

A Fresh Examination of Our Archive Material Both Remaining and Lost

Piscatorial Society Fly Day
Sunday 1st December 2024

John McGill - Hon. Librarian & Curator

Q. What Fly Is This?

Clues

- > An emerger
- > Not English
- > Not with a CDC feather



Clue
Henri Bresson
b.1925, d.2011



A. What A Difference An 'E' Makes?

Sanitisation even applies to the naming of trout flies!

- 'La petite peute' (Jean-Paul Pequegnot - 'French Fishing Flies', 1984, 1987)
- Franc-Comtois dialect - m. peut/f. peute = ugly
- Promoted by Henri Bresson. A pattern given to him by a Gypsy poacher on the river Cusancin
- Represents an emerging caddis. Hook size to suit hatching naturals (12-18). Body of yellow tying silk. A feather from the breast of a wild female mallard. Fibres bent back along the body and held down by the finishing knot
- Rumoured that originally, the fly was called 'La petite pute'. Thanks PW!

'French Fishing Flies'

Dr. Jean-Paul Pequegnot

The 'Soufflacul'







Our Historical Timeline

Four Broad Quartiles

- 1st. - Founded 1836 - 1850. A profile is established. An influential Society
- 2nd. - 1850 - 1900. The 'Golden Age' in terms of famous members
- 3rd. - 1900 - 1950. Two wars got in the way. More snakes than ladders
- 4th. - 1950 - Present. More ladders than snakes. A different profile is established. Today's enviable profile. See what the trolls say on-line!
- How would we define what we are and what we have today?

1st. First Half of The Nineteenth Century

Founded 1836 - 1850

- A meeting place in London - Anywhere with good beer!
- Most lived in London. Most fished in the Thames & tribs. close-by
- Most fish were killed. Monday evening meetings for the weighing-in of fish
- Prizes offered (cash, cups, jewellery) for specimen fish / large catches
- Other social gatherings started to attract press attention
- > 90% a social club. < 10% a fishing club

2nd. Second Half of The Nineteenth Century

1850 - 1900

- Development of an influential profile. Prominence of some members
- Development of a library. A museum of specimen fish. Other artefacts
- Weekly meetings continue. Reading of papers becomes established
- BUT - Thames becomes increasingly degraded and impounded
- Foray in to the renting of waters (Chilterns). Mostly linked to rail access
- Diversification of fishing clubs. Gresham Angling Club. Fly Fishers' Club.
- > 75% a social club. < 25% a fishing club



WEIGHING IN THE FISH.

3rd. First Half of The Twentieth Century

1900 - 1950

- Reading of papers continues to c.WW1 and not resurrected
- Move away from the killing of fish
- Reduced importance of weekly meetings. Club Room is a 'bolt hole'
- Fewer members with an influential profile. Some notable authors remain
- The focus shifts toward the renting of waters. Chilterns, then Rivers Kennet & Lambourn
- < 25% a social club. > 75% a fishing club

4th. Second Half of The Twentieth Century

1950 - Present

- Loss of a capacious Club Room (1955). Loss of the collections. Fish, books, artefacts. Sold, lost, 'borrowed on permanent loan'
- Twenty 'Wilderness Years' without an adequate Club Room
- Renting of waters now dominant. BUT - Abandonment of the Kennet in favour of a move westwards. A brave move which set the scene for the Society's success today
- Membership more dispersed. Newsletter - PSJ introduced. Rod Room acquired (1976)
- Recent shift to online comms.
- < 10% a social club. > 90% a fishing club

Changes Over Time - Diaspora Of Members

Channels of Communication More Important

- Journal of The Piscatorial Society. Is it read? But at least its recorded
- The New Great Scrap Book - main theme 're-naturalisation'?
- The Intranet. Member -> Society -> Member -> Member
- The Online Museum. More scope and capacity for recording
- Zoom meetings. Even more scope and capacity for recording e.g. AGM
- Fly Day & Hordern Meeting. Face to face

Our Approach

A More Structured Approach to Narrating and Recording

- Past - Alumni, achievements, artefacts not well documented. Random jumble of documents and other materials
- 2005 - Nicky Mulholland. Structured file of notes based on minutes and other largely internal sources. Plus some wider, external research.
- Today - Broaden the external research. Augmented narrative based on multiple external sources. The Society 'in context'. BBC Verify / PS Verify
- Create a regular series of short 'essays' published in JPS under 'A History of The Society In 100 Objects' plus occasional 'Piscatorial Profiles'. Structured, cross referencing of articles
- Important to list the 'sources' as a base for future reference and/or research. Cut & paste 'anthology' of cited paragraphs, quotations and other snippets
- Not claimed to be comprehensive/exhaustive. Enough to form informative, stand alone, articles

