

TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 48



The stories of two unsung heroes Bravery of the highest order

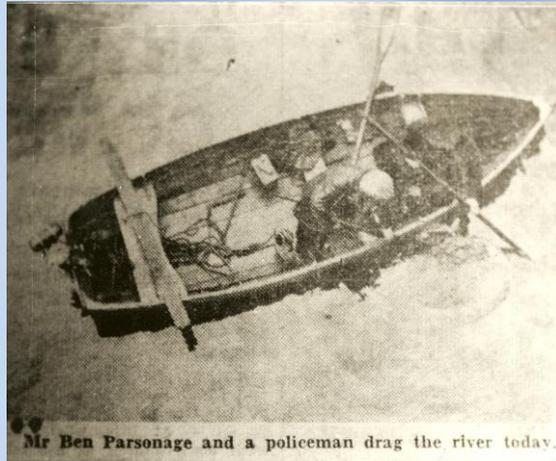
“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”.

John 15 verses 13-17

On the 9th February, 1937 Bennie Parsonage received word that a man's clothes had been found at 11.50 pm on the Quay wall at berth 36, Anderston Quay



He arrived at locus about 12.20 p.m. and viewed the location. On Police advice it was decided to leave dragging operations till morning as it was very stormy and there was no real proof that the man had entered the water. Next day Bennie arrived at Berth 36 at 9.00 a.m. and recovered the body of a man 40 minutes later. This man was wearing a lot of clothes, including coat and scarf. As the clothing found on the quay consisted of jacket, coat and hat, Bennie decided to make a further search and at 10.30 a.m. he 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 as reported in the Evening Times, Wednesday February 10, 1937.



“It is thought an explanation of the tragedy is that one man fell into the water from the quay, and another, after divesting himself of hat, coat, and jacket, dived into the water in a vain effort to affect a rescue”.

This was not the first time that such an incident had occurred. Ben Parsonage was called to the docks one day during the “depression” when it was hard to get work, where a man had been seen to jump into the river.



This man had queued for hours hoping to get work in a shipyard--but was not one of the lucky ones and was turned away. He was seen to walk over to the quay wall--take off his bunnet and jacket--and jump into the water, It was surmised that this man having failed to get work, had not wished to return to his wife and family and tell them that there would be no money coming in that week, so he had taken his own life.

Bennie started searching and a few minutes later recovered a body; but this man was still wearing his jacket and his bunnet.



A further search brought the body of the man with no jacket or bunnet to the surface. It was later found out that the man who was seen to take his jacket and bunnet off and jump in---had seen the first man fall into the water from the quay wall--and had immediately divested himself of heavy clothing and dived in to rescue him.

If Ben had not recovered the man wearing the jacket and bunnet the man without would no doubt have been classified as a suicide instead of a hero. The above is one of the reasons why I do not like the word suicide and is an example of why we should never make such a judgement

As the years passed and I (George) started to help my Dad on the river I witnessed many incidents where the person had been thought to have entered the river to take his own life, but where it was subsequently proven that there were other reasons often heroic. But these are other stories.

As Robert Burns said:

“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”.