

*The* American  
Fly Fisher

*Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing*

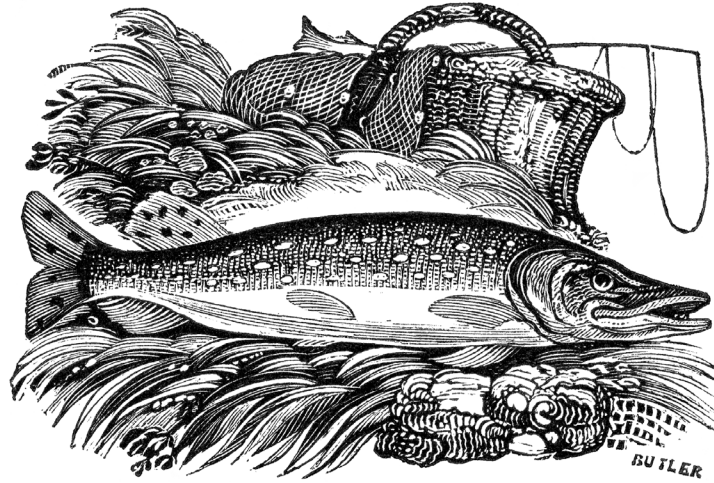


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SPRING 2008

VOLUME 34 NUMBER 2

# Shaw, Demarest, Uncles, and Other Heroes



From *The American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* Vol. III (Baltimore: J. S. Skinner, 1832), 83.

ON CHRISTMAS MORNING, in the lull before the festivities, I opened an e-mail from Paul Schullery, who had written to inform me that Helen Shaw had died. Word was spreading quickly, and by the next day, I was in contact with several people about it. The winter issue of the *American Fly Fisher* had just gone to press, and it featured “Helen Shaw: A Quiet Pioneer” in its pages. It was too late to note her passing there.

Harry Peterson, author of that article, immediately offered to write a remembrance for us. We include his words about a much-admired fly tier here, on page 20.

The fly-fishing world lost another great influence when Harold Demarest, the famous importer of Tonkin cane, died in July. Bamboo rodmaker Fred Kretchman pays tribute to his friend on page 21.

Losing some of the big names in fly fishing can put us in mind of our own fishing heroes, be their names famous or not. In “Uncles and Other Heroes” (page 2), Paul Schullery distinguishes between heroes and celebrities (while acknowledging that sometimes a person might be both). He easily conveys the excitement of meeting someone long idolized, then discusses our need for people to look up to, the role of the media in creating fishing heroes, and the fact that anonymity, for some, may be at the core of particular types of heroism.

We’re pleased to include two offerings from our British friends. First, in “Charles Kingsley and Angling: A ‘Panacea for Stupidity and Over-mentation,’” J. Keith Harwood calls that author of the children’s classic, *The Water Babies* (1863), a “true all-around angler who was equally at home on sea, loch, or river.” Like many of us, Kingsley found fishing a remedy for the stresses of daily living. Harwood gives us some basic background to this writer’s life and pieces together some of Kingsley’s own fishing stories from his letters and writings. Harwood, being an accomplished fly tier, also tied up Kingsley’s favorite flies for us, which we share with you in photos. This article begins on page 7.

Then, in “John Murray’s Pike,” Frederick Buller offers us “a look back on Britain’s most-famous-ever fly-caught pike,” the Kenmure pike, which was caught circa 1774 and allegedly weighed 72 pounds. Buller first excerpts his earlier research on the subject, found in *The Domesday Book of Mammoth Pike* (1979), then appends this information with new thoughts and investigations that involve the Scottish pound. The tale of this tremendous pike begins on page 13.

Last year, Joan Wulff donated some of Lee Wulff’s possessions to the museum, including one of his fishing vests. In “Lee Wulff, Innovator: The Fishing Vest and Plastic Flies” (page 22), Collections Coordinator Nathan George gives some history to these pieces now housed in our gallery.

And speaking of Joan Wulff and heroes, I should note that one of the ways we at the museum recognize our heroes is by way of our annual Heritage Award. The award was established in 1997 to celebrate individuals whose commitment to the museum, the sport of fly fishing, and natural resource conservation sets standards to which we should all aspire. The 2008 Heritage Award will be bestowed upon Joan Wulff this May 21 at the Yale Club in New York. For more information, turn to pages 23 and 28.

In “Notes from the Library” (page 24), Gerald Karaska tells us about some of the books that have recently made their way to our shelves. For an update about what’s been keeping the staff busy, see *Museum News* (page 26).

And last, but far from least, we have a new executive director at the helm. For more details, turn quickly to the inside back cover.

As you wade into those rushing spring waters, take a moment to remember the heroes who have brought you there.

KATHLEEN ACHOR  
EDITOR



THE AMERICAN MUSEUM  
OF FLY FISHING  
*Preserving the Heritage  
of Fly Fishing*

# The American Fly Fisher

*Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing*

SPRING 2008

VOLUME 34

NUMBER 2

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ON THE COVER: *From Charles Kingsley, The Water Babies (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1916), 174. Cabinet of American Illustration, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsc-05897.*

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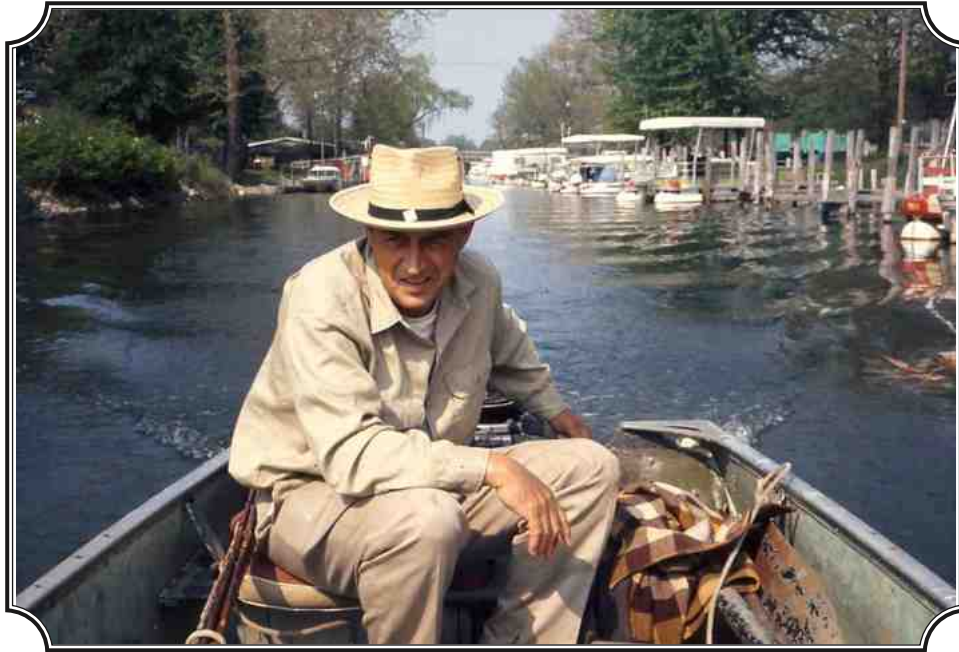
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# Uncles and Other Heroes

by Paul Schullery



*The author's uncle, Richard Murphy, sage of Buckeye Lake, Ohio, and the author's first fishing hero, 1972.*

**M**Y FIRST FISHING HERO was my uncle, Richard Murphy. He was a lifelong cane-pole bait fisherman and a fixture (eventually a legend) on his home lake in Ohio for upward of three-quarters of a century. Funny thing is, aside from certain inadvertent lessons he gave me in the effective use of profanity, I would be hard pressed to describe even one specific thing he taught me about fishing.

It wasn't that he didn't teach me things. They just didn't matter as much as being out there with someone who had lived with the lake his whole life. Just hanging around with someone like that is exciting. There is great inspiration in the presence of genuine authority.

Many of us have been lucky enough to stumble into a situation in which we could learn from some especially gifted angler. Every town has at least a few, and

whether they're the upright souls who patiently conduct fly-tying classes at the local school, or the poachers whose license numbers are taped to the dashboard of every law enforcement officer in the county, they occupy a special place in our sport's culture. They represent some rare, admirable pinnacle of skill and experience. They know things the rest of us don't, and they have seen things the rest of us can hardly imagine. They embody wisdom—or at least a backwoods savvy that many of us would secretly prefer anyway.

## THE NEED

I think we enjoy being in awe of someone like that. Whether we take that person on as a role model or not, it feels good to know a genius. Besides, the experience of being starstruck is happily self-serving: there's a satisfying if-they-could-see-me-now feeling in actually spending time with such a person. Twenty-five years ago, during my first

conversation with Lee Wulff, I found it hard to listen to him because my brain kept shouting at me, "You're actually standing here in Lee Wulff's house having a conversation with Lee Wulff!"

There's more to it than that. Our heroes take care of things for us. They put in the hard years doing the homework on techniques, entomology, fly patterns, and all the other great questions. By paving the way into all sorts of new arcane corners of the sport, they inspire us with their example and comfort us with their wisdom.

And, for the underachievers among us, who have no intention of working as hard as the real experts have worked and don't see them as role models so much as superathletes, they can actually reduce the pressure. We're happy just knowing that fishing can be practiced on such an extraordinary plane. We don't need to mimic their exploits and triumphs. They've got that heroic end of the sport covered, and we can just bumble along feeling good about it. Having a hero, like being a hero, is not a simple thing.

This article first appeared in shorter form in *American Angler* (November/December 2004, vol. 27, no. 6).



The cultural anthropologists agree. Joseph Campbell, in his classic *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), described the ambivalence of the hero's image this way:

The composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained. He and/or the world in which he finds himself suffers from a symbolical deficiency. In fairy tales this may be as slight as the lack of a certain golden ring, whereas in apocalyptic vision the physical and spiritual life of the whole earth can be represented as fallen, or on the point of falling, into ruin.<sup>1</sup>

None of this should sound especially unfamiliar to fishermen, from the exceptional gifts to the lack of recognition, or outright disdain. After all, only a few undistinguished people in my Uncle Dick's community realized or cared that they had a great master of an ancient craft among them. And as far as "symbolical deficiencies," just replace the mythic Golden Fleece or the Ring of Power with an equally mythic trout or fly pattern, and we're talking about the same passionate intensity of purpose. The difference is that in the case of fishing, only the fishermen care how it comes out, and the world isn't going to end if, once again, as usual, we fail.

So the anthropologists would tell us that our hero-worshipping runs a lot deeper than our admiration for a few guys who can catch more fish than the rest of us. The anthropologists would also remind us not only that humans throughout history have had an almost desperate need for heroes, but also that heroes are usually mythic.

But if the anthropologists were to look a little harder at us, they'd realize that we're way ahead of them. In our more lucid moments, we already know that the whole enterprise of fishing is a kind of high quest thinly disguised as a sport. The trout is just another kind of grail. And in our hearts we knew all along that nobody could really be as good at catching fish as we like to believe our heroes are.

## THE PROS AND THE HEROES

As long as fly fishers have cast their flies, they have had heroes. Before about 1800 or so, most of these notables were like my Uncle Dick—only locally famous. But surprisingly long ago, some of them were professionals in the fishing business. In 1659, Londoner Thomas Barker wrote in his charming little book *Barker's*



*Jason being regurgitated by the snake who guards the Golden Fleece tree (center); Athena stands to the right. Greek cup by Douris found in Cerveteri (Etruria), c. 480-470 B.C. Gregorian Etruscan Museum, Vatican.*

*Delight or The Art of Angling*, that "If you would have a rod to beare and to fit neatly, you must go to John Hobs who liveth at the sign of the George behind the Mews by Charing Crosse."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hobs and the other tackle sellers Barker recommended were that day's equivalents of Sage, Orvis, and all the other modern manufacturers. (Actually, because of the handwork involved in making a rod then, and because of their smaller output, they were probably more like the Pinky Gillums and Paul Youngs of their time; there was no large-scale tackle manufacturing back then.) It's a sure thing that seventeenth-century London's little tackle shops, as quaint as they seem to us now, would have hosted the same gatherings of angling fanatics who find their way to modern tackle shops.

And when Charles Cotton, writing in the famous fifth edition of Walton's *Compleat Angler* (1676), praised his neighbor, Captain Henry Jackson, as "by many degrees the best fly-maker I yet met with,"<sup>3</sup> he was telling us that the anglers of his time, like all others, paid full homage to its cool hands.

But there are heroes and heroes. And there are heroes on the one hand and celebrities on the other. The blurry distinction between the two groups first began to matter to American fly fishers in 1829, when volume 1 of the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* appeared. It was the first American periodical devoted entirely to sport, including horse racing (the "turf"), hunting, fishing, and other recreations, and in 1831, it was followed by the far more successful *Spirit of the Times*, edited by William Trotter Porter.