Example

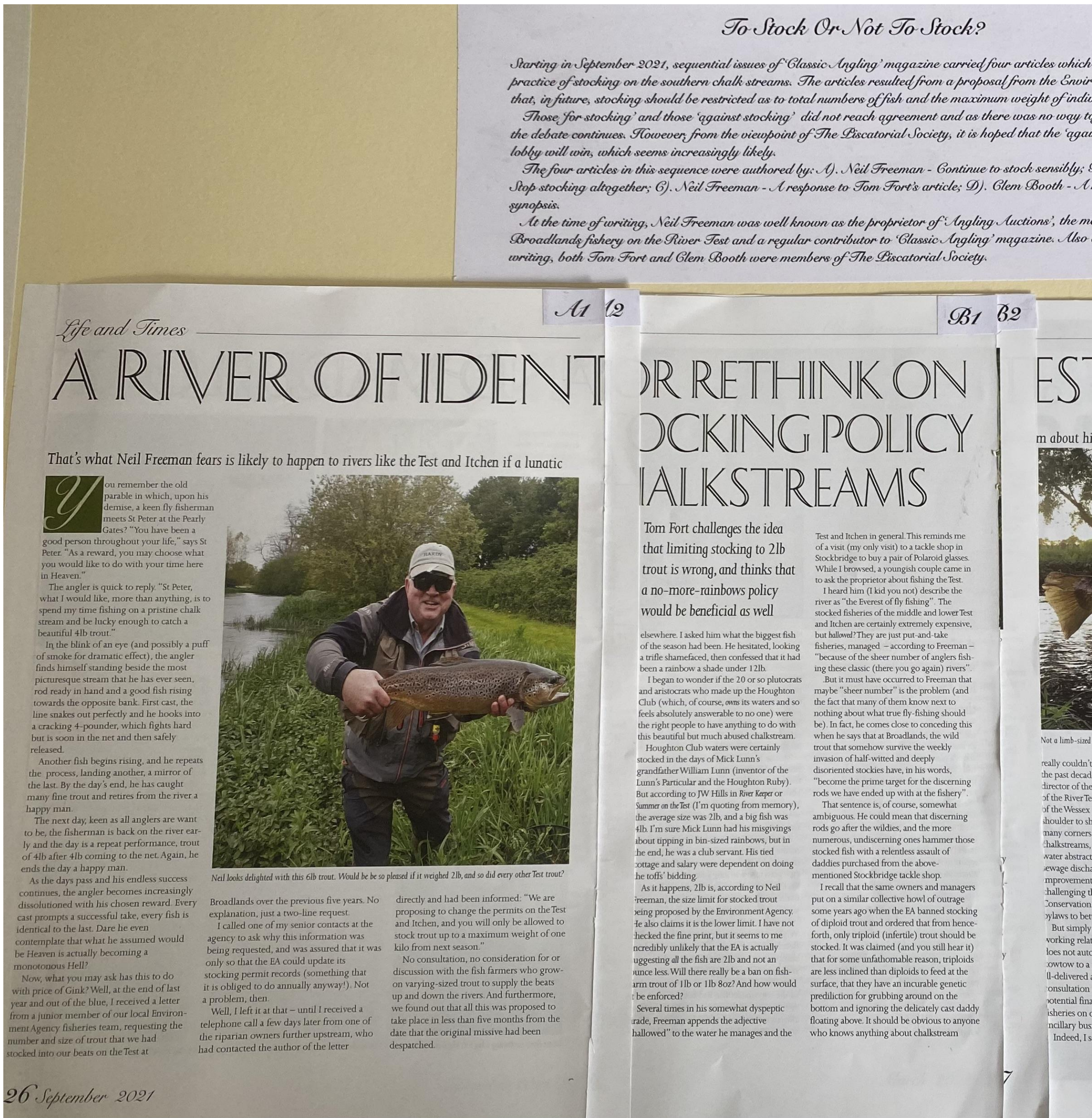
The Boldini Cartoons

- "We think these were painted by Giovanni Boldini He was famous they might be worth a huge amount of money if they are we might sell them and buy all of the River Test!"
- BUT - already deduced by Nicky Mulholland, Tim Olsen and others that Giovanni was not the (Droids) Boldini we are looking for
- SO - which other artist Boldini's might be contenders?
- Giuseppe A - Giovanni's brother?
- Giuseppe B - Another artist entirely? - Back to Giuseppe A - Defo. his brother
- Link to Burto Perelli-Rocco - Boat called 'Lombardy'





