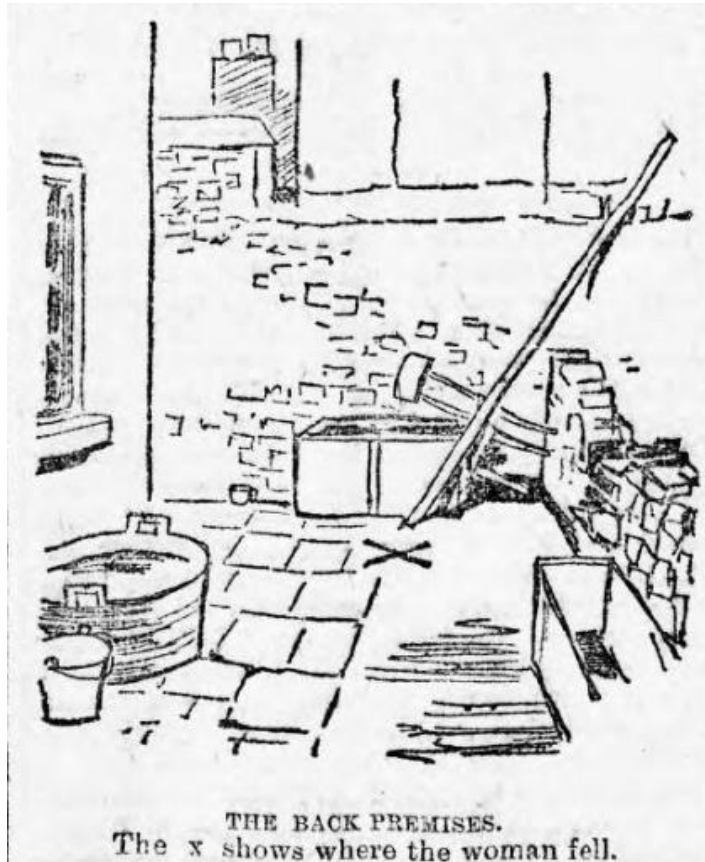
PLOT C 1215

Mary Sheen (aka Sweeney) was 25 and lived with Thomas Collins. Her estranged husband sometimes paid visits, creating jealousy between the two men. On 10 June, Collins was let out of prison after serving 6 months for felony. He went with Mary to his mother's home. Mary and Thomas argued, Mary accusing Thomas of an incestuous relationship with her mother. On 17th June Thomas attacked Mary with a knife causing her serious hospital treatment. She refused to press charges but 2 days later Collins attacked her again and the wounds inflicted were fatal.



Collins approached police officers and told them "I give myself up to you. I have done it." When the officers enquired as what he had done, he replied, "I have murdered Mary Sheen."

Collins was known to react badly to drink, and at the time of the murder, he had been drinking. Some even suspected that the allegations of incest may have been imagined. The jury found Collins guilty, leading to a mandatory death sentence. It was immediately appealed due to evidence from some London doctors, he was reprieved and transferred to Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum.



3 John Jones (aka Benjamin Swann) (-1872)

PLOT UNKNOWN

The Cardiff of the late 19th Century was a place where a man could shake off his past and create himself anew. One such migrant was butcher's apprentice John Jones who had arrived in Cardiff from Wolverhampton accompanied by his wife in the late 1860s. They had not always been known as such. In their native Black Country home town they had been known as Benjamin Swann, a slaughterman and his girlfriend Ann, Mrs Hollingsworth, the wife of his employer. The runaways took on the guise of Mr & Mrs Jones, establishing a reasonably successful pork butcher's shop in Wharton Street, above which they lived. Jones then set up a stall in nearby Canton Market, which also provided premises for the slaughter of the pigs.

Jones however suffered from severe bouts of depression. Jones took to alcohol to dampen his fears of financial failure. As his mental health deteriorated his cashflow problems got worse. He was also convinced that a local butchers Jeffries & Ayres were plotting to ruin him. Further drinking gave way to debts at the local pawnbrokers. Even at a visit to the Victoria Rooms in St Mary Street for an evening of musical entertainment ended up in an accusation that the singer was "singing against him", and he had to be escorted from the building, still ranting and raving.

On the night of 30 December 1872, Ann had been locked away by a neighbour to protect her from John's violent behaviour. On the previous evening John had suffered from "night terrors" - a burglar thought to be down stairs ransacking his shop, and an imaginary fire destroying the downstairs premises.