I have written about Porter before and still have hopes that he will eventually become more gratefully remembered.<sup>4</sup> He is the great forgotten hero of American fishing writing, the founder of American sporting journalism, and the shaper of a publishing tradition that in some ways hasn't changed all that much. In the *Spirit*, the *Turf Register* (which he later also owned), and a bibliographic tangle of other publications, he constantly celebrated leading anglers (or at least leading anglers who were also his pals), thus promoting fly fishing over all other types of angling and creating our first generation of national angling celebrities.

By 1856, Porter claimed that his *Porter's Spirit of the Times*, the latest per-



*Illustration by Arthur Rackham. From The Romance of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table. Abridged from Malory's Morte D'Arthur by Alfred W. Pollard. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917.*



*Derrydale Press print of Thaddeus Norris, 1931.  
Courtesy Anglers' Club of New York.*



*Joe Brooks. From the collection of  
the American Museum of Fly Fishing.*

mutation of his magazine adventures, was “backed by a circulation of 40,000 copies,”<sup>5</sup> a number that, if true (I doubt it), would be enviable even among many specialty magazines today. Anglers, it seems, were anxious to hear from each other, learn about the latest tackle, and enjoy the exploits of their favorite heroes. A great proliferation of angling societies occurred after the American Civil War, with hundreds of rod and gun clubs popping up all over the country. Porter’s pioneering journalism was magnified and enhanced tremendously in the 1870s and afterward by great old periodicals like *Forest and Stream* and *American Angler*, which fed the public’s appetites for information, lore, and heroes with a whole new generation of popular writers, tackle makers, and other purveyors of angling essentials (essentials such as travel, for example; it is impossible to overestimate the role that railroads played in this surge in recreational enthusiasm).<sup>6</sup>

### THE HERO UNCLES

That has never changed. The most beloved American angler of the nineteenth century, Thaddeus Norris, pub-

lished his immense *The American Angler’s Book* in 1864 and remained one of American angling’s foremost heroes long after his death only thirteen years later. He was and is still referred to affectionately as “Uncle Thad.” Indeed, it could be argued that this special quality of unclehood was for a long time the most powerful element in angling celebrity. In the several centuries before 1970, the overwhelming majority of fishermen learned their craft from a father, a brother, or a friend; no wonder that they gravitated toward the likes of a Walton or a Norris—wise, self-reliant types who sat under trees smoking pipes and oozing gentle sentiments.

And no wonder that subsequent generations found their angling heroes among similar men, two of the best remembered of the last century being Ray Bergman and Joe Brooks. Both Bergman and Brooks spent many years as fishing editor of *Outdoor Life*, and both, down-home, old-shoe writers of a practical bent, served as adopted long-distance uncles to generations of trout fishers.

In this respect, during the near-century between the deaths of Norris, in 1877, and Brooks, in 1972, fly fishing remained

a pretty quiet pond. A deep-sea fisherman might make some headlines now and then, but the hero trade didn’t bring a lot of glitz or even income to the life of fly fishing’s famous.

### THE MODERNS

Then things seemed to change, abruptly and dramatically. Fly fishing grew in popularity and in fashionableness. There were suddenly fishing schools, an aggressively innovative high-tech tackle industry, upscale fly-fishing resorts everywhere, and, of course, *The Movie*. In a short period of time, the fly-fishing industry stepped out of the cottage, and the fly-fishing community discovered the joys of conclaves, conventions, trade shows, and other gatherings to an extent not previously imagined. Uncles found themselves keeping company with professors, philosophers, and poets. Fly fishing seemed to exemplify the evolutionary theory of punctuated equilibrium, skipping abruptly from one state to another.

The significance of this change first dawned on me about thirty years ago at a Federation of Fly Fishers conclave in



West Yellowstone, Montana. I was standing off to the side, listening in, as people waited in line to ask Dave Whitlock questions. I had already noticed that the conclaves involved a lot of hero worship, as we took our turns to ask Doug Swisher, Enos Bradner, or any of dozens of other admirable authorities a question or two about something they'd written or some river they'd fished. Being one of the worshippers myself, I didn't see anything wrong with this except that I had to share the heroes with so many other people.

I'm still not sure what's wrong with it, but I date my unease about it to right then, when a well-dressed older woman reached the front of Dave's line. Ever the gentleman, Dave greeted her with his usual cheerfulness. She told him that she didn't really have a question, she just wanted to compliment him on his hair.

Right there, for me, some line was crossed, and suddenly fly fishing wasn't just about fly fishing any more. Uncle Dick usually avoided talking to women, and his hair was unlikely to earn their admiration anyway.

### THE COMMERCE OF HEROISM

It was only a few years later that Catskill fishing writer Art Lee began publicly referring to himself as a "professional fly fisherman," which apparently

shocked a lot of people who preferred to think of fly fishing as the domain of gifted amateurs supported by a benign and entirely altruistic industry. But Art was just acknowledging what had always been true: that fly fishing is about money, too. William Porter and other prominent British and American sportsmen of his century understood the commerce of fame and traded on it when they could.

In today's media-intense world, fly fishing's marketeers have been happily successful in applying the same promotional devices to the sport as are applied to barbecue grills, luxury SUVs, and skin conditioners. Endorsements abound, associations between leading angling authorities and tackle manufacturers are routine. Most of us seem to enjoy this. The storm of information and promotion sweeps over us, and we grab what we like. It is far easier today to become well informed about fly fishing than it was even twenty years ago.

Still, the establishment of what angling commentator Arnold Gingrich, writing in the 1970s at the beginning of this revolution, liked to refer to as a "pantheon" of experts has always seemed a little over the top.<sup>7</sup> But for the most part, if we don't like the celebrity aspects of the sport, we don't have to participate in those things. We can just go fishing and hope to avoid the crowds that the celebrities occasionally unleash, through their popular writing, on some favorite water.

Fly fishing, like other sports, attracts a variety of temperaments. For some, the solitude and the independence of spirit that seemed so essential in the angling tradition, at least as it was epitomized by the likes of Walton or Norris, has been trampled and discarded in the stockyards of the big trade shows, fly-fishing conventions, and competitions. In this atmosphere, they seemed to feel, experts can be spontaneously generated, but heroes can't.

There's something to that. And yet I'd be hard pressed to



Arnold Gingrich, Charles Ritz, and Jane Gingrich.

think of any fly-fishing celebrity, of any age, who ever actually got rich from it. The sport is just not that fertile a field. The pond is too small. Knowing what I do about the publishing of books and the giving of lectures, I know that in a narrow universe like fly fishing, those enterprises aren't going to buy you a retirement bungalow, much less set you up in Beverly Hills. If you crave heroic status, you'd be better off to find another way to get it.

### THE DURABLE HERO

Anonymity was a part of my Uncle Dick's peculiar angling heroism, now that I think about it. Years after my older brother and I had grown up, left home, and settled in other states, we both happened to be home in Ohio at the same time and managed a day of fishing with Uncle Dick. The weather was miserable, and there was no point in going out on the lake, so we all just messed around near the local marina, each in that slow state of killing time while holding a fishing rod (or pole). After a while, my brother wandered over to the marina and started up a conversation with the guy who ran the place. Naturally, they talked about the fishing. To emphasize the lousiness of the fishing right then, the marina guy pointed down the length of the docks to where Uncle Dick was sitting drowning



The Twelve Olympians by Nicholas-André Monsiau (1754-1837).

another depressed worm, and said, “See that guy? That’s Dick Murphy, and when he ain’t catchin’ ’em, nobody’s catchin’ ’em.” Suddenly, our own Uncle Dick—who had been a legend all along in our family for his fishing, his humor, his unique philosophy of life, and his stupendous belches—took on a whole new and glowing aspect for us. He was, we now realized, a cultural icon. He was a hero.

It seems to be a consensus among the observers I know that the great boom in fly fishing over the past thirty years has to some extent self-corrected some of its own early excesses. Our need for heroes didn’t disappear, but it kind of recalibrated itself to cope with the sudden overabundance of candidates. As Arnold Gingrich’s “pantheon” bloated with more and more experts, a reaction set in, even among the most naively receptive of us, and we ratcheted down our adulation. With so many legitimate experts out there, we didn’t necessarily have to idolize all of them.

In a way, we’ve come full circle. Most of us still are fundamentally local in our fishing. We dream of the big trips, but mostly we fish nearby, and it’s nearby that we are best qualified to identify the

extraordinary anglers among us. We, like Charles Cotton 350 years ago, don’t really need to look beyond our neighborhood to find a good serviceable hero. We still enjoy reading, hearing about, and even meeting the renowned experts and celebrities, and we even exalt some of them with hero status. But for the purposes of our day-to-day fishing, they’re rather remote compared with the local guy who catches fish when nobody else can, or tells the best stories, or in some other way draws us into the quiet heroism we vaguely sense is, or should be, fundamental to the whole fly-fishing enterprise at its best.



#### ENDNOTES

1. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), 37.
2. Thomas Barker, *Barker’s Delight or The Art of Angling*, 2nd ed. (London: Humphrey Mosely, 1659), 49–50.
3. Charles Cotton, in Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1897; reprinted London: Senate, 1994), 306.

4. Paul Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: Nick Lyons Books, 1987), 25–31. The best short summary of Porter’s career from a fly-fishing point of view is David B. Ledlie, “William T. Porter, First of Our Sporting Journalists,” *The American Fly Fisher*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Summer 1974), 2–4. See also David B. Ledlie, “William T. Porter and the Origins of Imitation,” *The American Fly Fisher*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Spring 1979), 4.

5. Francis Brinley, *The Life of William T. Porter* (New York: D. Appleton, 1860; reprint New York: Arno, 1970), 266. Brinley’s book, though adulatory, is a primary biographical source on Porter and a uniquely valuable reference on sporting attitudes, society, and journalism in his day.

6. For a thorough overview of this period and its sporting journalism, see John Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, 3rd revised edition (Corvallis, Ore.: Oregon State University Press, 2001).

7. Gingrich’s very entertaining, personable, and well-informed books, including *The Well-Tempered Angler* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965), *The Joys of Trout* (New York: Crown, 1973), and *The Fishing in Print* (New York: Winchester Press, 1974), were in good part devoted to celebrations of fly fishing’s experts. Gingrich did as much as anyone else to help establish fly-fishing authorities as celebrities.



Angling, Old Age, and Youth.

From a lithograph by J. Giles, after a painting by James Inskipp. From *W. Shaw Sparrow, Angling in British Art* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Limited, 1923), facing page 94.



# Charles Kingsley and Angling: A “Panacea for Stupidity and Over-mentation”

by J. Keith Harwood

“What are salmon?” asked Tom.

“Fish, you eft, great fish, nice fish to eat. They are the lords of the fish, and we are lords of the salmon;” and she laughed again. “We hunt them up and down the pools, and drive them up into a corner, the silly things; they are so proud, and bully the little trout, and the minnows, till they see us coming, and then they are so meek all at once; and we catch them, but we disdain to eat them all; we just bite out their soft throats and suck out their sweet juice— Oh, so good!”—(and she licked her wicked lips) “and then throw them away, and go and catch another. They are coming soon, children, coming soon; I can smell the rain coming up off the sea, and then hurrah for a fresh, and salmon, and plenty of eating all day long.”

And the otter grew so proud that she turned head over heels twice, and then stood upright half out of the water, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“And where do they come from?” asked Tom, who kept himself very close, for he was considerably frightened.

“Out of the sea, eft, the great wide sea, where they might stay and be safe if they liked. But out of the sea the silly things come, into the great river down below, and we come up to watch for them; and when they go down again we go down and follow them.”

THE ABOVE PASSAGE is from one of the great classics of children’s literature, Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies*, first published in 1863 and in print ever since. One spring morning in 1862, while sitting at the breakfast table, Kingsley’s wife, Fanny, reminded him of a promise to write a book for their youngest child, Grenville. Kingsley made no reply but disappeared into his study to emerge half an hour later clutching the first chapter of *The Water Babies*. The book tells the story of a young chimney sweep, Tom, who, after jumping into a river to clean himself, is transformed into a water-baby and enters an underwater world of magical adventure. The book displays Kingsley’s great interest in under-

water and seashore life, which was fueled by his passion for angling. Indeed, Kingsley was a true all-around angler who was equally at home on sea, loch, or river.

Charles Kingsley was born on 12 June 1819 at Holne on the edge of Dartmoor, where his father, also named Charles, was parish curate. Shortly after he was born, the family moved to Barnack, near Stamford in Lincolnshire. At Barnack, the young Kingsley’s sporting tastes and love

of natural history were nurtured by his father, whom he happily accompanied on fishing and shooting expeditions.

In 1830, the family moved to Clovelly on the coast of North Devon, where a new world was revealed to the youngster: that of the sea and seashore. The rocky Devonshire coastline provided a great contrast to the flat Fen landscape around Barnack, and he delighted in his new environment. Years later, in his *Prose Idylls*



From Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1916), 140. *Cabinet of American Illustration, Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsc-05895.*

An earlier version of this article appeared in the February 2001 issue of *Waterlog*.

