

## DANGER ON THE RIVER PARRETT

*by Jillian Trethewey, Hilary Southall and Clare Spicer 22/11/2021.*

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Friends of the Wembdon Road Cemetery.

“About four o’clock, the wind blowing a strong gale from the WSW and after the tide had ebbed for about three feet, leaving the vessels in the river aground, a tremendous roaring of sea was heard. All doubt was soon removed by the approach of the bore-head, a large wave nearly eight feet high bearing up, carrying everything before it, and nearly swamping all the laden vessels in the river, many of which were seriously damaged. The storm lasted a quarter of an hour.”

This is a vivid account from December 1847 of the tidal bore, a feature of the River Parrett that has added to its dangers for centuries.<sup>1</sup> This rush of the incoming tide in opposition to the river current demands skilled mariners and boatmen. But things could go badly wrong on the river even on a fine day, high tide or low, and for anyone whether fit or frail. This article will focus on accidents on or near the River Parrett at Bridgwater in the mid-Victorian period. The coroner’s inquest depositions have generally not survived and so, along with the burial registers, the newspapers are now the best source of information. Comparison with the number of burials in the town of Bridgwater each year will give an approximate incidence of these accidents.

From April 1849 to October 1857, the clergymen of St Mary’s Parish Church, Bridgwater, unusually recorded the cause of death against each name in the burial register. The St John’s Bridgwater burial register notes drowning deaths for the same period. The victims included children and adults, Bridgwater residents and mariners from other ports. Notations such as “accidentally drowned” or “drowned in the River Parrett” were the starting point for finding their stories. For many years, researchers without access to early newspapers may have had just a name, a date, and the brief comment in the burial register. Now, increasingly, the old leather-bound copies in archives and libraries dating from the 1840s and 1850s have been digitised, revealing stories that previously have been hidden in masses of newsprint.

	St Mary’s	St Mary’s Churchyard after WRC.	Chilton Trinity	Dissntr’s (approx.) WRC	Unit-arian	RC	Wes-leyan	Quaker	Trinity	St John’s	Wembdon Parish	Annual total
1849	214		54		4	5	0	1	20	146	14	458
1850	140		1		2	5	6	1	13	62	16	246
1851	91	13	1	?	5	6	7	0	20	71	22	236
1852	72	34	1	?	5	4	3	1	11	54	15	200
1853	79	22	0	10	7	2	0	1	13	46	9	179
1854	101	2	0	20	10	5	1	1	1	66	5	212
1855	123	0	3	20	13	3	0	1		58	9	230
1856	96	1	0	21	10	4	1	1		61	10	205
1857	92	0	1	37	11	5	8	1		84	11	250

Table 1. Burials at Bridgwater 1849-1857. There are separate burial registers for St Mary’s Bridgwater parish churchyard, St Mary’s burials at Wembdon Road Cemetery (WRC) from September 1851 and St Mary’s burials at Chilton Trinity during the cholera epidemic. The true number of deaths is likely to be a little higher because not every burial register has survived and some people may have been buried elsewhere or their bodies never found. The number of burials is much higher in 1849 due to the cholera epidemic.



