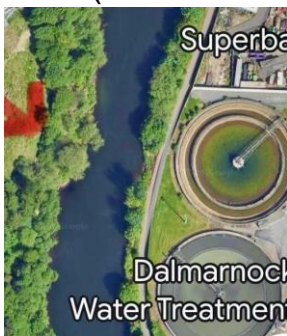


TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 152. Slippage



The world over, rivers make up their own mind, where they want to flow, unless of course, people physically alter natural movement. If people alter a river course, they must be prepared to look after it. Left to its own devices, the river will meander in its own sweet way to the sea, but once interfered with, there can be problems. This is so with any river, and certainly with the Clyde. The river I know so well. It is easier they say, to start anew than to rebuild. How often do we say this? Easier to build a new boat, a roadway, cities, riverbanks included. How does one go about “properly” repairing a river banking, especially if the maintenance has been poor and lets face it, money for getting rid of dead trees, knockweed and hogweed, is not high on Council priorities. The force of water is immense. The left photo, below, shows slippage at one part of the Clyde. It’s been moving slowly for years, decades, with tree after tree collapsing and earth being washed away. A tree collapses, roots come out of the ground, earth gets loosened, tree gets washed away along with some of the banking. It’s not rocket science. Remove old trees before they collapse. Not only will this prevent roots breaking up the banking, but it is easier to remove before it enters the water, before it is washed downriver, lands against the pier of a bridge, forms a beaver dam, damages a pontoon, or goes down to the Firth and hits a nuclear submarine(believe it or not, this allegedly has happened).



Map showing slip.



Whites' chemical works.



Sections of the river Clyde are prone to slippage. The north bank at the bottom right of the photo slipped, was repaired (but will slip again).

Further down, the bank also collapsed and the opposite bank has slipped several times. Old, wooden piles, that have holed many a boat, are at this spot, usually they are just below the surface. I questioned building the bank up at this locus as it is slowly moving, but built up it was. It did move and has moved several times now. I admit to a little smile, when I went with experts who had been monitoring, to examine instruments placed into the banking, to measure movement, to discover the instruments had disappeared, down into the depths, never more to be seen, when the bank had (again) moved. Just listen to locals? On the outside of the bend at the sewage works (W in above photo), we have a depth of around 30ft. Downriver (S) we have rocks across the river not far below the surface (around 6ft, 2 metres). Outside of the next bend a drop of 25ft, 8m, off the banking continuing to the next bridge.



If these piles were removed there would be big slippage. It would require major shoring up, piling? before removal. It has to be done properly, not wasting money on half baked efforts.

You reinforce one piece of banking and it affects the next bend downriver. People who play, exercise and work on the river see and learn this, listen to them. It was at the bend near here that I rescued a mother and her son, and slightly further downstream where we had a car drove off the towpath, into the water, one saved, one drowned. Both these instances are reasons why I know the depth so well. Where a wee boy drowned trying to retrieve a ball his dog would not go into the water for. It is where two eights collided during a race and a third eight slid into them. 27 persons brought safely ashore. I remember factories all along the north bank, names on the buildings, used as landmarks by river users. Carsons sweeties, the Co-operative Brush factory, Cowans Highland Toffee. Father and I used to land where the letter S is and carry the samples taken every week, up to the chemists in the Sewage Works. Interesting that although most of the filth and contamination was on the surface, samples had to be taken 5-6ft ,2m below.



Simple thing for taking samples.

We landed here to go to the Tannery to select hides to cut “leathers” for oars. Yes, I know this area well, probably every inch of the banking between the weir and Belvidere, as others will with their rivers.

It bothers me a bit, to know that part of Whites Chemical Works was on the area where the bank is slipping. I remember old building right at the edge of the bank. I do not think they were removed, just bulldozed. So, what is under the ground that is moving. Nothing untoward, I hope, but when I saw the green water coming down Jennies Burn last year, it made me wonder, for future generations. What is below ground that will surface through slippage?



Whites’ chemical works. Wikipedia. “Although production of chemicals at Shawfield ceased in the 1860’s the impact on the Rutherglen area due to the activities of J&J White lasted for decades”.

Wherever you are, look after your river. Love, respect your river, as I do the Clyde. If you have to alter it, do so correctly ensuring maintenance. Locally we have many places which were canalised, have subsided again and again over the past 100 yrs. Please get it right. Learn from the past, not have work that has to be redone every number of years.

I have just been informed that there is slippage on the south banking between the Weir and the Albert Bridge. Notified to authorities one year ago (I am not out much now and do not see these things). Cut backs or no cut backs, repairs should start at foundations, properly before more subsidence.