(1873), he recalled his life at Clovelly and his dining “off gurnards of my own catching—excellent fish, despised by deluded Cockneys, who fancy that because its head is large and prickly, therefore its flesh is not as firm, and sweet, and white, as that of any cod who ever gobbled shell-fish.”<sup>2</sup>

After school at Bristol and Cornwall, followed by a spell at King’s College, London, Kingsley enrolled as an undergraduate at Magdalene College, Cambridge, in the autumn of 1838. He found the curriculum prescribed for his degree course to be rather tedious; as a result, he spent more time than he should in fishing during his first two years. One of his fishing companions was a fellow student, E. Pitcairn Campbell, who, in a letter to Kingsley’s wife, recalled one such foray:

I was to call him, and for this purpose I had to climb over the wall of Magdalene College. This I did at two A.M. and about three we were both climbing back into the stonemason’s yard, and off through Trumpington, in pouring rain all the way, nine miles to Duxford.

We reached about 6.30. The water was clouded by rain, and I in courtesy to your husband yielded my heavier rod in order that he might try the lower water with the minnow.

He was, however, scarcely out of sight, before I spied under the alders, some glorious trout rising to caterpillars dropping from the bushes. In ten minutes I had three of these fine fellows on the bank—one of them weighed three pounds, others two pounds each. We caught nothing after the rain had ceased.<sup>3</sup>



*Clovelly, Devon.*

One of Kingsley’s favorite fishing spots was Shelford, where, in a letter dated October 1841, he tells of one that got away. “I spent Thursday at Shelford. I had great fun. Tell papa I hooked a trout so large that I was three-quarters of an hour playing him, and that he grubbed the hook out of his mouth after all. Of course, he will say that I was a clumsy fellow, but the brute would have puzzled the ghost of Izaak Walton.”<sup>4</sup>

He found fishing and the physical exertion it entailed a great antidote to the mental stress of study, as the following letter of January 1842 records. “I have walked ten miles down the Cam today and back, pike-fishing. My panacea for stupidity and over-mentation is a day in a roaring Fen wind.”<sup>5</sup> His formula of studying and fishing must have worked, because in the following month, he graduated with a first-class honors degree in classics. He was now faced with the prospect of earning a living and, after contemplating a career as a lawyer, he finally made up his mind to become a clergyman. Following his ordination in July 1842, he was appointed curate of the parish of Eversley in Hampshire.

In January 1844, he married Fanny Grenfell, whom he had first met five years earlier. Shortly afterward, he was appointed rector of Eversley, a position he was to hold for the rest of his life, after the sacking of the previous incumbent following an indiscretion with a female parishioner. The parish of Eversley consisted of three scattered hamlets on the edge of Old Windsor Forest, not far from Reading. It had been sorely neglected, and its parishioners were more likely to be found in the public house on a Sunday morning than in the local church. Kingsley was appalled at the conditions endured by the agricultural laborers in the parish, and he worked tirelessly to improve their lot. He arranged evening classes; he visited and treated the sick; he organized a loan fund and even a shoe club. In fact, throughout his life, Kingsley



*Kingsley’s Cottage, Clovelly, Devon.*





One of Kingsley's favorite haunts.  
Clovelly, Devon.

championed the cause of the underdog; his first novel, *Yeast*, which was serialized in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1848, showed his concern with the sufferings of agricultural laborers.

However, the energetic zeal with which he conducted his work in those early years at Eversley began to take its toll on his mental health. He suffered severe bouts of depression, and in August 1849, he retreated to Devon to revive his flagging spirit by walking and fishing. His letters from this time indicate just how much fishing helped him through this dark period of his life.

APPLEDORE: August 10th—Here I am . . . A delicious passage down . . . I feel myself already much better. I expect a charming sail tomorrow, and to catch mackerel on the way. The coast down here looked more lovely than ever.<sup>6</sup>

A couple of days later he wrote from Clovelly.

CLOVELLY: August 12th—Safe settled at Mrs. W's lodgings. I am going out fishing today in the bay, if there is wind; if not, butterfly hunting.<sup>7</sup>

CLOVELLY: August 17th—I am doing nothing but fish, sail, chat with old sailors and Wesleyan cronies, and read.<sup>8</sup>

By early September, Kingsley's fishing expeditions had taken him further inland in search of trout.

I went up into the Moor yesterday, and killed a dish of fish . . . Got on the Teign about three miles up, and tracked it into the Moor . . . The day was burning bright, so I only killed a dozen or so of fish. Every valley has its beautiful clear stream, with myriad fish among great granite boulders . . . Today I walked over to Cherry Brook, the best fishing on the moor.<sup>9</sup>

The 1850s were a busy decade for Kingsley. The early years were spent campaigning for sanitary reform following a serious outbreak of cholera in the Bermondsey district of London. His second novel, *Alton Locke*, was the direct outcome of this campaign. An interesting insight into his life at this time is provided by a private pupil of Kingsley's, John Martineau: "By boyish habits and tastes a keen sportsman, the only sport he ever enjoyed at this time was an occasional day's trout or pike fishing, or throwing a fly for an hour or two during his afternoon's walk over the little stream that bounded his parish."<sup>10</sup> Martineau also gives an interesting description of Kingsley's study.

Many a one has cause to remember that Study, its lattice window, its great heavy door, studded with large projecting nails, opening upon the garden; its brick floor covered with matting; its shelves of heavy old folios; with a fishing rod, or landing-net, or insect net leaning against them: on the table, books, writing-materials, sermons, manuscripts, proofs, letters, reels, feathers, fishing-flies, clay-pipes, tobacco.<sup>11</sup>

A portrait of Kingsley in his study at Eversley, complete with fishing rods, hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London. It was painted by Lowes Dickinson.

As the decade wore on, Kingsley's fame and fortunes began to increase, and he was able to find a little more time for fishing. For the summer of 1856, he planned a fishing expedition to Snowdonia in Wales with his friends Tom Hughes, author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and Tom Taylor. As the time for the holiday drew near, Kingsley was so excited by the prospect that he was moved to verse:

Come away with me, Tom,  
Term and talk is done;  
My poor lads are reaping,  
Busy every one.  
Curates mind the parish,  
Sweepers mind the court;  
We'll away to Snowdonia  
For our ten day's sport;  
Fish the August evening  
Till the eve is past,  
Whoop like boys, at pounders  
Fairly played and grassed.



Charles Kingsley. From Anne E. Keeling, *Great Britain and Her Queen*, in the Project Gutenberg Online Book Catalog, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13103/13103-h/13103-h.htm> (accessed 7 June 2007).





Left: Malham Tarn, Yorkshire.

Below: Malham Cove (Lewthwaite Crag in *The Water Babies*).



When they cease to dimple  
Lunge and swerve and leap,  
Then up over Siabod  
Choose our nest and sleep.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, as so often happens in fishing, the weather turned foul, and Kingsley resorted to botany instead.

I came to Pen-y-gwryd in frantic  
hope of slaying  
Grilse, Salmon, three-pound  
red-fleshed trout  
And what else there's no saying.  
But bitter cold and lashing rain, and  
black nor-eastern skies, Sir,  
Drove me from fish to botany, a  
sadder man and wiser.<sup>13</sup>

The summer of 1858 saw Kingsley once again on his travels, this time to York-

shire, where he stayed as a guest of Walter Morrison at Malham Tarn House. During his brief visit, he fished Malham Tarn, the limestone lake that nestles beneath the house. He was most impressed and regarded the trout fishing on the tarn as the best he had ever experienced. He also found that the flies he used on his native chalk streams were equally effective in tempting the trout of the tarn: "There palmers, caperers, and rough black flies, of the largest Thames and Kennet sizes, seem the only attractive baits: and for this reason, that they are the flies of the place."<sup>14</sup>

The scenery around Malham made a deep impression upon him, and it was to appear five years later in *The Water Babies*. When Kingsley was asked as an amateur geologist to explain the dark vertical markings on the face of Malham

Cove, he replied that they could have been made by a chimney sweep falling over the cliff and sliding down the front. This is exactly what Tom, the young chimney sweep, does in *The Water Babies*, although the Cove is given the pseudonym of Lewthwaite Crag in the book. The river in which Tom begins his metamorphosis into a water baby is undoubtedly the nascent river Aire, which rises near Malham.

The same year, 1858, saw the publication in *Fraser's Magazine* (later included in his book, *Prose Idylls*, 1873) of Kingsley's only angling work, *Chalk-stream Studies*. This little book ought to be on the bookshelves of everyone who fishes the chalk streams. It is a work far ahead of its time in describing the ecology and entomology of the chalk streams of southern



Above: Malham Tarn House.

Left: The river Aire, near Malham.

*Pictured on this page: six of Charles Kingsley's favorite flies.*



*Flies dressed by J. Keith Harwood.*

*Above: The March Brown*

*Left: The Caperer*

*Right: The Governor*

England, and the advice contained within it is just as valid today as it was nearly a hundred and fifty years ago. We are also given a fascinating glimpse into Kingsley's own angling methods.

If you want to find the hungry fish and to kill them, you must stand well back from the bank—or kneel down, if you are really in earnest about sport; and throw within a foot of the shore, above you or below (but if possible above), with a line short enough to manage easily; by which I mean short enough to enable you to lift your flies out of the water at each throw without hooking them in the docks and comfrey which grow along the brink. You must learn to raise your hand at the end of each throw, and lift the flies clean over the land-weeds: or you will lose time, and frighten all the fish, by crawling to the

bank to unhook them. Believe me, one of the commonest mistakes into which young anglers fall is that of fishing in "skip-jack broad"; in plain English, in mid-stream, where few fish, and those little ones, are to be caught. Those who wish for large fish work close under the banks, and seldom take a mid-stream cast, unless they see a fish rise there.<sup>15</sup>

Kingsley's angling methods were very much influenced by those propounded by W. C. Stewart—with whom Kingsley corresponded—in his book, *The Practical Angler*, which was published in 1857. In *Chalk-stream Studies*, Kingsley gives us a list of his favorite flies: Caperer, March Brown, Governor, Black Alder, and two or three palmers of different-colored hackles with a tuft of red floss for a tail. He also advocates the use of a fly with a

body made from the remnants of the huntsman's pink for catching pike.

In 1860, Kingsley was appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, but before he took up his post, he joined his friend Anthony Froude on a fishing holiday in Ireland. The holiday proved to be a memorable one because Kingsley caught his first salmon.

July 4th . . . I have done the deed at last—killed a real actual live salmon, over five pounds weight.<sup>16</sup>

The following day proved to be even better.

July 5th . . . I had magnificent sport this morning—five salmon killed (biggest, seven pounds) and another huge fellow ran right away to sea, carrying me after him waist deep in water, and was lost, after running 200 yards, by fouling a



*Left: The Black Alder*

*Right: The Red Palmer*

*Below: The Brown Palmer*



Fly photos by Sara Wilcox



ship's hawser! There is nothing like it. The excitement is maddening, and the exertion very severe.<sup>17</sup>

One of the highlights of Kingsley's life was being invited by the Duke of Argyll to stay at Inveraray Castle in Scotland during August 1862. He was entranced by the beauty of the place, and once again he was able to indulge in a little salmon fishing—only this time, he employed less sporting methods.

Inveraray Castle, August 21st . . . the loveliest spot I ever saw—large lawns and enormous timber on the shores of a salt-water loch, with moor and mountains before and behind . . . Between the hill and the castle, you would perceive, if it were visible, the river Aray, which contains now far more salmon than water.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, the salmon were proving difficult to tempt by conventional means.

River like a turn-pike road. Salmon asleep. They had to gaff to supply the house. I had one jolly turn, though—poached a 14-pounder with a triangle, had an hour and three-quarters of him, and killed him. Gilly and I fell into each other's arms—and regretted we had no whisky!<sup>19</sup>

Charles Kingsley died at age fifty-five following a bout of pneumonia on 23 January 1875. The last few years of his life were extremely busy. He was appointed to the canonry of Chester Cathedral followed by that of Westminster Abbey in London. He continued to lecture, to write, and to champion the cause of the underdog. A few months before he died, he even visited America, where he gave a number of lectures and preached several



*Inveraray Castle, Scotland, with river in foreground.*

sermons. However, he still found the time to indulge in fishing. Indeed, fishing for Kingsley was a true panacea, which sustained him through the difficult periods of his life.



#### ENDNOTES

1. Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies* (London: Macmillan, 1863; London: Penguin Popular Classics edition, 1995), 106–08.
2. Charles Kingsley, *Prose Idylls* (London: Macmillan, 1873; new edition, London: Macmillan, 1891), 260.
3. Fanny Kingsley, ed., *Charles Kingsley, His Letters and Memoirs of His Life*, vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, 1878), 58.

4. Fanny Kingsley, ed. *Charles Kingsley, His Letters and Memoirs of His Life* (London: Kegan Paul, 1888, abridged edition), 18.
5. *Ibid.*, 19.
6. *Ibid.*, 81.
7. *Ibid.*, 82.
8. *Ibid.*, 83.
9. *Ibid.*, 84.
10. *Ibid.*, 122.
11. *Ibid.*, 123.
12. *Ibid.*, 183.
13. *Ibid.*, 186.
14. Charles Kingsley, *Prose Idylls*, 64.
15. *Ibid.*, 71.
16. Fanny Kingsley, ed., *Charles Kingsley* (abridged edition), 236.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 246.
19. *Ibid.*, 254.



