

# TALES OF THE RIVERMAN

110 July 22



A few days ago, I placed the following on Facebook.

“I watched with disbelief, on the 2200hrs news last night, youths jumping off a bridge into the river Thames. The only publicity that I would have given these youths would have been views of them being led away by Police and perhaps subsequently doing community work. Maybe I have seen too many accidents. Often it is not the youths as seen on TV who drown, but the copy cats, the less experienced, perhaps younger. They see this as a good idea. The people who do such things should stop for a minute and think. How will they feel if a few days later they read of someone drowned, “copy catting” their actions, youngsters dared into action. The youths I watched on TV last night have a responsibility. There are also people who drown trying to rescue someone who has got into difficulty after a “jump”. I have recovered too many dead bodies. People should behave responsibly”.

Nearly 10,000 people viewed this, it was shared, and it drew many comments, including, “I’m in the States now, and recently a law was enacted in many states to make it illegal to jump off of public bridges”.

Remember, access to water must be “Safe and responsible”.

One of the saddest accidents I was involved in, is the following: I try never to mention people by name, but if this tragedy, can make others realise the stupidity of their actions, then I am sure I will be forgiven.

Constable Colin MACDUFF (28) 27 Jun 1973 City of Glasgow Police



Ben Parsonage's report states, "At 2045 hours I received word that two men had entered the River at Jamaica Bridge. One had been rescued but the other had sunk. On arrival at the locus, I found that a drunk man had entered the water for a swim and that a Police Officer had drowned in a brave attempt to rescue the drunk. After a short search (with George rowing) I recovered the Officer's body. The drunk was later jailed for three months".

This short entry in the minutes of the Glasgow Humane Society, records a tragedy, the memory of which has lived with me ever since.

I was at the oars of the lifeboat when my father recovered the Police Officer's body. I shall never forget the expression on my father's face, or the silence that accompanied the recovery. This is the only time we recovered the body of a Police Officer.

Colin died just because a drunk man decided to go for a swim. The man who was drunk had to live with that.

So many people who think they are good swimmers end up drowning. People think "Let's go for a swim;" they get into trouble and someone like Colin has to rescue, or try to, rescue them. They enter the water, they drown, and perhaps others drown trying to save them.

There are plenty of places to swim safely, so think before you do something silly.

Could you live, knowing that others died copying your actions or trying to save you?