

The new Millennium dawned and the year was set to be a very busy one for the Society, but as it drew to a close great sadness befell both the Society and the Angling world itself.



The Bridge at Wolvercote with the Peter Stone Memorial Plaque (above)

The Millennium and Beyond

We were to lose two great anglers who had been part of the Society from the very beginning.

We received confirmation that the Stillwater fishery at the centre of the barbel stocking row had in fact obtained section 30 consent for the introduction of 3500 barbel between 6 and 10 inches long, so much for the claimed monsters! Billy Makin was the master of hype.

But the big issue on everyones lips was the looming threat to the closed season, every barbel angler's worst nightmare.

At the NEC show Chris Yates was busy collecting names in a little book while he manned the Medlar Press stand, I remember mentioning to him at the time that it was a good idea but needed to be carried out

on a much bigger scale. Fred was with me at the time and we rang David Hallet who was coming to the show the next day and we asked him to print out lots of proper petition forms, and that is how the Barbel Society's close season campaign began.

We were already working

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hard behind the scenes rallying support but Mr Yates' idea prompted us to take this out to the much wider audience.

Fred really took the bull by the horns and set about the task of co-ordinating support from the thousands of river anglers across the country who totally opposed

the abolition.

The conference in May was another great success, excellent speakers as always but the highlight for everyone was the unexpected appearance of our esteemed President Peter Stone.

Peter was in very poor health but was determined not to let down his many

friends in the Society, he received a standing ovation as he gave an impassioned speech on maintaining the close season and there was more than just one with a tear in their eye.

Just prior to the start of the new season we put on a barbel show at Stapeley that attracted more new

members and plenty of signatures for the petition, which were now counted in the thousands.

With the help of other specialist groups, our petition contained over six thousand names and Fred and myself set off for London where we presented it to MAFF and then walked around the corner to take a copy to the House of Commons.

The hard work especially from Fred paid off, and it was a great day when an official Parliamentary letter dropped through the letterbox confirming the news that the close season was safe.

It just shows what can be achieved when anglers are well organised and get behind a campaign, we didn't do it on our own, but we certainly played a major part and river anglers

The Millennium and Beyond By Steve Pope

everywhere have acknowledged this.

On the regional front Mick Wood, Andy Orme, Chris Holley, Guy Robb, Stuart Morgan and Chris Lyons all took time out to share their wealth of experience with Society members.

We took on a beautiful stretch of the Bristol Avon at Pewsham that offered a real challenge to those who took a ticket, a big fish water, not easy but hugely satisfying when success arrives.

The committee once again went through a number of changes. Gordon stood down after completing issue number 9, he was now looking forward to putting his time and effort into the new guiding and teaching venture he had set up with his pal Martin Porter.

Martin Ford came on board bringing a journalists professional approach.

David Hallet handed over the merchandising to Phil Betteley, but kept on the brilliant job he was carrying

out with advertising and the conference. Pete Bailey lent a much-needed hand to Don as the fisheries really took off.

Mike Burdon was busy on our behalf attending meetings, keeping members informed and as always looking for help while explaining the ten points he was trying to address as R and C chairman. He even found time to design our new logo. For those who don't know Mike's talent as an artist meant he was always busy with commissions, but he always made time for his fishing and Society work.

At the beginning of the year we had a major fall out with the SACG, full details of which appeared in Barbel Fisher 10, this meant we held back from joining the newly formed SAA, a position we have maintained ever since.

We were still trying to get a website together but things just wouldn't fall into place.

On the junior side, more fish-ins took place and a



Peter Stone, Fred J and Peter Wheat at Conference

team of helpers was beginning to take shape.

But as I mentioned right at the start, as the year drew to a close the Society braced itself for some very sad news.

Gordon Scott a man who had been so instrumental in the Societies success, passed away very suddenly.

His death came as a complete shock to us all, and followed closely on the death of his beloved wife Barbara. Gordon was a broken man when Barbara who was his rock died, and he never

really had time to get over his tragic loss.

Then, the world of angling was united in mourning as we learnt of the death of the Gentleman of Angling, Peter Stone.

Peter was a true angling great loved and respected by all, his like will never be seen again and the Society will always owe a debt of thanks to Peter for his initial support and taking on the role of President.

So we entered 2001 saddened by the loss of two

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great friends but united in our resolve to move on.

We now had a bank balance in excess of twenty three thousand pounds and this strong financial base would enable the Society to embark on two unique missions that would bring it great credit.

