



**Dunoon & District Angling Club 1949 – 1999**

The Launching of the “Lady Vivien” on Loch Eck 15<sup>th</sup> January 1951

## INTRODUCTION

The sources for this not-too-serious history of the Club are seven Minute Books recording every Club meeting over the last fifty years. For the first twenty eight of these years the minutes are hand written, thereafter type takes over. Much anecdotal material has been provided by older Club members who were able to flesh out matters which are only briefly mentioned in the Minutes. An Editorial Committee (composed of the only two Committee members who have an O grade between them) guarantee accuracy.

In case history is not your favourite subject, there is some lighter material interspersed in the text. Some of this in the form of poetry (?) read out or even put to music at Annual Club Dinners.

Needless to say, because of the latter, this publication was not assisted by an Arts Council grant.

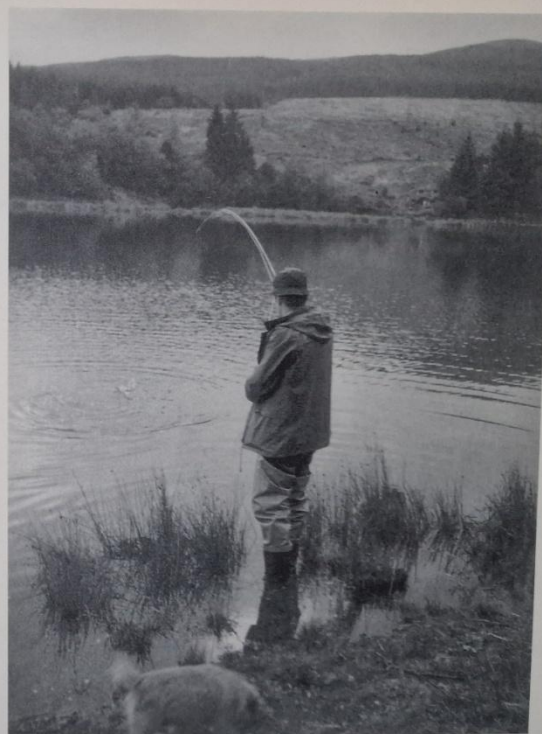
The author wishes to remain anonymous; the Club Committee agree but note he is the one on the back page who isn't eating sandwiches.

## DEDICATION

This slim volume is dedicated to all Club office bearers, committee members and ordinary club members who, over fifty years have sweated at work parties, organised outings and events, written minutes, attended meetings, kept accounts, varnished boats, filled in their annual returns on time (!), behaved as gentlemanly anglers and carried out the thousand and one tasks needed to keep the Club going, year in, year out. There are many individuals who have given service to the Club far beyond the call of duty; some were office bearers, some were never such but nevertheless gave much to the Club. To name one without naming all would be invidious. Thus they are not recorded here but the fact that the Club is here after fifty years, and is thriving, is in itself a tribute to their dedication.

## IN THE BEGINNING

The inaugural meeting, recorded in the first leather bound Minute book, was held on the 14th November 1949 in the Court Room of the Burgh Hall and was chaired by the Provost J. Marshall. Those present decided to form an angling club and elected a committee who were charged with drawing up a constitution. Little time was lost and after two committee meetings, a full club meeting was held in April 1950, thirty members attending. A constitution was agreed and the annual subscription set as £1.1.0. (£1.05). An offer to lease the River Cur fishings from the Forestry Commission for an annual rent of £7 was agreed and negotiations approved for leasing the fishings at Dunoon Reservoirs (note the plural; in those days there were three reservoirs, the present one and two smaller “up the glen”). Efforts to obtain fishing on the River Finnart had failed but moves were afoot to try for the River Massan fishings and the Ardyne Burn. At this time, of course, the Tarsan



*Tight lines at the reservoir.*





Opening ceremony at Loch Loskin.

dam had yet to be built and it was not until 1954 that the club obtained the fishings there.

A second meeting was held in April to consider an offer from the Town Council for evening fishing at the Reservoir for eight rods for £20 per annum. This was rejected but it was agreed to accept a very generous offer from the Hon. J. W. Younger of Benmore for the Massan fishings for the sum of 5/- (£0.25) per annum. Plans for winter lectures, film shows etc were discussed.

Regarding the rent for the R. Massan, some time later it was found not to have been paid so a payment was made with a suitable apology. This was returned with a note from the laird stating that the rent was only due "if asked for".

If only all our Club fishings had the same conditions today!

## IN THE EARLY FIFTIES

The Club was set up at a time of post-war austerity. Food, sweets, clothing and petrol were rationed, in some cases more strictly than in the actual war. For the few who had private transport, about 90 miles per month was the average petrol allowance.

At this time of shortages, trout were a great treat and, for most folk, fresh salmon was an unheard of delicacy. So membership of an angling club offered more than just sport. One member fondly recalls, as a boy, having the frying pan gently warming and the H.P. Sauce at the ready waiting for Dad to come home from the Massan.

Fishing tackle was in short supply. Army sectional tank aerials could be made into serviceable, if rather stiff, rods (A.F.T.M rating 19/207). The ubiquitous gas mask haversack made a good fishing bag. Ex Government oilskins took the place of today's Barbour or Goretex.

TV was yet to be installed in most homes and the "wireless" still reigned supreme. Participation in local societies and events was very important for folk in places like Dunoon; thus the emphasis on "winter activities."

The first annual general meeting (A.G.M.) of the club in 1951 reported substantial progress and a Club membership of 47. During the winter, lectures had been held every two weeks the subjects including the various methods of fishing, fly tying and rod making. The first club outing was held in October on Loch Eck in "gales and torrential rain". Permission had been given for the club to have three boats on Loch Eck and a specification had been drawn up for two boats. Sealed tenders from seven boat builders had been received, no less than five of these from firms in Dunoon. Less happy was the failure to agree with the Town Council about fishing on the Reservoirs, the minutes stating that "as a local club we received little consideration from the Council".

The first of many pleas which were to echo down the years, were for members to make annual returns (fifty years on, little has changed!)