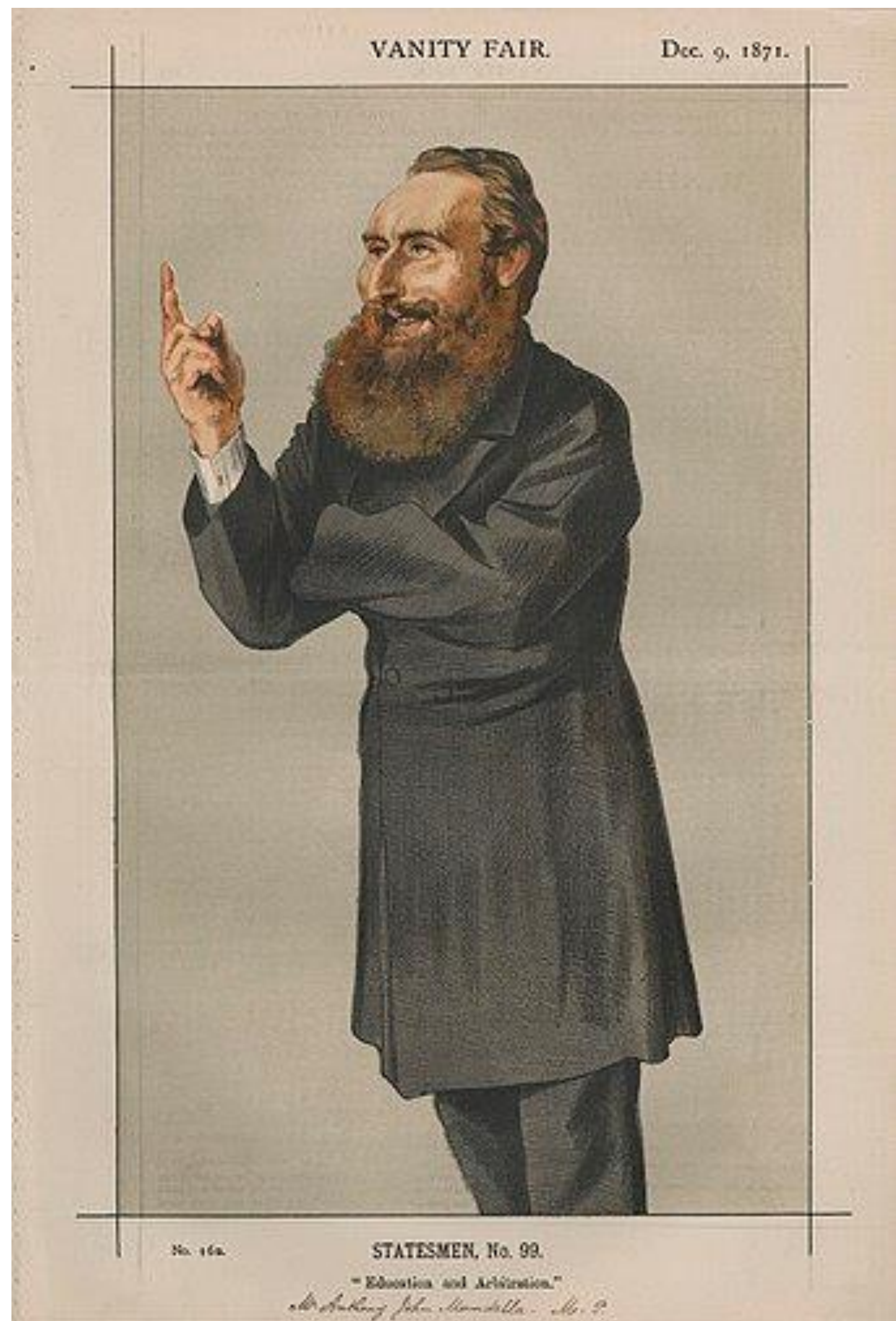
The New Great Scrap Book



Archive Material

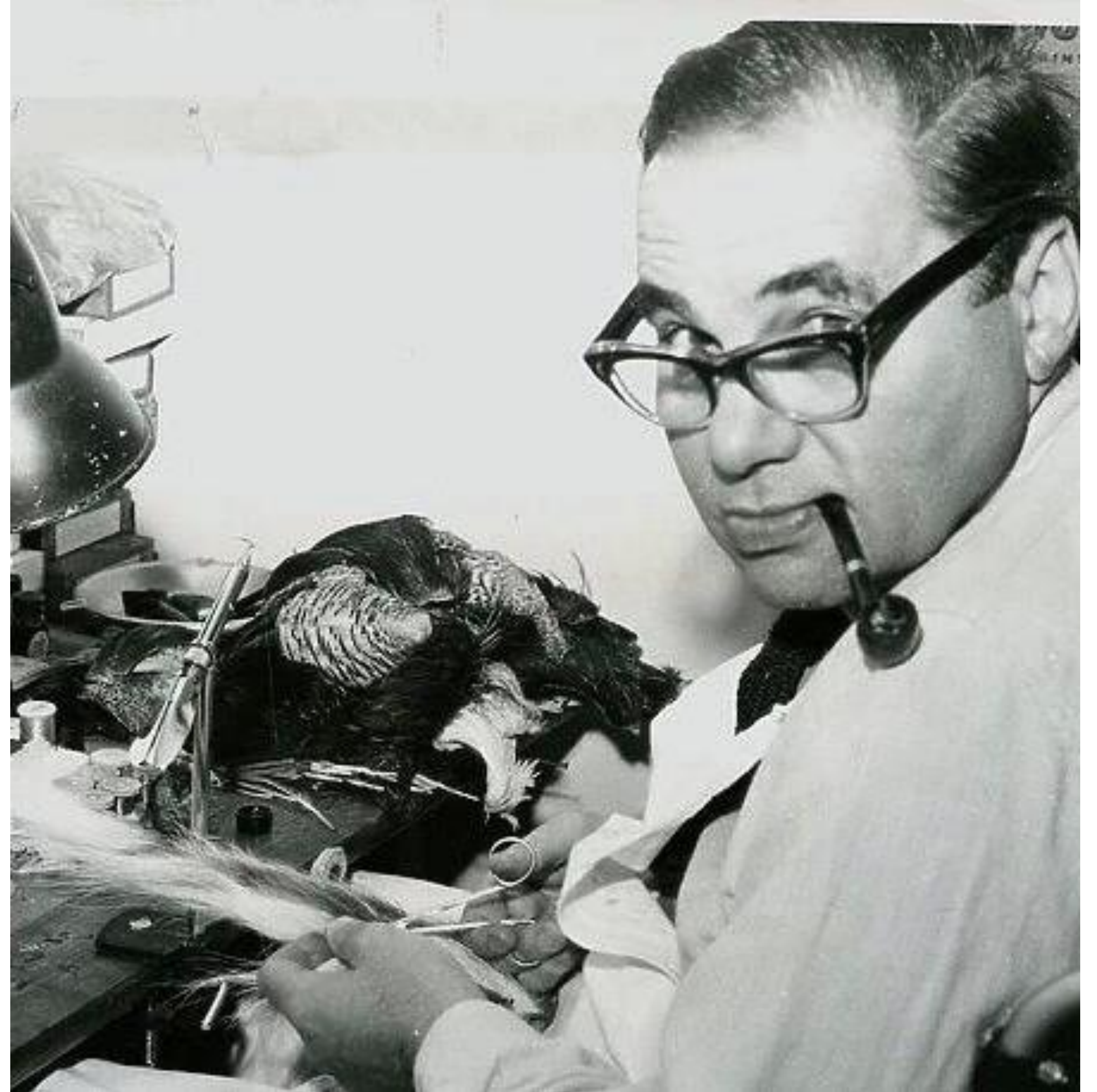
A History of The Society in 100 Objects

- Our Illustrious Alumni. Cholmondeley-Pennell, Jardine, Buckland, Francis, Fennell, Marston, Senior, Mottram, Sheringham, Saundby, Turing, Wilson, Goddard, Hayter, Paxman
- Feats of derring-do. Formation of TAPS, The Mundella Act, Trout to the Antipodes, Foundation of ACA, Adoption of electro-fishing, Re-naturalisation
- Artefacts still in our possession. Photos for the online museum
- Artefacts no longer in our possession. Defo photos for the online museum



Piscatorial Profiles

- Hal Thirlaway
- Nicky Mulholland
- Sean Crampton (L C-W)
- T.R. Sachs
- **Peter Deane** ->
- Topics & objects as well as people



"History Is Always A Work In Progress"