*The river Aray at Inveraray.*



# John Murray's Pike

by Frederick Buller

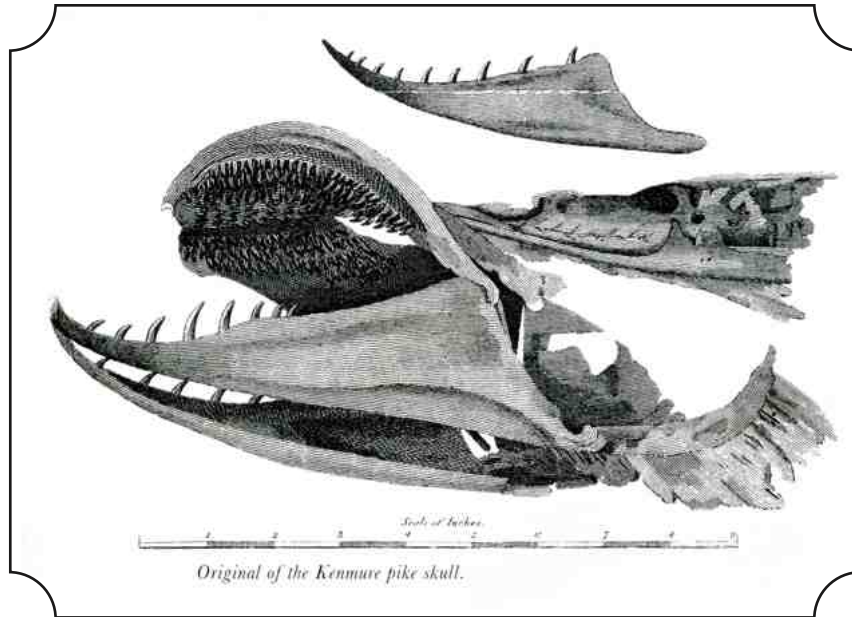


Figure 1. This engraving of the Kenmure Pike skull first appeared in the *Sporting Magazine* (albeit printed upside-down) in July 1798. The pike allegedly weighed 72 pounds.

**M**OST MIDDLE-AGED anglers have witnessed an enormous growth of interest in fly fishing for fish other than traditional prey: the trout in all its forms and the lordly salmon. This development makes a fish of any species, freshwater or saltwater, a potential target if it can be taken on a fly or a fly-type lure. In all probability, fly fishing for pike has been practiced in Britain and elsewhere for centuries, but it has only recently, in the last twenty years or so, graduated into a major branch of the sport. As an example, to show just how far that development has progressed, let me advise American readers that nowadays the preferred method of removing unwanted pike from trout water in southern England—even from our famous chalk streams—is by catching them on 5- or

6-inch pike flies, a method followed by a growing band of enthusiasts. At this time, it may be appropriate to look back at Britain's most-famous-ever fly-caught pike.

Members of the American Museum of Fly Fishing may remember seeing the engraving in Figure 1 in the Winter 2003 journal (vol. 29, no. 1), where it helped to illustrate my piece "Fly Fishing for Pike in Britain and Ireland." In my book, *The Domesday Book of Mammoth Pike* (London: Stanley Paul, 1979), I related what I had discovered concerning the capture of what purported to be the largest pike (or freshwater fish of any kind) ever caught on a fly. I include that extended excerpt (pages 253–60 of the book) here.

## JOHN MURRAY'S PIKE: REPORT FROM 1799

To the Editors of the *Sporting Magazine*:  
Gentlemen:

As I have lately seen a pike, which weighed no less than the surprising weight of 72 lb., I have been induced to make a draught of the skeleton of the head, which I hope will merit a place in your Magazine as it cannot fail to be extremely interesting to the amateurs in fishing. I have also taken a draught of another animal of this kind which was caught this season and weighed 25 lb.

A scale is annexed by which the respective proportions of the two may be

ascertained and which will convey some idea of the largest pike perhaps ever taken in Great Britain. There are no less than 22 rows of teeth in the under jaw.

It was caught in Loch Ken, near the small burgh of New Galloway, in Scotland, with nothing more than a common fly made of a peacock's feather.

I am, Gentlemen,  
Your most obedient humble servant  
G.

June 4, 1798<sup>1</sup>

For pike fishermen, there is magic in the name of Loch Ken (Figure 2). And no wonder. The annals of pike fishing hold many inspiring references to the celebrated

72-lb. Kenmure Pike reputedly taken by John Murray, gamekeeper to Viscount Kenmure, on a 3½-inch "fly" (ca. 1774).

In 1968, having made an exhaustive study of this famous fish, I was prepared to accept that no trace of it remained and to consider the case closed. In October 1972, however, a friend, John Cranston, who had just returned from a deer-stalking trip in the Stewartry of Kircudbright, handed me a newspaper cutting, given to him by his stalker, Jack Henderson. The cutting referred to an article written about the Kenmure Pike by Malcolm Logan in a copy of the (now defunct) *Country Life* magazine, *Angling*, of January 1953.



Figure 2. The extreme northwestern corner of Loch Ken is overlooked by Kenmure Castle. The bay in the foreground, where wild ducks sometimes gather in large numbers, was the place where John Murray took the great Kenmure Pike, possibly on a line baited with a duck.

Later at the British Museum, I located and read Logan's account of his research. "Seized with consuming curiosity," he had set out to find the missing skull of this giant pike, which, it seemed, had been kept in the library at Kenmure Castle (Figure 3) until sometime after World War II.

Logan was a good detective. After a persistent and painstaking search, he found the remains of the pike head in a cottager's outhouse somewhere in the locality of New Galloway. It now consisted of little more than a pair of enormous jawbones (Figure 4). To the upper jawbone two narrow fragments of the top of the skull were still attached. It was in bad condition: "The lower jaw was roughly nailed to the base of this case, on which some fragments of disconnected bone were scattered; and the wiring which held the upper and lower jaws together had rusted through and broken."<sup>2</sup> It can be readily understood that even in 1952, the Kenmure Pike head must have looked like so much rubbish to any but a knowledgeable observer.

From Logan's article I learned that John Murray, the gamekeeper who caught the pike, was buried in Kells churchyard a mile or two from Kenmure Castle. I photographed the gravestone (Figure 5), and for the reader's benefit include the inscription:

IN MEMORY OF JOHN MURRAY  
WHO DIED AT KENMORE JAN. 3RD 1777  
AGED 61 YEARS AND WHO FOR 46  
YEARS HAD BEEN A FAITHFUL SERVANT  
TO THE FAMILY OF KENMORE.  
ERECTED BY THE HONORABLE  
CAPT. JOHN GORDON.

Logan had noted the bas-relief figures on the gravestone (a fishing rod, a gun, a hound, and a powder horn), but had mistaken (as had other writers) the figure of a pigeon for that of a partridge—unlike my friend, Peter Thomas, who spotted the white collar on its neck immediately. On the reverse side of Murray's tombstone is engraved a poem. It was written by the Rev. John Gillespie, minister of the parish at Kells, who had won a guinea offered (presumably by John Gordon, younger son of Viscount Kenmure) for the most suitable epitaph.

Ah John what changes since I saw  
thee last;  
Thy fishing and thy shooting days  
are past.  
Bagpipes and hautboys thou canst  
sound no more;  
Thy nods, grimaces, winks and pranks  
are o'er.  
Thy harmless, queerish incoherent talk,  
Thy wild vivacity and trudging walk  
Will soon be quite forgot. Thy joys  
on earth—  
A snuff, a glass, riddles and noisy  
mirth—  
Are vanished all. Yet, blest I hope  
thou art,  
For in thy station, well thou play'dst  
thy part.

These verses give a wonderful insight into the character of this much-loved servant.<sup>3</sup> Does not the line, "Thy nods, grimaces, winks and pranks are o'er" give a clue to the truth behind the legend that John Murray's world-record pike was caught on a fly? And does not the following story recorded by Logan offer further evidence of Murray's enterprising humor?

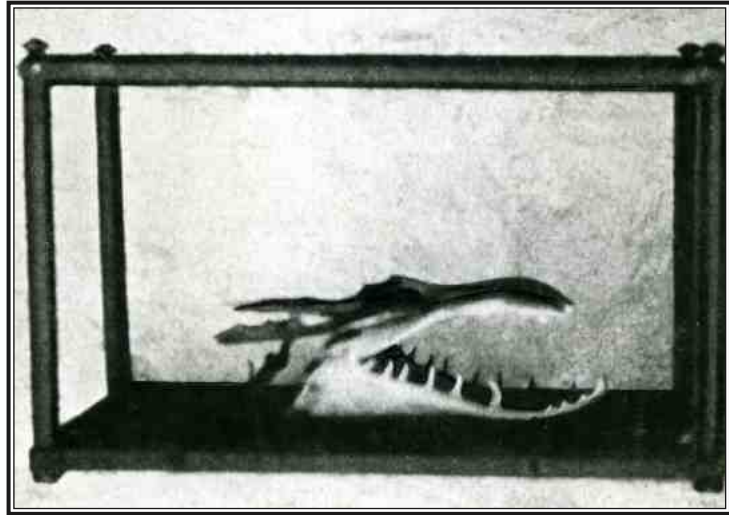
As keeper at Kenmure, Murray had the task of catching fish for the table; and after a long run of undersized trout had been forthcoming, his master remarked that the loch now contained nothing but parr. There was no doubt some warmth in Murray's reply, when he threw down the great fish exclaiming, "Does your Lordship ca' that a minnen [call that a minnow]?"<sup>4</sup>

One can imagine the question that Murray faced after his employer had recovered from the shock of seeing such an enormous fish; a fish so big that when



Figure 3. Kenmure Castle housed the head of the Kenmure Pike for nearly two centuries. The castle was built during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries on the site of an ancient fortress. For hundreds of years, it had been the home of the lairds of Kenmure, and although it survived a Cromwellian sacking in 1650 and the execution of one of its lairds in the eighteenth century, it finally fell victim to the rating system after World War II (no local taxes are payable on a property if its roof is stripped off).

Figure 4. Malcolm Logan's photograph of the encased Kenmure Pike skull. The original was first published in Angling. From Frederick Buller, *The Domesday Book of Mammoth Pike* (London: Stanley Paul, 1979), 255.



Murray carried it back to the castle, the pike's head was above his, while its tail trailed along the ground:

"I suppose you are going to tell me you caught it on a fly?"  
 "Why, of course my lord," Murray would have said blandly.

On 15 January 1973, I again traveled north to New Galloway to make further inquiries among the 300 inhabitants of Scotland's smallest royal borough. At lunchtime, with extraordinary luck, I ordered a dram of King's Ransom whisky at the Cross Keys—an act that created an instant bond between myself and the licensee, Mrs. Davidson, whose late husband had loved this brand of whisky above all others.

She remembered that her husband had once possessed a photograph of a nineteenth-century painting of John Murray's pike, and a subsequent search revealed a yellowing print (Figure 6). For those who would like to try their hand at dressing the fly that created one of the most enduring controversies in angling history, here are the details:

- The Fly which Caught the Kenmure Pike
- 3½ inches long
  - Black and red body
  - Blood cock hackles
  - Peacock and white turkey wings
  - Wild drake horns
  - Macaw tail
  - Dressed on cat gut
  - Wrapped in copper wire.

In 1897, W. Meikle, an expatriate Scot living in Walsall,<sup>5</sup> painted a picture of the Kenmure Pike, the original of Mrs. Davidson's yellowing print. A closer study of the painting shows that once a myth has been fabricated (in this instance, that the pike had been caught on a fly), it can be carefully embroidered with the sort of detail that fulfills the expectations of gullible people. In the painting, the pike's head has eyes and a covering of skin—features that do not exist on an earlier engraving of the same head (see Figure 1), published some ninety-five years before the painting was executed. Moreover, despite the lapse of 130 years since the pike's capture, the painter managed to assemble not only the original fly but also all the rest of John Murray's ancillary tackle—or rather,

Photos by Frederick Buller



Figure 5. John Murray's gravestone in Kells churchyard.

Figure 6. W. Meikle's 1897 painting of the Kenmure Pike. The gaff is captioned "Gaff which hauled him out," and the rod is labeled "The rod which caught the Kenmure pike 72 lbs caught 100 years previous to 1896."

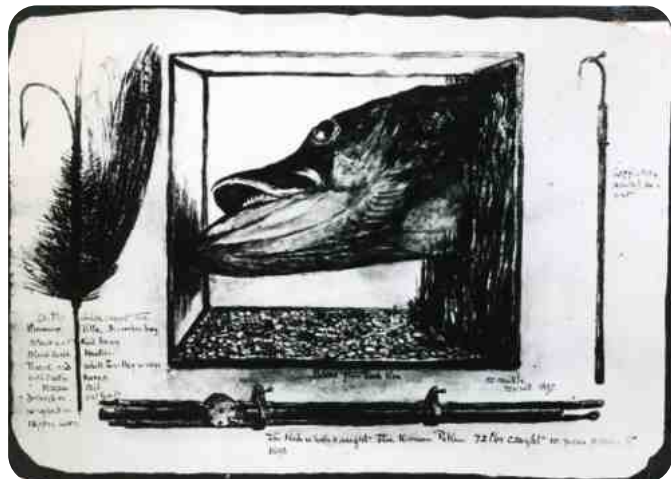






Figure 7. The Kenmure Arms Hotel, New Galloway. The head of John Murray's 72-pound pike (the largest authenticated British pike) was once on public view in the bar.

all that seemed appropriate to the taking of a pike with a fly. A supremely bogus touch is the artist's inclusion of "pebbles from Loch Ken."

