

the river dee | annual report 2012



Dee District Salmon Fishery Board



The River Dee Trust

Dee District Salmon Fishery Board

The River is administered by the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board, a statutory body tasked with protecting and enhancing stocks of salmon and sea trout across the district, encompassing the Rivers Dee, Cowie and Carron.



William Banks



Victor Beamish



Simon Blackett



William Boyd-Wallis



Jamie Burnett



Gavin Clark



Robert Dey



Richard Gledson
Vice Chairman



Alastair Hume
Clerk to the Board



Edward Humphrey



David MacDonald



Linda Mathieson



Ian Scott
Chairman



Samantha Fleming

River Dee Trust

The River Dee Trust is a community-based charitable company, set up in 1998, responsible for research, restoration and education regarding the rivers within the catchment area.



Victor Beamish
Treasurer



Jim Coates



Richard Gledson



Alastair Hume



Hugh Mackay



Randall Nicol



Ian Scott
Chairman

River Staff

are employed by the Board and the Trust to carry out a combination of management, administration, projects and fundraising. Two Project Officers who are employed by Rivers & Fisheries Trusts of Scotland to deliver the Pearls in Peril LIFE project are based at the River Office.



Mark Bilsby
Director



Colin Esson
Bailliff



Steff Ferguson
Project Officer



Blair Forsyth
Bailliff



Flora Grigor-Taylor
Project Officer



Diarmid Hawkins
Bailliff



Dr Lorraine Hawkins
Trust Manager



Adrian Hudson
Biologist



Carol Mair
Administrator



Ken Reid
Fisheries
Development
Officer



Edwin Third
River Operations
Manager



Mark Walker
Bailliff

chairman's report

2012 was a year of considerable progress for both the River Dee Board and Trust. Our season got off to a grand start with the official opening ceremony conducted in great style by the actor, writer and avid angler Paul Whitehouse. These launch celebrations serve to endorse the importance of the Dee Fishery to the sometimes fragile rural economy of the catchment. Over 250 folk from many walks of life, joined together at Potarch to signify their recognition of the value of the river and angling to the area.

In the spring, we received confirmation that approval from Scottish Government of the Board's application to formally extend the fishing season by two weeks to October 15th had been granted. This approval acknowledges that salmon are arriving later, and assisted by the invaluable research carried out by the Dee Trust, meant that proprietors were able to extend the sporting season without damage to later running fish.

Spring also saw the Dee Trust venture to London to deliver one of its most ambitious fund raising activities to date. In the prestigious Savile Club in Mayfair we held a memorable charity auction and with the generosity of friends of the Dee from around the globe, a sizeable sum was netted to assist with Trust's three major goals; Research, Restoration & Education. My thanks to all who made that function such a success.

The Board were heavily involved in the information provision stages of the new Aquaculture & Fisheries Bill instigated during 2012. A cross-party group of MSP's spent two days touring the catchment and seeing at first hand the work being carried out to improve the river. Their visit was timely as funding support had just been granted of £2.6 million to address degraded tributaries and protect our spawning burns from the effects of damaging climate change. Modifications to the Aquaculture & Fisheries Bill are likely to become law in summer 2013 and we trust that the inputs from the Dee will be of a positive nature. My main hopes and concerns remain that wild fish interests in general and the protection of the endangered Atlantic salmon in particular are protected from the worst ravages of coastal netting and aquaculture expansion in the west. In this regard I would urge all the national bodies that purport to speak in defence of freshwater fish interests to do so with a strong, clear and cohesive voice.

As our season on the Dee drew to a close it was clear that our angling returns, in line with other major east coast rivers, were not going to match 2011. However, a very good total catch of 7854 salmon was still recorded. My thanks to all anglers and ghillies for submitting the best ever release figure of 99%.

As I write this forward to the 2012 annual report we have entered the 150th anniversary of the River Board's formation. We intend to mark this with a range of commemorative events and activities later in the year.

Before signing off, on what will be my last year in the Chairs of Board and Trust I want to thank and pay tribute to the effort and support of my fellow Board members and Trustees. Over the past six years they have demonstrated their ability to deal professionally with difficult issues in a positive and supportive manner. My final thanks go to the team at the River Office for their hard work and dedication in helping improve the health of our beloved Dee.