Glenn Kumhera - Penn State Behrend

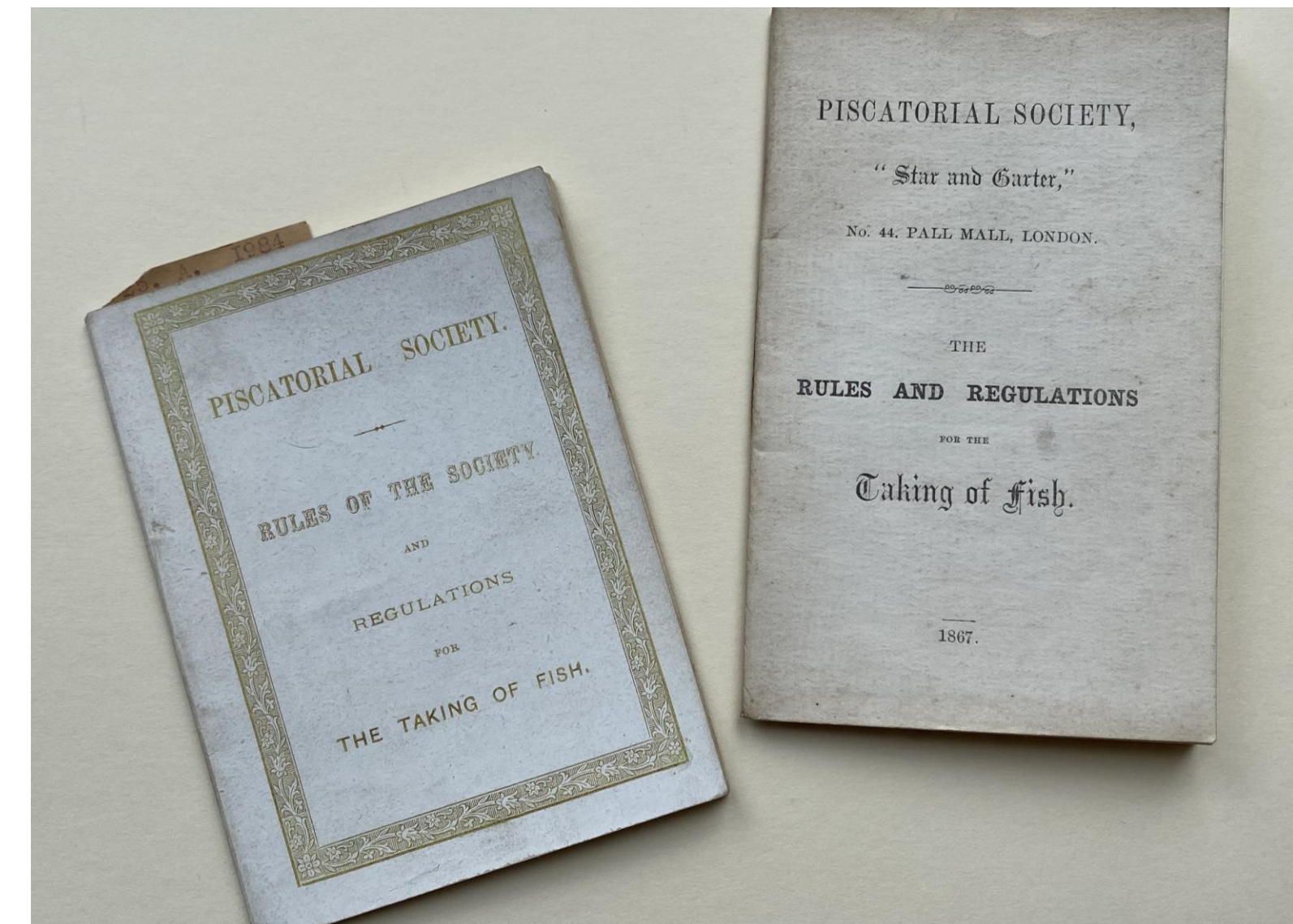
< - Re-written

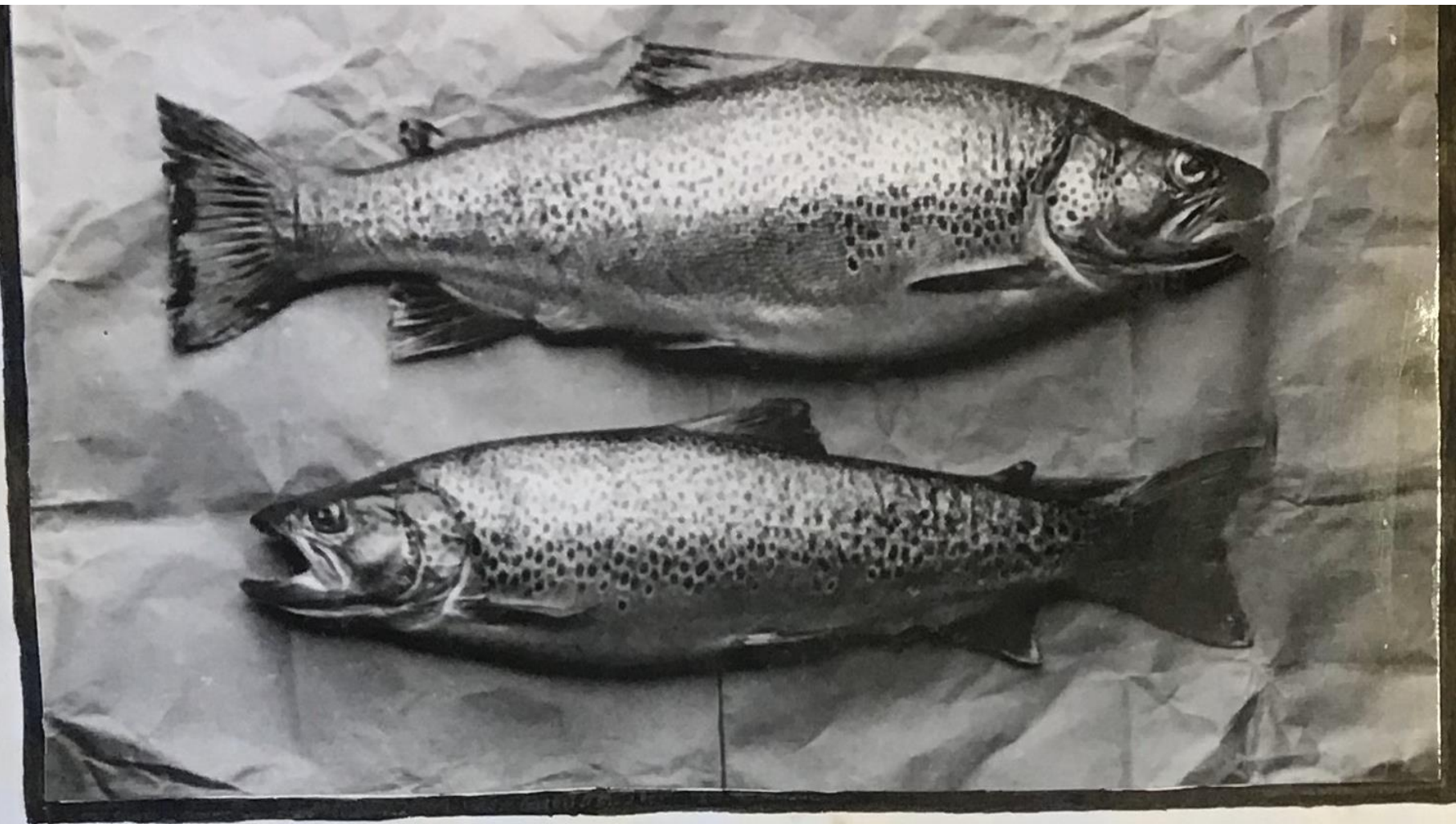
Evolving - >

Future Acquisitions Strategy

Limited Space + Few Members Refer to The Books

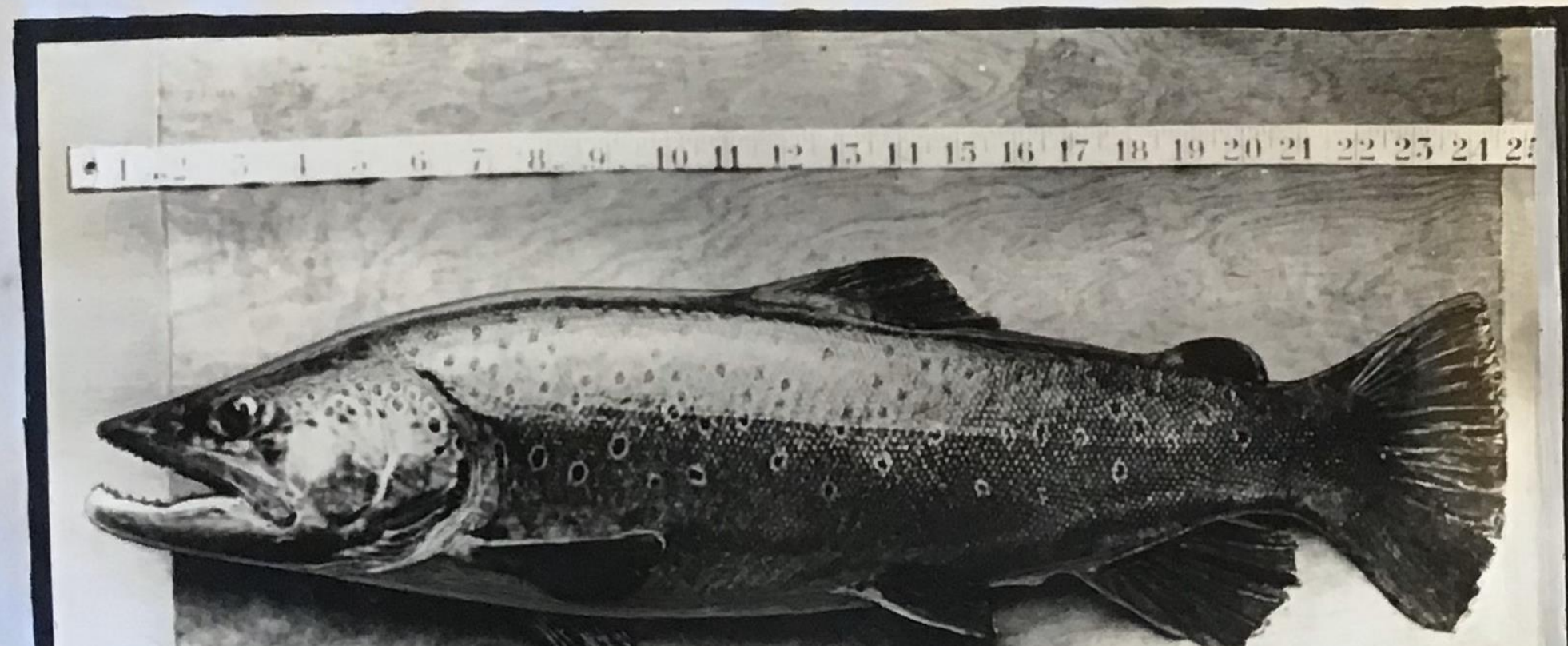
- Library - Books which mention the Society. Books written by alumni
- Other Documents - Ephemera directly related the Society. Expensive
- Physical Artefacts - Available infrequently. Very expensive
- Photographs - More acceptable. Minimal cost. Capacious online museum
- Donation is the preferred route. Purchase might be considered





