

ARTHUR CECIL HARRISON

THIS issue of PISCATOR is noteworthy because it is the hundredth number. Even more memorable is the fact that it is the hundredth issue produced by that remarkable person Arthur Cecil Harrison, who has guided the destinies of this Society since its beginning in 1931, as secretary, editor of PISCATOR, and general mentor to the members of the society. There can be few fishing societies, or indeed any kind of societies that have had one secretary and editor for forty-six years. "A.C." is probably the only surviving founding member of the Cape Piscatorial Society. This hundredth issue provides an opportunity to pay homage to him and to express our gratitude to him.

In my book, *Tales of a Trout-Fishing Duffer*, which is dedicated to "A.C.", I also paid tribute to him, but here I would like to go further, and look back on his life. There can be few members of the society who are not personally indebted to him as I am. When I started trout-fishing over twenty years ago, it was "A.C." who told me where to go, what to do, and how to do it. He was endlessly patient, always interested, and unfailingly helpful. My one regret is that I never had the privilege of fishing with him.

"A.C." was born in Crouch End in London, in 1890. He says he started fishing "as soon as they would let me", which was at the age of about eight. Like John Ridd in *Lorna Doone*, his first fish were roach and later bream, caught in ponds at Highgate and Hampstead, and Welsh Harp, Hendon. As a small boy too he did some sea fishing from boats and piers. Since then he has done a good deal of sea fishing both in England and the Cape. In fact, the largest fish he ever caught was a 70,76 kilo shark in Smitswinkel Bay. It was only in 1919 after World War I that he started trout-fishing and that was at the Eerste River in the Cape.

Few people have had as wide experience as "A.C." In England he has fished in the Norfolk Broads and Dorset; in Wales in the Dee and Conway and the Teifi; in Perthshire in tributaries of the Tay, Isla and the Water of Dean. His South African experience is very wide indeed. He has fished all the streams in the Western Cape; in the Eastern Province he has fished the Kingwilliams Town reservoirs, and at Maclear, Ugie, Mount Fitcher; in the East Griqualand area at Matabele, Cedarville, Kokstad and Bizana. In Natal he has fished most of the rivers in the Mooi River, Himeville and Underberg areas, and in Lesotho, the Tsoclike River. Even saying this, I have left out still-waters like Groenvlei and the trout dams of the Cape and Natal. It is indeed unlikely that there is any other angler who has such a wide knowledge of South African fresh waters.

I once asked him which was his favourite Western Province river, and he told me it was the Dwars at Groot Drakenstein. He fished it regularly for years and came to know it intimately. "The lure of the river," he said, "was the large brown trout in certain deep, narrow runs, and open pools," although rainbows were plentiful. It was, however, in the Junction Pool of the Berg River that he caught his largest trout, a brownie of 6 lb. (2,72 kg.) on January 18, 1930. (PISCATOR No. 31, p. 87.)

"A.C." believes that "the fly does not much matter in this country as long as the angler has faith in it". His own favourite is the Invicta which he has tied with his own variations in sizes 10 and 12 (old scale), and which he has used everywhere in South Africa, including wingless Invicta nymphs. For dry-fly he has always used Ginger or Red Quill.

But "A.C." has been much more than an angler. He is an extremely knowledgeable naturalist, an amateur but scholarly ichthyologist. When the University of Cape Town conferred the honorary degree of Master of Science on him in June 1960, the University Orator, Professor D. V. Cowen, said of him: "Calmly, industriously, unostentatiously, for more than 50 years, Mr. Harrison has enriched the world of learning as a freshwater biologist and piscatorial expert. His list of scholarly publications on trout, bass, eels, the kurper, and many exotic fishes is long and impressive." (PISCATOR No. 49, p. 41.)

After mentioning that "A.C." served for more than 20 years as the Advisory Officer for Cape Inland Fisheries, Professor Cowen said that, "throughout his professional life he has striven to conserve and safeguard the living beauty of nature from man's destructiveness; and since 1952 he has been secretary to the Advisory Committee for Nature Conservation. Such men . . . who seek to keep alive our awareness of nature in an industrialised world are rare."

Few of us realise how indebted we are to "A.C." for the sacrifices he has made for all anglers. Much of his time—in fact most of his time—has been spent in making river surveys, and in the introduction of bass; these activities limited his fishing time which was restricted to specimen fishing. All this time was devoted to improving angling for others. This is typical of his generous nature.

Younger members of the society are probably unaware that "A.C." served in the South African forces during World War I and was wounded at the Battle of Delville Wood.

I have always had the greatest admiration for "A.C.'s" ability to write simply and most effectively, and all his writings, whether scholarly or reminiscent, have a superb literary quality. His article, *Two January Days—a Contrast*, which he regards as his favourite fishing reminiscence, is a model of its kind, and an example to all aspiring anglers. (PISCATOR No. 50, pp. 107-110.)

There can be few people who have met "A.C." whose lives have not been enriched; his direct but courteous manner, his dry sense of humour, his encyclopaedic knowledge of nature and fishing, and his human and humane wisdom are but a few of the qualities which make those who know him realise they have been in the company of a very unusual individual; one of those rare human beings whose personality makes an indelible impression on one's memory. Long may he prosper and long may we enjoy his advice and his company!

FRANK R. BRADLOW.