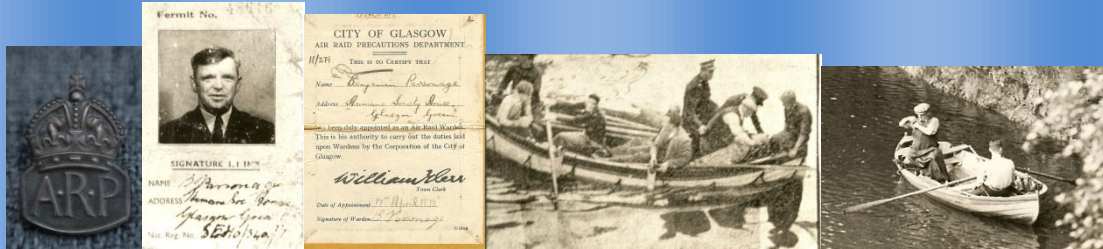




TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 50



It is difficult to illustrate the amount of work Bennie Parsonage undertook during the war years. It was not just about recovering bodies from the water, there were rescues, preventions, safety problems, air raid precautions work, indeed the usual multitude of tasks that still befall the Humane Society. War time Glasgow (like all British Cities) had night time "Blackout" which coupled with our notorious fogs caused moving about near waterways to be difficult and even dangerous. There were also persons who having lived through one war did not really wish to live through another, and people who were very lonely with their loved ones being away at the "front" and their children moved to the countryside hopefully "out of harm's way"



3rd September, 1939. Sunday, WAR DECLARED and within the next 12 months Bennie had to recover 47 bodies from the water

Up and down the rivers Clyde Kelvin and Cart and at other waterways like the Forth and Clyde and Monkland Canals, Bennie's expertise was called on.

Every berth on the Clyde was numbered as were bridges over our canals. Places like Burnbank, South Spiers Wharf, Mid Wharf, and the quarry at the Piggery Shettleston

Soldiers on sentry duty, Royal Artillerymen, Auxiliary Firemen, Able Seamen, Stokers, Dockers, Naval Rating, Riveters, Seamen Gunners, Ship Stewards, Painters and Night Watchmen many falling into the water during the blackout and/or heavy fog.

From ships like the S.S. Rowan, Finnish ship SS Hektos, H.M.S. Sussex

From as far away as France, Finland, Vancouver Canada, Norway and Stornoway

Here are some of Bennies reports

9th September a girl cyclist was brought into our House having injured an eye I phoned for an ambulance but found they were very busy. I took her to the Hospital in a hired car, her wound was stitched.

12th September at 1300hrs a boy was brought into our House having injured his head on falling into one of the wartime trenches in the Park. I was able to dress his wound and let him return home. At 1630 hrs another boy was brought to the House by an Auxiliary Fireman, having received a bad injury after falling into a trench. This boy had to receive hospital treatment. When I went to the boats next morning I found my barge covered with shrapnel. Several incendiary bombs were lying nearby on the banking. I gathered them up carefully and carried them to the Central Police Office where they were disposed of.



Stop Press News-Glasgow Naval Hero Drowned

One of the heroes of a recent sea fight between the British and German ships has met his death in a Clyde port in dramatic circumstances. He was returning to his ship, which was docked, when he is supposed to have fallen from the gang-way into the water. This occurred on Friday night and a petty officer's attention was attracted by screams. He was seen struggling in the water and almost immediately disappeared. His body was recovered by Ben Parsonage of the Glasgow Humane Society.

From various sources both written and verbal it would appear that during the above months Bennie was often too busy to note down rescues and other work unless it required Police notification.

When accidents occurred in the Clyde during the hours of darkness, blackout, Bennie was unable to make an immediate search as soldiers were under orders to shoot at anything moving in the River at night in case it was enemy saboteurs.



Many of the above gave their lives for their country just as much as anyone at the front but I wonder how many of their names appear on memorials.



Glasgow Humane Society pays tribute to everyone lost in our City waterways.