

FISHING

Being brought up in the country I was soon interested in fishing and started with coarse fishing for perch in the mill pond at Cockhaise Mill Farm.

We had two lakes in the estate. One about two acres with a boathouse, and the other below Latchetts of about one acre. I soon got interested in trout fishing in these lakes.

In April 1950 my mother, father, Jim Swinley and I went to Ireland for a salmon-fishing holiday. We fished the Blackwater at Lismore and at Ballynahinch in Connemara. We had no success with salmon but lots of fun with small brown trout averaging a half a pound.

Later that year in August we had a family holiday at The Peacock, a famous fishing inn, at Rowsley in Derbyshire. This was fishing the Wye and the Derwent with 6 rods fishing six miles of river, rotating beats each day. My fishing record book says I caught 42 rainbow trout of between 7" and 11".

After my marriage to Rebeka we went to live on the outskirts of Londonderry as my ship H.M.S. Loch Ruthven was based there.

We had a holiday touring some of Ireland and stayed at the Pontoon Bridge Hotel at Foxford on the river Moy.

Here I caught my first salmon, a fine fresh 10lb fish.



My next experience was when Loch Ruthven visited Haagusund in Norway and we had a day on the famous River Etna. Two fish were caught by our party which ate very well. I did not personally catch anything.

I left the Navy in February 1958 and came to live at Latchetts and again began to enjoy a little trout-fishing in the lakes.

From 1979 to 1986 all the Hardys and the Lewis had superb holidays in Scotland. Most of them were at Cambusmore Lodge on the River Fleet near Dornoch. We used to take the cars on the overnight sleeper to Perth and drive on from there. The estate was owned by Ralph Abel-Smith, a single man aged about 40. It consisted of moors, lochs and the river Fleet with a small tributary, the River Carnaig with a fish ladder built by my ancestor Laurence Hardy in 1888.

Most years we went in August but one year we had the first week in September when there was a nice run of summer grilse. I caught five grilse ranging in size from 4 to 6lb. I was using a single handed 10' rod and size 14 flies.

We also had the Gledhill beat on the River Carron where we sometimes went. I caught a couple of fish there.

The backwater on the Fleet contained many sea-trout of all sizes and I used to spend hours there and kept the house well supplied with fish of ½lb to 4lb.

The Erriff 1984 to 2005



16/09/2016

I had been looking for some more serious fishing and in 1984 was invited to join Dr Francis Briggs, his wife Dot and Stephen Hurry to fish the River Erriff in Co. Galway. This was the start of a long and fruitful 22 years of enjoyment.

There is a photo album containing lots of fascinating pictures of the cottage where we stayed and of the wonderful scenery and views.

On one occasion when the weather was no good for fishing I climbed up the 3000' hill behind beat one and took photos of the whole river with a telephoto lens.

The first few years we went it was a long journey driving up to Holyhead and crossing to Dublin (Dun Laoghaire) arriving at about 0500. We disembarked and drove for a while before stopping for a cooked breakfast by the side of the road using a little calor gas stove!

Later on we changed to crossing from Swansea to Cork on an overnight trip arriving in Cork at 0700 and driving about five hours to get to the Erriff. On the way we stopped at Gort and stocked up with food for self catering in the cottage.

In the last four years we flew from Gatwick to Shannon, hired cars and drove the 100 miles to the Erriff. Flying restricted our luggage and so we were always overweight, but often got away with it!

Over these years I caught 116 grilse ranging in size from 1lb to my best of 15lb.

16/09/2016



1st July 2003
The River Erriff Co. Galway, Eire
Beat 6
The run to the Colonel's pool.
A lovely fresh 14lb Salmon, my best ever fish.

16/09/2016

The Morphie Beat on the North Esk 1991-2005

In 1991 Francis Briggs, Ian Watt and I bought a 30 year time share for week 6, usually the last week in March, on the North Esk.

This is/was a lovely spring salmon river with very good runs of salmon ranging in size from 6lb to 20lb.

The first year we went up by overnight sleeper on the Saturday and stayed at the Glen Esk Country Club which had its own golf course.

