

Elizabeth Macdonald Buchanan

It with great sadness that we have been informed that Elizabeth Macdonald Buchanan passed away on Friday. Elizabeth was a true champion for salmon & the wider fisheries community and brought a sparkle to all our lives.

She is remembered by her fellow Vice President of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, Andrew Wallace.

“Elizabeth’s reputation as a larger than life character always preceded her but I first really got to know her in the mid-nineties when she, Jonathan Bulmer and I started work on setting up the West Coast Fisheries Trust network. That was the time when we recruited a promising young fellow from Manchester to one of the Trust posts. He was called Mark Bilsby!

It seems like another age now, but Elizabeth and Jonathan used the intoxicating backdrops of Inveran and Amhuinnsuidhe to raise money and bang heads together, all ably assisted by regular and extensive consignments from Berry Brothers. Elizabeth’s natural enthusiasm, combined with her bulging address book, her disarming (and occasionally disconcerting) frankness, and her formidable generosity, soon had the denizens of Wester Ross marching to her step.

Elizabeth was also huge fun to work with and her legendary use of the sort of Anglo-Saxon invective, that would have made even the most hard-bitten squaddie blanche, was often targeted at recalcitrant lairds or misbehaving fish farmers, with tremendous effect.

But, above all, she was enormously generous, often surprisingly steely and shrewd, and utterly dedicated to the cause of saving the salmon. She and I latterly had the great privilege of becoming Vice Presidents of the Atlantic Salmon Trust, and it was in that capacity I last spoke to her and she asked me why I was not able to come to her 80th birthday “piss up” at Fishmongers’ Hall where she was on the Livery. There were very few people who could get away with describing an event in those hallowed surroundings as a “piss up”. It was one of those weeks when the diary looked impossible and I just could not make it work. Of course I now will always regret missing the opportunity to celebrate the last birthday of one of the salmon world’s national treasures.

I hesitate to use those clichéd words: “they don’t make them like that anymore” but I suspect all those who knew Elizabeth would agree that if ever those words applied to anybody, it was her. For those privileged enough to know her, she seemed to provide a tantalising glimpse of a world that has now largely passed into history.

I and many, many others will miss her humour, her irreverence, her kindness, and her own special brand of optimistic ebullience. The Atlantic salmon, and all who have an interest in the King of Fish, have much to be grateful to her for.”

Andrew Wallace