

## YTHAN UPDATE

### **Bronie Burn Scottiesly Weir**

The Bronie Burn enters the Ythan at the very bottom of the ADAA Ardlethen Beat, the overall length of the Bronie and its tributaries is around 24 km.

The River Ythan Trust carried out habitat surveys of the whole Ythan catchment including the Bronie in 2012. During the survey we came across the old weir some 0.6 km upstream of the confluence with the Ythan.



### **Bronie Scottiesly Weir May 2012**

Our initial view was that the weir was a significant obstacle for upstream migration in low water levels possibly affecting around 97% of the Bronie catchment and needed to be investigated further.

### **Bronie Burn Scottiesly Weir Fish Passability Survey 2013.**

In order to establish the fish passability status of the weir, the River Ythan District Salmon Fishery Board commissioned the River Don Trust to carry out a survey. This was carried out by Jamie Urquhart, assisted by River Ythan Trust volunteers on 28/08/2013.



**Bronie Scottiesly Weir Survey 28/08/2013 (Water level at the SEPA gauging station in Ellon 0.718 metres.)**

#### FISH PASSABILITY ASSESSMENT 28/08/13

River Don Trust upstream passability (SNIFFER) assessment for the site.

Passability Scoring System.

- 0.0 – impassable.
- 0.3 – partial barrier high impact.
- 0.6 – partial barrier low impact.
- 1.0 - no barrier.

Adult Salmon.

- Low flows – 0.0.
- High flows - 0.3.

Adult Trout.

- Low flows – 0.0.

- High flows – 0.3.

Adult Lamprey/Juvenile Eel/Juvenile Salmonids.

- High flows – all 0.3.

From the above we concluded that this weir presented a very serious obstacle to salmon and trout upstream migration.

### **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Water Environment Fund.**

Since the weir was no longer used for commercial purposes (the lade from the top of the weir to the long defunct mill at Hillhead of Ardlethen was no longer in existence) we approached SEPA in 2013 to consider having the weir removed or modified to improve fish migration funded by the Water Environment Fund.

After many discussions and communications SEPA from 2013 – 2018 a site visit and meeting was held with SEPA's Restoration Specialists in May 2018 where it was accepted the weir was a partial obstacle to fish migration.

SEPA contracted cbec eco engineering in late October 2018 to carry out a feasibility study to provide options to improve fish passability.

To cut a long story short, cbec provided their report and engineering options in early March 2019. Due to difficulties in establishing legal ownership of the weir and delays caused by COVID 19, a contract for the "design and build" contract was not awarded until 2022 to McGowan Ltd of Aviemore.

The weir demolition and associated works affected around 340 metres of riverbed which had to be dewatered – the Bronie being diverted around the work area temporarily – the River Dee Trust were employed by McGowan Ltd to carry out a fish rescue before the project commenced on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2022. The fish found and returned to another section of the burn included 440 trout parr and fry, 450 salmon parr and fry, 50 eels, a number of lamprey and minnows.

The project was completed, apart from grass seeding, which will be carried out in spring 2023, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 – quite a remarkable achievement by McGowan Ltd – greatly assisted by the drought conditions experienced during the work period.



**Bronie Scottiesly Weir May 2012, looking downstream.  
(Note the location of the unused lade take-off on the left  
of the picture.)**



**Bronie Scottiesly Weir removed. (Jim Kerr)  
(Note the location of the old lade take-off on the left  
centre of the picture.)**



**General View of works. (Jim Kerr)**



**General View of Works. (Jim Kerr)**



**One of the several Large Wood Structures installed to improve the habitat for juvenile trout and salmon.**

**(Jim Kerr)**

**Conclusion.**

I hope the article shows how time consuming it can be to achieve the removal of a single weir. 2013 – 2022

Without the SEPA'S Restoration Specialists and the Water Environment Fund, the project could not have been carried out.

**Alec Paterson. River Ythan Trust.**