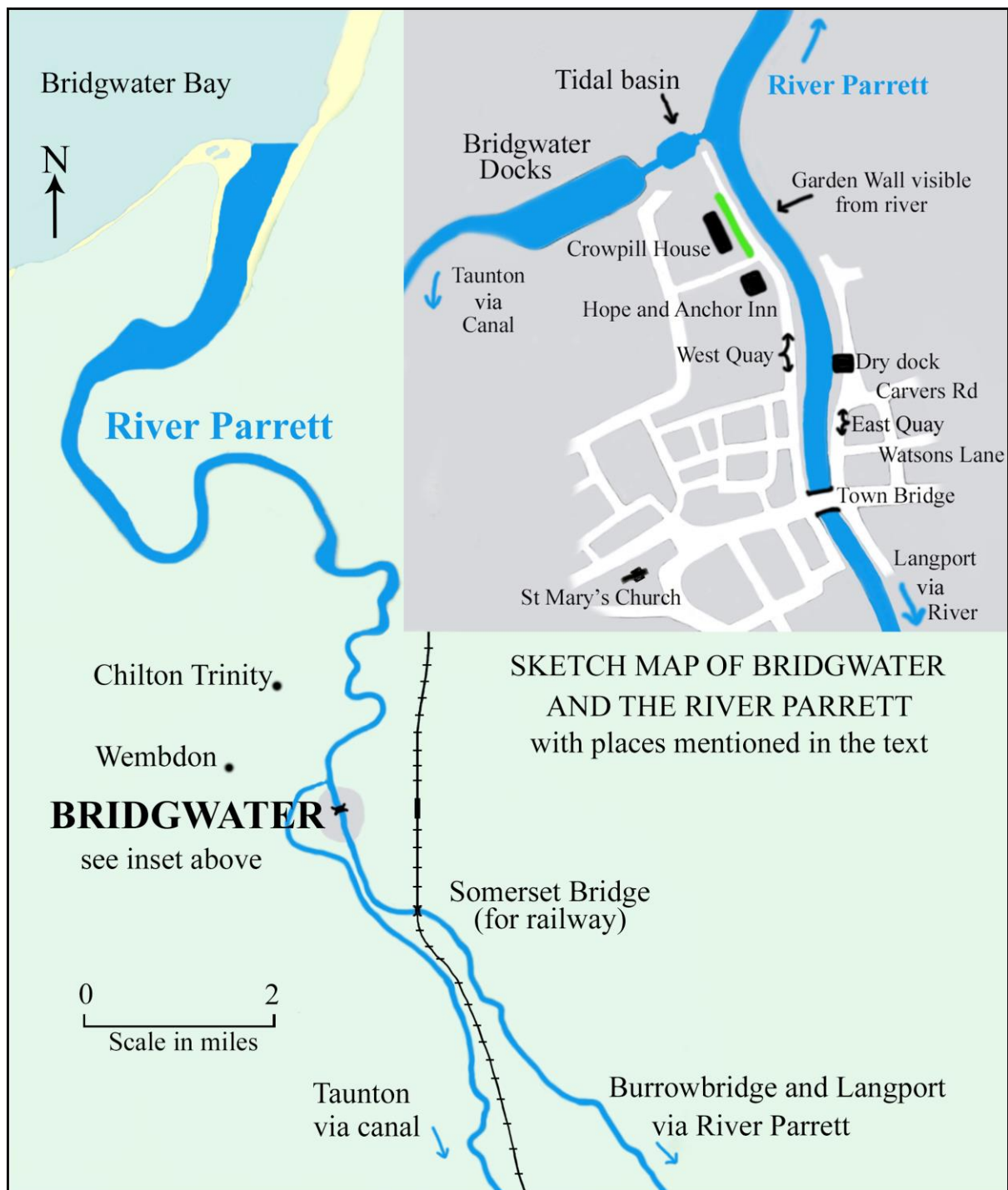
Above: The River Parrett at Bridgwater looking north to the Town Bridge. There is a big drop in water level between low and high tide, which created difficulties when loading and unloading vessels moored along the river. It was one of the reasons for the construction of the Bridgwater Docks.

The total number of burials for the town of Bridgwater in the 1850s was on average 214 per year, but the actual number is probably a little higher. (Table 1). Of these, nearly half, or an average of 104 burials per year, were recorded in the St Mary's Parish Church burial registers. There were death certificates for Bridgwater from July 1837, but the registration district included nearby parishes as well as the town of Bridgwater, all in the one index together, and the index does not give the cause of death.

The approximate number of accidental drownings in Bridgwater is three per year, based on the burial registers (Table 2.) Even if the actual figure is a little higher, it is still a very small percentage of the total burials and overwhelmingly the major causes of death were infectious diseases.

	Accidental Deaths Parish of St Mary's		Accidental Deaths Parish of St John's		Accidental Deaths Burial unknown
	Drowned	Other accident	Drowned	Other Accident	Newspaper reports only
1849	2 (brothers in separate accidents)	2	3	0	
1850	1	4	1	0	
1851	1	1	2	0	
1852	2	3	2	0	one man - fall from horse
1853	2	0	2	0	
1854	1	1 (fell from quay onto barge)	1	3	
1855	1	2	0	0	
1856	1	2	1	0	one infant – in Bridgwater workhouse
1857	3	0	0	2	
TOTAL	14	15	12	5	2

Table 2. Bridgwater Accidental deaths 1849-1857. Of the various Bridgwater burial registers, only St Mary's and St John's recorded accidental deaths for the above years. The total identified in Bridgwater from 1849-1857 is 48, or an average of 5 per year. The actual number is likely to be higher because the St John's burial register only noted drownings, not other accidents for some years. About half the accidents were drownings. Overall, about half the accident victims identified were adults and half were children under 15 years of age.



