

27TH JANUARY 1923.

MILTON BARGE MATE'S DEATH.—On the 8th December last, shortly before midnight, a collision occurred off Northfleet Hope, between the barge Ebenezer (owned by Messrs. Smeed, Dean, and Co., Sittingbourne) and the tug, Crusade, belonging to Messrs. Dick and Page, of Gravesend and London. The barge was not sunk in the collision, but was seriously damaged, and afterwards no trace could be found of the mate, Frederick Handford, of 4, St. Paul's-street, Milton Regis. A reward was offered by the firm for the recovery of the body of the deceased man, but no tidings could be gleaned about him until Wednesday in last week, when his body was recovered at Northfleet. On Saturday last Mr. E. C. Harris (County Coroner) opened an inquest at the Trades Hall, Northfleet, respecting the death of Frederick Thomas Handford. Mrs. Caroline Handford, the widow, identified the body as that of her husband, who was 57 years of age. She said he was mate of the barge Ebenezer, and he left home at one a.m. on December 7th last to join his barge. That was the last she heard of him. Henry Pavitt, of 17, Dock Row, Northfleet, a waterman and lighterman, said that on January 17th, about 4.30 p.m. he was standing on the quay at Undershore, Northfleet, when he saw an object floating in the stream. He got in his boat and rowed to it. Finding it was a dead body he towed it ashore, and gave information to the police. Dr. Michael McDonnell, of Northfleet, said he had examined the body. There was a depressed fracture of the head, which would be caused by a very heavy blow. There were slight signs that such a blow was received before death, which would be sufficient to cause unconsciousness. Death was due to asphyxiation by drowning. The Coroner said there would have to be an adjournment, because it was known that there was a collision between the Ebenezer and the tug Crusade, and they must go into the circumstances of the collision, because it was material in finding the cause of death. He did not propose to take any more evidence that day, but to adjourn the inquest until the owners of the tug and the barge could have an opportunity of being present.