Dave Burr had now taken on the role of editor and his first effort Barbel Fisher 11 was a wonderful moving tribute to Gordon. Some of the words from Gordon's many friends expressed powerful emotions that would have touched everyone.

In the same issue, there was a lively debate on the pros and cons of the Countryside Alliance and also details of Martin Salter's letter praising the vigorous campaign to keep the close season.

There is no doubt Gordon would have approved as Dave started on his mission to take the BS flagship to a new level.

As the season drew to a close Graham Elliot and members of the Anglersnet website arranged a fish-in to remember Gordon.

During the last months of his life Gordon had made a huge impact on Internet forums and the friends he made there just wanted to pay their own respects. Enough money was raised to purchase a bench seat together with a plaque and this can be found on the banks of the Severn at the Ketch, one of his favourite fishing spots.

The years conference at the Hanover was another great success, John Bailey, Jan Porter and John Baker all gave entertaining talks and the nostalgic forum of Fred J Taylor, Fred Buller, Peter Wheat and Fred Crouch evoked many memories from the distant past.

Looking down on proceedings, Stoney would have approved.

To keep Gordon's memory alive, we initiated the Gordon Scott Award to be presented each year to the person who had made the most significant contribution to the Society.

The committee had no hesitation in bestowing the first award to Phil Buckingham in recognition of his steadfast control of Society finances and sound ideas and recommendations, all of which had been a major reason for the Societies success.

Fred became President of the Society and Peter Wheat became Vice-President, Steve Hitch took over from Phil as Treasurer, Barry Norris at last managed his escape and this meant Phil's "retirement" was short lived as he became Secretary.

Barry became the Societies first honorary life member in recognition of his input to the Society.

The committee was going through its biggest upheaval to date.

David Hallett handed over the reigns on the advertising to John Smith, having put together a strong base for John to build upon.

We were fortunate to take on two new fisheries for the coming season, one on the Middle Severn at Upper Hampton and the other being the adjacent stretch to our Teme water.

The membership pack was at last completed and sent out to everyone, it took some time but we were pleased with the end result.

But our proudest moment came when the Peter Stone Tribute booklet was completed, a painstaking task came to fruition and the anecdotes and heart-warming stories from the many anglers who knew Peter showed the reader the depth of affection in which he was held.

Every member received a copy and the money raised from the sale of additional copies was destined for a



Phil Buckingham, first Gordon Scott Award recipient



Fred leaving Parliament after delivering close season documents



Trefor with two friends no longer with us, Stoney and Tom Cockfield

charity of Sue Stone's choice.

This was also the year of the Adams Mill saga and our involvement; or in reality our lack of it.

The facts of the matter were fully detailed in BF 13.

Martin Allen produced the first of the Swim Wild Swim Free newsletters, an excellent A4 production but one that proved to be too costly for us to maintain.

We met with the Environment Agency to discuss the Stillwater stocking situation and issued a joint statement, we were told that a study was ongoing and we would be kept fully informed, however we still await results.

By the end of the year the membership was holding up well with numbers around the twelve hundred mark, the bank balance had dropped to nineteen thousand, which was expected as we were starting to spend some money.

As 2002 kicked in, the big news for the Society was that our long awaited website finally hit the 'net.

It was worth the wait as Simon Asbury translated the piles of information we had given him into a very attractive and user friendly website. Simon instantly joined the committee in charge of Information Technology and we are in his debt for producing a site we

can all be proud of.

Sue Stone was a welcome guest to the conference in May, where she was presented with a cheque for two thousand pounds. This was the amount raised from sales of the Tribute magazine and Sue forwarded the money on to The Kennington Cancer Fund.

The conference itself was another winner with talks and slide shows from Dave Green, Paddy Webb, Fred

section and along with Neil Degg quickly got to grips and started organising junior events at different locations.

Keith Truscott was co-opted on to the committee and at the end of the year he became Secretary when Phil finally made the decision to retire from committee life after being with us from day one.

At the same time Dan Whitlock also became more

again Fred showed how persistent he could be, this time with the various councils and red tape.

This permanent memorial to The Gentleman of Angling from his many friends in the Barbel Society was to the best of my knowledge a first, and brought a feeling of immense pride to every member of the Society.

At the May conference along with speakers Pete

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Crouch and myself covering a wide range of barbel topics.

Andy Orme was recognised for his initial input to the Society when he received the Gordon Scott Award.

The Peter Stone Memorial fish-in, which we hoped would become an annual Society event, was held at Throop and was well attended.

There were more committee changes, Dave Johnson took over as Regional Co-ordinator, and Steve Boulton came on board as Assistant Membership Secretary to give John some much needed help. Phil Betteley took charge of the junior

involved fitting in Society work with the usual hectic schedule of any seventeen year old!

