

# TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 156



It was just another day, working away repairing boats and oars, hoping the phone would not ring, but it did. It was the weirman shouting that someone had just fallen from the Albert Bridge. When you get a call like that you have to take in so many things at once, two hours after high tide, so we cannot get through the weir; the water level at the back of the weir is too low to get a boat over the steps on the north gate, Police were being notified, but there could be a delay in getting a towing vehicle (for a boat on trailer), people are at Clyde and Clydesdale clubhouses (West boathouse), and there's plenty people in the park. Decision time, we jump into a rowing boat, and head to the weir.



Steps, left corner, water flowing over them. Outflow Molindinar/Camlachie burns. West Boathouse.

Approaching the clubhouse steps we were shouting to rowers for help. Some had done this before; as it happened every so often. All hands to the boat, lifted out, dragged up the steps, run out of the club compound, across the grass, past the weir to the area where the Molindinar and Camlachie burns enter the Clyde, ran through the double gate which someone had gone ahead, unlocked and opened. The boat was slid down the grassy slope, across the concrete, then over the rocks into the water, with us jumping into the boat, after it. We had beaten by several minutes the Police car that had been sent to pick up the boat on the trailer, but those minutes were possibly precious, as we rescued a man struggling in the centre of the river. Then it was back to the banking where we knew an ambulance would be arriving. Often the easiest way to get the casualty up the steep bank was to lift him in the boat. The rowers, police and members of the public who often had rushed down from the bridge to help, manned the bow rope that was passed up and others held the boat square as it was hauled to the flat. If a towing

vehicle had arrived, it could quickly reverse back, right angles to the river, the rope could be tied to the tow bar, and the vehicle would pull the boat out with us holding the boat square. The system was in many ways, ludicrous, but it worked, rowers were always ready to assist and it was done so fast. If the rowers were not there, park workers, members of the public, police, there was nearly always someone. Sometimes, if we were up in the house when the message was received, we would push one of the boats that sat on trailers in the garden down the hill and along the south carriageway. Time was of the essence, and, as said, you had to decide your course of action so quick, and once made, you stuck to it. Sometimes we would be half way along the towpath running and pushing when the police towing vehicle would arrive, hitch up and race on. Should we just have waited and not spent so much energy, who knows, the vehicle might have taken longer to arrive. You make a decision and go for it. I cannot emphasise enough how seconds counted. I will never know if our strange method was quicker than having a boat coming upriver. The time it takes to get a crew to the boat (as yet there does not appear to be a crew on the water 24/7), and half of the time, a motor boat would have great difficulty getting to the area between the Albert Bridge and the weir due to the shallows. It did show the excellent relationship between us, and the rowers, the public and police when push came to shove (literally). Yes, there were times in the middle of the night, on wet dreich winter days, when there was no one around, but we managed. Then it was definitely a case of pushing down the towpath, as there would be no rowers to help lift the boat around. When we reached the area of banking where we launched, the slope, gravity helped. Battering it off the concrete and the rocks did not do the boat much good, but we managed, and you must realise that the higher the tide, the easier this was, and of course around high tide, we could just go right through the weir. Low tide was the problem.



View looking over the steps on the north gate of the weir. In this photo there is about a 15ft drop, and yes, cautiously and carefully but with speed, we did use it..