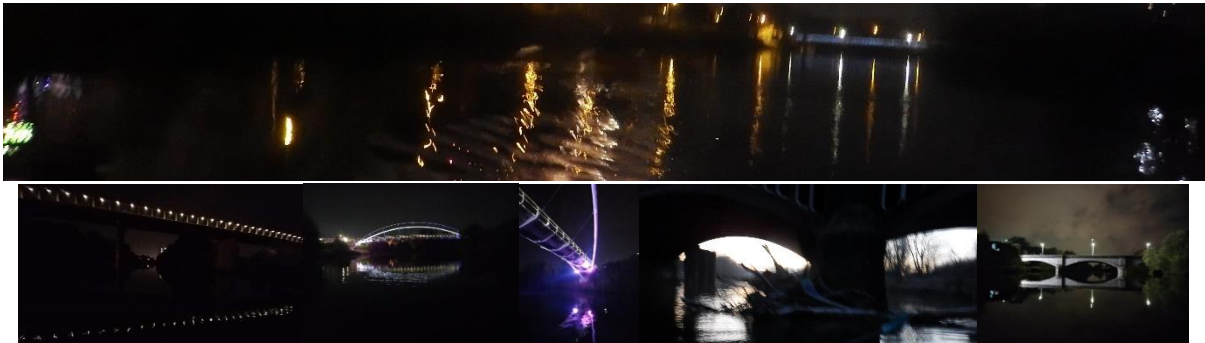


# TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 105



**The Pit Bull Terrier.**



Night on the river.

0200hrs on a dark dreich pouring wet morning I was awaked from sleep by Force Control phoning to inform me that they had an old woman who had walked out of Belvidere Hospital who was heading for the river intent on immersion

I grabbed some clothes and in pyjamas and a pair of shoes ran out into the “storm” down the brae through the gate and into the launch. I started the engine reversed the boat from its kennel and shoving the control to full speed set off upriver in the desired direction. While holding the wheel with one hand I was pulling oilskins on top of my pyjamas and harnessing myself to a lifejacket. It was cold, the rain biting at my face screwing up my eyes to see against the elements. The sky was inky black with not a star in sight even the moon hid behind the clouds. As I approached Rutherglen Bridge, I saw something fall from the upstream centre arch and splash into the water. Good grief! They must have mistaken the locus thought I and pointed the launch towards the dent in the water surface. Stopping the engine on approach, I ran forward in the boat and leaning over the bow reached down into the “dent” and grabbed hold of the fallen body. I thought “this is light for a woman “and as I drew it to the surface while drifting out from below the bridge where it was though dry, even darker than outside, I found myself face to face with the nastiest Pit

Bull Terrier that I had ever seen. Blood was caked into every orifice, ears were bloodied and bitten the red stuff dripped from its mouth. The dog must have got one terrible fright being thrown from a height, landing in ice cold water, being dragged to the surface and coming face to face with me. Quick as a flash before the dog “came to” I threw it down in the bow while stepping backwards and shouted as firmly as I could “SIT” which it did. I restarted the engine and continued my race upriver hoping that the few seconds I had lost picking up my four legged “friend” would not result in a fatality. I arrived a few minutes later at the locus. Two Police Officers were on the towpath and said that there was no sign of the woman. After a quick race along the edge of the water once in the dark using my “night sight” to observe any ripples on the water and then using my search light to look at the banking, I returned to speak with the Officers. I headed for the banking bow first then realising that the dog that lay growling and baring its teeth in the bow was not going to let me past I turned the boat and moved into the banking stern first. I smartly stepped from the boat onto the banking slapped my thigh and shouted the words “WALKIES” as the dog bounded past onto the banking I stepped back into the boat and shoved off as fast as I could. By the time I turned the boat around one Police Officer was up a tree and the other was on top of the wall of the Belvidere Hospital. The dog was hurling itself alternatively at the tree and the wall trying to make friends with the Officers. After a few minutes realising that it was not going to reach either, the dog trotted off up the path that leads to London Road. Another few minutes later a Police car came down the path. The front of the car was bashed in as was the bonnet. The car front was covered in slime saliva and blood where the Pit Bull had obviously wanted to say hello to the occupants. A window was rolled down and a very white-faced Officer asked “His oanyboady seen a mad Pit Bull terrier?” We all fell about laughing. At this point our night was made complete by a message over the radio that the woman had been found safe and well by the DOG BRANCH among the area of trees that led to the river.