Ian Scott
Chairman

pearls in peril

The Pearls In Peril LIFE project was launched on 28th September 2012 and will run for four years until September 2016. It heralds major works to protect the River Dee and safeguard its future. All of the work provides significant improvement and protection for salmon and trout: So why the title "Pearls in Peril"? Scotland is a global stronghold for the freshwater pearl mussel with up to half the world's known reproducing population. The Dee is recognised as a Special Area of Conservation in part for its population of freshwater pearl mussels. These mussels can live for more than 100 years and grow to be as large as your hand. The mussels have a complex lifecycle and, in their first year, live harmlessly on the gills of young salmon or trout. They live at the bottom of clean, fast-flowing rivers, where they are completely or partially buried in the substrate. Thus, they have the same habitat requirements as juvenile salmon; what is good for mussels is good for salmon.

This four year, £2.6 million EU-funded project aims to deliver in four areas:

- Riparian tree planting will be undertaken over 70km of river bank in 382ha in the Upper Dee catchment to alleviate the future increases in water temperature that arises from global warming. Restoring the riparian zone will reduce diffuse pollution and bank erosion, providing benefits to pearl mussels, salmon and many other terrestrial species.
- Buffer strips will be created along 45 km of tributaries in the middle Dee (Dinnet, Tarland, Dess and Feugh) to reduce local diffuse pollution. Similar work has already been carried out in many tributaries by the Dee DSFB and Trust and proved successful in repairing habitat for juvenile fish.
- The removal from the Dee of eight engineered structures to restore the natural main stem and its function.
- Support the delivery of 10 school visits per year over four years to focus on the importance of the river for all the species that depend on it and to Deeside as a whole.

In January 2013, two Project Officers were jointly recruited to one full-time post. Steff Ferguson and Flora Grigor-Taylor are employed through the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland [RAFTS] and joined the River Office team at Dinnet. Their remit involves working with land owners, farmers, foresters and keepers on the Dee to deliver the ground work, as well as working on the River South Esk and River Naver to deliver other components of this national project.

The work on the Dee is part of a UK project, led by Scottish Natural Heritage [SNH] and RAFTS with English and Welsh partners. A total of 23 rivers across Britain are involved, all of which are designated as Special Areas of Conservation. In Scotland, the majority of the project will be carried out on the River Dee. It is important to recognise that such a large restoration project as this would not be possible without a partnership approach, and will be delivered jointly by the DDSFB and River Dee Trust who have secured European funding plus support of matched funding from SEPA, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority [CNPA], Dee Catchment Partnership [DCP] and our own contributions. The support for and delivery of the project is through local partnerships with SNH, FCS, SEPA, CNPA, DCP and local land managers.



Callater burn, Clunie



Upper Dee



Upper Dee



View from Invercauld



Clunie



Upper Gairn



Invercauld

invasive non native species

Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) are animals and plants that are unwelcome newcomers that cause significant damage to the natural environment of the catchment. The riparian areas of the rivers Dee, Cowie and Carron have four plants of significance – Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and American skunk cabbage. These species can, and do, dominate bank vegetation, outcompeting native plants and having a knock-on ill effect on the wildlife that depend on them. Bank access becomes difficult due to vegetation density, which dies back in the winter, leaving banks unprotected from flooding and erosion.

In 2011 the RDT received funding from SEPA's River Restoration Fund for a five year programme to train volunteers to treat invasive plants on the Rivers Cowie and Carron, before tackling the larger scale problem on the Dee. Nearly 13,500m² of affected riparian area was found on the River Cowie alone and in 2012 treatment began, undertaken by the Trust and its volunteers.



Giant hogweed



Himalayan balsam

Over the summer more than 8000m² was tackled, which included injecting herbicide directly into the stem of Japanese knotweed and cutting down Himalayan balsam before it had set seed. However, the work is not finished and even the treated areas will need to be re-visited to prevent any plant regeneration, particularly from the Himalayan balsam which, over the years, has established a significant seed bed.

