

## Presidential address AGM January 16<sup>th</sup> 2019

Storm Frank legacy:- In December we received a written response from SEPA regarding our plans for reinstatement of the river bank which had been eroded at Upper Parkhill North below the former railway bridge. They were against our proposals using large boulders and backfill. Their suggested method using fir trees and willow was considered impractical in the area concerned so Committee decided to adopt the alternative of constructing a wooden walkway. Stuart Fleming agreed to measure up and during the winter months he would prefabricate the structure down in the bothy to be ready for installation later in the year when water levels dropped.

Work at Snuffies on the Cruives was ongoing to fill the large hole using materials from the surrounding area.

Our agreement with our co-proprietors on both the Cruives and Nether Don Fishings for the exclusive use of the fishings expired at the end of the 2017 season. Notice had been given to the agents for the co-proprietors that ADAA would no longer seek exclusive use and instead only pay and fish our share of the beats. The suggested number of available rods would still leave ADAA as the majority shareholders for each beat with an adequate number

of rods for members. This would result in significant savings for payment of Assessments plus the solicitors fees for arranging the agreement. Since intimating this there had been no response from any party.

Discussions had taken place with the landowner at the bottom of the Ardlethen beat regarding the possibility of obtaining an area for parking following problems with members parking on the verges at the end of the 2017 season getting stuck in the mud. The owner was reluctant to come to any agreement initially and discussion went on for a couple of months before it was decided the only option he was prepared to make available was both impracticable and far too costly.

Following all the pollution experienced on the Don and also at Loirston during the previous 2 years SEPA had been contemplating a prosecution of the AWPR contractors. Any fine imposed would simply have gone to the Treasury so a deal was brokered that parties who had been affected by the pollution and had raised complaints would be paid a sum of money in lieu of a prosecution taking place. This was a one off situation and the Courts had to agree to the suggested action. We were ultimately paid a sum of £20K in December 2017. Initially we were required to stipulate how the monies would be spent. We suggested a new grass cutting Flail machine plus new brushcutter to replace our aging stock which was on its last legs. Eventually they paid over

the monies without any conditions applying. We did however use the funds to buy the new machinery in time for the grass cutting period

The AWPR bridge over the Don needed 2 tower cranes, one at either side of the river. The riverbank areas acquired under the compulsory purchase order were not large enough to accommodate the cranes plus the rotating cranes need to use the airspace above ADAA land to operate. Discussions had been ongoing since August 2017 and a Sum of £10K agreed covering the period up to the end of March when the bridge was due for completion. As you are all aware due to problems encountered work went on long past the original date so another agreement was made taking them up to the end of August 2018. We were asked again in August to extend the agreement up to the end of December 2018. Enough was enough we said, as the works were still denying upstream access to anglers wishing to fish the upper part of the North bank of Parkhill and at the back end of the season so we upped the asking price for the extended licence which they initially objected to but we stood firm and they eventually accepted our amended terms. Payment for the earlier agreements were not paid in time in line with the licensing terms so they had to pay a penalty for late payment. By the end of December 2018 we had received a total of £46K for the licensing charges. At one point it looked like the works might continue

beyond December but the cranes were in fact removed just before the year end, although still no word about when the last stretch of the AWPR is likely to open.

In December 2017 a 6lb rainbow was recorded out of Loirston. After that a further couple the same size were also reported. Nothing of that size had ever been stocked into the Loch so the fish had clearly been feeding well to reach that size.

In January I attended the triennial meeting of the River Ythan District Salmon Fishery Board. The outgoing Chairman Sir Charles Wolridge Gordon announced that he was not seeking re-election and he proposed myself as his successor which was agreed by the meeting. ADAA is well represented on the Board as we have 2 seats as an Upper and Lower proprietor. Another Board member representing another party is also an ADAA member so we are well positioned when it comes to arguments regarding the possible ban of worm fishing for finnock and sea trout on the river

A wayleave was agreed for laying SSE high voltage cables underneath the Don at Upper Parkhill. This is to serve the developing village of Newmachar. Work was originally planned in 2018 but has been delayed for operational reasons.

On 19<sup>th</sup> February we were informed that at long last the long awaited new bridge at Ardlethen had been placed in position. The

contractors were looking for payment but an inspection of the bridge revealed that there were some problems with the works and we required the designing engineer to inspect and detail the problems. Payment was withheld until the work was properly completed. Just as well because in late May we were advised that the contractors had gone into liquidation. The Trustees appointed were looking for payment but were advised the works not done to specification. ADAA arranged for the necessary work to be done and the costs were deducted from the monies due without any argument.