Above: Sketch Map of Bridgwater and the River Parrett.

### Playing Near Water

The lives of ordinary women and children were rarely mentioned in Somerset newspapers in the nineteenth century, even when there was a serious accident. The parish burial registers did record a few women and several children who drowned, but whether they were working on the barges or just fell when near the river, is not known. In his book *By Waterway to Taunton*, Tony Haskell has written about life for the boatmen and their families on the River Parrett and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, which opened in 1827. The dangers for children included falling in and drowning while playing on the swing-bridges along the canal, as well as accidents after many hours working on the barges without adequate rest.

On Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 1849, an inquest was held in Bridgwater on the body of Robert Bale, aged nine years, whose body was found in the floating dock. The verdict was 'Found Drowned' and the newspaper only added that "it was supposed he had been amusing himself in a boat."<sup>2</sup> Robert's father James Bale was a mariner and he may have been working on one of the nearby vessels or was expected home from a voyage that day. Robert was buried in St Mary's churchyard.

"A lad fell into the river on Wednesday, while crossing a plank to go on board a vessel lying off the quay and would have been drowned had it not been for the prompt relief afforded by a man named Kirk."<sup>3</sup>

Lucky escapes such as this one from July 1847 were sometimes reported in the newspapers, but with very few details. George Kirk was a mariner of West St, Bridgwater, who was aged about eighteen in 1847, but there were other men named Kirk too and we will never know which one was the hero.

Ambrose Locke was thirteen years old when he drowned in the River Parrett in October 1857. A death was usually better documented than a near miss. As well as the entry in St Mary's burial register, there was a coroner's inquest, a newspaper report of the inquest and the coroner completed a death certificate. An inquest, with a jury, was held usually within 48 hours of an accidental or sudden, unexplained death. Ambrose was in a boat with other boys near Somerset Bridge, when he spotted some apples floating up the river, a free snack for a growing boy. He reached for them, but overbalanced, fell into the water and drowned. The boat remained afloat and the other boys were unharmed. Ambrose was born in Taunton but lived his short life in Bridgwater. In 1857 his mother was Mrs Jane Cording of Friarn Street. The newspaper does not specifically state that Ambrose was a barge boy, but there were boys working on the boats on the River Parrett from the age of eight years old.<sup>4</sup> Ambrose was buried in the Wembdon Road Cemetery.

### **Somerset Bridge**

Generally the newspapers did not report the loss of young lives, but this accident and those that followed could not be ignored. The repercussions would flow all the way to London.

The Bristol and Exeter Railway came to Bridgwater in 1841 and the competition with barge traffic on the River Parrett was not just theoretical. The new railway bridge across the Parrett just south of the Bridgwater town limits, called the Somerset Bridge, actually impeded the navigation of river traffic. On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1842, at five o'clock in the afternoon, a heavily laden coal barge and another carrying merchandise, both owned by Stuckey and Bagehot, were proceeding upstream from Bridgwater. The boats collided and were smashed by the tide against the supports of the Somerset Bridge. Both boats sank immediately and seven people were flung into the water. Four men, including the boatmen, and two women were able to swim to the river bank and were saved, but an eleven year old boy called John Hopkins fell under one of the boats and drowned.<sup>5</sup> One newspaper reported other complaints about the bridge supports being too close to the centre of the river and told its readers that the collision of the boats would have been uneventful anywhere else along the river.<sup>6</sup> If bumped, the barges needed room to swing gently away, perhaps nudging the soft mud of the river bank. Solid, rough-hewn timber planks, called baulks, were unyielding and there were no hazard lights. At the coroner's inquest which followed, the jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death with a deodand or fine of £500 on the bridge, for which the railway company or its contractors were presumably responsible.<sup>7</sup> John Hopkins was from Stathe, Burrowbridge, and was buried in the Burrowbridge parish churchyard.

Although not considered at the inquest in mid-September, the digitised 1842 newspapers reveal another death that in similar circumstances today, would also have been reported to the coroner.