During 1951 two boats were obtained, one being our very own "Lady Vivien" which today continues to be on use on Loch Eck. This was launched in a ceremony on Loch Eck in June as illustrated in the photograph on the front cover.

Club members reported "an abundance of fish in the loch but the general opinion was that they were difficult to catch", an opinion probably as valid today as it was then. In the Club outing in September on Loch Eck, only two sea trout were caught.

During the winter, the lectures had continued to be popular and now included net making but in 1952, some were cancelled as a mark of respect at the death of King George VI.

## A (DUNOON) ANGLER'S PRAYER

*Thank you, lord, for this year's fishing,  
It's been great, but now I'm wishing  
Next year let the trout be bold  
And onto every fly of mine take hold.  
Let the fish be sleek with perfect fin  
And please lord, let me reel them in.  
And if you could, arrange a hatch  
To send them into feeding frenzy,  
And ensure the fish I catch  
Are bigger than those of Keith Mackenzie.*

## 1952 – 1954

The second A.G.M. of the club in February 1952 heard that the new boats had been paid for by members paying subscriptions for a number of years in advance. Ground had been leased at Loch Eck to build a club boathouse and plans were advanced for this project. To save costs, it was hoped to use Club labour to erect the building. The need for an entrance fee for new members was agreed and membership numbers were growing at a rate which would require a waiting list to be started. This reflected the importance of the R. Massan to the Club where rod numbers were becoming a growing problem at times of high (i.e. fishable) water. At this time, and for some years to come, probably the majority of active Club members were spinning rod enthusiasts, both bait and spinner.

Fishing tackle was now more freely available. A built cane fly rod could be purchased for £5.10.0 (£5.50); the cheaper (and heavier) greenheart type costing £2.50. Wet flies were selling for 6/- (30p) per dozen. Nylon was beginning to take over from gut as a cast material.

By June 1952, there were 30 applicants on the waiting list and by the AGM of 1953, membership numbers had risen to 86. There was no nonsense about payment of annual subs; in those days, members got seven days notice and then their place was filled by an applicant from the waiting list! The R. Massan competition was started in 1952, the winner having 18 sea trout and 1 grilse. A trophy for the best fish was presented by an anonymous donor later in 1955. 1952 was a poor year on Loch Eck, it being reported that "the loch was in its dourist mood" ('plus ça change, plus la même chose' — as they say in Port Glasgow).

During 1953, the dam at Tarsan being completed, the Club was in negotiation with the Hydro Board on obtaining the fishings. Plans for the Loch Eck boathouse were put on hold for the present. The first annual dinner was held in January 1953 a feature of the event being a film show. The first Club outing outwith Cowal, to Loch Awe, was held and proved a success. In the annual Loch Eck outing, fish "again proved elusive".

In 1954, after many delays, fishing (by fly only) commenced on Loch Tarsan, the loch having been stocked with 5,000 yearlings by the Hydro Board. Costs for members were 5/- (25p) per day; 15/- (75p) per week and £2 per season. A site had been chosen for the boathouse. It was hoped to finance its construction in part by prepayment of subscriptions and also by purchase of life membership. The Club was now entering one of its most active periods when it was facing building both the Tarsan and Loch Eck boathouses, providing more boats and coping with its first major fly-only water.

In its first year, 1500 trout were taken from Tarsan.

In October 1954, there took place The Great Duplicated Minute Mystery! Two meetings are minuted, each with the same date, in the same handwriting and mostly with the same content. Only one is signed as correct by the President. Clearly, being Hon Secretary can seriously damage your (mental) health. Elsewhere in the numbered minute book, two



Can catching the best basket cause swelling of the head? Tests being carried out.

pages have been removed, a hand written notation having been made to that effect but no reason given. What dark secrets did these pages contain, never to see the light of day?

By the time of the A.G.M. of 1955, five years after the Club was started, great progress had been made. Membership stood at 84 and a limit of 100 members was agreed. The Club had fishings on the Massan, Cur, Loch Eck and, now, Loch Tarsan. Programmes of outings, winter activities, competitions and the annual dinner were all now in place.





### A TRUE FISHING STORY

The fisheries manager of a major river not 100 miles from Dunoon, one day took a rod out for a cast or two. For reasons best known to him, the rod was a light trout wand and he was reminded of this when he hooked a large salmon. After a long battle, he landed it and, at 20 lbs, it proved to be the biggest salmon ever taken on fly on that river. This fact was recorded in the local paper.

That autumn, two Club members were lucky enough to be invited for a day on the river.

One of them hooked a salmon of some size and, with the help of his companion, managed to land it. It was indeed a large fish, with a pronounced kype, and weighed all of 24 pounds, as later confirmed by the fisheries manager.

Later, in the pub, he was telling a pal of this event, adding that the fish "was an ugly brute."

"Aye, Wullie", said his pal, "It was fower pun uglier than your'n!"

### 1955 – 1960

1955/56 saw the completion of the building of the Loch Eck boathouse. The original intention had been that voluntary labour would be used in its construction but, finally, a contractor was employed to complete the work at a cost of £46. The Club was clearly experiencing what most voluntary organisations find, that while much be achieved by keen volunteers, there are limits to what can be done. After plans for the new Loch Tarsan boathouse had been approved, sealed tenders were called for and building went ahead at the cost of £527 and it was completed in time for the start of the 1956 season. A new twelve foot mahogany boat was ordered from a local boat builder for a cost of £72. Members paid 2/6d (12½p) for boat hire at Tarsan and the day permit cost was also 2/6d. The minutes of the A.G.M in February 1956 are of interest in that they give catch returns for the first time. The reported catches were poor, 1955 being "a year of drought and hot, sunny weather". Tarsan provided 552 fish; the Massan 4 salmon and 77 sea trout; Loch Eck and the R.Cur 4 salmon and 30 sea trout. So old-timer's tales of the rivers being full of fish in those days of yore clearly did not apply every season; the classic "good, wet angler's summer" was still needed, even then.

After all the work with boathouses and boats in 1955/56, the Club committee seemed to have changed down a gear in 1957 when, after the A.G.M, only two meetings were held



Netting for brood fish on the River Ruel.

