

# TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 47



## Stranger than fiction

It was a quiet winter's day in Glasgow and in Partick Police Office no one really wished to go outside as it was below freezing and there was ice on the ground. A member of the public wanders into the station, a person, well known to the Police for making up stories and at this time of year knew that he could always get a heat in the station while he told his latest tale.

He claimed that he had been out bird watching and had been fighting his way down the banks of the River Kelvin through the bushes and fallen trees towards Kelvingrove Park when he saw two skeletal legs sticking straight up out of the river with shoes on the feet. The tale of the skeleton was interspersed with stories of the various feathered friends he had seen that day. The Officer behind the bar duly filled in a form making a report and saying that someone would look into it as soon as an Officer became available.

After a conversation about the pleasures of bird watching, the man left the station and the Policeman filed the report.

Sometime later the "birdwatcher" wanders back into the station carrying a poly bag. "What do you want this time" says the Officer. "You did not believe me" says the "bird watcher" and proceeds to lift a shoe out of the poly bag and place it on the counter.

There was a deadly silence as the shoe had the skeleton of a foot inside it. The "birdwatcher" had returned to the river re-climbed the fencing, walked back down the banking to where he had seen the skeleton, taken hold of one of the shoes and wrenched it off the leg. As you can imagine he was now taken seriously.



Uniformed Officers, CID, Scenes of Crime etc. were summoned from their warm offices and reported to the freezing banks of the river Kelvin.

Needless to say Ben Parsonage was sent for, boat towed to the locus, launched and Bennie was soon on the Kelvin alongside the skeleton.



Ladders were placed from the banking up to the railing along the path edge to allow the various experts to climb down onto the banking and view the spectacle. Searchlights were set up as darkness fell early these days.

The legs were sticking up in the air, one with a foot and a shoe and the other without. It was difficult to say what was below the waist of the skeleton as the area was frozen solid. Bennie got to work with an axe and a spade and carefully cut around the area where the rest of the body should be. Sure enough a complete body was unearthed in almost perfect condition and a short time later the entire body/skeleton was removed. Except of course for the missing foot and shoe, the body was in perfect condition thanks to Bennie's expertise. It was very strange to see a body which from the waist down was a skeleton and from the waist upwards was perfectly preserved in the ice.



This person had probably entered the river during a spell of floodwater some weeks earlier and been washed downriver. The head and trunk being the heavy part of the body was hanging down low in the water and when the body was tangled up in overhanging tree branches it had hung vertically upside down against these branches. The body was now in the water half below the surface and half above. The river had frozen at the edges including the area where the body lay. Thus the area of body from the waist to the head had been almost perfectly preserved in the ice while the legs and feet sticking up out of the water had been picked clean of any flesh. This was one of Bennie's "unusual" cases

