

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 107

Another story about the Tuxedo



Searching among the rubbish piled against the Tuxedo.

My assistance was required where a youth being chased by Police Officers had gone down onto the rubbish that was on the river surface between the Tuxedo and the Quay wall. This rubbish accumulated to such an extent that one could mostly walk on it. The youth had committed a nasty offence, fought off police officers, and ran towards the river. He had climbed down quay wall ladders and crawled out onto the trees and rubbish that were nearly always to be found lying packed tight between the Tuxedo Princess and the quay wall. He was now huddled, up back against the ship facing the quay wall, shouting abuse at the Police. No one could have got near him with a boat, and it seemed an impossible task to remove him. Were the police going to have to wait until the youth was freezing and starving, like a form of medieval siege? I was asked to take a Police Officer with me in my boat which as usual we launched at Finnieston and rowed upriver. The young man was still precariously balanced standing on logs shouting obscenities at the Officers on the Quay wall. Officers were standing at the edge of the wall throwing lifebelts and ropes at him, for him to catch. Now if the wee S---- (to use the Officers jargon) had caught one of the lifebelts or ropes and pulled hard the Officer at the other end of the rope could have done a dive off the quay wall onto the rubbish an occurrence not to be recommended. At this point the Officer sitting mildly at the back of the boat received a radio message asking me to stay out of sight at the river side of the Tuxedo so as not to upset their potential client. Now I would never agree to this as if the wee S---- (Police parlance) had pulled one of the Officers down beside him, probably badly injured from landing on the rubbish, I would not have had time to row round and reach the Officer in time.

On informing the Policeman in my boat of this he informed me that I would not tell the Police what to do, they would tell me. I realised that I had an opportunity here, and loudly informed the officer (So that the youth on the debris could hear) that I was in charge of my boat and if he did not like it, he could leave. I rowed across to the nearest quay wall ladder and as requested the Officer from my boat climbed up the quay wall which he seemingly reluctantly agreed to. As he did so I signed to the two E Division Officers who had manned the car that drove me to the locus and knew my strange ways, well, to stay close and watch carefully. The raised voices between me and the officer were being heard by the wee S---- (not my words). He began, as I had planned, to see me as a comrade spirit against the forces of law and order. "Hey big man you ah right?". "I'm ok how about you man?". "A'hm aw right" "How about I take you across the river to Govan away from these (Insert as appropriate)". "Great, big man, your gaunny take me tae Govan away from these B-----?" (His words). "Aye nae bother, I replied but I'll need to get a rope on you, tae get ye tae the boat". At this point I was shouting to the Police to shut up (keeping the "pals ac going), while surreptitiously signing my intensions to the E Division officers.

I threw a rope to the youth, and got him to place it round his waist. I said "that's not a good knot, put another on the rope, fine, now another knot for luck" all the time telling him (out of earshot of the above Officers, of how I would make a quick escape with him into the darkness of the river and land him on the Govan side well away from the arms of the law.

We were becoming good pals.

As he finished the last knot, I gave the rope a sudden jerk causing the wee S---- to fall off his log and be drawn across the rubbish towards the boat. At the same time, I threw the other end of the rope up the quay wall to the ready waiting E Division Officers who instantly took up the slack and joined now by their A Division colleagues who realised what was going on, started to haul on the rope whereupon the wee ---- was propelled fast towards the quay wall then straight up into the air from where he shouted obscenities at me and questioning my parentage.

I am told that the disembarked Officer was referred to for a time as Fletcher Christian.

All ended well, but shows you have to think fast and lateral.