Logan's finding of the pike head in 1952 made me determined to find out if it still existed, especially in the light of his heartfelt plea: "Readers will, I think, share my hope as this famous relic was locked up once more in that outhouse, that this will not be the end of the story."<sup>6</sup>

On 11 February 1973, I made yet another visit to New Galloway, and with kind help, I elicited details of the previous whereabouts and ultimate fate of the Kenmure Pike head. These are given in chronological order.

From a description given by Dr. Grierson, in an article that he wrote for the *Annals of Philosophy for 1814*, we know that the head of the Kenmure Pike was kept in the castle library. Toward the end of the nineteenth century (there being no surviving male heir), Kenmure Castle passed to another branch of the family: the Maitland Gordons. Despite this change of ownership, the head was still there when the famous British museum taxonomist Tate Regan took its measurements sometime between 1904 and 1917.

In 1924, after a wartime reversal in the family fortune, the castle was rented to General M. L. MacEwen. During his tenancy, according to his daughter, Miss M. W. MacEwen, the pike head was kept in the billiard room. A few years later, when General MacEwen bought the castle from the Maitland Gordon family, the pike head (being, as it were, a personal effect) was removed to Overton: a dower house in New Galloway, which still belonged to the Maitland Gordon family.

When John Maitland Gordon went abroad before World War II, he left the pike head in the safe keeping of Mrs. Douglas of the Kenmure Arms Hotel, New Galloway (Figure 7), who put the famous relic on view in the public bar.

About the year 1950, Michael Gordon, brother of John Maitland Gordon, returned to New Galloway to start a building business, and the pike head was once again taken back to Overton. Later, when

Overton was emptied before its sale, the head was removed to a small village outhouse (Figure 8).<sup>7</sup> It is here (in the outhouse of Logan's account) that the Kenmure pike head finally came to grief.

At this time, the outhouse (once the property of Viscount Kenmure) was looked after by Geordie Bell, a worker on

the Kenmure estate. In time, Michael Gordon moved out of the district, but the pike head remained in the outhouse until shortly after the death of Geordie Bell in 1955.

The outhouse was cleaned out during the period 1956–1957, when Mrs. Bell lived in England, so that what remained of the pike head (just a little pile of powdering bones in a broken glass case) was thrown away. And now, by the removal of its roof, the last resting place of the Kenmure head—the little outhouse—has suffered the same fate as Kenmure Castle: it became derelict after its roof was removed to avoid local taxes.

I am sure that Malcolm Logan's wish, "that this will not be the end of the story," will be granted. Even though the head of the Kenmure Pike no longer exists, controversy will always surround this mighty fish. Recently I have found evidence (supporting my own opinion) that the pike was caught on a live duck, as well as counterevidence to the effect that it was caught on a spinner. For the reader's interest (and confusion) I append the items.

FROM C. H. DICK'S *HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN GALLOWAY AND CARRICK* (1916)

Soon after this Murray saw some ducklings on the water disappearing one by one. He took a duck as a bait, and began to angle with a strong rope. The duck went under, the line was taut and quivering, and it was plain that there was something powerful at the other end. As Murray drew back from the edge, he saw a mighty pike lashing the placid surface of the loch. He landed and killed it and carried it on his back to the castle. As he did so its head was above his, and its tail was trailing on the ground.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 8. The outhouse in Westport, New Galloway.

FROM H. CHOLMONDELEY-  
PENNELL'S *THE BOOK OF  
THE PIKE* (1865)

The attempt to delineate a great fish, or the taking of him, must certainly exercise some mystifying influence upon the piscatorial mind, for we find even Stoddart, generally so accurate, when alluding to the celebrated Kenmure Pike, going out of his way to describe him as having been taken with the fly, whereas, from the account which I have in my possession, it is clear that he was captured by the spinning-bait . . .

. . . To the Hon. Mrs. Bellamy Gordon, of Kenmure Castle, my best acknowledgements are due for an interesting account of this gigantic Pike and its captor, written on the spot by the Rev. George Murray of Balmaclellan.<sup>9</sup>

FROM THE *FISHING GAZETTE*,  
31 DECEMBER 1898

*The Kenmure Pike*

Dear Sir, Will you kindly allow me to answer a query set forth by our most esteemed and old mutual friend "Dragnet"? Speaking of the celebrated Kenmure pike in last week's *Fishing Gazette*, he asks: "Perhaps some angler more learned in big pike captures will answer the query as to how, when, and by whom this lovely fish was taken?"

Would that poor old John Murray could answer for himself, but, alas! poor John died on Jan. 3, 1777, and lies in Kells churchyard . . .

. . . The following letter was written at Kenmure Castle Nov. 9, 1885:

Dear Sir,—I have much pleasure in giving all the information I can regarding the great pike that was caught by my grandfather's gamekeeper towards the end of the last century. There is little doubt it weighed at least 72 lb., but cannot remember to have heard its length<sup>10</sup> or girth; only that John Murray was a tall man, and when he took it to my grandfather its head was resting on his shoulder and its tail trailing on the ground. He threw it at his master's feet and said, "Tak the next yersel," meaning, of course, he might catch one like it if he could. The pike was caught by a fly made of peacock feathers. I have part of the head in a glass case, but in a mutilated condition. I am, yours faithfully,  
BELLAMY LOUISA GORDON.

P.S.—Why I stated at least 72 lb. is that I believe the Scotch pound in those days weighed some ounces more than at present. My uncle, Lord Kenmure, gave me the above information; he died in 1840, aged ninety-one. I forgot to state the fish was caught in Loch Ken, Kirkcudbrightshire.<sup>11</sup>

This letter by Bellamy Louisa Gordon was copied from the *Fishing Gazette* in 1885 by the writer, who believes the

original is still in the hands of R. B. Marston, Esq., to whom it was sent by the Honourable Mrs. Bellamy Gordon in the ninetieth year of her age.

By the way, it is worthy of notice that when speaking of "pike" to a Scotchman, they should be called "gedd," as witness the following.

"Ye Ken Wha," an old correspondent to the *Fishing Gazette*, states when you sends oot invites to fush for pike you maunna ca' them pike, they nicht na like it. Their fins are in their native flood, an' their name is "gedd" (twa "dees" mind). They're a wee thought touchy and they have sharp teeth. Hielan bluid, ye ken! But try them wi' the "toddie!" Aha, lads!

Trusting dear "Drag" will "ken noo!" with "Ken Wha"—And yours truly,

FRANK GOSDEN

Reading

P.S.—Mr. J. Kenna, another old correspondent, in his big "gedd" reminiscence, remarks: "We paid particular attention to this piece of water, where, it is said, the celebrated angler, John Murray, caught the big 'gedd,' which weighed 72 lb., and, be it observed, with the fly. I'll warrant he wielded a real mountain ash with a vigorous arm to cast almost over a bay the Peacock Tail Fly, about as large as a swallow." This almost corresponds with the editor of the *Fishing Gazette's* remark, viz., "It was evidently a big Alexandra."<sup>12</sup>

## NEW THOUGHTS AND INVESTIGATIONS: THE SCOTTISH POUND AND THE LOCH KEN PIKE

"He that knows nothing of numbers is scarcely a man." So said Charles XII, King of Sweden.<sup>13</sup>

In 2006, while researching data for my book *The Domesday Book of Giant Salmon*,<sup>14</sup> I ran into the same problem with regard to documenting a reliable weight for some large Scottish-caught fish taken during the latter part of the eighteenth century. These salmon ostensibly exceeded a weight of 60 pounds, but because of the problem brought to my attention by Bellamy Louisa Gordon in her statement, "I believe the Scottish pound in those days weighed some ounces more than at present," I needed to take a closer look at the true value of the Scottish pound.

Avoirdupois weight (from the French, meaning *to have weight*) was brought into law in Britain in 1824 with the Weights and Measures Act, although in some areas in Scotland, variations persisted well into the 1840s. According to the book *Weights and Measures in Scotland: A Modern European Perspective* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2004), before this act, a chaotic system of weighing and measuring existed in Scotland, which authors R. D. Connor and A. D. C. Simpson set out to unravel.

Before the Weights and Measures Act, the Scottish pound (at least in Lanarkshire) was equivalent to 1 pound, 1 ounce, 8 drams of the imperial or English pound. This would lead us to believe that at the time of capture, Murray's pike weighed 80½ imperial pounds, which seems to me to be most unlikely. My response was to set loose my friend David Hatwell, an indefatigable Internet detective, and he soon provided some infor-

mation on the Scottish pound, or trone, via the online Scottish Archive Network's Scottish Weights and Measures Guide. The value of the trone varied, according to district, from 21 ounces to 28 ounces avoirdupois. By taking 1 lb. = 28 oz. as the basis, we can calculate  $72 \times 28 = 2,016 \text{ oz.} \div 16 = 126 \text{ lb. avoirdupois}$ . While reeling from this result, I received a letter from David Devereux, the very helpful curator of the Stewartry Museum in Kirkcudbright (Kirkcudbright is only 11 miles from the southern end of Loch Ken) to whom I had written for help.

Regarding your enquiry about establishing the exact weight of the pike, and converting the 72 lb. quoted in 1774 into an Avoirdupois weight, I enclose a photocopy from *The Lower Part of a New System of Practical Arithmetic* by John Millar (1849). Page 96 has a useful list showing the various weights of the Scottish Pound Tron, expressed as Avoirdupois Ounces, used in different Scottish counties. You can see from this that the Pound Tron in the district of Kirkcudbrightshire between the rivers Urr and Fleet (in which area Loch Ken lies) was equivalent to 28 Ounces Avoirdupois. If it is assumed that the local weight measure was used, then, by my calculation, that would make the weight of the pike 126 lbs. Avoirdupois!<sup>15</sup>

The above calculations are undoubtedly correct, and confirm my own, but I still felt that another approach was required because a weight of 126 pounds for the Loch Ken pike is out of the question.<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, I had another look at the first published account of Murray's pike, which appeared in the *Sporting Magazine* or *Monthly Calendar* in July 1798. At the time, the publishers, Rogerson and Tuxford, claimed that theirs was the only magazine that catered to sportsmen, but more followed long before it



ceased publication in 1871. Because it was published in London and doubtless catered principally to English sportsmen (albeit many of whom read it for the reports on cock fighting),<sup>17</sup> I suggest that the pike's weight in trones had already been converted to pounds avoirdupois before publication in order to be readily understood by its English readers. Furthermore, I feel that the base of having varying values of the Scottish trone or pound is the reason Dr. Grierson reported a different weight for Murray's pike in his book *Mineralogical Observations in Galloway* (1814).

In a footnote, he wrote about his own modest success with Loch Ken pike and then added, "But this is nothing in comparison of one that was caught by John Murray, gamekeeper to the Hon. John Gordon of Kenmore. It weighed 61 lbs., and the head of it is still preserved in Mr. John Gordon's library at Kenmore Castle."<sup>18</sup> Where this gets me in proving the weight of Murray's pike, I don't know, but I am beginning to feel, as the king of Sweden said, "scarcely a man."

Finally, I cannot resist reproducing one of the earliest known illustrations of a pike fly: an engraving made from a drawing of a fly presented to H. Cholmondeley-Pennell. It was published in Pennell's *The Book of the Pike* (Figure 9), where he wrote, "The engraving is taken from a very fine specimen of the pike-fly as used in Ireland, and which was presented to me by Mr. Martin Kelly, of Dublin."<sup>19</sup>

#### A NOTE AND POSTSCRIPT

While backtracking through my books and magazines in order to respond to questions asked by this journal's editor, I have just discovered (5 April 2007) an entirely new (to me) line of enquiry regarding John Murray's pike in a reference to the so-called Sibbald manuscripts. The reference was in a letter sent by James Robertson and published in *Angling* (March 1953, vol. xvi, no. 100). It would appear that the late John C. Hay, Robertson's father-in-law, had sometime during the 1890s perused a manuscript "which claimed the Kenmure pike to be the largest freshwater fish caught in British waters and that it weighed 96 lbs."

The manuscript, of which there are only two known copies, must be either eighteenth or nineteenth century in origin.

I look forward to making further investigations.