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that year. Present day Committee members look at these records rather wistfully. 1½ hand written pages were enough to record the transactions of a Committee meeting; about 3 covered an A.G.M. Fifty years later, a meeting each month is hardly sufficient to cover the business.

For the first few years, Loch Tarsan provided good catches e.g 1,500 fish average 12 ozs in 1954. One report at this time recorded two trout being caught on the one cast, each exactly one pound in weight. Stocking was carried out with yearlings, 2,000 to 3,000 being stocked each season. However, the catches declined and by 1960 the catch was only 371 fish for the season. The minutes show much discussion as to the cause with suggestions for liming the loch. Present day knowledge based on the experience of the establishment of many new rainbow fisheries prove that newly-flooded areas will indeed give good results initially due to the abundant feeding available for the first few years and this was probably the case at Tarsan.

The Fisheries Laboratory at Pitlochry were consulted and after investigation, their conclusion was that the loch was overstocked and underfished. The Club thought Sunday fishing with spinning allowed in July and August might help to rectify the situation but both suggestions were vetoed by the Hydro Board.

The decade ended with a commendably brief A.G.M (pages 141 and 142 of the Minutes sufficed to record the proceedings) after which it was noted "tea was served and much enjoyed."

This period also saw a marked increase in the personal use of motorised transport which made access to the various Club waters so much easier. Cycling or using the bus to go fishing, once the norm, gave way to the ubiquitous motor bike or scooter and, as car ownership grew the blessings of personal, weatherproof transport were enjoyed by more and more anglers.

Ian Russell our Hon. Treasurer  
Is one of the nicest fellies  
He went off to fish Loch Tarsan  
But found he'd forgot his wellies  
Resourceful man that he is  
He found a solution sublime  
He wrapped his feet in carrier bags  
Purloined from Victoria Wine

### 1960 – 1970

The first few years of this decade appear uneventful from the fairly brief minutes of the Committee meetings. Three or four meeting per year sufficed to carry out the Club business. Continued poor catch returns at Loch Tarsan caused much discussion with suggestions of improving the water quality by liming and of trying spinning tactics to catch the "cannibal trout" which were thought to exist.

Membership rose to around the 150 mark with about 20 on a waiting list. No membership applications from those resident outwith Cowal were to be considered. At the AGM in 1963, finances were so sound that the President said that "suggestions would be welcomed for using some of this surplus". Such a suggestion today at our AGM might well send our Hon Treasurer into orbit!

In late 1963, however, some dark clouds appeared on the horizon. There were "authenticated reports" of ungentlemanly conduct by members fishing the River Massan and a special meeting was called. This proposed rules regarding a ban on the sale of fish caught on Club waters, fishing with unattended rods etc and also a ban on fishing from anchored boats. These were approved at the following AGM.

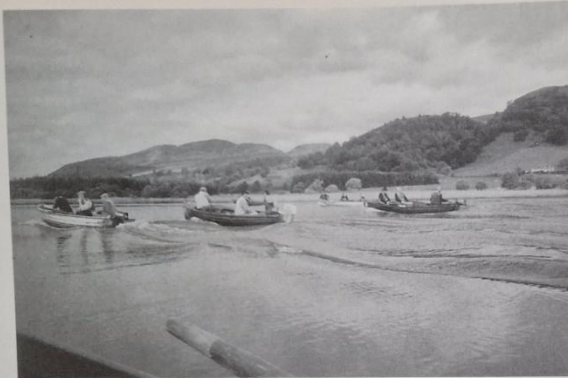
Sadly, the matter did not end following the adoption of the new rules. The owners of some of the Club fishings made complaints about the conduct and fishing methods



Building gabions at Loch Eck boathouse.

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Setting off at a club outing on the Lake of Menteith.

employed by some anglers. A special committee meeting held in August 1964 heard evidence against a number of members who were seen taking foul hooked fish from the Massan using heavy tackle and large hooks. The sale of permits to visitors was stopped and more evidence was heard in October where a number of offending members had been challenged for fishing illegally on the Massan and where fighting broke out resulting in the police being called. It was also alleged that some of the members were accompanied by friends who were not members and who had no permit to fish. The Committee eventually agreed to ask four members to resign but giving them the opportunity to state their case to the Committee.

Following a hearing in November, the case against three of the offenders were upheld and one was given a warning. By January 1964, the three culprits had resigned.

This unpleasant episode in the Club's history has been outlined in the spirit of a "warts and all" approach. It clearly caused much upset in the Club at the time; there were allegations of leaks of confidentiality from the Committee and plans were made for more strict vetting of future applications for membership.

Today, we sometimes hear complaints against a modern breed of anglers, greedy to get "their limit" at any cost, the implication being that there was a former golden age when all was sweetness and light on loch and river. The above shows that, perhaps, the old Adam can get not!

However, it is pleasant to report that, to date, there has been no need to invoke these powers given to the Committee over thirty years ago. Long may it remain so and the Club continue as a happy group of anglers showing respect both to their fellow members, their environment and to their prey.

(This comment was made on a member's Annual Return.  
Name, W. McGonagle, perhaps?)

*I fished in vain on Cur and Eck  
I should have stayed at home by heck  
For the only fish I got I bought  
In a basket of chips at the Coyalot!*

At the AGM of 1965, major changes to the Club constitution were agreed to give the Committee powers to deal with matters of ungentlemanly conduct which remain in force today. A membership limit of 130 total was agreed; there were 42 on the waiting list. Annual subscription remained at £1.1.0 (£1.05) and entrance fee 3 guineas (£3.15). The cost of an annual dinner ticket that year was 17/6d thus it can be seen that the annual sub, in relative terms, was very much cheaper than it is today. Even taking into account that in those days members had to pay for use of Club boats and to fish the Tarsan (season permit £3), costs were on the low side and remained so for many years.

During the remaining years of the decade, the problem of poor catches on Loch Tarsan continued to worry the Committee. Suggestions of fixing a grid at the tunnel connecting to Balliemore were turned down by the Hydro Board. After investigation by the Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory, 20,000 freshwater shrimps were planted in the loch in 1967 to improve the feeding but this seemed to have little effect. Catches did not improve; only 64 fish were caught in 1968 and 110 in 1969. In that year the boat was only used 13 times. Clearly, the policy of stocking with yearlings was not working.