John Mann, 55, was an accountant and clerk for Stuckey's Bank in Bridgwater. He was one of the four men who nearly drowned when the boats sank at Somerset bridge, but was able to swim to safety. John was born at Evesham, Worcestershire, in about 1787, to a Wesleyan family. His father Thomas Mann was the first to introduce mechanised spinning of silk thread to Evesham. John was also a silk throwster at first, but his business was unsuccessful. By 1837 John was in Bridgwater with his wife and children and had a new career. In 1841 John and Caroline and family were living in York Buildings, Bridgwater. Then on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1842, Mrs Caroline Mann died, leaving John with a toddler and seven older children whose ages ranged from ten to twenty-three.

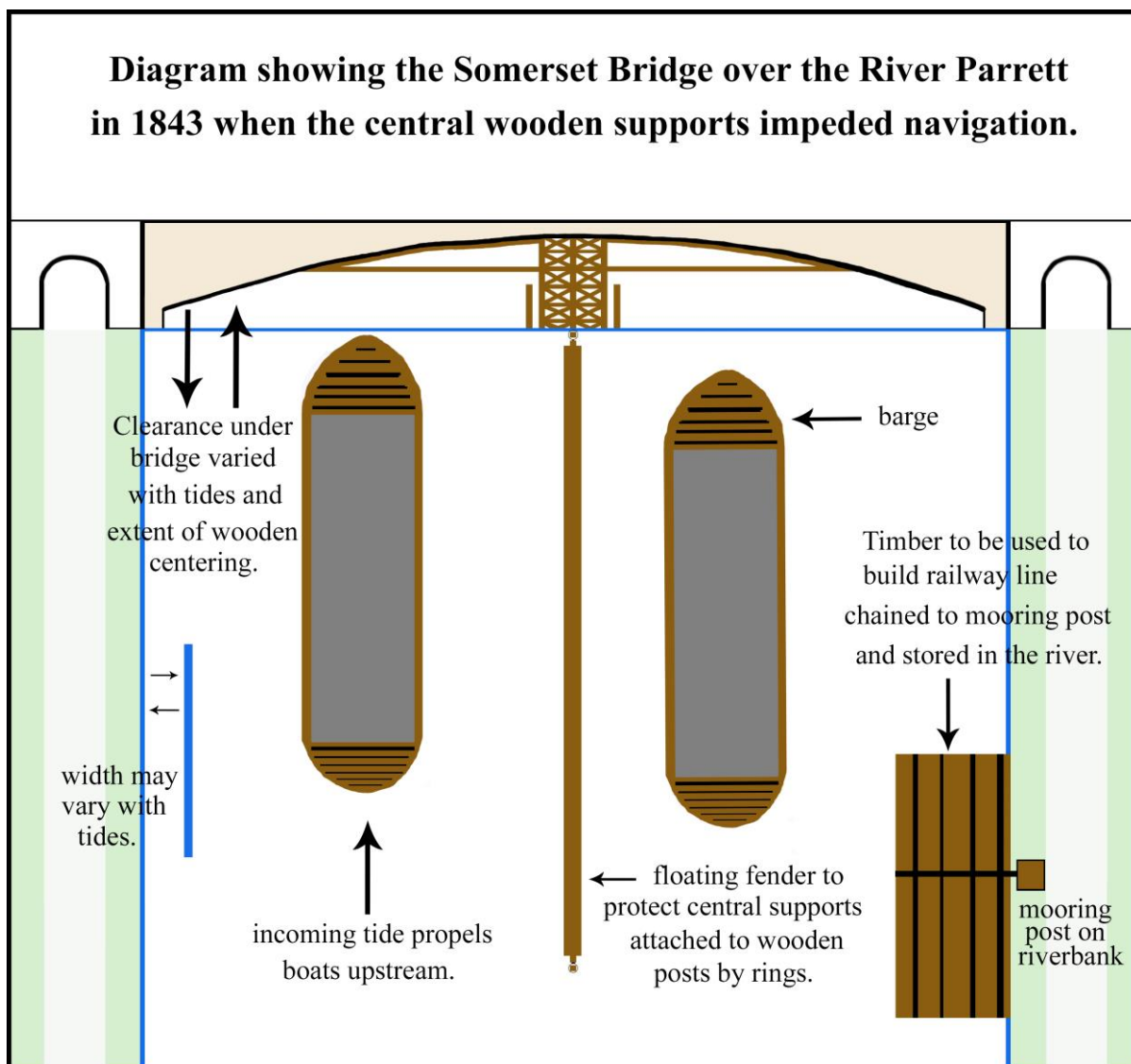
Five weeks later, John was on the boat travelling away from Bridgwater, probably on bank business, as it is unlikely that he would leave his home for any other reason so soon after his bereavement. A bank clerk may have visited a client to promote business, to collect payment or to audit accounts. The nature of the merchandise on the second boat is unknown, but if valuable, John may have been aboard to see that it was delivered safely. Also, Stuckey's Bank had a branch upstream at Langport.