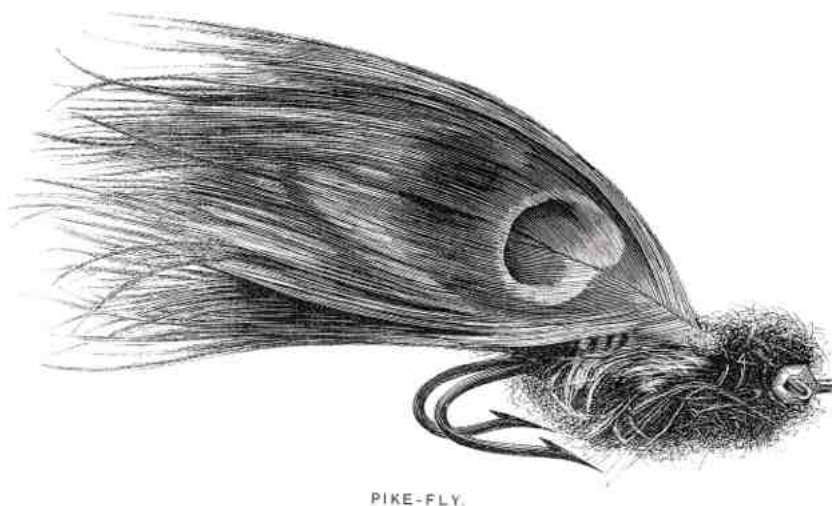


Figure 9. An engraving made from a drawing of the fly presented to H. Cholmondeley-Pennell by Martin Kelly of Dublin. From H. Cholmondeley-Pennell, *The Book of the Pike* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1865), 232.

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Sporting Magazine* (July 1798).
2. Malcolm Logan, "Tracing the Kenmure Skull," *Angling* (January 1953, vol. xvi, no. 98), 12–16.
3. Transcription of the epitath originally appeared in the Rev. C. H. Dick's *Highways and Byways in Galloway and Carrick* (London: Macmillan Press, 1916), 454.
4. Logan, "Tracing the Kenmure Skull," 14.
5. Although a packman by trade, Meikle's interests included archaeology, history, and photography. *Angling* (June 1951, vol. xiv, no. 79), 355.
6. Logan, "Tracing the Kenmure Skull," 16.
7. There is some confusion as to when the head was removed to the outhouse. Horton Evans, writing in *Angling* ("Loch Ken Pike," February 1951, vol. xiv, no. 75, 108), reported that when he stayed at the Ken Bridge Hotel some four years previously, in 1947, he was told that the head was kept in a nearby cottage.
8. Dick, *Highways and Byways*, 454.
9. H. Cholmondeley-Pennell, *The Book of the Pike* (London: Robert Hardwick, 1865), 14.
10. "J.B.," writing in the *Fishing Gazette* of 2 January 1897, quotes the length of John Murray's fish as being 7 feet.
11. *Fishing Gazette* (31 December 1898).
12. Frank Gosden, no reference available from original 1968 research.
13. Quoted in John Millar, *A New System of Practical Arithmetic* (Paisley, Scotland: Caldwell & Son, 1849), frontispiece.
14. London: Constable, 2007.
15. Letter to author, 4 October 2006.
16. C. Tate Regan's closely argued support of the claimed weight of 72 pounds in his book *Freshwater Fishes of the British Isles* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1911) is compelling. Tate Regan, during his lifetime, became one of the most influential fish biologists of the British Museum (Natural History).
17. Important information during the heyday of gambling.
18. Dr. James Grierson, *Mineralogical Observations in Galloway*, published in *The Annals of Philosophy* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1814), vol. 3, 420fn.
19. Cholmondeley-Pennell, *The Book of the Pike*, facing page 232.



# Ogden W. Pleissner

## THE SPORTING GRAND TOUR

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# Helen Shaw

## 1910–2007

Hermann Kessler

**H**ELEN ELIZABETH (SHAW) KESSLER of Red Rock, New York, died on 20 December 2007. With her death, the world of fly fishing lost a gentle friend who set a high standard for excellence in fly tying.

Helen Shaw, who was ninety-seven, was a pioneer in making the craft of fly tying accessible to fly fishers through her authorship of three important books, especially her first. She wrote a seminal book, *Fly-Tying*, in 1963. She later published *Flies for Fish and Fisherman: The Wet Flies* and *Fly-Tying: Materials, Tools, Techniques*. Her articles were also included in books on fly tying written and edited by others.

Helen Shaw was born in Madison, Wisconsin, on 2 March 1910. She moved with her family to Sheboygan, Wisconsin, as a child. She was awarded the Evangeline Kohler Award in Art upon graduation from high school. While still in high school, she tied for Art Kade, owner of Art Kade Flycasters in Sheboygan. Later, she served in the Women's Auxilliary Army Corps, rising to the rank of 2nd lieutenant. She returned to Sheboygan and stayed there until her marriage to Hermann Kessler in 1953, when she moved with him to New York City. In New York, her reputation was enhanced by her contact with important groups and individuals in fly fishing, a world then heavily dominated by men.

Her husband, Hermann Kessler, was the art director at *Field & Stream* magazine for more than twenty-five years. Kessler played a central role in the establishment of the American Museum of Fly Fishing and was an important partner in the development of Shaw's books. As she tied the flies, Hermann took the photographs. They were taken from the vantage point of the tier, an enormous help to those she was instructing through her books.

Helen Shaw's approach to tying flies was methodical and meticulous. When she was invited to supervise tying for a commercial fly-tying company, she declined, saying that the attention to maintaining quality by that firm was not sufficient. Eric Leiser, a respected author of fly-tying books, said about her first book, "I have a personal interest in *Fly-Tying*. It was the only book that taught me how to tie flies."<sup>1</sup> She has been recognized by the current generation of women fly fishers. She is included in Lyla Foggia's 1995 book, *Reel Women: The World of Women Who Fish*. Arnold Gingrich, the editor of *Esquire* magazine, called her the First Lady of Fly Tying and included *Fly-Tying* as among the fifty most important fly-fishing books and one of the ten best "modern" fly-fishing books.<sup>2</sup>

During her long life, Helen Shaw observed the changes that took place in her field after the publication of *Fly-Tying*. Fly fishers now have available many more materials for tying, as well as dozens of books and DVDs on fly-tying techniques and materials, but Helen Shaw established the standards and led the way. She was acclaimed nationally, but will especially be remembered in Sheboygan, where she lived for many years. The local Federation of Fly Fishers chapter in that city is named after Helen Shaw, and the Onion River, where she fished as a



Helen Shaw.

From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

young woman, has been restored with public and private grants of several million dollars.

In 1979, Helen Shaw Kessler and Hermann Kessler moved to Red Rock in New York. Her beloved husband died in 1993. She died after a short stay at the Barnwell Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in nearby Chatham, New York. The obituary issued by the funeral home encouraged donations to the American Museum of Fly Fishing in her honor.

—HARRY L. PETERSON  
MIDDLETON, WISCONSIN

### ENDNOTES

1. Eric Leiser, quoted on the dust jacket of the reissue of *Fly-Tying* (New York: Lyons and Burford, 1987).
2. Arnold Gingrich, *The Joys of Trout* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1973), 120.

IN MEMORIAM

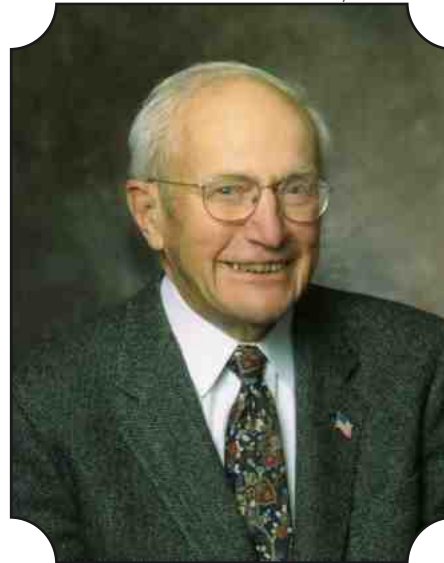
Harold H. Demarest

1911–2007

Eileen Demarest



Sandy Pilewski



ON 2 JULY 2007, the fraternity of bamboo rodmakers and those who love to fish cane rods lost one of its patron saints: Harold Demarest.

Harold was a giant in his field. For more than sixty years, he carried on his family's import business: supplying all the major rodmaking firms with Chinese Tonkin cane. Rod manufacturers included Leonard, Thomas, Heddon, Granger, Montague, and South Bend, as well as all the smaller operations, such as Payne, Dickerson, Garrison, and many others. The Charles H. Demarest Company of Bloomingdale, New Jersey, founded by Harold's father, is *the* name when it comes to Tonkin cane. Perhaps no one else today knows more about this special bamboo species and how to deliver it into the hands of cane rodmakers. Even after the Chinese embargo began in the early 1950s, Harold tried every method he could to continue to supply this precious bamboo to the rodmaking community. During the golden era of bamboo rod production (roughly 1900 to 1955), his family had hundreds of thousands of culms of cane in transit from China to the United States.

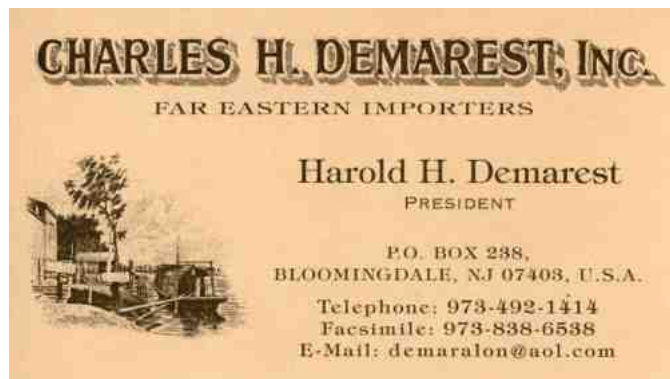
Upon graduation from Lehigh University in 1934, Harold joined his father's company full time and traveled throughout the eastern United States to visit their many established customers. During World War II, he was a flight instructor for the Army Air Corps. He later joined the Navy, and as a lieutenant,

he found himself second in command of the destroyer USS *Hughes*. After the war, he rejoined his father's company, which continued to import items from around the world.

Although Harold passed away just two days before his ninety-sixth birthday, he never thought of retiring from the import business. Each year he would attend a handful of rodmaker gatherings around the United States and Canada and delight his audiences with stories of "The Search for the Perfect Culm" [of bamboo] or "The State of Bamboo Today."

As a matter of fact, the bamboo in just about every bamboo rod in our museums, private collections, and in the hands of fly fishers passed through the Demarests' hands. Without Harold and the import business his father started, who knows what our fly-fishing heritage would look like today?

This gentle man of high moral standards was a devoted husband and father. His wife, Eileen, was the love of his life and a constant companion on their many journeys. As a sign of her love for him and their devotion to the bamboo rodmaking community, she has promised to continue the family business of importing the finest bamboo culms.



—FRED KRETCHMAN  
BAMBOO RODMAKER



# Lee Wulff, Innovator: The Fishing Vest and Plastic Flies



Nathan George



Sara Wilcox

*Top: A plastic-bodied stonefly made using the injection-molded system. This method allowed for threadless, assembly-line fly production.*

*Left: Decades after Lee Wulff designed his first fly-fishing vest, he designed one for Wulff Apparel that is strikingly similar. Anglers worldwide seem to agree that there is little room for improvement.*

*Bottom: A molded badger streamer. Wulff's injection-molded system could be used for virtually any style fly.*



Sara Wilcox

LEE WULFF IS KNOWN universally among fly anglers for his many contributions: books, magazine articles, fly patterns, and advancement of conservation and catch-and-release. These are all the result of his most outstanding trait: innovation. He was always an innovator and was seldom (if ever) content to accept the contemporary paradigms. This led to one of his earliest and most far-reaching contributions, as well as to a groundbreaking innovation that didn't catch on. The fishing vest was the first of these creations, something so basic and seemingly obvious that few anglers today would even question its pedigree.

In 1932, the first fishing vest was designed and made by Lee. It was done partly out of innovation and partly out of frustration with the style of the time. A day on the stream bore a striking resemblance to more formal activity; tweed jacket, vest, and necktie were all part of the attire. The resulting fly fisher looked neat and put together but lacked easy access to his equipment. The most prominent feature of the new vest was

pockets—and lots of them. Two large front pockets on left and right sides, as well as several smaller pockets, gave the angler plenty of storage options. Most had heavy-duty zippers or button closures. Another feature was fleece patches to allow recently fished flies an opportunity to dry.

Approximately fifty years later, when Lee designed the Wulff Apparel vest that resides in the museum's collection, the design was remarkably similar to his initial creation. A few metal D rings had been added, and a compartment reminiscent of an upland bird hunter's vest graces the back. This latter feature is no surprise as his original model was a hunter's shooting vest. The back also has a large zippered pocket. On the inside is a special holder for a pair of fly-tying scissors, providing the option of streamside fly modifications. These minor changes are essentially the only departures from that first vest. An interesting feature is what appears to be an ordinary fleece drying patch that unfolds to reveal a second, larger drying patch. Like many

# Joan Wulff to Receive 2008 Heritage Award

anglers, Lee made full use of this vest's pockets. He kept a length of nylon rope, pocket knife, and compass in the zippered back pocket. The front pockets were filled with tippet, fly boxes, and line dressing.

