

# A DRAM TO SUPPORT THE SALMON

For too long rivers have had to rely on proprietors and board levies to fund their activities. Now a new business initiative by the Dalmore Distillery promises help for the “Big Four” rivers. *Ross Macdonald* reports



**I**N A BREAK with the all too familiar doom and gloom stories surrounding our wild fisheries, it is refreshing for me to have the opportunity to share something positive with *T&S* readers.

The Dalmore Rivers Collection was launched at Balmoral Castle in January. It is a new partnership between the “Big Four” rivers and The Dalmore single Highland malt whisky, which has the potential to generate a new and lasting source of funding for river enhancement projects.

The premise is simple. The Dalmore master distiller, Richard Paterson, has created four unique expressions of the Dalmore, each with its own taste notes and character, reflecting the different personalities and moods of the rivers. We have the Dee Dram, Spey Foundation Dram, Tay Dram and Tweed Dram.

Each bottle sold will generate a minimum of £4 for the respective rivers.

The project builds on the success of the Dalmore Dee Dram, created in partnership with the Dee Trust. The idea was formed and shaped by Jim Coates of the Dalmore, and Ken Reid of the River Dee Trust and, following some discussion between the trust and the Dalmore, a new special

STEPHEN HOWARD

Salmon and whisky: who would have thought?

## A DRAM TO SUPPORT THE SALMON *continued*

edition single malt was produced. The marrying of the two brands, in retrospect, seems painfully obvious. Salmon and whisky: who would have thought?

The Dee Dram clearly struck a chord. Anglers bought into the idea and the quality of the whisky ensured that their faith was rewarded with a product worthy of their investment. The full production, some way over 3,000 bottles, was sold out in nine weeks following the February 2010 launch. The Dee Trust received £35,000 with which it was able to unlock a similar amount of matched funds. This provided the means for the trust staff to open up 25 miles of spawning habitat that had been blocked off to salmon for many decades. On a river the size of the Dee this is a considerable increase in the river's spawning capacity.

The extension of the concept to the Spey, Tay and Tweed was a logical next step. The results so far are encouraging and the partnership between the Big Four and the Dalmore is expected to deliver significant resources directly to those who can do most with them.

The Rivers Collection is a

Removing barriers or adding fish-passes is a priority for the Tay Foundation.



### THE TAY

Dr David Summers of the Tay Foundation is clear on his priorities for the proceeds of the Tay Dram. "The funds will be used to try to unlock matched funds from SEPA's Water Environment Restoration Fund, which particularly targets man-made barriers to fish movement." He would like to remove barriers or install fish-passes on tributaries of the Isla, the Earn, the Tummel and on the main stem of the Almond. The easing of these barriers will either secure good fish passage or open up fresh spawning areas, resulting in greater numbers of smolts in the longer term.



Funds will be used to discover the impact of water diversions.



### THE SPEY

On the Spey, proceeds from the Spey Foundation Dram will contribute towards research projects aimed at enhancing the upper Spey.

Roger Knight, of the Spey Foundation, told me: "The headwaters of the Spey are significantly affected by water transfer. This includes major abstractions from Spey Dam by Rio Tinto Alcan and water from the Rivers Tromie and Truim (two upper Spey tributaries) being diverted into the Tay catchment by Scottish & Southern Energy, under the Tummel CAR Licence Scheme, to generate hydro-electricity. Over the past 70 years these water abstractions and diversions have had a significant impact on the ecology. The Spey Foundation will utilise the donations from this exciting partnership to conduct research which we hope will provide evidence of the impact of these water diversions and hence allow remedial actions."



business model. For too long salmon rivers have had to rely on proprietors and board levies to fund their activities; it has always been a tough ask and anglers, too, have done their fair share of fund-raising over the years. I think the beauty of this idea, and the key to its long-term success, is that is an initiative grounded in good business practice. The Dalmore brings with it the organisational clout and resources to develop the "Rivers" brand and to ensure it is widely publicised and properly marketed. Scotland's Big Four now have a strong and committed business partner that is in it for the long term.

But it remains an important concept and is an accurate expression of how our rivers and their respective communities function.

The sustainable development of the communities up and down the Big Four is inextricably linked to the health and vitality of the rivers themselves. Sustainable development is development that balances the needs of the economy, the environment and the community. I have always thought that salmon fishing is the epitome of sustainable development: a thriving river environment and strong habitat for salmon creates the bedrock for a fishery; the fishery attracts anglers and their patronage filters back into the local communities, in the form of jobs on the river and income for the local economy. It is a virtuous circle.

By channelling investment directly to the rivers, the Rivers Collection supports sustainable development. The Dalmore, in partnership with the river trusts and foundations, has bought into this idea in a meaningful way; it recognised something needed to be done to support the rivers and it took action. Certainly, the Rivers Collection will be good for business, but that is also part and parcel of sustainable development. This is an initiative that appreciates the long game; that understands the value of what we have; and that has a plan to do something to preserve and enhance it.

There are many, and varied, issues facing each of the rivers and each trust or foundation has a set of priorities for tackling them. The Rivers Collection will generate revenues which, as evidenced by Deeside, will go directly towards river improvements.

