



# What do wild salmon mean to me?

## Andrew Douglas Home



Andrew Douglas-Home is a keen angler and fishery owner and lives in the Scottish Borders at Coldstream. Andrew has been a Tweed Commissioner since the early 1980s, and was awarded an OBE in 2013 for services to fishing and Sir Walter Scott's historic house, Abbotsford. Andrew writes the weekly editorial for the Tweedbeats website.

The Ledges is a 50 yards long wadeable run at the top of the Temple Pool on the River Tweed.

My old friend Martin Wills was watching, unable to fish because of the brain tumour from which he later died, as the river started to rise. It was 19th October 1988. I hooked and landed a sea liced 23 lber. "Go back in for a few more casts", said my watcher as flooding debris began to come down the river. Then I hooked something of a different order; after a few minutes it set off straight upstream into the waxing flood, towards Wark village, on and on with relentless steady power as my line and backing began to run out, over 100 yards with the rod fully bent, the strain became intolerable, I could not follow on foot, so eventually.... ping, or maybe it was twang....it broke. The fish and over 100 yards of line and backing, gone for good.

"You will remember that for as long as you live, there was nothing you could do" said the watching Martin "it was epic".

Fast forward to 11th October 2001. I walked the 200 yards or so to the Ledges from the house, after work, as darkness fell. There was time for a few casts. I hooked something immediately. Racing the full 80 yards to the other bank, nothing could stop it. The first splash was just off the boat moored on the Wark side. "Foul hooked" was the instant thought, so dramatic and out of

control had been the first few minutes of the fight. Slowly, I hauled and as it came within range, the tail waived above water. "S..t, that's big" was my involuntary, and slightly unfortunate, shout to nobody in particular.

Ten minutes later, in the semi dark, I beached it, a sea liced cock fish with my tube fly securely in its scissors.

We weighed it on the old spring balance at 31 ½ lbs. Head boatman Malcolm Campbell had come along. "Should we try it on the new digital weigher?" he said, knowing full well that those old spring balances show heavy over time.

And so we did; it registered exactly 30 lbs 1oz. I was sure that Martin was watching, as he had been, in exactly the same place, 13 years earlier. "Epic" he would have said.

That is what our wild salmon, and the delicious excitement of fishing for them, meant to him....and me.



Discover more about the importance of wild Atlantic salmon at:  
[www.fms.scot/what-do-wild-salmon-mean-to-me/](http://www.fms.scot/what-do-wild-salmon-mean-to-me/)  
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