

S&DAC Newsletter

Autumn 2014



Salisbury & District Angling Club
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Dear Members,

Fishing at Hamer and Whitesheet Lakes for S&DAC members will stop with immediate effect.

The continuing poor fishing returns and negative comments by visiting anglers do not justify the cost. Please note that our club is paying on a per visit basis.

Hamer Lake is currently being negotiated with the Somerley Estate and we will inform the membership about the outcome when known.

Diary Dates:

Game Meeting:-

Saturday 1st November 2014 at 1pm

Antrobus House, Salisbury Road Amesbury SP4 7HH

AGM:

Tuesday 13th January 2015 at 7.30pm

The Cycling Club, Salt Lane, Salisbury. SP1 1DU

Game Fishing . 2014. – John Stoddart Vice Chair. Game.

What a season! For the second year we started with our fisheries under water for many weeks. The floods of 2013/14 will be remembered in the valleys for a long time. I don't think these levels had been seen for many years. Our chairman lives high on Salisbury plain and he produced pictures of lakes standing on the highest areas. The aquifers filled and overflowed, springs appeared that had been dry for years, many properties were threatened.

The committee thinking was that we were going to be able to offer only limited opening on April 1st. The keepers had been unable to approach many of the fisheries to check for flood damage, fallen trees and undermined banks and we knew there would be a backlog of work and that many banks would be under water or at best wet and muddy.

Andreas devised his traffic light system for the website to update members on what was likely to open and where the problems were. This seemed to be very well received particularly by those living outside the area.

The early weeks were a washout for fishing, visits were low, catches poor, hatches very limited, grannom failed to appear in any numbers. The water took a filthy brown colour and stubbornly refused to clear. Gradually though we were able to open more and more of the water with some fisheries, for example Sutton Veny, starting to fish very well. By the time of

the mayfly we were back to normal with only one fishery remaining closed, Hurdcott, where young cattle made a total mess of things. We hope to have this back on the book for next year.

Most members accepted the limitations and used the fisheries that were available. Unfortunately a few ignored advice and were fishing on closed waters. Please read the website, we have no consent to be on land outside the season and those times when the fisheries are opened officially by the committee. Closures are decided for your safety and to protect our landlord's property where paths and banks can be seriously damaged by excessive footfall. Too many muddy boots trampling through the paths can also delay the drying and prevent us getting machines to where they are needed.

The mayfly hatches were good with some great evening fishing enjoyed, some of our fisheries enjoyed bumper fly years with evening spinner falls being a particular feature. Good catches were reported from all sites with some exceptional fish caught. Our impression to date is that visits have been lower this year, we will know the full story when the return books are collected but fisheries do not seem to have been over pressed. For the first time we have had return books out at Amesbury and although a few will have missed signing in the first impression is that the fishery is not so pressured as we might have feared. Good news for those that have asked us not to limit rods on that water.

This year we have tried to be more systematic in the maintenance, mowing and fringe cutting. The start of the season was difficult with some areas getting away from us as mowers could not be got on to the banks. Fisheries were divided into categories and a schedule devised. Extra casual help has been employed to assist the keepers in the busy season and this allowed them to get on with improvement works such as the new bridges and fences at Woodford and the fence at Stapleford. Feedback on the new work has been very good. I am very proud of how the fisheries are looking as I write, a lot of hard work has been done. The true left bank below Ham Hatches has been opened up to allow members to fish across to some of the more difficult areas on our usual bank. A new gate just the other side of the hatches gives access all the way down that side. A new path has been cut in to the copse below Sleeper bridge and some bridges installed in the wettest areas, the Piscatorial Society were able to complete their project and open the new berms in the copse, fishing now available from the berms or by wading. Members who have tried this stretch have reported some very good fishing.

Projects at Parsonage Farm, The Butts (Town Water), Sutton Veny have been completed or are underway. A major project at Bulbridge is due to start this month. These projects are funded by Natural England and/or EA and are designed to improve river habitat and fish passage. We are supported by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in planning and execution and by some excellent contractors who have done the heavy work. It is fair to say that funds in the order of hundreds of thousands of pounds have been invested in our waters. There is a lot of work for the club in planning and organising this work and in ensuring it is to our advantage as an angling organisation. We are pleased that our owners are able to devolve responsibility to us knowing we will be acting to enhance the value of their fisheries.

