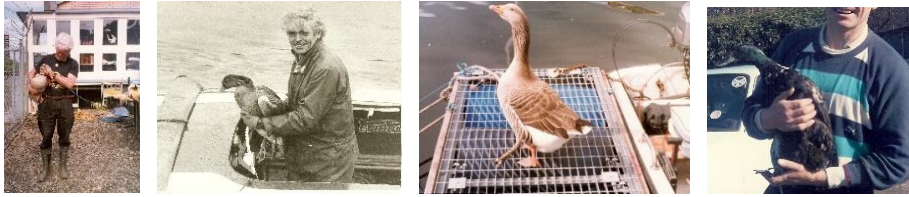


# TALES OF THE RIVERMAN 155 Geese



The first. "Gertrude" and then "Green Boy"

The first goose I rescued we named it Gertrude. It followed me around. I took them for walks. Gertrude was heavy and kept getting stuck on the ice during winter and I had to keep freeing her. Another couple of geese joined Gertrude courtesy of river incidents. We fed them and laid straw for them. They were still free to come and go as they pleased. They were joined by about 20 geese ex distillery guard geese. The only water these guard geese had seen was the water in their drinking troughs, but they took to the river like ducks. It was interesting watching the different types of geese learning to accept each other, the swans, ducks, mink, all the creatures learning to live together. I did get a couple of goose eggs (lovely) but they quickly learned to nest well out of sight of marauding animals like foxes. The "rescued" geese soon numbered close to 40. We also had a couple of goslings born on the slipway, little balls of yellow. My family gave the geese daft names and we had "Wheelbarrow" "Loud boy" "Gustaf" "Josie". I would take a trailer and collect food, but soon the public "adopted" the geese, and they were being well looked after. The public loved the geese, and we even had mini-busloads of children being brought down to see and feed them. It was quite amusing to see a City Gent stand on the viewing platform on his way to work in the morning, unwrap the lunch that no doubt his wife had lovingly made up for him, and feed it to the geese. Letting the geese get to know me was easy.; forby the fact that they came rushing when you produced food, I find that if you just really ignore animals when you are working, but talk to them as you pass by, they come to accept you; I think they get to know my voice. They become nosy. They would follow me into the boathouse, they would swim up to the clubs to get fed by the rowers, they lay back and enjoyed the heat when we had sunshine. They were a highlight for visitors when we had events in the park. They seemed quite at home listening to the music, BBC Proms, Transmit, Flutes, Bagpipes

and drums, and the only time they swam off upriver was during a concert when Marlon Manson played. They did not seem to like his music.



The Years passed and the geese got old and through age and one or two other mishaps, by 2014 we were down to two. Last week, one was attacked, I am told the injuries looked to have been made by a dog. The other goose, its mate was just standing sadly beside its badly injured pal. William (now the Society Officer) took the two geese, made them as comfortable as possible, and drove them to Hessilhead Wildlife Sanctuary where our good friend Andy took charge. The injured goose did not make it, but its mate was given a good home. It is so sad that now we have none. The place is eerily quiet. In recent years there have been none to rescue. Someday William may be able to start another colony. Seemingly we cannot move wild geese to the river, they have to need rescued, or come of their own accord.

On a serious note, please do not let your dog run after wild creatures. I have seen people think it funny for their dogs to chase and catch squirrels, to catch ducks, to attack cats and even to attack/kill other dogs. It is not funny. Mostly we love animals and would not wish harm to any creature., so, please, if your dog is not completely under your instant control, keep it on a lead.