A testament to the pragmatism of Lee's design is the number of fly-fishing vests available today. In spite of alternatives like the chest pack, most anglers still prefer the old-fashioned vest.

Another Lee Wulff innovation was introduced in 1951. Since fly fishing's beginning, fly tiers used thread and bodies made of dubbing, chenille, tinsel, or floss. Lee was inspired by welded pieces of metal to create a better, faster method of "welding" flies. These new flies resembled tried-and-true patterns, such as the Mickey Finn, but in place of the traditional tinsel and dubbing was plastic.

The polystyrene bodies were injection-molded onto a hook, then hackle, wing, and other material could be added through judicious application of a dissolving solution. The plastic was then allowed to reset, a process that was complete in five minutes. The resulting flies were durable and could be made assembly-line style because no thread was used. The plastic had neutral buoyancy and worked well for both dry and wet flies. These new flies could be made very quickly—about forty-five seconds per fly, in most cases. They involved a minimal amount of skill, allowing virtually anyone to take on the task of tying his or her own flies. Unfortunately, these flies were an innovation ahead of their time, and, in spite of publicity in publications such as *Rod & Reel* many years later in 1986, they just did not catch on. The museum has several of these plastic "flies of the future," as they were known. The stonefly dry looks like what it claims to be, and the badger streamer is not really all that different from a body constructed with conventional materials. The bodies were made with different-colored plastic for the different imitations. In the case of flies that needed some sparkle, glitter was added to the surface of the plastic shortly after the molding was complete.

Knowing that these flies are made of plastic takes some getting used to; it seems that fly tiers and fishers were more attached to the conventional tying rather than the new "molding." Perhaps this simple issue is what kept them out of the fly boxes of most anglers. Then again, the radical notion of a "fishing vest" must have taken some getting used to as well.

NATHAN GEORGE  
COLLECTIONS COORDINATOR



*At the 1996 Fly Tackle Dealer Show in Denver, Joan Wulff introduced some ladies to the casting habit as part of a celebration of the 500th anniversary of Dame Juliana Berners's A Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle. Photo courtesy of Janet Downey.*

The American Museum of Fly Fishing is very pleased to announce that Joan Wulff is the 2008 recipient of the museum's Heritage Award.

The museum established this award in 1997 to celebrate individuals whose commitment to the museum, the sport of fly fishing, and natural resource conservation sets standards to which we should all aspire. Past recipients of the award include Leigh H. Perkins, Gardner L. Grant, Bud Lilly, Nathaniel Pryor Reed, George W. Harvey, Lewis W. Coleman, Foster Bam, Yvon Chouinard, Nick Lyons, Mel Krieger, and last year's honoree Stan Bogdan; Stan will also be attending this year's festivities to help welcome Joan into the club.

In choosing Joan Wulff, the American Museum of Fly Fishing recognizes one of the legends of angling for her innumerable contributions as well as her unwavering energy and devotion to the sport, culture, and conservation of fly fishing.

Listing all of Joan's credentials in order to justify her selection for this award would not only use up the rest of this space but is, I suspect, completely unnecessary—anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with fishing already knows why Joan is more than worthy of the honor.

To me, it seems that among all the accolades earned, barriers broken, and firsts achieved, the biggest and most important impact Joan Wulff has had on the sport is her unending desire and ability to show the world that fly fishing isn't some arcane, esoteric ritual practiced by a select few but an activity anyone and everyone can participate in. Be it by serving as living proof that you don't have to be a 6-foot, 200-pound man to be able to cast a fly a distance of more than half a football field (a feat she accomplished in 1960 at the age of 33); by being the first person to break the mechanics of fly casting down into plain, simple, easily understood steps; or by acting as teacher and mentor to thousands of aspiring anglers and fishing instructors for nearly 30 years, Joan has spent a lifetime making the sport of fly fishing accessible to others, and in doing so has ensured that it will continue to grow and thrive for generations to come.

Yet as important as these contributions are, they're but a few of the many reasons why Joan Wulff is the museum's 2008 Heritage Award honoree.

SARA WILCOX  
ART DIRECTOR

GREETINGS ONCE MORE from the library of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. We've received donations from both individuals and publishers over the last quarter that we'd like to share with you.

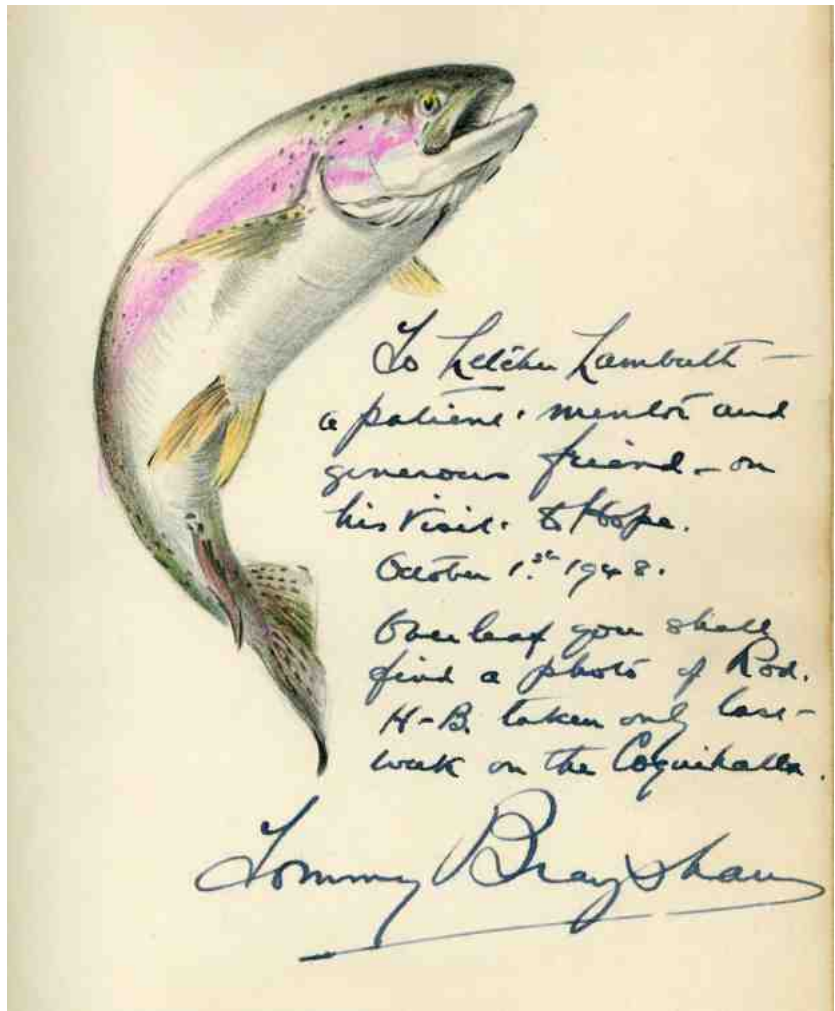
We received two donations in memory of Walt Hoetzer: Jay La Bombard of Manchester, Vermont, donated an inscribed copy of *Art Flick's New Streamside Guide* (Crown Inc., 1969), and Faith Nielson of Columbia, Maryland, donated a copy of Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton's *The Compleat Angler* (1844).

Clyde E. Drury of Tacoma, Washington, donated a copy of a book he edited, *The Autobiography of Dr. James Alexander Henshall* (Whitefish Press, 2007). James Heckman, MD, of Manchester, Vermont, donated six books: Henry Van Dyke's *Little Rivers* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), *Little Rivers* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), and *Fisherman's Luck* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899); editor Arnold Gingrich's *American Trout Fishing* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); Robert Travers's *Trout Madness* (St. Martin's Press, 1960); and Fred Everett's *Fun with Trout* (Stackpole, 1952).

Lou Ureneck of Brookline, Massachusetts, donated a signed copy of his book, *Backcast* (St. Martin's Press, 2007). John Betts of Denver, Colorado, donated his review copy of Fred Buller's *The Domesday Book of Giant Salmon* (Constable, 2007). Joan Wulff of Lew Beach, New York, donated five books by Lee Wulff: *The Atlantic Salmon* (Lyons & Burford, 1983); *Trout on a Fly* (Lyons & Burford, 1986); *The Compleat Lee Wulff* (edited by John Merwin, E. P. Dutton, 1989); *Salmon on a Fly* (edited by John Merwin, Silver Quill Press, 1992); and *Lee Wulff: Bush Pilot Angler* (Down East Books, 2000). She also donated a book about Lee: Jack Samson's *Lee Wulff* (Frank Amato, 1995).

Thanks also to Skyhorse Publishing, who sent us Justin Askins's *The Legendary Neversink* (2007).

This time around I'd like to highlight a book by Jack W. Berryman called *Fly Fishing Pioneers & Legends of the Northwest* (Seattle: Northwest Fly Fishing, LLC, 2006; softcover, 206 pages), which was sent to us by the author last year. The book is valuable in its portrayal of twenty-three legendary anglers of the Northwest, but it also has special meaning for its perspective on Roderick Haig-Brown. Haig-Brown is one of our foremost angling authors, noted for the beautiful prose that describes his feelings for being



Letcher Lambuth's copy of Roderick Haig-Brown's *The Western Angler* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1947) included this remarkable image by Tommy Brayshaw on the flyleaf with the following inscription: "To Letcher Lambuth—a patient mentor and generous friend—on his visit to Hope [B.C.]—October 1, 1945. Overleaf you shall find a photo of Rod H[aig]-B[rown] taken only last week on the Coquihalla. —Tommy Brayshaw."

on his rivers. The book helps to place Haig-Brown in the context of the entire region, in a specific time frame, and highlights especially his relationships with other anglers.

Berryman has thoroughly researched twenty-three fly fishermen of the Pacific Northwest. The personal characteristics of the men are especially well presented with valuable insights into the development of the region's angling history.

The areas of focus are seven watersheds that have long been productive rivers for steelhead, trout, and salmon: the Kamloops, Stamp, and Campbell rivers of British Columbia; the northwest Washington rivers, especially the Skagit and Stillaguamish; the Salmon and Clearwater rivers of Idaho; the southwestern rivers of Montana's Yellowstone area,

namely the Big Hole, Madison, and Yellowstone; the Rogue, Umpqua, and Deschutes rivers of Oregon; and, in northwest California, the Eel, Klamath, and Russian rivers.

All twenty-three anglers indeed were pioneers and legends. Although they were not the first generation to popularize fishing in the region, collectively—and at about the same time—they made significant contributions to the fly-fishing history of the Northwest and North America. The book reveals some pertinent commonalities.

All of these anglers fished many rivers of the region, but they were devoted to their own nearby rivers. Further, although they were proficient anglers, some were exceptional—for example, for the long-distance casting learned so as to reach



## CONTRIBUTORS

the expanses of the bigger rivers, or for being creative with their fly tying, creating lures that proved to be especially productive. Most interesting is that they all knew each other, not only as fishing companions, but also as good friends. This was especially important in their profound dedication to the conservation movements in the region.

Some were famous outside their home rivers as authors of books and articles, artists, fly-tying innovators, and rod-builders. Clearly, Roderick Haig-Brown, Ted Trueblood, and Zane Grey were prolific authors who wrote about their own rivers as well as their angling adventures worldwide. Tommy Brayshaw was a noted artist, as was the photographer Ralph Wahl. Others were prominent local writers, such as Jordan Mott III, Polly Rosborough, Enos Bradner, and Ken McLeod. Equally famous—not only for their angling, but also for their national prominence—were the fly-shop owners Don Martinez (Bud Lilly's Trout Shop) and Dan Bailey (Dan Bailey's Fly Shop).

Significant innovations included flies especially developed for steelhead—for example, the optic series, the woven hair series, Bunyan Bugs, and the Woolly Worm—that were later adopted by eastern anglers. Berryman cites Paul Schullery describing this phenomenon as part of a dynamic national evolution and cross-pollination process of fly patterns (page 99).

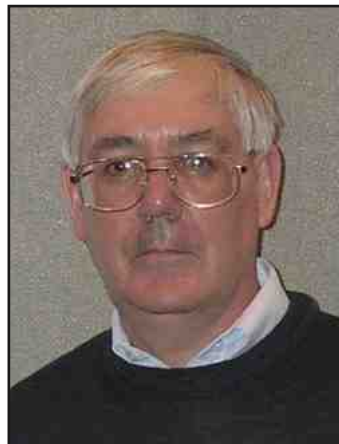
The British Columbian legends, interestingly, were immigrants who brought British fly-fishing traditions with them. The other legends were American; some were born in various parts of the Northwest, but most were transplants from various other places in the country. Perhaps the most revealing characteristic of these men was their camaraderie, both among those on their home rivers and with the legends and many other anglers on different rivers.

In 1993, Letcher Lambuth's library was donated to the American Museum of Fly Fishing, and one of the books nicely expressed such a shared and valued friendship. It is a copy of Haig-Brown's *The Western Angler*. On the fly leaf is a remarkable image of a rainbow trout and a poignant inscription by Tommy Brayshaw (see illustration on the previous page). On the reverse of that page is an attached photograph of a young Haig-Brown fishing, with his inscription to Lambuth.