We have many other schemes ahead of us, we are keen to look at the tree lines this year knowing that in some places they have encroached and are making fishing difficult. We want to continue to replace stiles, wading steps and bridges in a way that will assist our older members. Larger steps and steady posts are being used. We have plans to deal with flooded berms at Amesbury where the ground has settled or been washed away. We would like to trial methods of dealing with reeds, a really difficult problem. At this time of year we can cut into many reed beds and fishing becomes easier but some are too wet to get at. We have various ideas to see if we can control things a bit more. Some reed beds will be left alone, for example the big one at the sewage outfall at Amesbury, this is doing a good

filtering job and the area can be fished from the opposite bank. We continue to look for a realistic solution to the car parking problem at Sleeper Bridge but repair of the bridge will be a costly and difficult job and may be a step too far for the club.

Many members have been enjoying the fishing at Hamer Lake under our guest arrangements with the Christchurch Club. Some will have heard the news that Christchurch will no longer have the fishing after 2015. We are able to confirm that we are at an advanced stage in securing the fishing at Hamer for SADAC from next season.

This year we introduced combination locks at the fisheries, after a slow start with frequent calls to the office most members found the numbers in their year books and discovered the button on the base of the lock. This change will save the club a lot of money in terms of replacement costs and postage for keys.

We held our annual game open day at Manningford Fishery, as usual this was led by Charles Jardine and a volunteer band of instructors in fly casting, fly tying and entomology. Members enjoyed fishing instruction, good food and refreshments. In the afternoon a good few fish were caught on Manningford's lakes and rivers. One young boy enjoyed particular success pulling out the rainbows, his excitement was great to see. A raffle and the Putnam family cake and tea sales helped pay the expenses and put a small surplus in to our funds.

The club has continued to develop its entomology with courses, monitoring and restoration schemes.

This year I have been able to speak to a number of our associate members who have all been very positive about the club and grateful for the opportunity to fish our waters. Associate members are very important to us as they help to pay our bills and often do not need to fish so often to get good value from their membership. The waiting list is healthy and it is our intention to continue to offer what we think is the best value chalk stream fishing anywhere. Thanks to the associate members who help to make the sums add up for the club. Thanks also to our staff team who are producing some really good results.

Coarse Fishing Roundup – Phil Wood

As I write this we're experiencing one of the warmest and driest Septembers on record. This is a world away from the situation that faced us in the run-up to the new season. Both Petersfinger and Steeple Langford had spent a considerable amount of time underwater and there were real fears that we wouldn't be able to open them for the start of the season. However, the waters receded and with some fantastic efforts by the team only a few swims were unfishable.

Following a suggestion at the AGM, the Club held its first Coarse Fishing meeting in July at the Cycling Club in Salisbury. Only 16 Members attended but there was plenty of discussion. Subjects raised included fish refuges, set aside areas and stocking.

As always our maintenance team have been busy making repairs and improvements. At Petersfinger we've raised the bank to give some flood protection and we have plans to improve the track on the west bank.

At Steeple Langford we've:

1. Built up the south bank between the little lake and the river with 200 tons of stone
2. Created two new swims – by the car park and on the causeway
3. Removed some trees
4. Put in new gates

We have plans in place to build up the bank upstream of the weir to provide some flood protection. At the coarse meeting it was suggested that we investigate fish refuges so we will be purchasing some Hedgehog refuges that we will evaluate over the close season. We don't expect them to provide much protection for the larger fish against Otters, but they could be useful against Cormorants.

The habitat improvement project at Parsonage Farm and the Town Water is now more or less completed and the alterations have bedded in. We've had to replace a bridge that disappeared in the flooding but the whole fishery is now open and fishing well. The board walk has been positioned further away from the bank so this will give us a little more room to fish. Judging by my visits the Dog entry areas seem to be used by the majority so hopefully this will have a positive effect on bankside erosion.

In September Steeple Langford hosted the Club's 36 hour Carp competition. The event was organised by Chris Cooper and supported by 15 anglers who took part. The results were:

1. Lee Bailey – 6 carp for 113lb 2 oz.
2. Andy Murphy – 2 Carp for 45lb 10 oz.
3. David Willet – 2 Carp for 35lb 5 oz.

Largest Fish: Terence Andrews – 24lb

In addition, the anglers raised £150 for Fishing for Forces which was presented to a member of staff from Tedworth house at the Fishing for Forces day at Petersfinger Lakes.

Thanks to Chris and all who helped and took part – you've really done the Club proud. We look forward to this becoming an annual event.

