

# TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 30



## *“THE GLASGOW SPACEMAN”*

This tale may not appeal as much to people who do not know the area of Glasgow around the river though I am sure you will all have local areas where the same thing has happened.

Someone asked me the other day about Bogleshole Ford and whether or not there were “Bogles” in it. Bogleshole Ford is at Cambuslang. When the river was not in spate the shallows could be crossed at low water (before the present bridges were built). Many people did cross the Ford here, but many others who tried to cross when there was floodwater on the river, were swept away and drowned including horses still harnessed to their carts and often the cart driver. (Carter drowned on 11th June 1863 while endeavouring to cross the river with two horses and carts at Bogleshole Ford)

It can be an eerie place and I have had the sad business of removing the remains of someone who was murdered by drowning at this spot. Do the spirits of the Carters and the murdered haunt the place? It is now a haunt of Kingfishers, Cormorants and Herons.



Working up and down the river we used special names for certain areas; the rowers on the river certainly gave names to areas of banking where they turned to come back down or where they wished to put in a sprint during a race or just to identify where they were. Just upstream of Rutherglen Bridge was the Scottish Co-operative Brush Factory, a large building with large letters SCWS (Wholesale Society) on the side; some rowers referred to this as the “Brush Factory” and others as the SCWS. When it was pulled down, next to it were two factories producing toffee bars—Carson’s and Cowan’s—so people referred to the area as Carson’s or Cowan’s depending on what club they belonged to—for example—we are just going for a paddle up to Cowan’s Bend. But just a matter of yards away was Strathclyde School, an imposing red sand stone building (still there) which would have been an easier and more obvious land mark; but where’s the fun in that.



When we started to race over 2500 meter, the start was at the Sewage Works bend—but that was not good enough, so when a fence was erected and painted blue, the start area was known as the “Blue Fence”—but someone came along and stole the railing for scrap. Fortunately some graffiti artists had painted a large “Spaceman” on the wall of the Sewage Works and so the start

area immediately became known as the “Spaceman”. It has recently been painted out by officials claiming they are trying to keep the area tidy-why?—we all liked the Spaceman- and goodness knows what the rowers are going to call the area now. Calling the area after the street nearby, “Shore Street” would be too simple.



We have problems as to what to call the area where the Dalmarnock Power Station was. It has been demolished and as yet nothing has been built in its place, it’s a kind of no man’s land for names. The nearest we have got to naming it is “where the fishermen sit”.

Just upstream where our 4000 meter Head of the River Races start, we now have the Games Village (so called because it was built for our 2014 Commonwealth Games) and upriver from that we have an area which was, and still is, known by some as “Belvidere” (used to be a large Hospital called Belvidere on the banking). We also have on the south bank, “Cunningar” which is really waste ground turned into a large woodland park.



Fortunately the wooden stumps of the “Bogie Bridge” are still in place. Rowers do not go upstream as far as this, they turn before the Bogie Bridge as the remaining stumps lie just on or just below the water level and many a racing craft has come to a sticky (or should that be fragmented) end on the stumps and ended up included in my “Standing Boats” sculpture that stands as a warning to those who do not heed the Rules. The “Bogie Bridge” was used to for the Pit Ponies to pull that carts on rails across from the Pits in Rutherglen to London Road on the north bank



Bogle must not be confused with Bogie. A “Bogle” is a “phantom, goblin, ghost or folkloric being”, whereas a Bogie is “an undercarriage with four or six wheels pivoted beneath the end of a railway vehicle”

We spend money having artists endow our walls with “Murals” and we spend money having items like the “Spaceman” classified as “Graffiti” removed. Who I wonder decides what is Art?

Perhaps we should run an Art Competition for someone to design and paint a new “Spaceman” or perhaps something that no one has yet thought of will spring up here and give us a new name to our starting point.

