

## Upper Floors

Sitting on a natural terrace well back from the river, but overlooking it, Floors Castle has a light and elegant air, rather French to my eye. I met the ghillie, Colin Bell, outside the walled garden and followed him down to the hut, which I thought quite one of the most attractive I had seen on any river. So solid is it, so well proportioned and so beautifully built, it could easily be a little cottage, with people living in it. From its appearance it could be a hundred years old at least, and I was amazed to hear that it dates only from 1987, when it was built by estate workers after an earlier wooden hut had accidentally burned down.

The ghillie had gone up the river fishing from a boat, and when, looking back, he saw smoke, he thought it was only the foresters tidying up in the woods. Even if he did forget to put the guard in front of the fire, he was not blamed, and the only faint hint of rebuke he received came when he and his boss stood looking at the new hut, built of stone, and the Duke remarked, 'Well – you won't be able to burn this one down, anyway!'



Its most curious feature is the fish mosaic on the doorstep at the entrance, fashioned with big pebbles collected from the river and based on a template of a salmon caught in 1887 – a fifty seven and a half pounder, the largest ever taken on Tweed. The monster may have been even heavier, for it was not weighed until the day after its capture.

The hut commands a view of the Shot Pool, where this great fish was caught. The curious name apparently refers to the method of netting employed by the Duke of Roxburghe at that time – a technique of taking one end of a net downstream in a boat, and bringing it back round before hauling it in. I wonder if it was the lethal success of shot netting that gave rise to the rule that estate workers should not be fed salmon more than three times a week. The beat is still immensely prolific, and produces record-breaking catches.

*Facing page:*

**The hut at Upper Floors**

*Above:*

**Decorated doorstep**

*The fish mosaic of a 57 1/2 lb salmon at Upper Floors hut*