



Four Young Men Drowned

An inquest was taken before Mr. Whitmarsh on Tuesday last, at All Cannings, on view of the bodies of Henry Withers, 21 years of age, William Page, 19 years of age, Francis Cowdry, 18 years of age, and Stephen Green, 18 years of age, who came by their death under the following melancholy circumstances. These young men were of fine stature and averaged nearly six feet each.

It appeared from the statement of Stephen Shipman (the survivor) who is between 17 and 18 years of age, that on Sunday evening last, about 6 o'clock, he and the above unfortunate individuals left All Canning for a walk - when they went to Stanton St, Bernard, which is a mile and a half off. They proceeded by the Kennet and Avon Canal, and at times walked on the ice, till they reach Stanton, where they, and left at half past 8 to return home. About a quarter of a mile from Stanton, on their way back, as they were walking upon the canal, the ice broke, when they fell into the water. All was silence directly, and witness saw no more of his companions. In sinking, he caught hold of the edge of some old ice, and remained for some time in this position, till at last, with much difficulty he raised one leg on the ice, and after more delay and great effort, he was enabled to get up the other, and then he crawled to the bank; but it was some time before he could stand, being so cold and weak. Afterwards he went to All Cannings, which he reached about 10 o'clock, and gave information of what had taken place. Their friends and relations immediately went to the spot, where they saw the hats of the deceased on the water, and returned for the morning, when the bodies were taken out of the canal. Henry Withers was found in an upright position, and his hair was frozen to the top of the ice.

Verdict - Accidentally drowned.

All were unmarried men. They had, we understand, been to the house of Thomas Broomham, at Stanton, where they drank six quarts of beer between them, but it is stated that they left sober.

The following is from a correspondent:-

On Sunday night last, five young men of the parish of All Cannings, returning from Stanton, were rash enough to venture on the canal, the ice which is daily broken by barges. Still they went upon it, whether to slide or merely to cross the water is not known, and were instantly immersed, and soon sunk, to rise no more. One of the party, however, escaped, through the mercy of God, after struggling for about an hour, and by the help of the masses of ice around him, finally reached the shore. What overwhelming sorrow to the families of these deceased youths this fearful visitation has occasioned, may too easily be conceived. Nor should the voice of God, here admonishing the youth both of the uncertainty of life, and of the value of each returning Sabbath be speedily forgotten.

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