

THE GLASGOW HUMANE SOCIETY

# A Short History of the Glasgow Humane Society

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Complete with contextual historical events,  
newspaper and minute articles

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*The following gives an idea of what the world was like at the end of the 1700's, it tells of the foundation of the Glasgow Humane Society, of the Awards and Gifts given to the Society and of some of the main occurrences in its development.*

# 1. The Glasgow Humane Society and Enlightenment: The Spirit of an Age

The Glasgow Humane Society was set up by members of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow at some point in the 1790s. This period marked the latter stages of what has been come to be termed as the ‘Enlightenment’ or ‘Enlightenment movement’ by historians and other scholars alike. It is notable for many features but for the Glasgow Humane Society’s purpose it can be seen as a time when the influence of scholars and philosophers such as Descartes, Newton, Kant, Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Adam Smith – to name but a few – created in Europe a temperament in man for reason and self-improvement and moving away from religious intolerance and ignorance.



At this previous time if you fell (or jumped) into a waterway and were in danger of drowning seldom would anyone go to your assistance. In the eyes of the church, if you attempted to take your own life, as many who jumped into the river no doubt had in mind, you were to end up in hell and suffer eternal damnation. If you lived you were a criminal.

*“EARTH'D up, here lies an imp o' hell,  
Planted by Satan's dibble;  
Poor silly wretch, he's damned himsel',  
To save the Lord the trouble” .....Robert Burns*

On the contrary, ideas of the Enlightenment encouraged people to view other people with sympathy and previous religious intolerance as ridiculous such that if people required help, then they were to receive it.

Humane Societies were being formed all over the world like in London, Paris, New York, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Venice. However, these societies only gave out rewards or were defunct. It was only the Glasgow Humane Society that was willing and ready to follow its enlightened principles to the full by employing an Officer to carry out the practical work of prevention, rescue and recovery.

*“That a Humane Society should have been established in 1790 in Glasgow is no doubt due to the influence of the medical faculty of the College. It may also be related to the Spirit of the age, the movement that developed throughout the eighteenth century and is known to us as “the Enlightenment”.*

This quotation directly captures the aim and ideas of the society at its birth. It is this that has been maintained throughout the years and even in the present day. This Enlightenment ideal has always been and will always be an important part of the Glasgow Humane Society's ethos and it is with this that a timeline of activity is laid out here.

*(All text highlighted is taken from the Glasgow Humane Society Minutes at date recorded)*

## 2. The Glasgow Humane Society Timeline: Foundation and 19<sup>th</sup> Century

In the mid-18th Century there seems to have been little depth to the River there only being 1'3" at low water and 3'8" at high water at the Pointhouse Ford while there was only 2ft water at Dumbeck. Yet, this was still sufficiently high for people to put themselves in danger.

**1768** There appear to have been 7 fords across the River.

**1775** A stone weir was built on the River at Stockwell / Broomielaw.

**1781** The depth at high tide in the harbour was only 7ft.

**1787** Mr James Coulter left the sum of £200 in the keeping of the Faculty of Surgeons (now the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow) to set up a society.

Despite measurements being put in place by the College the fact of floods, however, combined with high winds to give high water (as still happens) could not be prevented and in 1882 the River Clyde rose 20' above normal level flooding much of the City and destroying the road Bridge between Motherwell and Hamilton (built in 1780).

From the Glasgow Advertiser Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August 1790:

*"The Humane Society of Glasgow met this day in the Tontine Tavern for the first time"*



The Society was then officially founded on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1790 by a group of Glasgow businessmen, including David Dale, using the money left by James Coulter.



At this inaugural meeting was held in the Tontine Hotel, Gilbert Hamilton, ex Dean of Guild was elected President, and Robert Cleghorn, of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, was elected Secretary.

In 1790 a great deal of Glasgow's life was centred on its shallow River which frequently flooded up to the Cross and on its Green, much of which was peat bog and hummocky terrain with streams running through it. Drownings were frequent.

Faculty Hall November 8th 1790, Present Gilbert Hamilton Esq Preses, Dr Thomas Reid, Dr Hope, Messrs Richard Thomson, Robert Simson, Wm Nimmo & Ro, Cleghorn:

*The Collector stated that both the additional sets of Apparatus were received & that the one was lodged in Peter Stewarts Broomielaw, the other in Robt Lockhart's at Finnieston Toll Bar.*

*The Society agrees to give Nathaniel Jones a Guinea & half for the trouble he has had this season, and to give him one Guinea annually hereafter while he continues in their service,  
signed Gilb Hamilton Presses  
Robert Cleghorn Secy*

Thus in 1790, Glasgow Humane Society appointed a full time Officer and became a very effective Safety Consultancy and Dedicated Rescue and Recovery Service. Indeed the only truly dedicated inland water rescue service at this time - in Britain and further afield

1790 Robert/Nathaniel Jones was appointed the first Officer of the Glasgow Humane Society, 1790-1796:

*Apparatus - "a complete apparatus which is now lodged in the washing House, ready to be employ'd at a moment's notice. The Faculty some time ago commision'd from London two similar setts of apparatus, the arrival of which is expected soon. One of these the Faculty thinks should be kept near the Broomielaw, the other near Finnieston. The Faculty ordered also the following articles, without which the apparatus can be of no use, viz.: - Five drags, two to be lodged along with each apparatus, three handbarrows for carrying the body, in a proper posture from the water to the receiving house; three mattresses, being one for each barrow; twelve pairs of blankets; twelve hand towels; and three syringes." ...  
April 1792...a letter was received from Hugh Brown, the keeper of the washing house, desiring that the apparatus be removed from there.*

Lifesaving apparatus kept at Peter Stewart, Vintner and Robert Lochart at the Tollbar below Broomielaw

**1792** Feb 23rd Humane Society of Massachusetts incorporated (erected life-saving stations for distressed mariners) <http://www.masslifesavingawards.com/history/>



1792 Medal

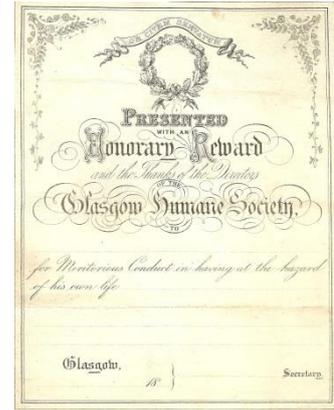
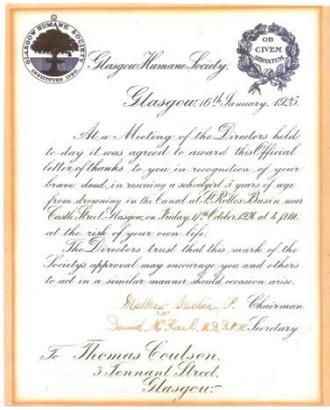
**1793** St Mary Church burned down by the Hellfire Club

**1794** The Glasgow Royal Infirmary opened



**1795** The first House was erected on the Green in Glasgow.

In **1795** the Lord Provost and Magistrates attended a meeting of Directors, and suggested that a house should be built for the accommodation of the Society's boat and a residence for a keeper. This was approved of, and subscriptions for the purpose were solicited. Subscriptions were obtained to the amount of £238, including £10 10s from David Dale, who had also subscribed liberally at the institution of the Society. The town does not appear to have subscribed, but the Magistrates granted the ground in the Green for the house, which was completed in September 1796, at a cost of £300. An addition was made to the house in 1867, when a further sum of £260 was expended.



Money was paid to and/or medals were given to those who helped in rescue or ran for assistance. In 1815 this expenditure amounted to £49.15.

**1795** The Albert Bridge was washed away by a flood.

*“On Wednesday the 18th Nov 1795 the river Clyde rose to a greater height than the oldest inhabitant in this city remembers (except the memorable flood in March 1782, from the height of which, it only wanted about eleven inches). This remarkable inundation was occasioned by a very severe storm of wind, rain and snow, which commenced on Tuesday night, and continued till Wednesday afternoon. About noon on Wednesday, two arches of the newly erected stone bridge opposite to the foot of the Saltmarket gave way with a tremendous crash into the river, and about five o’clock in the afternoon, the remaining three arches shared the same fate”.*

**1796** John Wiseman Officer Glasgow Humane Society

Tuesday August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1796

*Saturday forenoon a young man, while bathing in the Clyde near Anderston was seized it is imagined with the cramp, and was drowned. His body remained in the water for about an hour. When brought out it was carried home, and every effort used to restore animation, but to no purpose.*

*Same day in the afternoon, a woman while washing her feet in the Clyde, near the house erected by the Humane Society for the reception of drowned persons, fell forward into the*

*river. The Society's boat was immediately put off; and she was taken up apparently dead but by using the means prescribed, she was happily restored to life.*

**1800** Police Force founded.

**1801** The Glasgow Humane Society's Officer

The Officer in 1801 was James Baird who lived in the Society's House in the Glasgow Green to be near the bathing places in the River Clyde a mile from the Glasgow Cross Steeple. He was rent and rates free and was supplied with coals for his fire. He had a retaining fee called a salary of £1 10/ 0d per year.

**1806** The depth at high water in the harbour was 8'6"

*"A heavy loaded Schooner 150 tons burthen came direct from Lisbon and discharged her cargo at the Broomielaw"*

The first large monument to Nelson was built on Glasgow Green at the 43.5 m (143 ft.) tall.

**1807** Glasgow Water Works established

**1808** Great flood on river (even greater than the flood of 1795 which washed the Saltmarket (Albert) Bridge away.

**1811**

*"Neap tides at Glasgow are about 3ft 6inches and Spring Tides about 5ft 6 inches and vessels drawing 9ft 6inches can come up to Glasgow in an ordinary Spring Tide. The current during a high fresh, runs at the rate of 4 miles per hour to the Broomielaw and is perceptible a mile above Rutherglen"*

**1812**

*"There is every need to practice such work (heroic rescue), that when it surely shall come the fitting crown which self-respect has carried and which neither envy nor selfishness in the after years can dim or tarnish, for these persons there is a much higher reward.*

*An effort and a jump*

*A few brief struggles and all is over,*

*Disgraced in life,*

*In death much about the same*

*The blessing of them that was ready to perish shall come upon them"*

**1815**

Exclusive of the house which the Society erected on the north bank of the Clyde in the High Green where they have a complete set of apparatus steam bath boats drags hand carriages etc. under the immediate management of Mr Robert Duncan their resident Operator they have placed a set of apparatus drags hand carriages mattresses blankets rubbing cloths etc. at the following stations, viz, at the Broomielaw, in the house of Mr James Cooper, Vinter: at

Meikle Govan, in the house of Mr John Shaw, Weaver: at Port Dundas, in the house of Mr Robert Orrock, Vinter: and at Rutherglen Bridge in the house of Mr John Campbell Chandler

**1819**

*“Thursday July 22<sup>nd</sup> Yesterday, about one 0’clock afternoon, a man was drowned while bathing in the Clyde, nearly opposite to Little Govan. Half-an-hour elapsed before the body was got out, when it was carried to the Humane Society house, where the usual experiments were tried to restore suspended animation, but without effect”*

**1821** A wooden bridge was constructed at Dalmarnock.

**1822**

Friday October 11<sup>th</sup> 1822 Edinburgh Advertiser,

*On Saturday afternoon some severe gales of wind accompanied by heavy rain were experienced at Glasgow. On Sunday the Clyde was much swollen and there was an endless succession of roots branches of trees apples plums and other produce carried down by the stream. The Humane Society House boats were forced from their fastenings and carried to the old Bridge*

**1825**

In **1825** The River was frozen over. After the ice broke up the floes four to five inches thick were piled up by the current on a sand pit at Fleshers Haugh to a height of 5ft.

Report **1825**, 611 lives had been saved under the auspices of the Society.

**1826** The depth at high water in the harbour was 13'



Riverside at Anderston 1827



Broomielaw 1829



Hutcheson Town Bridge from Glasgow Green 1830

**1833** Bridge built at Saltmarket to replace the one washed away during flood in 1795

A minute of the Councils Committee on the Green of 11<sup>th</sup> February 1834 decided “To erect two additional spring boards, repair various wooden steps and various stone entrances to the river. Site three long stone seats opposite the three springboards “in response to a petition from bathers to improve the bathing place at Dominies Hole which was above the bend in the river at Fleshers Haugh, and about half a mile below Rutherglen Bridge

Dominies Hole is a deep pool in the river, and legend has it that it lies directly in the line of an ancient subterranean passage between Glasgow Cathedral and Rutherglen. The boards were removed in 1877 because of the drownings and near drownings.

**1835** The Trustees of the River became officially linked with the Glasgow Humane Society. Clyde Trust established.

*“In 1835 the Trustees of the River Clyde intimated an annual donation of £20 to the Society, on condition of the Society’s providing a Receiving-house and proper apparatus at the Broomielaw. Since that time the officer of the Society has been at the call of the River Trustees, to assist when accidents occur at the Harbour”.*

**1838** The Glasgow Humane Society having forward to Miss Grace Horsley Darling their honorary silver medal, that heroic young lady returned the following reply to the letter which accompanied the medal:

*Longstone Light House, Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> 1838.*

*“Sir – I own the receipt of yours of the 29<sup>th</sup> ult. Which has been delivered to me by Robt. Smeddle, Esq. of Bambro’ Castle, and, in reply, most respectfully beg leave to thank you, as president, also the committee and the members individually, for the kind present which they have thought proper to confer upon me. Be assured that I lament most sincerely the awful loss of human life caused by the wreck of the Forfarshire. It affords me great pleasure to think my humble endeavours assisted by Devine Providence, have been instrumental in saving the lives of nine persons; but ah! How much my hearts yearns within me to think how many valuable lives have been lost to their mourning friends, and to society at large, on this most melancholy occasion? I sincerely thank you on behalf of my dear father, and beg to*

*most respectfully to say that the medal, which your noble institution has been pleased to confer upon me, shall be considered a valuable relic so long as it shall please Almighty God to spare me in this world.*

*"I have the honour to remain, sir*

*"Your very humble servant*

*(Signed) "GRACE HORSLEY DARLING*

**1839** Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society founded  
<http://www.liverpoolshipwreckandhumanesoc.org/Home.html>

**1840** The Trustees deepened the River between the Broomielaw Bridge and the Bishops Bridge to 10'3" at high water and constructed a weir just below the Bishops Bridge.

**1841 James Geddes Officer Glasgow Humane Society 1841-1850 (dates uncertain)**

**1842** The weir at the Broomielaw Bridge was removed.

February 16<sup>th</sup> **1845** On Friday forenoon last a young female, who resided with a family in West Street near the Broomielaw, (either as a relative or in the capacity of a servant), threw herself into the river near Govan and was drowned. James Geddes and the Keeper of the Humane Society House, Govan made search on Sabbath and after 4 hours labour succeeded in getting the body where it was taken to the Govan Mortsafe House. She was claimed by her friends.

**1845** Permission was granted to build a weir 120yds above Hutchesons Bridge. It was built in **1851** and had a lock for boat passage.

**1845 John McLean Officer Glasgow Humane Society 1845-1859 (dates uncertain)**

**1846**

*September 6<sup>th</sup> 1846 a man bathing about Mill below the village was drowned. The keeper (Mr John McLeun) getting notice was instantly on the spot and after 5 hours labour succeeded in getting the body, which was delivered to his wife in Partick*

**1847**

*August 27<sup>th</sup> 1847 a woman threw herself into the river below Govan but being observed by the crew of the Brig Fair Kathleen, outward bound, they lowered a boat and succeeded in recovering her. She was conveyed to the Humane Society House where every attention was paid by the Keeper and she was able to be taken home. Next day the unfortunate creature would assign no reason for the rash attempt.*

**1848 Duncan Downie Officer Glasgow Humane Society**

The Annual General Meeting of the Humane Society on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1848 was held in the Religious Institution Rooms with James Somerville President in the Chair. It was agreed that the following should continue as Officers-John McLean at Govan (a record book of James McLean is in the possession of G Parsonage at the GHS House Glasgow Green), Duncan Downie at Broomielaw and James Geddes at the Green

**1849** 16<sup>th</sup> January **1849** Tuesday – Received notice of an accident on the Kelvin

*A man in the employment of Mr Neilson, Baker, Partick, went off the road with his horse and cart and fell into the river which being swollen carried him down to the Clyde. Remarkable to state both he and his horse were saved although he was found upwards of a mile from the spot he went in – he was able to go home next day.*

**1850**

A mini drama was enacted one Monday morning when a 30 year old woman plunged into the water near the south quay. Rescued by a sailor and a policeman in a boat, she was discovered to be intoxicated and charged with wantonly and recklessly throwing herself into the river to the alarm and annoyances of the lieges and breach of the peace. Hauled before the Baillie she was discovered to be the notorious Miss Meek who kept an improper house in Jamaica Street. The same morning she had escaped a fine and had been celebrating ever since. This time she was not so lucky receiving 60 days in the bridewell and a sermon from the bailie

**1851**

29<sup>th</sup> September 1851 As the Victoria Steamer was coming up the river a man the worse for liquor fell overboard and was drowned, he was a passenger, search was made, the body was not recovered until next day, and he was named by his friends

**1852 – 1857** Officers were – James Geddes, Glasgow Green and John McLean at Govan James was also Ferry-Keeper until the opening of the new suspension bridge at the society's house.

**1852**, July 30<sup>th</sup>

As the Citizen Steam Boat was going down the river another boat came in collision with her, Mrs McKenley and her child were knocked overboard and were both drowned, the mother was got that night and the child next morning.

**1853**

Glasgow Regatta (Glasgow Herald Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August 1853) On Friday between Nelson's Monument and Jennie's Burn. Numbers and prizes and fame of competitors caused considerable interest.

A Grandstand was erected on bank off Nelson's Column. A Barge with awning moored off this contained the Veteran Battalion Band. Opposite this on the south side another barge was moored, decorated with flags this held the Commodore, Vice-commodore and other gentlemen. 200 yards further down a yacht was moored.

## 1854

June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1854 the body of a man was found floating near to the Whiteinch, he was took to the Govan churchyard and was buried unclaimed.

## 1855

August 19<sup>th</sup> 1855 Sunday afternoon a young man the name of William Johnston went into bathe at Govan, He went beyond his depth and was drowned, John McLean and his son was soon on the spot but the body was not recovered till three days after, he belonged to Glasgow.

**1856** St Andrews Bridge replaced Ferry. 1856 a bridge keeper is reported being at the St Andrews Bridge.

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August 1856 a boy named Arthur Neil residing in Tradeston, while bathing opposite Barclays Dock, was drowned. Three days search was made for the body without success, it was found floating 8 days after and brought up to the Govan Mortsafe House. Word sent to his parents who removed him home.

It is recorded in the Glasgow Register of Electors, 1856-57. 4<sup>th</sup> Ward  
1856 - James Geddes, Boatbuilder. Waterside, Humane Society House  
Proprietor and occupant of Boat-yard and shed, Waterside

**1857 John Geddes Officer Glasgow Humane Society 1841-1857 (dates uncertain)**



1857 House on Green renovated and extended.

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1857 around 1230hrs an unfortunate female threw herself into the water, while under the influence of liquor, at the first spout. John Geddes ran up the bank and brought her out. She was handed over to the police and sent the following day to Bridenhill for 30 days.

**1858** William Geddes son of George Ass. Keeper



**1858** The Caledonian Railway Bridge was built.

Newspaper article Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 1858

*“Narrow escape – On Wednesday afternoon, while several persons were enjoying themselves in two small boats on the river, by some mismanagement one of the boats was capsized, and four individuals left struggling in the water at the Peat Bog. John Geddes, on receiving the alarm, ran to the spot, and after great exertion succeeded in rescuing the immersed individuals, who were taken to the Humane Society House and properly attended to.”*

### **1859-1889 George Geddes Officer Glasgow Humane Society**



**1859** George Geddes I became Officer until he passed away in 1889.

Sunday 29th May 1859, Newspaper article

*Narrow escape from drowning – About 1500hrs yesterday, two lads, each about 13 years of age, named Andrew Kelly and James Lyle, residing in Union Lane, Green Street, Calton, went into the river to bathe, opposite McNeil’s Boat House. Lyle, who could not swim, sank into a sand hole, and Kelly, who could swim, went to his rescue, but Lyle caught a firm hold of Kelly, and both were nearly drowned. A gentleman rushed into the water, with his clothes on, but he could not swim, and after wading up to the neck, and within a yard of the boys, he had to turn back. Two young gentlemen named respectively J.P. Hotchkiss and William Pollock, residing at 29 and 13 Rottenrow, then rushed in, and brought the boys to the shore. The gentlemen in question deserve great credit for their gallant conduct. Parents would do well to caution their children against bathing at any of the sandbanks between the Suspension and Rutherglen Bridges, or at the sandbank above the latter bridge. Sand holes abound at all these banks, and young boys who cannot swim run great risk in bathing at any of these places. Were a swimming pond constructed in the Fleshers’ Haugh, we would hear of no such casualties. At the Springboards on Sundays, Mr. G. Geddes has a boat in attendance in case of accident.*

George Geddes awarded Bronze Medal of the Royal London Humane Society (Date unknown)



George Geddes awarded Gold Medal of the Glasgow Humane Society (Date unknown)

**1861** Man drowned when his horse and cart were washed away at Boggleshole Ford.

1861 4 men and 2 women were drowned when the Govan Ferry collided with the Lochgoil steamer.

**1862**

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 1862

A young man was drowned in the river, named James Mulligan. He had gone into the river near to White's Chemical Works, in order to recover a lad's cap, which had been thrown in. Shortly after leaving the shore he took cramp and sunk. Information of the occurrence was conveyed to George Geddes, who, with an assistant proceeded to the spot and recovered the body (but not till after 4 hours search). His friends took the body home.

**1863**

30<sup>th</sup> November 1863

A rare tragedy occurred when a ferry boat in the harbour area capsized and twenty seven people were thrown into the river. Twenty of them lost their lives. George Geddes and assistants helped recover the bodies but during their labours one of his assistants was drowned.

**1864**

Scotsman April 18 **1864** Extraordinary Wager

A young gentleman belonging to Glasgow, a Member of the 1st Northern Rifle Volunteers and one of the most distinguished amateur members of the Clydesdale Rowing Club, has undertaken, for a substantial wager, to perform the wonderful feat accomplished by the late Captain Burnaby, of the Royal Horse Guards - viz to row a quarter of a mile on the river, walk a quarter of a mile, run a quarter of a mile, hop a quarter of a mile, and ride on

horseback a like distance, all in the limited space of quarter of an hour. The date fixed for this remarkable performance is 3 May."

## **1865**

It is reported that the Officer went before a Parliamentary Committee and gave evidence as to the effect that the removal of the weir would have. Were the weir to be removed the stream would flow faster, and in the case of heavy spates serious injury would be done to the River banks which moreover at low tide would present a disagreeable appearance and prevent people from walking along the Riverside.

Newspaper today (1917) comments on the death in action of a Captain John Montgomerie Bell of the six foot battery of the Midlothian Coast Artillery Volunteers

In his youthful days he received the medal of the Glasgow Humane Society (**1865**) for rescuing two women from drowning at Largs

An upper storey was added to the Society House in **1865**

## **1866**

Monday 17 September **1866** 1pm

Five men hired a boat from Rankin's barge and when near the suspension bridge the boat upset and one of them swam to the shore. The other four were rescued by John Kay and George Geddes. The men were all very much the worse of liquor.

John Kay and George Geddes rescuers

Kay paid 5/- (five shillings)

## **1867**

Glasgow 5<sup>th</sup> June **1867**

This vessel was deposited here this day by George Geddes, Keeper of the above house, on a storey being built to the original, which was built in 16<sup>th</sup> day of August 1790 by a private Society of humane gentlemen, who have honourably carried their design out of their private resources, having from time to time rewarded persons in rescuing their fellow citizens.

The original members without a single exception being numbered with the dead, peace to their ashes

The oldest director above is the President Alexander Harvey Esq., Baillie of Provan, who has been untiring in his exertions to promote the interests of the Society for a long period of years.

This addition having been required in consequence of the Keepers family increasing, the directors having in the most handsome manner ordered the addition to be made.

The masonry has been executed by John McGregor, Foreman to Mr. Brownlie Builder who has done it ample.  
Enclosed are a few coins and Daily Herald of this day.

George Geddes, Keeper.  
John McGregor, Builder.  
William Leishman, Scriptist.

## 1868

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1868: 4pm

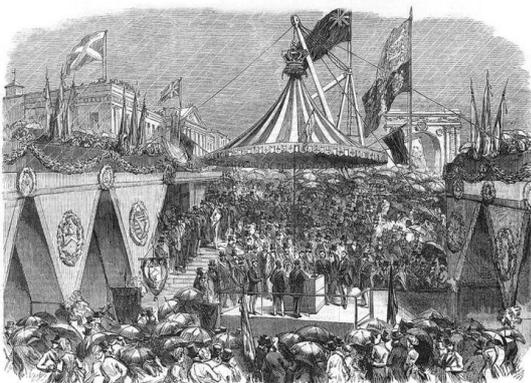
A boy named John Pearson went into the river to bathe a little to the east of Rutherglen Bridge and was drowned. Information was sent to the Humane Society House. A search was made and the body recovered about one hour after. The body was removed home to London Street where his parents reside.

## 1869

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 1869, Newspaper article

*Girl drowned in the river – Yesterday forenoon a girl, aged about 13 years, named Helen McGenty, who resided with her parents at 52 Rose Street, fell into the river near to Higginbotham's Mill, and was drowned. Deceased was playing in company with some children of her own age, and when the accident took place her companions ran for assistance, but before it could be obtained she had sunk below the surface. Mr Geddes, of the Humane Society House, recovered the body in about twenty minutes from the occurrence. A correspondent suggests that the police might be instructed to prevent children from playing on the banks of the river, as hardly a day passes without some accident arising out of the practice.*

## 1870



Laying the foundation stone for the Albert Bridge 1870

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 1870

Newspaper article

*“Narrow escape from drowning – About 8pm last night, two gentlemen, members of the St Andrew’s Rowing Club, had a narrow escape from drowning in the Clyde. They were pulling up the river in a pair-oared outrigger, and when midway between Nelson’s Monument and the offices of the Humane Society, the boat upset, and both were immersed in the water. Although only a short distance from the shore, the occupants of the boat, one of whom appeared unable to swim, would inevitably have been drowned, had not Mr Geddes, of the Humane Society, who witnessed the disaster, come to their assistance. As it fortunately happened, they both escaped with a good ducking.”*

## 1871

Sets of apparatus kept at Broomielaw and Finnieston, 5 drags, 3 barrows for carrying the body in a proper posture from the water to a receiving house, 3 mattresses one for each barrow, 12 pairs of blankets, 12 hand towels and 3 syringes.



Drag of the type developed and used in Glasgow for 200yrs

## 1872

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 1872, Newspaper article

*“Dreadful tragedy in the East End of Glasgow this morning – A mother drowning her three children and afterwards committing suicide – An act of fatal rashness, accompanied by unusually melancholy results*

*The murder of three young children by their mother, and her own subsequent suicide, took place in the East End of the city this morning. About 0900hrs a woman, only 28 years of age, named Mary Crawford or Duchar, wife of Alex Duchar, a designer, residing at 266 Dalmarnock Road, told her step-daughter, a girl 10 years of age, named Grace, that she meant to take the three children out for a walk. She desired that Grace should accompany them for the purpose of carrying the youngest child. The children were prepared for the “outing,” and the little family party, five in all, set out from their home. It was made up of Mrs. Duchar, 28 years of age; Grace, 10 years; Harriet, 3½ years; Alexander, 2 years; and May, 3 months. They proceeded in the direction of the river, and at length reached the banks of the Clyde, near the Cranstonhill Old Waterworks, where Mrs. Duchar took the youngest from Grace, and told her to leave them, at the same time requesting her to return in a short time. The girl obeyed. What took place immediately afterwards is matter of conjecture, but the results are only too well known. According to instructions, Grace went back to the Clyde, near the Old Waterworks, after the expiry of some little time, and the first object, which caught her eye, was the body of one of her sisters floating down the river. Naturally enough, her first impulse was to raise an alarm, when a man named Edward Cassidy, 65 Saltmarket, who happened to be in the neighbourhood, recovered the body. That of the second child was taken out of the water by Patrick Brown, East Hope Street; and Robert Russell, 26 Finlay Street, Cowcaddens, recovered the third child. In every case life was extinct. As to the fate of the mother, there can scarcely be any doubt that after drowning the children she committed*

*suicide. Her footprints are quite discernible on the sand going towards the brink of the river, but the closest scrutiny has failed to discover any returning footmarks. Mr. George Geddes and assistants have during the day been making every search for the body, but up to the hour of going to press, without success. It is alleged that Mrs. Duchar and her husband have not lived on the best of terms for some time past, and that they had a quarrel last night, but at present there are many rumours obtaining currency. Dr McIntyre, who saw the children, did what in him lay to restore animation, but without avail. The occurrence, as may be imagined, has caused a great sensation in the East End of the City.”*

## **1873**

### **Rowing during 1873**

The inclusion of the word “amateur” in the title of the Club and the practice of referring to “gentlemen amateurs” was criticised with some justification, as a piece of snobbery. Indeed, an anonymous correspondent, writing to a Glasgow newspaper, made scathing comments on the gentlemen amateurs “Rowing on the Clyde is dying of gentility on the brain” Young gentlemen, inspired by English ideas, had grown fastidious and would not compete for money but only for cups, rings or pins. Instead of rowing on the Clyde in the presence of large crowds, they had taken to staging their regattas in the retired waters of the Gareloch, and were not so much interested in rowing as in strutting about with their blue coats with silver buttons and white trousers as if they were at Henley regatta, one of England’s most prestigious social occasions.