RIVER TEST - ABBEY FIELD - 21.5.35

3 lbs - 0 oz } MAYFLY (SEE PAGE 50)
2 lbs - 1 oz



Papers Read to The Society

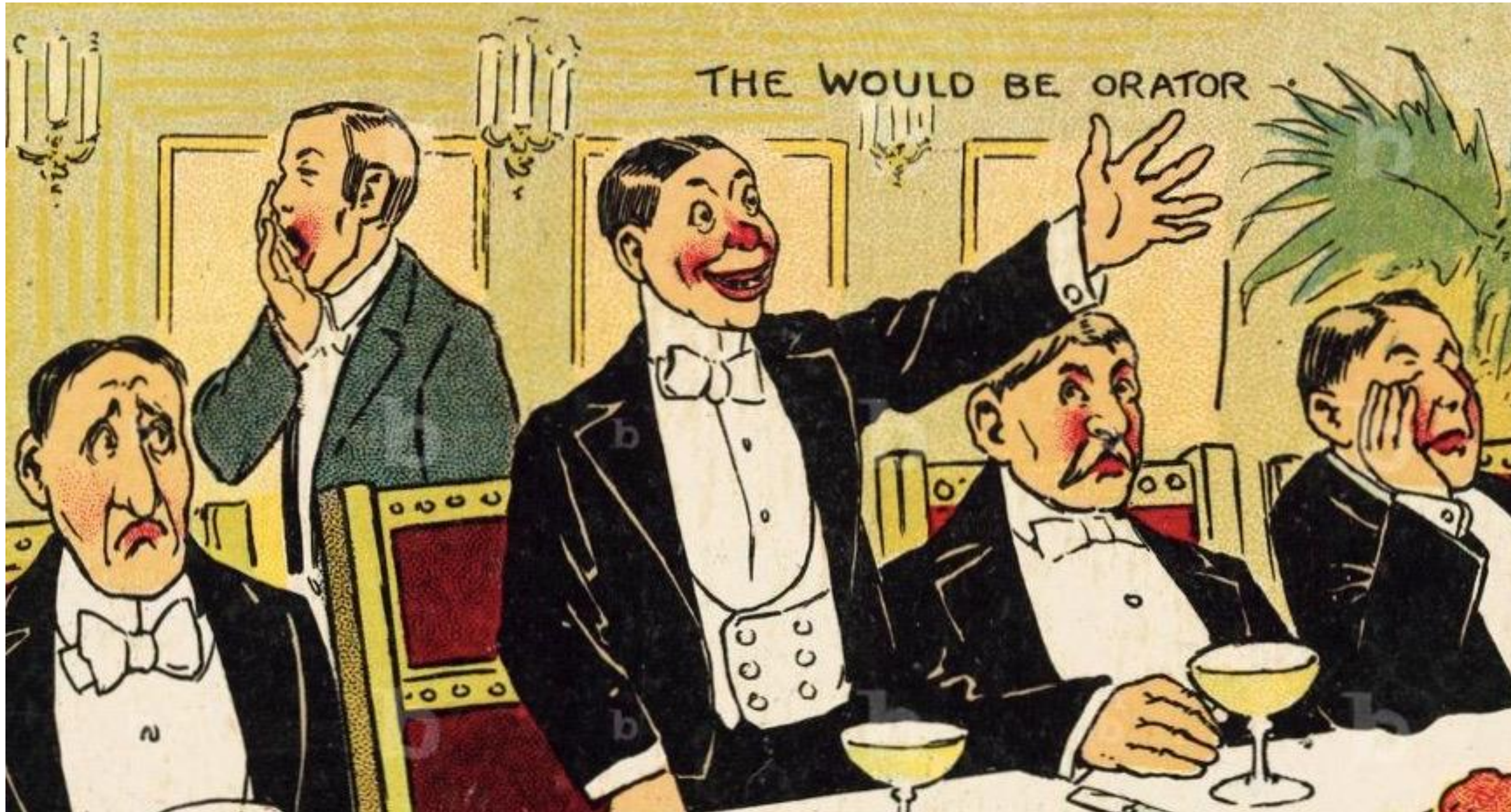
Attention spans were longer in the 1800s?