The newspaper reported that John never recovered from the effects of the accident at Somerset Bridge. The nature of the trauma he suffered is unknown, but his death certificate states that he died of pneumonia at 10 am on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1842. The informant was Abraham King, a Bridgwater surgeon and the registrar who issued the certificate. So someone ensured that John did receive medical care.<sup>8</sup> John left only a modest sum, but enough such that his children were not left destitute. John was buried at Cossington, Somerset, with Caroline and two of their family.

Six months later there was a near miss. On a Friday afternoon in February 1843, two barges belonging to Stuckey's and "laden with coal, culm, tallow and other valuable merchandise" were lost at Somerset Bridge. The tide was strong at the time and the boats were driven against the framework of the bridge and sank. "The men in charge and the passengers were saved" reported the Sherborne Mercury, thus documenting that these boats did at times take passengers.<sup>9</sup> How many more collisions had occurred at this location since the Somerset Bridge had been built, but without sinking the boat or boats, is unknown.

Then in August 1843, newspapers all around the country screamed of another fatal accident at the same spot "due to the ill-adapted construction of this bridge."<sup>10</sup> William Meade had been a boatman on the River Parrett for forty-one years. It was two in the morning and William was taking advantage of the tide to navigate a coal barge from Bridgwater upstream to the yard of Mr Hennett, a railway contractor. With William were his sons Thomas and Henry Meade and two brothers Richard and Joseph Hall, aged nineteen and fifteen respectively. At the time of the accident, Thomas was ashore on the western bank of the river. The incoming tide was running strongly and Thomas was tying the boat's mooring rope to one mooring post and then the next to slow the boat's speed. William was standing in the stern of the boat with the other end of the rope wrapped around the boat's bollard, slackening off the rope as necessary. Despite these measures, as it was passing under the bridge the boat hit the central wooden structure, tipped up, filled with water and sank. Such was the strength of the tide that Richard Hall's body was pulled from the water over a quarter of a mile further upstream. Joseph's body was not recovered.<sup>11</sup> Richard was buried at North Petherton.

The Somerset Bridge was built of stone quarried near Langport, had a span of one hundred feet and foundations in the soft ground of the Somerset Levels. The engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, had left a wooden structure in the centre of the river to support the centre of the arch while the foundations were still settling. At the inquest into the death of Richard Hall, witnesses for the railway tried to discredit William Meade, but the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter against all thirteen directors of the Bristol and Exeter Railway Company.



Above: This diagram is based on newspaper reports and a drawing of the original Somerset Bridge.

It was only 12 feet high to minimise the gradient for the trains. The largest coal barges were 50 feet long. There were usually two boatmen on each barge, one fore and one aft, each with a single sweep (long oar) for steering. Chains could be dragged along the river bed to slow the barge. Horses were not needed along this stretch of the river as the boatmen waited for the tide.<sup>12</sup>

While the legal proceedings continued, another accident occurred. On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1843, at about two in the morning, a heavily laden coal barge owned by Mr Hearn was proceeding upstream from Bridgwater with the tide. Near Somerset Bridge, a bundle of rough-hewn timber planks or 'baulks' were chained together and lying in the river, tethered to the mooring posts at or near the timber yard of the Bristol and Exeter Railway Company. It was a dark night and the boatmen didn't see the raft of timber until it was too late. The boat was forced into the raft, tipped and sank immediately. Henry Fry, aged eleven, was asleep in the head of the barge and was found drowned.

Henry was born in 1832 at Kingsbury Episcopi, the son of George Fry, a boatman, and his wife Susan. They lived at Thorney, a village in the same parish, on the banks of the River Parrett upstream from Langport. It is likely that George Fry was one of the boatmen on the night that Henry drowned. A boy could help his father by fetching a horse at Stanmoor, near the tide limit, then leading the horse as it towed the boat upstream. Henry was buried at Kingsbury Episcopi.