24 Hour Carp Competition 23rd August 2014

Congratulations to John Hunt on wining the competition with a magnificent Mirror Carp of 28lb 5oz from Steeple Langford .

Fishery Focus – White Horse Downton

Downton has a rich history of angling, in particular the Bull Hotel and the White Horse Inn fisheries that were both renowned for their specimen Roach fishing in particular. Things are very different these days and a specimen Roach from these areas is a rare occurrence (but not impossible!). For the last few years we've been privileged to have the fishing on the White Horse stretch. Access is either from Green Lane for fishing the top section or South Lane for the lower section. For this guide I'll work my way downstream from Green Lane.

I've fished the stretch a number of times now but have still only just scratched the surface – so what follows is just my impression and can't be considered definitive. The approach that I've taken most often is to travel light and move from swim to swim looking for the fish – this has been much more productive for me because an area that fishes well on one day can be unproductive the next. I've also found that wearing waders is a real help when fishing the top half of the fishery – for both crossing flooded fields and also to make fishing easier by getting into the river (where safe to do so).

As you enter the fishery from Green Lane there are a number of good looking swims along the side stream – I've found these to be totally unproductive and don't even bother to fish here anymore. The first "good" swim is on the bend where the stream meets the main river. I've had some good Chub catches in the deep pool, with a few Dace and Roach towards the far bank. There is often a decent Pike or two in residence and at least one Barbel has been reported (sadly not for me). Below the pool is very shallow but I have had a few small Trout from here. Below the shallows the river takes on a very uniform feel – I haven't found any real hotspots but by feeding quite heavily with either maggots or mashed bread I have managed to catch a few Chub and Trout.

The next obvious set of swims are where the Moot stream enters the river. I've had quite a few Chub from around here but other anglers have told me that this area can be productive for all species so I must try a bit harder. I've found the area below the Moot stream down to the Wood as the most productive stretch with some excellent Dace and Chub fishing, some decent Roach on occasions and plenty of Trout. I was also lucky enough to be walking past when a Club Member hooked and landed a 16lb Pike from this area.

Within the Wood itself the Keepers have prepared four nice swims that can be productive in the right conditions and I've seen several large Bream patrolling between the sunken branches. However, at the moment there are a large number of trees down making access very difficult.

Just above the island can be excellent but it can be difficult to get through the reeds to fish. I've had some very good Chub trotting a float under the overhanging branches and once spent quite a while flicking maggots to a very large Roach which quickly disappeared when I finally tried to catch it. In its heyday the island was in fact two islands and Captain Parker who ran the Bull fishery installed fishing shelters on each and even a live bait pool for Pike anglers. Today it's totally overgrown which is a shame. To access the fishing below the island requires a fairly long walk, but once you're clear of the reeds the river is ideal for trotting a float as it's a nice steady glide and a reasonable depth of water – I've only had the odd Trout and Chub from here but I continue to live in hope.

Overall my opinion is that this fishery can be difficult but also rewarding if you put in the effort to explore it. It's a very pleasant place to spend your time and has the look of somewhere that could provide a fish of a lifetime.

End of Season – Andreas Topintiz

There are routine things in life which we take for granted. It is everyday things that we do habitually. It's the way we sometimes leave our belongings in a mess which we can't see, but others can see when they walk into our room for the first time.

Why am I saying this? It's because we take the sport of Fly-fishing for granted and continue what we have been habitually doing for ever. However, Fly-fishing is a composite word consisting of two components. "Fly" and "Fishing". If you take away the "Fly" component, what remains is incomplete. We simply cannot afford to ignore the "Fly" part as it is the whole essence of our sport.

I have had discussions with members who put their faith in the magical daddy long legs, the big mayfly and the extra-large sedge which will lure the fish from the bottom of the pool with a splashy rise. It is true that this can happen sometimes, but the majority of times fish chose to sip gently something much smaller in a very discreet savoir-vivre way.

Fly identification is highly important when it comes to imitating the shape, size and colour of the natural insects so that we can match them successfully. It's such an obvious thing to say, but yet this is where a number of our anglers fall short.

One look at members' fly-boxes can reveal a lot of things about their entomological skills. Some anglers do not carry anything smaller than size 12 to 14 flies. This is in fact roughly translates into an expectation that the whole season will be "duffers fortnight". Typically, this is the size of flies you would require to use during May and June. When they are asked the question "why don't you carry something smaller?" their stereotype answer is, "because I can't see them on the water". The fact is that outside the mayfly season fish are feeding on tiny insects that populate our chalk-streams. Occasionally there will be a terrestrial that got blown onto the water, or a larger aquatic fly, but this is the exception and not the rule.

