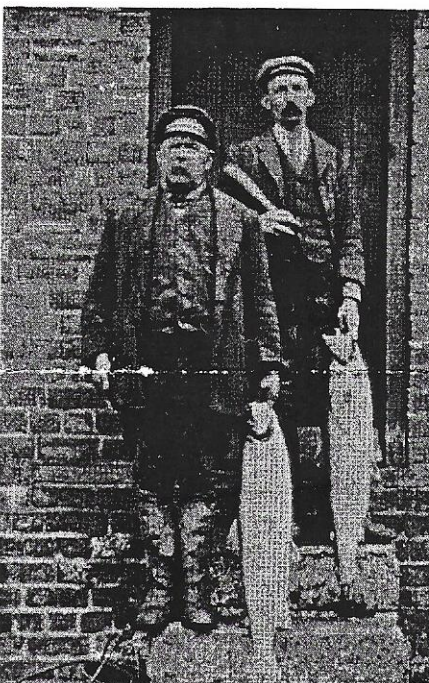
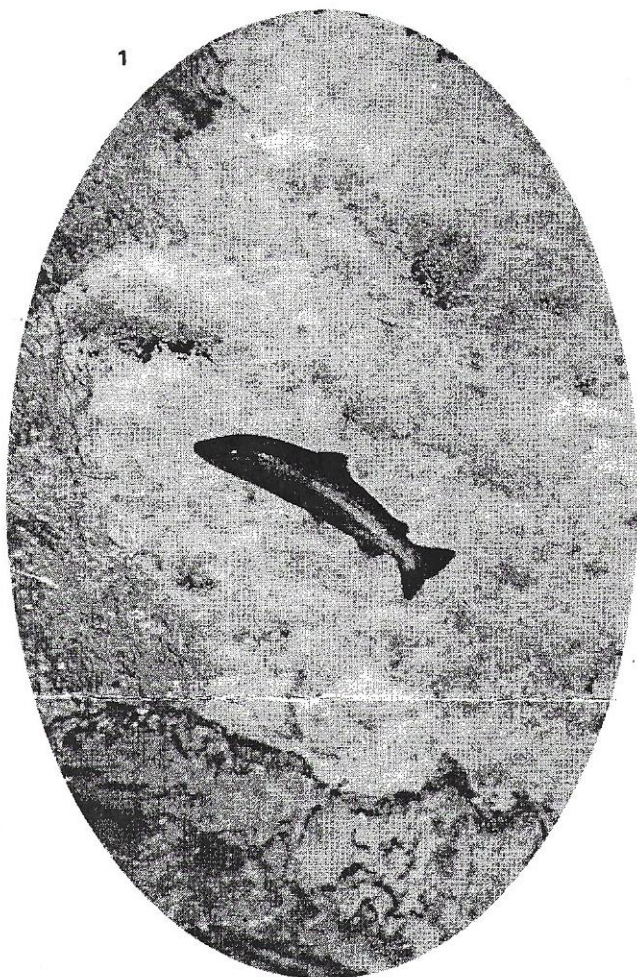


King Salmon ² may reign again in Yorkshire

by Arthur Oglesby



1 A sea trout jumping at Sleights weir on the Yorkshire Esk.

2 From a snapshot in the Naburn salmon netting records. The only caption - "1938". The main area of netting at Naburn was a few hundred yards downstream of the falls - which was a protected area.

3 Taken at Naburn, this undated photograph presumably shows Mr. Jim Leaf and Mr. A. Smith, each with a salmon.

4 A printed post card (postmark dated May, 1908) showing what is described as a white whale taken from the Ouse at Naburn.

5 The weir at Boroughbridge on the Ure. Salmon ladder is seen in the foreground.

6 Smolt trap at Mickley in construction.

TIME was when salmon was commonplace as food on the table. Legend has it that indentured apprentices and house servants signed contracts that, as a part of their deal, they would *not* get salmon served to them for more than a specified number of days per week.

Salmon, indeed, were so plentiful in the Middle Ages that there was barely a British river system which did not have more than adequate stocks. In early, pre-deep freeze times most meats and fish were preserved by the age-old method of salt preservation. Some were additionally smoked and it seems highly likely that few people knew or cared about the vast difference between fresh-run salmon and the stale, spent kelt. It all looked like salmon and one can imagine the indignation of those apprentices and servants if they were given too much salted

kelt. Where was the newly-hung home-fed beef; the succulent grass-fed lamb and the less-expensive home-cured ham? Small wonder that salmon kelt became the principle food of the proletariat and the common man. It was there for the mere taking. No husbandry was involved and the fish, in their thousands, could be extracted by the simple methods of netting and spearing.

All this, of course, was before the Industrial Revolution brought extra prosperity - albeit through hard work - to most of the working classes. It was a period in history when the bulk of endeavour was given to industrial expansion without a thought to consequent offences against the environment. Many rivers were used as open sewers. In a country where rainfall had never been a problem there was continual fresh water in abundance. Why bother about

water purification and its attendant expense? Nature would take care of everything.

That was, of course, until something went drastically wrong. Many rivers became so polluted that they could no longer sustain fish or insect life. Water for drinking purposes became increasingly hard to acquire. Almost overnight, it seemed, that vast national resource - pure water - was about as hard to find as an honest politician.

Varying types of fish have differing requirements from their natural environment. Some, such as eels, can tolerate a certain amount of pollution and low levels of dissolved oxygen. Others, like trout, salmon and grayling - all members of the family *salmo* - need to be found in the sparkling upland streams where pure rain-fad or spring water cascades over rock and limestone to keep it continually

charged with the life-giving oxygen. Some species of the family *salmo* - such as salmon and sea trout - are known as anadromous fishes. This means that they have the ability to survive in both fresh and saline waters and to make the necessary migrations between the two. It is on these migratory fish that pollution has had its greatest effect.

Most upland rivers are as pure as they were before the word pollution appeared in the English language. In the water of their birthplace, young salmon, sea and brown trout had little cause for concern about basic water chemistry and attendant oxygen levels. A lack of food in this environment, however, is undoubtedly what drove many downstream to seek whatever fortune might come their way. That salmon and sea trout find the bulk of their diet in the sea is