These years were also the heyday of the River Massan where, in 1966 84 salmon were caught. The following year, 223 sea trout were taken. However there were problems caused by such availability of salmon and sea trout, especially at the Eas an Buidh pool where as many as nine anglers at a time tried to fish, where it was difficult to prevent poaching and where it was often difficult to fish without inadvertently foul hooking a fish. Eventually it was agreed to make this pool a sanctuary. It is a measure both of the numbers of fish in the Massan during this period and of the fishing effort by members that the catch of 223 sea trout in 1967, a record for the river, was made after the Eas an Buidh was made

a sanctuary. However, the pool's sanctuary status meant that it was not visited by members and evidence started to accrue that this allowed even more poaching to take place in their absence. The site was visited by a civil engineer who recommended that a rock at the head of the pool might be blasted to allow fish easier access upstream. Plans were also discussed to fix a grid over the most vulnerable section of the Eas an Buidh to prevent removal of fish.

There was also a dispute about the ownership of the upper fishings on the river which much exercised the Committee. Much clearance work by the Club had opened good stretches for fly fishing but the hurricane of 1968 blew many trees into the river requiring more clearance work.

With the poor fishing on Loch Tarsan, it is clear the the River Massan continued to be the jewel in the crown of Club fishings. (It was not until 1972 that the Club gained the fishings at Dunoan Reservoir which, today, is the Club's most popular fishery).

## ODE TO DONNIE BARR

(On being presented with the Massan Trophy)

*At Massan week the biggest fish by far  
Was a great big salmon caught by Donnie Barr  
Straight to the Road Pool he did trot  
Tied on a worm and a wee split shot  
That's what he did, no more no less  
But we all tried the same without success  
His secret I'll now relate to you  
Firstly, he refreshed himself with Barr's Iron Bru  
Secondly, that split shot was of a special grade  
For like the Iron Bru t'was from girders made  
So if you want to catch a salmon bonnie  
Follow the path of our champion, Donnie*

## 1970 - 1980

For most of this period, the River Massan and its problems continued to occupy the Committee. With the death in 1972 of the Hon. J.W. Younger, the Club Hon. President and benefactor, the Club's tenure of the fishings became less secure. Poaching at times of low water was rife and several plans to prevent this were tried. Complaints of "hogging" favourable fishing places continued and members were circulated on the subject of

"fishing etiquette".

In 1975, a grid was fixed over part of the pool at the Eas an Buidh; this later mysteriously vanished, was replaced and vanished again. Bags of concrete were also deposited to deter low-water fishing (and poaching). That year, the long awaited plan of blasting the rocks forming a lip at the Eas an Buidh was carried out, the object to allow fish to pass through this area more easily. By 1977, it was agreed more work should be carried out but all this came to a halt when the Club lost the lease of the fishings in 1978 and did not regain them until late in 1979 having then to pay a substantial annual rental.



Electro fishing survey on the Garvie Burn (River Ruel).



The Club's run of bad luck continued when, having persuaded the Hydro Board to end its policy of stocking with yearling trout in favour of larger fish, it became impossible to obtain stocks due to the virus I.P.N which was then affecting hatcheries all over the country. No stocking took place in 1972 or 1973 and it was not until 1974 that 1,000 marked ten inch trout were obtained. Thereafter, catch returns much improved.

In 1974, the Hydro Angling Competition Finals were won for the Club by Gordon Small and the late P.J. Mackenzie and in 1975, the finals themselves were held on Loch Tarsan (as they were again this year, 1999).

### AWARDING THE LOCH ECK TROPHY

*In '74 the fishing was thin  
And few fish to the net came in  
But one trout came up with a tiny wee splash  
And landed in the boat before thinking to dash  
The pair wee creature had just jumped up in fright  
But earned for our friend as he pulled it in tight  
His name on the cup, the glory and all  
We wish him guid fortune and ask him to call  
To uplift the trophy inscribed 'Gordon Small.'*

In 1972, the Water Board offered the Reservoir fishings to the Club on favourable terms and this offer was eagerly accepted. It will be recalled that one of the prime aims of the Club at its foundation in 1949 was to obtain these fishings. However the I.P.N epidemic, rampant at that time, prevented stocking with rainbows until 1973. Charges were set at £0.25 for members and £0.50 for visitors. 350 half pound rainbows were stocked annually in 1973 and 1974 but about half of these were caught in the first month after stocking (one member described this as "feast and famine"). In later years, the water was stocked twice per season with a total of 500 fish and the fishing closed for a period after stocking to allow the fish to distribute. By comparison, today's annual stocking totals about 1,800 to 2,000 fish a fair number of which are of up to three pounds weight plus a number of "biggies".

1971 was also the year that the MacAulay Tankard was donated to the Club by George Munro. Archie MacAuley was the moving force behind calling that original meeting away back in 1949. Perhaps it is permissible to break the "no names" rule mentioned in the

Dedication in Archie's case. The minutes record that up to the time of his death "he had attended 123 meetings of the Committee out of the 124 held since the formation of the Club." This trophy is presented to an unsuspecting recipient at each Club annual dinner; this unfortunate then has to make an impromptu speech in reply and has to make a similar presentation at the dinner the following year. In 1979, the P.J. Mackenzie Shield was presented to the Club as a memorial by the family. This was awarded for the best basket in the Tarsan competition, a trophy for the best fish having earlier been presented by Provost J. Thomson.

In 1977, the Alec Cameron Cup in memory of a stalwart of the Club tragically killed in a road accident was donated by Ian McRae to be presented for the best basket at Club outings. Club outings have always been a very important part of Club activities, introducing new members into the Club and cementing friendships among anglers. Gathering together for a meal following the outing plays a large part in this. Over the years, many future activists, committee stalwarts and office bearers have been "discovered" at Club outings.