At the subsequent inquest, the jury determined that the raft of timber materially obstructed the navigation of the River Parrett: "The conservators of the aforesaid river are highly answerable for their inattention to the obstructions which have so frequently occurred and which obstructions have been so often attended by the loss of human life." <sup>13</sup>

In January 1844 the Court of the Queen's Bench quashed the verdict of the jury at the Robert Hall inquest, but the desired effect had been achieved. With the threat of criminal proceedings, the directors instructed Brunel to take action. Accordingly, the wooden structure in the centre of the river was removed immediately and over the next six months, the heavy stone arch of Somerset Bridge was demolished and Brunel replaced it with a timber bridge. <sup>14</sup>

### **Visitors from Martock**

An accident in November 1851 in which six men went overboard was widely reported. Their barge was full of coal and had entered the tidal basin at Bridgwater to shelter until the bore head in the River Parrett passed. About half an hour later, they navigated out of the basin to enter the river, but the turbulence resulting from the river current meeting the incoming tide was still very strong, and the barge was forced back against the wall and overturned. Two of the men swam to safety and one man was saved by another vessel, but three men drowned. Samuel Bryer, aged sixteen, was born in Martock, Somerset, and was the son of a tailor. Amos Trott was a friend from Martock of about the same age. Thomas Furber was also the son of a tailor and he was Samuel's brother in law. Thomas was aged twenty-seven and born in Kingsbury Episcopi, upstream from Langport and near Martock.

None of the three men who drowned were listed as boatmen in the census records and they could have been passengers. Perhaps the three unnamed men who survived were the experienced boatmen, or perhaps they were just lucky. It was the kind of accident that could happen any time with "the float" or tide on the River Parrett. The police constables recovered the bodies from the river over the following few days. Thomas, who left a wife and two young children, and Amos were buried in their home parishes, but Samuel is buried in the Bridgwater Wembdon Road Cemetery. <sup>15</sup>

### **Captain Fender and the Steam Tug.**

Philip Fender, aged sixty, was born in Bridgwater and was the master of one of the first iron steam paddle tugs working along the River Parrett. <sup>16</sup> A tug with a skilled captain could tow up to five or six loaded vessels at one time past the sand banks at the mouth of the river and upstream to the Bridgwater docks, with fewer delays due to the weather or being unfamiliar with conditions. On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1854, Philip was steaming up the river with vessels in tow, when one of these heavy vessels accidentally rammed into the rudder of the steam tug.

"The tiller wielded round with great force and struck Captain Fender across the body, depriving him almost instantly of life." <sup>17</sup>

The tiller was a heavy wooden bar and if it hit a man on the chest with force, it could easily cause fatal injuries. Philip was a highly respected and experienced master mariner with over forty years of experience. He had been master of the ship 'Cygnet' of Bridgwater, a sailing ketch built in 1833, and from 1834 to 1839 at least he sailed between Bridgwater and ports in south Wales and along the River Severn. In 1854 Philip, his wife Elizabeth and their children lived in Barclay St, Bridgwater. Philip was buried at St John's Parish churchyard, Bridgwater.

### **Bridgwater**

Bridgwater was a busy port in the mid-nineteenth century, with ships mostly involved in the home or coastal trade. Many seamen or mariners returned to their ships late after an evening in the town. One Thursday night in July 1857, the trawler 'Palace' of Gloucester was moored in the River Parrett.





Above: Bridgwater docks in 2011.

Seaman Thomas Davis finished work aboard the 'Palace' at half-past eight in the evening and went ashore. About half past eleven his messmates heard a splash and immediately ran to see if someone had fallen overboard. His body was recovered an hour later and taken to the Hope and Anchor Inn to await the inquest. There was no doubt that he had fallen off the gangplank and the verdict was Accidental Death. Thomas was described as "a fine young fellow, aged nineteen years, and standing six foot two inches in height." He was buried in Wembdon Road Cemetery.<sup>18</sup>