It was early that morning that Thomas Thorton, a retired Policeman was invited by Jones to the Canton Cross Vaults to discuss some business venture and partake in a small drink. Later in the day and now alone Jones spotted PC William Perry on Cowbridge Road passing the workhouse gate. Jones invited Perry to join him in a drink in the adjacent Wyndham Arms. At first declining, the pair settled for a drink in the Westgate Hotel at the bottom of Cowbridge Road.

In the cramped entrance passage Jones turned abruptly to face Perry and withdrew his butchers knife from his coat and plunged it into the policeman's chest. Death was almost instantaneous.

Jones calmly strolled into the bar, where there was pandemonium, with people trying to escape through every door. A brave lady Edith Hobbs confronted Jones to be threatened with the "contents" of his blade for her efforts. Jones proceeded to slash at his own chest with the lethal blade, staggered across to a table and chair. Dr Granger arrived to declare that he could do little for Perry. Jones thought he had done enough

to kill himself, but was wrong. When the police arrived to arrest Jones, he commented, "Shut your mouth and let me alone; I will die as fast as I can."

Jones was transported to the Infirmary, expected to recover.

An inquest was held at the Town hall on 2nd January 1873 presided over by the Deputy Coroner for the Cardiff Borough, E B Reece. If Jones was found sane, he would be held responsible for his actions and would hang. Dr Sheen supervised the prisoners care while at the Infirmary and declared that Jones was mentally fit to declare. Jones was found guilty of wilful murder in his absence. With the death sentence taken as given the formality of sentencing would be postponed until Jones' release from hospital.

Jones was conveyed the news of the verdict and his health started to deteriorate; he started clawing at his wounds and died. He had simply lost the will to live. The cause of death was recorded as fatal haemorrhage of the lung.

On Sunday 5 January PC William Perry was buried with full honours at the old Cemetery in Adamstown.

On 9th January 1873, John Jones' corpse was transported to Cathays Cemetery between the hours of 9 and 10 at night, and two policemen interred him in unconsecrated ground. The ground was levelled and no record made in the ledgers.

It seemed they knew that one day a member of the Friends would be looking into the position of the only convicted murderer in the Cemetery.

4 Doris Appleton (1903-1921)

PLOT EA 1197

A Jamaican marine fireman, Lester Hamilton, aged 25, visited his girlfriend's house at 57 Cwmdare Street, Cathays only to shoot her in the face on 12 February 1921. She died instantly. He walked back into the street and shot himself in the head but survived and was paralysed down his left side. He then had to be carried to the Gallows on 16 Aug 1921 in Cardiff. His executioner was John Ellis.

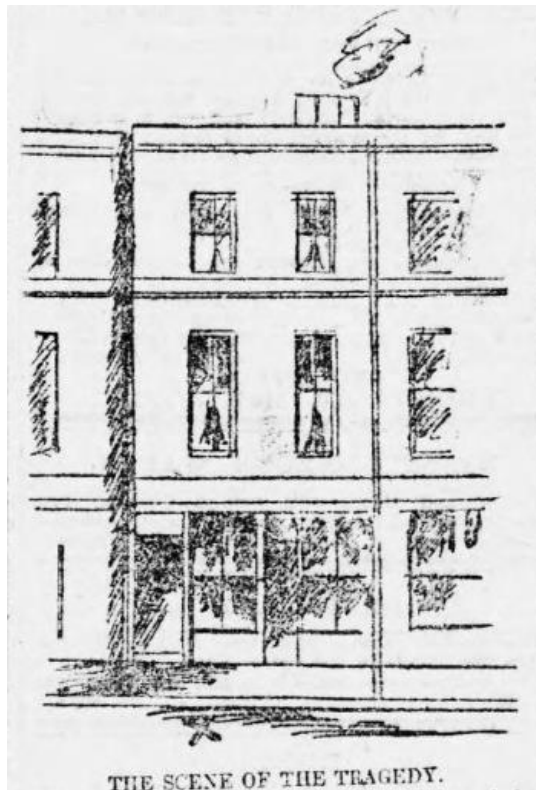
5 Filippo Pace (1876-1897)

PLOT F 9

A band was playing outside the Seaman's boarding house and 21-year-old Filippo stopped listen to the music. A complete stranger rushed out of the boarding house and stabbed him to death. Giuseppe Ferragie, his attacker was charged with wilful murder. Ferragie did not speak a single word until his trial at Swansea Assizes.

