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A FISHERMAN'S REFLECTIONS

Peter Harvey

Peter Harvey has recorded in this book his practice and locations of fishing during the twentieth century. Increasing urbanisation, climate change, the attitude of the ruling classes towards the countryside and field sports will all have a profound effect on angling. Many of the situations which he has recorded have already disappeared; Shardiloes Lake, the scene of his first expeditions with his father; has dried up due to excessive abstraction from the River Colne.

His experience started with coarse fishing, proceeded to trout and finally was almost exclusively confined to salmon.

The first chapter gives a short history of the Thames at Cookham and an account of the fishing there in 1920s and 1930s. He then presents a picture of pre-war Scotland where much has changed in attitude. The chapter on the River Taw and The Fox and Hounds Hotel at Eggesford recalls a milieu which disappeared with the retirement of Ken Sharrock.

The latter half of the twentieth century has witnessed a steep decline in the numbers of salmon ascending our rivers. Three chapters have been devoted to its life history, management and fishing methods. His association with the Wye for over forty years has initiated an in-depth analysis of its catastrophic loss of salmon. Having fished the Hampton Bishop beat, made famous by J.A. Hutton, for twenty years he offers an updating of its history which is of significant interest.

A history of the Cotswold Fly-Fishers' Club gives an insight into the problems facing such an organisation of which there must be thousands in the United Kingdom.

Finally there are chapters on changes in tackle, environment and river control and one – simply – on some enjoyable days fishing.



Peter Harvey was born in 1921 at Cookham Dean in Berkshire and at the age of four moved down to live in Cookham Village. He lived there for thirty years on and off, with breaks at boarding school, war service in the R.A.F. and hospital training.

At eight years old he was packed off to boarding school, where he spent the next ten years, first at prep school and later Marlborough. There followed courses in Medicine and Dentistry at Guy's Hospital in London, broken by four years' service in the R.A.F. In 1952 he moved to Oxford and set up in General Dental practice.

As a boy he accompanied his father on most of his fishing expeditions and during the 1930s they went to Scotland twice a year, specifically to fish. The war put a stop to their fishing and after the war deterioration in his father's health precluded any more joint expeditions.

On moving to Oxford he joined the Oxford Alliance for coarse fishing and the Cotswold Fly-Fishers for trout. In the mid 1950s he started to fish for salmon, visiting the Taw at Eggesford, from the 1960s the Usk and Wye at various locations and during the last twenty years he has fished at Hampton Bishop.



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