Matthew Ayres, a seaman, drowned in a similar gangplank accident in October 1857. Matthew was twenty-one, from Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk, and his ship was the 'Affiance' of Cardiff. Matthew had been drinking in town on Saturday evening and he was expected back on board Sunday morning, but was nowhere to be found. The ship's master noticed that the gangplank had fallen into the water overnight. Eventually Matthew's body was recovered when two volunteers dragged the tidal basin. The newspaper was quick to mention that Matthew had been drinking, but made no comment as to why the gangplank was not required to be more secure. A nineteenth century gangplank was often just one plank of wood, with no handrail and nothing like the modern gangways. These same narrow gangplanks were used by the men loading and unloading vessels and required good concentration and balance. Matthew was buried in the Wembdon Road Cemetery.<sup>19</sup>

Joseph Saunders, aged twenty-two, was a stranger to Bridgwater. He was a seaman aboard the schooner 'Nottingham' which was probably registered in Gloucester. On Saturday evening 11<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Joseph and another man were sculling up the river in a boat in the dark. A seaman on board the vessel 'Trusty' was an eye-witness. Joseph's boat was opposite 'The Garden Wall' which was probably the river frontage of Crowpill House on the west bank near the tidal basin. Joseph was struck by a rope stretched across the river. The pull of the tide on the moored vessels was very strong at the time. Joseph caught at the rope, but almost immediately let go, sank and drowned. Although others rushed to help, it was too late. His body was recovered the next day. Joseph was buried in the Wembdon Road Cemetery.<sup>20</sup>





Above: Photo taken in 2011 from East Quay in central Bridgwater looking north. The next street on the right is Watsons Lane. This is close to where William Hill was unloading timber in 1854.

### Working on the Docks

Thomas Jenkins worked in a trade vital to wooden ships. He was a ship's carpenter or shipwright employed by Watson, Luer and Co. in their dry-dock near East Quay. In May 1848 the schooner 'Charlotte' of Bridgwater, Captain W. Bryant owner, was in the dock for repairs. She had been there for two weeks and work had proceeded uneventfully until Monday mid-afternoon.

"At that time six men were employed on her larboard side, caulking, and two on her starboard, and the foreman was also under her examining the work, when he perceived the vessel giving way, and rushing past a man of the name of Thomas Jenkins, sixty-two years of age, escaped from the impending danger, receiving only a blow in the forehead, by which he was knocked down."<sup>21</sup>

Caulking meant sealing the wedge-shaped seams between boards on a wooden ship, to make the hull and the deck as watertight as possible. Thomas Jenkins would have driven cotton or hemp fibres soaked in pine tar (oakum) into the seams using a special caulking chisel and a caulking mallet. It was then covered over and sealed with putty or hot pine pitch. It was skilled work. Thomas was sitting working underneath the 'Charlotte' when the vessel fell on him, killing him instantly. All the other men escaped injury. The accident was presumed to have occurred because the shoring of the vessel had been insecure, possibly due to the heat of the sun on the wedges and the pitch.

At the inquest, the jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death, but only because the foreman of the jury refused to be a party in a vote of censure on the shipyard foreman Bere and his men. The newspaper report was very critical of the workers and accused them of neglect. The obvious conclusion is a workplace safety failure. Yet the contributing factors were not determined at the inquest or at least not reported, just the conflict between the jury foreman and the others present. Thomas Jenkins was buried in St John's Parish churchyard, Bridgwater.

Dock labourers loaded and unloaded the vessels at Bridgwater's quays and docks. On the afternoon of Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 1854, a fatal accident occurred.

"As some men in the employment of Messrs. Watson, Luer, and Co., were landing some timber from a barge, at the No. 1 crane on the Eastern Quay, one of them, an old man named Hill, whilst in the act of throwing the chain into the boat, over-balanced himself and fell over the Quay against the pieces of timber in the barge, injuring himself very much, especially in the head."<sup>22</sup>

William Hill, aged sixty-five, was born at Broomfield near Bridgwater. William was working as a sawyer as early as 1815 and in 1854 he was a sawyer of Albert Street. Watson, Luer and Co. were shipbuilders close to or on the site of the later Carvers shipyard. Sailing ships were built of wood so barge-loads of timber arriving at East Quay would have been routine and the shipyard was nearby. Chains were wrapped around a heavy bundle of timber then the chain attached to the crane and the load winched up by manpower to the quay. The chain would then be unhooked, removed from around the timber and thrown down to the barge again for the next load. There could be up to a 30 feet drop down to the water level of the River Parrett, so slipping or over-balancing and falling could easily cause serious injuries. William was taken to the Bridgwater infirmary, but died two days later. He was survived by his wife Elizabeth and their daughters. William was buried in the Wembdon Road Cemetery. There is now a Watson's Lane and a Carvers Rd near East Quay. A mid-Victorian crane on West Quay at Bridgwater has been preserved.

