

Boatman fined for allowing daughters to live aboard

From the Birmingham Daily Post, December 8, 1884. (District News, Wolverhampton)

Overcrowding on Canal Boats

At the Police Court on Saturday, Jeremiah Firkins, master of a canal boat on the Birmingham Canal, was charged with allowing two young women, aged 20 and 13 years, to reside in his boat together with himself and his wife, on 2nd October, in contravention of the Canal Boats Acts of 1877, under which the boat was registered as a dwelling for himself, his wife and two children under 12 years of age only.

Mr Court, from the Town Clerk's office, prosecuted, and the charge was proved by Samuel Elanton, inspector of the canal boats to the Corporation. Defendant admitted the offence, but stated that he was obliged to have the assistance of his elder daughter to work the boat. He had previously been fined for an infringement of the Act, and he was now ordered to pay 10 shillings and costs.

Three other boatmen, Jonathan Sefton, William Hodgetts and Frederick Mitchell, were each fined 5 shillings and costs for a similar breach of the Act. Each defendant said it was impossible to work the boats without the help of the girls. Mr Court explained that the Act gave them the liberty of employing a boy over 14 years of age if the cabins were properly divided by a screen.

(On website - Jeremiah Firkins b1832 Smethwick, with wife and seven children)