As a result of this programme efficient working methods were developed and will be rolled out along the Dee. In 2012 the Trust put together an EU funding application for eradication of these plants from the Dee, Cowie and Carron, which will require the treatment of 45 km of river bank. This "Invasive Species Action (ISA Scotland): Working with volunteers to tackle multiple invasive species in Scotland" LIFE project is in collaboration with other Fisheries Trusts in Scotland and led by Scottish Natural Heritage. It will also include mink control in the catchment and development of a best practice manual for invasive plants control. The outcome of this project application is expected in the summer of 2013 and if successful will run until 2018.



Japanese knotweed



Stem injection of Japanese knotweed



ranunculus

Surveys in 2012 by the Dee DSFB found a substantial increase in the invasive aquatic plant *Ranunculus* (also known as water crowfoot) since a previous survey in 2009. Both the occurrence and density of *Ranunculus* below Dess have increased in this three year period. Trials by the Dee DSFB to physically dig up the plants proved infeasible and alternative solutions are currently being sought. A Management Group including the Dee, Don and Spey rivers, SNH and SEPA was established at the end of 2012 tasked with trialling new methods of control and eradication, including both laboratory and field-based trials of herbicide control. In the meantime, the advice can only be emphasised that by cutting *Ranunculus* it will spread more rapidly, as each piece cut can take root, becoming a new plant.



biosecurity

In 2012 disinfection facilities were provided to every beat on the Dee for anglers to disinfect their waders and landing nets. In addition, facilities are provided at Orvis in Banchory and Somer's Fishing Tackle in Aberdeen. We have encouraged this for several years now to reduce the likelihood of the introduction of the lethal parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris*. However, 2012 saw the threat of other salmon diseases which clearly emphasises the importance of biosecurity measures as a standard that must not be relaxed. Even the aquatic *Ranunculus* plant can be spread by angler's equipment. For further information on disinfecting please contact the River Office, but please make a habit to follow the simple wader and landing net disinfecting guidelines every time you arrive on a beat.



stocks

7854 salmon were caught on the Dee in 2012 (including over 700 fish caught in October). Although this number is down on the catches in the last two years, it is still the third highest rod catch in the last 20 years, even before the fish caught in October are counted, with the best two years being 2010 and 2011. The catches benefited from a wet summer, with July figures being the highest on record. The scale sampling programme run by the Trust showed that the grilse run dominated catches in August and September and that one quarter of the salmon caught between June and September were in fact spring salmon, i.e. fish that entered the river in the spring months.

Spring catches of 1925 salmon were disappointing given the improvement seen in recent years. Unsettled weather conditions undoubtedly played a part, although runs of spring salmon did not appear as good as previous years. The Girnock fish trap monitored by Marine Scotland Science also indicated low numbers of returning salmon to the upper Dee in 2012.

Sea trout catches of 1352 fish were low in 2012, however, our records for the last 60 years show how variable sea trout catches are; we have seen nearly a three-fold variation in catches in just the last five years. This information is used by the DSFB to set the Conservation Code for the Dee each year, whilst also taking the wider Scottish trends into account. Dee fishing beats and anglers are to be congratulated on adhering to the Conservation Code and putting back 99% of salmon and 98% of sea trout that were caught in 2012.

season extension

Following three years of evidence collecting by the Trust and Board, the Board's application to extend the fishing season by two weeks into October was finally supported by an amendment to the Statutory Legislation in spring 2012. As part of the amendment we will continue to monitor fish stocks so the length of season is appropriate.



policing

The bailiff team was reduced by half at the beginning of 2012 due to Luke Myatt and Danny White leaving. Both Luke and Danny were hard working and dedicated bailiffs and we wish them every success in the future. From over 60 applications, successful candidates Colin Esson and Diarmid Hawkins joined the team in early spring bringing a range of useful skills and expertise to the bailiff team. As well as passing numerous exams and courses they have received excellent first hand training from Mark Walker and Blair Forsyth.

Policing the Board's District is undertaken quietly by the bailiffs both day and night over a large geographical area. During the last twelve months the bailiffs have actively patrolled and responded to all reports of suspected illegal activity including 24 poaching incidents. Outcomes range from a firm but friendly caution, to arrest and subsequent prosecution. There are two court cases pending from 2012.

The team continue to work closely with the police and receive valuable support, training and intelligence exchange from local officers, particularly PC Mike White and PC Gavin Lindsay. In 2012 bailiffs attended a police training course in confrontation management and carried out joint patrols with police on several occasions during the year. Without the presence of the policing work, illegal exploitation would very soon impact on the internationally important stocks of Dee salmon.

