

# In it for the long haul

BASS chairman Ian Misselbrook looks back on the organisation's continuing commitment to raised minimum landing size so that every bass can breed at least once

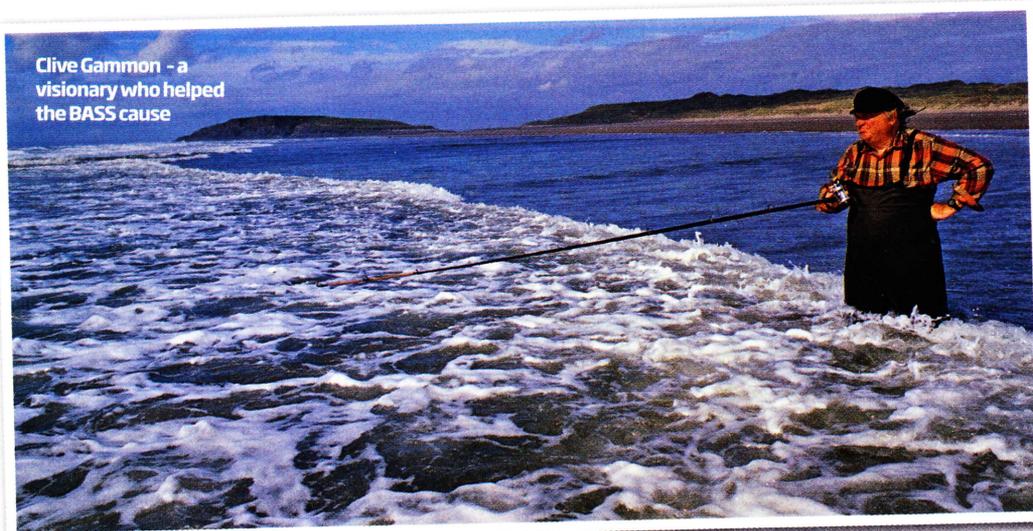
**W**e regularly remind and inform as many recreational sea anglers as possible that with a unified voice constantly directed at Government, maybe, just maybe, our politicians will treat our sector with the equivalent concern that is given to commercial fishermen.

You may be aware that we've been doing this since 1973. Seems a lot longer, I hear some of you say.

Having recently been part of the delegation that presented a paper justifying an increase of the bass MLS to 48cm to Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon, I was intrigued to read in one of our old magazines an article by our then chairman, Clive Gammon.

Considering it was written in autumn 1974, it shows how important it is to constantly rattle the cage if anything is to be achieved, and moreover it shows that it can take long-term staying power and effort.

I quote part of the article: "We on your committee were very heartened in October to hear from MAFF that they were willing to meet a delegation from the Society to discuss the question of the minimum size limit for bass. The impression our delegates got from that meeting was that it is



Clive Gammon - a visionary who helped the BASS cause

not very likely we will get what we want, i.e. at least a 14in limit. The commercial interests, while conceding eventually that a size limit was advisable, pitched it as low as 9in. The feeling at that meeting was that 10in might be the result.

"BASS is not necessarily d i s h e a r t e n e d at this turn of events. We have only been in existence for little more than a year and the fact that our pressure on the Ministry, together with that of the National Anglers Council, has finally got them to admit that there is a problem, is an achievement in itself.

"Although we do not regard a 9in or a 10in limit as satisfactory,

for us this is only a first step. We will continue to press for it to be enlarged and we will continue to seek further evidence to support our view."

Thirty years later in 2003, Clive shared his current thoughts.

Again I quote part of that article: "This week, through my letter box came issue No 4 of the BASS Restoration Project Newsletter and I realised how far we've come since then, and how, even though the war to save bass is not yet won, how much better things look - nursery protection measures in place, a great year group of juveniles coming through, the 36cm landing size and, above all, there's a distinct feeling of optimism that DEFRA

will one day soon take on board the surely by now obvious fact that the economic value of the recreational fishery, not just in cash terms but in employment, far outweighs that of the commercial catch."

The only disappointing fact about these events is that it took 30 years of constant lobbying to achieve what we did, but we had men of resolve and determination who were in it for the long haul if that's what it needed.

Clive Gammon, who died this year, was one of the founding fathers of BASS and he became its first chairman. Together with other thinking sea anglers of the day, he recognised the threat to our bass stocks.