In March it came to our attention that an application had been lodged with the City Council for a licence for a hot food van in the lay by at Loirston. We had already lost the parking over at the other side of the loch and there were concerns about lorries blocking the parking area and possibility of a litter problem. I drafted objections which were sent in and a hearing was set to hear the parties for and against the proposal on 17<sup>th</sup> April. I attended and spoke on behalf of the Association and was pleased when the Police Traffic Dept also lodged objections. After discussion by the members of the licencing Board who asked questions the application was unanimously denied.

I was approached at the beginning of March by Agents acting on behalf of the owner of the Culter Beat on the Dee. Since purchasing the beat he had experienced some difficulty selling

permits to fish. An offer was on the table for ADAA to take on a 4 year lease for a sum far less than the cost of the annual assessments Consultation took place with Committee involving a couple of anglers very familiar with the beat and it was decided it was too good an opportunity to miss. The only problem was how to allocate the permits. There was a 6 rod limit for the beat. A convener was appointed and he came up with the idea of splitting up the rods into half days plus have a separate session for sea trout anglers in May. June and July the peak months for sea trout. We contacted the designer of our website and he designed a bespoke online booking system for us. The system is very adaptable and can be managed by ADAA for this beat or for anywhere else if necessary. The one problem we had with our existing Boat Booking system was with non members going online making false booking

This was easily solved by linking the booking system to our membership database and requiring a member to give an email address and his membership no before giving access to the system. The system worked well with only 1 minor problem and that was with multiple booking of sessions. A couple of members did try this but as the bookings were being monitored they were quickly put right. Hopefully for 2019 multiple booking will not be possible once the system has been tweaked a little.

Fishing had got off to a reasonable start for the season on the Don with a number of springers recorded. Kemnay did particularly well at the start although some so called springers were in fact silvery kelts when you viewed the photos taken. Sundays were proving more popular with more trout anglers out on the river than during the week.

It was noted membership numbers after the renewal period had reduced by 100 members. As will be discussed under finance this has caused a significant and serious drop in annual income.

In July it was reported in the early part of the grass cutting season the contractor was well ahead of schedule mainly due to the use of the new flail machine which worked well in some areas. For 2018 the grass cutting at Kemnay, Methlick and part of Ardlethen was to be handled by our own contractor rather than being farmed out as in the past to an outside contractor. This will show a saving in annual costs.

Since the start of the season the Secretary has been obtaining as many email addresses as possible for members. In the future this will allow us to communicate with members much more economically. A good example is the annual AGM/newsletter mailshot was sent by email this year at a significant saving in both printing and postage costs. Also more environmentally friendly. 76% of members have now supplied us

with an email address so if you or other you know have an up to date email address but haven't told us please do so.

A Junior day was held out at Park Fishery on 12th August which was a very successful event. Many thanks to Chap for allowing the use of their fishery and to Craig Fleming for organising the event.

Towards the end of August river levels were at their lowest level seen for many years due to the drought since early May and warmer than usual weather. We received a warning from the City Environmental Health dept that there was a suspected outbreak of blue algae up at Loirston. This can be dangerous and life threatening. However after emergency testing the suspicions turned out to be incorrect and there was no cause for concern. Over on the Don at Upper Parkhill the low water had revealed a stone in the river covered in carvings. An examination by Aberdeen University confirmed it was a very rare example of either a 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century Pictish Carved Stone of significant national importance.

Over the years I wonder how many anglers have stood on the submerged stone when fishing not realising what was below their feet. Arrangements were made to remove the stone from the river. Under Scots Law the find belongs to the Crown despite



it being found on ADAA land. I objected to the removal until a suitable similar sized stone could be found to replace it. You never know it may have even been creating a salmon lie. The stone was duly removed/replaced and taken to Edinburgh for examination.

At the beginning of September the walkway under the former railway had been completed. Stuart had managed to fit the work in along with the grass cutting. It certainly improves access up the north bank particularly when the river is running high. A job well done by Stuart and Nicky!