Poaching had always been a problem for the Club and the Club employed a number of paid watchers. Their lot seems not always to have been a happy one. The minutes record a payment to a R. Cur watcher to pay for a new tyre to replace one slashed by poachers. A Tarsan watcher reported encountering a group of nude swimmers; the minutes do not



Calm day on the Lochan.

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Junior competition day at the reservoir.

specify gender. The opening of the Reservoir was a magnet to the local poaching fraternity, 53 of whom were recorded as being "moved off" in the first year of operation. Today, active watchers and superb co-operation with the police have reduced the activity of these pests. However nude bathers of the female type were reported at the Reservoir in 1998; their effect on permit sales have not been analysed.

### FISHING TIP NO: 1

*Floating, intermediates, sinking, sink-tip, slow-sink, fast sink? What type of line should one use? A member who had fished Loch Tarsan, man and boy, all his life and who had won many Tarsan competitions over the years, was asked if he preferred a sinking line. He replied, "Are there other kinds?"*

Loch Eck, dour or not, continued to be a challenge and the Loch Eck Cup was presented for the best fish in the annual competition to mark the Club's 21st anniversary in 1970. The loch always producing a few salmon and, in 1978, no less than 150 sea trout. Many methods were tried in launching boats including rails, rollers and trolleys before moorings on trip lines were standardised. For many years, Club members had only permission to fish the loch by boat and there was much resentment at the many bank fishers, mostly fishing without permits. The use of Club boats varied; in some seasons very little use were made of the boats and this even led to suggestions that they should be sold. To encourage more use, it was decided to purchase a Club outboard motor and thus appeared the Club's first Seagull employing a most environmentally unfriendly petrol mixture of 10:1. This motor, and those that replaced it over a period of years, certainly allowed many more members to fish both Tarsan and Loch Eck. However, shared outboard motors impose a heavy burden of maintenance and repairs and there is always the maverick who abuses them and the Club decided with some regret to end this provision a number of years ago.

The 1970s were a period of high annual inflation, the rate peaking at the middle of the



The Lochan in winter.

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decade at over 25%. The days of leases of fishings for peppercorn or low rents were now numbered. The Club was having to meet demands for a realistic rent for the R. Massan and the Hydro Board were proposing increases for Loch Tarsan. The acquisition of the Reservoir also added to the Club's expenditure. The annual subscription of £1.05 had remained in force since 1950 and was only raised to £2.10 in 1970. It had to be raised to £3 in 1973, to £4 in 1975, £10 in 1977 and £12 in 1979. Even with an increase to £25 in 1980 necessary economies had to be introduced. Allowing life membership to be purchased for the 15 years payment of subscriptions in advance was one measure which had to be abandoned. Early in the decade, Treasurers were reporting healthy credit balances; by 1977 the Club was facing a deficit and the necessary funds needed for boat replacement were simply not available. One member recalls at this time asking the Treasurer for cash to buy some minor spare parts for the Club outboard motor only to be asked to delay until some annual subscriptions had been paid so that there was some money in the bank.

To cap all this, the loss of the R. Massan in 1978 was a severe blow to the Club causing membership to decline at the very time when numbers were needed. The Club was in deep trouble.

### YOU CAN'T PLEASE 'EM ALL

*About ten years ago a visitor to Dunoon caught what is thought to be the largest brown trout ever taken from Loch Tarsan. He took it to the Purdies who weighed it at 4 lbs 5 ozs and arranged with members to have photographs of it and its proud captor taken which could be sent to him on his return home. The following day the visitor bought a Reservoir permit (then costing £5). He later returned it to the Purdies complaining bitterly that, after spending such a sum, he was unable to catch a single fish there!*

### 1980 – 1990

This decade proved to be the most turbulent in the history of the Club. It started at a period of lowest ebb in the Club's fortunes when, indeed, the very future of the Club was in doubt; it continued over a period of retrenchment, through a period of expansion where Loch Loskin and the R. Massan fishing rights were acquired to a position of strength and stability.

Although the Club had negotiated a new lease for the R. Massan for 1980, rod limits and permits were now required. After years of easy access to this river, many members found the arrangements restrictive and this fact, together with the increased subscriptions were among the reasons that membership numbers fell to almost half the total which had obtained in the previous decade.

The Club had always operated a policy of low annual subscriptions but members paid for permits to fish various waters, use Club boats and, for a time, use Club outboard motors. Many members bought season permits but the system meant that annual income depended on the use made of the facilities; it was thus difficult to budget ahead. It was therefore decided to drop all charges for fishings and use of boats etc but to charge a more realistic annual subscription.

In 1981, as a fund raising venture, the 150 Club was started and, due to the hard work of the organisers, the dedicated band of collectors and the generosity of the contributors, it provided over £10,000 to Club funds over the sixteen years it operated. For many years, the 150 Club Social Evening also added to Club funds (the arm-twisting to provide gifts



Building the sluice at Loch Loskin.

for the raffle was developed into an art form!) as well as cementing friendships among the membership.

The Club was thus on the road to recovery when it was announced in 1981 that Loch Loskin was for sale. In such a case, any angling club is at a disadvantage against commercial interests in the speed at which a response and offer can be made. Indeed, within a few days of the announcement, surveyors from interested parties were on site. However, by that time an offer had been made by a group of members with the interests of the Club at heart. This was accepted and the asking sum paid by one of this group. A special meeting of the Club was then called and there was unanimous agreement that the Club should purchase Loch Loskin (no doubt much to the relief of the above individual). Only such unconventional and swift action was able to secure the Lochan for the Club.

With the help of grants and loans, part of the purchase cost was defrayed and the boathouse, boats, spillway and access road provided in a similar manner. Under the supervision of the Fisheries Laboratory, the level of the loch was lowered and the chemical rotenone applied to kill off pike and any other coarse fish. Although the fishery was formally opened in 1983, it was allowed to lie fallow for a further year to re-establish insect life before stocking with trout and fishing commenced in 1984.

The above bald statement of fact does not, of course, give any indication of the enormous effort involved by the Club. Applications for grant aid are a long, tedious process requiring much negotiation. Until all these grants came through, the Club was running a large overdraft during which time it had to try and finance its normal activities. Planning and supervising the works and building all placed heavy strains on the Committee members and others.