The rivers have agreed to transparency and will demonstrate what has been achieved with the money they receive. As anglers we will know what we are supporting and will be able to monitor the results. This level of transparency can only be a good thing. As time passes and projects are completed, the trusts or foundations will grow in confidence and can be more ambitious in their aims and the scale of projects they undertake.

I look forward to reporting on progress.

*Sláinte mhath!*

May 2011

### THE DEE

On Deeside Mark Bilsby has already benefited from the success of the Dee Dram.

"The funds generated by the sale of the Dalmore Dee Dram will be used to directly fund the easing of five obstructions to fish migration across the Dee catchment. The obstructions are either historic weirs that impede fish passage or are badly designed culverts and bridge aprons that completely block fish movements. We aim to seek match funding from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) River Restoration Fund and others to ensure that the money works harder to the benefit of the fish and the river.

Overall, approximately a further 25 miles of river and tributaries should be opened up.

"The second area that we are working on is tackling diffuse pollution with local farmers. Diffuse pollution in this context is the run-off of silt, sand and soil from nearby fields into tributaries, causing spawning grounds to become silted up and juvenile nursery areas to become smothered."



Key targets are easing obstructions and tackling diffuse pollution from fields.



The challenge is to understand better the fish populations.

### THE TWEED

Nick Yonge, director of the Tweed Foundation, anticipates that the Tweed Dram will help him and his team. Over the past 20 years the Tweed Foundation has done much to open up its waters to spawning migratory fish, improve habitats and establish the distribution of its fish species. This has been achieved through investments of the fishery owners with significant European and national aid.

"Now the challenge is to understand better the components of the Tweed's salmon and freshwater fish populations. The evidence so far is that each species has several stock components and it is the greater understanding of these which enables objective prioritisation and implementation of the most appropriate and effective management. The tools to do this include the genetic differentiation of the salmon, sea-trout and brown trout populations, where and when each spawns, which are robust and which are threatened. Increased depth of understanding about the stocks allows effective management decisions to be made."



## FACTFILE

[www.onlinespirits.co.uk/whisky/distilleries/the-dalmore-rivers-collection](http://www.onlinespirits.co.uk/whisky/distilleries/the-dalmore-rivers-collection)

TheDalmore.com has full details of where to buy... but here are some key ones:

Online: [www.onlinespirits.co.uk](http://www.onlinespirits.co.uk) Gordon & Macphail: 01343 545 111, [www.gordonandmacphail.com](http://www.gordonandmacphail.com)

London: Simon McKay, Friarwood Fine Wine, 26 New Kings Road, London SW6 4ST.

Tel: 020 7736 2628 Strachans of Aboyne: Station Square, Aboyne, 013398 86121



## EASTER BRUNCH

With AMANDA ROBIN

EGGY CRUMPETS, STUFFED WITH SMOKED SALMON, HERBS AND CREAM CHEESE, topped with extra smoked salmon and delicious buttery scrambled eggs.



I adore crumpets, toasted on an open fire, served with butter and lashings of golden syrup... however, this savoury recipe makes an unusual and delicious brunch. Quick and easy to prepare, the crumpets are soaked in egg which is absorbed and the extra buttery scrambled egg makes this into a delicious Easter brunch. Serves four, with two crumpets each.

### Ingredients

● 8 crumpets ● 7 large eggs ● 150 ml milk ● 1 tsp of dill ● 350g smoked salmon, sliced into strips ● 100g cream cheese ● 1 tblsp creme fraiche ● 2 spring onions, thinly sliced ● 1 tsp grain mustard ● 1 tblsp chopped coriander ● Salt and freshly ground pepper.

### Method

Place the crumpets in a large shallow dish. Beat the eggs and milk together and add the dill, season with salt and freshly ground pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the crumpets, and leave for at least 15 mins for the egg mixture to be absorbed into the crumpets. Turn the crumpets over one or two times.

In the meantime, place the cream cheese in a mixing bowl, add the thinly sliced spring onions, grain mustard, 1 tblsp of creme fraiche and 1 tblsp of the chopped coriander. Mix all the ingredients together. Season to taste. Then chop 150g of the smoked salmon into cubes, add to the cream cheese and carefully mix together.

In a small mixing bowl whisk the four remaining eggs together, season with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste.

Remove the crumpets and place on a chopping board and slice in half horizontally. Spread the cream cheese mixture equally over each bottom half of the egg crumpets then place the other half of the crumpet on top of the mixture to create a sandwich.

Heat a large frying pan and add some olive oil. When hot add the crumpets and cook for 3-4 mins each side until they become golden (you may have to fry the crumpets in two batches).

Place the remaining eggs in a hot pan with a large knob of butter, stir and keep stirring until the eggs are nicely scrambled, taking care not to overcook the eggs. Remove the pan from the heat.

Place the crumpets on a warm serving dish and place a tblsp of scrambled egg on top of the crumpets and add the strips of smoked salmon. For the final touch, decorate with a sprig of fresh coriander.

Best served with a steaming hot cup of freshly ground coffee or perhaps a cup of white tea. Or, if you are celebrating, a glass of sparkling wine goes down well!