The angling fraternity of the Northwest, inspired by these pioneers and legends, has increased our awareness of the beauty of their rivers as well as their intense desire to see that beauty preserved.

GERALD KARASKA  
LIBRARIAN

**Frederick Buller**, a retired London gunmaker, has spent most of his spare time during the last forty years researching angling history. In 2002 he was awarded the Country Landowners Association Lifetime Achievement Award for Services to Angling. He is the author of ten books, the most recent of which—*The Domesday Book of Giant Salmon*—was published by Constable (London) in 2007. His most recent contribution to this journal was "Ancient Hooks," which appeared in Spring 2006.



**J. Keith Harwood** teaches Latin and Greek at Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, an institution founded in 1554. He is a keen angler and fly dresser and is very much interested in the history of angling. He has contributed articles to a number of magazines. Harwood has recently published two books with Medlar Press, one on the history of the float (bobber), *The Float* (2003), and the other on the history of salmon flies, *The Hardy Book of Salmon Flies* (2006). His most recent contribution to this journal was "Thomas Bewick: Artist and Angler," which appeared in Fall 2006.

**Paul Schullery** was executive director of the American Museum of Fly Fishing from 1977 to 1982. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of about three dozen books, including several relating to fly fishing and fly-fishing history. His most recent books include *Cowboy Trout: Western Fly Fishing as If It Matters*; *The Rise: Streamside Observations on Trout, Flies, and Fly Fishing*; and *The Orvis Story: 150 Years of an American Sporting Tradition*. He was the 2006 winner of the Roderick Haig-Brown Award from the Federation of Fly Fishers.





# Museum News



Sara Wilcox

*Despite the inclement weather, a good time was had by one and all at the Manchester and the Mountains Chamber of Commerce holiday mixer, which was held at the museum on December 13.*

## Annual Membership Meeting and Trustee Meeting

The Annual Membership and Trustee meeting took place on Saturday, October 27, in Manchester, Vermont. Outgoing Board President Nancy Mackinnon, who began her term in 2006, was honored for her dedication and service to the museum.

The museum is pleased to announce the election of board member George Gibson to the post of board president. Two years ago, as a vice president, Gibson received the first Trustees Award for his outstanding service and commitment to overseeing the construction and completion of the museum's new gallery and archives. The board also elected James Heckman and Richard G. Tisch to vice-president posts.

After the meeting, the trustees and museum staff enjoyed a wonderful dinner at the Reluctant Panther here in Manchester. Thanks go to all of museum staff for preparing for the board meeting and setting up for the reception and dinner.

## Correction

Harry Peterson, author of "Helen Shaw: A Quiet Pioneer," which appeared in the Winter 2008 (vol. 34, no. 1) issue of the *American Fly Fisher*, has informed us that he misidentified the magazine where Shaw's husband, Hermann Kessler, was employed. Kessler was the art director for many years at *Field & Stream* magazine.

## 2007 Innkeeper Appreciation Party

The American Museum of Fly Fishing (AMFF), the Southern Vermont Arts Center (SVAC), and Hildene, the Lincoln family home, all hosted a reception on November 7 at SVAC to thank our local innkeepers for sending so many of their patrons to

## Upcoming Events

**May 21**  
Heritage Dinner honoring Joan Wulff  
Yale Club  
New York City

**May 30-31**  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
Manchester, Vermont

**June 1**  
*Ogden Pleissner: The Sporting Grand Tour*  
Opening of the exhibit at the American Museum of  
Fly Fishing  
Manchester, Vermont

**August 16**  
Fly Fishing Festival  
On the museum grounds  
Manchester, Vermont

**October 1**  
Third Annual Hack and Cast Tourney  
Rhode Island

**October 16-17**  
Seventh annual Friends of Corbin Shoot  
Location TBA

For more information, contact the museum at (802) 362-3300 or via e-mail at [amff3@amff.com](mailto:amff3@amff.com).

the museums and historic site. This was a chance for us to say thank you and to share news about our latest benefits for our friends in the lodging business.

During 2007, AMFF, SVAC, and Hildene offered a tri-ticket program via innkeeper membership to all three institutions. In return for the membership, inns could sell a group of three tickets (one each to AMFF, SVAC, and Hildene) to their guests at a reduced rate, which promoted increased attendance for all. The lodging property would realize a profit from the sale of the tickets, and the guests would have discounted admission. The inns received multiple copies of the *American Fly Fisher* and a link on the websites of all three institutions.

The program was a success, with more than twenty-five local inns, motels, and hotels participating. This year we have added a level for smaller inns and bed-and-breakfasts to participate. Everyone was encouraged to sign up for another year. The evening reception was well attended, and drinks and hors d'oeuvres were enjoyed by all.

## Museum Happenings

December 2007 was a busy month at the American Museum of Fly Fishing! Our facility was host to several functions as we opened our doors to many people in the community for meetings and gatherings.

On two consecutive Friday evenings, November 30 and December 7, the museum was the venue for the annual Historic Inns of Manchester cocktail party. We welcomed more than thirty people who signed up to stay at one of several inns in the area for the weekend. Their package included lodging, the cocktail party at the museum, a sleigh ride in the mountains, and a dinner at Bistro Henry, a local restaurant. The propri-

etors each brought hors d'oeuvres and beverages to share. The participating inns were the Inn at Manchester, the Manchester Highlands Inn, the Wilburton Inn, and the Inn at Ormsby Hill. Everyone enjoyed themselves and said that our gallery and gift shop was the perfect setting for a holiday event.

Bright and early on December 7, we hosted the annual holiday party for the local Northshire Nonprofit Network. The NNN is a collaborative group of nonprofits in southwest Vermont who meet on a monthly basis to share ideas on specific topics and network for the mutual benefit of each organization.

On a snowy Thursday evening, the building was lit up like a Christmas tree as local business people converged on the museum for the December 13 Manchester and the Mountains Chamber of Commerce holiday mixer. The snow wasn't a deterrent for those die-hard people who love to get together and share business tips, network, and generally catch up with each other. This was our chance to shine, and the museum was decked out with poinsettias, wreaths, and sparkling lights. We gave a door prize, had a few drinks and hors d'oeuvres, and even dug a few cars out of the snow! We hope next year brings as many groups to our door.

## Recent Donations

Trustee **Woods King** of Moreland Hills, Ohio, recently donated eleven rods to the museum: a 9½-foot, three-piece, 6½-ounce Thomas Special salmon rod; a 12-foot, three-piece, 15-ounce Thomas Special two-handed salmon rod; a 12-foot, three-piece F. E. Thomas two-handed salmon rod; an 8-foot-4-inch, two-piece, 5-weight graphite L. L. Bean Double L; a 7-foot, two-piece Usulan five-strip cane spinning rod; an 11½-foot, three-piece F. E. Thomas Special two-handed salmon rod; an 8½-foot, two-piece, 4½-ounce Thomas Special; a 7-foot, two-piece Rodcraft model 133; a 9-foot, three-piece unmarked rod; a 7½-foot, two-piece F. E. Thomas Special; and a 9-foot-2-inch, three-piece unmarked bamboo rod. He also sent us a 37-inch leather rod tube.

Trustee **Jim Hardman** of Dorset, Vermont, gave us a 10-foot, three-piece, ca. 1893 Leonard rod, with tube. **John Decaro** of Maine donated a pair of women's sporting boots made sometime between 1880 and 1910 (used for all types of outdoor activities, including fishing). And **Rhey Plumley** and **Sheila Reid** of South Burlington, Vermont, sent us a DVD titled *Figuring Out Fly Fishing: Trout*.

Former volunteer **Joe Pizarro** of Rutland, Vermont, donated an extensive fly collection in thirty-eight fly boxes. **Dr. Charles Greenhouse** of White Plains, New York, gave us a collection of 151 flies, including some tied by Charles DeFeo, Bob Jacklin, Ralph Graves, and Irv Lacy.

**Joan Wulff** of Lew Beach, New York, donated several periodicals that contained articles by or about Lee Wulff: the August 1938 *National Sportsman*, the July/October 1986 *Rod & Reel*, the January 1938 *Ashaway Fishing News*, and the January 1978 *Sports Afield*. She also gave us several brochures: two about Lee Wulff films, one with Lee Wulff advertising Newfoundland vacations, one called "Plan a Trip to Newfoundland," one about fishing in Newfoundland, and one about Lee Wulff. She sent copies of two advertisements: "The Lee Wulff Salmon Tailer" and one about hunting and fishing in Newfoundland. She also gave us a catalog titled "Lee Flies & Fly Kits." And she donated a photograph of herself giving a casting demonstration at a St. Louis sportsmen's show.

**John Feldenzer** of Roanoke, Virginia, sent us two copies of the Fall 2005 issue of the *American Fly Fisher* signed by baseball great Bobby Doerr, with photographs of Doerr signing each copy. That issue of the journal featured Feldenzer's article, "Of Baseball and Bamboo: Bobby Doerr, Ted Williams, and the Paul H. Young Rod Company."

## BACK ISSUES!

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Back issues are \$4 a copy.

To order, please contact Rebecca Nawrath at (802) 362-3300 or via e-mail at amff3@amff.com.



# Honoring Joan Wulff



The Heritage Award Dinner Committee  
and the Board of Trustees of  
the American Museum of Fly Fishing  
cordially invite you to participate in our  
2008 Heritage Award dinner celebrating

Joan Wulff

Wednesday, May 21, 2008, at 5:30 p.m.

in New York City  
at the Yale Club

RSVP: Rebecca Nawrath  
(802) 362-3300 • amff3@amff.com  
AMFF • PO Box 42 • Manchester, VT • 05254  
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# Welcome, Catherine Comar

Tim Delisle



*The museum's new executive director, Cathi Comar, during a trip to Jeffrey's, Newfoundland, in August 2007. This picture of Cathi, her sons Chase and Shane, and their good friend Maki was taken on the St. George's Bay shoreline near the Crabbes River.*

IT IS WITH pleasure and considerable excitement that the museum board of directors and staff welcome Catherine Comar as the new executive director of the American Museum of Fly Fishing. Cathi officially assumed her new responsibilities in January.

Cathi served as director of collections management for the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont, for the past ten years. The Shelburne enjoys a superb reputation as a large and well-run facility just south of Burlington. They enjoy 22,000 square feet of storage and exhibit space in thirty-nine buildings, attracting worldwide attention and respect. Cathi was responsible for the collections management staff and all associated activities, including Shelburne's networked collections database, photographic documentation, exhibition development and installation, coordination of mutual support and loan arrangements with sister museums, and financial budgeting of projects supported by federal grants, foundations, and individual donors. Cathi also curated the well-received exhibition *Simple Beauty: Paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe*, the first Vermont exhibition featuring this American artist.

Cathi's past affiliations include the New Jersey Historical Society, the South Street Seaport Museum in New York City, and the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. She received her formal education at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Cathi brings a wealth of experience and capability to the museum at a time when we are expanding and embarking on new programs and activities. She will hit the ground running: continuing preparations for reaccreditation, overseeing the opening of the Ogden Pleissner exhibit in June, and supporting the ongoing efforts for full computer inventory, Internet access and documentation, financial resources, and the whole spectrum of member benefits and services. She has the strong support of the museum board and staff.

Cathi replaces the departing executive director, Bill Bullock, who is fulfilling a lifelong goal of teaching at a private school in Massachusetts. Bill brought a new professionalism and enthusiasm to the museum during his two-year tenure. We thank him for his significant contributions and wish him well in his new duties.



## The American Museum of Fly Fishing

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THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING, a nationally accredited, nonprofit, educational institution dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of fly fishing, was founded in Manchester, Vermont, in 1968. The museum serves as a repository for, and conservator to, the world's largest collection of angling and angling-related objects. The museum's collections and exhibits provide the public with thorough documentation of the evolution of fly fishing as a sport, art form, craft, and industry in the United States and abroad from the sixteenth century to the present. Rods, reels, and flies, as well as tackle, art, books, manuscripts, and photographs, form the major components of the museum's collections.

The museum has gained recognition as a unique educational institution. It supports a publications program through which its national quarterly journal, the *American Fly Fisher*, and books, art prints, and catalogs are regularly offered to the public. The museum's traveling exhibits program has made it possible for educational exhibits to be viewed across the United States and abroad. The museum also provides in-house exhibits, related interpretive programming, and research services for members, visiting scholars, authors, and students.

### JOIN!

Membership Dues (per annum)

Associate	\$40
International	\$50
Family	\$60
Benefactor	\$100
Business	\$200
Patron	\$250
Sponsor	\$500
Platinum	\$1,000

The museum is an active, member-oriented nonprofit institution. Membership dues include four issues of the *American Fly Fisher*. Please send your payment to the membership director and include your mailing address. The museum is a member of the American Association of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History, the New England Association of Museums, the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance, and the International Association of Sports Museums and Halls of Fame.

### SUPPORT!

As an independent, nonprofit institution, the American Museum of Fly Fishing relies on the generosity of public-spirited individuals for substantial support. We ask that you give our museum serious consideration when planning for gifts and bequests.