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May **1873** Newspaper article.

*“Attempted suicide- About eight o’clock yesterday morning, a destitute woman, named Ann Newton, attempted to commit suicide by throwing herself into the Clyde, opposite Nelson’s Monument. John Geddes, a nephew of Mr George Geddes, the officer of the Humane Society observed the action, and he promptly rescued her. It appears that the woman had left the Central Police Office at seven o’clock, she having been received there for protection on Saturday night. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, she was removed to the City Poorhouse.”*

## **1874**

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July **1874**, Newspaper article

*“Young man drowned at the Springboards. A lad named Edward McPeck, 19 years of age and residing at 3 Rutherglen Road, was drowned yesterday afternoon while bathing in the Clyde, opposite the Springboards. It is supposed that he was seized with cramp. The struggles of the poor fellow were observed by several other bathers and by many people on the banks, but no one appears to have had courage enough to render assistance, and ere the Humane Society’s Boat, which is always stationed in the neighbourhood at this season, reached the scene, the unfortunate lad had disappeared. Mr George Geddes was at once apprised of the accident, but fully 20 minutes elapsed before the body was recovered. Had the men in charge of the boat above referred to been free to devote their attention to their duties, for which they are there placed, the accident in all likelihood, would have not occurred. It appears, however, that the small wooden bridge, which crosses Jenny’s Burn, at the point where it enters the Clyde, has been allowed to fall into a disgraceful state of disrepair. Of the structure only one old rotten beam remains and all traffic has been suspended; but along the*

*plank of a few inches square, some venturesome children attempt to crawl. In making this effort yesterday, one little fellow missed his footing and toppled into the burn, and was only rescued as he was drifting into deep water. When the lad McPeck went in to bathe, the Humane Society's men were at Jenny's Burn endeavouring to get children to leave the spot, and so were prevented paying full attention to the necessities of bathers. Repeated representations, we are informed, have been made to the police authorities, as to the necessity for having the bridge put into a proper state of repair, but no effectual heed to these has hitherto been given."*

**1875**

From the 'Aberdeen Journal' April 1875: James Kinnear 'Lifejacket Inventor

The Bailie—"My Conscience"—No 138-Glasgow, Wednesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, **1875**. Price 1d  
MEN YOU KNOW

Nautical Glasgow is one of the surprises of our great city. It has nothing to do with ships or with seafaring, There is no smell of salt water about it. Between the pursuits it follows after and those of the busy world below the bridges there is all the difference between play and work, between the very small and the very great. On any afternoon, particularly and Saturday afternoon, as you are on your way from Dunlop Street Station to the coast, turn your eyes eastwards while your train is crossing the river, and higher up than Albert Bridge, the water, you will observe, is absolutely black with boats and boating parties. Hundreds, it may be thousands of loungers crowd either bank, and altogether the spectacle, to say the least, is one of the busiest to be met with even in Glasgow. This, then, is our nautical quarter. It is here – on the stretch of water from the Weir to a point near Rutherglen Bridge – that we boat, that we pull matches, that we hold regattas. Some of us paddle about in stout old-fashioned jolly boats or punts, but the pair-oar and four-oar racing gig is the favourite craft, dangerous though both species seem to inexperienced eyes. The presiding genius of the place, indeed he might almost be termed the guardian nymph of the stream, is a wiry little man, with cheeks like a frosted apple, and hair which is rapidly taking a tint of iron grey. This is "Geordie," otherwise Mr George Geddes, the keeper of the Glasgow Morgue, and officer of the local Humane Society. On the Saturday afternoons in the height of the boating season GEORGE seems absolutely ubiquitous. He is one moment looking after his boats – he has a perfect fleet of them – then he is up near the springboards, apprehensive that his services may be required in that direction, and again he is back at the Suspension Bridge, busy assisting a couple of lads out of the water who have upset in their pair-oar. GEORDIE, as becomes such a well-known personage, is Glasgow born and bred. When very young, little more than a baby, he was left an orphan, and was adopted by a decent pair of workpeople who lived in Govan. At the mature age of seven years he was sent to work ten hours a day in a silk mill – this was in 1833 and legislating for children had not been heard of. When he had completed his ninth year his labours in the mill were supplemented by walks up to the city of an evening, where he assisted a brother who had charge of the ferry across the river at the foot of McNeil Street, where the Green Suspension Bridge now spans the Clyde. In the course of time "Geordie," who took to the water almost by instinct, became ferryman himself, then assistant officer of the Humane Society, and, at an interval of ten years, the Society's officer in chief. He had plenty of claims to advance for his fitness for this latter post. When no more than eleven years of age, he leapt into the Clyde and saved the life of a drowning girl at the imminent risk of his own. This feat gave him a taste for rescuing people. From the date of his entering the service of the Humane Society, in 1845, up till 1860 he had rescued no fewer

than 35 persons, who had either stumbled into the river or had gone in of their own free will with the intention of putting an effectual “period” to their days. For his services in preserving life he has been awarded the only gold medal ever given by the Glasgow Humane Society, and also the bronze medal of the Royal Humane Society of London. In his day – he is now content to rest on his achievements of the past – Geordie was a capital oarsman. On one occasion he beat the famous Bob Campbell, the champion of Scotland, in a match on Kilbirnie Loch. He was one of the “As you Like It” crew, the crack crew of a score of years back, and he otherwise distinguished himself in boating and pulling matches. Glasgow is an unknown “quartier.” There is nothing very lovely about it, or very cheerful, or even, unless you take an interest in “the boats,” very exciting. It presents a phase of Glasgow life, however, characteristic enough in its way, and as such the BAILIE presents it – together with “GEORDIE,” its tutelary genius – to the attention of his readers.

## 1876

From Society Minutes for **1876** from Glasgow Herald

*"The recently completed railing which through the Society's efforts has been erected on the south side of the River and extending from Wellington Street to Mr Dixons property near Jennies Burn*

*This railing as anticipated has proved an invaluable safeguard as no accident has there occurred since its erection."*

## 1877

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July **1877**-Kept watching brief on Glasgow University v Edinburgh University Boat Race from Dalarnock Bridge to temporary bridge now being thrown across the river above the suspension bridge.

**1878** Pond on Dixon's Estate known as Campbell's Pond soon to be filled up. (Note-children still drowned in the Malls Mire area up until the 1960,s



**1878** - George Geddes Junr awarded Glasgow Humane Society Hon Certificate for Meritorious Conduct (Aged 14)



Glasgow Corporation took over the awarding of Medals for Bravery

## 1879

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> November **1879**, Newspaper article

*“On Tuesday night, shortly before 2100hrs, a young man named Alexander Sinclair, a grocer at 59 Dalmarnock Road, and residing at 88 Bernard Street, Bridgeton, was busily engaged in serving his customers. He then abruptly left several people standing at the counter, and, passing into the back shop, put on his hat and coat, and passed hurriedly out of the shop. The strangeness of the man’s manner, not less than the unaccountable nature of his hurried departure, aroused the suspicions of those left standing at the counter that something was surely amiss. As the young man failed to re-appear his landlady was communicated with, and the shop properly secured for the night. All Tuesday night Sinclair failed to put in an appearance at his lodgings, and as early as 0700hrs yesterday morning, the dead body of the young man was brought to the Eastern Police Station, and lodged in the mortuary there, having been found floating in the Clyde opposite Nelson’s Monument. Sinclair had been in a very depressed state of mind for some days previous, and the supposed act of suicide is believed to have arisen from a temporary derangement of the mind.”*

1879/80 the weir at Glasgow Green had been removed. This proved a danger to the structure of Rutherglen Bridge and the bridge was closed in 1890.

**1880**

Monday May 17<sup>th</sup> **1880** Glasgow Whitsuntide Open Skiff Handicap  
Steps of the Humane Society to Albert Bridge and back fully half a mile.

**1881**

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May **1881**, Newspaper article,

*Boy drowned – About 1300hrs on Saturday afternoon a boy named James Burton, 10years of age and residing at 15 Logan Street, south side, went into bathe in Jenny’s Burn and was drowned. The Humane Society officials recovered the body. At this season of the year, parents ought to keep a vigilant eye on the movements of their children, as great danger attends juveniles entering the river. The officials of the Humane Society do all in their power to prevent accidents, but they can be materially assisted by careful action on the part of parents.*

**1882** Oatland and Polmadie Ferries owned by Robert McQueen.

**1883-1893** Oatland and Polmadie Ferries owned by I & W Wallace.



Glasgow Humane Society officers were and are normally Commodores or Clerk of the Courses for Regattas - these cannons were used for starting races at Glasgow Green in the 1800's

### **1884**

4 July 1884--Friday, 4pm--A boy named William Kelly while walking along the parapet of Rutherglen Bridge fell into the river and was drowned. G Geddes made search for the body and was successful in recovering it about an hour after.

### **1885**

17 August 1885-Monday, 5.30pm-A man named John Sharkey having fallen asleep on the bank near to Nelsons Monument rolled down into the river. A young man named Gibb observing the occurrence at once jumped in to save him and was unsuccessful till the arrival of G Geddes who also entered the water and rescued him. Both men were taken to the H.S. House where they were attended to with the usual restoratives. It was a bad case. Both men were able to go home late in the evening.

### **1886**

25 February 1886-Thursday, 2pm-Attempted Suicide--A woman named Isabella Fisher threw herself into the river near to the Gymnasium. She was observed by John Geddes from his station at the Oatlands Ferry and he at once jumped into the river and succeeded in rescuing her. She was in a very exhausted state and carried to the H.S. House where she was treated in the usual manner, where she recovered and conveyed to the City Poor House. Before leaving the H.S. House she stated she had walked from Dunfermline and feeling tired was prompted to leap into the river.

### **1887**

30 July **1887** Saturday, 11.15pm, Newspaper article – Source unknown

*“Tragic termination of a fight in Glasgow – A young man named William Bell, residing at 38 Nelson Street, South Side, lost his life under very melancholy circumstances on Saturday. He was about 2200hrs in the evening engaged with another man, whose name has not been ascertained, in a fight on the SS of the Clyde, three hundred yards east of the Green Suspension Bridge. The pugilists were stripped to the waist, and were attended by seconds and a large number of supporters. The fight had been in progress some time when Probationary-Constable John Moore, stationed in Rutherglen Road, was informed of what*

*was going on, and along with Constable William Stevens he proceeded to the river bank. On the policemen making their appearance the crowd rapidly dispersed. One of the pugilists and the two seconds affected their escape, but Bell being closely pursued plunged into the water and attempted to swim to the other side. One of the constables shouted for him to come back, but as Bell was making his way across the water, the constable ran over the bridge for the purpose of intercepting him. Here a most exciting scene ensued. The crowd on the SS of the river encouraged Bell with cries of "keep up," but as he was approaching the other side he became exhausted and shouted for help, and within ten yards of the NS he sank. Mr George Geddes, junior, of the Humane Society House, attracted by the noise, left the house partly dressed, and learning what had occurred plunged into the water. He was directed to the spot where Bell disappeared, and dived under twice, but owing to the strong current and the darkness his efforts were unavailing, and after swimming about for some time, he was reluctantly obliged to give up the search. Meanwhile a boat was procured, and the body was recovered shortly afterwards with the grappel irons some distance from the place where Bell was seen to sink. The body was taken to the mortuary of the Eastern Police Station, where it was identified. From its appearance, and from the testimony of several eyewitnesses, the fight seems to have been of a prolonged and severe nature. A number of rounds were fought before the police disturbed them, and both men were much injured. Bell's eyes were blackened, his lip cut, and the body badly bruised. Deceased was 22 years of age, and was employed in Singer's sewing machine establishment at Kilbowie. The occurrence will be reported to the Procurator Fiscal."*

## **1888**

23 June 1888 Saturday, 12pm

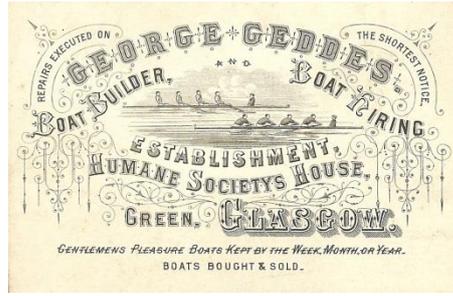
Accident saved – A boy named Archibald Todd, residing at 114 French Street, fell into the river near to the Oatlands Ferry. John Geddes, ferryman, hearing the cry ran with all haste to the spot, jumped gallantly into the river and succeeded with difficulty in rescuing the boy. He was taken to the Humane Society House in a very exhausted state. The usual restoratives were applied. He gradually recovered and was removed home in a cab by his parents.

For the above rescue, John Geddes was awarded the medal of the Royal Humane Society. The reward had been made in response to the action of a number of workers of Messrs Higginbotham, who had witnessed the rescue and had memorialised the Royal Society,

John Geddes is the son of the ex-Officer John Geddes. Born in 1834 he was a considerable oarsman who rowed in many regattas. A good swimmer and waterman, he was for some time an assistant to his cousin George. His first experience of saving life was as an eleven year old when a boy he was swimming with in the Clyde above the old Rutherglen Bridge took cramp in the water and John rescued him. The last was only two years before he died. His cousin George had dived in to rescue a woman attempting suicide about 200yds from the suspension bridge with the tide running strongly. George was nearly overpowered when John dived in with a life line attached and helped them both out. For some years he was employed by the Clyde Trust and had charge of the Erskine Ferry. A competent single sculler he also competed in pairs with his brother Robert. He died on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1895.

## **1889**

### **1889-1932 George Geddes Officer Glasgow Humane Society**



George Geddes awarded Silver Medal of the Royal Humane Society (Date unknown)

## 1890

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May **1890** 1400hrs

Accident drowned – A man named Donald Munro was thrown into the river at the new Dalmarnock Bridge, through the breaking of one of the girders. Munro was engaged working on the bridge. Search was made for the body among the iron debris at the bottom of the river, but fully an hour was spent before it was recovered.

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July **1890** Time: 2100hrs Accident drowned

A sad boating fatality occurred at this time. Two young gentlemen belonging to the Clyde Amateur Rowing Club were engaged rowing a pair oared race in 27 feet outrigger gigs. When nearing the foot of Waddell Street, the bow oarsmen named Lambie, let his oar slip out past the button, thus causing the light craft to heel over and threw the occupants into the river. His companion named Hamilton and the coxswain, a little boy named William Mitchell, were the other occupants of the boat. It was seen as the boat was capsizing, that Lambie had lost his presence of mind and probably knowing that Hamilton was a good swimmer, he sprang on to his (Hamilton's) back. Hamilton being so exhausted with the severe race could not extricate himself from Lambie's grasp. They both at once sank and never rose to the surface. The boy Mitchell came to the surface caught hold of an oar, which was thrown to him and was speedily rescued by a man named James Finch. He was taken to the Humane Society House and attended to by Mrs Geddes and could soon be removed home. George Geddes, who sprang into a boat and rowed to the spot, witnessed the accident. On seeing no one, he promptly dived from the boat at the spot where they sank, but as the tide was running too strong, it was of no avail. The same efforts of fruitless heroism were done by club friends of the deceased, namely Mr A.S. Pettigrew, who was in the opposing boat and Mr R. McK Pepper. Search was at once made for the bodies, but ½ hour elapsed before the first body was recovered and another ½ hour passed, ere the second body was brought to the surface. They were taken to the clubroom and afterwards removed home when all enquiries by the police authorities were finished.

Scottish Sport October **1890**

It is with feelings of heartfelt and genuine sadness that I announce the death of one in whom I in common with many others, took much interest. I refer to Minnie Geddes third daughter of our late Humane Society Officer. Good hearted, even tempered, smiling little Minnie passed quietly away to the land of shadows in the early hours of Tuesday morning and was followed on Thursday to her resting place in the Southern necropolis where but within a very few months past her father and sister Annie and younger sister Bessie had been laid. Minnie was one of the pioneers of lady swimmers in Scotland.

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September **1890**-1500hrs-A young man (a policeman named Joseph Montgomery, connected with the Police Rowing Club) when practising on the river in an outrigger skiff, upset and was thrown into the river. He was promptly rescued by George Geddes, who put off in a boat and was nothing much the worse of his accident. Where he upset was at the foot of South York Street.

### **1891**

“The old minutes are exceedingly interesting, and the names of prominent citizens who have been Directors and Office-bearers, show the interest which was taken in the Society. Many acts of heroism and intrepidity are recorded in the pages on the Minute Book, and many lives have been saved during the past hundred years through the instrumentality and the precautionary measures of the Glasgow Humane Society”.

### **1891**

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January **1891**--A horse dealer from Carlisle named Thomas Arl, residing at 14 Rigg Street, fell over the short railings at the foot of Wellington Street SS and rolled into the river. He was very much the worse of liquor and was caught hold of by some people who were passing, before he had got out of his depth. He was taken to a neighbouring public house, but on George Geddes arriving, he was taken to the Humane Society House and put to a warm bed, where he soon recovered. After recovery he explained that he had been in the company of some soldiers and women and had lost over £100.

### **1892**

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August **1892**--Found drowned – The body of a man, who was drowned, was found lying partly in the river at the foot of Govan Street, having been left there by the receding tide. George Geddes took it to the Southern Police Office, where from papers in his possession, he was identified as an Englishman from Hull who had got into destitute circumstances, when looking for employment in this city. He resided last at 41 Kent Street and his name was A. Shand. To keep up a respectable appearance, he had on a small steel chain with a padlock, to appear as if he possessed a watch.

### **1893**

Ladies Rowing Club operating from the Glasgow Humane Society wharfage during **1893**

### **1894**

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May **1894**-1000 hours-The body of a man name unknown evidently of the labouring class was found floating on the river on the site of the old weir above the Albert Bridge. It was in an advanced state of decomposition and was probably ten weeks in the water.

Body was conveyed to the Southern Police office.  
George Geddes found it and took it from the river.

### **1895**

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April **1895**-A little boy named Wm. John Bogle 22 Young Street slipped into the river from the Clyde Club steps a few yards east of the foot of McNeil Street. The occurrence was observed by a man named Michael Darcy 20 Carrick Street who divested himself of his coat and jumped in to the boy's rescue and brought him to the bank. Geo Geddes carried the little boy to the Humane So Ho where he was put to bed and soon recovered under the usual treatment.

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June **1895**-During the progress of the life-boat Saturday procession of boats on the river a young gentleman named Bryson was thrown into the river by the capsizing of his outrigger skiff. The occurrence occasioned great alarm and Geo Geddes who was on duty on the river rowed at great speed and rescued him from his perilous position. He was clinging to his frail craft. He was none the worse of his accident and went to his clubhouse.

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> July **1895**-Miss Alma Beaumont the lady aeronaut from the Carnival at the Coplawhill Road in descending from her balloon by means of her parachute dropped into the river a little east of the Green Suspension Bridge.

Geo Geddes fearing that she would land in the Clyde put off in a boat with his assistant Dan Bree to be able to render assistance if necessary.

Luckily she dropped within ten yards of the rescue boat & was at once submerged. As the boat was broadside on Geo Geddes dived off the boat, swam one or two strokes caught the lady & lifted her on her feet in shallow water at the side where the parachute lay.

Some trouble was experienced in cutting her from the tangled ropes, which when accomplished Miss Beaumont was taken on board of a boat & taken to the Humane Society House, where she was kindly treated by Mrs Geddes and after a little attention and loan of a complete change of warm dry clothing she was driven off in a cab to the carnival by her manager nothing the worse of her dangerous immersion.

## **1896**

An unfortunate accident in **May 1896**, probably led to the decline in Dumbarton amateurs success. A maiden crew-A Lang, H Cuthbertson, R Lang, A Kelly (stroke) and James Glen (cox) had crossed the Clyde to Langbank and ran into difficulties on the way back, shipping water after two steamers had passed. Their boat was swamped near the Castle and only two survived -Alex Lang and Cuthbertson.

## **1897**

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> **August 1897** two little boys reported to George Geddes that a little companion while attempting to drown a cat near to Polmadie Ferry had climbed through the palings and overbalanced in the act. Geddes went to the spot with drags and in a short time recovered the body which was removed to the home of his parents by the Police.

## **1898**

Opened in **1898** by the Earl of Rosebery, the People's Palace was designed as a cultural centre for the people of the east end. Originally arranged with reading rooms on the ground floor, a museum on the first floor and an art gallery on the second floor,

## **1899**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February 1899 7.20a.m** A man with a wooden leg was seen to mount the parapet of the Albert Bridge west side and drop into the river with the remark to a passing stranger of "Good bye pals". The Tidal flow carried him down but he was seen to sink about 75 yards from the bridge. Geo. Geddes was soon communicated with and dragged the river for some time when he learned that the body of a man was found further down the river at the Belfast berth floating bourn up by the small amount of wood contained in his artificial leg. He was soon identified as a van man who had been drinking for some time past.

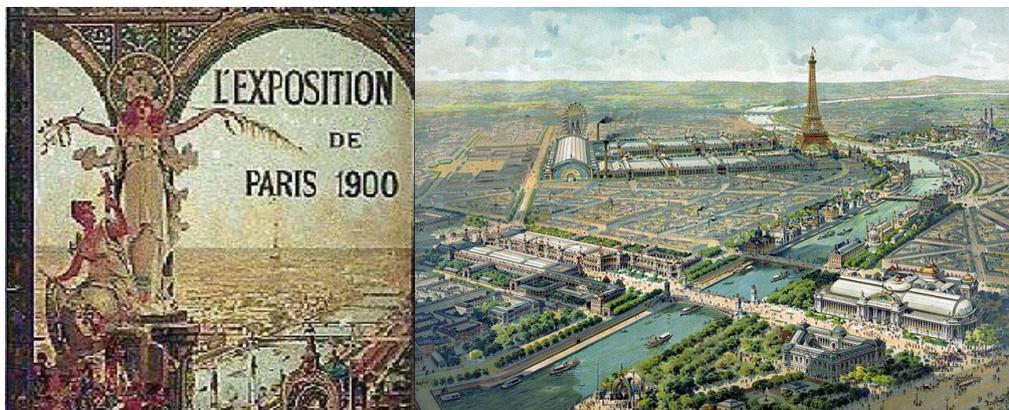
### 3. The Twentieth Century

1900 Glasgow Humane Society crew win Gold Medal at the World Lifesaving Championships, Paris.

As part of the celebrations for the 1900 millennium Paris held an exhibition



The *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 was a World's Fair held in Paris, from April 15 to November 12, 1900, to celebrate the achievements of the past century and to accelerate development into the next.



#### World Lifesaving Championships at the Paris Exhibition in 1900

A Glasgow Humane Society Crew was invited to attend. A special boat was built designed by Mr George Geddes Society Officer. The unique thing about the boat was that the seat ran down the centre from bow to stern and the rowers sat astride. At the competition the crew had to row to someone in the water, lift the person into the boat, and row back. The Glasgow crew set off in the normal way with two rowers double sculling and a cox at the stern. As they approached the person in the water, the cox took the stroke oars and rowed standing facing the bow. The stroke swung round and took the bows oars and rowed standing facing the bow. The bowman turned round lent over the bow of the boat and caught the person in the water and lifted him into the boat. As he did so the two rowers sat down and rowed normal way back to the shore. The stern had now become the bow of the boat. The story is that the

French were very annoyed at losing and on the road home, the Glasgow boat was “accidentally” dropped from its slings when it was being lifted from the quayside onto the ship to return to Britain. All that remains of the boat now are the centre seat the rowlocks. There is a drawing of the boat in a newspaper.



### **Saturday to Monday 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1900**

The competition was on the River Seine and held between officers of humane societies and aquatic life-saving agencies from England, Ireland, Scotland, America, Australia, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Holland and Belgium. The Glasgow boat represented Great Britain. The boat was taken by ship from Leith to Dunkirk, then train direct to the French capital.

The Glasgow crew consisted of George Geddes, James Aitken, and Gavin Meiklejohn, a smart young waterman. Aitken was trainer to Queen’s Park Football Club and a sculler of high ability, who took first place in skiff, sculling, and ordinary rowing races at the principal regattas and handicaps on the Rivers Clyde and Tyne. Daily reports of the competition were carried in British newspapers and the New York Herald.

During the Championships two young life savers were drowned and the death of a third only just averted. The two drowned lifesavers could not swim.

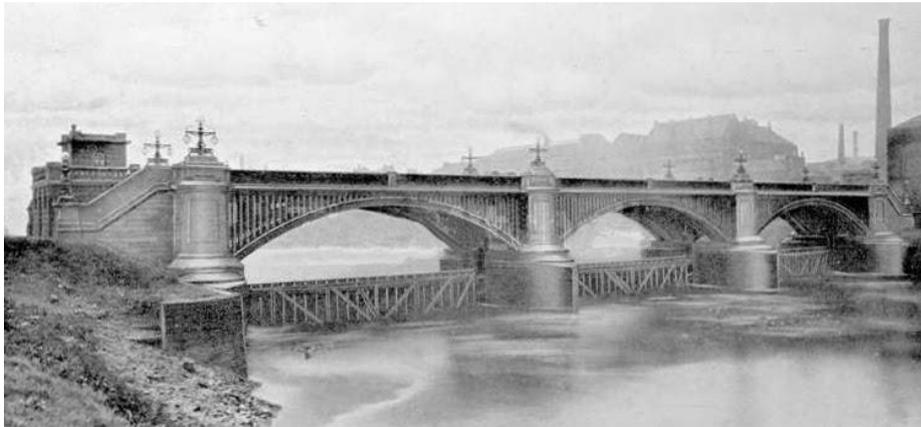
More than 12,000 persons paid admission to see the competition.

In the final, the Scottish team got well away at the start and soon put four boats’ lengths between themselves and their nearest opponents. Amidst much excitement, the Britishers increased their lead and eventually landed home the winners, thus becoming champions of the world for twelve months.

A fanfare of trumpets announced the finish of each race and English, American and French, as well as Norwegian, Danish, Belgian and Dutch oarsmen and lifesavers, shouted themselves hoarse, as did also the great crowds, when the Scotsmen so completely out-distanced their rivals.

They brought home a costly bronze figure and several objects of art. The crowning prize, the Grande Medaille d’Or, was to be sent on by the committee (the whereabouts of any of these prizes are unknown)

**1901**



**1901** Polmadie Bridge replaced ferry, 28th Dec. Tidal Weir opened.

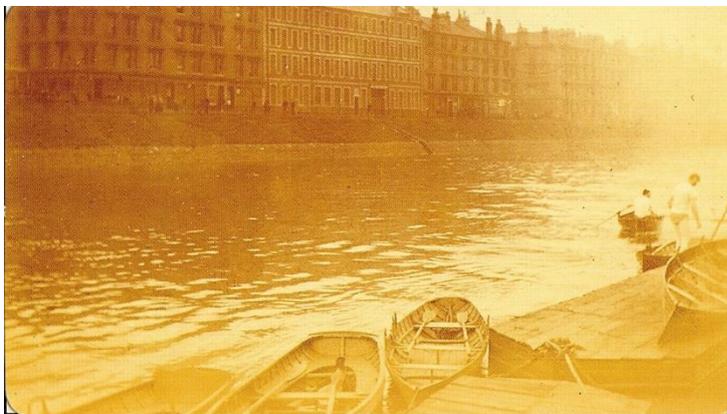


Photo shows the bottom half of the banking is stone

When the new weir was built the banks of the river were reinforced with stone “slag” blocks from the steelworks. These can still be seen as far upriver as 4 miles

Saturday 11th May **1901** 2.30p.m

George Geddes was summoned by the Eastern Police authorities to recover the body of a boy named Wilson 7 or 8 years who had been drowned in a large pond belonging to Grants Mill in the eastern portion of the city near Mile’ end. He proceeded to the spot with an assistant and after a short search recovered the body which was taken in charge by the Police. This boy had gone through a gap in the wall bordering the pond made by the fire-brigade while extinguishing a fire in the neighbourhood a few days previous.

31st May **1901** 4.30p.m

George Geddes was requested to proceed to a deep clayhole a little west of the Cumbernauld Toll to recover the body of a young man who had been accidentally drowned by slipping from an improvised raft of planks on which he had been amusing himself. Geddes recovered the body after a short search and conveyed it home a short distance off. Charles Lee (13 years) 440 New Road

**3rd September 1901**

Suicide-A man named Currie a laundry Keeper drowned himself in the canal. Geddes dragged the canal that night but did not get the body till the next day. He was a married man and one of his girls made a serious allegation about him which she afterwards denied. But before the denial came he had committed self-destruction.

