

BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST

BOATMAN ARTICLES 1881 TO 1890

July 3 1889

FIRE AT OLDBURY – A GALLANT BOATMAN

Early yesterday morning a fire broke out in a house occupied by a man named William Harbutt, on the canal side, near Lodge Street, Oldbury, and was only prevented from being attended with fatal consequences by the brave conduct of a boatman named Benjamin Taylor, in the employ of Mr Hickman of Brierley Hill.

It appears that Taylor and his wife were in a boat on the opposite side of the canal, and shortly after midnight they were alarmed by hearing cries for help. Hurrying out of their boat they saw that a fire had broken out in the front bedroom of a house on the opposite side. Taylor and his wife ran over a bridge close to, and in a few seconds reached the house, which by this time was filled with smoke. Mrs Harbutt, who had two children sleeping with her, the husband being at work, was either overcome by the smoke, or so terrified that she was powerless to render any help to her children.

Taylor, after some difficulty, obtained access to the house, and rushing upstairs through the smoke he, at considerable personal risk, succeeded in rescuing Mrs Harbutt and her two children, one of them a baby. Having rescued the inmates, Taylor afterwards extinguished the flames. The bed clothing and a quantity of Mrs Harbutt's clothes were destroyed.

The fire, it is thought, originated through a spark from a candle falling upon a table cover. Last night, at the Parochial Offices, New Street, the vicar (Rev W T Taylor) presented Taylor with a sum of money, as a reward for his brave and prompt conduct in saving the lives of the three persons referred to above.