The Board are committed to maintaining a highly trained, well equipped and motivated bailiff team and to augment this, the use of remote surveillance technology is currently being trialled.



restore

obstructions

Since 2007, the Dee DSFB and Trust have eased or removed 19 manmade obstructions to fish migration from the river Dee's tributaries. With 20 further obstructions identified, there is still much more work to do. The biggest obstruction remains the Culter dam. As can be seen from the article reviewing some of the Dee Board's history, this dam has been a considerable thorn in the side of the Dee Board for at least 100 years. The Dee Board and Trust have worked hard to find the solution and with the support of SEPA aim to ensure the installation of a fish pass to minimise the time that this tributary – the second largest of the Dee - remains inaccessible to salmon. Positive work continues with Dunecht Estate to tackle other obstructions on the Culter tributary.

There is an ongoing programme of maintenance for the existing fish passes to ensure that all are effective for spawning migrations. The Trust undertakes electrofishing monitoring to determine the success of the fish passes post-installation and runs a monitoring fish counter on the Coy burn.



improving habitat

Diffuse pollution is the name given to pollutants carried by water from the surrounding land and deposited into rivers and burns; it is the biggest problematic issue on the river at present. Much of it comes from agricultural land and there are straight-forward measures undertaken to limit the problem. Our most commonly used approach is to install buffer strips along the margins of river bank. These fenced off areas prevent livestock accessing the burn and act as sediment and pollutant traps, such that unwanted particles and chemicals are deposited in the buffer zone and do not enter the watercourse.

In 2010 The Dee DSFB and RDT set up the 'River Dee Enhancement Project' to increase the uptake of Government funding by farmers on Deeside for work that would reduce or mitigate diffuse pollution entering the river. The various support given to farmers included technical, practical assistance with funding applications and a cash contribution towards the preparation of their funding application. In 2012 this project delivered the protection and maintenance of 17 km of stream length through the installation of buffer strips. The work was carried out on the tributaries of the Cattie, Gairn, Tarland and Crathie burn as well as the main stem Dee.



river dee 2012 highlights



- Invasive plants treatment area
- Invasive plants survey area
- Pearls in Peril project
- Redd count areas
- Buffer strip



development

fisheries & economic development

In order to improve the quality and comfort experienced by anglers to the Dee, new fishing huts have been completed on the beats at Kincardine, Tilquhillie, Aboyne Water and Glen Tanar, whilst planning permissions for new huts by a number of beats is being progressed for installation in 2013/14. Other improvements to the riverside have included new or improved beat tracks, for example at Cairnton, the positioning of new signage and new and refurbished accommodation on several beats; all of which will enhance the experience of visiting anglers. Biosecurity improvements to all beats have been provided by the Dee DSFB, including disinfecting chemicals and equipment, so all anglers can disinfect their waders and nets free of charge prior to commencing angling.

It is not only fishing beats that are active in improving the facilities on offer to visitors to Deeside but many accommodation providers throughout the valley have significant refurbishment work underway. With the support and promotion by the Dee DSFB and FishDee, the aim is for all partnership establishments to deliver the requirements of visiting anglers - visit the FishDee website to find out more. The development of local supporting infrastructure is welcomed, as is the support by local service providers for the fundraising activities of the River Dee Trust.