**1901** the Royal Humane Society, LONDON, awarded to Mr. George Geddes, the Silver Medal of that Society, for gallantry in saving life

**1902**

15th July 1902

A few children were playing at the Clyde rowing club steps about 50 yards above the foot of McNeil street when one of the youngest a child named Harry Adams 2 years residing in Gt. Hamilton Street who was along with a girl aunt. It was picked out by the aunt but had to be treated by Mrs. Geddes to assist its recovery in the Humane Society House.

Monday 9th September 1902 12.30p.m

A man named Thomas Brewer 37 Dalmarnock Road a vanman who had been discharged for tipping from Miss Wilson Mathieson & Co. jumped into the river from the south bank 100 yards above the Rutherglen Bridge. The alarm was given by some people from the other side to a boat the property of Charles Anderson Esqre of the Tollbooth Lad's Club which was rowing in the vicinity. They rowed to the spot and took the drowning man on board. They rowed to the Humane Society House where Mr. Geddes put him to bed and applied restoratives with success. He was taken into custody by the Rutherglen Police Authorities.

**1903**

The Baillie established 1872 Glasgow, Wednesday, July 22nd, 1903. Price 1d

But, notwithstanding all the changes, the said grandfathers would find one thing steadfast-and that is the Humane Society House.

That venerable fabric is still to the fore, and flourishing as ever. The boats are in the water ready to be let out to lads and lasses.

The name of Geddes still is dominant. Like the Hebrew Kings of old, the son reigns in his father's stead. Young GEORGE GEDDES has taken the place of old George Geddes-whom all the world knew and dearly liked. Young George, who succeeded to the heirship in 1889-when he took up the father's work-maintains the duties with the same care and excellent effectuality that distinguished those discharged by his parent. He has saved many lives; he has recovered many bodies of unfortunates who fling themselves or throw themselves into the dark, dismal waters of the Clyde. His services have been acknowledged locally - London has awarded him the silver medal for gallantry. Deeds of his courage and unselfish daring have been chronicled in the daily press. In a single word, he is the worthy son of a worthy sire. In him the reputation of the Humane Society is absolutely sustained. For conclusion, the BAILIE would say he is glad to note that the old enthusiasm for boating on the Clyde is beginning to come back. For some years past football ---a partial dream of juvenile and considerable adult Insanity ---- has monopolised the vision of the masses. But it will not always last. Other and more gentle and more human sports will succeed, and there is some

pleasure in observing that there is a resurrection of rowing---that real life is awakening at the Humane Society Wharf

Mr. GEORGE GEDDES is young and he has the prospect of a world before him. The BAILIE wishes him success.

GHS certificate awarded to George Herd for rescue from R Clyde at Glasgow Green



## 1904

Sunday 10th July 1904 12.50p.m-A man named Peter Ross a model lodger while under the influence of "delirium tremens" ran frantically down the bank a short distance above the Suspension Bridge at the Green and into the water. He ran past two men who were lying on the grass resting, one of whom named Thomas Stanton a boiler maker suffering from consumption without hesitation sprang to his feet threw off his jacket and rushed into the river & helped to drag him out. Ross was taken to the Humane Society House and afterwards to the Police Office & thence to the Asylum

## 1905 Tollbooth Mission Boys rowed on the river

Sunday 7th May 1905 4.30p.m-About this time a number of young boys were amusing themselves at the Clayhole pond of the Messrs. W. & I. Stevenson; and it appears that in the course of their frolic, they endeavoured to board a raft made of an old delft crate and a few planks, which overturned and threw four of them into the water and all were drowned before any adults could be procured to render assistance. News of the melancholy occurrence soon spread and thousands of spectators went to the place. George Geddes was requisitioned to drag for the bodies. A lorry was procured & boat & drags taken to the pond. Three bodies were soon recovered by Mr. Geddes and his helper a lad named Ernest Coultart but some hours elapsed before the fourth body was brought to the surface. The hole was filled with an indescribable lot of rubbish which made operations very slow and arduous.

The bodies were handed over to the Police Southern Division.

The following are the names.

(10 Years) Cornelius Tennant son of James -do- Carter 39 Crown Street

(13 Years) Michael John Culken son of Thomas -do- Dealer 39 crown Street

(10 Years) Dennis Tierney son of John -do- Hammerman 21 Crown Street

(14 years) Robert McCart son of Francis -do- Cabinet maker 153 Mathieson Street

## 1906

31st January 1906 9.35a.m

A boy named James Doran 11 years of age residing with his mother at 50 Lime Street jumped into the river from the south bank about 50 yards from the Suspension Bridge upper side. The mother had been following her boy, to catch & take him to school. He had been punished by the teacher, a day or so before, & rather than be taken back, he outstripped his mother and dashed into the water. The mother screamed when she saw her boy in the river and a man named Joseph Baird 26 years of age residing at 53 McNeil Street a shoemaker in the employment of the co-operative boot factory adjoining, who was spending the remainder of his meal hour, in the vicinity, ran to the spot, threw off his coat, plunged in and swam out with the boy, who was taken to the Humane Society House by Geo. Geddes where he was put to bed and soon recovered.

Saturday 7th July 1906 , Accident Drowned 9.p.m.

A little boy named William McGougan 10 years of age residing at 27 Centre Street while playing or catching minnows at the water's edge of Stevenson's clay pond Polmadie fell into the water and was drowned. Geo. Geddes was informed by the police. He at once took a boat per lorry to the pond, made a search and soon recovered the body which was taken to the Southern Police Mortuary.

Attempted Suicide 11p.m.

A woman named Jessie Thomson c/o McEwan 105 Kidston Street jumped over the green Suspension Bridge to commit suicide. She did not fall into the water but dropped headlong on the slag which has recently been heaped here to protect & support the piers of the bridge. Geddes put off in a boat and had her brought to the Humane Society House for attention. Dr Grainger the younger of Monteith Row on arrival ordered her removal by ambulance to the Royal Infirmary as she had sustained a broken collar bone, fractured skull with other cuts & bruises.

Accident Saved 11p.m.

A young woman named Nellie McNally c/o Mrs. Bogan 236 Mathieson Street who witnessed the previous occurrence became hysterical with excitement, ran down the embankment at the Humane Society House. She could not stop & fell over the pier into the river. Geddes laid down the other injured woman sprang forward & dragged her out. She was taken to the house stripped by the attendants' female, put to bed & as she did not make much progress towards recovery she was also taken away by the ambulance.

Accident Drowned 11.30p.m.

While under the influence of drink and it appears stung by the goads of his intemperate companions as to his swimming abilities divested himself of all his clothing with the exception of his shirt and plunged into the river from the sloping bank of the river at the Richmond Park about 50 yards upstream from Jenny's Burn. He got beyond the centre when he became exhausted and sank. His companions left his clothes lying & fled. The occurrence was seen & heard by a young man and his sweetheart who informed the Police. Geo. Geddes went to the spot & dragged the river till well into the morning but without success. On resuming the search on Sunday morning the body was recovered by Geddes taken to the humane society Station & thence by undertaker to the Southern Police Mortuary.

8th July 1906

Constable J H Stewart Lanarkshire Police received Glasgow Humane Society Certificate for the rescue of a boy at Lambhill Quarry.

### **1907**

Thursday 26th September -The broken skeleton of a human being was dug out of the bottom of the river by the sand dredger working on the lower side of the Albert Bridge. George Geddes rowed the undertaker with his "receptacle" to the dredger & had the remains removed to the southern police Mortuary where the casualty surgeon Dr. Chalmers gave it as his opinion to be that of an adult male.

### **1908**

Friday 14th February 1908, Suicide 3p.m,

A man who had told a fellow tradesman (a Slater) that he would never again see him alive went on to the Govan Street Bridge & before he could be prevented he dropped into the river. He floated for a short time and ineffectual attempts were made to rescue him by throwing lifebuoys &c. George Geddes hurried to the spot & on the arrival of boat with drags, commenced to make a search and recovered the body about 100 yards down the river. The body was taken to the Southern Police Mortuary by the undertaker where it was identified as that of John Johnstone 62 years lately an inmate of Govan Poorhouse.

### **1909**

Between 1909 and 1919 a Glasgow Humane Society boat was kept behind (downstream of) the weir.

Friday 8th January **1909**, Attempted Suicide 11.20a.m,

A woman named Annie McPherson calling herself a cook from a hydropathic establishment in Edinburgh threw herself forward into the Clyde below the Green Suspension Bridge. The masons working at the new Bakery opposite raised the alarm. George Geddes ran down entered & dragged her from the river. She was none the worse but had to be put to bed until her clothes were dried. Dr Fletcher was in attendance. She was removed to the Eastern Police Office. She was brought before the Magistrate & sent 14 days to prison.

### **1910**

11th April **1910**-As requested Glasgow Humane Society Officer took soundings and sections at Govan Street

### **1911**

Sunday 1st January **1911**, 0215hrs

Incident refers to a Charles Flynn, a worker in Calico Printers employment. It appears that Flynn and his sweetheart, accompanied by another young girl and young man, were walking

along the SS of the riverbank, about 200 yards above the Govan Street Bridge. On coming to Higginbotham's Mill, Flynn left the side of his companions, as he was feeling sick, (having been first-footing a short time previously) for the purpose of vomiting into the river. In retching he overbalanced and fell over the fence into the water. He tried to swim to the piles, but could not and his sweetheart let down her fur boa for him to grasp, but he was too far out. Uttering the words "Oh Mary!" he sank and was drowned before her eyes. They all hastened to the Humane Society House and informed George Geddes from bed. He and his son speedily rowed to the spot, but an hour elapsed owing to the current and darkness before George Geddes recovered the body. It was taken to the Humane Society Station and afterwards conveyed by the undertaker to the Southern Police Mortuary.

## **1912**

Monday 8th April **1912**, spring holiday

Very stormy and river rough-A 27 feet outrigger rig of the Clyde Amateur Rowing Club was swamped with the rough water opposite the Hutchesontown Bowling Green. The occupants, 4 men and coxswain were left swimming in the water. The cox could not swim, but the rest of the crew kept him up. One of the crew was so cold, that he availed himself of the care of the Humane Society House warmth. The boy was taken home in a cab from the bowl house, where he was taken.

Second report--4 men and a boy were rescued at Hutcheson Town Bridge. The cox could not swim. All 5 had left their boat and were trying to make the bank

Tuesday 14th May **1912**, Attempted Suicide 7 1/2p.m

A man named James Jope an engineer residing at 69 Roseberry St. while under the influence of drink was walking home with his wife along the banks of Clyde near the Oatlands Park on the south side of the river. Evidently he began to talk about his powers of swimming, and before his wife could prevent him, he had slipped from his jacket leaving it in her hold. She was carrying a baby at the time & could not hold him so effectually as to prevent him carrying out his purpose. He climbed over the railing jumped into the river & swam for the other side. Nearing the middle it was seen he was in great extremity. Loud cries were raised and boats rowed hurriedly to the spot. One of them manned by a crew from Messrs. Collins Printing Office practising for the Regatta and coached by Peter Thompson Bellgrove Street cleverly steered to the spot and picked him up in an exhausted condition. He was brought ashore and conveyed to the Humane So House by Geo Geddes. He was put to bed and attended to in the usual way and after recovery was able to go home with his wife after 11o'clock

Thursday 16th May **1912**,

A female foetus was found in the river and taken to the Eastern Police Office.

Shipyard Accident at Clydebank—four men drowned-A distressing accident occurred yesterday in the shipbuilding yard of Messer's John Brown & Co Clydebank by which four men lost their lives and another man had a narrow escape. The accident was caused through the capsizing of a small boat containing five men in the yard dock, and with the one exception all efforts to effect a rescue of the men were unavailing. The names of the deceased are Charles Sweeney 34 9 South Bank St Clydebank who leaves a wife and one child

Hugh Martin 27 single 44 John Knox St Clydebank

James Duffy 35 single 34 John Knox St Clydebank

Edward Dougan 22 residing in Anderston Glasgow

The five men were in attendance on a diver who was engaged in connection with dock tests of the Duke of Bedford's new yacht Sapphire which was lying close to the Cruiser Southampton and when they put out from shore in a small boat which was 17ft long the yacht's propeller was working and it is understood that the violent motion despite the efforts of the man in charge of the oars drove the boat against the bow of the cruiser by which it was somewhat damaged. The boat afterwards rocked heavily shipping a considerable quantity of water and ultimately it capsized altogether leaving the men struggling for their lives. Only one of the five as stated was saved. This was Patrick Kelly who resides in the Trades Hotel Clydebank. He swam about for some time and was at last able to clutch a hawser to which he held on until rescued. Another man was seen to rise but he again sank and in this case it is supposed that he had sustained some injury. A number of hands in the yard rushed to the spot to render what assistance they could and Dr Wm Stevenson remained on the spot as long as his services could be of any avail. To aid in the recovery of the bodies Mr George Geddes of the Glasgow Humane Society was sent for and his efforts were supplemented by those of the divers. The work however proved exceedingly difficult. The accident has caused keen regret in the yard and much sympathy is expressed for the relatives

During **1912** water level was lapping on the coping stones at the Broomielaw Quay

### **1913**

Monday 3rd February **1913** Found Drowned 3.30 p.m. At this time some people crossing Govan Street Bridge noticed a bulky object like a dead body being swiftly carried down the river with the spate which was running at about 8 to 9 miles per hour. They ran and told Geo. Geddes at the Humane Society House. He and his son pushed off in a boat and with great difficulty and some danger intercepted it, to find it was the bodies of a young man and woman tied together at the waist with his pair of braces.

On being rowed to the embankment it was conjectured that the bodies were those of two young lovers named William Douglas 17 years of age residing with his mother at 666 Springfield Road and Minnie Irvine 19 years of age residing at Tollcross Road Parkhead who had gone mysteriously amissing on 21st December previous, and such proved the case. The bodies were conveyed to the Central Police mortuary in an undisturbed state, to assist as far as possible to elucidate the circumstances.

Friday 1st August 1913 Accident 6 p.m-George Geddes was requested by the brother of a young farm labourer who had lost his life while bathing in the Glanderston Dam at Barrhead to recover the body as all efforts by the Police and others in the district had failed. Geddes consented and drove to the place and after a short careful search brought the body to the surface amid manifestations of approval from the numerous spectators who had gathered to watch the operations. The body was taken in charge by the local Police.

### **1914**

Monday 19th January **1914** Hogganfield Ice thickness—7/8" dangerous-Glasgow Humane Society man in attendance

15th April **1914** George Geddes was given 10 guineas to mark his 25th year in Office.

Sunday 20th April **1914**-About one a.m.

Geo. Geddes & his son recovered the body of a schoolteacher who sitting on the rail of the Portland St. Suspension Bridge shot himself through the mouth & dropping into the river was drowned. When returning home they were in time to alarm the people in the vicinity of the fire which had broken out in the Albion Mill, across the river from the Humane Soc. House.

29<sup>th</sup> May 1914

Honorary Certificate presented with the thanks of the Directors to Mr Robert McCrae for Meritorious Conduct in having at the hazard of his own life plunged into the river Clyde without divesting his clothing, near Millerfield Road Dalmarnock on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1914



18th June **1914**, 2140hrs

Statement by Thomas Morrison, 19 years of age, baker, in the employment of Messrs J&B, Stevenson, at 71 Mathieson Place (and a member of the Co-operative Trade Amateur Rowing Club). State that, while you were training on the Clyde for your forthcoming Regatta, with the other members of your crew, on nearing the Govan Street Bridge, a splash was heard and it was evident someone had fallen from the bridge. On looking over in the direction, saw a man in the water who had just come to the surface fearing that he would sink and be drowned. He jumped from the boat and held him up until the jolly boat could be brought alongside. The boat from the Humane Society quickly arrived and Mr. Geddes had the man taken to the House, where he was put to bed and soon recovered.

Saturday 22nd August **1914**, 5.40 a.m.

At this time George Geddes recovered the body of a soldier who had fallen into the river from the west side of dock pier at Fairfield Shipbuilding yard, Govan, where he had been on sentry duty. A splash had been heard and he was missed a short time after mid-night. His rifle & cap were found nearby on one of the mooring heads. The body was removed by his comrade guards to the yard mortuary where it was seen that he had his ammunition belts fully charged but the puttee on the left leg was loose. His name was William Ward "D" coy.4th Bat. Scottish rifles  
4 James Street Calton Glasgow.

Sunday 23rd August **1914** Accident Drowned 4.55 p.m.

At this time George Geddes & his son recovered the body of a soldier who had fallen during the night into the dock at Dalmuir in the shipbuilding yard of Messrs William Beardmore &

Co. Limited near the stern of H.M.S. "Benbow" the super Dreadnought in course of construction. It appears that he struck off from the dock wall probably to catch one of the cables mooring the various vessels but sank and was drowned. On receipt of phone message they set out by lorry with boat & drags and completed the commission. The body was taken by his comrades who were on military duty guarding the yard to the mortuary. His name was James Devine 5th Batt. Scottish Rifles 26 years 46 Elphinstone Street Govan

Note that at this time McGruer's Shipyard Racing and Pleasure Boats Builders and oar makers were at 213 Adelphi St Glasgow-also Motor Launch Builders

Glasgow Printing Trades Amateur Rowing Club Founded 1914. Affiliated to Scottish Trades Amateur Rowing Association and Royal Life-Saving Society.

A Mr. Bob Davidson, retired Glasgow Policeman, says that he remembers that when he was a member of the Clydesdale Rowing Club during the year 1914 he and his fellow oarsmen greatly admired the wee boy in short trousers who helped at the boats. He was able to jump around the boats, row them, and handle them with ability far in advance of his years-this was Benjamin Parsonage later to become Glasgow Humane Society Officer

## **1915**

Attempted suicide wed 15th September **1915** at 5.15 am

At these early hours as some workmen were crossing the Suspension Bridge at Glasgow Green they saw a young man jump from it into the ebbing river below. They ran to the Humane Society House nearby and informed George Geddes who was asleep in bed. He and his son ran in their night dresses to the landing stage, manned a boat, put off and caught hold of an extended hand above the water just in time. The rescued young man was quickly hauled on board and carried in an unconscious condition to the House where he was put to bed and after a short rest and the usual treatment he was able to indicate that he was a Belgian refugee. Asking for a pencil and writing paper he wrote "I am from Belgium. Three weeks I am to Glasgow. I have leave five months to London and I am too young to go to war, but all my country is in fire and my King and my friends are at war, I will to vengeance my country or to be killed. I am fifteen years in November. In a pocket book was an affectionate farewell to his mother in French and giving his name as John Hitneur Belgian Scout Officer 12 Rue De Houlgray Jupelle Lez Liege Belgium also 64 Blackhame Road Walthamstow also 280 Baltic Street

Glasgow Humane Society Dr Mathie 37 Montieth Row was called in and considered it expedient to have him conveyed to the Duke Street Observation Hospital of the Parish Council for further care.

**1916** A letter from Dr Dan Miller talks of seeing Ben Parsonage working around the River from 1916.

**1916** George Geddes Jnr awarded the Diploma of the Royal Humane Society London for placing his life in great danger during the rescue of a woman at Glasgow Green

## **1917**

Monday the 5th February **1917**

Comments: Ice thickness – 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>” to 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>”

Man in attendance at Hogganfield Loch (all day – 0730hrs to 2200hrs).

Skaters during day and from 0730hrs to 2300hrs--Between 150 to 200 skaters

Fine moonlight night and ice in splendid condition.

Friday the 20th July **1917**

At 1230hrs, a man named Marcelina Erzickauskas 33 went to bathe in the Clyde near Kenmure-Hill Colliery and was drowned. A companion named Anthony Youskervitch 33 who was bathing with him, tried to him but in vain. Word was sent to George Geddes who went to the place with a boat and drags and the body was recovered at about 2000hrs.

**1918**



### **1918** First rescues recorded of Benjamin Parsonage

Sometime during **1918** two or three pals out in different boats were larking about. One produced a revolver that had been given to him by someone returned from the War. He pointed it at one of the boys, the gun went off, and the boy was killed. The boat was called the Mary.

Ben Parsonage was given the job of washing the heavy blood from the boat.



Seat and shoes of Ben's sculling boat

Ben Parsonage became a very fast sculler but only won two races before being made a professional when he became Assistant Officer in 1928.



Glasgow Humane Society House and Boathouses

### **1918-1928 Benjamin Parsonage Assistant Officer Glasgow Humane Society**

**1919** January Rescue of woman by B. Parsonage.-A woman went down the banking at the side of the boat shed near the Bridge. B. Parsonage ran after the woman and, throwing himself at her, managed to drag her from the shallow water. A priest hired a boat for several weeks after. The rescued woman was one of his parishioners and this was his way of saying thanks

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July **1919** a Painter fell from Caledonia Railway Bridge. The body was recovered in the evening. The body was handed over to the Marine Police. A fresh gale from the west was blowing all the time.

#### **1920**

Saturday 26th June **1920** the Glasgow Printers Regatta was held after a lapse of 6 years.

**1921** Polmadie Bridge burned down.

#### **1922**

4th October **1922**, 9.30 a.m.

Two men drowned in Rothesay Dock, while lowering a motor boat into the water by electric crane, at berth 3, the sling broke and the 35ft boat capsized, throwing the three occupants into the water. One was rescued, two were drowned, and the first body was recovered at 1.35 p.m., the second at 7.30 a.m. the following morning, after the ship had been moved. After recovering the bodies, the boat was rowed back to Glasgow Green in three-quarters of an hour by B. Parsonage and G. Geddes JR., with G. Geddes SRN sitting at the back.

#### **1923**

Sunday 10th June **1923** 7.30 p.m.,

A little boy, 10 years of age, named Henry Reid residing at 145 Matheson St., fell into the Clyde while running along the sloping bank opposite the Society House. The alarm was raised and B. Parsonage, 20 years, 313 Baltic St., Bridgeton and William Docherty, 16 years, 293 Main St., Bridgeton put off in a small boat and rescued him. He was taken to the Society House and tended to until his mother arrived to take him home. The boy's mother gave the two rescuers each a tie as a thank you.



Saturday 23rd June **1923**

Glasgow University beat Leeds University in race on Clyde  
The course was from a point below Jennies Burn to a flag opposite Commercial Road a distance of about half a mile.

**1924**

Among those drowned in the River during **1924** were a Lamplighter a Coal Trimmer and a Clyde Trust Bargeman

**1925**

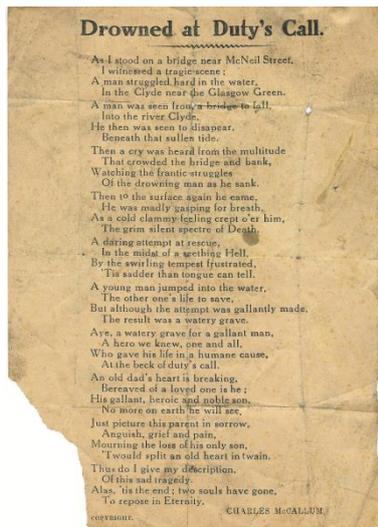
1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1925 GHS medal awarded to Gavin Rae



10th November **1925** Policeman's bravery rewarded

The Honorary Certificate of the Glasgow Humane Society was presented yesterday at the Marine Police Court to Constable Joyce a native of Clifdon Co Galway as an acknowledgement of his bravery in saving the life of a boy seven years of age on 24th June last. Joyce was on duty at Meadowside Wharf Partick the tide was ebbing and the boy was being carried into the middle of the river. The Constable ran along the bank took a fence in his stride and without even removing his helmet jumped into the river swimming about 30 yards and grasping the lad as he was being swept past brought him safely ashore. A GHS certificate was also awarded to Thomas Coulson for a rescue at the Canal





Saturday 24th November **1928**, 12.30 p.m.

B. Parsonage went home to Baltic Street for his lunch. On returning about 3.00 P.m. there was a large crowd at the wharf and he was told that G. Geddes Jnr. had been drowned while trying to save a man who had jumped off the King's Bridge into the River, which was in heavy spate. Young George, David Docherty and a Policeman had rushed out in a boat. The man in the water was near to the Suspension Bridge, George and David were rowing double scull up through the Bridge when the boat was birlled round by the heavy current, caused by the eddy at that point. They had missed the man drifting by, so George dived into the water. Both men disappeared. The Policeman tried to take George's oars but the boat was being whirled around by the current. George appeared on the surface near to the barges, then a few minutes later appeared at the Bridge again, the pressure of the current almost lifting him out to his waist. He slid back into the water and disappeared.

B. Parsonage and others searched non-stop in relays for the body but due to the heavy spate, this was really a hopeless task. The body was recovered the following Wednesday in front of the fish market. The other man was recovered 6 weeks later at Govan.

B. Parsonage moved into the Glasgow Humane Society House to live with George Geddes and act as his assistant officer.

At his funeral on 1st December a short service was held at the Society's House with a throng estimated at thousands standing silently in the Green nearby. Similarly the road to St James Parish Church for the main service was lined so densely that the Lord Provost and some other mourners had difficulty in attending. He was buried in the Southern Necropolis.

On a dreary day in November 1928, young Geordie dived into the Clyde to rescue a man who had jumped from St. Andrew's Bridge.

The struggle with the fellow determined to end his own life was desperate. This time young Geordie did not succeed. He drowned in the dark, cold waters of the Clyde.

The whole of Glasgow was plunged into mourning for that brave young man. He was just 37. The base of the Geddes stone bears the inscription relating to young Geordie's death.

The Geddes family did a job that inevitably made legends of them. It also made a legend of their successor, Ben Parsonage. The Glasgow Humane Society is very special to this city which always raises its bunnet to courage.

Many women with babies in their arms wept as the beautiful floral tributes, from sympathisers and friends all over the country, were placed in the two motors behind the hearse.

As the cortege, covered with white lilies and carnations, passed through Glasgow Green on its way to the Church, thousands lined the streets and in London Road traffic was completely held up.

## **1929**

Monday 17th June 1929,

A woman jumped off the East side of the St. Andrew's Suspension Bridge at 8.40 p.m. B. Parsonage raced to the spot in a rowing boat. Two boys who were out in a rowing boat at the time rowed over the woman in their attempt to help her. As she surfaced at the stern, of their boat she grabbed hold of their boat, and in her panic she almost upset the boy's boat. B. Parsonage arrived on the scene and had to break the hysterical woman's grip on the boy's boat before he could control her and lift her into his boat. He took her to the Humane Society House where she was tended to until taken to hospital for observation.

## **1930**

Monday 6th January, 1930

B. Parsonage went up to Jenny's Burn at 9.15a.m. He recovered the body about 40 feet in, partly embedded in the mud, and Chemical Silt, peculiar to this part. Depth of water inside tunnel was from 3ft. to 6ft. and was getting deeper as you go in.

Official's Heroism-The courage of a Glasgow Humane Society Officer, who half-swam, half-crept for 40 minutes along a dark culvert, on Monday cleared up the ten days old mystery surrounding the death by drowning of a little Glasgow boy. The man was Benjamin Parsonage (26), of Bridgeton, and the drowned boy was James Anderson Campbell (10), 37 Acorn Street, Bridgeton Glasgow, who, it will be recalled, fell into Jenny's Burn and was drowned.

GLASGOW MAN'S PERILOUS FEAT "I willingly undertook to make an attempt. "I was to have made the attempt two days before I did, but before I was quite ready to enter the tunnel the dam burst, and within a few minutes the culvert was flooded once more. Had the dam burst a few minutes later, I would have been in the tunnel, caught like a rat in a trap. "For over 40 minutes I was in the culvert, and when the dam gave way, and two bags of clay were washed aside the men almost gave me up for lost, although they promptly repaired the danger. "I never gave a thought to the danger I was running, as my thoughts were concentrated on the work of recovering the body, "I had moved into the culvert about 40 feet before I touched the body with my hook. I had to work practically in darkness, and it was a case of feeling about until I discovered the body of the little boy." "I lost no time in getting

out of the culvert, and I then made off hurriedly to the Humane Society House, where I had a complete change of clothing, and some hot tea to warm me up.”

Wednesday 12th February 1930

B Parsonage continued his search at Uddingston. In the absence of B. Parsonage, G. Parsonage, 16 years, recovered the decomposed body of a man from the weir.

June 11th 1930

B Parsonage attended as requested launch of Empress of Britain

**1931 During the years 1929 - 1932 George Geddes was hospitalised several times in the Royal Infirmary due to "gangrene".**

Sometime during 1931 George Geddes and Benjamin Parsonage moved residence to 11 Templeton Street, due to the condemning of the house in the Green.