- Started mid 1800s. Stopped c.WW1 but never resurrected
- Quite lengthy. Up to an hour reading aloud
- Some readers were very popular e.g. Sheringham. Others were not!
- Many were presented. Relatively few were preserved
- Questionable quality

Questionable Quality

(The Book of The Piscatorial Society - Hammond 1936)

"... full of puns and topical allusions, now quite incomprehensible ..."





Would members log-in to occasional Zoom-based evening or weekend lectures

The Society Today

The Society's History and
Heritage is the 'Back Story'
to Our Reputation

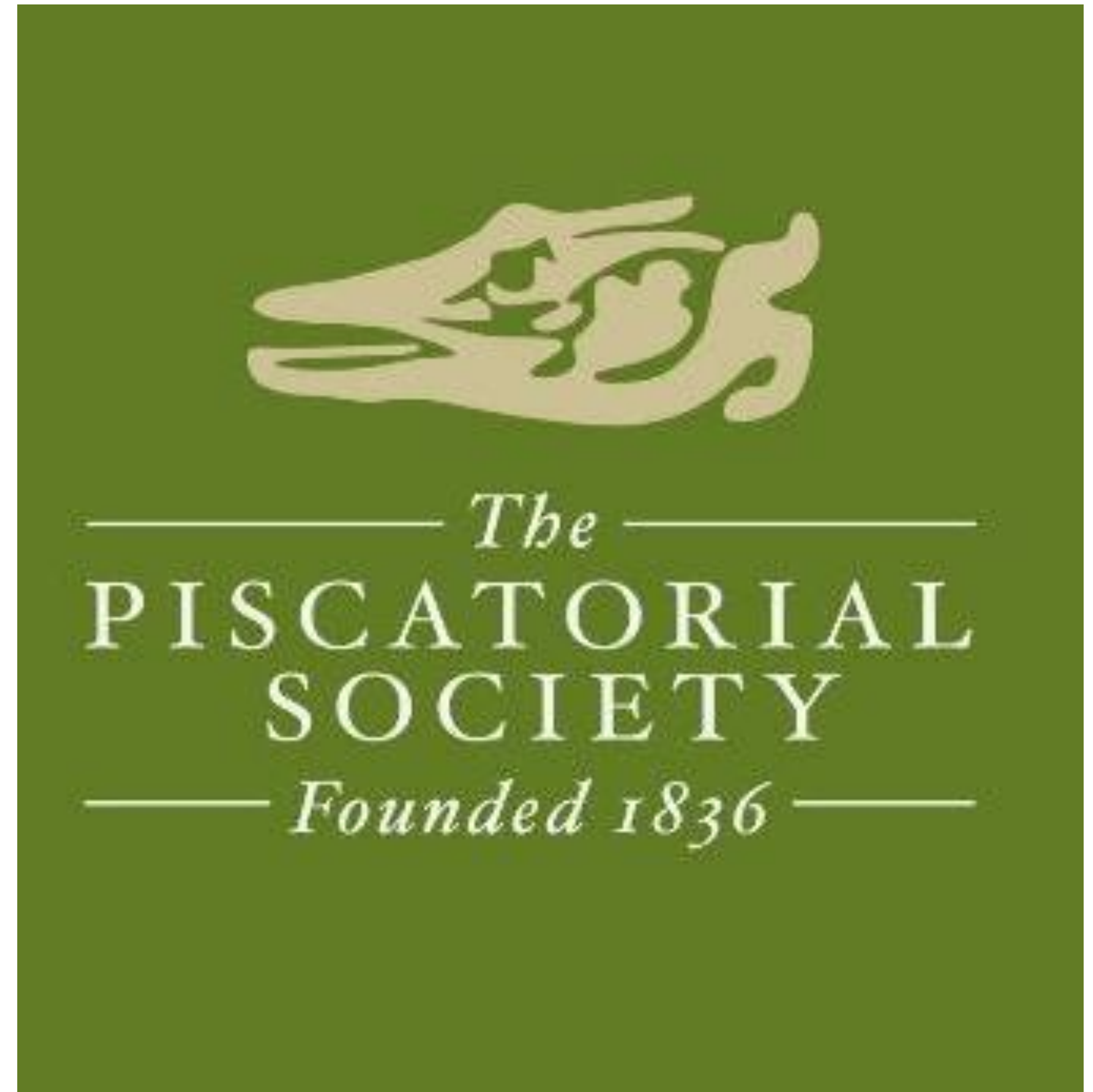


— *The* —
PISCATORIAL
SOCIETY
— *Founded 1836* —

The Society Today

Reputation Confers Benefits

- Simply lease waters from riparian owners **NO**
- Minimal or no habitat management + heavy stocking **NO**
- Partner with riparian owners to improve asset values **YES**
- Work with multiple agencies to re-naturalise habitat **YES**
- Evidence based / research engaged **YES**
- Key individuals with effective networks **YES**
- Society has built 'preferred partner' status **YES**



FIN!