FishDee

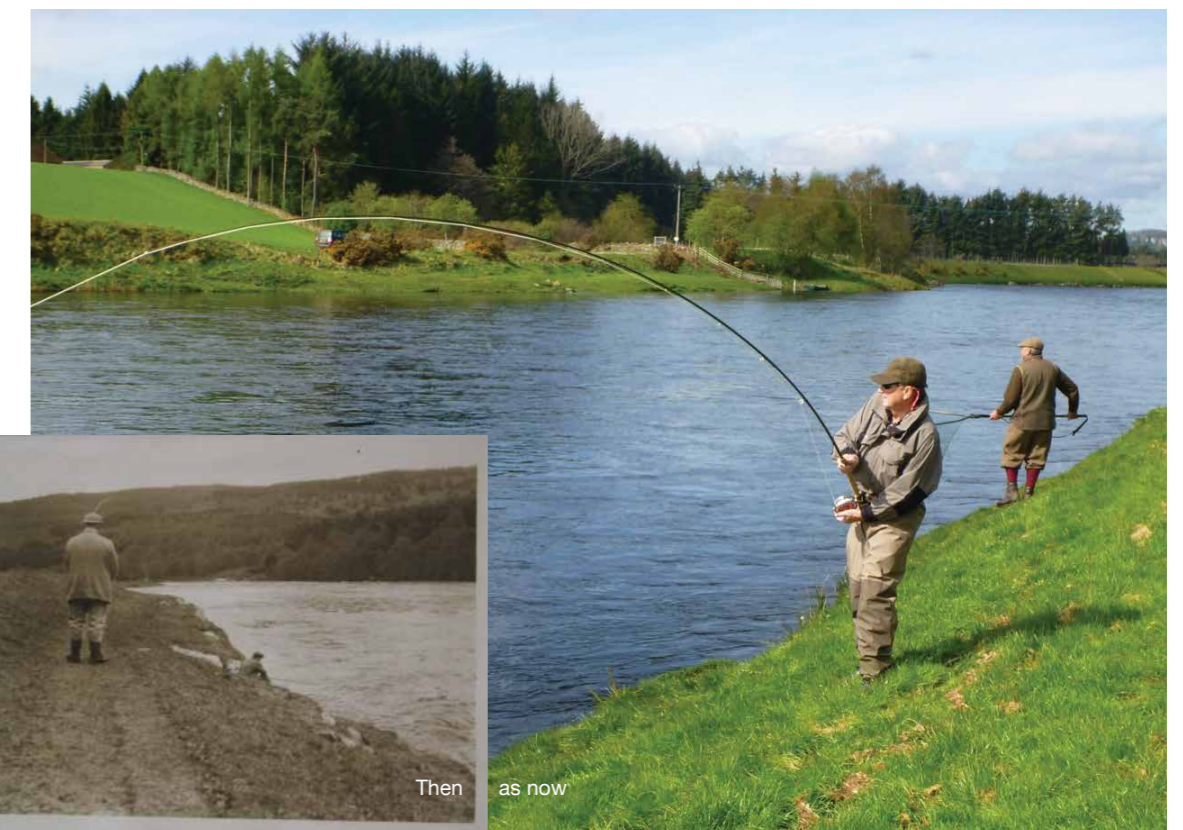
The FishDee website continues to grow from strength to strength; www.fishdee.co.uk is actively marketed to a global audience receiving more than 2.5 million hits in 2012 with the direct value in excess of £200,000 for rod lets over the last twelve months, which is a significant increase on 2011 figures. Currently, 48 fisheries use the site to promote angling opportunities to suit every level of expertise.

Alongside angling, visitors also require hospitality and 42 accommodation providers spanning the length of the river are promoted through the website along with links to many other services. The weekly fishing reports have proved popular and are distributed through multimedia outlets such as the printed press, websites, Facebook and Twitter and fishing agents. The FishDee Blog was recently launched which carries regular news items about the river and businesses that support angling tourism.

Seven short films have been produced and are hosted on the FishDee website, these help promote fishing beats to new customers.

look to the future

As part of the 150th anniversary of the formation of the Dee DSFB, a bursary scheme was launched in February at the opening of the 2013 angling season. The bursary aims to encourage new people into the profession, by providing training and access to the vast experience and knowledge from the existing network of ghillies. The type of training is up to the candidate but a list of courses is available on the website, along with application details. Training will be consolidated by work experience on the Dee so newcomers may learn from some of the best ghillies in the world.



look back

A light hearted review of 50 years of fishery management

By Wilson Forbes

Treasured at the Board's offices at Dinnet are two splendid, hide covered volumes of minutes spanning the years of 1925-1968. The copperplate writing of the various clerks is proof enough that knuckle rapping for a less than perfect hand at school really did work. One can only imagine in this day of word processing aids, how time consuming this labour of love must have been. Economics were high on the agenda since the Board thought long and hard about increasing the clerk's annual remuneration from £60 to £100. This generosity of course did not extend to expenses which had to be covered out of salary.



Between 1939 and 1945 the minutes reflected no mention of the outbreak of World War 2. Discussions centred on angling, the well being of the river and future improvements. Either these dedicated trustees had not noticed this breakdown in "entente cordiale" or put the long term future of the River Dee far ahead of any inconvenience happening in Europe.