Without much free professional help, particularly with architectural and legal matters, the Club would have been hard put to succeed with this project.

The plan for Loch Loskin intended it to be a specimen brown trout fishery where, due to the rich feeding, the trout could be expected to reach a good size. Catch returns, however, were poor and there seemed little evidence of the growth rate hoped for. Much work was later devoted to this problem with the help of fishery scientists. It seems that, being so near the sea, numbers of trout are attracted off in that direction (it is, of course, illegal to put any obstruction in a river preventing movement of fish thus netting off the Lochan is not an option). The type of trout stocked was changed because the original stock were of a type which carried a sea trout gene which might have been the cause of the migration, but without effect.

Some of the investigations carried out were not without their lighter side. Two committee members were instructed to carry out some worm fishing among and near the bull rushes and lilies to investigate if the larger fish were feeding in such areas. No large fish were taken and when this pair were later questioned about the size, condition and other technical matters about the fish they had caught, they had to admit their ignorance of such matters as they had cooked and eaten the evidence!

A scientist was asked to carry out an electro-fishing survey to try to assess stock levels and sizes. The only time he was available was on the Sunday morning following the annual dinner. The sight of bleary-eyed members nursing mega post-dinner hangovers staggering about with nets and electro fishing gear would have made even strong men blanche!

However, with a pattern of stocking developed over the years, Loch Loskin has proved to be a most attractive and popular fishery.

In 1985, a large sea trout was caught by a Committee member and the minutes record that, to mark the event, "he was presented with a bottle of spirituous liquor appropriate to his somewhat Slavonic taste."

### FISHING TIP NO: 2

*A member caught a very large brown trout in the River Cur and, in spite of being advised by an old hand that it could be a sea trout, decided to send it to a taxidermist for stuffing and mounting. The old hand had taken some scales from the fish and sent them off for analysis. About the time the stuffed fish came back with a very hefty bill from the taxidermist, the Fisheries Lab. report also arrived. You guessed it – a sea trout!*

*(Studies by the Fisheries Lab. in West Highland rivers show that the majority of juvenile trout present are either sea trout or the progeny of sea trout. This would also apply to Loch Eck. Mature sea trout returning from the sea very rapidly adopt the coloration of brown trout. Apart from genetic differences, sea and brown trout are, of course, biologically identical.)*

By the A.G.M in 1982 membership numbers had improved and continued to do so progressively over the years to reach the present day total of over 160. Annual subscriptions were increased to allow for inflation and the 150 Club profits used to help with increased stocking and new developments. The practice of trying to keep members informed by Spring and Autumn newsletters had been started. In those days, newsletters were produced on a number of rather elderly duplicators, the operator putting up prayers





that the typed "skin" would not disintegrate before the run was complete. Money was still tight and a Secretary recalls the town being scoured to buy the cheapest envelopes. To save postage, some newsletters were distributed by hand.

In 1982, the Hydro angling competition was won for the Club by the late Ian Thompson and Keith Mackenzie. In 1983, after protracted negotiations, the Club was able to rent the fishings on the R. Ruel However in mid 1983, the Reservoir was closed to allow repairs to the main dam and we did not reopen these fishings until 1986. Due to lack of funds, Loch Tarsan was only stocked once in the years 1980 – 85 and catch returns in the first years of fishing on the Lochan were poor. Thus with the loss of the Reservoir, this was a lean period for members fishing for brown or rainbow trout. There was a brighter picture on the rivers and Loch Eck, the loch especially providing some of its best annual catches during this period including, in 1985, a 19 lbs salmon.

There was to be no rest for the wicked, however. The Club had barely drawn breath after all the work concerned with the Lochan when it became known that the whole of the R. Eachaig, R. Massan and Loch Eck fishings had been purchased by Salar Properties Ltd who intended to sell off the Eachaig fishings on a time share basis. This took place at a time in Scotland when the boom years of the Eighties triggered a demand for salmon fishings, the prices of which rocketed. Some angling clubs and associations who had for years rented fishings found that the owners now wished to cash in on the boom in prices and they either had to relinquish their tenure or try and compete on the open market.

Thus the whole complicated process of applying for grants and loans restarted. With the unanimous agreement of the Club A.G.M in February 1986 and after a protracted period of negotiation, the Club was able to make an offer for the Massan fishings together with a long-term agreement for its fishings on Loch Eck which was eventually accepted.

However the Club had to find £7,500 of its own cash and agree to pay off in five years a loan from the Scottish Sports Council of £10,000. Again, as in the case of the Lochan purchase, the considerable legal work involved in this acquisition was most generously provided at minimum cost to the Club.

It is a tribute to the far sighted measures taken in the early years of the decade that the Club could even take on such a commitment but now measures would be needed to meet the new demands while keeping up the standard of all the Club's fishings. It was also clear that the Club must also acquire a nest egg of capital to have in reserve if ever we needed funds to extend or retain our fishings in the highly commercial world which lay ahead. For example, a demand was made during this period for a rental increase of one of the Club's fishings of 830%. For a time it seemed the Club might have to meet very expensive provisions at the Lochan due to the enforcement of the 1975 Reservoirs Act. It was fortunate that these eventually did not arise but this was indicative of the perils which might in the future face the Club.

To meet the new challenges, a fund raising committee was started and set to with great energy, frequently exceeding their target of raising £1000 each year. To exploit the income from visitor's permits a new 7 day "walkabout" permit was introduced. It produced over £290 in its first season and the Club then got grants for printing fishing leaflets and to pay for advertising in the angling Press which ran for several years. The end result was to



Stocking day at the reservoir.

increase permit sales so that today they form a very large part of the Club's income.

All these permit sales, of course, are handled by Purdies who have been the Club's agents for over thirty years. Sadly, not every visiting angler has heard of the term 'gentlemanly conduct'. Last year, one such asked about the catch limit imposed at the Reservoir and being advised that five fish was the limit, demanded to know if this number was guaranteed! Also, and shout it not from the rooftops, it has been known for the odd member not to have read the Club rules, requiring gentle guidance from Mrs Purdie. All such situations have been handled with tact and common sense and the Club owes a great debt to the Purdies for their work over the years.

