

RIVERMAN BOATS.

“Lady Sarah”. Named after Sarah Parsonage wife of Ben.



Ben Parsonage purchased a 10foot Tepco fibreglass dingy in 1962. Having heard how strong fibreglass was he wanted to try it out for himself. Due to its lightness and strength it soon became the perfect boat for use on our canals, quarries, ponds, rivers like the Kelvin and Cart, burns streams, indeed anywhere he was asked to attend where access was difficult and sometimes where the boat had to be carried a fair distance before launching. Many a time the boat was damaged and repaired and strengthened. Wooden seat knees were replaced with steel ones. Steel corner pieces were placed on the gunnals at the stern. A steel plate went down the centre of the sternboard, along the inside keel and up to the bowplate. An outside steel band went from the top of the bow to the top of the stern. The side rubbing bands also had steel on them. The boat was customised to be very strong while staying light.

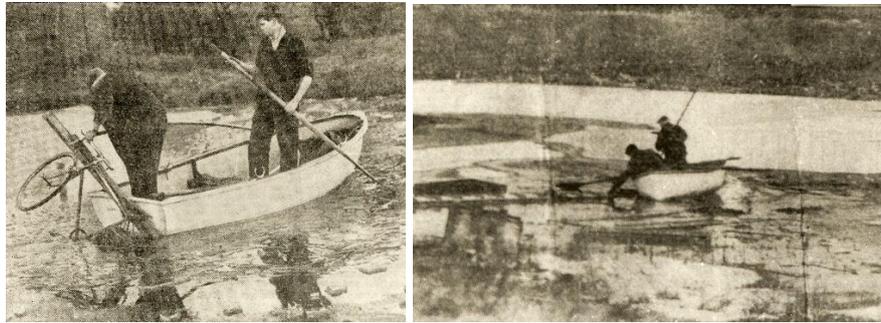


This was not a boat for rescue, not for lifting a heavy person over the side, it was too light and not shaped correctly for that. It was a boat chosen and custommed for use in searches. It was stable enough to take several persons on board as can be seen in the photographs below, taken at rainwater flooding in the east end of Glasgow in the 1970's



The boat was used a lot on our Canals and especially the Forth and Clyde Canal, often where youngsters had fallen through the ice. The fibreglass boat was able to stand up to the punishment it took when breaking its way through the frozen water. Even though I said the

boat was not really steady enough to lift someone over the side of it, It was still a solid working base to work from. In the left picture below, we see Ben standing on the stern seat lifting a bicycle and lengths of wood from the Canal, George standing in the bow, manoeuvring/steadying the boat with an oar..



In the late 1950's early 1960's people were drowning in the Canal every week. Often of rafts.



In the control of an excellent boathandler like Bennie Parsonage, the Lady Sarah was ideal for coming down a small river over hurls and rapids. As the photo below shows, Ben would row the boat sternwards from the bow seat, lifting the stern of the boat out of the water so it did not catch on anything. In this photo Ben would be rowing against the current drifting slowly downriver. Several murder hunts were brought to a conclusion using this boat.



A lovely little well used and still useable boat. Should be placed in a Riverman museum.