The second and third years we stayed at a hotel about eighteen miles south which meant longer drives. It was a rather gloomy place but did have a nice bar with one hundred and eleven different malt whiskies! I didn't try them all!

Then we moved to Balnakewan House owned by Peter and Helen Swire. It was very comfortable and the food was good but as we had to be in for dinner by 7.00 pm we found it restrictive and moved to a Bothy at the mouth of the river. It used to be fishermen's cottages and had been converted to bed and breakfast accommodation, and was much cheaper. A week there cost.

We always ate out in the evening and discovered several superb restaurants within 45 mins drive where we could eat very well for about half the cost in Sussex. It also had an excellent chippie which had won an award for being the best one in the UK; £8.00 for fish and chips bread and butter and a Guinness!

There is a small album of photos of the Morphie beat.

There were three other rods and the river was divided into six mini beats, changing sides at lunch time. The top beat at the Morphie dam was the most productive.

Lunch was in a good hut with a stove. We used to shop before going to the river, usually at Morrisons, 1.00pm to 2.00pm was 'de rigeur'.

The fields on either side of the river are planted with daffodils and the sight of the pickers bending over for hours made my back ache in sympathy! In later years many of the pickers came from Lithuania.

My annual catches varied from 0 to 10 and totalled 32 over the 15 years.

I had one fantastic day when I caught four very quickly before lunch and after changing banks caught four more, much to the frustration of the rod fishing opposite me who caught nothing.

It is a bigish river and we use 15 foot two handed rods and a spinner in very high water.

In 2005 a ban on keeping fish was enforced. This is to try and preserve the spring salmon run, but as the nets catch far more than the anglers it is very frustrating. One of the pleasures of being a 'hunter/killer is to eat what one has caught. Many of the fish I caught were smoked when I got home by Springs at Edburton.

CANADA _ SEPTEMBER 2002

Rebeka and I visited Peter, Diana, Charlie and Sam at their house in Mississauga, Toronto. While Rebeka and Diana went to the Toronto Church for a four day conference, I flew up to New Brunswick to fish the River Miramichi.

There are some excellent pictures in a photo album.

I stayed in a log cabin with an amazing wood burning stove. It was very cold at night but got warm during the day so I was shedding clothes as the temperature rose. I had a very nice ghillie who drove me to the beat and advised me on what flies to use.

I also met two very nice Americans in the restaurant and teamed up with them for two days.

We were only allowed to keep one fish for each four day's fishing. Once a fisherman had kept a fish he was not allowed to fish any more at all.

I caught five fish in all and kept the last one which I caught in the last hour.

The home beat by the Lodge had about six rods fishing it. One started at the top and worked down to the bottom and then went back to the top.

Some of the fish we caught were kept and taken away by the fishery bailiff to be stripped of their eggs for a hatchery.

16/09/2016

**A RECORD OF FISH I CAUGHT ON THE ERRIFF,
THE NUMBERS CAUGHT BY OUR PARTY,
AND THE SEASON'S TOTAL FOR THE RIVER
FROM 1984 to 2005**

YEAR	L.C.H.	PARTY	SEASON	COMMENTS
1984	1	15		LCH 1 WEEK
1985	1	21		LCH 10 DAYS
1986	5	51		
1987	5	48	640	
1988	8	55	971	
1989	3	10		
1990	5	29		
1991	2	16		
1992	5	17		
1993	13	51		
1994	14	28		
1995	4	12	662	
1996	5	7	288	
1997	0	14	452	LCH 1 WEEK
1998	7	14	592	
1999	3	18	575	
2000	4	20	527	L.C.H. 10 DAYS
2001	10	21	552	ALAN BRIGGS 1WK
2002	8	12	508	ALAN, ADRIAN 1WK
2003	3	7	292	
2004	1	6	293	ALAN 1 WEEK
2005	3	4	256	V.FEW FISH
TOTAL	116	492		

References:-

Photo Albums of River Erriff

Fishing diaries covering Erriff and Morphie in
Red note books.