

UPPER SHIN NEWS



2002



2003

All the Kyle Rivers and much of the east coast experienced a very late and small run of spring fish. The Shin was finally off the mark on the 4th June, with an 11lb cock fish in Upper Eleanors on a Tadpole, to John Geddes. I had a small party of friends in the lodge during the second week of June (mainly for the trout fishing, but also hoping for an early salmon), Annie Greenwood caught a beautiful 12lb hen in Meadow in the pouring rain (see photo) and David Windsor-Clive had a 9lb hen in Rocky (both very fresh fish and returned). The Trout fishing in the Shin during May and June was really stunning. One morning Oliver Cooke and I caught over 30 fish above the Ladies Pool, ranging in size from 5oz to 2½ lb, they were caught on every type of fly I possessed. I would recommend anyone who can spare a long w/e in the early summer to come and stay in Reid's and fish for the brownies. The fishing costs £5 a day per rod, and Reid's is £67 a night.

Oliver Cooke

Annie Greenwood



The 2002 season saw first fish caught by:

22nd July.

Hugo Manners (aged 12), in Frying Pan a 6 lb cock on an Aly Shrimp.

24th July.

Jo Manners (aged 11) in Meadow a 7lb cock, on a Sunray Shadow .

Olivia Manners, in Meadow a 5lb cock, on an Aly Shrimp.

9th August.

Caroline Chapman in Field an 8½lb cock, on a Sunray Shadow

14th August.

Tim Carter, (*right*) in Rocky a 5lb cock, on an Aly Shrimp.

17th August.

Sue Carter, in Meadow a 6lb cock, on an Aly Shrimp, (her first for 15 years).

21st August.

Panda Sheridan, in Meadow a 6½lb cock, on a 10 Thunder & Lightning (after 30 years of trying!).

10th September.

Colin Pope in Cottage 4 a 5½ hen, on an Aly Shrimp, (fell in later).

17th September.

Phil Biegel in the Ladies Pool a 5lb cock, on an Aly Shrimp.

25th September.

Claire Moore in the Ladies Pool a 6½lb hen returned, on a GP (first after 20 years of trying).

25th September.

John Northridge in Cottage 4 a 5lb cock, on a Sunray Shadow.

Meadow seems to be the pool to catch your first fish in, with Ladies and Cottage 4 in second place. I do think it a bit hard to send novice rods that have never caught a salmon to the cottages, as the wading and casting are the most problematic on the river. That said, congratulations to you all and I hope this has fired your enthusiasm for more. I know the paths along the Cottage pools are causing a lot of concern, and they are going to have work carried out on them.



The percentage of fish returned was marginally up on the last two seasons. This is particularly disappointing as I had thought that the message was at last getting through to you all. The overall figure was 64% returned. However one party in September, contrary to all the instructions in the front of the fishing book only managed a pitiful 25% return rate, and managed to kill 3 fish over 11lbs. Where as the week before i.e. The last week of August, 21 fish were landed and only 2 were killed (an 86% return rate), 7 were tagged and 5 were fin clipped.

I have been fighting the Upper Shin's corner, constantly telling the Kyle Board members that because we are so responsible we do not need a compulsory catch and release policy. Sadly, as of next season, all the Kyle Rivers; Oykel, Carron, Cassley, and Shin will follow the same catch and release policy: This will be.

Before 15th June 70% of all fish to be released.

After 15th June all fish over 65 cm to be released.

Over the season 75% of all fish to be released.

Hooks

No treble hooks to be used at any time.

Before 15th June only single hooks to be used.

As we are on the subject, I just had to say that this season I was most fortunate to land 16 salmon of varying sizes. All were caught on the same fly and hook (I did change my cast several times, and did a lot of fishing with other flies as well), a Sunray Shadow and a single offset hook. Several times I wished I had bent down the single barb, as it would have made releasing them a whole lot easier. 6 were tagged, 6 had their adipose fin clipped, and most had their photo taken. You can see them all on the Lairg Estate web site.



The most popular fly was the Sunray Shadow with an amazing total of 89 fish. In 2nd place was the Aly Shrimp with 22; and a close 3rd with 21 was the Willie Gun. The Oykel GP only managed 7. I wonder how many people can tell the difference between the Aly Shrimp and Oykel GP?

