



LETTERS

Your comments and opinion on game-fishing matters

BEMERSYDE MEMORIES

I thoroughly enjoyed *Echoes of the Past* (August) featuring the Bemersyde beat on the Tweed. Back in the late 1970s and through the '80s, I was fortunate to be part of a syndicate that fished there. At that time, the syndicate rods were let for the whole season, and although fish were caught throughout the year, it was the autumn run we looked forward to with great anticipation. Unfortunately, we didn't benefit from the transport now provided on 'cardiac brae' and we faced the steep walk up the hill at the end of the day.

The syndicate I was part of was managed by John Coutts, who sadly died in 2020. John was a prolific salmon angler, well known by many fishermen and gillies for his exploits on all the major Scottish rivers.

I was at Bemersyde with John one October day when he caught three magnificent salmon from the Boat pool with a weight of more than 60lb. That gave him a problem because those were the days when you kept what you caught, which meant he faced the daunting prospect of carrying his catch up the hill. Perhaps fortunately for him, the other rods, including myself, were blank and willing to lend a hand, but it was only after many stops and much puffing and panting that we reached the car park at the top of the appropriately named 'cardiac brae'!

Very different times now, but for those of us privileged to fish all those years ago, the precious memories remain.

Peter Martin, Scottish Borders



Memories pinned inside the Bemersyde hut

MICHAEL BOYD

Despite the facts

Despite the fact that Scottish anglers will be obliged to release all salmon caught in 117 rivers in 2025. Despite the fact that the Norwegians closed 33 rivers for salmon fishing this year, among them the famous Gaula and Orkla. Despite a dramatic decline of returning salmon in the last two years in France and this year in Denmark, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) considers there is a paucity of evidence justifying the collapse of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic. That's what it told us in a letter after we had confronted it with the existing salmon crisis.

IFI also sees no reason to change the existing Irish salmon and sea-

trout tagging scheme despite a steady decline in the returns of salmon to the Irish coasts. Over the last 20 years, the returns of multi-sea-winter fish to the Irish coasts have been well below Conservation Limits (CL), defined as "the required number of spawners to ensure the continued survival of the species", and reached an all-time low this year. One-sea-winter fish haven't reached the CL for ten years, as stated by the IFI in its own status report of salmon stocks for 2023. Last year was the lowest value ever recorded, as evaluated by fish counters in Ireland.

We think it is unwise to wait until we have all the scientific proof that stocks have completely collapsed worldwide.

We have to act now. Archaic rules, like allowing anglers to kill 10 springers per season, must be banned. On rivers like the Moy, this practice occurs regularly. This highly unsustainable behaviour must stop. It sends the wrong signal to the public, the angling community and attracts 'fishmongers'.

Reto Coutalides (North Atlantic Salmon Fund) and Yann Guegan, Switzerland

Apathy

In *Letters* (August), Mike Collett urges anglers to unite. He's right, of course, and it's why I joined the ACA in 1972 and its effective successor, the Angling Trust, on its establishment in 2009. But anglers