

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 104

Anchor Line rescue.



As a wee boy, Bennie Parsonage hung about the wharfage at Glasgow Green; after school, weekends, then after work. He never said it to me, but his hero must have been George Geddes, the incumbent Lifeboat officer and boat hirer. Ben probably never thought that he would end up as the Lifeboatman, the Riverman, after all there was a young George Geddes to perhaps follow in his fathers' footsteps. When young George drowned trying to rescue a man who had entered the water from the Kings Bridge, Ben just collected a small bag of belongings from his parents' house and immediately moved in to live with George Geddes. Let us now move forward, just under two years.



On the morning of Tuesday 2nd September 1930 Ben Parsonage was rowing upriver looking for a parcel that Police had reported having been dumped into the river. A man who had been charged with embezzling, or stealing from, the Anchor Line, entered the Clyde from the Kings Bridge. Like young George Geddes had done, Bennie raced in his boat to rescue the man. Just as had happened in 1928, Ben ended up in the river beside the drowning man (which rarely happened as Ben did nearly all his rescues from the boat). I am sure the idea of history repeating itself never entered Ben's head as he struggled with the man almost at the same spot as young George had, a man of roughly the same age, at roughly the same hour of the day, who had jumped from the same bridge, Fortunately, the man stopped struggling, and Ben was able to swim with him back to the boat. It is a difficult task to hold onto a limp

person while hauling yourself back into a boat, and then lift the limp body into the boat, especially after an exhausting swim in the river, but the task was executed perfectly, Ben set about giving artificial respiration and soon brought the man round.



This is the method that Ben would have used to lift the man into the boat.

The man was now very subdued and Ben was able to convey him to the Society House where he was looked after until the arrival of a Dr. Shearer and a Mr. Henderson of the Anchor Line. The man was removed to Millbrae Mission House, Langside.

The Anchor Line who seemingly gave Ben an award. Was it ever actually given, if so, what was it and what exactly happened to it, will probably never be known? All that I know, is that some of Ben's friends who had witnessed the rescue, and saw how brave it was, had a gold medal suitably inscribed and presented to Ben.

Ben was extremely proud of this gesture.



Presented to Ben Parsonage for Bravery by the Anchor Line. (But it wasn't, it was presented by his friends 30 years later).

For the record, no parcel was ever found, but if Ben had not already been on the water looking for this parcel this man would probably never have been saved.