



TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 59



A TALE OF TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

The first photo was taken in the early 1950's from the top of the Co-operative building



You will note that there is a centre rail on the Bridge and a centre light hanging from two semi-circular girders. The bridge at this time was painted Mid Brunswick Green. I remember the centre light being gas. Most of the lighting in the Park up until the late 1950's was by gas. The clubhouses along the riverside all used gas, and I remember a group with electric guitars looking very sheepish when they turned up expecting to play at a dance in one of the buildings.



The centre rail on the bridge used to be vaulted over by young men showing off to their girlfriends. One time half the bridge was being repaired and a youth scissor vaulted over only to disappear from view down into the river with a big splash as there was no flooring on the other side. He was immediately rescued by Bennie Parsonage.

There are wooden Barges on the banking next to Bridge, being repaired. They were floated onto the banking during a very high tide then lifted using old railway jacks and Bennie crawled underneath to do necessary repairs, mostly plank replacement and caulking.



Jacks

Drill

Caulking

I can just be seen outside the left shed repairing my bicycle.

The old wooden shed on right is where Bennie built his boats, after he drew the plans out in chalk on the floor. He had an ancient circular saw in this shed and a “caw the haunle” boring machine (drill). The shed was not long enough to take the steel bands necessary for the keel of a boat, so Bennie bored a hole in the shed wall through which the steel was fed into the machine. I often had the job of standing outside feeding the metal through the hole.

No trees were planted on sloping bank of river. Those we see now are all self seeders and their roots are responsible for breaking up the bank stone work.

There is an old railway shed on the left which stored oars and a multitude on necessary equipment for boatbuilding, oar-making and, of course, the ongoing work of the Society.

At the top of the stairs to the south carriageway there is a wooden sliding gate. At the foot there is a noticeboard advertising boats for hire, some of which I remember; Bella, Sally, Rhina, Fin, Grey Fin, Wendy Edward and Ann.

The original jetty is pictured with its wooden piles, some of which still exist.

The pathway to the left of the picture was for some obscure reason taken away during refurbishment of the Park. This was the pathway that Bennie used to

push the boat on trailer down during hours of darkness from the house garden in order to get to the weir for a rescue.

Just out of the picture to the left were allotments and an open air Bandstand



The second photo is an aerial shot taken around 1964



In the foreground we have the turrets of the Co-operative Bakery in McNeill Street. This beautiful building should never have been knocked down and, indeed, would have made the most wonderful transport museum. The building had a massive basement. It also had a central hall right up to the roof, ideal for a museum. A mainly red and yellow brick building it was a perfect match for Templeton's on the opposite side of the Park. And the hot morning rolls were delicious.



The St Andrews Bridge no longer has no centre rail or hanging light.

The wooden shed next to the Bridge has been replaced by an old prefab. Bennie built the prefab himself. It came in sections about 18 inches wide and 8^{ft} high. Bennie lifted them into place and I held them there while Bennie bolted them together. Shutters were made for the window which were on hinges and were closed up and bolted every evening and lowered again in the morning.

Note the Connemara /chestnut fencing around the area outside the House and the area filled with hedge bushes.

The old railway shed is still on the left. Bennie purchased many wooden sheds (as an old one became unusable). The one I remember most was an old army shed which had been near the river upstream. Bennie numbered each section,, dismantled it, dragged it to the river, made a raft of the parts, floated it downstream and lifted it out of the water to rebuilt.

There are 32 boats in the picture. Every hiring boat was at some time or other used for the work of the Glasgow Humane Society, often lifted onto lorries to be moved to some distant waterway where Bennie was required to make a recovery.

The steps down from the gate in both pictures are in the very same place as today.