

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 161



New bridges Govan and Renfrew.

Bridges, the world over, were built to allow people to cross obstacles, including rivers. They replaced fords, ferries and saved miles of detour. Like most rivers, the Clyde had fords, though when horses carts and people, were washed away when half way across, it was not good. The water being shallow where there was a ford, you could not replace the ford with a Ferry, so they built bridges. Ferries though, were not always the best answer, and have been known to sink due to reasons like overcrowding, winds, currents. We had ferries on the Clyde, upstream of our weir, some run by relatives of the Glasgow Humane Society Officers. Ferries at Rutherglen, Polmadie, Glasgow Green. Ferries though, were not very reliable for people getting to work, for if there was a flood on the river, the ferry did not operate. Bridges had to be built, for workers, for armies to cross and fight with their neighbours, for people to visit friends. Oar propelled ferries, chain ferries, inboard engines, outboard engines.

It is funny how they say that the Clyde made Glasgow, when in fact like Buda and Pest, the Clyde did, and in many ways still does, splits Glasgow into two, Glasgow North and Glasgow South. Persons living in the south did not get a telephone directory for the north and vice versa if you lived in the north. The river was used as a dividing line for postal services and constituency boundaries.

During the depression there were many gangs in Glasgow. Allegiances were to north or south gangs, and they would meet and fight at bridges over the river. Stirling Brig all over again.

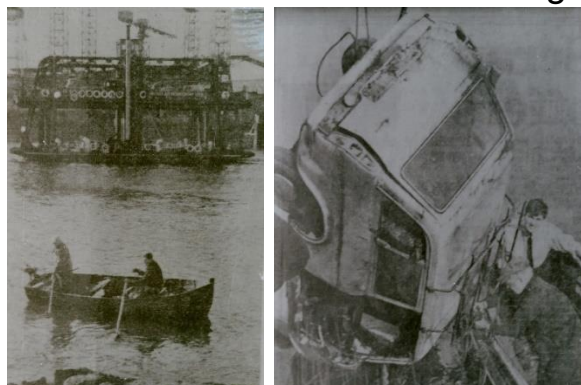
We have many bridges over our river Clyde, Upstream and downstream of our tidal weir at Glasgow Green. Downstream the river is under the

control of Port Authorities. The Clyde Trust provided ferries for people to cross from one side of the river to the other and they really knew where to place the ferries; simply; where they were needed. The present authorities have really followed the Clyde Trust with the exception of the Tradeston, (Squinty) Bridge, which could have crossed at the Quay Complex, close to where the old Clyde Street Ferry operated. Still, we are now, again moving on the right track (perhaps I should say, wave length). The Clyde Arc replaced the Finnieston Ferry, and new bridges replace Govan and Renfrew.



Recently a man appeared in court having jumped into the river at the Arc after a car chase. Before Clyde Arc opened at the foot of Finnieston St there were flashing lights telling you to turn left. People did not see the lights, and drove straight off the quay wall, unbelievably, not noticing there was no bridge.

At Govan, there were no cars driven into the river, but a few people lost their lives trying to swim across when the ferry was not operating. Some, fell off the Ferry. So sad. At least there will be a bridge to cross now.



Ben, George at the oars, searching for man who fell off the Govan Ferry. Ben removing someone from a car.

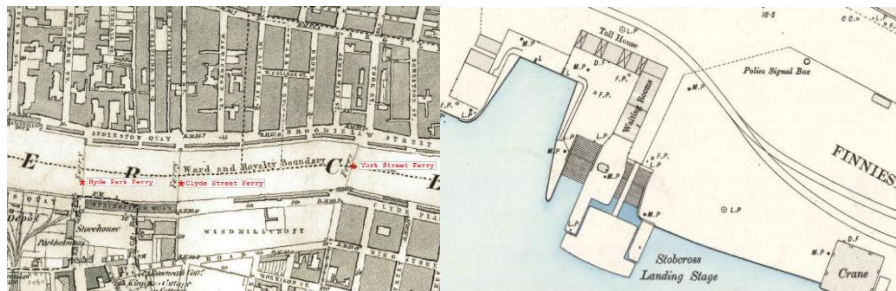
At Renfrew, people drove down the slipway on the north side, did not notice the ferry was on the south side, and drove straight into the river. Others, drove their car, down the slipway, onto the ferry and straight off

the other side. We never found out if perhaps, a foot stuck on the accelerator, or they thought they were on a bridge.

I welcome the new Bridges, and am proud to have had input into safety rails, lifebelt positioning and numbering.

I did have a good rescue at Renfrew. A woman went out onto the piling on the south east side of the ferry slipway. She was sitting on the outside beam over the river, looking depressed. A Police Officer bravely crawled across the beams and sat beside her, talking to her. The tide was rising fast. They did not notice what was happening behind them, and when the Policeman managed to have the woman agree to come off the beams with him, he discovered that the beams he had crawled along were now covered by the tide. A call to myself at Glasgow Green, a very fast drive in a police car with trailer, boat launched and the Policeman and the woman were soon on terra-firma. We found it quicker to trail a boat by land and launch, we saved people our way.

I will miss seeing the ferries, we move on, but a piece of our history disappears. I feel that one of the old Clyde Trust Ferries should have been placed on dry land somewhere along the riverside in Glasgow. Perhaps, someday, we shall learn to appreciate our history.



Position of ferries and view of Dolphin at Finnieston pedestrian and vehicular.

