

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 124 march 2023



Dogging was a once widely used Glasgow term for playing truant or skipping off school.

It was a lovely summer day, warm, sun splitting the trees, so why go to school? Let's stay off school and go up to Glasgow and have some fun.

And so it was that a youngster came up to the big city from an outlying country area, with some of his friends. He was one of the younger ones of the group and had been encouraged to "dog" school for a day's enjoyment in the city. The group came out of the Central Station and strolled down towards the river laughing and joking. The older lads had brought a "carry out" (drink) with them. Soon they were beside the Clyde, on the north bank, between the Glasgow and the Lower suspension bridges, where the remains of a bandstand and the notorious nightclubs used to be. The group stepped over the low wall and "fence" onto the outside ledge above the even more notorious overhang. They sat down and shared out their drink. His friends said it was the first time he had consumed alcohol. When the youngster tried to stand up, he staggered, overbalanced and toppled into the river immediately swept under the overhang where no one could see him, and only hear a few muffled shouts, before silence. I recovered this young boy's body after a short search.



Even sadder, as this is not where the story ends. After the Police Officers and I had lifted my boat from the water and replaced it on its trailer, we became aware of a man acting suspiciously. We watched him carefully from a sedate distance, but when he climbed over the gate onto

the stairs to the river beside the George 5th Bridge and started to walk down the stairs, we raced over, jumped the railing and down to where the man now was, half in the river. After a struggle we managed to drag the man back up over the railing and sat him in the Police car. It turned out that this was the young boy's father, He had been informed of the tragedy and in his demented state, had wished to walk along the bed of the river to find his son, to be with him. Unbelievably tragic.

As said, the nightclubs have gone, but despite the promises of redevelopment, the overhang is still there and has claimed more victims. The railing at this locus is not a deterrent. As the youths did, you can just step over it. The only purpose the ledge on the outside of the fencing serves, is to encourage people to walk along it, or sit on it. If you end up in the river, with the currents and the prevailing south west wind, you are immediately swept under the overhang. No one can see you; they can hardly hear you and there are no quay wall ladders below an overhang.

How can any developer or landscape designer, propose an overhang after reading a story like the above, and it is only one of many similar tales regarding the Custom House Quay overhang. The area was developed about 50 years ago, and since then it has claimed too many lives. I have been told dozens of times that there will be a new development with no overhang. I feel sad every time I pass it as I have too many memories.

Having sent Tales of the Riverman 84 to the Scottish Government, I received the following; "Dear Mr Parsonage, Thanks very much for your email. From the Council's response it looks like your efforts to raise awareness of the dangers of overhangs at the river have been successful. While it's sad that it has taken this long, undoubtedly lives will be saved as a result, adding to the long list of lives you've saved throughout your career. Glasgow's been lucky to have you and your family, and I'd just like to add my own gratitude to that of those who've voiced their appreciation of your work".

The response states "the exiting overhang at Custom House Quay will be removed as part of the future works and the design team have been briefed to ensure the new designs do not present similar H&S risks".

Will it will be altered in my lifetime?

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