



Arthur E. J. Went

21 January 1910 – 8 December 1980

On 8 December 1980, Arthur Edward James Went died in Dublin. At the time of his sudden passing, he was acting as a consultant in a matter concerned with Fisheries. Thus, even though he had retired in 1975, nevertheless at the end he was, characteristically, still performing the kind of task which had become his hallmark after more than 45 years of active service.

Arthur was born a Londoner, indeed a Cockney, in 1910. He came to Ireland in 1936 and served the cause of Fisheries in the country which he adopted, with a distinction that was reflected in the many roles which were placed upon him by Irish scientific life. Before entering the University of London to read the Natural Sciences, he took employment with a firm which manufactured a variety of chemicals. During this short

period of his early career he was to acquaint himself with problems concerning water pollution, which provided him with an understanding of their importance. When, eventually he came to Ireland, he campaigned steadfastly against pollution of our lakes and rivers, at a time when it was distinctly unfashionable to be a prophet about the consequences of poor water resource management. Having graduated in 1934 with high Honours, he went to Norway to study on a London University Travelling Studentship. There he met two persons who were to have a tremendous influence upon him and to set the seal upon his future career. One was Einar Lea (of salmon tagging fame) and the other, the legendary Professor Johan Hjort. His experiences in Norway were such that he determined to devote his

main career to Fisheries Science. So strong was this determination that he telegraphed Dublin to say that he would travel there as soon as possible to be interviewed for the post of Assistant Inspector of Fisheries (at a salary of £150 per annum). He was obliged to travel by fishing trawler and coastal steamer from the remoteness of the Norwegian west coast before finally embarking on a ship to England and thence to Dublin. He was already late for his interview, by many days, but so impressed were his future employers by his tenacity to get to Ireland, that they convened a special Board to interview him. He was never to lose that drive and sense of purpose, throughout his career.

A particular and fortunate speciality was his far-sightedness and those who remain behind and those yet to be employed will continue to reap the benefits of his thoughtfulness for a long time to come. This applies equally at international and national levels. Over a period of almost 45 years he enjoyed a special association with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and during that time was deeply involved with many aspects of its work. The Salmon and Trout Committee (subsequently the Anadromous and Catadromous Fish Committee) was to claim his special attention and from 1952 to 1957 and again from 1962 to 1966, he was its Chairman. In 1963 he was elected Vice-President and became First Vice-President for the period 1963 to 1966. In 1966 he became President.

At home, his influence was no less than abroad. He was a founder member of the Irish Institute of Biology and its second President. He helped to found the Irish Specimen Fish Committee, a voluntary group of people dedicated to the promotion of sea-angling in Ireland. He was especially attached to this Committee and at the time of his death was its Chairman. He was a long-standing member of the Science Committee of the Royal Dublin Society and a Vice-President of this Society and also of the Royal Irish Academy. His association with the Dublin Zoological Society was of equally long standing and he became its President from 1973 to 1976. He also found time to be the founder of the Irish Numismatics Society, to be a member of the Dublin Scientific Club and the Dublin Field Club. Through his general activities with the Dublin Zoo and the Field Club, he devoted much of his amazing energy to encouraging young people to take an interest in biology.

He had an abiding interest in history, and felt strongly about its influence upon the present and the future. This was amply borne out, not only by the numerous papers on the history of Irish fishing, published in a variety of media, but also by the fact that he was historian to the International Council, a function which culminated in the publication of "Seventy years agrowing" (*Rapp. P.-v. Réun. Cons. int. Explor. Mer*, 165) in 1972. His other publications both in national and international media run into hundreds and include such species as salmon, sea trout, brown trout, char, pike, and pilchards. His many papers on salmon migrations are now

proving to be of immense value and importance to those interested in salmon stock management in its wider European context.

His host of friends at home and abroad always found him to be irrepressible, loyal, generous with his advice which was always worth taking, and having a highly developed sense of humour which made his company as delightful as it was helpful. Small of stature, he was a giant amongst fishery biologists. A great friend and counsellor has departed from us, but to remain always in our memory.

Alec Gibson

Arthur Went attended his first Council Meeting in 1936 and his last in 1980. During this span of 44 years, he was a Delegate for Ireland for 37 years and took part in all Bureau meetings for 12 years and in all Consultative Committee meetings for 17 years.

These figures alone give but a vague idea of what he meant for the Council. He was either the initiator of or one of the leading persons in all the important activities that thoroughly re-shaped the Council in the years after World War II.

Together with Gunnar Rollesfsen, he was the driving force in the preparations leading to the diplomatic conference to draft a new convention for ICES in 1964, as well as those leading to the host agreement with Denmark in 1968 – an agreement he signed as President. These negotiations, which lasted 11 years, were difficult ones. In the more formalistic international communities after the war, the Council had to achieve full and formal recognition of the intergovernmental status it had enjoyed *de facto* since 1902. On the other hand, it was important that it should not lose the flexibility and ease of operations which had been a characteristic of the Council until then. This was by no means easy, and it was to a large extent due to Arthur Went's ability as a negotiator and to his sense of formulation, that this major event in the history of the Council was brought to a successful conclusion.

Turning to the Council's main structure, Arthur Went also took a prominent part in the drafting of its Rules of Procedure, and in the revision of its committee structure, which was necessary or desirable under its new status. Through the Rules of Procedure, the Council's valuable traditions were preserved, while at the same time the whole organization was modernized.

There were of course others that took an active part in the activities just mentioned, but I believe it is fair to say that Arthur Went was – more than anyone else – the one who tied them all together and had a very great influence on the final results.

He was also the one who drafted the Council's election procedure, and he took the initiative to have the Presidential Chain made for the Council.

There are indeed very few persons in the history of the Council who have played an equally important role in making ICES the unique intergovernmental organization it is. He was *the* authority on its history and traditions, and he was very much a part of its atmos-

phere. It was therefore no coincidence that it was he who wrote the history of the Council's first 70 years.

Arthur Went has left us, but he will continue to live as long as the Council lives.

Hans Tambs-Lyche