The regions were active with Stef Horak, Mick Wood, Trefor and Chris Ponsford all taking time out to entertain and inform Society members.

The magazine under Dave's watchful eye continued to improve, with some great interviews involving John Bailey and Matt Hayes filling the pages, while Fred developed his ideas regarding the barbel's senses.

Mike Burdon was in correspondence with English Nature regarding their stance on Sites of Special Scientific Interest, specifically the Hampshire Avon.

As the year drew to a close the membership numbers remained stable and with further expenditure the bank balance dropped to sixteen and a half thousand pounds.

On a bright April day in 2003 another event took place that brought great credit to the Society.

At last after many meetings, letters and telephone calls the Society installed the brass plaque on the bridge at Wolvercote to honour Peter Stone. Once

Reading, Jeremy Wade and Chris Ponsford we were privileged to be given the opportunity to auction Peter Stone's fishing tackle. The outcome of which was a substantial cheque for Sue and her grandchildren.

There was only one contender for The Gordon Scott Award and to a great reception Trefor West became the third recipient. Trefor's support for the Society since the first day has been immense and by bestowing the Award, the Society acknowledged his total commitment.

We started the season with two new fisheries, one on the Trent, and the other on the Swale.

Pete Bailey handed over the day to day running of the fisheries to Steve Hastie.

Martin Ford left the committee after making a huge impact and Dave Burr agreed to take on his role.

Not content with his workload Phil Betteley took over the newsletter and began to develop a more cost effective and up to date journal. Mark Fox took pity on Phil and took over the merchandise!

The Peter Stone fish-in was oversubscribed on the Wye, and those lucky enough to be there had a brilliant day.



Society stalwart Barry Norris

Lo and behold, in the press Des Taylor finally admitted that he agreed with our stance on Stillwater barbel, now if only he would help us in our quest to convince the other doubters.

Phil and his team organised a brilliant junior day at Beauchamp Court and as always Pete Drennan came up with lots of goodies for the youngsters.

We were all saddened by news of the death of Tom Cockfield who had been a Society stalwart from the beginning and was always willing to lend a hand as one of the army of unsung heroes.

Mike Bachini and Harry Green gave the membership an insight into how they run their very successful Cambridge-Bedfordshire region. And staying with the regions, Archie Braddock, Gary Knowles, Mick Dinnigan and Martin Bowler joined the regulars on the slideshow circuit.

After three years of expenditure the bank balance had fallen to eleven and a half thousand, it was now time to refill the pot.

So 2004 became the year for tightening belts and consolidation.

The year didn't exactly get off to a good start when Mike Burdon was forced to stand down due to his illness. Mike had been around from the start and had fought a massive battle on behalf of the Society on many issues.

His work for the Society cannot be overstated, he had a hand in every aspect of conservation that we became involved with, and all of us owe Mike a huge debt of thanks.

Pete Reading, one of the finest barbel anglers in the land agreed to take up the role Mike had made his own, and at the first opportunity he outlined his targets and with help from us all, Pete will meet those targets.

Paul Owens who had breathed new life into the Yorkshire region took over as Regional Co-ordinator and in newsletter 32 he gave a detailed account of how he set about transforming his own region.

The conference in May was well attended and talks by Mick Wood, Bob Roberts, Adrian Busby and Ian Welch gave the audience much food for thought.

As in the previous year there was only one man in contention for the Gordon Scott Award and watching Phil Betteley's face as the realisation dawned it was him will live forever!

The Peter Stone memorial fish-in was held on the Trent at Sutton.

Bernard Cornish now had his feet firmly under the table at committee meetings, producing the best minutes we have ever had.

We dropped Hill House and Upper Hampton from our fisheries portfolio.

Some of the regions were really buzzing; Graham Elliot, Dave Mason and Duncan Normanton joined the list of speakers.

Everything else was ticking over nicely, by the end of the year the bank balance was up by four thousand pounds, the membership had increased and we faced our tenth anniversary full of optimism.

Reaching the ten-year mark is a milestone and it is right to look back over the past decade and acknowledge everyone who has played a part and that includes every single person who has been a member during that time.

But it is also a time to look forward; the Society aims to be around for the next ten years and is fully equipped to meet the challenges of a changing scene.

If your passion is barbel fishing, whatever else you do make sure you join us for the ride!



Martin Ford, tremendous contribution to the Society



Sue Stone presented with cheque at Conference



We had some disagreements with them!