He was a Maltese sailor, previously serving in the Navy and was present at the bombardment of Alexandria. He was so affected by the experience that he was discharged from the Navy as mad and detained in a lunatic asylum.

The Judge told the jury they must decide whether Ferragie was mute by malice or by visitation of God. Ferragie was found unfit to plead and ordered to be confined.



6 John Carey (1861-1886)

PLOT T 1120

On the night of 26 June 1886 as David Jeans, of 14 Treorky Street, and his fiancée Ellen Merchant, of 41 Cathays Terrace, were walking across fields near Weddall Farm, close to Cathays Cemetery and the Rhymney Railway bridge, they were according to Jeans, approached by 5 men, who demanded money. The couple made a dash for it and the assailants threw stones at them. With the robbers hot on their heels, Jeans pulled out a revolver and fired several shots, wounding 3 of the men.

However according to the other party, George Mills (a farm labourer), James Hawker, John Williams and Thomas Kellow, stated they had politely told Jeans and his girlfriend that they walking on private land. Jeans then pulled out the gun and started firing at them. Kellow was hit in the thigh and Mills in the hip. John Carey, aged 25 of 47 Ellen Street, Roath, was shot in the head and a bullet lodged in his brain. Carey was a labourer in the employ of Cardiff Corporation. Trepanning was resorted to in vain. Upon his deathbed he stated that his friends statements were correct. When Carey died on the 4th, Jeans was tried for murder. John Carey was buried at Cathays Cemetery on July 8th.

In the Assizes Ellen collaborated Jeans story, stating that Jeans had fired into the ground. The evidence of the men was very similar, like they had rehearsed it. The crime was therefore reduced to Justifiable homicide, believing Jeans had acted in self-defence, recommending mercy on the account of the provocation received before the shooting. Jeans was sentenced to 12 months in prison.

As a note. David Jeans never married his fiancée Ellen Merchant, on release from prison he married another young lady and went to live in Australia.

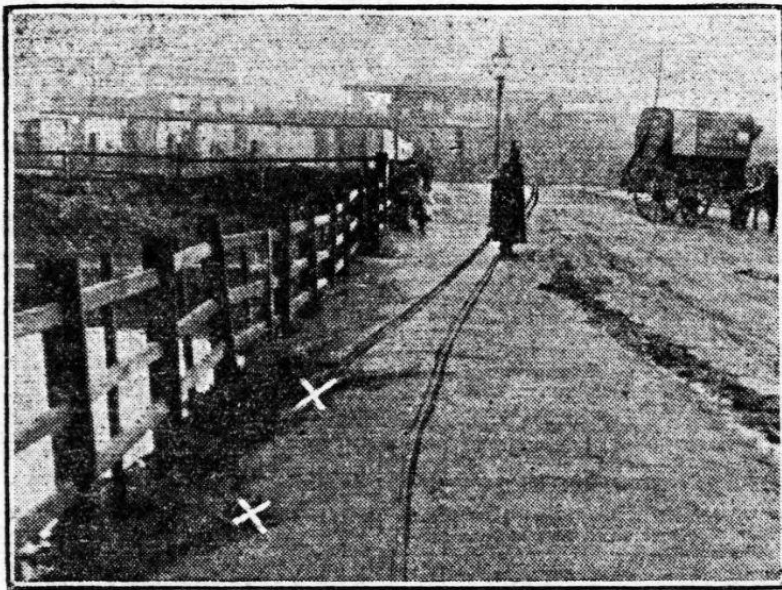
7 The Mysterious Death of Charles Munday

PLOT L 3290

The air must have been a chilly as the policeman approached the tilted cab, with its horse still attached, against the railings on Sloper Road, in the early hours of the morning of 7th December 1909. Inspector Butler looked around the cab but couldn't see anyone, but his eye soon glimpsed a coat in the water on the other side of the railings. On inspection, he saw it was the body of the cabby, Charles Munday of 52 Compton Street. Apparently drowned in three feet of water.

You can imagine the surprise as opened the cab door to reveal there a man and a woman asleep. The woman was named Anne Carney, a singlewoman of Mary-Ann Street and the man an able seaman, Humphrey Owens, of Llanbedrog, from the steamship "Edale", from Middlesbrough.