Board meetings were held in the Clerk's Chambers of Wilson and Duffus at 7, Golden Square, Aberdeen. In 1925 the Clerk to the Board was Robert P. Stott and under the chairmanship of Mr John Milne. In 1968 the Clerk was Mr D.A. Davidson and the chairman Mr John A. Lewis. The tone of the minutes suggests that discussion on rentals, assessments, and dealings with government departments was no place for light hearted humour. A picture is conjured up of Dickensian faces and stiff, starched collars, their attention to austerity was admirable, with every bill and expense claim being queried.



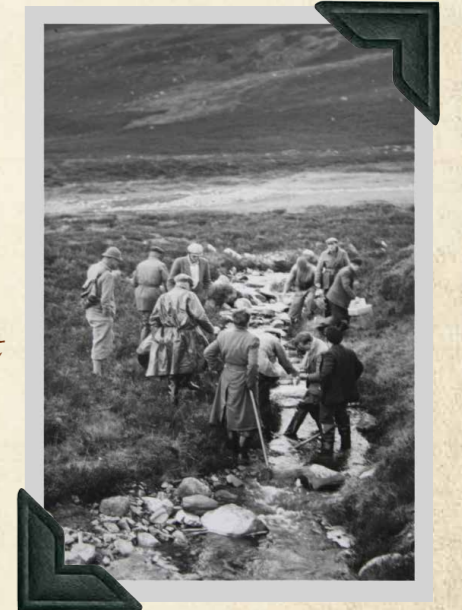
The Board however showed great concern for staff well being. Reviews and discussions on Bailiff's and Inspector's wages and conditions were constant. In August 1937 the Bailiffs received the welcome news that their wages were to be increased from £2. 3/ per week to £2.5/, whilst the Inspector's salary was increased from £250 p.a. to £280. Generosity did not end there, with the annual bicycle maintenance allowance being increased from £1.10. to £3 per annum, bringing the allowance in line with police wages. By 1967 the foreman Bailiff's wages had increased to £14 per week plus accommodation, and single Bailiffs to £13 per week plus caravan and bothy. The Inspector's salary had reached £1200 p.a.

Travel for the Bailiffs changed in 1946 with the purchase of two 3 1/2 h.p. B.S.A. motorcycles at a cost of £132.14s.10p each with the question of providing sidecars left in abeyance. Presumably these were only for senior men, whilst the rest looked on enviously from their bikes. Everyone must have been envious in 1948 when the Inspector took delivery of his second hand Austin 10.



However, the late 1940's highlighted the advantages of the bicycle as petrol rationing meant that the motor cycles and car were stationary more than mobile. Even appeals to the local M.P. and government departments brought no joy. The thrift of the Board was again demonstrated in 1934, when the Inspector requested six pairs of night glasses for his Bailiffs. After approval by the Board, the chairman Mr Charles Cox, suggested the acquisition be left to him since he could acquire these cheaply from "certain sources". These sources were never revealed in the minutes and will forever remain a mystery.

Many cases of poaching and illegal trafficking in salmon were investigated and prosecuted over the years, some more successfully than others. In 1944 one case highlighted the co-operation between the Dee and Don Boards. It was suspected that during the close season fish had been taken from both rivers, purchased by fish merchants and stored in Aberdeen. Detective work and collaboration between the Inspectors placed a definite suspicion on a well known firm of fish merchants in Torry. An Inspector was alerted from the Fishmonger's Company in Scotland and arranged to routinely visit cold storage units in the city. At the New Standard Cold Storage Company's premises he found a considerable number of "doubtful boxes". On reporting this back to the Board, a search warrant was obtained to reveal that 333 salmon had been deposited by the fish merchant who had attracted the Inspector's suspicions. With compelling evidence that these salmon were deposited during the close season, and despite the fish merchant's assertion that the bulk of the fish had been caught by him on rod and line, a successful prosecution ensued. A fine of £150 was imposed, with both Boards happy to share equally the £647. 17s realised from the sale of the forfeited fish.