## TWITCHERS

*One Spring day, two boatloads of friendly anglers on Loch Tarsan were taking their ease on shore having lunch together.*

*Two of them were keen bird watchers and started discussing the local bird life at some length, eventually provoking yawns among the non-twitchers, who were much more interested in the fish life.*

*Said one twitcher suddenly, "Look, sandpiper!"  
One bored angler responded "Coarse, medium or fine?"*

During this period, Club competitions continued to be keenly contested. Best-basket trophies were generously donated in memory of Bunny McEwen for the Loch Eck competition and of Bill Livingston for the Massan competition. Our American members donated the Friendship Cup to be awarded annually in a U.S.A v. the Rest competition. Before our American friends left with the closing of the U.S. base in 1992, the late George Hackett arranged for this trophy to be refurbished and re-named the D. Pittman Trophy (Douglas Pittman was a well-liked member who sadly suffered a tragically early death). In 1987, the trophy for the One Day competition on Loch Tarsan was donated by Gordon Small. Also in that year, the competition for junior members at the Reservoir was started.

In 1986, the Club secured the fishings on the R. Finnart which it retains to this day. Adept now in the esoteric art of grant applications, grants were won for boat replacements, for the re-roofing of the Loch Tarsan boathouse, for extra stocking for Loch

Tarsan, for the building the concrete apron at the Loch Eck boathouse and for two surveys of the R. Massan carried out by fisheries scientists at Stirling University.

It is here appropriate to record the help and assistance the Club has received from such bodies as the Scottish Sports Council, our local council in Argyll & Bute and the Highlands & Islands Development Board. In more recent years, much help has been given by Argyll & the Islands Enterprise and the Cowal Enterprise Trust.

By 1989, concern was being expressed at the lack of sea trout in the West Highlands and we now know that this was to be a problem which was to increase beyond the decade. As far as our own R. Massan was concerned, juvenile stocks proved to be of a level to be expected; the problem was the low number of adult fish returning from the sea. Since this time much scientific work has been carried out in Scottish rivers but, to date, no definite solution has been found. Much of the problem seems to lie at sea where, for a number of reasons, the whole ecology and food chain could be changing by over-fishing and pollution. In estuaries, the presence of fish cages are suspected of having an adverse effect on sea trout.

In 1987, permanent weekly sessions of meetings of a Club fly tying group were started and these continued for a number of years during the annual close season. Fly tying



Loch Loskin purchased; first task – remove scrapped vehicles.





Confucius he say: "Anglers smiling – fish must be biting."

demonstrations were given at various community fairs and other events in the area. It is hoped that this group, which proved to be very popular, can be restarted in the near future.

On the R. Ruel, a massive escape of rainbow trout from a fish farm polluted the river in 1989, and must have had a dire effect on the river. Earlier in the decade, commercial poaching on the R. Cur was met with action by Club bailiffs who had been appointed by the R. Eachaig Fisheries Board, on which the Club had representation. Much work on Loch Loskin (The Lochan) was carried out to control the growth of weeds and considerable funds each year were spent on expensive chemical treatment. A survey of invertebrate insect life on the Lochan carried out in 1998 showed that it had returned to its previous level prior to the chemical treatment to remove coarse fish in 1981 and fishing had much improved.

Since its re-opening in 1986, the Reservoir had become one of the Club's most popular fishings. However in 1989, the Club lost an entire stocking of fish at the Reservoir. After much investigative work which included building and installing a small fish cage at the Reservoir so that experiments could be carried out on captive fish and with help from the Clyde River Purification Board, the cause was eventually decided to be acid water caused

by excessive rainfall during the early part of that year. The Club thus decided to carry out testing of the water quality to ensure that acidity (pH) levels were suitable for rainbow trout who are very sensitive to acid water and such tests are now carried out before any fish are stocked.

## THE SCIENTIFIC ANGLER

*Now Archie Young he's a man  
Of scientific bent  
Measuring acidity at the Reservoir  
With his wee pH instrument  
He's got a plan to boost Club funds  
His cleverest yet by far  
He plans to bottle the water there  
And sell it as vinegar!*

## 1990 – THE PRESENT

The last ten years of the Club's activities will be known to many members thus only the most important events will be noted before this history can be closed (Is that the distant sound of cheering?)

In 1992, the U.S. base closed and the Club lost a number of its American members many of whom had been active in helping the Club. Loch Eck became a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Club assisted with this project. Sadly, the initial hopes that Scottish Natural Heritage would initiate a management plan for the loch which had been promised never came to pass.

After much effort, the Club were able to acquire the migratory fishing rights on Loch Loskin and the Milton Burn for a small rental as a measure of protection for these waters. The R. Ruel District Salmon Fisheries Board was established in 1993 and the Club gained representation and has contributed much to the Board's efforts to improve this once-productive river.

Once the loan from the Sports Council to buy the R. Massan rights had been paid off in 1992, much effort went into improving the Club's assets. With the aid of grants, major repairs were carried out to both the Loch Eck, Loch Tarsan and Loch Loskin boathouses and such work continues today.

In 1994 the Club received a bombshell from the Forestry Commission giving us six months notice to remove ourselves from our Loch Eck boathouse and to demolish it as they

wished to sell the land! This demand made use of a clause in the original lease agreed 43 years ago. In spite of protests they continued with their demand and the Club had to make an appeal directly to the Chairman of the Forestry Commission before they relented. However we had to purchase the land at the valuation of the District Valuer and, just to get their pound of flesh, we had to pay all their legal and administrative expenses. Just at this time the Club had completed a refurbishment of the boathouse and provided the concrete apron on the shore.

The deal was finally concluded in 1996 making the Club riparian owners on Loch Eck. We also acquired the two small boathouses with the transaction which have been rented out to secure some income from the capital outlay. It is a measure of the strength of the Club that the refurbishment work on the boathouse plus the purchase of the land came to over £10,000 which the Club was able to meet from its own resources without having to impose a levy on members. This is a prime example of the need for the Club to have that nest egg to meet eventualities. Since 1996, we have been able to recoup the expenditure and return the nest egg to its former total.

