

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 141 November 2023



I have told of how our Glasgow “good time” girls would always be first to offer help, like when we launched the boat at Betty’s Bar, helping to look after injured people and giving their jackets to keep someone warm, advising as to whether or not a sailor was actually missing or just “shacked up” with one of the girls.’

Sometimes they caused problems, but the problems were mostly amusing.



Father and I were called to an incident below the Central Station Railway Bridge one night. We arrived at the locus with blue flashing lights and before long the area was full of blue flashing lights. There was a lot of noise and commotion during the next few minutes while we were doing our rescue work on the river, with the flashing lights and torches lighting up the area, policemen noticed men coming down from off the pillars of the bridge and helping women to “dreep” down off the same ledges. Investigation found that some of these girls of the night were operating from (or should that be on) mattresses they had dragged up onto the girders of the Railway Bridge. Both they and their clients were upset by all the Police activity. Men were running away with their jackets up over their heads in case someone would recognise them. It was a very amusing sight.



Which brings me onto the story of the tent we discovered pitched on the river bank. At first it was thought that a criminal on the run was sleeping rough and a watching brief was kept, but next night it was realised that

no one was coming to the tent. The tent was searched and items were found belonging to one of our girls of the night, the working girls. She could not be located and a search of the river and banking commenced. Fortunately, she was found perfectly OK, but we were amazed at the audacity of operating from and entertaining in, a tent on the banks of the Clyde. She had just left her tent and gone to someone's house for a couple of days. She apologised profusely for any trouble she had caused.



We had one of the girls reported missing, having last been seen in a wooded area next to a large pond, a shallow saucer like pond with heavy reeds in the shallows and trees and bushes down to the water edge. A search was required. It was decided to carry out the meticulous type of search that the "support unit" are famous for. We formed a long line. On land firstly there were the foot troops, then the dog branch, then a row of mounted officers in shallow water, next, a row of support unit officers on foot but up to their waists in the water, then a row of underwater officers with poles, up to their shoulders in the water, then father and I in a boat. The senior officer stood up on the high banking and on his command "forward" the whole line started moving and almost in unison started singing "You took a sad time to leave me Lucille" Guess what the missing woman's name was? I am glad to say that this "lady" was also found safe and well.

One of the girls did not wish to be arrested and when approached by Police Officers, she climbed over the quayside railing onto the outside ledge and said that if they did not just go away and leave her alone, she would jump into the river. I was called out and shortly after was sitting in my boat just out from where she was standing holding the railing. She looked down at me and said "are you the boy Parsonage?" I replied "Yes". "Well," says she, climbing back over the fence to the waiting Policemen "Theres nae point in me jumping in, you rescued ma maw".