



For those of you that don't follow the Dundee Courier you will have missed the recognition at the press awards on the paper's excellent article earlier this year: Shaped by a river - Tales of the Tay.

It basically covered people and companies that have worked closely along the 117 mile stretch of the silvery river. Being a long-time Courier reader, I must say that I eagerly consumed all the content, images and videos which kept me glued to it for weeks. The history too was fascinating as was information from local people both young and old.

As Wildfowlers, most members will appreciate how lucky we are to be living next to 11 miles of the longest continuous reed bed in the UK (or maybe not so lucky if your inexperience meant that your shot duck came down 10 metres into the thick of it!).

Seemingly they were first planted by Monks around 16th/17th century and added to in the 18th century by Napoleonic troops who were housed in Perth prison and let out on a day release basis to help maintain and harvest the crop which was used for various commercial reasons. I bet there were a few sick notes put

in on some of those days! It was back breaking work - or maybe being out in the fresh air was something to look forward to for the prisoners?

In more modern times the reeds were managed by a 10-man team and 2 machines. Unfortunately, as time moved on cheaper alternatives arrived on the scene and around 2006/7 the commercial cutting of the reeds came to an end.

I am no Biologist so finding out details like 3x the height of the reeds are under the surface and the growth speed can be 3ft in a day was indeed a bit mind blowing. Seeds from the reeds have also been planted on the Forth estuary around Grangemouth and Loch Leven.



Now the RSPB and landowners manage 3000 to 4000 Hectares - cutting around 10 to 15 Hectares. Harvest time is short and lasts between December to mid-April. Special species include Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit, Water Rail and of course Wildfowl and Waders, not forgetting lots of other birds, mammals, and plant life.



To follow on from the Tay reed beds obviously the salmon fishing played a big part on the history of the river. Way back in time people came from various parts of Scotland to work on the many netting stations staying in the bothies next to the river. Owned by PD Malloch from approximately 1899 to 1996 the Tay salmon fisheries company was reckoned to be the largest netting station in the world. Thousands of wild salmon went from Perth to Billingsgate fish market in London. As time went on the numbers started to decline and with the 1990s fish farm boom the netting stations came to a gradual end.

Ghillies, Bailliffs, Biologists, Scientists, the Almond hatchery, the rivers only traditional cobble builder and lifeboat crews are only some of the people working hard behind the scenes. Not forgetting some young and enterprising new businesses that are ensuring the river remains a place for the next generation to come and continue enjoying.

Check out Shaped by a River – Tales of the Tay online via <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/tay/>

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