*Two Committee members decided to fish the Reservoir one day and, on getting their permits at Purdies, ascertained that they were the only anglers with a permit at that time.*

*On arrival at the Reservoir they were concerned to see an angler at the far bank over the dam, his rod clearly visible. Knowing that he cannot have had a permit, one of them strode off along the dam to challenge the poacher. Arriving at the spillway, the poacher had put his rod down and was crouching down at the bank, probably preparing to land a fish. Knowing that in such circumstances the softly-softly approach is best, in a loud voice he was asked what the (four letter word) he was doing. He stood up to reveal a model boat in the water. With one hand he lifted up the radio control unit with its long, rod aerial; with the other, he raised two fingers to the Committee member. Clearly, apologies were in order and were duly made.*

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During this period we were at long last able to persuade the Council to allow Sunday fishing at the Reservoir which has proved most popular. The two sessions per day was changed to a single day session and a pattern of stocking with various sizes of rainbows and brook trout has been established.

We were at the forefront of a scheme to restock the Garvie Burn on the R. Ruel in collaboration with the Fisheries Board and with later improvements to the river which, last year, gave us access to six miles of extra fishing on the river.

Two competitions at the Reservoir each year were now held for Club Junior Members. The Kidson Trophy, for a "senior" junior winner was donated by the family of the late Jimmy and trophies for the "junior" junior presented by Donald Macintosh who had the pleasure of seeing his grandson becoming the first winner. A trophy for an "Over Fifty" competition at Loch Tarsan was both made and presented by John Howieson. (Note: At the weigh-in, the rules require both grandparents had to be present to vouch for the competitor's age)

The Club participated in the Cowal in Europe festival in 1994 and also the Countryside Fayre and other events in the community. We are represented on the Steering Group to try and extend the West Coast Sea Trout Trust into South Argyll and we played a pivotal role in the Loch Eck Advisory Steering Group in 1997, set up by the Council to advise on a management plan and controls on boat use on Loch Eck. This included a boat use survey carried out by a voluntary group of Club members. It is sad to say that, in spite of a full report being given to the Council in early 1998, no action has been forthcoming. The Club has also done battle to prevent further expansion of fish rearing cages in the area, to control further escapes from fish from these installations and to stop trawlers entering the Holy Loch once the clearance work on the sea bed is complete.

In addition to all this, some of the Committee found time to fish as well!

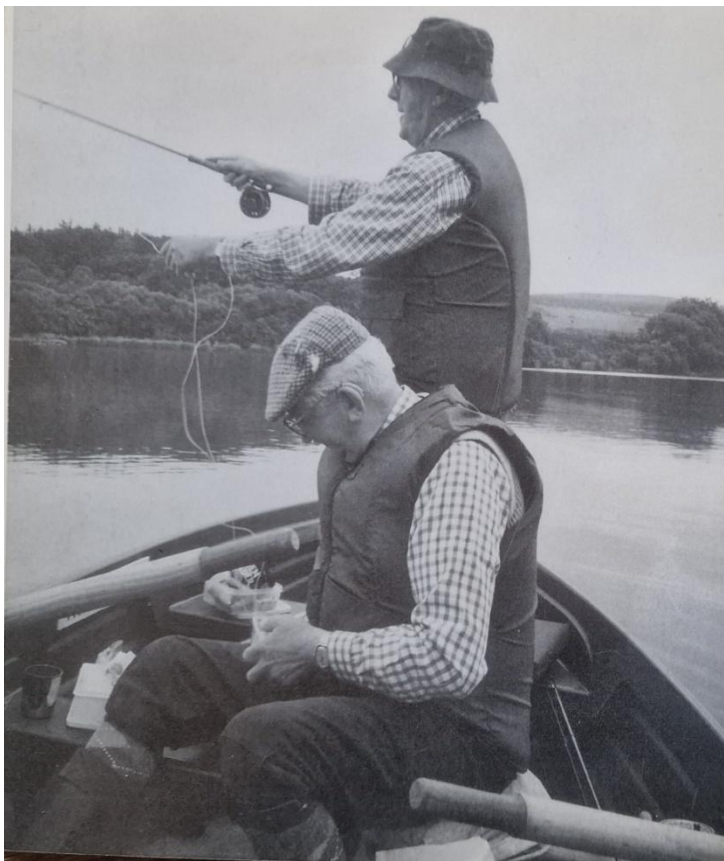
This then has been a look at the first fifty years of the Club. One wonders what those original founder members of fifty years ago would have made of it all. Being Dunoon anglers, they would no doubt have found something to complain about (probably the fishing on Loch Eck!).

Perhaps, looking around the Club today, they might have uttered what is said to be a Scotsman's highest order of commendation – "Aye, nae bad" ... or, being Dunoon anglers, perhaps not.



Tea break at a work party.





Archie lays his cast of flies  
Gently on the water.  
Donald eats his sandwiches,  
Long before he ought'er

No one's tense or getting cross  
About the lack of trout.  
Friendly chat and scenery,  
That's what it's all about.



### **Dunoon & District Angling Club**

Hon. Sec. A. H. Young  
28 Royal Crescent  
Dunoon PA23 7AH



### **GLEN MASSON**

On the green slopes of Glen Masson  
lies the lonely little boy;  
the Winter snow now falls on him  
away from human joy,  
and far below him in the glen  
a phantom window gleams;  
he ne'er shall see his home again,  
Bunessan of his dreams.

Cold and cruel are these hills,  
there moves no living thing,  
you'd never dream this bleak white waste  
could feel the breath of Spring;  
and in the grip of Masson's arms,  
the little boy lies still,  
and every blade of Summer green  
turns white upon the hill.

Then slowly weary Winter glides  
unwilling to the Spring  
and all the valley now awakes  
in nature's blossoming:  
the flowers peep and sparkling streams  
cascade the pebble stones  
as Masson sings a song of life  
around his whitened bones.

This poem describes the sad fate of an orphaned lad from Mull,  
who ran away from various foster homes on the mainland in  
an effort to return home to his island. The discovery of the  
unidentified bones led to a Government enquiry.