**George Geddes died early in November, 1932 and was buried on the 11th November in the Southern Necropolis.**

Sunday 16th August 1931 B. Parsonage came out of the house and walked down the brae. He was amazed to see a girl struggling in the River. He rushed to his lifeboat and rescued the girl. She was taken to the Society House and tended to, then later removed to Stobhill Hospital. The girl was Tilly Maugigan, 103 Bairds Rows Low Blantyre. This girl had lost her job and was frightened to go home. Arrangements were made for her to start training as a nurse.

**1928-1979 Benjamin Parsonage B.E.M. Officer.**



**1932** - Benjamin Parsonage awarded Bravery Medal from Anchor Line.

22nd May 1932 B. Parsonage recovered the body of the boy Stagg (decomposed and no legs from the knees down) from the River Clyde at Dalmarnock Bridge.

At a GHS meeting in 1932 the following was minuted-“Soul-less” Corporation

*Dr. J.H. Macdonald, treasurer, said if the work were taken over by the Corporation it would be a great pity. In the event of that being done, however, the necessary funds would be available always, but he doubted if there would be the same personal interest shown in the work. The Society would loose a great deal by becoming part of a machine, which had no soul, no heart. It would be much better, he thought, if they could stimulate public interest,*

*and get a little more money for the Society to carry on the work. The time had come when they might make a special appeal to the public.*

19th August **1932** B. Parsonage searched at Fannyside Loch for a youth who was drowned while bathing. Recovered after a short search

A letter from the City of Glasgow Rowing Club to the Directors of the Glasgow humane Society in 1932 states, "He acted as our life guard on the river in keeping the River traffic in order and warning boating parties when he would eye danger before anyone else, and thus preventing accidents. I may also state being a fine oarsman it takes him no time to reach any boat in difficulties. Since Mr. Parsonage came to the River, there have been no accidents."

December 1932 Letters commending Ben Parsonage from Dr Dan Millar Bankhead House, Glasgow Printing Trades Amateur Rowing Club, Clyde Amateur Rowing Club, Clydesdale Amateur Rowing Club, City of Glasgow Amateur Rowing Club, Glasgow University Boat Club, City of Glasgow Police

### **1933**

Thursday 12th January **1933**

B. Parsonage recovered body of Mr. Robertson from Pilmuir Loch. This man had left a note saying that he would be in one of the 3 lochs in East Renfrewshire. His umbrella had been found nearest Pilmuir Loch. When B. Parsonage recovered the body the legs were all tied up - the man must have tied his legs up then swam hands only to the centre of the Loch.

17th January **1933**

B. Parsonage recovered the body of a van driver who was drowned when his van ran into the canal at 520 Garscube Road. Recovered about 9.00 p.m. while he was searching for this man at Tenants Brewery, a woman at the front of the crowd of people who were watching was accidentally pushed into the canal. B. Parsonage rescued her.

Friday 14th April **1933**

B. Parsonage recovered the body of a week old baby from the canal at the Paint Works west of Ruchill Bridge. The mother of this baby had drowned it in the bath and taken it to the canal, put it in a bag with weights and sunk the child.

Daily Record and Mail, Monday June 19th **1933**

Raft Tragedy in Slag Pond. Glasgow Boy Drowned-Two Escape-A Glasgow schoolboy was drowned and another who went out on a raft to try to rescue him was saved at the last minute from drowning in a deep slag pond in a large open space opposite Richmond Park last night. The boy's body was recovered by Ben Parsonage.

Friday 20th October **1933**

The Kings Bridge at Ballater Street was opened today by the Lord Provost. A shed was purchased from the Bridge builders Sir Wm Arroll & Co to serve as a shelter and boat store.

Ben Parsonage purchased another shed and placed this at the other side of the pier. Steps down from the road were formed using railway sleepers. A punt donated by the Clyde Navigation Trust was used as a floating deck in front of the pier.

Saturday 18th November **1933**

B. Parsonage and G. Parsonage searched for, a man who was seen to fall into the River Clyde at the entrance to Kingston Dock. The search continued into the early morning and at 1.00 a.m. a shout was heard. B. Parsonage made for the Quay wall, climbed the ladder and found that a Police Constable had fallen across one of the holes for the runners of the Bridge and dislocated his shoulder blade. An ambulance was sent for while B. Parsonage tended to the injuries as best as possible.

Friday 22nd December **1933**

### **B. Parsonage and Sarah Mulholland were married in the University Boat Club.**

The lifeboat was tied to the steps of the University clubhouse just in case of emergencies. A notice was hung on the St Andrews Bridge suggesting that no one jumped off the bridge today.

No Honeymoon, they walked back home to 11 Templeton Street across the Green.

**1934**

January 19, **1934**. Lorry in Clyde Driver's Escape in Glasgow Accident

A motor lorry driver - James McKinnell, 180 Adelphi Street Glasgow - had a remarkable escape yesterday when a lorry in which he was seated slid over the embankment of the Clyde near McNeil Street Suspension Bridge, Glasgow. B. Parsonage rushed over and took the driver from the wagon. The driver was in a very dangerous position as his cabin stopped about 10ft from the water and the fire was put out by the River. Quote from B Parsonage "We were very lucky for if the boiler had entered the River it would have exploded". Apparently a quantity of steel slag was about to be tipped from the lorry on to the south bank, when the vehicle slipped backwards and ran quickly down the steep incline into the river.

10th June, **1934** Sunday

Went to Loch Lomond and assisted with search for four men and a boy drowned in a boating accident from Loch Lomond Rowing Club.

### **21st June, 1934. Capt. J W Eaglesome Harbour Master TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.**

Mr. Benjamin Parsonage, Glasgow Humane Society, 11 Templeton Street, Glasgow, has permission to use a motor boat on the river within the jurisdiction of the Clyde Navigation Trustees, on the understanding that the boat is used solely on the Humane Society's business, and not for pleasure or commercial purposes.

The Bulletin Thursday August 16 **1934**-Tragedy of Sixfold Escape from Scots Prison Youth Drowned in Vain Swim for Liberty. Barlinnie Break Thrills Large Crowds - Five Captured After Prompt Pursuit. A prisoner attempting with five others to escape from Barlinnie Prison, Glasgow, was drowned after plunging into Monkland Canal nearby in a desperate effort to elude pursuing warders. Mr. Benjamin Parsonage, officer of the Glasgow Humane Society, recovered the body

The Humane Society House because of decay and dilapidation it had to be closed and was demolished in **1935**.

31st December, **1935**-Recovered body of boy at Blackhill Lock no 2-James Daley 5yrs 16 Queenslie Street



**1936** - Benjamin Parsonage awarded Glasgow Corporation Bravery Medal.

From the **Corporation of Glasgow**

I have pleasure in informing you that following on a report by the Chief Constable the Magistrates Committee have agreed that you be awarded the Corporation Medal for Bravery in respect of the rescue of a man from drowning, in the River Clyde at Glasgow Green on the 5th ultimo and also the numerous other rescues which you have effected in your capacity as Officer of the Glasgow Humane Society.



GLASGOW HUMANE SOCIETY Honorary President: The Right Hon. The Lord Provost of Glasgow Humane Society (John Stewart, Esq.)

Chairman of Directors: Sir David Mason, OBE D L LLD

Society's New House in course of erection in Glasgow Green:

Ceremony of Unveiling Lintel-Stone over main entrance to be performed by the Lord Provost on Wednesday 29th January 1936, at 2.45p.m

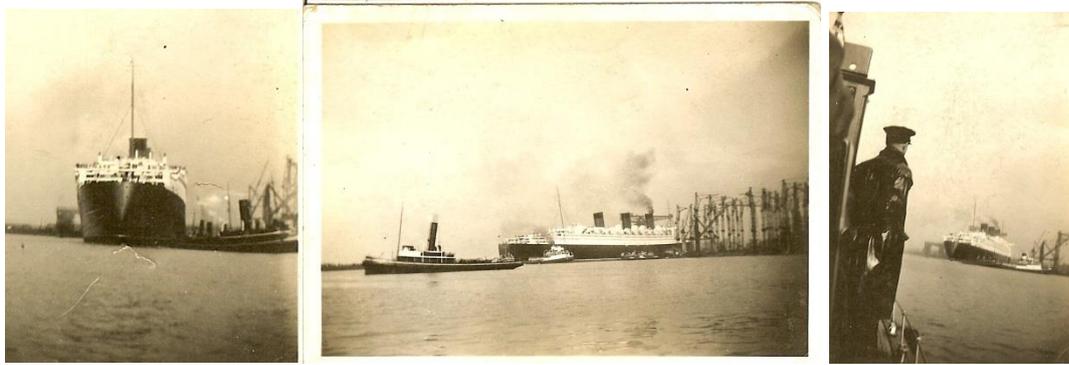
RENFREWSHIRE CONSTABULARY JOHN ROBERTSON, O.B.E. CHIEF CONSTABLE  
18th March, **1936**.

Benjamin Parsonage, Esq

Dear Sir, Sailing of the "Queen Mary"

With reference to my telephone conversation with you regarding the manning of the rescue boat in connection with above, I have to inform you that I have made arrangements with the Clyde Navigation Trust for the supply of a Motor Launch. This will be at Renfrew wharf at 8 a.m. on the 24th instant, and I shall thank you to instruct two of your men to be there to join it along with a Constable.

Please confirm. Yours faithfully, Geo. Gray Dep. Chief Constable of Renfrewshire



Photos taken by Ben Parsonage of the Queen Mary

Due to the rapid rise of the water during this launch about 100+ persons were trapped opposite Browns on the flat ground. B Parsonage in a commandeered boat ferried these persons to safety.

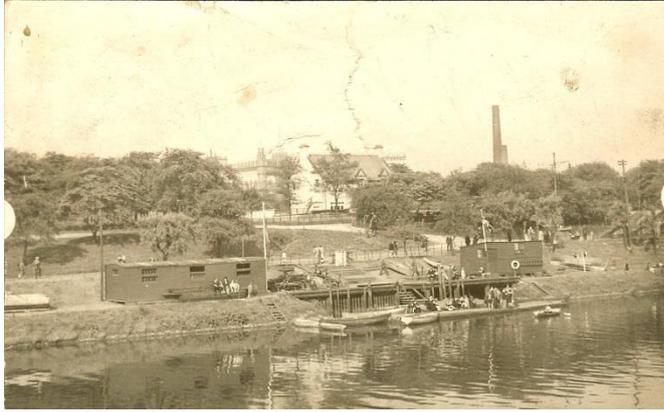
### 1936

During 1936 the City Council complained about rowing boats going too near the Tidal Weir

#### DAILY RECORD AND MAIL, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1936 YOUTH DROWNED IN QUARRY

##### Companion's Vain Rescue Bid

A Drowning accident occurred on Saturday evening at what is locally known as "Wee Kenmure," a quarry hole about 75 yards wide at Kenmure, Bishopbriggs, when Alexander Docherty, about 12 years of age, who resides at 34 Morrin Street, Springburn, Glasgow, lost his life. Along with two companions, Docherty had left Springburn to gather brambles. He left his friends and went on to a raft. Shortly afterwards, Docherty evidently lost his balance and fell into the water, which is from 10 to 15 feet deep. Boys on another raft raised the alarm and Richard Downie, 36 Morrin Street, Springburn, one of Docherty's chums, ran to the side of the quarry and, throwing off his jacket and vest, swam out to rescue his companion. Before he reached the spot, however, Docherty had gone under and did not come to the surface again. Bishopbriggs Police commenced grappling operations, but without success, and owing to the darkness they finally had to abandon the search. Grappling operations were resumed early yesterday morning, when a boat arrived from Glasgow in charge of Mr. Benjamin Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, who recovered the body about 9 a.m.



Glasgow Humane Society House and Boathouses

**1937**

9th February, **1937**.

Received word that a man's clothes had been found at 11.50 p.m. on the Quay wall at berth 36, Anderston Quay-Arrived at locus about 12.20 p.m. and viewed the location-Decided to leave dragging operations till morning as it was very stormy

10th February, **1937**.

Arrived at Berth 36 at 9.00 a.m. and recovered the body of a man at 9.40 a.m. This man was wearing his clothes, including coat and scarf. As the clothing found on the Quay consisted of Jacket, Coat and Hat, I decided to make a further search and at 10.30 a.m. I recovered the body of another man, clad only in trousers, shirt, socks and shoes. It was surmised that one man entered the water in an attempt to save the other.

Glasgow Herald Tuesday, 15th June **1937**

#### ORIGIN AND RISE OF HUMANE SOCIETIES

Lead given by Dutch City; Glasgow Body Constituted in 1790

The occasion of the new house in Glasgow Green, erected for the Humane Society of Glasgow, being opened by the Secretary of State for Scotland to-day seems an appropriate time to discuss the origin and rise of such societies, whose chief functions were "to give premiums to such persons as shall exert themselves for the recovery of people in danger of death from drowning or other accidents," and to assist to provide the best means for the restoration of such people, any necessary apparatus, and the dissemination of all available knowledge on the subject.

The 18th century in Britain saw the beginning of social and economic changes due to the new forces of machinery and capitalised industry working within a loosely-organised aristocratic society, which did not foresee their destined pre-eminence.

In London at the beginning of the 18th century, there were only two large general hospitals, St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas's. Yet in this century nearly all the great hospitals in

London and the provinces, with which we are familiar today, were founded. Crime was rampant, yet it was the age of Howard, Neild, Letteom, and Wilberforce.

## A BEGINNING IN HOLLAND

In Holland, in October, 1766, the Bailiff of Amstelland and the Sheriffs of the respective districts of the same, resolved upon a proclamation, published in January, 1767, declaring that it was permitted to take drowning persons out of the water, and to carry them into houses; and advices were added as to the several means recommended for use in restoring life.

Following closely on this action the principle inhabitants of Amsterdam conceived the idea of founding a society for recovering drowning persons only apparently dead. In a weekly journal of the time in August, 1767, appeared the announcement of its foundations, its aims, and the means of attaining them. The prejudice which prevented the handling and succour of these unhappy victims was vigorously combated, and a reward was promised to those whose efforts towards their recovery were crowned with success. The reward might consist of six gold ducats, or a gold medal of the same value.

Similar societies soon arose throughout Europe. In 1769 the Burgomaster and the Councillors of the free Imperial City of Hamburg exhorted the citizens in a mandate to take, in the case arising, drowning persons into their houses and give the treatment advised and promising rewards in money or medals. The Society for the encouragement of the Arts and Works of Public Utility also promised rewards and published information as to the medical treatment to administer.

Venice followed in a similar style in the same year and Milan and Vienna also. Gotha followed in 1770, and New York. Which possessed a Marine Society, took note. Similar steps were taken in founding societies in 1772 in Paris and Copenhagen; in 1773, in Florence and Dresden; in 1774, in London, Brussels, and Boulogne; in 1775, Berlin, Poland, and Bavaria; in 1776, in Berne and Saxe-Weimar; in 1777, in Padua, Naples, and Barcelona; in 1780, Brunswick; in 1782, Strasbourg; in 1783, Erfurt; in 1784, Rostock; in 1785, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Boston, Madras, Calcutta, Quebec, Jamaica; in 1790, Glasgow; and in 1805, Moscow.

## **15th June, 1937**

The Society's NEW HOUSE in Glasgow Green on an adjacent and larger site was opened this day by the Rt Hon Walter Elliot Secretary of State for Scotland the Rt Hon the Lord Provost (John Stewart Esq.) in the Chair



## **1938**

5th January **1938** Recovered body of a Chinaman from the River Clyde at King George 5th Dock-The Chinese crew members burned pieces of coloured paper and chanted over the body. The sailors wouldn't do anything on board ship until the body had been recovered.

An official of the Baths Department from Greenhead Baths called on Ben Parsonage regards a man who had been given a job as a baths attendant using as a reference the fact that he had the Co-operation Medal for bravery, but it was discovered that the man could not swim. Now this man had gone looking for a job with Arrolls who were building Plantation Quay. He did not get a job but when walking home he saw a man in the water. He jumped in and caught hold of the man and kept him afloat until someone threw him a rope and both were pulled out. Ben told the Baths Official that the man didn't get his medal for swimming, but for bravery, so they should teach him to swim.

## **1939**

During **1939** the RAF moved into the GHS House in Glasgow Green along with the Parsonage family

3rd September, **1939** Sunday, Britain and France declare war on Germany

The Humane Society House was a landmark. The German bombers came across country from Grangemouth along the Forth and Clyde Canal, turned upriver at Bowling and dropped their bombs, came upriver and outside our House they arrived at the first right angle bend on the River, and turned across country and headed home as the second wave of bombers came in.

12th September, **1939**. Tuesday, at 1300 hrs a boy was brought into our House having injured his head on falling into one of the wartime trenches in the Park. I was able to dress his wound and let him return home. At 1630 hrs another boy was brought to the House by an Auxiliary Fireman, having received a bad injury after falling into a trench. This boy had to receive hospital treatment.

One morning when I went to the boats, Ben found his barge covered with shrapnel. Several incendiary bombs were lying nearby on the banking. He gathered them up carefully and carried them to the Central Police Office where they were disposed of.

From minutes of B Parsonage-10th October, **1939**

I recovered the body of a Royal Artillery man who was drowned in the River Clyde having fallen into the water while on sentry duty on the south side of the River near Finnieston Ferry. This accident occurred at 4.00 a.m. during the blackout. I rowed from Glasgow Green to Finnieston and recovered the body at 11.20 a.m.

November, **1939**.

A seaman went missing and it was surmised that he had fallen into the River in the vicinity of Berth 17, Queen's Dock, which he passed on his way home. I immediately carried out a

search. I picked up a large hawser. I asked the Policeman who was rowing my boat to row out to the centre of the River where I would drop the hawser out of the area of search, but as he rowed the hawser was getting heavier and heavier. I pulled in the hawser and was amazed to see the man hanging onto it, holding it tight in his death grasp. He must have caught hold of the hawser when he sunk. I prised his hands loose of the hawser, lifted the body into the boat and landed it on the Quay from where Police removed it to the City Mortuary.

## **1940**

30th April, **1940**.

Tuesday, received call at 0130 hrs that a man was supposed to have fallen into the River at Berth 4, King George 5th Dock at 1130 hrs the previous evening and drowned. Searched all day at King George 5th Dock

1st May to 15<sup>th</sup> May, **1940**. Searched every day at King George 5th Dock

15th May, 1940. Wednesday-Recovered the body of Allen Richard Caldwell of Vancouver, Canada from the River Clyde at Berth 3, King George 5th Dock

6th July, **1940**. Saturday, a boy of 15 years was drowned at about 3.15 at the King's Bridge while canoeing in the River Clyde. I searched till 11.00 p.m. without success.

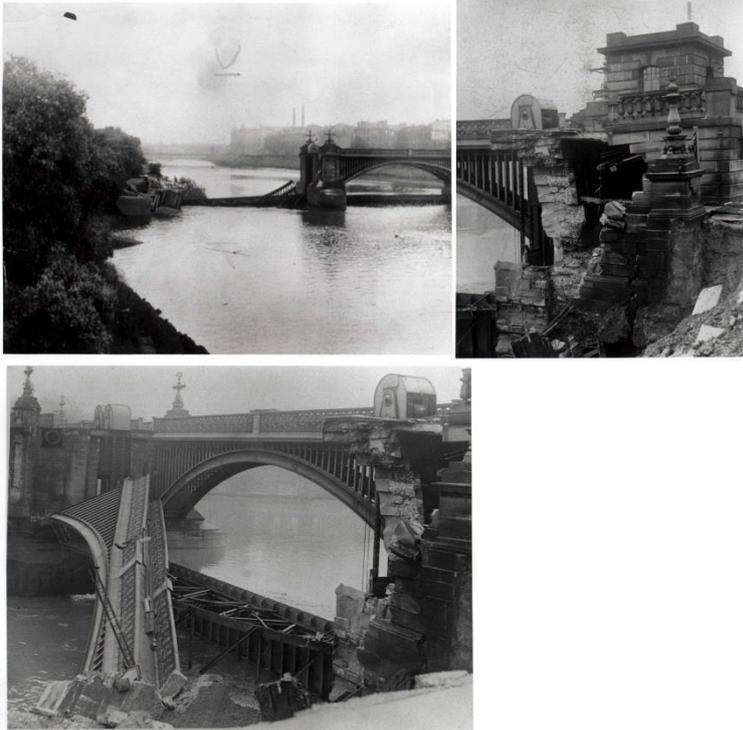
7th July, **1940**. Sunday Searched for canoeist

8th July, **1940**.

Monday while searching for boy drowned out of canoe a woman and her two children - Mrs. Thomas Taylor, 25 years, of 35 Wolesley Street, her daughter Joan and her baby Mae, fell into the River Clyde 70 yards east of the King's Bridge. I saved the mother and Joan and the young Policeman who was with me dived in and saved the baby, 8 weeks old. All were taken to the Society House and treated before going to the Royal Infirmary. This woman had decided to end all for herself and her two children when life became, it seemed, too difficult for her. Her husband was away in the army and she was finding it difficult to cope. Her baby had started crying one night and she had put the light on without drawing her blackout curtains and had got into trouble with the Police so she took her dramatic actions. All ended well, her husband came home on compassionate leave and they flitted out of the district.

9th July, **1940** Tuesday I recovered the body of David Baird, 15 years, the boy drowned while canoeing.

30th September. **1940**. Monday, From the River Clyde at Berth No. 3, Meadowside, Whiteinch, I recovered the body of Kurt Kinnison, Greensted Norge, AB Seaman.



**1941** “Heavy and continuous rain fell for three days in the Clyde catchment area, the rain gauge in Glasgow showing 2.65 inches for the period. As the catchment area is about 1,500square miles it is estimated that about 200million tons of flood water passed down the river in the three days”. Glasgow Humane Society gave a lot of assistance to the Council at this time as well as suffering much damage to their Boathouses and Wharfage.

A surprise military strike took place, by the Imperial Japanese Navy against the United States naval base at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii Territory, on the morning of December 7, 1941

## **1942**

23rd August **1942** recovered the body of James Ranking, 4 years, of 50 Reid Street from Emergency Water Tank at Savoy Street

Newspaper Report **1942**- Boy Drowned-Alexander Crossan (11), 64 Stanhope Street, Townhead, was drowned, and two other boys suffered severe shock from immersion last night, when the raft on which they were playing in Monkland Canal, at Castle Street, Glasgow. Capsized, throwing them into the water, Recovered by B. Parsonage.

## **1943**

22nd March **1943** recovered the body of Samuel Totten, 10 years, of 18 Moodiesburn Street from a quarry near Steppes Road, after two days search

Recovered the decomposed body of Thomas June, 54 years, near the Tidal Weir

## **21st May 1943**

After a short search recovered the body of George White, 16 Clova Terrace, North British Road, Uddingston from the River Clyde near the Priory Pit, Blantyre. Bathing fatality-

Newspaper cutting 22nd May 1943 Miners show respect. As a token of respect and sympathy to a fellow worker (George White a 19yr old Uddingston Miner who was drowned while bathing in the Clyde on Thursday night) miners at Blantyre Colliery remained idle on Friday last. The body was recovered on the Newton side of the river by Hallside Police and great tribute is paid to the work of the Glasgow Humane Society for their very efficient and satisfactory assistance. Under the supervision of Mr B Parsonage of the Society, a boat and the customary equipment were soon on the scene of the tragedy, and within 20 minutes after being directed to the approximate point where the lad had disappeared, his body was recovered. The Society undertakes this work free of all charge and is maintained by public subscription.

10th September **1943**-boy of 21/2yrs had drowned in the Paper Mill at Springfield

14th September **1943** Recovered the body of P. Fillet, 6 years, of 507 Baltic Street, Eastfield after a three-day search-Drowned in the Clyde Paper Mill at Eastfield

### **18th October 1943**

Sarah Parsonage had just given birth to George a few days earlier. An old woman came to the door and asked if she could see mother and baby. She told Sarah that she would not know her but she had brought her a cake that she had made and iced as a present. She had read about George's birth in the papers and just felt that she wanted to give a small present since Bennie had given her back her son by rescuing him from the River.

### **1944**

5th March **1944** Went to a point near Larkhall at the request of the local Police to search for two girls and a boy who had fallen through the ice in the River Clyde and were drowned. On arrival found the bodies near the edge of the River. At the request of the Superintendent, we put the boat into the River and removed the bodies to the opposite bank as it was almost impossible to get the shell to where the bodies had been lying.

Evening Times 11th May **1944**

Mystery of Skull on River Bank-Glasgow police are investigating the discovery of a man's skull found yesterday on the banks of the river Clyde near Dalmarnock by three boys. Mr. Ben Parsonage, of the Royal (Glasgow) Humane Society, was called in and carried out dragging operations on the river. A short distance from the spot where the skull was found Mr. Parsonage came across a part of the vertebrae of a body. The skull and the other remains have been removed to the City Mortuary.

Two Documents received from the Admiralty dated 27th June **1944**.

Form M. S. 2 Licence Nos. 935 & 936-The Restriction of Construction of Ships Order, 1940, dated January 31st, 1940, made under Regulation 55 of the Defence (General) Regulations, 1939-LICENCE TO BUILD A SHIP Extracts -.....construction by Benjamin Parsonage Esq.....to the order of Glasgow Humane Society.....of the ship known as Yard No.....-.....of which particulars are given overleaf.

Signed by J A Alderson

Particulars of vessel

Owners: Glasgow Humane Society  
Type of Ship: Rowing Boat  
Length between perpendiculars: 16'  
Breadth moulded: 4'10"  
Depth " 1'6"

## 1945

21st August **1945**-Receipt-CORPORATION OF GLASGOW 60957 Civil Defence Department, Glasgow, 21st. Aug.1945

Received from Mr. B. Parsonage the sum of one Pounds-Shillings-Pence, Being Purchase price of Anderson Shelter at Humane Society House, Glasgow Green

£ 1: - : -Only this official form of Receipt will be recognised.

This Anderson Shelter was used as a coal store by Ben Parsonage

Danger to children from insufficiently covered emergency water tanks in the city is causing concern to the Glasgow Humane Society.

The Society's officer, Benjamin Parsonage, said yesterday that during the past year he had recovered the bodies of two children from such tanks. One was a boy of four and the other a girl of eight (these two cases are not reported in the minutes—during the war years Ben Parsonage was too busy to have time to write down all of his incidents)

Provost George Mann, of Rutherglen, advised solid covering on the tanks.

## 1946

5th June **1946** Gave assistance as requested to Glasgow Schools A.R.C. re buoying of course for forthcoming Regatta

23rd October **1946**

Received word that a man had been decapitated and that the head had fallen into the basin at Fairfield's Shipyard, and would I make a search for it. On arrival at the shipyard I found that the head jammed below a Carley Float and retrieved it and put it into a bag. We took it to the Govan Police station in the motor lorry that my boat was being conveyed in.

## 1947

The following story was related by a man who was Captain of the Hutchesons Grammar School Rowing Club. I was taking part in a "ladder" race organised by Glasgow Schools. We were racing another 4 oared boat from Allan Glens. Ben Parsonage was as usual following the race downstream in his wooden boat with a 3 1/2 hp seagull engine. The Glens 4 crabbed and the boat filled with water. B Parsonage came alongside and lifted the 5 frightened and cold boys into his boat and returned them to their clubhouse. He then retrieved the boat and oars.

Newspaper Report, 9th December **1947**

Mystery of car in Clyde. Police and a Glasgow Humane Society officer early this morning searched the wreckage of a grey saloon car found late last night almost completely

submerged in the River Clyde 100 yards upstream from Dalmarnock Bridge. By torchlight police traced the tracks of the car which plunged over a 40ft. drop into the fast-flowing river. They found that the car came down Woodrop Street, Dalmarnock, crossed a piece of waste ground, and skidded in a gully before toppling over the embankment. The police believe either that the car was stolen and abandoned by thieves or that the driver was unfamiliar with the district and did not realise he had left the road. Early this morning a list of stolen cars was being examined in police headquarters and checked against the description of the car found in the river.

## **1948**

### **Clydesdale Club, 16.1.48**

An extraordinary meeting was held here today at 1.45pm. The President Dr Goodall was in the Chair. The business was to investigate an incident involving a crew from Allan Glen's School and to decide, what action should be taken.

The President recounted details he had obtained from the Captain and secretary who he had interviewed. Mr B Parsonage then asked Mr D Campbell who had been called to the meeting to give his account. The Allan Glen's pupil J Watson who was the Captain of the school Rowing Club was then called in and asked what statement he had to make. After he had made his statement members of the Committee questioned him as to various details. He was also questioned by Mr D Campbell whose statements the pupil confirmed. The pupil having been dismissed, the Committee found the following to be the account of the incident:

“ That on the afternoon of Monday 12th January **1948**, Watson acting on instructions from Mr Stewart, the Games Master at school, had telephoned Mr. Parsonage to inquire as to the state of the river and was informed by Mr. Parsonage that only a very experienced crew should risk venturing out. Mr. Stewart on being informed declared that there would be no rowing that day. Watson nevertheless went to the office where he obtained the keys of the Boathouse and came down to the boathouse with a crew. The crew was met by Mr. D. Campbell who pointed out that the river was in a condition, which rendered rowing dangerous. The crew argued with Mr. Campbell who said that he considered that a Jolly boat might be sufficiently safe but that a Long -boat was out of the question. The crew nevertheless took out, a Longboat, Watson acting as cox. On their return the crew failed to bring the boat into the landing- steps and were swept by the current against a pier supporting one of the cranes used in repairing the weir. From this position they were rescued by the combined efforts of "Mr. Parsonage and 'Mr. Campbell in a boat and the weir attendant who crawled along the leg of the crane. Mr. Campbell also managed to recover the Longboat, which was towed back by Mr. Parsonage. The rescue operations were very difficult, because of the current. Estimates of the difference of level on the two sides were given as from 6 to 10 ft."