Scene of the Cab Tragedy in Sloper-rd., Cardiff



The crosses show the position of the cab when found on Tuesday morning.

The sailor had spent the previous morning visiting public houses in Bute Street, and remembered meeting two women in Bridge Street. The other woman was Charlotte Parker also living in Mary-Ann Street, apart from her husband. Around midnight they hailed a cab in Adams Street to take them to Barry Docks.

They however did not get to Barry Docks. On passing the Merry Harriers in Llandough at approx. 1 am, the cab pulled in, and they stopped to obtain some refreshments. Upon ringing the bell, they got the landlord, a one Mr Clode, from his bed. He opened his window and the cabby shouted to him to tell him he had a fare going to Barry. They had a couple of whiskies each and the seaman paid for a bottle of Whisky.

“The drink I had in the Merry Harriers was the first drink I had had since seven o’clock, I swear” said Anne. “The driver had drink for drink with us”. “I daresay you had more than two drinks each during the hour you were at the Merry Harriers.” The Coroner replied. “We had a couple of drinks” retorted Anne. “A couple is two, you know”. “Oh we had more than two each, we had a tidy couple.” “You mean three, four of five?” questioned the Coroner. “Oh yes, quite, sir, and then we had a bottle of Whisky.” “Where did you finish the bottle of whisky?” “In the police station. I had it with me when I woke up in the cab.”

The two women returned to the cab whilst the sailor and the cabby returned to the house for another drink of rum each. They left very soon, and the landlord closed the pub as the cab drove off for Barry.

Inspector Butler added some detail to the discovery on the fateful morning. He was returning to the spot of the accident with the ambulance from Grangetown police station when he saw Mrs Parker in the street, drunk, without a hat on.

The Coroner had already summed up when Superintendent Yelland made the interesting remark that the deceased horse was a quiet old animal, which as it happened, had been grazing in the field where the deceased was found, and, as the spot was near the gate, he supposed that the horse had turned in sharply to his old haunts and toppled the driver over the railings into the water. A verdict of “Accidentally drowned” was returned.

Poor Charles Munday now resides in Section L. The poor old horse did it.

8 Edward Daley (1845-1870)

PLOT F 232

Edward Daley and Margaret Rimlan (aka Joseph) had just been acquitted from a case of Larceny at the Cardiff Quarter sessions and decided to celebrate their release from

custody. Moving from the Bath Arms Hotel to the Custom House Hotel, they met up with a George Harding, who had previously worked with Daley as a boatman.

After drinking until midnight the 3 headed for Harding's boat. A fight broke out between the drunken men and Harding pushed Daley into the Canal. Margaret decided to run away and Daley was later found drowned by Margaret who went to the police. A woman also saw the event from a nearby bedroom window. Harding had made no attempt to rescue Daley and was found guilty of Manslaughter. Harding stated he was very sorry, the Judge remarked he hoped he would be sorry for the rest of his life and sentenced him to 20 years.

9 Susan Lily Evans (1884-1886)

PLOT Q 789

In November 1885, Susan, her mother, and 3 siblings were taken in to the Workhouse, where they were to remain for 22 days. Benjamin Evans stated he did all he could to provide for his family but was hampered by his wife's drinking habit. Mrs Evans however claimed that Mr Evans had neglected his family for the last 2 years, forcing them to sleep on bare boards and refusing money for food. He moved the family into lodgings in Helen Street. The landlady noticed that Mrs Evans only had one dress to wear that was threadbare. The family had no furniture and were only allowed to light a fire when Benjamin was at home. Food consisted of bread and butter. However Benjamin ensured the house always had cheese and bacon which he alone was allowed to eat. He refused to buy milk and forced his 8 year old child to beg in the streets for food. Even when neighbours took pity on Susan, the beef extract they bought for her was eaten by Benjamin.

A doctor called to look at Susan on 1st March, but could find no evidence of illness, but she was underweight and the doctor recommended a quart of milk a day for her. Unable to persuade Benjamin to pay for the required milk, Susan died on 10 March weighing only 8 pounds 6 ozs.

Benjamin was charged with negligence for Susan's death at the Swansea Assizes. He claimed clemency for the sake of his wife and children. He could have easily given up some of his cheese and bacon. The judge sentenced him to 10 months imprisonment.