The Board must have breathed a sigh of relief on the 13th February 1981, the day that brought the closure of the Culter Mills. Over the years covered by these minutes, they must have been fed up to the back teeth with the continual running battle with the Mill's proprietors. Almost every minute contains a reference to the ongoing battle. It seems that the Mill manager's sandwiches were the only thing that did not end up in the Culter Burn. The Inspector continually sent reports to the Mill of cloudy water beneath the Mill and clear water above. Frequently dead fish were found by Bailiffs and Inspector.



The response to this of course was a denial that any of their effluent would be harmful to fish or indeed if the effluent came from the Mill at all. Claims and counter claims were made as to the capacity and effectiveness of the tanks and filters through continual meetings between the Board, Mill management and lawyers. The drawn out intellectual and scientific battle between biologist Professor Gemmell, representing Culter Mills and Dr Rushton, biologist for the Salmon and Trout Association representing the Board is both fascinating and at times puzzling. Seemingly irrefutable evidence from Dr. Rushton was countered and explained away by Prof. Gemmell. Caustic soda, bleach, dilute sulphuric acid, paraffin oil, china clay and unrecovered fibre were all found in the waters, but at that time no scientific method was available to prove a definite link to malpractice at the Mill. To the Board's great credit they challenged Dr Rushton's expense claims, suggesting that as members of the Salmon and Trout Association they were entitled to a discount.

A sad note is struck with the inclusion of obituaries to Board members - Sir Thomas Burnett (1926) Colonel Randall Nicol (1941) Charles Cox (1948) Lord Caithness (1965). The wording of these reflects the esteem in which these members were held.

What shines through in the minutes is the diligence and passion the changing Board members have shown in their custodianship of the River Dee. The minutes show the aims in 1925 were exactly the same as today that the River has always been in safe hands and hopefully always will be.



abstraction

Between Invercarnie, above Banchory, and Aberdeen, the river Dee is abstracted by Scottish Water to provide the public water supply to a population of approximately 300,000 people, as well as commerce and industry. In 2012 the Board and Trust commissioned an independent study to assess the impact that the two main abstractions [at Invercarnie and Inchgarth] have on the amount of available habitat for salmon, freshwater pearl mussels and otters, and how future climate change predictions may influence this further.

The study showed that current abstraction levels at Invercarnie are not significantly impacting the ecology, but in the lower Dee at Inchgarth, there is a significant effect. By 2080 water abstractions are projected to increase by 8%. However, the biggest impact will be as a result of future declines in summer rainfall, which are predicted to decrease by around 17% by 2080. The reduction in rainfall will result in lower summer flows which, along with the increased frequency of such events, will have implications for the extent of habitat available to support salmon and freshwater pearl mussels.

There have been rare occasions when the water flows available within the river are insufficient to allow salmon to migrate and this, when combined with effects on water quality, has led in the past to mortalities of salmon. By 2080 predictions are, that low flow conditions which occur 5% of the time, or 18 days each year on average, may be insufficient to initiate upstream migration of adult salmon at Garthdee.

The water resources river management require a review to identify what can be done during the critical periods when these resources are strained. Having measures in place in advance should allow for quicker resolution before potential conflict situations arise, along with improved strategic planning to examine water storage and usage.



education

2012 saw the Trust's education programme expand its scope to reflect requirements of the Curriculum for Excellence. Learning outdoors within an educational context encourages young people to make connections experientially, leading to a deeper understanding and sustainable development of the biodiversity and habitat management roles now undertaken. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of how the river's health is dependent on activities across the whole valley, with new developments, changing land management and invasive species all having an impact.

Children from six primary schools took part in 15 classroom talks as part of the Trust's 'IntroDee' education programme. Talks were relevant to the class learning programme but focused on a subject such as 'the life cycle of salmon', and linked to a theme such as 'how the river has changed since the last ice age'. While the classroom talk was a common denominator, the field visits were very diverse. Trips to the river to look at wildlife and fish and talk about the fishery remain very popular, as does sampling invertebrates and fishing at the Raemoir Loch Fishery. Many of the river visits involved habitat mapping, wildlife recording or looking at invasive species. Ballater Primary used a series of field trips to achieve the John Muir Award.