### **22nd May 1948**

I was in my boat following a skiff race and when I came round the final bend I saw a four oared boat lying upside down in the water with five members of the Stirling Amateur Swimming and Boating Club hanging onto it. I rushed to their aid. I was in one of my lifeboats, driven by a seagull outboard. My older daughter, Elizabeth, was with me in the boat at the time. I lifted the five into my boat. The boat they fell out of belonged to the

Clyde Rowing Club and a thole pin had broken. The Regatta was the University Western Regatta. The Cox boy was worried about the loss of a sandshoe when he was put ashore and discovered it missing, so I went out and recovered his shoe, and I think I got the best cheer of the day for bringing in his shoe.

## 1949

16th May, **1949**.

After a three day search recovered the body of David Lavery Fisher, 10 years, of 202 Braidfaulds Street from the River Clyde at 6.15 p.m. at a point between the Clyde Iron Works and Tollcross Sewage Works. The boy was swept off his feet when trying to cross from the North bank of the River to an island. The river runs very fast at this point and is always dangerous for anyone trying to ford this part.

## 1950

11th June **1950** Searched for bather missing at Motherwell. 12th June 1950 Recovered bather at Motherwell Bridge

Scottish Daily Express, 25th July **1950**

Child Loses Life For A Shoe-Express Staff Reporter. As he walked on planks underneath D and W Henderson's shipyard in Meadowside, Glasgow yesterday nine-year-old Billy Boyle lost a shoe in the River Kelvin. He tried to reach it with a piece of stick, over-balanced and fell into the water. Five-year-old Nelson Drennan saw Billy fall. Frightened he ran home to 636 Govan Road to tell his father. Meanwhile Govan ferrymen reported that they had seen a pair of arms threshing the water. A search started. Billy's father, Mr. James Boyle was in a cinema. A message flashed on the screen sent him hurrying to his home at 41 Nethan Street, Govan. Billy's mother waited, fearfully. On the table at her home lay Billy's supper, uneaten. The search went on for hours. It ended at 3 a.m. today, when Mr. Ben Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, dragged Billy's body from the river. Billy was the eldest of five children.

## 1951 Festival of Britain

GLASGOW HUMANE SOCIETY

ORDER FORM

ORDER No. 12

A. Taylor & Sons Ltd  
4 Portree St

Glasgow

28-7-51

Motor Lorry to remove boat from Glasgow Green to River Kelvin

Confirmation of Telephone message of the 26-7-51

£1 – 6d

Daily Express, July 27, **1951** a Boy Went Off To Play Indians

Dusk...and the waters swirl into Glasgow's river Kelvin as a mill-lade is dragged for the body of a boy-recovered.

15th November **1951**

Glasgow Schools' Rowing Club Minutes "The President announced that a life jacket and heaving line and life buoy were now provided, the latter by Mr Parsonage to whom the secretary was instructed to write a letter of thanks. "The secretary was instructed to post a notice warning crews to easy when near weir. In all cases of doubt Mr. Parsonage was to be consulted.

**1952**

15th June, **1952.**

Searched for a boy Drowned while bathing at the Ruchill Quarry Auchinairn-16th June, 1952-Recovered the body of Joseph Drain, 15 years, of 25 Dunollie Street, Garngad from Ruchill Quarry.

17th August **1952**

After about 2 hours search, recovered the body of Charles Watson, 7 years of 33 Springwell Crescent, Blantyre from the River Clyde at the foot of Blantyre Dam. The local Priest was allowed by Ben to come into the boat and give the last rites

**1953**

22<sup>nd</sup> January 1953 B Parsonage received commendation from J Robertson ACC City of Glasgow Police re retrieval of motor car from the river at Ferry Road Yoker

20<sup>th</sup> July **1953**

While getting my tea the bell rang and on going to the door a young man told me that a woman had jumped from the St. Andrews Suspension Bridge into the River Clyde. I rushed down and rowed as fast as possible to her aid. When I got to her I rushed to the stern to catch her but owing either to the wind or the current that was flowing at the time, I found the woman was too far away to catch her. I immediately plunged into the water and got hold of her and swam back to the boat. I shouted to two young men who were on the float to bring out another boat. I asked one of the young men, Duncan McLauchlan, 29 years, of 388 Rutherglen Road, to hold the woman while I got into my boat. I then lifted the woman into my boat and raced back to the Wharf. I carried her into the Humane Society House where Mrs. Parsonage stripped her and put her to bed in the treatment room, and looked after her until the Ambulance arrived and removed her to the Royal Infirmary. For this rescue B .Parsonage was awarded a bar to his Corporation medal.

30<sup>th</sup> July 1953

B Parsonage received letter of commendation from J Robertson Chief Constable City of Glasgow Police re above rescue



**1953** - Benjamin Parsonage awarded Bar to Corporation Bravery Medal.

Letter sent to Ben Parsonage from Lord Inverclyde who became a family friend  
 CASTLE WEMYSS; WEMYSS BAY; RENFREWSHIRE  
 STATION WEMYSS BAY TELEGRAPH, SKELMORLIE. TELEPHONE, 3104 WEMYSS  
 BAY 10.2.54

Dear Mr. Parsonage, until I read about it in this evening's newspaper I did not know that you were to be the recipient of a bar to the medal which you already had. Please accept my warmest congratulations and best wishes. I trust you are all well, yours truly, Signed Inverclyde

**1954**

22<sup>nd</sup> January 1954 Letter of Commendation sent to B Parsonage from Jas Robertson Assistant Chief Constable City of Glasgow Police

7<sup>th</sup> January 1954

B. Parsonage towed waterlogged tree from Polmadie Bridge to the Society Wharf. This was a danger on the River.

8<sup>th</sup> January 1954

B. Parsonage towed waterlogged tree from the Wharf to the Albert Bridge and tied it there to await the Clyde Trust Motor Launch.

31<sup>st</sup> May 1954

B. Parsonage recovered the body of a man drowned in the Blackwood Loch, Lesmahagow, while cutting weeds. This man fell overboard from his boat. B. Parsonage recovered the decomposed body of James Adam, 62 years, of 9 Tureen Street, from the River Clyde at the Tidal Weir.

## 1955

10<sup>th</sup> Jan to 6<sup>th</sup> Feb **1955** supplied safety boat at Albert Bridge as requested

31<sup>st</sup> January to 27<sup>th</sup> February **1955** Assisted as requested British rail with supply of safety boat at Railway Bridge

Sunday Mail, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, **1955**

Canal Ice Cracks, Boy Dies-Mr. Ben Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, was called out, and, after breaking the ice and dragging the canal for about half-an-hour, recovered John's body in 10 feet of water.

Ben to the Rescue Again-Evening Citizen 21<sup>st</sup> May **1955**

21<sup>st</sup> May **1955**- News of the World-He Saves Woman from Clyde

Jumping, fully clothed, into the River Clyde at Glasgow Green to-day, Mr. Ben Parsonage, of the Glasgow Humane Society, rescued an elderly woman from drowning. Mr. Parsonage was working in his boathouse when he heard shouting.

He ran down to the river bank and saw the woman struggling in the water about 12 yards from the edge. While his son fetched a stretcher, Mr. Parsonage swam to her rescue. After bringing her ashore he applied artificial respiration. The woman was detained in Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

\*\* Collar too tight. Separate collar and stud - burst collar. Voice was lost for 2 or 3 weeks and has never been the same since.



**1955** Benjamin Parsonage awarded Second Bar to the Glasgow Corporation Bravery Medal

8<sup>th</sup> June **1955** Gave assistance to the Corporation as requested with the clearing of oil from downside of the Tidal Weir

6<sup>th</sup> July **1955** after a short search I recovered the body of Allan Darricott, 16 years, from a water hole at East Kilbride. Bathing accident

23<sup>rd</sup> February **1956** Assisted Corporation by taking river water samples as requested

29<sup>th</sup> March **1956**

After a 6 day extensive search recovered the body of Dorothy Wright, Woodford Green, Essex, from the River Clyde opposite Meadowside.

Statement BENJAMIN PARSONAGE (52) Glasgow Humane Society Officer, States:-On Saturday, 24th March, 1956, I received information from Chief Inspector Johnston, Marine Division, that a woman had been seen to jump into the River Clyde adjacent to Meadowside Ferry from the north bank and eastwards of the ferry. Same date I had my boat taken to that locus and started dragging operations. These continued until Thursday, 29th March, 1956, during the hours of daylight. About 10.30a.m on 29th March, 1956, whilst making a sweep about 75 yards west of Meadowside ferry and at a position in the river between a third and a half of the distance across the river from the north bank, I recovered the body of a woman and took it into my boat. I immediately sent word to the Marine Police Office and Chief Inspector Johnston and Detective Inspector Duncan arrived a short time later. The body was then removed by shell to the city Mortuary.

While the Clyde is dragged for Victim's Body a Man Is Accused of Killing missing Woman  
Clyde is dragged after woman's shoes are found it may be murder  
"Caused Her to Jump into River" Charge

Last night police were still trying to solve the mystery of an unknown woman who was drowned in the River Clyde near Meadowside Ferry, Partick Glasgow

A thorough search was being made of all missing people's lists.

While the search for her body was going on, a young man appeared in Glasgow Central Police Court. He was charged with killing the woman.

The accused was ordered to be detained in Barlinnie Prison for four days for examination.

The charge against him alleges - "That on vacant ground adjoining Meadowside Street he assaulted a woman, meantime unknown, by robbing her of her handbag and belongings, throwing the handbag into the river, causing the woman to jump into the river to retrieve the handbag, as a result of which she was drowned, and you did kill her."

## **1956**

**22<sup>nd</sup> September 1956**

Clydesdale member upset his skiff at the South gate of the Tidal Weir, which was out of the water at that time, and he was swept through below the gate. I hurried in my boat with all speed down River and a few yards downstream of the Weir I got hold of him and helped him into my boat. I returned him and his boat to the Clubhouse. He was none the worse of his immersion.

**26<sup>th</sup> September 1956** Ben Parsonage received a letter of commendation from W. Kerr. Chief constable Dunbartonshire Constabulary

**26<sup>th</sup> September 1956**-While searching in the River Clyde at the foot of Stone Byres falls for two men who had been thrown over the Gartland Bridge by a lorry, and had disappeared, Ben Parsonage fell and broke my left arm.

**26<sup>th</sup> September 1956** Letter of Commendation to Ben Parsonage from Robert Kerr Chief Constable Dunbartonshire Constabulary

**1<sup>st</sup> October 1956**-Recovered the body of James Joseph Kelly, 59 years of 31 Montieth Row after a short search from the River Clyde at the Kings Bridge---B Parsonage had his arm

broken, but got fed up watching the Police trying to drag, so he worked the grapnels with his good arm and his feet to recover the body.

## 1957

2nd January **1957** received word at 11.20 p.m. from the Police that a man was supposed to have fallen from the Rutherglen Bridge into the River at about 6.00 p.m. that night--My son and I went up straight away and made a search with no success. No witnesses could be found and no one was reported missing.

30th April **1957** the body of a youth was recovered from the "Hidden Loch," behind Hawkhead Hospital, Paisley, early this morning by Mr. Ben Parsonage, of the Glasgow Humane Society carrying out the search by torchlight. First hint of the tragedy was given last night after two boys found a man's clothes piled by the side of the loch. A rowing boat had to be carried across a mile of fields before Mr. Parsonage could start his search.

4<sup>th</sup> June 1957 Letter of Commendation to B Parsonage from Superintendent A Murray Lanarkshire Constabulary

19th June **1957** recovered the body of Peter Hamilton from the White Rock Quarry. The following letter was received from the City of Glasgow Police.

Dear Sirs, I should like to bring to your attention the outstanding performance of duty undertaken by Mr. Benjamin Parsonage, your Society's Officer on the occasion of the recent fatality, which took place at Queenslie Quarry Glasgow. Briefly the circumstances are that at about 1030 p.m. On Sunday 16th June 1957, notification was received by the Police that a boy, aged 9yrs. had not returned home and on a search being made in the vicinity of the Quarry, near which he had been seen, his clothing was found. Mr Parsonage was notified and attended immediately. From then until the recovery of the boy's body about 10pm on Wednesday 19th June 1957, Mr Parsonage continued dragging operations almost continuously, halting only when compelled to do so by darkness'. The esteem in which Mr Parsonage is held by all who have dealings with him was greatly enhanced by his untiring efforts and perseverance throughout.

Signed F. Farquharson Assistant Chief Constable

24<sup>th</sup> June 1957 Letters of Commendation to B Parsonage from D Young White Rock Quarry Co Ltd and F Farquharson Assistant Chief Constable City of Glasgow Police. Refers to incident at Queenslie Quarry



1957 first recorded "in boat" assistance by George Parsonage Daily Mail, May 3 **1958**. Body found in Clyde-The body of Stephen Corcoran, the 21-year-old soldier who vanished after he boasted he would swim across the Clyde at Dalmarnock, Glasgow, was recovered yesterday.

Mr. Ben Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, found the body after an all-day search. Corcoran, of Barrowfield Street, ran a quarter of a mile from a friend's home on Thursday night and dived into the river wearing his army shirt, trousers and heavy boots. Corcoran of the H.L.I. was stationed at Maryhill Barracks, Glasgow.  
6<sup>th</sup> June 1958 Letter of thanks to B Parsonage from M McCulloch Chief Constable City of Glasgow Police re murder weapons searches.

## **1958**

9<sup>th</sup> July **1958**

When I returned from Erskine on the 8th I received word from the police that a boy had been drowned near Bothwell Bridge. Frogmen had made a search but given up saying the boy was not there. I went early in the morning of the above date with my son George and recovered the body of Michael Cronin at 8.40a.m. The message was received at 11.00p.m. While we were there the local police told us that there had been a drowning accident at Motherwell and they phoned the Motherwell Police and suggested that we went over and helped them at Motherwell. A Motherwell inspector thanked us for our offer but declined as the Sub Aqua Units of Glasgow and Motherwell Police were at the scene. We had not long returned home when Motherwell Police phoned to ask for our help. The Sub Aqua had ceased searching. I went there with my son George and recovered the body of John McFarlane, 11 years, from the River Clyde. This search was made difficult by the fact that the public told us that the two boys had been together when the first boy had been brought to the surface the previous day, but the second boy had slipped away and sunk again. Many swimmers had been down and they claimed they had seen the boy on the bottom. Every time we went to search further away the public shouted that we were in the wrong place. Father ignored them finally and recovered the boy's body further along the river.

15<sup>th</sup> December **1958**--2p.m.

Recovered top of back door of Rowntree's motor van and new wheel and tyre and quantity of chocolates and sweets at the foot of Belvidere. Door proved for insurance that van was in the water.

What B Parsonage actually did here, was, catch hold of the back door of the van with his grappling irons, (in over 30ft of water) and using his great strength he pulled/ripped the door off its hinges.

Having taken the back door off the van, most of the contents of the van rose to the surface and the River was covered from side to side with Rowntree's confections. Police Officers had to be on the River banks to ward off any youngsters who attempted to retrieve the sweets while we gathered everything into boats and brought them back to the Society Wharf for disposal. This was a long job.

## **1959**

1<sup>st</sup> April **1959**

Boy reported missing at 11p.m. from the Pals Motor Boat Club, Rutherglen. I proceeded upriver immediately and made search at the Railway Bridge along with my son George. Suspended operations at 2a.m. when the police said that we were searching the wrong place.

In the morning 2.4.59 the police brought down the other boy witnesses and had the spot pointed out. At 2p.m. I recovered the boy's body

23<sup>rd</sup> August **1959** recovered the body of a young man who was drowned while swimming in the Laker Dam, Bridge of Weir--Bathing accident  
Dozens of children drowned in the City Canals during the 1950's

## **1960**

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June **1960**

After a short search recovered the body of a 9 year old boy, from a clay hole near Prospecthill Road

He was drowned near his home when he slipped into a quarry pool while trying to catch tadpoles.

He and a pal were standing on the side when they spotted some fish below them.

He started to scramble down, slipped and fell into the water, which is about six feet deep.

Alan saw him fall and when he realised he couldn't get out started throwing pieces of wood, hoping he'd be able to catch one.

Police had to call in Mr. Ben Parsonage, of the Glasgow Humane Society, to drag the quarry before they could recover his body.

After the tragedy angry residents of the multi-storey flats, which overlook the quarry, talked of a petition to get the quarry closed down, or at least fenced off.

25<sup>th</sup> July **1960**

My son George told me after coming down River in a racing skiff that a man had climbed the railings at the side of the river above the Kings Bridge and he thought he was considering jumping into the water. I rushed upstream in the lifeboat and found the elderly man taking his boots off to enter the water. He admitted to me that he was going to commit suicide as he was fed up with life having no one at home. I took him into my boat and took him to the Society's house. The police took him into their care.

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August **1960**

Noted in Evening Times

Bag in Clyde was part of P.O. Haul

The mailbag salvaged from the Clyde in Glasgow last night was part of the proceeds of a £2700 safe blowing at Sighthill Post Office on Springburn Road 2 days ago.

That is the conclusion reached by the Police after they had examined the mailbag discovered near the McNeil Street Suspension Bridge by 3 school boys boating on the river.

The safe blowers haul included cash postal orders and insurance and savings stamps

The boys immediately contacted the Police when they made their discovery and Mr Ben Parsonage of Glasgow Humane Society rescued the bag from the river.

A Police spokesman said today it is undoubtedly part of the stolen property from the post office.

## **1961**

Evening Times.**16.1.61**

“Watchman Drowns in City Dock”.

An elderly watchman was accidentally drowned in Princes Dock Glasgow early today.

It is believed he missed his way in the dense fog and stumbled into the dock.

His body was recovered by Ben Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society after a 2 hr search.

8<sup>th</sup> April **1961**

After a three days search the body of a 2 year old boy was recovered from the Brock Burn by Ben Parsonage

Evening times, Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August **1961**

Deck hand drowns after fall from quayside,

A deck hand on one of Glasgow’s vehicular ferries was drowned to-day when he missed his footing and fell into the river Clyde. The man was jumping from the General Terminus Quay to connect a mooring wire to the Finnieston Ferry. He slipped and fell into the water striking his head on the slipway wall. Other members of the crew and dockside workers immediately tried to get hold of him with hooks but failed. After the unsuccessful attempts to recover the body Mr. Ben Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, was called out to start dragging operations. After Mr. Parsonage arrived, he recovered Brown’s body within a few minutes.

Rescue from floods. See Daily Record & Evening Citizen **9.8.61**.

Mr Ben Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society was called in to rescue people from Factories and workshops in Rigby Street and Shettleston Road.

By 2 a.m. he had rowed 8 people safely to “shore” from the floodwater eight feet deep in places. Also rescued were two ponies trapped in a stable and a dog.

After recovering a camera from the River at the Albert Bridge using grappling irons and returning it to its owner the following letter was received.

4432 Mitchell St. Philadelphia 28, pa U.S.A Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> 1961

Dear Mr Parsonage, I wish to thank you and all concerned for recovering my camera from the Clyde River. I did not expect ever to ever see it again when it fell over the Bridge and I saw it sink in the water. I was in a daze for a while I think how simple it could happen that it had to fall in there after carrying it all through the streets of Glasgow, Belfast and Londonderry all the way from the USA. You must have a wonderful Corporation.

Thanks again Charles H. Devine.

2<sup>nd</sup> November 1961

Searched at Berth 58 Stobcross Quay from a man missing from the Caledonia Star--Received word on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1961 that this man had been found alive, hiding on the boat at sea- He had a mental breakdown.

7<sup>th</sup> January **1962** at about 5a.m. Received phone message from Detective Inspector Galbraith of Maryhill Division that clothes of a young girl had been found on the banks of the River Kelvin opposite 31 Lacrosse Terrace and that he suspected that she had been murdered and thrown into the river. A police car ran me immediately to the scene where I found the river a raging torrent after the recent thaw and heavy rain. We spent the day along with my son George and police searching without success.

The case is believed unique in Scotland, as it is the first time a man has been arrested and charged with murder without a body having been found.

## **1962**

2<sup>nd</sup> April 1962 Ben Parsonage attended murder trial at the High Court.

On 16<sup>th</sup> May **1962** after months of searching Ben Parsonage recovered the body of the girl from the River Kelvin a few yards north of footbridge at bandstand in Kelvingrove Park

4<sup>th</sup> March **1962**

Received word from Information Room at about 3.45p.m that a boy and his bicycle had fallen through the ice on the Forth and Clyde Canal behind Westerton Railway Station (Dunbartonshire) and had been drowned. I and my son George proceeded there with our boat on a police trailer. After breaking the ice with an axe, we reached the hole through which the boy had fallen and recovered his body immediately. I then picked up the bike.

Evening Citizen, 22<sup>nd</sup> March **1962**

Dredger picks up car at dock

A Glasgow dockyard foreman was found dead today in a small saloon car submerged in the Clyde at Stobcross Quay. He had been missing since January 28, when he was believed to have left the dock in dense fog in his car. Police believe that the car went over the edge of the dock near Finnieston Street as he tried to find his way from his office on Stobcross Quay. They think that he drove his car along a set of train rails and, at a junction, followed a side line to the edge of the quay. The car was found today when the dredger Elderslie was operating at the quay. Its garb jammed on an obstruction on the river bed, and a second grab was brought into operation. A four-seater Ford car - registration number KEA 831 - was hoisted, upside down, on to the quay. Police from Glasgow's Marine Division hurried to the scene, and threw a tarpaulin over the maroon car. The dead driver lay trapped beneath the steering wheel. Later four policemen turned the car upright and assisted Mr. Ben Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, to remove the driver.

10<sup>th</sup> July **1962** recovered the body of a man from pond at foot of Jessie Street, off Polmadie Road (about 8p.m. - about 20 hours in the water)

29<sup>th</sup> November **1962** two youths appeared at Glasgow Central Police Court today, charged with the theft of a life-boat from the wharf on the river Clyde at Glasgow Green last night. They were each fined £5

## **1963**

17<sup>th</sup> January **1963**-Friday, received word that a boy had fallen through the ice into the canal below the Bridge at Castle Street--Proceeded there immediately and after a short search recovered the body---“That canal is a curse.”---“Father’s agony at canal of death”

21<sup>st</sup> February **1963**-Received word that a boy had fallen into the River Cart 200 yards from the Pollok Estate--Proceeded there immediately and recovered the body of a 16 year old “A Youth Dies In Ice Trap”. “The 16-year-old was the seventh to lose his life in an ice-covered river or canal this week, and the eleventh this year”.

2nd March **1963**

Decomposed body in River Kelvin

Father and I were called to the River Kelvin by the Police due to a very unusual happening. It seemed that a bird watcher had found the skeleton of a man sticking feet first out of the ice in the River Kelvin. He had informed passers-by when he climbed back up onto the roadway but nobody would believe him, so he went back down onto the river bank and wrenched the shoe and skeleton of the foot from the body; he went home, had his meal and then took the foot and shoe to the Police and so we were called in. The body was head first in the silt to the waist, the rest sticking out of the water. The body from the waist to the head was preserved intact in the ice and the legs that were sticking out of the water were skeletons striped of flesh by the birds and water life on the River. Arc lights were set up and after hours of patient digging and cutting with spade and axe father managed to bring the body remains intact from the River. The C.I.D. present said they would never have believed that the body could have been brought out whole. The remains were taken to the mortuary and we returned home.

15<sup>th</sup> April **1963**-Helped Police recover motor bike from the River Clyde, 100 yards above Rutherglen Bridge on the north bank.

25<sup>th</sup> May **1963**-Rescued dog stranded on pier of the Albert Bridge. Decided to keep dog, named him Albert

20<sup>th</sup> October **1963**-Received call at about 1.15a.m from the Marine Police that a man was reported to have fallen into the Canal while attempting to cross a lock gate at no.36 lock Forth and Clyde Canal. Along with my son George I proceeded there immediately and recovered the body at 5.15a.m

24<sup>th</sup> November **1963**-At about 3.30a.m received word that motor launches were floating loose on the River. These proved to be boats from the Rutherglen Motor Boat Club, torn from their moorings by the heavy spate on the River. At least one boat was smashed and others damaged owing to the fact that no one could prevent their passage due to the spate of the River

## **1964**

February 25 1964 – Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali) beats Sonny Liston in Miami Beach, Florida, and is crowned the heavyweight champion of the world.

September 4 1964– the Forth Road Bridge opens over the Firth of Forth.

8<sup>th</sup> April **1964**-A school tub four and a clinker four rammed each other head on near to the St. Andrews Suspension Bridge on the River Clyde. My son George and I rushed to them in our boat and separated their boats. The boys in one boat had received a nasty fright and were frightened that their boat would sink on account of the damage. I took the boys into my boat and George took their boat back to the Clubhouse.

28<sup>th</sup> April **1964**-Received word about 10.30p.m from the Eastern Police that an Ice Cream van was in the River Clyde at Millerfield Road-Proceeded there with my son George-The Police passed me a wire rope from a Corporation breakdown wagon that I fastened on to the rear of the van. The breakdown wagon pulled the van out of the water up the high bank and onto the road. There was no one inside the van, which had been stolen.

9<sup>th</sup> May **1964**-Clerk of Course Clydesdale Regatta-During the Clydesdale Regatta when I was following one of the final heats in the Roger Cup event, the Stirling sculler through exhaustion, rolled into the water out of his racing skiff. I lifted him into my boat and returned with him to the Clydesdale Clubhouse. Later on he was none the worse for his immersion.- Douglas Adam, the Stirling sculler, said later how lucky he was that father was on the spot as he had completely blacked out and could remember nothing until he came round in father's boat

3<sup>rd</sup> December **1964**- Searched quarry at Giffnock for a boy who had been missing from his home since 1.00p.m., suspended search at midnight.-4<sup>th</sup> December 1964-Recovered the body, in the early forenoon from the Quarry at Giffnock

## **1965**

1965-The epic film "Doctor Zhivago" premieres in New York during December of 1965  
Australia Joins Vietnam War

Racing driver Jim Clark wins the Indianapolis 500, and later wins the Formula One world driving championship in the same year.

The Maple leaf becomes Canada's new national flag symbol

70 mph speed limit imposed on British roads

11th January **1965** a crew from St. Gregory's capsized at Polmadie—all rescued--Damage was extensive. Crews must be warned not to turn near bridges and in the event of an accident to keep by the boat.

14th February 1965-After a short search recovered the body of a cook from the MV Firth Fisher in the Queens Dock, River Clyde between the boat and the quay wall--Recovered at about 12.20a.m--drowned at 10,30a.m on the 13th February, 1965

I was called to Polmadie Bridge regarding a sculler who had fallen out of his racing skiff into the River Clyde. On arrival I found a Clydesdale 4+ had taken him into their boat, on being informed that the man was all right and wouldn't come into my boat, the crew returned with him to the Clydesdale Clubhouse. My son, who is a member of the Club, seeing the man's condition getting worse after his soaking, sent for an ambulance and he was taken to the Royal Infirmary suffering from exposure.

22nd April **1965**-Searched in the River Clyde at the foot of Ferry Road on the 20th, 21st and 22nd April, **1965** for a man who was seen to jump into the water and disappear. While searching at Ferry Road, the Police asked me to go to the Canal at Maryhill where a boy had been drowned. I went there and after a short search recovered the body of a 6 year old boy.

While I was at the Canal at Maryhill a woman jumped into the River Clyde from the north bank near the Kings Bridge. A passer-by waded in and hauled her out up the bank, aided by my son George who had arrived on the scene by this time. They took her to the Glasgow Humane Society House where my wife took charge and put her to bed. With the arrival of an ambulance she was removed to the Royal Infirmary. She was none the worse for her immersion.

Newspaper Report -While Mr. Parsonage was dragging the canal for the boy's body his son George was helping to save a woman from drowning in the River Clyde. A passer-by noticed a woman in difficulties not far from the bank and he waded in and hauled the woman to the shore. George then took her to the Parsonage home at Glasgow Humane Society House in

Glasgow Green. He helped revive her and then sent for an ambulance, which took the woman to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. An unknown man was last night pulled out of the Forth and Clyde Canal at Kelvin Docks, Maryhill, by Mr. Ben Parsonage.

Daily Mail, November 3rd **1965**-STUDENT SAVED IN RIVER TERROR. A Young Glasgow University student, clinging to an overturned skiff, was rescued yesterday as he was being swept down a swollen river towards a weir.