During the height of the warm weather we had been unable to carry out our usual summer stocking at both Loirston and Parkhill as our suppliers refused to deliver any fish in the prevailing high temperature conditions.as there was a likelihood of serious death of the fish. With the drop in Temperature we eventually had a stocking in the first week in September Weed at both lochs was a problem due to the hot weather. Water levels at Parkhill began to drop dramatically making cutting the weed almost impossible as the water level was too shallow to allow the cutters to operate properly This led to some complaints but there was not a lot we could do about it.

The situation at Parkhill became quite worrying and we began to think there must be a serious leak somewhere but the owner could find nothing wrong. The vegetation around the place

was lush and according to the previous owner a similar situation happened in the year 2003 when there was a very dry summer. Thankfully the rains eventually came. At first the levels were slow to increase but are back to normal. During the low water most members gave up fishing but out on the boat some excellent fish were caught out in the deeper water. Several fish in the 6 to 10lb range were taken.

Over on the Don the low levels exited right into October. Few anglers were venturing out but those that did were often surprised to find they were catching salmon despite the very low water. As you will hear later the salmon catches on the Don were double that of the previous season which had been very poor.

On the Dee at Culter, members were having success with catches of salmon on most days. There was a very high uptake of the rods and some members actually caught their first ever salmon on the beat. Water levels were low which suited the beat with incoming fish building up. A lot of fish were colouring up but there was still the odd sea liced fish taken

Back in 2017 we saw a significant run of Pacific Pink Salmon into the Dee and also some other rivers up and down the east coast. It is unsure just how successful they were in spawning but the eggs were definitely viable as they hatched out in the Marine Lab in Torry. Some say they will return in 2019 as they follow a 2

year life cycle whereas some say 2017 was a one off and any progeny of the 2017 spawning will not have survived so they will not return. All I can say is it will be interesting to see what does or doesn't happen.

Our old tin shelter over on the North bank at Upper Parkhill had disappeared we are certain due to the AWPR Bridge construction works. At the beginning of September we were fortunate in obtaining an ex offshore container FOC that can be used as a replacement once the AWPR work is finished. It has been completely repainted inside and outside all ready for the future. Thanks to Benny Smart for getting it and for all his and his team of volunteers hard work repainting it.

Our existing arrangement for Balbithan and Torryburn came to an end in October. In 2018 the Kintore Angling Club had been given permission from the local farmers who own the banks for the beat to fish for brown trout. Worm was also being allowed which was in conflict with our fly only rule for trout.

The annual return was very poor with only a couple of members catching salmon and hardly any trout recorded at all so it was decided 2 clubs cannot fish the same beat without some conflict and unfair that we had to pay for the salmon fishing which was almost non existent. After discussion with the agents

for the owners we decided renewal of the lease was not worthwhile especially now we have the Culter beat on the Dee.

The foregoing covers the main points from the season looking through all the minutes.

The main concern we currently have is the sudden drop in membership. Every year we see members drop out but never before in such large numbers. After taking in new members we are still 100 members down. The 2017 was a poor salmon season but whether or not this was the reason we do not know. This has had a very serious effect on our revenue income which we need to finance our Association. We have been fortunate in gaining income via the AWPR but that is a one off and was never intended to finance the day to day running of our Association. The AWPR monies should be looked upon as a bonus rather than as a subsidy for our income.

We have not had any fee increase since season 2015. There have been strong arguments within Committee since then for and against any increase to help us retain members but at the same time it was agreed back in 2015 at the AGM that fees should be reviewed annually in line with the Retail Price inflation index. Back in 2015 a senior member was paying £215, the same as in 2018. If inflationary increases had been applied the fee would

have been £2032 for 2018 compared to the £215 charged and £2038 in the season ahead so we have fallen behind quite a bit.

In the past financial year we have suffered a loss of £30k some of which is a legacy of Storm Frank 3 years back but discounting that there is still a loss of £20K. We have reduced our liabilities quite substantially in arriving at that figure and there is not a lot more trimming to be done. At a recent meeting of the Committee, which unfortunately I was unable to attend, it was decided that rather than make any recommendation on fees, to throw the matter over to members to decide for themselves. I must say not an approach I would necessarily have agreed with. We have approximately 700 ordinary members paying full fees and £120 senior citizens paying a reduced fee so it is doesn't take a genius to work things out. All I can say is give it some very serious thought when the matter of fees comes up for a decision on the future fees to be paid.

Thank you all for listening to me. Let's hope the season ahead will be a little more productive and that the weather is a little bit kinder towards us.

I'll now hand you over to our Treasurer, Paul.

Bob Dey

ADAA President