Two adult education events also took place in 2012. Craibstone (Scotland's Rural College) land management students and a visiting group of Norwegian fishery managers spent separate days with the team, learning about the habitat enhancement measures that have been carried out. The Trust also supported work experience students from as far away as France and as close as Aboyne; these students were involved in all the activities taking place aiming to give them a true picture of the work on the river.



mar lodge activity week

The Mar Lodge Activity Week was launched to educate secondary school pupils about the environment during a week of varied outdoor activities in an outstanding setting. This programme was made possible with the co-operation and support of the National Trust for Scotland, John Muir Trust, Cairngorms National Park, Aberdeenshire Education Authority and Sportscotland Active Schools. The programme also received funding and equipment from the John Lewis Partnership, Tiso's and Glasgow Angling Centre.

The first activity week held in May 2012 had 29 third year pupils from Banchory, Mackie and Mearns Academies who tried fishing and radio tracking under the guidance of the Trust, and mountain biking, simulated deer stalking, gorge walking, mini-Highland games and a variety of other activities all in the stunning landscape of the Cairngorm mountains on Mar Lodge Estate, Braemar. Accommodation was provided in Mar Lodge, with activities designed to highlight the links between the land and river and the importance of ecosystems to the social and economic climate of the valley. Participants all achieved the John Muir Award.

The success of this event should ensure this opportunity will become an annual event and offered to different schools. Anyone wishing to give support should contact the River Dee Trust.



in brief 2012

- The fishing season was officially opened at a ceremony at Potarch by the actor, writer and avid angler Paul Whitehouse who toasted the river Dee to 250 assembled guests.
- The River Office gained three new staff - Administrator Carol Mair and bailiffs Colin Esson and Diarmid Hawkins.
- The Trust's research provided the first evidence that salmon from different areas within the Dee catchment are genetically distinct, with differentiation between salmon from the upper and lower catchment being most apparent. This highlights the importance of protection for all components of the salmon population – especially in tributaries – to ensure a robust population able to withstand future conditions.
- Due to the continued support of the Mink Project Initiative mink captures on Deeside were low in 2012 (15 animals), showing the prolonged trapping efforts by volunteers is effectively keeping this fish predator at bay.
- A case of Ulcerative Dermal Necrosis (UDN) was confirmed in Scotland; the last major outbreak was in the 1970's but the underlying cause was never identified. As a precautionary measure, all anglers are asked to disinfect their waders and landing nets prior to fishing. In the meantime through collaboration with the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards and the Institute of Aquaculture a three year research programme has been initiated to update our understanding so that practical management can take place.
- Aberdeen Harbour Board gained permission to widen and deepen the navigation channel into the Harbour. The Dee DSFB was concerned that blasting would be damaging to fish and made strong representations on the issue. Thankfully blasting was not required and the work proceeded smoothly. The challenge for 2013 will be to ensure that the construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route will not harm the River.
- Marine Scotland's radio tracking study of salmon to the South Esk has shown that the coastal nets operated within the Esk district capture Dee salmon. Based on the first year of the study approximately 15% of the salmon captured and tagged were returning salmon to the Dee.
- Every week from early October until late December, river staff count salmon redds on sections of the Dee and its main tributaries to determine when spawning begins, peaks and ends in various parts of the river. In 2012, 13 additional tributaries were surveyed to assess spawning numbers which involved surveying over 300km of river.
- River Staff carried out six piscivorous bird counts on the main stem of the River Dee and on the major lochs within the catchment. Systematic bird counts have been carried out by river staff since the late 90's.
- The Trust raised significant funds for restoration work through generous donations, auctioned at the Savile Club in Mayfair, London.
- Financial accounts and new meeting minutes are now on our website – www.riverdee.org.uk
- And finally, the Trust is running a raffle in Spring 2013 to raise funds. Details can be found at www.riverdee.org.uk and tickets can be purchased from the website or from the River Office or supporting fishing beats.

Please support the work of the Trust.



www.riverdee.org.uk





“Opening Day” is a limited edition giclee print of 100 copies and is signed by Howard Butterworth. Capturing the atmosphere on the morning of the 1st February 2013 when Clerk to the Board and Trust Member Alastair Hume cast the first line to open the salmon fishing season and began the celebrations to mark 150 years of The River Board.

This unframed print is available for £120 to order from The Butterworth Gallery, www.butterworthpaintings.co.uk

Each print sale generates £25 for the Trust.

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