

apparent. If people want cages, then they can have cages- so he started manufacturing them, forming a whole new industry. Kames fish cages are undoubtedly known the world over. One only has to do a cursory check on the internet to find many references to them. The cage business has led in all sorts of directions, recent work has included constructing tern rafts and swan rafts for wild life sanctuaries and gangways for marinas, e.g. on Kielder Water.

So with the know-how from salmonids, the cages to sell, the obvious next step was to sell the expertise. With a growing staff by this stage he had a lot of expertise to call on. One of his most successful projects at this time (1977-80) was setting up a farm to produce mirror carp in Lake Habbaniya in Iraq. The first manager on this project was David Scott, subject of my first "Stirling graduate in business" (Aquaculture News 2000).

Meanwhile back in Kames the straightforward fish farming continued, but not so straightforwardly. It was becoming apparent that rainbow trout were not so happy in full strength sea water and so were transferred to Loch Etive with its lower salinity conditions, while salmon farming was established at Kames and other sites on Loch Melfort. This was in the early 80s in partnership with a shipyard owner from Glasgow, Mr Connell. Between 1984 and 1998 they were producing 1500-1700 tonnes of salmon from 5 sites. While furunculosis and sea lice were growing problems these were the boom years for salmon but then catastrophe struck in 1998 with infectious salmon anaemia (ISA). All Stuart's stocks were culled because a contiguous farm which incidentally also had siblings of his current stock was infected. No compensation was payable so it was a financial disaster. It looked like it would be the end for Kames Fish Farming and almost literally, since at this time Stuart was also diagnosed with cancer involving surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. A very bad year all round – but somehow Stuart seems to have picked up after such a major set back. Four out of his 8 marine sites had to be sold to avoid bankruptcy, but the enthusiasm for creating new ventures seemed to have survived the major set backs; so they continued producing the salmon smolts and went into halibut farming. In fact their first batch of halibut were also lost to ISA but since then they have produced between 100-200 tonnes per annum. But even in this venture which in itself was uncertain in its outcome, there was the major problem of the release of all his stock by animal liberationists in 2006. This was another disaster that also engendered enormous media cover but while at least there was some help from insurance the losses were major.

While these activities in "straightforward" fish production were going on in Scotland activities overseas continued. Extending fish farming development to Greece, in 1984

Stuart went into partnership with John Stephanis and set up a company, Selonda producing sea bass and sea bream. This was eventually floated on the Greek stock exchange in 1988 and Stuart's shares were bought out but he set up a new farm off the island of Evia. These two companies are not unknown to Stirling graduates, 2 MSc students were doing project work at Selonda only last year under the aegis of Phil Boddington (MSc 86-87).

Another development with long reaching consequences was the establishment of the cooperative Scot Trout with 5 other trout farmers including his early mentor, Graeme Gordon. This eventually became an organisation with 13 members and Stuart as the first chairman for 12 years. Scot Trout has recently been sold to Dawnfresh which means they now have almost total coverage of the UK supermarkets for their trout.

And Stuart has not shunned shellfish either. He had interests farming mussels in Loch Etive and also was involved with a mussel farming firm in the USA selling rafts to them on the basis that the Americans were not able to produce rotational moulded floats. A lot of Stuart's work on developing such technology was done with Jim McLaughlin of Xplora who clearly shared his get up and go philosophy.

In these interviews I always ask what the "Stirling graduate in business" most benefited from the MSc course. Since Stuart's academic path was not via the taught MSc this was not a question I could pose this time but throughout the interview Stuart stressed the importance of the role the Institute had played. In those early days nobody could know how best to do things and Stuart clearly welcomed the view of Prof Roberts; that diseases were challenges rather than problems. And this view of rising to such challenges, whether in dealing with parasites, finding new cage designs, new business solutions was something that Stuart felt strongly universities should provide and that the Institute was so doing. Stuart talked of a "volcano of enthusiasm issuing from the Institute" and felt the Institute could take a lot of credit for breeding this thirst for knowledge. It has been vital for building his business but clearly he can take real pride in his own achievement of being probably the largest independent fish farmer in Scotland as well as in his many other commercial achievements. And probably best of all, still maintaining huge enthusiasm for all these ventures. These articles are about Stirling graduates. Stuart made it very clear that his success was very largely supported by a graduate of another university, but anyone listening to the "On Your Farm" programme recently broadcast on BBC Radio 4 (20th January 2008) would have got the clearest impression that Stuart's wife Shelagh was an integral part of the business and vital to his success and continuing enthusiasm.

## Seafish-funded project on the Solway Firth

Seafish are currently funding research on the Solway oyster farm of Mr Wilf Morgan, Solway Marine Oysters, to be carried out by Dr Janet Brown. Solway Marine Oysters have introduced a system of oyster culture little used in the United Kingdom, the Australian suspended culture system (BST system), which is untested in such a high energy situation as found on the Solway Firth. Over this winter the road to the beach and the sea wall have been partially washed away but so far the oyster lines remain in place! The project will investigate the performance of the system over three years and monitor any impacts of the activity on the immediate area. The Solway is an area marked for the development of shellfish culture but being an area of high importance from a conservation viewpoint it is important that these developments are monitored.