Nineteen-year-old engineering student Jan de Vries was only 200 yards from the raging weir on the River Clyde at Glasgow Green when he was pulled into a boat by Mr. Ben Parsonage, of the Glasgow Humane Society.

Seconds later his skiff was sucked under the weir gates and smashed to pieces.

## **1966**

2nd January **1966**-Recovered the body of a new-born male child, from the Monkland Canal which had been seen floating near to Gala Street

10th February **1966**-Gave assistance to Corporation by taking water samples

It was reported to me that a Clyde 4 had sunk after striking the North Pier of Dalmarnock Bridge with their boat and the 5 men had fallen into the river. My son George was on hand and was able to help the 5 into the bank. I rushed there as fast as possible (2 miles from the wharf) and completed the rescue and returned to the Club with the smashed boat.

Daily Record, Thursday 24th March **1966**.

Car hanging over bridge, then... Mystery of ex-Celt in river

Police were last night probing the mystery death of former Scotland and Celtic star Joe Baillie. His body was recovered from the River Kelvin in Glasgow yesterday....

After his car was found hanging over the bridge in Skaethorn Road, Maryhill, Glasgow, late on Tuesday night - without any sign of Joe, 37.

When police checked at his home that night, they discovered he had not returned home from his work as a whisky representative.

After the discovery yesterday by Mr. Ben Parsonage, of Glasgow Humane Society, a police spokesman said: "We have no idea what happened. We are completely in the dark.

"We can only assume Mr. Baillie was dazed after the accident and got out of the car thinking he was stepping on to the road but instead fell into the river."

The spokesman appealed for witnesses to the accident to come forward.

Father of two Joe joined Celtic as a left-half from St. Roch's in 1948.

He won a cup medal with Celtic and was capped for the Scottish League against the English League in 1952 and against the Irish League in 1952 and 1953.

He was transferred to Wolves in 1954. He later played for Bristol City, Leicester City and Bradford.

Evening Times, 29th March 1966-Missing boy found dead.

Two-year-old Alexander Ross, who disappeared from his home at Alyth Crescent, Clarkston, on Sunday, was found dead by searchers in the river Cart this afternoon. His body, which had been swept downstream by the fast-flowing river, was found at Linn Park.

The discovery made by Mr. Ben Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society, ended a two-day search.

Daily Record 4th June **1966**-A Man dived off a Clyde passenger ferry late last night, and began to swim towards a quay wall.-But 15 feet from the Finnieston side of the river the man vanished in the murky water as ferry passengers watched horrified.-Police raced to Finnieston ferry at Clydeferry Street and began to search with grappling irons. Then Mr. Ben Parsonage, of the Glasgow Humane Society, joined in the search. A police official said late last night: "The man apparently jumped overboard and began swimming. At 1 A.M. the body of the man was recovered from the river. He has not yet been identified.

2nd July**1966**-At about 1.15p.m received call from Govan Police that a boy of 8 had been missing from his home since 2.30p.m the previous day and as he was not to be found anywhere in the vicinity there was a chance that he might have fallen into the River Cart. I proceeded there and started searching likely places. At about 5.00p.m received call while still searching that the body of a man had been seen floating in the Clyde near to Berth 57, Mavisbank Quay. Recovered at about 5.30p.m Returned to River Cart where at about 9.00p.m recovered the body of a boy. The body in the Clyde was badly decomposed and very difficult to remove. Named as Titus Neeson, 72 years of 37 Westminster Drive, Brooklyn, New York

Lifeboat taken away during the night--Recovered at 6.30am.

A boy, at about 1.00p.m.fell on the spikes while climbing a fence at the swings in the Park.-- As I was searching at Govan, my son George went to his aid and carried him to our house where he was treated until the arrival of an ambulance. He had 12 stitches put in the wound

## **1967**

8<sup>th</sup> March **1967**, one of my (B Parsonage) boats which was being used as a rescue boat to Sir William Arrolls and co at Bothwell Haugh was smashed during a flood.

22<sup>nd</sup> March **1967**, received word from the Police Information Room about 2.25am that a man had jumped from the Kay Bridge into the River Clyde and was drowned--I and my son George proceeded there right away and started to search, taking into consideration the run that was on the River. I recovered the body of the man 30 yards east of the St Andrews Suspension Bridge and about 15 yards from the north bank. This was about three-quarters of a mile from where he went in and on the opposite side of the River.

9<sup>th</sup> April **1967** received word from the Police Information Room that a man was struggling in the River Clyde at Riverside School at 1.25p.m-- I rushed up-river in a small speedboat and recovered the man. I landed him on the bank at 1.35pm where an ambulance was waiting to rush him to the Infirmary, but he was found to be dead. Distance from Humane Society house to Riverside School is 3 1/2 miles.

9<sup>th</sup> June 1967, Ben Parsonage received the following letter from Robert S Allan OBE BEM Chief Constable Renfrew and Bute Constabulary:

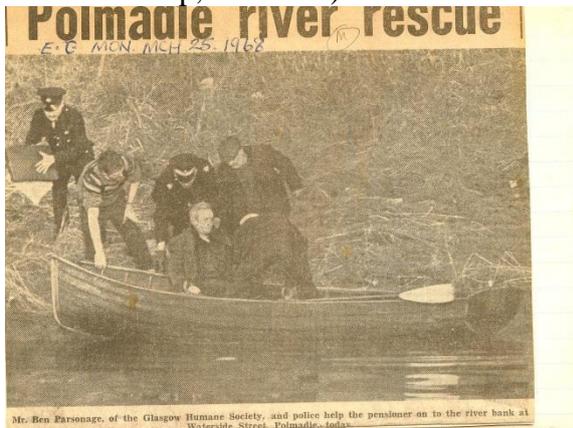
Dear Sir, I have been informed of the valuable assistance which you rendered my officers at Giffnock on 30<sup>TH</sup> May when the body of a man was found partly submerged in two feet of water in the Rouken Burn at Thornliebank. The body was in an advanced state of decomposition and had been in the water for about two months. Without your expert advice and assistance, recovery of the body would have presented great difficulties because of the steep banking on both sides of the burn, the sludge below the water and debris which had

trapped the body. Please accept my grateful thanks and appreciation of your excellent co-operation on this occasion. Yours faithfully, R.S. Allan Chief Constable

Followed by on the 21<sup>st</sup> June, Dear Sir, I have been informed of the valuable assistance which you rendered my officers on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> June, when a fifteen year old boy was drowned in a deep pool at the River Calder, Lochwinnoch. Great difficulty was being experienced by the police in recovering the body because of rocks overhanging the deep pool and your assistance was requested. At 8.30p.m on the same evening after a difficult and sometimes dangerous operation, the body was recovered. The recovery was due principally to the skill and courage which you displayed. I wish to express to you my very sincere thanks and appreciation of your excellent co-operation with my officers on this and many other occasions. Yours faithfully, R.S. Allan Chief constable

1<sup>st</sup> January **1968**, about 7.00am received word from the Police Information Room that a motor car had run into the River Clyde at Renfrew Ferry on the Yoker side and that a woman had been trapped in the car and had drowned, and my services were required. I attended at the locus with my son George and a boat on a Police Landrover. After a short search I located the motor car and on arrival of the Police Sub Aqua unit I gave one of them a rope which he took down and fastened it to the woman, I then raised her to the surface and lifted her into my boat. She was removed to the City Mortuary.

8<sup>th</sup> February **1968**, receipt for boatshed. Received the Sum of £25 for Wooden Hut from B. Parsonage (Removed from Shawfield site) As approved, With Thanks, J D Sturgeon (signed over 2d. stamp, with date)



28<sup>th</sup> July **1968**, Pram in the River Clyde at Polmadie Bridge, recovered by George Parsonage for the Police

## 1969

7th, 8th, 9th & 10th July **1969**-river heavily polluted with oil from Clydebridge Steel Works.

3rd August **1969** –The body of a boy of six was recovered by Ben Parsonage from the waters of a disused quarry near Hamilton Road, Mount Vernon.

16th October **1969**, Stood by when Weir gates were opened to allow cruiser through an hour before tide and the water fell 10” suddenly causing quite a current.

## **1970**

Ben Parsonage received the following letter from David McNee Assistant Chief Constable Dunbartonshire Constabulary. Dear Sir, My attention has been drawn to the invaluable aid given by you to the Police following a tragic drowning accident on the Forth and Clyde Canal at Westerton on Friday, 20th February 1970. I am informed that despite appalling weather conditions you continued your search until you eventually recovered the child's body. I wish to take this opportunity of conveying to you, my personal thanks and appreciation of your assistance on this occasion. Yours faithfully, David McNee

4th August **1970**. I was asked to search the River Cart at the Inchinnan Bridge for a girl, who was missing. While doing so I learned that this 21/2 year old had been found sleeping in the long grass some distance away.

30th August **1970** a visiting Egyptian Doctor upset his sculling boat above the St Andrews Bridge. I raced to his assistance, brought him into my boat and returned him to his club none the worse for his immersion. I also retrieved his boat.

7th September **1970** one of the GHS boatsheds was burned down during the night. Candles were found which seems to point to someone having broken in to sleep. Fortunately if anyone was in the shed they got out safely

## **1971**

21st March **1971**. While out sculling George was amazed to see a boy's head appearing from behind the centre girder of the south gate of the weir. He was climbing along the girders of the gate. George stayed close until the boy had removed himself from this extremely dangerous position.

Letter to Ben Parsonage, from County of the City of Glasgow Office of Lieutenancy City Chambers, Glasgow 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1971.

Dear Mr. Parsonage, The Lord Provost, as Lord Lieutenant, has been requested to present to you on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen the British Empire Medal which was awarded to you in the New Year's Honours. This presentation is to be made at a luncheon to be held in the City chambers on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> May, and I would appreciate your forwarding me a list of names and addresses of your family and friends whom you would wish to be present. As accommodation is limited would you please confine your numbers to 10, yours sincerely, Eric Hamilton Clerk of Lieutenancy



1971 - Benjamin Parsonage awarded British Empire Medal (B. E .M.)

**Scottish Daily Express Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May 1971**

Medal for Ben

Mr Ben Parsonage Officer of the Glasgow Humane Society was presented with the British Empire Medal yesterday by Lord Provost Sir Donald Liddle.

Letter - BUCKINGHAM PALACE

I greatly regret that I am unable to give you personally the award which you have so well earned.

I now send my congratulations and my best wishes for your future happiness.

Elizabeth R.



1971 - George Parsonage awarded Glasgow Corporation Bravery Medal.

27<sup>th</sup> March 1971 Ben Parsonage received the following letter from James A Robertson Chief Constable City of Glasgow Police

Dear Sir, I am informed that on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1971, together with your son George, you rescued a woman from drowning in the River Clyde, near Kingston Bridge.

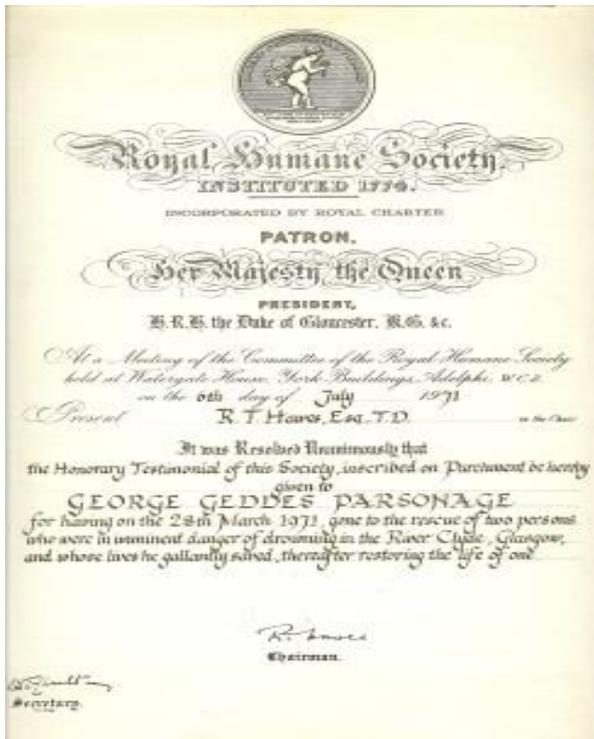
The efficient manner in which you conducted your search of the river in the darkness is most commendable and is much appreciated by those in the Police service in this City.

I have written to Mr. Hamilton, the Lord Provost's Secretary, asking him to bring your efficient action at this incident to the notice of the Secretary of the Royal Humane Society, and I shall be pleased if you will accept my sincere thanks.

28<sup>th</sup> March 1971 1100 hours I received word that a body was floating in Princes Dock. George and I went to the locus and recovered the body.

George, while out sculling on the river, dived into the River at Strathclyde School and rescued a mother and her son. He had to dive into about 20 feet of water to get the boy who had sunk, then holding the boy with one hand and trying to give E.A.R. he caught hold of the

mother with the other and struggled to the bank. The boy recovered and all were taken into the school until the arrival of an Ambulance. I had arrived by this time and recovered George's boat, which was floating loose on the river. His boat was partly damaged.



1971 –George Parsonage awarded Royal Humane Society Honorary Testimonial on Parchment.

August 1971 Lifeboats interfered with; Oars missing. Three boats thrown off the wharf into the water, one never recovered, and one found smashed to pieces in the harbour.

16<sup>th</sup> September 1971 Assisted Police to removed headless body of woman from car taken from the river at Queens Dock.

## 1972

25<sup>th</sup> February 1972 Received word that a man had been drowned in Princes Dock I proceeded there immediately. The man had fallen between the M113 Royal Navy vessel (V.R.), and the Quay wall. The Navy managed to manually move the ship to allow George to manoeuvre our boat between the ship and the quay. I recovered the body of George Harvie, 21 years, 126 Petershill Road from below where the ship had been and towards the steps at the end of the dock - about 0330 hours.

FROM: CAPTAIN A.D. HOUSTON, R.D., M.A., LL.B., R.N.R.



H.M.S. GRAHAM  
CLYDE DIVISION, R.N.R.  
130 WHITEFIELD ROAD,  
GLASGOW, S.W.1.

LD RPA/A

24th February 1972.

6 MAR 1972

The Secretary,  
Glasgow Humane Society,  
Glasgow Green,  
GLASGOW, S.E.

Dear Sir,

I write to express my appreciation of the services rendered by your Mr. Ben Parsonage and his son in connection with the tragic accident which occurred on the night of 25/26th February when one of my Junior Ratings, George Harvey, lost his life through drowning in Princes Dock.

I have learnt from my Executive Officer, Commander J.A. Brown, of the expert manner in which Mr. Parsonage and his son conducted their search and recovery of the body of George Harvey, and I would like to express my admiration for the expeditious manner in which this was achieved in awkward and difficult circumstances. Perhaps you would be good enough to convey to the members of your Society and to Mr. Parsonage and his son in particular my personal appreciation of what was done on this sad occasion.

Yours sincerely,

25<sup>th</sup> February 1972 Seaman Drowned In Dock.

The body of a 50-year-old seaman, who had been missing from his ship since the weekend, was found in Rothesay Dock, Clydebank, today.

The man, left his ship, the motor vessel Everity, on Saturday night to go for a drink in a nearby public house in Clydebank.

He was not seen again after leaving the pub to go back to the ship, and it was thought he had fallen into the Clyde.

After dragging operations in the dock today, led by Mr. Ben Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society, the body was recovered.

21<sup>st</sup> April 1972 I received word from E Division Police that a boat was floating loose on the river near Strathclyde School and that children were trying to board it. I went upstream immediately and towed the boat to our wharf. The boat had been stolen from the Rutherglen Boat Club and was later collected by the owner.

3<sup>rd</sup> July 1972 recovered the body of an 8yr old boy drowned at Polmadie while trying to retrieve a football from the river.

Ben Parsonage received letter of thanks from J G Gillies Deputy Chief Constable Renfrew and Bute Constabulary

Dear Mr. Parsonage

I have received a report from my officers at Johnstone that you were of great assistance to them on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1972. A young girl was found soaking and bleeding from cuts on her forehead, climbing through a gap in the hedge to the west of Cochranemill Road, Kilbarchan, from the direction of the Mill Lade. Prior to being taken to hospital she stated “

her wee brother was in the burn". The body of this child was recovered from the lade. From enquiries made initially it was suspected that there may have been a third child involved. My officers therefore contacted you and you responded immediately with negative result. It was later confirmed that no other child was missing.

2. My officers are extremely grateful as I am for your assistance once again.

6<sup>th</sup> August **1972** 1100 hours at the request of E Division CID I carried out a surface search of the River for clothing that had been cut up and thrown in by a murder suspect; Blue shirt and white trousers. In the afternoon the boats were lifted round the weir and the search continued downstream as far as Finnieston.

7<sup>th</sup> August 1972 I recovered a piece of light blue shirt, which was bloodstained. This was what the C. I. D. wanted.

13<sup>th</sup> August 1972 a woman started to strip herself at the St. Andrews Bridge. While George telephoned the Police I tried to talk some sense into her. Although still cursing and shouting I had managed to get her away from the parapet. When she heard the Police sirens she tried to throw me aside in an attempt to throw herself over the bridge. I held onto her although she was a very big woman and was beating at me furiously with her fists. With assistance from George we controlled her and after a short talking to she began to cry. We took her to the house for a cup of tea and a seat away from the crowd that had gathered. She had tried to cut herself on a broken window before coming to the river. Police took her home.

4<sup>th</sup> October **1972** recovered the body of a 4 year old boy, from the River at Stobcross after a 7 day search

Letter to Glasgow Humane Society from City of Glasgow Police

Dear Sir,

I wish to bring to your notice the commendable actions of Mr. Ben Parsonage, care of the Glasgow Humane Society, Glasgow Green, Glasgow, in recovering the body of a three year old boy from the River Clyde at Stobcross Quay on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1972.

The services of Mr. Parsonage were requested on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1972 after the child had fallen into the River from customs House Quay at a point east of Jamaica Bridge, and the water between Customs House Quay and King George V Bridge on 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September, a total of 36 hours on the River.

No trace was found of the child's body and Mr Parsonage from his experience and knowledge of the River was of the opinion that it would surface about 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> October at or near Finnieston Quay.

About 9 a.m. on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> October, the body surfaced at Stobcross Quay and Mr. Parsonage again provided valuable assistance in its recovery. In order to effect this recovery Mr. Parsonage descended a rope ladder between the quay side and the side of a vessel moored there, and having positioned himself on a floating baulk of timber succeeded in affixing the line to the body enabling it to be removed. Due to turbulence in the River caused by a passing vessel Mr. Parsonage for a time was placed in considerable danger.

The praiseworthy determined efforts of Mr. Parsonage are much appreciated by the Police Service in this City and I shall be obliged if you will convey my sincere thanks to him for his co-operation on this occasion.

Yours faithfully Kelso, Deputy Chief Constable

## 1973

18<sup>th</sup> February **1973**, rescued two scullers who were stuck in oil slicks--I had to lift them into my boat and then try to prize their sculls from off the oil, which in places was 3 feet thick. This oil came from Clydebridge Steel Works.

13<sup>th</sup> May **1973**, as requested by the Police I removed the body of a cow from the River 500 yards downstream of the Kay Bridge. This cow had come downriver with the heavy floodwater the previous day and had been caught up in the buoy ropes laid for a regatta. Due to the size of the animal this was a difficult manoeuvre. The Regatta had to be delayed while we slowly towed with a rowing boat the carcass downstream to the weir from where we could arrange its removal by the Port Authority and its disposal.

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1973, about 2100 hours I was informed by two Police Officers who came to the house door that a dog was stranded in the River on a raft at the Custom House Quay. I rowed to the locus, lifting the boat round the weir (with assistance from Police and members of the public), and brought the dog into my boat. I returned with it to my wharf from where it was taken home by the owner.

2310 hours I received word that a man had fallen or jumped into the River Clyde at the walkway, Clyde Street. George and I immediately wheeled the boat and trailer out in readiness for the arrival of the Police towing vehicle, but it was not until an **hour later**, and after I had phoned to find out what the delay was, that the Landrover arrived. On arrival at the locus we found that two men had dived in to save the drowning man but had failed to hold on to him. They themselves had been brought out by Police and members of the Public using a lifebelt. (**Just as well they had not needed me in a hurry**). As the witnesses had been taken to hospital there was no one present to say where roughly the man had sunk. I searched until 0300 hours without success.

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1973, I returned to the walkway and after having the witnesses attend to give us a spot to start searching I recovered the body at 0910 hours. As no transport was available we rowed the boat to the weir, lifted it out, rowed it home, lifted it out and replaced it on the trailer in its place of readiness.  
Clerk of Course, Clydesdale Regatta.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1973, I received word from a Park Warden that a man was in the River downstream of the Tidal Weir. George went with the Warden in the Landrover while I took the boat. On arrival at the locus I found that George had lassoed the man with a rope, but due to the man being extremely drunk and strong, he was in danger of being pulled in. Every time this man swum near to the side he challenged us to come in and get him, shouting and swearing at the top of his voice. Between us we managed to get the man to shallow water and were about to catch hold of him when the Police arrived. When the man saw the Police he swam back out into the River shouting and swearing at them. I asked the Police Officers to hide behind the trees and again set about persuading the man to come out off the water. After some time we managed this. He waded ashore shouting and bawling about how he was going to give us a hiding. We kept backing off and he kept following us until we were alongside the trees at which point the Police apprehended him. It took six Police Officers to hold him on the ground while he was handcuffed. It is amusing to look back at this incident where a 24stone Police Officer had to sit on this man while the other Officers "cuffed" him.

I (George) remember Father standing at the water edge. The man was shouting at Father to enter the water and fight. Father was giving as good as he was getting, saying to the man that he was frightened to come out of the water and fight with him. Every time the man swam close, Father hit him with his rope. Finally the man came out of the water Father moved back the man followed and the Police jumped him.

27<sup>th</sup> June **1973**, at 2045 hours I received word that two men had entered the River at Jamaica Bridge. One had been rescued but the other had sunk. On arrival at the locus I found that a drunk man had entered the water and that a Police Officer had drowned in a brave attempt to rescue the drunk. After a short search (with George rowing) I recovered the Officer's body. The drowned Police Officer was Constable Colin McDuff, 28 years. The drunk was later jailed for three months.

## **1974**

24th February 1974 at 1730 hours I received word that there was a skull in the River at Jamaica Bridge. We launched at the back of the Weir, but on arrival at the locus we could find nor see anything. I landed and made my way to a telephone and phoned the Central Inquiry to find that there had been a mix up. The skull had actually been high on the Riverbank and the CID had been able to get it themselves. I was supposed to have been informed. We rowed the boat back to the Weir, lifted it out round the Weir and returned home.

8th October 1974 at 1150 hours I received word that a quantity of drugs had been dumped in the River opposite the monument. With Police assistance I searched downriver and recovered three boxes.

Warned schools against boating due to the state of filth in the river

5th December 1974 G.S.R.C Committee re-established its' policy on rowing during inclement weather, that during flood or high wind teachers proposing to row must first consult Mr .B. Parsonage on the advisability of using the River. In cases of fog teachers are also recommended to consult Mr. Parsonage.

## **1975**

28th January 1975

At 1500 hours I received word that there was a body in the River opposite Carrick Street. I proceeded to the locus and removed the body of a young woman from a cofferdam; I had to be lowered by crane down into the coffer. To the best of my knowledge this woman was never identified. This was where piling work was taking place on new quay walls

10th February 1975

At 1730 hours I received word from Clydebank Police that one of the crew of a Norwegian ship berthed in Rothesay Dock was missing. The ship was leaving at 2200 hours that night for Germany and I was requested to make a search before the ship left. A Glasgow Landrover took me down to Clydebank where Clydebank Police took over. I searched between the ship and the quay wall while George and Police took the boat to John Browns and launched. At 2130 hours I went out in the boat to watch the Tugs arrive to tow the ships

out. The 22000-ton liner finally left at 2300 hours but there was no sign of the sailor. We ceased search at midnight and took the boat to Renfrew Ferry to lift it out. There was a chance that this man had just decided to “jump” ship (Run away).

6th March 1975

At 1720 hours about eight Police cars converged on the St. Andrews Bridge. I was informed that a man had jumped from the Bridge into the River. Since George, several rowers, and myself had been in the locus for some time I could not see the possibility of this. Assuming that the Bridge must have been the lower one George went with the Police in their van while I went downriver in a boat. There was no sign of any incident and it could only be assumed to be a hoax.

19th April 1975

At 1100 hours while working at the Boatshed George and I saw a school sculler capsize. We raced to his assistance. Boys in another boat were screaming hysterically for help and causing the boy in the water to panic. We quieted them down, calmed the boy in the water and lifted him into our boat, and returned him to his clubhouse. The boy had been scared as the very cold water had given him cramp in both legs.

30th May 1975

At 1545 hours I received word from the Govan Police that a woman was missing from their area. Her handbag had been found with a suicide note beside the Bishop Loch in Easterhouse and it was assumed that she had drowned herself there. I proceeded to the Loch and after about an hour searching through the bull rushes, sometimes wading and pulling the boat, I found the body. This Loch is extremely difficult to search.

10th June 1975

Recovered body of a woman from the Barrhead Waterworks

1st July 1975

I received a call from Craigie Street Police Office at 2030 hours asking if I would go to Boggleshole Ford where a youth had drowned. I went to the locus at Clydebridge Steelworks and launched my boat. It seemed that three boys had been swimming the River to escape from a gang. Two had made it, one had not. I recovered the body at 2345 hours.

6th August 1975

2015 hours. While down at the wharf George was approached by a man who asked how to get to the skyscrapers on the other side of the River. He told the man to go across the bridge and walk along Adelphi Street. The man started to act very strange and wanted to play chases and then suggested swimming across the River. George realised that this man was in a deranged state of mind and tried harder to get him to go out the gate and into the Park. When the man ran off along the towpath George rushed into the shed and alerted myself, who was working in the house, and dialled 999. I arrived to see the man run down the banking, wade out to one of our pontoons, climb aboard and walk across it, then dive into the River. We rowed double scull to a position alongside this man. I realised that we would have to be

very careful and I went to the stern of the boat telling George to keep me as close as possible to the man without actually hitting him. He was now among weeds and getting very tired, but still was ready to fight me off. Suddenly he sunk among the weeds and I had to throw my body over the end of the boat and reach down into the water to catch hold of the man. Fortunately George had let go of the oars and caught my feet. Together we lifted the man into our boat where I brought him round. George rowed as fast as possible to our wharf while I gave aid to the man. Our resuscitator was in readiness but was not needed. It took five Police Officers to remove the man, who was absolutely terrified, into a Police vehicle. I had to attend the Royal Infirmary as the man had in his insane state accidentally bitten me on the hand when I reached down into the water.



1975 Presentation to Benjamin Parsonage by Clydesdale Rowing Club for 50yr association

## 1976

31<sup>st</sup> January 1976

Two 8's collided head on opposite the University Club

George and I rushed to their assistance. By pure luck, although the two 8's were tightly jammed together, no one had been injured and neither boat was holed nor badly damaged. We had to stand on riggers and prize them apart using boat hooks. Not only could this collision have caused a very serious accident but the water was extremely cold had either of the boats sunk. Having separated the boats we examined them for damage then saw them both safely back to their Clubhouses. Something will have to be done before there is a serious accident. Only this morning I had to shout to stop an Argonaut 4 with coach on the bank from mowing down a school sculler.

17<sup>th</sup> July 1976

At 1930 hours I went to the Canal at Maryhill and recovered a handbag for the Marine Police. Theft from old lady

26<sup>th</sup> July 1976

I was asked by Rutherglen Police to remove the carcass of a donkey from the River. I agreed but informed them that due to the very hot weather they would have to have the cleansing standing by to remove the carcass as soon as it was taken from the water. The donkey had travelled through four Divisions before these arrangements were made.

Received from Glasgow Police- Dear Sir, I write to congratulate you on your public-spirited actions on Thursday 2 December 1976 when you assisted in the rescue of a man from the River Clyde. The prompt and intelligent actions displayed by you at the time of this incident were most commendable and undoubtedly saved this man's life. Accordingly, I would ask you to accept my sincere thanks and appreciation for the assistance you rendered. Yours faithfully, David McNee Chief Constable

## 1977

28th February 1977-At 1205 hours I received word that a body had been seen in the River at Yorkhill Quay. George and I were rushed to the locus. A young Police Officer had seen a leg with a shoe on it sticking out of the water. We launched and as there was a strong outgoing tide, rowed downstream. We had thought the report unlikely, but you can never be sure, so we continued downstream and at a point opposite the Granary we found a shop dummy's' leg with a shoe on it sticking out of the water. It was an understandable error. Returned home at 1400 hours

8th March 1977-At 1750 hours while out sculling George saw the body of a man in the River at Rutherglen. He came down for me and together we went to the locus. I recovered the body and brought it downstream to the wharf where the shell attended at 2120 hours and removed it to the mortuary. This body had been left high and dry by an exceptionally high tide in the branches of a tree.