The Pool Analysis (see separate sheet) almost had a fish included in the Gate column. Sadly, Patrick Darling lost it at his feet; he assures me if he had had someone with a net they would have landed it. This was all seen by his wife and sister-in-law from Frying Pan.

So the offer still stands. A prize for the next fish landed successfully in Gate. There must either be a witness or photographic proof.

Another epic battle happened in Lady Herbert's on the 30th August. I'll let Jonathan Muir describe it to you in his own words.

"Lady Herbert's-first pool of the day and fair sized trout enjoying the hatch. Out with the trout rod, a cast, the fly skates in the current and a huge swirl. Swiftly back to the big rod! Three swirls to the Sunray and a hard take. A leap and a powerful run into the rapids. Fifteen minutes of agony negotiating the rocks and gullies but finally the cock fish bends into the net. Then the hook falls out! Relief. 21lbs, my biggest yet! Two more and two lost complete a memorable day. Jonathon 3, Dad 1."

First estimates put the cock fish at somewhere around the 23 to 24 lbs mark. It was written down as 23 lbs. I subsequently received a letter from Jonathan's father telling me that his son had been researching the sizing of fish from their measurements, and consequentially he wanted the size to be down graded to 21 lbs. All in all an excellent effort, the fish was returned successfully.

Whilst this is something we all dream of doing, the next story is so remarkable it beggars belief.

Jeremy Drax was fishing late one evening in Phil's on the 30th of July. The weather was in his own words "Raining constantly, midges out when wind dropped. High water still after heavy rain the day before. The highest water I have ever fished in Phil's pool".

He caught the first fish at 19:30 in the top run into Phil's on a blue charm N°14 micro tube. A hen of 6½ lbs (kept). Then the fun really began. During

the next two and a half hours another five fish were caught, they were an 8 lb hen, a 20 lb hen, a 7 lb cock, another 20lb hen, and finally a 6½ lb hen, all these fish were returned. Jeremy's comments in the book were "One of those dreamy evenings of a lifetime, never to be repeated. Lost 3 other fish & rose another 6 more on micro tube and hitched tube fly. The second big hen went ballistic & took about 45 mins to bring in. Fish lying everywhere and showing all night. Fly deliberately changed on each run through the pool. Magic experience- going to heaven early!" The flies were all micro tubes and were; the Blue Charm, Black Sheep, Silver Stoat, and Orange & Yellow. All were on size 14 hooks. He finished fishing at 22:30, by which time his father had walked up from the suspension bridge to see if he had fallen in. The Drax party caught 18 fish and returning 11, giving them a return rate of 61%.

Another story worth a mention happened in Humphrey Walwyn's week. Humphrey runs a very tight ship and has worked out a rota so that not a single fishing moment is lost . He awards various prizes at the end of the week for, 'The most fish in the week' won by Giles Wood again! 'Best



dressed fisher' won by Robert Stirling, and the 'Shin navigation award' given to a fisherman who fishes the wrong pools or cannot obey instructions! This year it went to Roger Chapman who knows the river perfectly well but still got 'lost' - even though he is (was) a professional explorer and Fellow of the RGS. This caused much amusement.

Estate News.

I have to report that Donald Bain has left the Estate's employment. We would like to wish him and Rona all the best in the future.

Important news for the 2004 season. I have been aware for a long time that the way the callendar works each year, you all continually move back by a day each season. To remedy this all weeks will move forward one week in 2004. This sadly means Simon Lamb's and my week will only be four days long, but this cannot be helped. I hope this meets with all of your approval.

Hatchery News.

The vertical stacking egg trays have now been installed in the newly insulated building within the Grudie Burn facility. There are six units with eight trays taking 3000 ova per tray, making a total of 144k ova. We plan to net 150 pairs of fish for the stripping this year. Ian McMyn has been carrying out a habitat survey on the Shin, and early indications show that we have a very healthy population of parr in the river. The thing that most struck Ian was the huge size of the parr, much larger than the equivelent aged fish in upland areas.



Reid's Cottage.

Reid's Cottage is now fully operational, if you would like to take it for either a week or a long week end, please contact me. Why not visit Lairg in the winter and see the river in a totally different light? Come and watch the salmon spawning, it's truly remarkable and fascinating.

We can arrange visits to our brand new salmon holding facility up on the Grudie.



Tight lines,
and have a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

James Curran