

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 54



THE DOG'S CHRISTMAS

Christmas Day for the Humane Society family over the years has varied from normal family enjoyment, to mundane regular prevention work, to sad incidents on our Glasgow waterways.

Around 1900 the Humane Society Officer would probably have been at Hogganfield Loch on Christmas Day measuring the thickness of the ice as requested by the Council.



Sometimes Christmas Day would be spent dealing with a hoax call out.

Some Christmas Days were spent rescuing scullers who had ventured out onto the river for a holiday row. Some were spent just watching the river users, advising on safety and being ready to assist as necessary.

A man rescued at the Kings Bridge really surprised his family as they thought he was at home in Edinburgh where they expected to visit him for Christmas.

There was the usual retrieval of lifebelts and ropes, the removal of beer kegs, footballs, gas cylinders and other possible raft building material and the reporting of tar oil and other waste, in the water. Removing trees

from where they had been lodged on the piers of bridges. Bennie had been called out one Christmas Day to recover stolen goods and on others to look for lost property.



On Friday 25th December 1992 around 0355hrs, just after Santa had been, George received word that someone had entered the river at the Lower Suspension Bridge and a car was already on its way. The boat was launched at the George 5th Bridge steps, a tricky manoeuvre at the best of times, even more so when in a hurry. George and a Police Officer, did retrieve a lifebelt and rope, but could find no sign of anything else. No one had actually seen anyone enter the river; there had been no tell tale ripples. No one had heard a splash and bouncers from a nearby disco said they had been on the quay wall for the past hour and had not seen or heard anything. It was presumed the “call” had been a “mistake”. George decided to row the boat downriver to the Finnieston Steps to lift it from the water rather than use the “tricky” G5 steps again. So George and the Police Officer took a Christmas morning sail downriver. As they passed a culvert on the north bank lying between the George 5th and Kingston Bridges, a culvert from which several large pipes come out into the river, they heard whimpering from up inside the culvert. George rowed in closer and the Police Officer shone his torch up the culvert and lit up the eyes of a dog. The poor thing was shivering and obviously very frightened. Try as they could, the dog would not come towards them. They knew that if they did not rescue it, the dog would be trapped and drowned when the tide rose again and covered the culvert, which extends for some 30metres back from the river.



Some other Police Officers alerted to the dog's predicament, were dropping food down into the boat from the quay wall, but the dog seemed too terrified to come out even for food; which included an evening meal from the Tuxedo Princess (a ship that was moored nearby as a floating nightclub.



Finally, George decided to enter the culvert on foot, and crawling along one of the pipes, he managed to catch hold of the poor animal, make his way back down the pipe and pass the dog into the waiting hands of the Policeman. The dog did now accept some Christmas pie. George rowing, Policeman cradling the dog, they arrived at Finnieston where eager hands took the dog off to a warm environment and a good Christmas tuck in.

Now if it had not been for a "hoax" or "mistake" call out, George would not have been rowing past the culvert. No one would have heard the whines, and no one would have known to go to the dog's assistance before the tide rose.

**THE RIVERMEN WISH YOU A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**