21st March 1977-At 1630 hours a mounted Police Officer came to our wharf and informed me that he had seen what appeared to be a body in the River at the Kings Bridge? I went to the locus and recovered the body of a horse.

5th April 1977-Continued search for missing boy. At 0930 hours after breakfast George and I were preparing to return to Dalmarnock when the phone rang and my daughter Elizabeth, who had answered it, shouted "There's a man in the River at the Weir". We raced for the lifeboat and rowed double scull to the weir. I spotted the man floundering on the south side of the River near Adelphi School. I caught hold of him and we lifted him into the boat. George rowed the boat back upstream while I tended to the man. Several times I had to bring him back from unconsciousness. We walked the man from our wharf to the house and put him to bed in the Treatment Room, having stripped and dried him. Police and Ambulance arrived and the man was removed to the Infirmary. Andrew Cameron, 54 years 2 Queen Elizabeth Square

After lunch on route to Dalmarnock we observed some boys building a raft on the south bank of the River at the Oatlands Bowling Club. We informed the Police and requested of them that they remove the raft. At 1830 hours George observed four boys playing on a raft in the middle of the River at the Kings Bridge. He sent someone to inform me while he rushed upstream and removed the boys from the raft, and then amid a hail of missiles from other boys he towed the raft downstream for disposal. Police were informed.

16th July 1977- At 0100 hours two detectives came to the house from the Central Division seeking my opinion on the possibility of concrete blocks, which may have been placed in the River twenty years ago, still being in the same place. The story was that one of the detectives had been told by a reliable contact that two bodies, a man and a woman, had been encased in concrete and dumped into the River near to Dalmarnock Bridge some twenty years earlier. I gave the opinion that the bodies and the concrete should still be in the same place and not covered with silt. While they were in the house the phone rang and I was informed that there had been an accident on the Kingston Bridge, a man had been killed but a taxi driver had seen something that could have been a person fly through the windscreen and fall into the water. We rushed to the locus where waves were braking over the bow of the boat. The only objects we could find were a traffic cone and a glove. I climbed onto the quay wall and phoned the Police up on the Bridge, who were still trying to find out if indeed there had been two persons

in the Cab. We again searched the River without result, until word was received over the Police radio that there was no one else in the Cab and no doubt it had been the large welders' glove and the traffic cone that had been seen falling.

5th August 1977-Early in the morning George saw a man on the Riverbank acting very strangely. He was contemplating suicide he said, but after pouring out his troubles to George he said he felt better and borrowed 10p for his bus fare home.

22nd September 1977-Continued search at Belvidere.-At 1945 hours George observed a couple staggering along the banking inside the fencing in a dangerous position. He requested that they leave. This they did with no complaint, but when back on the footpath the man suddenly started to shout abuse at George. George walked away, but on hearing running feet he looked round and was amazed to see the man running towards him with an open razor in his hand. George ran off as fast as possible. Finally when the coast seemed clear he returned to the wharf where he met two plain clothes Police Officers who took a description of the couple and had Police cars tour the area. They did not find the couple.

24th September 1977-At 1050 hours a Support Unit van drew up at our wharf and we were informed that a boat had capsized at Dalmarnock and there were boys in the River. With sirens George and I were rushed to the locus to find fortunately that someone had thrown a lifebelt to a non-swimmer and the three boys were now standing on the bank. The Police ran the boys back to their Clubhouse. George and a schoolteacher rowed the boat back to the clubhouse as to have it towed downstream with the motorboat would have attracted attention and perhaps bad publicity for Rowing. The Police sent a report to the Education Department re- this incident as the boat should not have been so far away from the Club unattended and a non-swimmer should not have been on board.

7th October 1977-At 1420 hours I was asked to attend at Shettleston, Duke Street, Rigby Street, where there was flooding. George and I were rushed to the locus. Two buses were trapped by the floodwater, which was rising. Along with Fire Brigade Officers in a rubber dinghy we started to ferry the passengers to safety, over 250 people. The area was chaos, people were stranded in vans, cars, buses, works. Another bus got stranded and while George returned to the Green for another boat I ferried the passengers from this bus, and elsewhere. One old lady took a heart attack on the bus had I had to very carefully and quickly ferry her to a waiting Ambulance. George returned and together we managed to ferry more than 100 persons from another bus. People were still working in their offices thinking they were all right. I rowed round informing them all that they should evacuate in case the water level rose. Bosses were asked to round up their workers in Stewart Plant, the Sausage Skin Works, G. P. O., a Garage, a Petroleum Firm. Load after load was ferried to safety. We were soaked to the skin, sometimes up to our waist in water, but some of it was still funny, Bosses with their trousers rolled up to their knees but still with their umbrellas up, the drunk passing his bottle of wine round the boat while singing " O sole mio ". We returned home to find the Clyde a raging torrent. I advised City of Glasgow A. R. C to cancel their Regatta, scheduled for tomorrow, which they did

12th October 1977-Received copy of the following letter sent from Glasgow Argonauts Boat Club to the Head Teacher Whitehill School.

Dear Sir, In recent weeks my Club members have been pleased to see a great improvement in the state of the riverbanks at Glasgow Green. Not only does this improve the appearance and

help us when coaching or controlling races but makes a great contribution to increased safety on the water.

This Club has many members both boys and girls in the under 18 age group and it is very important that these crews and scullers should be clearly in sight of the responsible Committee member at the Clubhouse at all times so that speedy action may be taken in the event of some mishap.

I have learned that this clearing operation has been a voluntary effort by boys from your school under the direction of Mr George Parsonage.

On behalf of the Club therefor, I would like to thank your school for this contribution to the environment and to safety on the River Clyde.

Yours faithfully John McGinley Hon Secretary GABC

1978-1<sup>st</sup> January 1978

AT 1250 hours I received word from Police Control that there was a woman's body in the River Clyde at Jamaica Bridge. George and I went to the locus in a Landrover. The body of the woman was floating face up in the water about 12 feet from the quay wall. Police Officers and myself lowered George down the wall on a rope and using a boat hook he managed to catch hold of the body. He fastened a rope to her and passed it carefully along to where I had now positioned myself at the foot of a ladder on the quay wall. We had to be sure of getting hold of this woman first time as she had been in the water for only a short period, and if we had disturbed her without getting hold of her she would have sunk. The woman was thought to have died from the shock of hitting the cold water rather than drowning.

14<sup>th</sup> January 1978

I had to speak to members of Paisley College of Technology Rowing Club re dangerous behaviour on the River. Going into the bank and one of the oarsmen changing positions with the coach.

**Letter –**

J W Auld  
Swimming Co-ordinator,  
Glasgow.

24<sup>th</sup> January 1978.

Dear Sirs,

I would like to congratulate you on your efforts in ensuring that the public of Glasgow have many swimming pools in their area and that these pools are open as often as possible. Perhaps I should at this point bring to your notice an extract from the society's minutes for the year 1938.

“The prospect of new palatial baths in the Glasgow Green is a legitimate excuse to note that it was the fatalities from bathing at the old spring-boards in the River Clyde at about the present Corporation Boating Clubhouses that caused the first Public Baths in Glasgow to be built at the Green Head and opened in 1878. From that time there was a decided fall in the recorded immersions in the Glasgow green”.

During the years 1975, 1976 when the School Ponds were closed for a time there was a dramatic rise in the number of children playing on rafts on the River Clyde, the numbers paddling at the River's edge and even some swimming in the river. The same can also be said about the canals and other waterways around Glasgow. This rise seemed to climax in the summer period of 1976 when myself and the Police had a very busy time trying to keep children from, and teaching them not to play in and on the river. This appeared to coincide

with many City Ponds being closed. The Swimming Ponds appear to be operating normally again and I hope they continue doing so. It has given me great pleasure in my capacity in dealing with the prevention of waterway accidents over the years, to see the City Fathers continually increasing the number of swimming ponds and again giving the Citizens of this City and its surrounding area the pleasure of bathing in such safety.

Yours sincerely,

Benjamin Parsonage B.E.M.

**Letter – STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL COUNCIL – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
GLASGOW DIVISION  
COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICE**

Telephone 041-427- 5593

Cornwall Street Sports Building

Lambhill Street School

GLASGOW

G41 1AX

13.2.78

Dear Mr. Parsonage,

Many thanks for your letter and your kind comments in regard to Community Education Summer Swimming. I have passed the letter on to Mr. John Johnston who is responsible for all G.E.S. Sport. Mr. Johnston informs me that this year it is planned to open twenty pools during the Summer Holiday period, this is double the number open at the same time last year.

Thank you for your interest,

Yours Faithfully

Signed James Auld

27<sup>th</sup> May 1978

Asked by Police to stand by during parachute jump in Park in case anyone landed in the River.

9<sup>th</sup> July 1978

George and I were alerted by the shouts of the public to the fact that someone was in the River opposite the east boathouse. We telephoned for Police assistance as we raced to the scene to find to our disbelief that several schoolboys out in boats under the authority of Glasgow Argonauts Boat Club were jumping into the River and swimming between the boats. We immediately put a stop to this nonsense and removed everyone from the River. Police took notes of the incident. I reported it to the boys' schoolteacher on Monday and he dealt severely with the pupils. The pupils were banned for the rest of the year.

10<sup>th</sup> September 1978

I was awakened by the sound of a Police Klaxon at 0130 hours and rushing to the window saw a Police Range Rover sitting at our front door. I was informed that there were people trapped by floodwater in a bus at Shettleston Road. George and I were rushed to the locus and we ferried about a dozen persons to safety before returning home.

20<sup>th</sup> September 1978

At 1530 hours I received word that there was someone in the River at West Street. A towing vehicle was en route but as the tide was suitable George and I went downriver through the weir. As we approached the George 5<sup>th</sup> Bridge we observed a small rowing boat at the stern of the old Fire Boat. We came alongside and were informed that the body was that of a woman who had fallen in but not sunk, until the small boat in an attempt to get hold of her had gone over the top of the body and then she had disappeared somewhere around the stern of the Fire boat. We moved the Fireboat as best we could with the fast rising tide, and I searched round it then moved upstream searching all the surface debris for any sign. The search continued around the boat but the boat could not be completely moved due to the tide.

At 1045 hours I received a phone call from the CID at Craigie Street informing me that they had a man in custody who claimed he had tried to murder the woman in the water. The Fireboat had still not, as I had requested, been moved, but after a discussion with C.I.D. chiefs a call went out to the Port Authority to have a tug move the boat. Meantime George had, with Police and a gang of workers, managed to manhandle the boat to a position further along the quay wall and enough to let me get my boat in. After about 10 minutes search I recovered the body which we very carefully removed from the water. On the quayside a Police Doctor examined her and C. I. D. photographers took pictures. The body was removed for an immediate Post Mortem.

14<sup>th</sup> October 1978

At 1740 hours a Police car came to our house and I was informed that my help was needed at the Canal at Maryhill. George and I proceeded to the locus and found what could be a body of a man lying over the topside of the lock gate near to the old Maryhill Barracks. We launched the boat and carefully tied the body up. It appeared to be that of a male, but mutilated, no arms, no lower legs, and no head. We carefully lifted it out onto the towpath. It seemed to be tied up in sacking. The CID were in attendance and a preliminary examination was held. I thought the body was not human and was possibly a dummy that had been used for bayonet practice at the old Barracks. This was later verified. Returned home 1900 hours.

**Letter - Glasgow Schools Rowing Club**

Colin Murchison, Esq. M.B.E., M.A. Founder President (1942-1948) William Hunter, Founder Boatman (1951 –1972)

Club houses

THE WEIR, GLASGOW GREEN, G1  
KING'S BRIDGE, GLASGOW GREEN, G 5

St. Aloysius' College,  
45 Hill Street,  
Glasgow, G3 6RJ

29<sup>th</sup> November 1978.

Dear Mr. Parsonage,

As you will know, Glasgow Schools Rowing Club are purchasing a sculling boat from George. As a token of our appreciation for all the help and advice that you have given to Glasgow Schools Rowing Club over many years we would be most grateful if you would allow us to name the boat the "Ben Parsonage".

The policy of G.S.R.C. has been to name its boats after fresh water Scottish Lochs. However, in recent years it has been felt that the best way to honour those who have been crucial to the development of G.S.R.C. is to name boats after them. Thus our best restricted fours are named the "Colin Murchison" and the "Willie Hunter". It seems to us most appropriate that our best sculling boat should be named the "Ben Parsonage".

Yours faithfully,  
Ronald F. A. Fraser.  
(President, G.S.R.C.)



1978 - George Parsonage awarded Strathclyde Region Medal and Bar.



1978 Ben Parsonage given Civic Luncheon at City Chambers to celebrate his Golden Jubilee as rescue Officer, hosted by Lord Provost David Hodge



1978 Ben Parsonage awarded Commonwealth Certificate of thanks by the Royal Life Saving Society



1978 Ben Parsonage presented with fob watch from Glasgow University Boat Club



1978 - George Parsonage awarded Mountbatten Medal R.L.S.S.



## 1979

1979-25<sup>th</sup> January 1979

George and I were called upon late in the evening to attend at the Govan Wharf where there was a body in the River. On arrival at the locus I was shown by the C.I.D. what appeared to be a torso floating near to the quay wall. Our boat was lowered into the water by crane. Under my instructions George went down the quay wall into the boat and fastened up the remains carefully enabling it to be lifted out. After a brief examination and after the boat had been lifted out, the Torso was placed in the boat, covered with a coat, and with car escort raced to the Mortuary for further examination. Over the next few months I attended many meetings regarding this Torso. While lifting the Torso, George cut his thumb on the severed shoulder bone.

George writes. While examining the remains I caught the base of my thumb on the sawn off shoulder blade of the torso. The cut was deep and there was a lot of blood. I was lifted back up the quay wall on the rope and held my hand up while one of the CID wrapped my handkerchief around it making a tourniquet. I was lowered back into the boat where I wrapped up and brought into the boat, the torso. At the City Mortuary my thumb was washed with Lysol and bandaged.

3<sup>rd</sup> April 1979

George received word that there was a body in the River at Windmillcroft. He then received word that the body was floating and that a Rope Boat was going to pick her up. He then

received a request to rush to the locus. On arrival he found that a motor car had been driven over the quay wall, a woman had surfaced from the car, two Policemen and some civilians had got hold of her with a boat hook and tried to lift her, but she had slipped off and sunk. Police Divers were searching the River for her while awaiting a crane to lift out the car. George decided that they should find the woman within a few yards of the car and returned to the wharf. At 1540 hours George received a request to return to Windmillcroft as soon as the Sub Aqua Unit had recovered the car, but no woman. He launched at 1620 hours and searched an area downstream of where the car had been as there was a witness to the body drifting before it sunk. He could find nothing. Everyone except Sergeant Angus McIvor, who was rowing the boat, departed for the night, enabling George to move back into the area where the car had been. At 2100 hours George recovered the woman's body about 10 feet from where the car had sunk. She was lifted into the boat, onto the quay wall, and after the Casualty Surgeon had attended, he returned home at 2300 hours.

4<sup>th</sup> April 1979

At 2130 hours George received word that there was a man in the River having jumped from the Jamaica Bridge.

He rushed out the boat and trailer but the Police vehicle that arrived had no tow bar. Taking ropes he was rushed to the locus. The man had floated under the Bridge so George tied a rope round the parapet and lowered himself so he could see under the arch. He saw the man swimming about. Police with the boat had not yet arrived so an attempt was made to get to the Port Authority boat, but this was thwarted by a 30-foot fence (after climbing a 20-foot fence). He returned to the Bridge to find that the man had now caught hold of a lifebelt that a Policeman had dropped and attempts were being made to pull him to the side. George shouted to them to keep the man talking while he took boards of plywood from a building site and laid them down the mud flats to the water. He slid down the boards on a rope half into the water and caught hold of the man and pulled him ashore. With Police assistance George walked the man up and down the road to restore circulation until the arrival of the Ambulance. My boat arrived but of course was fortunately not needed.

1st May 1979

Received word that a young man had entered the sewage pipe at the lower outflow of the sewage works on the north bank at Dalmarnock. Father and I attended and shouted up the pipe that the tide was rising and the youth would be trapped. We also commented on the disease from rats. The youth came out from the pipe, we passed him up to the waiting Police Officers who took charge of the situation.

27<sup>th</sup> May 1979

Shortly after 0800 hours I recovered the sailors' body about 30 feet from the quay wall under the bows of his ship. While carrying out this search I discovered that the quay wall ladders were in a dangerous condition. I reported this to the Dock Safety Officer. The dead man was English and had been out celebrating England's victory over Scotland at the Football that afternoon.

16<sup>th</sup> July 1979

At 0020 hours George received word that a man had drowned in the River at Mavisbank while trying to swim the River to escape from the Police. The young man had been involved in an incident in a Chinese restaurant at Paisley Road Toll. When the Police arrived he had ran away towards the River, dived in and swam across to the north bank. A Traffic Police Officer had climbed down a quay wall ladder on the north bank to assist the youth from the water. When the youth saw the Police Officer he turned and swam back to the centre of the River, where he sunk. I immediately started a search in the area but could find nothing. At 0630 hours Govan C.I.D. informed me that the drowned man could be the suspect in a murder inquiry. I continued the search. A Policeman shouted to me that a body had been seen in the River near to the Whiteinch Ferry steps. I rushed to the locus and recovered the body of a middle-aged man. I returned to Mavisbank and expanded my area of search. About 1440 hours I recovered the youths' body about 60 feet from the north quay wall. It was indeed the youth the CID was looking for. Birrell, Easterhouse. The Regional Crime Squad was in attendance when I recovered the body. On the Ferry steps we examined the body and looked at photographs. The youth had cut his hair very short and dyed it in an attempt to escape detection. 14hours 20mins searching the River.

27<sup>th</sup> July 1979

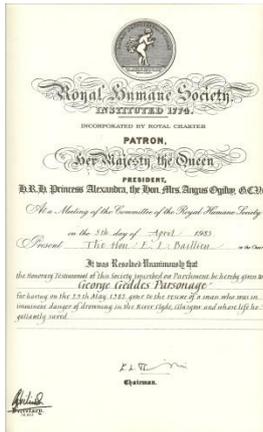
At 0755 hours George received word that a man had jumped from the George V Bridge and disappeared. The only witness had been about 400 yards away and they could not give an accurate location for searching. George commenced a search. About 1030 hours he heard a whistle blowing and realising that it was a lifejacket whistle, rowed his boat at speed across the River in time to rescue a workman who had fallen from the scaffolding under the Bridge. George was tending to this man when the cry went up that there was a man in the River at the Suspension Bridge, having jumped. He rowed upstream at speed passing the workmen's motor boat, and rescued this man. After lunch he resumed his search at the George V until 2000 hours.

8<sup>th</sup> August 1979

George recovered with difficulty a human leg from a ledge on Windmillcroft Quay, for Govan C.I.D. He also took samples of the surrounding debris and put it into plastic bags. The leg proved to be part of the Torso that we had taken from the River earlier this year.

1979 Ben Parsonage received presentation "With grateful appreciation" from The County Grand Orange Lodge of Glasgow.

1979 Rowers organised Ben Parsonage Memorial Regatta-cancelled due to floods



Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October 1979

## 0700 Ben Parsonage died of a heart attack at home in Glasgow Green

1980

1980- Letter -

Clyde Amateur Rowing Club  
Founded 1865  
Club House, The Weir, Glasgow Green.  
GLASGOW

7<sup>th</sup> April 80.

Dear George,

As you know, our club's annual Regatta is due to be held on the week-end of 26<sup>th</sup>/  
27<sup>th</sup> April 80.

We would very much like your family's permission to name one of the sculling events at this Regatta "The Ben Parsonage Memorial"

This club feels that this would be an appropriate step for us to take as it would go some way to keeping alive the memory of a man who for many years was a great friend to the club and also a great influence on our sport in Glasgow.

We would appreciate it if your family would consider our proposal and let us know your decision. If you agree, we would feature the event strongly in our Regatta programme.

Hoping all is well with you and your family.

Yours faithfully, Michael Haggerty Hon. Sec

8<sup>th</sup> May 1980

Continued Search

Gave assistance as requested to the weirman with the removal of wood  
Destroyed raft

At 1420 hours I received word that there was a body in the River at Fir Court. I raced to the locus and found the body of a man floating just below the surface. I roped him up and towed him back to our wharf. It was a very heavy tow. When we lifted him onto the barge we discovered that he had tied part of a wall (bricks and mortar), round his neck, which had probably choked him before he drowned. CID and Police Photographers attended. While we were on the barge someone shouted that a woman had jumped from the lower suspension

Bridge. We raced to the locus in a Police car only to find that it was a hoax. We returned to find the Undertakers in attendance. The body was removed to the Mortuary (see 2<sup>nd</sup> May)

At 2300 hours I received a call from Force Control that there was a body in the River at Cambuslang. A Landrover arrived and took me to the locus. From the Bridge an object could be seen below the water and a woman had said that (in daylight) it was a plastic bag with an arm sticking out of it. I launched the boat and after lifting the plastic bag verified that there was nothing in it. This occurred at Boggleshole Ford. I returned home around 0100 hours.

25<sup>th</sup> May 1980

At 0430 hours I was awakened by the sound of the doorbell being rung frantically. Two youths told me that there was a woman in the River on the south side upstream of the St Andrews Bridge. In bare feet and pyjamas I raced to her assistance, and assisted two other youths to pull her from the water. She was lapsing into unconsciousness. I brought her round and with one of the youths made her walk to keep circulation going. My sister Ann had phoned for Police and Ambulance, and then brought out blankets and sweet tea. We wrapped the woman and kept her moving and talking until the arrival of the Ambulance. She was removed to the Royal, and I returned home to get dried. In the morning the C ID spoke with me re this accident.

19<sup>th</sup> July 1980

At 1010 hours I received word that there was the body of a man in the River Cart at Linn Park. I proceeded to the locus and launched my boat. I lifted the body of a man, which I thought had only been in the water for only a few hours into my boat. Boat and body were lifted out. Returned home 1200 hours.

13<sup>th</sup> August 1980

At 0520 hours I received a call from the weirman that there was a body at the centre gate. I went there immediately and recovered the body of a young man. I towed it back to our wharf from where it was removed to the City Mortuary at 0730 hours.

At 1445 hours while out on the River assisting the Region Engineers with a bridge inspection, a Police Dog Branch Officer shouted to me that Force Control were trying to contact me. I returned to our wharf where I was informed that a woman had been drowned off the old Erskine Ferry slipway, South side. I attended at the locus. The Police Sub Aqua Unit were also in attendance. While they searched alongside the slipway where the woman had last been seen I searched further downstream and studied the currents, trying to make up my mind where, if at all, she would have been washed to. The Unit concluded their search and left. I moved to the locus at the side of the ramp and at 1850 hours I recovered the woman's body in about the exact spot given by the witness as to where the woman had sunk. I lifted her into my boat and the boat was lifted out. The body was removed to the City Mortuary and I returned home at 2000 hours.

24<sup>th</sup> August 1980

At 1200 hours I received a call from the weirman regards the keeping of his gates open for a sponsored race from Glasgow to Greenock. I told him just to shut his gates and not to let his water fall any lower, and I would check to see if I could find out anything about this row. I

discovered that the Glasgow Argonauts had indeed arranged a race but permission had been refused by the Port Authority. No one had thought to let the weir know.

15<sup>th</sup> November 1980

At 1630 hours I received word that a Clydesdale Rowing Club four had sunk at Dalmarnock. I rushed upriver in the speedboat. The Clydesdale launch had 3 oarsmen on board, 2 others were able to run down the banking as they had shoes with them. (so keeping warm). The Clydesdale launch could not manage to tow the sunken boat and cope with the now 5 adults on board. I took 3 oarsmen on board and returned them with haste to their club. (They did not have shoes so could not run back to the club). I then went back up river and helped with the retrieving of their racing boat as the launch was finding great difficulty with this manoeuvre. The Club President later phoned and thanked me for my assistance.

**1981**

27<sup>th</sup> February 1981

At 1715 hours while working in the garden in front of our house I noticed a woman wandering around the Park with no apparent good reason. I was suspicious and watched her. Sure enough about 1740 hours she climbed the fence onto the River banking. I ran as fast as I could the 200 yards or so to where she had disappeared, jumped the fencing, ran down the banking and was just in time to run into the water and grab hold of the woman who was wading in. I carried her up the banking, over the fence and made her walk to our house to keep warm. My sister Ann phoned for the Police while I looked after the woman until I thought her well enough to be given a seat by the fire to chat with mother. The woman was taken to Hospital at 1810 hours.

About 1925 hours after helping to mop up the water from the floor of the house, I sat down for my evening meal. The doorbell was rung and on opening it I was amazed to see the woman whom I had rescued earlier, standing there soaking wet. She fell into my arms shouting, "You were right, son, the water's too cold". I carried her into the house where Ann stripped and dried her and wrapped her up in dry blankets until the arrival of the Ambulance. This woman had not been admitted to Hospital the first time, the Police decided just to let her go and she had just walked down from the Station and jumped into the River. The cold water had made her change her mind and fortunately she made the bank and came to my house. This woman should have never been let out, as someone could have lost his or her life trying to save her.

7<sup>th</sup> March 1981

At 1330 hours a motor cruiser on its' way to Rutherglen Motor Boat Club could not pass under the St. Andrews Bridge due to the height of the water. The owner tied his boat to the bridge, a manoeuvre which was potentially dangerous, to await the tide falling. I had to intervene when one of the crew climbed onto the bridge and put himself in a dangerous position to remove a rope. Accompanied by a Police Officer, who just happened to be passing, I gave advice and assistance and about 1600hrs, the boat was again on it's' way to Rutherglen.

Strathclyde Bridge Engineers have asked if I ever see anyone tying a boat to the bridges, thus putting an awkward strain on the bridge that I request their immediate removal.

12<sup>th</sup> March 1981

Rescue of beginner sculler, out in floodwater, after dark.

At 1700 hours a car came speeding to the boatshed and the driver shouted that there was someone in the River at the weir. He raced me to the scene. A young boy had fallen from his sculling boat into the water and was clinging to the top of it. The boat was being held against the north gate of the weir by the strong current. An 8 from his club, Clyde A.R.C., were trying to pull the boy and the boat away from the weir gate but their attempts were failing. Using a rope I lowered myself onto the upturned boat beside the boy. I took hold of him and club members on the banking lifted us both onto the banking. After seeing that the boy was none the worse of his experience I came back to the wharf and went downstream in the lifeboat to retrieve the boys' sculling boat. The Club were informed that the boy being a beginner should not have been out on the River in such a current should not have been out after dark, and in fact no one should be out from a Rowing Club after dark. This boy was very lucky to have got out safely. As the rescue was taking place the weirman was lifting his gates starting with the south and moving across River, oblivious to what was happening on the other side of the River in the dark.

19<sup>th</sup> March 1981

At 1850 hours I observed an 8 from Clyde ARC rowing on the River in darkness and in unsafe conditions. I spoke to them pointing out that after last week's incident of the sculler capsizing (12.3.81) it would appear that their Club were flaunting safety procedures. They returned to their clubhouse.

16<sup>th</sup> May 1981

**Glasgow Argonauts Boat Club 15<sup>th</sup> April 1981**

Dear George, I am writing to you on behalf of Glasgow Argonauts Boat Club to inform you that we will be holding our summer regatta on the Clyde on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May between 1230pm and 5pm (approx. till entries in)

We will be using both the 1450metre and 500metre courses, please could you position two stake boats below Polmadie Bridge with the appropriate stagger around noon this day.

Yours faithfully signed Alex Snyder Regatta Secretary

PS Will you be Clerk of the Course? A

At 1650 hours I received a call from A. Division that my services were required to remove a body from the River at Yorkhill. On arrival at the locus I found that when the propeller of the old ferry moored there had been started a Police Officer who just happened to be on the Quay wall saw what he thought was a body float to the surface then sink again. I launched the boat and picked up what appeared to be parts of a stomach. I placed them well out of sight of the quay wall and requested that an expert be called in to say whether or not these remains were human. I commenced a search with grappling irons and after a few minutes picked up parts of a body. It was naked, and had one arm ripped off. It was slashed all over and there was no sign of legs or head. I carefully tied up the remains and brought them to the ferry steps. On arrival of the Casualty Surgeon we examined the body and discovered that there were legs and a head though they were hardly recognisable. I asked for and received the help of

Yorkhill Fire Brigade to place a tarpaulin under the body, tie it up and lift it up the ferry steps. The pieces I had found floating around were shovelled into plastic bags. I thought the body could have been in the River anything from 10 days upwards. CID photographers attended along with the Procurator Fiscal. I returned home about 2100 hours.

