



The River Dee Brief May 2009

STOP PRESS... The River Dee Trust **CHARITY LUNCH** will be held on **Sunday 29th November** at the **Marcliffe of Pitfodels**, provided most kindly by Mr Stewart Spence. Guests can enjoy a fabulous lunch and bid for some exciting items for auction on the day, with all funds raised going to The River Dee Trust. Full details to follow.

Ancient Lamprey Species at Home in River Dee...

The Dee is home to a prehistoric group of fish which came into existence at least 450 million years ago - Lampreys.

There are three species of lamprey occurring on the Dee: Brook lamprey, River lamprey and Sea lamprey. Lampreys have an eel-like shape and lack jaws; their mouth is surrounded by a sucker-like disc, which the River and Sea lampreys use to attach to and feed on the flanks of salmon and sea trout. All three lampreys are declining in numbers across Europe and therefore are offered some protection as EU-listed species.

All three lamprey species live in fine sediments of the river bed for several years, from soon after hatching from eggs until they transform into their adult form.

As pre-adults, the River and Sea lampreys migrate out into the sea where they feed on fish, returning to the river to spawn and die. Brook lamprey, in contrast, never leave the river but move further upstream to spawn.

Between January and March 2009, the RDT carried out electrofishing surveys for juvenile lampreys. They were found up to Mar Lodge, 120 km/75miles upstream from the river mouth wherever suitable lamprey habitat was available, demonstrating that the Dee is important as a conservation area for these ancient and declining fishes.

Radio Tracking Pilot Success

The radio tracking pilot study tagged and followed 20 salmon captured in the Lower Dee from Oct 08 to Feb 09. Fish that had entered the Dee in October (i.e. fresh fish) showed the greatest upstream migration (up to 53 km/33miles).

In contrast, the five spring salmon that were captured and tagged in October showed the least upstream movement, suggesting that a proportion of spring fish spawn in the lower river.

Spring salmon reached their highest upstream position in mid-late November, whereas two late-entry fish migrated upstream until mid January. Two of the radio tagged fish were recaptured in February as kelts.

The pilot study highlighted differences in behavioural movements of individual salmon prior to spawning and demonstrates the importance of monitoring the impact of the trial fishery extension prior to any permanent changes to the fishery being made.

In 2009 and 2010, 30 fish captured in September and 30 in October will be radio tagged and tracked, to allow comparison of behaviours/movements of fish captured at different times in the season.



Leaping salmon with lamprey, courtesy of Gillespie Macandrew, Edinburgh

Departing Vikings...

The River Dee has had a significant number of visitors from Scandinavia recently with the 15th anniversary of the Global Club of Fly-Fishers visiting and taking fishing from beats throughout the middle and upper River Dee beats.

The party organiser Reid Hagelin brought his recording equipment and is in the process of producing a "15th year" Jubilee River Dee film.

Reid received some assistance with the project from Mark Bilsby and Edwin Third. They visited areas throughout the catchment showing the Life Project work and explained the successes of these and how they assist the migration and improve nursery areas for salmon and their juvenile production.

Turus a Bhradain – The Salmon Journey

Last year the River Dee office was approached with a request for a film crew to do some filming on the river about Salmon for a planned television series on satellite channel BBC Alba 168. The crew, led by director Mr Chris Webster and presenter Ms Neen Mackay, arrived on Deeside and spent a number of days in the catchment.

They have now produced a 30 minute programme about the River Dee's renowned Spring Salmon, on-going Life Project habitat work and historical connection with the development of greased line fly fishing, what we today call floating line fly fishing. The omens for the series were excellent – when the crew visited the well known Deeside landmark Potarch Bridge, they caught on film an angler landing a spring salmon.



Ken Reid and Chris Webster on Deeside

This is no mean feat - animals are very reluctant to perform for the television cameras and salmon are no exception to this.

The crew were able to access and broadcast some archive footage of floating line fly fishing inventor Arthur Wood, fishing with underwater cameras recording the moment a salmon took his fly. This was filmed in the 1920s and was shot in black and white, and is probably the earliest recorded footage of a salmon taking a fisherman's fly underwater.

This is part 2 of a six part television series which has received much acclaim for the quality of content and production values. There may be a further series, depending on support for this type of programme. The footage can be downloaded from BBC I-Player and may subsequently be broadcast on Scottish Television. Chris Webster thanked all concerned for their support and will forward on a copy of the series to the River Board as a gesture of appreciation.

All in a Day's Work...

The River Dee Trust's biologists, Dr Lorraine Hawkins and Adrian Hudson, were recently called out to one of the beats to investigate some distressed fish. Quick to the rescue, Adrian and Lorraine grabbed waders, landing nets and electro fishing equipment to assist them with the capture.

On arrival they undertook an assessment and 2 fish were spotted, one moribund and the other poorly. The fish were subsequently netted out of the river and efficiently despatched to the Marine Lab in Aberdeen for post mortems. It is important to ascertain why there is rare mortality amongst spring salmon and to find out the cause, whether that be poor handling by an angler or some other reason.



Biologists Dr Lorraine Hawkins and Adrian Hudson

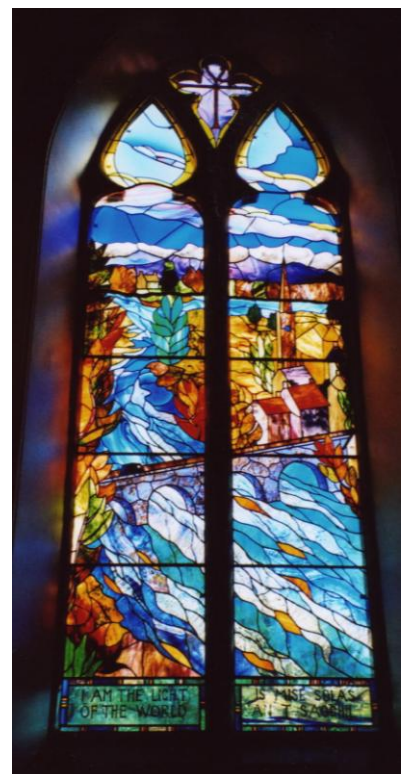
Memorial Window

There was a dedication of a memorial window (right) to Royal Butcher Mike Sheridan, at this year's Easter service, Glenmuick Parish Church led by Reverend Tony Watts.

Mr Sheridan, who supplied meat to Balmoral and Birkhall, passed away in 2006. He was involved in the Ballater Chiels group, as well as other community groups. More than 1000 people attended his funeral. The Easter service was attended by the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay.

The window was designed by local artist **Howard Butterworth** of Ballogie. He comments: "When I was asked to design the window for Glenmuick Church I found it rather daunting, but it gave me the opportunity to draw on my affection for Ballater and my friend, Mike Sheridan. The design depicts christian souls, symbolised by stylised salmon, swimming the river of life, up to the light; Ballater being en route to Heaven with Mike's presence represented by the blue Sheridan's butcher van."

The design was initiated over 2 years ago. Howard has found the whole experience immensely spiritual. He said: "I am honoured and grateful to have played a part in its creation. I'm still excited and amazed to see it in position, and hope visitors to Glenmuick Church will feel the same too."



Dee District Salmon Fishery Board & River Dee Trust
4 Mill of Dinnet, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, AB34 5LA
Tel: 013398 80411 Email: info@riverdee.org
www.riverdee.org.uk