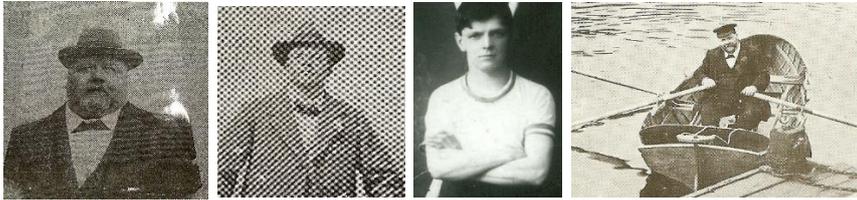


TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 118 1918



George Geddes George Geddes Jnr Bennie Parsonage George Geddes

Bob Davidson, a retired Glasgow Policeman, and Dan Millar members of rowing clubs in the years 1914 to 1918, remembered the wee boy in short trousers who was always around the boatyard helping the Geddes's. This boy could jump around the boats, row them, and handle them with ability far in advance of his years. They remember the wee 13yr old Bennie, being given the job of washing the blood out of a boat called the Mary. Young Ben watched and learned from the Geddes family, totally fascinated; and there was plenty to learn.

The story of how the Mary was covered in blood, is as follows. About 1630hrs, four young men asked to hire boats. They were accommodated with two boats and left the landing stage, two in each boat. They proceeded up the river and, in a few minutes, had disappeared round the bend. Shortly after both boats were seen returning, rowing in a hurried fashion; one with two men, the other with only one visible. One of them shouted, when about 100 yards from the staging, to "get an ambulance", as his pal had been shot. George ran at once and phoned, while the men carried their bleeding friend into the Glasgow Humane Society (GHS) House. George saw at once that the man was dead. The breast of his shirt was very stained with blood and it seemed evident that he had been shot near the region of the heart. George asked how the shooting occurred. One of the young men had pointed a revolver, that had been given to him by someone just returned from the War, at his companion in the boat, shouting to the two in the other boat, "look how frightened he is." The gun went off. He had not known it was loaded. On the arrival of the ambulance wagon, George along with one of the South Division Policemen, the young man who fired the shot, and the dead body, were driven to the Central Police Chambers and Mortuary. The other two companions followed with the second policeman. George Geddes Jnr was left to look after the boat hiring and Bennie Parsonage to wash and clean the Mary. A very sad occurrence.

There were many incidents for an intrigued youngster to learn from during 1918. What follows is not a Tale, but a list of occurrences. No dates no names, (except when acknowledging heroism).

A 74yr old man drowned at Higginbotham's Mill, a short time later, a boy drowned at Rutherglen Bridge and later a girl drowned at Richmond Park. All in one day, a day one would wish to forget.



Rutherglen Bridge



Richmond Park



GHS House.



Tidal Weir.

Of course, it wasn't all tragedy. A little boy, 5 yrs., fell into the river between the Tidal Weir and the Albert Bridge. A discharged wounded sailor named James Morrow, 35 years of age, immediately ran to the spot, plunged into the river and brought the child to the bank. The boy was rushed to the GHS, where he was put to bed. Later he was able to go home. What a brave man.

A girl of 13 was rescued from the river by John Goldie. She said she had been attacked and thrown in, but she had jumped in to get attention after she had caused trouble at home. After a good talking to she was allowed to go home with her sister.

A woman entered the river from Polmadie Bridge. "Some young schoolboys, rowing on the river, went to her assistance and one Charles Maley grasped her and brought her to the side". She was taken to the GHS, seen by Dr. Fletcher then removed into custody at the Eastern Police Office.

A man in a hired skiff went into the banking at Polmadie to take a 19yr old woman on board. The woman slipped and fell into the river. She clung to the skiff until she was pulled out, suffering from shock. Police sent her to the Infirmary. "The young man who was in the skiff, did a runner.

A young boy fell into the river Clyde near the Albert Bridge. He was rescued by a man and taken to the police barracks in Great Clyde Street. He was allowed to run home. The rescuers name was not even noted.

A man drowned in the south basin of Princes Dock. George Geddes proceeded to the spot by tram car (with drags) and after a short search they brought the body to the surface. It appears that the deceased had fallen into the dock from the north wall of the south basin. He was swimming across towards the ladder set in the south wall of the dock, but sank before he could reach it. I remember my dad in the early 1950's putting grappling irons into a canvas bag and travelling by tram to the harbour area where he had left a boat. No doubt he learned this from watching George Geddes.

Two boys 16 and 17 years of age, hired a boat. While under the Govan Street Bridge (now the Kings Bridge), sheltering from the high wind prevailing at the time, one boy leant over the boat to push away from the abutment, and fell overboard. Luckily a man named David Johnston Mason, in a light skiff at once rowed to the struggling boy and with great difficulty and danger to himself, hauled him on board. He was very cold and exhausted by his immersion and was taken to the GHS and looked after until visited by Dr. Mathie. He was later allowed to go home.

A boy of 3 fell into the Clyde at Nelsons Monument. He was pulled out by William Sutherland, 12yrs, who took him to the GHS. His mother, aunt & neighbour arrived to take him home.

A boy drowned in the "warm water plunge", at Avenue Street, Bridgeton. George Geddes procured a lorry to convey boat to the place and recovered the body of the young boy who had been bathing. The bottom of this pond is full of old rubbish, and is nearly 12 feet deep.

A boy drowned near the Orion Bridge. Whilst crossing a shallow ford some 100 yards downstream from the bridge, he was swept off his feet and sank in the nearby whirlpool. A lorry took a boat to the locus and George Geddes, recovered the body. The boy's body was conveyed on the lorry to the boys' home, to "facilitate the completion of a sad accident". Bennie learned how to get lorries and used this method of transporting boats until the Police got tow bars in the 1950's

At 2100hrs a little boy while playing with wood in the Clyde at Glasgow Green, near Govan Street Bridge (now Kings Bridge), fell into the river. He would have been drowned had not Alex Mathieson, gallantly plunged in and rescued the child. The child was taken to the GHS, where he was attended to until the arrival of friends with dry clothing. Alex Mathieson (who is a discharged soldier) was given a change of clothing to enable him to go home. Bennie learned from this and spare clothes were and still are, kept in the house on Glasgow Green.

Acting on information received from Maryhill Police, regarding the continued absence of a Major who had last been seen near the canal at Maryhill, George Geddes searched the canal lock and intermediate basin in that vicinity. Later a phone message was received that the Major had turned up alive at his home in England.

A boy about 8yrs, while following the canal pleasure steamer "Gypsy Queen", fell into the water and was drowned. His friends were too young to give definite information, but a boy, gave the Police details of the accident and George Geddes recovered the body.

A Belgian youth named Edward Deruille, 15yrs, rescued a boy who fell out of a boat at the Weir.

A young woman 24 years of age, entered the River Clyde at the Hutchesontown Bowling Green and swam out to the centre of the river where she got into difficulties. John McMillan, 44yrs a miner, stripped off clothing and swam out to her rescue. George Geddes and his son rowed in haste to the spot and rescued both who were in an exhausted condition.

A boy with one leg was drowned while bathing in a quarry at Temple, Anniesland in deep water. George Geddes recovered the body.

A man was stabbed through the left hand by another man who ran off. The screams of a woman, (who was the cause of the fracas) brought the Geddes's from the house. They dressed the open wound and when the bleeding was stopped, the Inspector and Sergeant of the police, who had arrived summoned an ambulance. The sergeant went to the Royal Infirmary with the man.

Young Bennie Parsonage watched and sometimes assisted with the above occurrences, this was a school where you learned by watching, listening and when asked, helping.