### **River Safety**

All over the world, not just in Bridgwater, maritime safety in the 1840s and 1850s was primarily about the cargo reaching its destination. There were improvements slowly happening. From 1850 in the UK all masters and mates had to either sit an examination for a certificate of competency, or apply for an exemption based on prior experience. Lighthouses were being built to make navigation safer. The Plimsoll Line, to prevent dangerous overloading of merchant ships, became law in the UK with the Merchant Shipping Act of 1876.

Locally, the Bridgwater Port and Navigation Committee did discuss safety issues. In 1851, after a drowning, the Committee considered 'some additional Lamps at the Basin' to improve lighting. Other safety innovations in the 1850s were provision for fire-fighting and a policeman to watch the river, docks and the Basin at Bridgwater.<sup>23</sup> There were more improvements to come and much progress in the later nineteenth century as Bridgwater trade flourished.

At the time of writing, not all nineteenth century newspapers and only a small fraction of the documents in archives, such as records of the Borough of Bridgwater, have been digitised. Over the coming years surely there will be more to learn not only about accidents, but also about the lives of the people who worked on the River Parrett and the Bridgwater Docks.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bridgwater Times quoted in the Hereford Journal. Weds 15 Dec 1847.

<sup>2</sup> Sherborne Mercury, Sherborne, Dorset. Sat 5 May 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Western Times, Exeter, Devon. Sat 17 July 1847.

<sup>4</sup> Wells Journal Tues 10 Oct 1857.

<sup>5</sup> Taunton Courier 14 Sept 1842.

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- <sup>6</sup> Dorset County Chronicle. Dorchester, Dorset. Thurs 8 Sept 1842
- <sup>7</sup> Dorset County Chronicle, Dorchester. Thurs 22 Sept 1842
- <sup>8</sup> Bristol Times and Mirror. Sat 1 Oct 1842
- <sup>9</sup> Sherborne Mercury - Sherborne, Dorset. 25 Feb 1843
- <sup>10</sup> Taunton Courier. 2 Aug 1843
- <sup>11</sup> Taunton Courier. 16 Aug 1843
- <sup>12</sup> The River Bridges of Bridgwater trifold. Bridgwater Town Council Blake Museum. 16 June 2016. A drawing of the original stone Somerset Bridge may also be found in MacDermot, E.T. (1931). History of the Great Western Railway. Vol II. London: Great Western Railway. Page 136.
- <sup>13</sup> Taunton Courier. 22 Nov 1843. Sherborne Mercury, Sherborne, Dorset. 28 Oct 1843
- <sup>14</sup> Bristol Times and Mirror. 3 Feb 1844
- <sup>15</sup> Wells Journal. Sat 1 Nov 1851
- <sup>16</sup> The Bridgwater Steam Towing Company owned at least two iron paddle steamers, the Endeavour built in 1837 and the Perseverance, official number 10932, built in 1840. The name of Captain Fender's vessel in 1854 was not stated in the Dorset County Chronicle, but family members believe it was the 'Perseverance.' (Private communication.) See also Murless, B.J. Bridgwater Docks and the River Parrett, page 25.
- <sup>17</sup> Dorset County Chronicle, Dorchester. 27 Apr 1854.
- <sup>18</sup> Bridgwater Mercury. 9 July 1857.
- <sup>19</sup> Bridgwater Mercury Weds 21 Oct 1857. There is a photo on the Friends of Wembdon Road Cemetery website (biography of Matthew Ayres) which shows an example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century ship with a typical narrow gangplank, moored at Bridgwater.
- <sup>20</sup> Taunton Courier. Weds 22 Sept 1858.
- <sup>21</sup> Sherborne Mercury, Sherborne, Dorset. Sat 27 May 1848. Additional comments were found in the North Devon Journal, Barnstaple, Devon. Thurs 25 May 1848.
- <sup>22</sup> Wells Journal, Somerset. 13 May 1854.
- <sup>23</sup> Murless, Brian J. Bridgwater Docks and the River Parrett, page 27.