25<sup>th</sup> May 1981

At 2240 hours the doorbell was rung and a Police Officer informed me that there was a man in the River at the walkway. We hitched the trailer and sped down the Riverbank using lights and siren. We screeched to a halt on the Albert Bridge beside other Police cars. The man was under the archway; he had been thrown a lifebelt on a rope and was trying to hang onto this. I tied ropes to the parapet and climbed down into the water beside the man. The youth seemed unconscious but I soon brought him round. I took the rope off myself and fastened the youth up with it enabling the Police and members of the Public to lift the youth from the water and pull him across onto the north embankment where an Ambulance was waiting. On my shouted instructions they "walked" the youth to the Ambulance. By this time the Police were launching my boat and rowed out to where I was hanging onto the pier of the Bridge. I collected my ropes, the boat was put back on the trailer, and I returned home to get dry clothes. The lifeboat was holed during this rescue.

2<sup>nd</sup> June 1981

At 1400 hours I received a phone call from E. Division Control that youths were on the River on rafts at Belvidere. As I made ready to go to the locus I received a call telling me that the youths had dived off the rafts and swam to the opposite bank to escape from Police Officers. With a Police Officer in my boat I headed upstream. At Polmadie Bridge youths engaged in a gang fight started to stone us and we had to radio for assistance before proceeding upriver. At Rutherglen Motor Boat Club a member flagged us down and complained to the Police Officer about the wash being thrown up by the Clydesdale launch when passing their club, never slowing down. At Belvidere we found 3 youths back out on the rafts and about 40/50 youths watching from the bank, on seeing us 2 of the youths waded ashore and the third swam the short distance to the bank. All fortunately got out safely--- We sunk 4 of the rafts and brought 1 back to the wharf where Police examined it to see if they could find out where the youths were getting their material.

After a minor collision between 2 Club boats I warned of the dangerous practice of practice racing in unsafe conditions and of bad coxing. I have warned oarsmen repeatedly this month regards bad steering, racing through crowded spaces and generally not watching where they were going, therefore behaving dangerously.

At 2100 hours gave assistance as requested re occurrence in the Park.

20<sup>th</sup> September 1981

While at the wharf trying to cope with the torrential rain that was falling---a Police van arrived to inform me that I was needed at the Police Dog Training Centre in the Pollok Estate. I went there immediately and launched. The kennels were badly flooded, I ferried about 15 dogs, in ones and twos, to dry land where a mobile kennel van was waiting. I entered the flooded H.Q. turned off the electricity, helped move items to above the floodwater level and brought out food for the dogs.

9<sup>th</sup> November 1981

At 1500 hours a cat being chased by a dog fell from the St. Andrews Bridge into the River. I put on a large pair of gloves and rushed out and rescued the cat. Unfortunately its' back leg seemed to be broken and it would not stop bleeding and shivering. I took it to the E. Division Police Office where it was looked after.

## 1982

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January 1982

About 1020 hours I received word from Police Control that my services were required to remove the body of a man from the River Clyde next to the Shieldhall Sewage Works, I proceeded there immediately. The body was lying over a beam under the wharf about 15 feet down from the deck and about 15 feet above the water. I tied a rope round my waist and Police lowered me down to a position from where I could fasten the body up with ropes enabling us to lift the body to the deck. The Casualty Surgeon arrived and examined the body which was that of a middle aged man having been in the water for about 5 / 6 weeks.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 1982

About 1415 hours I found some obviously stolen goods on the river banking and handed them over to the Police.

About 1415 hours I observed someone swimming in the river near to the Monument. I dialled 999 for Police assistance then rushed downstream in the lifeboat. I saw youths, three in all, out of the river on to the banking beside about a dozen of their friends. By the time the Police arrived they had all moved into the park to join a Pop Group that was playing for a C. N. D. march. The Police took charge of the incident

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 1982

About 0730 hours I found a woman's handbag floating in the river upstream of the Suspension Bridge. I handed it over to the Police who left to check if the woman was missing. I received a call that the handbag had been stolen on Saturday night and that the woman was delighted to have it back.

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1982

0830 hours I received a report of a suspected body at the Kings Bridge. Investigation proved this to be a 4 ft pink teddy bear.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August 1982

I chased away from the river a reporter, who wished to take a photograph of persons on the river sitting on motorcar tyre inner tubes a craze seemingly sweeping America. I tried to explain to him of the terrible example this would be to children and requested that no matter where / if he managed to take this photograph, whether on a river, canal or pond, that he did not publish it. The photograph finally published was taken in a swimming pool, the proper place for stunts.

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December 1982

The Chief Ranger for Linn Park etc, called re the placing of lifebelts on the bridge over the River Cart, if I thought this a good idea. I gave advice on the positioning of the belts, the type of belt, the type of belt rope and telephoned dealers for prices. I also suggested small belts being carried in vehicles.

## 1983

1983 - George Parsonage awarded Royal Humane Society Honorary Testimonial on Parchment.



George Parsonage attended Premier of “Local Hero” guest of Twentieth Century Fox  
1983 I received word that a man had said that he was going to jump off Erskine Bridge. Fortunately a Police Officer had found the man huddled in a workman’s hut.

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 1983

I received a call from Superintendent Little of Pollok asking if I could help them at Princes Dock with the search for a woman missing from Govan. At 1500 hours I was taken to the locus by Police car. The ship that the missing woman was supposed to be trying to board was a large one rising 60 - 70 feet above the quay wall. It was moving backwards and forwards against the quay wall surging up and down due to high winds making the taking of a boat near it, for the meantime, too dangerous. I was told that the Police Underwater Unit had been searching round the stern of the boat, where the ladder used to board the ship was, for the past two weeks without finding anything. It was thought that if the woman was in the water she was either between the ship and the quay wall or under the ship. I searched as best I could from the quay wall without success.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 1983

At dawn I continued my search of the Clyde between Dalmarnock and the Tidal Weir. I then went to Govan where I watched a ship being taken downriver by tugs allowing me to observe just how much the Greek ship moved in and out from the quay wall. This enabled me to decide how far in I could take my boat between the ship and the wall without being crushed. After satisfying myself that the woman’s body was not lying between the ship and the quay wall amidships I decided to work from my boat. Before I could do so Chief Superintendent McNally sent me for. At Govan Police H.Q. Mr. McNally and Detective Superintendent Leitch asked if I could possibly search underneath the ship, as it appeared that that was possibly where the body lay. They were extremely anxious to find this woman, as there were now suspicions that she could be found elsewhere and searches of the ships in the vicinity, and the surrounding dock land were in progress. I said that I thought that the woman’s body should be below the ladder of the ship at the stern of the boat (if she was in the water). If I did not find her there I would do as they requested though due to the shape of the ship I thought it unlikely that she would be found underneath. I commenced my search from the boat and after 15 minutes recovered the woman’s body directly below the ladder.

I arranged for the Police to have removed an abandoned car that had been left blocking the access to the emergency steps at Finnieston.--Note this was after an intensive search by Police Divers.

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 1983

Continued search.

Gave assistance to Region Roads Dept. When St Andrews Bridge roof was blown off.  
Tuesday 5th July 1983.

Gave advice when members of Clyde and Clydesdale Clubs started arguing about practice racing on the 500 metre straight.

Dear George,

It is my great pleasure to inform you that at our Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November 1983, Ralph Gillies proposed and David George seconded a motion to elect you as the Club's Honorary President.

This motion was passed unanimously.

I would be glad for you to accept this motion and hope that this action will help to cement the good relationship that this club has enjoyed with the Parsonage family.

Yours, with kindest regards  
Michael Haggerty.  
Hon. Sec.  
Clyde ARC

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> February 1984

About 2210 hours I received word from Force Control that there was a man in the river at the George V Bridge. Almost immediately a Police range Rover arrived. The boat was launched at the Finnieston steps and as I raced upriver I spotted the man's body floating just under the surface. I lifted him in to the boat but all attempts to resuscitate him were in vain. I returned to Finnieston where the Casualty Surgeon was in attendance. The body was removed to the City Mortuary.

Reported that the emergency steps below the George V Bridge were covered in heavy crude oil

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March 1984

While at this locus I found and destroyed a large raft made from beer barrels, wood, wire and rope. It had the words "Powered by booze" on it and was obviously from a raft race

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> March 1984

While searching round the river about 0730 hours I came across a raft of wood and oil drums. I dismantled the raft and sank the oil drums.

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April 1984

While searching the river for any sign of the old woman missing January 11<sup>th</sup>. I found a large bath with a dummy in it which children were playing with. I removed the bath and the dummy made from a boiler suit stuffed with old clothes, a scarf, wooden feet with shoes and a black leather coat, was removed for disposal by the Cleansing Department.

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April 1984

About 1200 hours I received word that a coach of the Clyde Rowing Club had injured his back and was lying on the tow path at Dalmarnock where he had fallen off his bicycle. I rushed upriver in the rescue launch lifted him carefully into the launch and brought him downriver to the wharf. I placed him on a stretcher and with the assistance of a member of the public carried him to the house where my sister and I attended to him as best we could until the arrival of the Red Cross who were in the Park for a Fun Run and then on their advice I summoned an ambulance which removed him to the Royal Infirmary.

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 1984

About 1750 hours I was informed by Police that a boy of 3 had fallen into the river at Belvidere while trying to retrieve his football. A passing oarsman had rescued him and a member of the public and it was requested that I retrieve the football, which was still floating down the river. On route to remove the ball I received word that young boys were out on the river on blocks of polystyrene near to where the boy of 3 had almost drowned. After notifying Force Control I continued upriver and rescued a youth of about 18 years from off a piece of polystyrene on which he was precariously balanced. Amid a barrage of missiles and abuse I gathered dozens of sheets of polystyrene into my boat, some as large as 12 ft. X 5 ft., also oil drums, beer kegs and wooden palettes and with Police assistance brought them downstream to the wharf for disposal. I also removed the child's ball. I requested of the media that they carry warnings against this type of behaviour - B.B.C Radio Scotland obliged.

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April 1984

About 1830 hours I received word that there were boys on the river at Dalmarnock on rafts. I met Police at the locus and removed 4 rafts made from old doors, polystyrene and wooden palettes, which were brought down to our wharf for disposal.

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 1984

At 0700 hours removed raft of doors and polystyrene from the river at Dalmarnock.

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 1984

As a result of the article carried in the Sunday Post,  
Removed raft from river.

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 1984

I was called to Rutherglen to remove two large rafts that were being used by children on the river.

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 1984

About 0255 hours I received word from Force Control that there was a man in the river at the Jamaica Bridge. A towing vehicle picked me up immediately. On arrival at the locus I observed a person in the centre of the river trying to hang on to a lifeline that had been

dropped from the bridge. Immediate assessment of the situation told me that the youth in the water was in fact lapsing into unconsciousness and I decided to ask the Police to launch my boat themselves while I threw ropes over the parapet and slid down into the water beside the youth. I resuscitated the youth and as my boat had not had time to be launched I fastened ropes under his arms hoping to lift him upward on to the bridge. The youth was so terrified that he clung desperately to me and I decided the risk of the ropes holding both our weights during a "lift" was too great, so I fought to keep him conscious and us both afloat until my boat arrived. I climbed into the boat and lifted the youth after me. I directed the Policeman in the correct aftercare of the man while I took the oars and sprinted to the quayside where an ambulance was waiting to remove the man to hospital. My boat was lifted from the water and placed on its' trailer back in readiness for its' next call and I returned home to get dry clothes.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1984

Prevented collision between racing craft.

About 1400 hours I observed a youth from Glasgow Rowing Club capsize his sculling boat below the St. Andrew's Suspension Bridge. I raced to his assistance, lifted him into my boat and returned him and his boat to his clubhouse.

About 1430 hours I observed another youth from the Glasgow Rowing Club capsize his sculling boat about 100 yards downstream of our wharf. I raced to his assistance, lifted him into my boat and returned him and his boat to his clubhouse.

About 1445 hours I observed a third youth from the Glasgow Rowing Club capsize his sculling boat near to the King's Bridge. I raced to his assistance, lifted him into my boat and returned him and his boat to his clubhouse.

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 1984.

Removed and destroyed raft.

Removed from the river at Belvidere a home made but well made diving board that children were using

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1984

From 0730 hours to 1550 hours gave assistance to Strathclyde Region Bridge Engineers.

Police contacted me while on the river at the Jamaica Bridge informing me that a youth had drowned at Belvidere. I came upstream to the back of the weir, a Police car then drove me to the wharf and I continued to the locus at the Clyde Iron Works in the motor launch. En route I chased 4 young boys from a raft at Riverside School. Together with Police, a search was made of the river and the boy's body recovered. The 17-year-old had been swimming.

I removed from the river at this locus 3 motor car inside tubes that adults and children, even a mother with her baby, were using to float on the river.

En route back to the wharf, a Police Officer and I removed from the river 12 inside tubes, 1 raft of old doors and polystyrene, several sheets of polystyrene, 3 lifebelts and 4 lifebelt ropes.

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August 1984

About 1600 hours I observed 4 young men hanging around the centre of the Suspension Bridge in a manner that caused me to stop what I was doing and watch them. After some arguing one of the youths took off most of his clothing and dressed only in T shirt and underpants mounted the parapet. Immediately realising he had been "dared" to jump into the river I blew my whistle and shouted an order, instructing him to come off the parapet

immediately and put his clothes on. I was quite surprised when he complied immediately. His friends though seemed ready to cause trouble but after I had spoken to them of the dangers their friend would have put himself in and of the fact that children could try to copy him, they left.

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November 1984

At 2100 hours the doorbell was rung by a man who was close to collapse and with his face all blood. I carried him to a seat in front of the fire as he was soaking wet and shivering badly. I tended to his wounds while my sister, Ann, gave him hot tea and wrapped him in blankets. Ambulance and Police were summoned. This man had collapsed unwell in the Park some 3 hours ago and lain there in torrential rain until he came to and was able to crawl to our door. He was removed to the Royal Infirmary.

Written during 1985; there is much room for improvement and perhaps the time is looming closer when enforcement of safety procedures will have to be a reality.

The River must not be allowed to become a free for all.

1. Speedboats banned except for emergency
2. A Dead Slow speed limit enforced
3. More fishing platforms built and public asked to use them
4. A strict enforcement of the rule that prevents persons launching a boat off the banking or taking on board or disembarking passengers other than at a licensed landing stage
5. No unauthorised use of the River after lighting up time
6. All River users to be members of and boat from a club
7. Unless where totally impractical, all River users should wear life jackets or buoyancy aids
8. Licensing of all River craft

## **1985**

6th January 1985

About 10.35 hours while working at the Boatshed I heard the screeching of brakes and the slamming of car doors. I ran from the shed and observed Police Officers running down the banking towards me. They shouted that a youth was stranded on the small "island" in the centre of the River at Belvidere. I raced upriver in the Rescue Launch and brought the youth from the tiny island of rocks and bricks where he was huddled. As he was suffering badly from hypothermia I wrapped him in "space" blankets, some of my clothes and a Police Sergeants coat. I was in the process of bringing the youth downriver in my boat when I heard over the Police radio that there was a Police vehicle in the area. At my request it attended and rushed the youth to his clubhouse, Clydesdale, where he could get a hot spray and where I knew there was a Doctor in attendance. The youth had been out sculling from the Clydesdale A.R.C. and although a comparative beginner had been at the locus, 3 1/2 miles from his clubhouse, unaccompanied. Having smashed his boat in two on the "island" he had clambered onto the rubble and was fortunate that someone saw him and telephoned the Police I retrieved the remains of his boat and returned it to his clubhouse. This was a case of the youth either not paying enough attention to where he was going or not being competent enough to handle his boat in the currents prevalent at that locus. I gave a statement as requested to E Division Police.

16th January 1985

Reported to E Division Police that a fiat caravanette ENS 449T had been driven into the River near Shore Street. I had checked that it was empty.

31st January 1985

I observed what at first glance was obviously a body in the River at the North Gate of the Tidal Weir, further investigation proved it to be only that of a life size teddy bear dressed in human clothes. In its waterlogged state it proved too heavy to lift into my boat, so I broke it up so that no one else could mistake it for a body as I had done.

Saturday 16th March 1985

Removed wooden stakes from the River. Recovered stolen goods. Clerk of the Course Clydesdale A.R.C. Head of the River for Fours.

About 13.50 hours a Police vehicle arrived at the wharf and I was informed that my services were required at Dalbeth to remove a body from the River. I proceeded upriver in the Rescue Launch to Dalbeth but could find no sign of an occurrence. A phone call from a nearby farm to force control enlightened me that the locus was actually Daldowie. As there are Falls on the River between Dalbeth and Daldowie I returned to the wharf where I was picked up by range rover and with boat on trailer arrived at the locus. The body was lying beside a tree on the north bank in a very decomposed state. With difficulty and great care I cut the clothing that was wrapped round tree branches to free the body. Half the head and the back was skeleton and I had to be very careful not to break it up as I brought it across the River to the south bank which was the only suitable place to lift the body from the water. After lifting the body onto the banking, examination proved it to be that of a woman with reddish brown hair, floral dress and green coat. In my opinion she had been in the River 8-12 months. I returned home about 16.00 hours. Received word that there was a body 100 yards east of Rutherglen Bridge on the north bank. This proved to be only the body of a dog. Police took charge of this incident.

Wednesday 3rd April 1985

About 07.00 hours I went upstream to retrieve a lifebelt and lifebelt rope that had been reported floating in the River. Returning downstream, at a point about 150 yards west of the St. Andrews Bridge I was amazed to see bobbing up and down in front of me on the River, the head and shoulders of a man. I swung the boat alongside him and lifted him on board. Having checked that he was breathing I wrapped him in "space" blankets and sped back to our wharf. I shouted for members of the public to run to the house and ask my sister Ann to telephone for an ambulance. I brought the man from the boat and with the assistance of a passing youth walked the man up and down the road for a few minutes to improve his circulation before taking him into the house where Ann helped me wrap him in dry blankets and sit him in front of the fire. The man told us that he was a patient in the psychiatric unit of Duke Street Hospital, he had ran out at breakfast time and thrown himself in the River as he was terribly depressed. I had to watch him carefully as his mood changed from being heartbroken to one of trying to escape again. Ambulance and Police attended and removed him to the Royal Infirmary.

Clydesdale Amateur Rowing Club, Instituted 1857

Glasgow 7<sup>th</sup> April 1985

Dear George,

On behalf of the committee may I express our sincere thanks to you for the kind presentation of the life belt?

I have felt for some time now that as a club engaged in water sport we should have a life belt for the obvious safety reasons.

Once again our sincere thanks.

Yours sincerely signed Thomas R. Findlay Honorary Secretary

Thursday 9th May 1985

About 20.00 hours I observed a body floating just downstream of Polmadie Bridge. It appeared to be that of a woman in a floral dress, with a plastic bag over the head. Fortunately as I proceeded to rope it up I found it to be a large dog dressed up.

22nd May 1985

Removed raft material from the River at Dalmarnock.

Retrieved stolen goods at Polmadie for E Division C. I. D. At 15.40 hours my sister Ann received a call from Force Control that a man had fallen into the River at the Albert Bridge. Ann shouted the message out of the window to where I was beside my car in the process of running in to answer the phone. I raced in my car to the locus and with Police searched the banks and even lowered myself over the bridge on a rope to see if anyone was floating below the arches. As we radioed for further information a message was received that there had been a mistake in the bridges, it was the Kings Bridge 1 mile upstream. I sprinted to my car, drove to the wharf and within seconds was at the new locus by boat but although I reached the man before he sank I was unable to bring him round. He had been floating face down for too long. An ambulance attended and removed the body. While I had been at the Albert Bridge Ann had been arranging "back up" and had pushed the trailer and boat out to meet the range rover she had summoned. This of course was now not needed.

Sunday 26th May 1985

About 09.30 hours I removed the remains of a raft from the River at Glasgow Green. 17.00 hours I removed a purse and documents from the River at Rutherglen Bridge. E Division Police attended and checked that the woman, whose name was in the purse, was not missing. Indeed she had shortly before reported her handbag and purse stolen.

Saturday 31st May 1985

Removed oil drums from the River. About 18.30 hours I observed a car stopped at the Kings Bridge its occupants down at the waters edge with a plastic bag into which they put the body of a cat. They then threw the bag into the River. I rowed to the locus and suggested that there were surely more humane ways to get rid of an animal and pointed out some of the many reasons why animals should not be put in the River. I was in reply subjected to a terrible torrent of abuse and threats that the man would do the same to me as he had done to the cat. The man followed me along the towpath in his car shouting, swearing and uttering threats. I landed at the wharf and summoned Police assistance. Unfortunately the man drove off before Police arrived. I removed the body of the cat in the bag.

Saturday 7th June 1985

A woman playing with her dog on the St. Andrews Bridge accidentally threw the dog's ball into the River. She started to climb the fence to go down the bank to attempt to retrieve her ball but I stopped her and went out myself in the lifeboat and retrieved it for her. Requested of Regional Official that the old ferry steps at Queens and Princes Docks be kept and maintained

2nd September 1985

Removed beer cylinder from River. Spoke to official from Clyde A. R. C. re coxes being used who were too small to see where they were going.

**1986**

George Parsonage received presentation from Police Mounted Branch

**1990**



1990 Glasgow Humane Society 200yr Anniversary honoured by Glasgow City Council

1990 Glasgow Humane Society 200yr Anniversary honoured by Strathclyde Regional Council



1990 Glasgow Humane Society honoured from United States of America



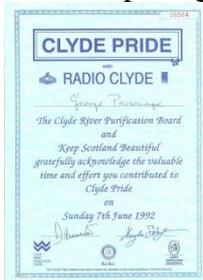
1990 Service in Glasgow Cathedral to mark the 200yrs of Glasgow Humane Society



1990 Parsonage Row called after Benjamin Parsonage, Parsonage Square called after George Parsonage



1991 Opening of New Boathouse



1992 Glasgow Humane Society awarded certificate from Clyde Pride



1995 George Parsonage presented with plaque at the opening of the Foyle Search and Rescue "A Guiding Light, An Inspiration, A Friend"



1996 Sarah Parsonage (Ben's wife) awarded Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police Commendation.



**1997** Firemaster's Lunch in Honour of the Glasgow Humane Society



**1998** George Parsonage awarded St Mungo Medal

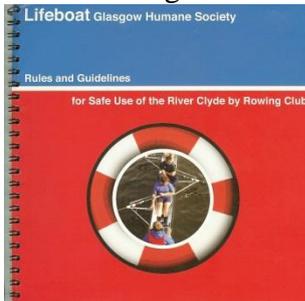
**1998** Founder members of Glasgow City Council Water Safety Group



**1998** George Parsonage awarded certificate from Strathclyde Police A Division



**1999** George Parsonage awarded Member British Empire (M.B.E.)



**1999** Glasgow Humane Society produces Rules and Guidelines for Safe use of the River Clyde by Rowing Clubs

#### 4. The Twenty First Century



**2002** George Parsonage awarded Queens Golden Jubilee Medal  
Golden Jubilee Award from Maritime and Coastguard Agency



**2004** George Parsonage awarded Honorary Testimonial of the Royal Humane Society



Various Police groups gave George Parsonage gifts marking the long working relationship



**2004** George Parsonage given presentation from Glasgow Humane Society for 25yrs as Officer



**2004** Presentation to George Parsonage from REME School of Electrical & Mechanical Engineering



**2005** George Parsonage awarded Royal Humane Society Special Silver Medal.

**2005**

Glasgow Humane Society went from being the Dedicated resource for the Greater Glasgow area for waterway rescue to being an Additional resource allowing more time concentrate on Prevention of Waterway Accidents but still be available for Rescue and Recovery in their immediate area (tidal weir and pipe bridge at Glasgow Green to the eastward (upstream) navigable tidal limit



**2003-2005** Mark Gash Temporary Assistant Officer to George Parsonage



**2005-2006** Edward McGowan Temporary Assistant Officer to George Parsonage



**2006** George Parsonage awarded Service Cross of the Royal Life Saving Society



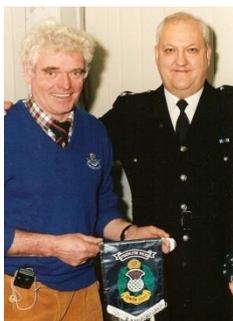
**2006** George Parsonage awarded Honorary Doctorate of Strathclyde University



**2006** George Parsonage awarded Honorary Degree Master of the Glasgow Caledonian University



**2007** George Parsonage presented with Clydesdale ARC 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Medal



**2010** George Parsonage given pennant from Strathclyde Police A Div.



**2010** Lifeboat “Bennie” decommissioned and taken to Riverside Museum



**2011** Riverman Appeal Launched



**2011** Glasgow Humane Society given Environmental Award from Glasgow City Council



**2006- 2012** Antony Coia Part Time Temporary Assistant Officer to George Parsonage

**2009** George Parsonage presented with Quach from Whitehill School F.P. Dinner Club



**2012** George Parsonage and Antony Coia awarded Queens Diamond Jubilee Medal



**2012** Glasgow Humane Society takes part in Queens Jubilee Pageant on River Thames.



**2013** George Parsonage presented with Henley Royal Regatta 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Medal



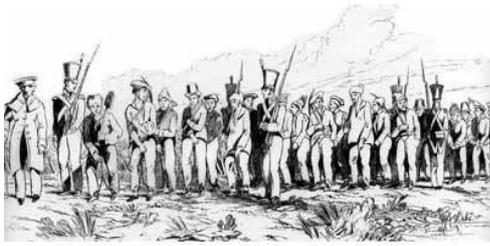
**2013** Ben Parsonage 11 Part time Temporary assistant Officer to George Parsonage



**2015** William Graham appointed Officer alongside consultant Officer George Parsonage

**2015** G Parsonage received present of Flag from Sebina Rowing Club Italy

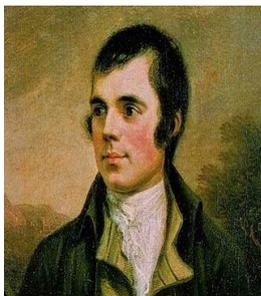
## 5. Context and Comparison: The World and the Glasgow Humane Society



a convict chain gang in Sydney, New South Wales



**1788** Convicts landed in Australia. Charles Edward Stuart died. Sir Robert Peel born



**1790** When the Glasgow Humane Society was founded Burns was still writing Tam O'Shanter, Catherine the Great reigned over all Russia while the French Royal family were in Versailles, Mozart was composing. Flora MacDonald died.



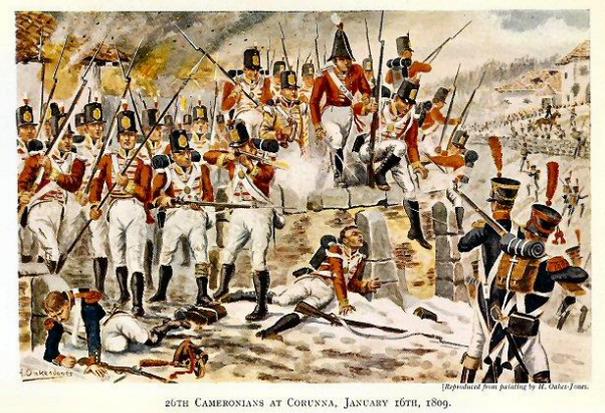
Forth and Clyde Canal opened.

- 1791** The Symphony No. 94 the so-called London symphony was written by Joseph Haydn. It is popularly known as the Surprise Symphony.
- 1797** Birth of Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales. She was the only child of George, Prince of Wales (later to become King George IV) and Caroline of Brunswick
- 1798** The Irish Rebellion led by the United Irishmen against British rule began.
- 1799** Joseph Black FRSE FRCPE FPSG who died on the 6 December 1799 was a Scottish physician and chemist, known for his discoveries of magnesium, latent heat, specific heat, and carbon dioxide. He was Professor of Anatomy and Chemistry at the University of Glasgow for 10 years from 1756, and then Professor of Medicine and Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh from 1766, teaching and lecturing there for more than 30 years. The chemistry buildings at both the University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow are named after Black.
- 1802** Stewart's editions of Burns' poems were published.



- 1803** May 18<sup>th</sup> Britain declares war on France after Napoleon Bonaparte continues interfering in Italy and Switzerland.
- 1804** The High Possil meteorite fell on the morning of Thursday, 5 April **1804**, in a quarry near High Possil, on the northern outskirts of Glasgow. The High Possil meteorite is one of only four ever to have been found in Scotland. Glasgow Humane Society Officers recovered a number of persons over the years from the Possil Quarry.
- 1805** Scots who led the way at Trafalgar were: Captain George Duff, of Mars; Rear Admiral William Carnegie, Earl of Northesk, on Britannia; Captain Philip Durham, of Defiance; Captain William Rutherford, on Swiftsure, and Captain George Hope, in charge of Defence. Below them were thousands of experienced and talented Scottish seamen who were seen as the backbone of the Royal Navy.

Subsequently a monument was erected to Lord Nelson in Glasgow Green.



**1809** Many Glasgow men fought at the Battle of Corunna in **1809**, the year that Abraham Lincoln, Alfred Tennyson, Charles Darwin, Felix Mendelssohn were born.



**1837** Queen Victoria came to the throne