I was having a chat with one of our members in September and asked why he had tied a daddy long legs imitation. His answer was "because it's September and daddies do well in September". Yes, this may be true on some days, but on that particular day when the conversation took place the blue wing olive and pale watery spinners had started already their mating dance before the spinner fall. An olive spinner imitation of #16 to 18 would have been more appropriate.

I recall another instance with another member who was correctly fishing a mayfly spinner pattern as there were some spinners floating down and some fish taking them. He came to a group of fish which were clearly rising and carried on covering them with the same imitation. The tricky thing was that these fish were taking much smaller spinners. I advised that he used a smaller size. He later met me at the car-park and said that he had managed a brace of trout on the smaller fly.

Our best guide when we are fishing is our very own eyes. Look for the tell tale signs of the finches and wag-tails who are hurriedly flying across the river. There's a hatch in progress. Look for signs of insects trapped in spider webs. Look up towards the sun-set to see the tiny silhouette of a blue wing olive spinner. Look for the elusive dimple under a tree. These are all visible clues that you gradually start learning and move along your endless piscatorial journey.

First and foremost, one must know the basic flies that exist in our chalk-streams and a very good starting point is Dr. Cyril Bennett's pocket guide "Matching the Hatch" and the club's book. The club has also been developing a smart phone app. which is essentially an electronic pocket guide. So if an angler is fishing our waters in April and sees a small mayfly like insect hatching, the app. will suggest that the angler is looking at a large dark olive and will further suggest an artificial fly for it. It is just a starting point, but will undoubtedly help a lot of our anglers, especially those who are new to the sport. This smart phone app. will be ready to launch in the early part of next year. We are planning to have a small demo during our annual game meeting on November 1st 2014.

All the above is fine provided we have healthy fly populations. Unfortunately, there has been gradual deterioration of our aquatic flies over the last few decades. There are a lot of pressures on our flies, but the overarching problem is poor water quality due a number of factors, ranging from treated sewage water, rich in phosphates to agricultural run-off. Our club together with the Piscatorial Society and the Wilton Fly-fishing club have been undertaking a study of the fly populations on various stretches on the river Wylfe. We will soon have a very good benchmark of these populations at species level. We are planning to map these populations on all of our waters.

This year's fly hatches had a very slow start, but accelerated fast as the rivers settled and the weather warmed up. We hardly saw any large dark olives in April and the grannom and hawthorn hatches were average. The mayflies were on time, starting around mid-May, but

certainly not abundant. One should admit though that these trickle hatches accounted for very good fishing. July and August were dominated by very good blue wing olive spinner falls, provided one was on the water from 9:00 p.m. to darkness. So far autumn has been superb. The driest September since 1910! The ensuing warm weather has prolonged the hatches of our smaller mayflies (pale wateries, small dark olives etc.) and spinner falls. Dry fly fishing at its best without the need for these tungsten diving nymphs that are best left for the colder months.

In conclusion, we do have pockets of excellent fly life which we need to nurture and improve. It's down to all of us. No weed and bank vegetation = no flies = no fly-fishing. It's as simple as that!

Our Disappearing E/CA Enforcement officers (Water Bailiffs) - Brian Phillips (Senior Bailiff)

Our general manager and keepers recently attended a training day at Sparshot Agricultural Collage presented by **Adrian Saunders (Fisheries Enforcement Campaigns Manager)** relating to managerial and wellbeing of our fisheries. It was an opportunity to hear at first hand the changing situation of the E/A enforcement officers and how many we may have on patrol in our area. These official representative of the E/A have the same legal powers of search and arrest as our police officers and are tasked with being responsible for the inshore waterways from Wessex to Devon. At the moment there are 7 full time people employed as fisheries enforcement officers but when they re-organised this will fall to 5. An almost impossible task, to patrol and police such a large area.

This lack of manpower and the enormity of the task has resulted in the creation of the Fisheries Enforcement Campaign – working in partnership with and making use of voluntary bailiff services. There was a suggestion about 3 years ago in the South East of England to form such an alliance with local fisheries and fishing clubs and make use of their voluntary bailiffs as support to those of the E/A. This has been piloted in the areas of Kent and looks now if it is being offered or promoted in the Wessex area.

This is being supported by the Angling Trust and involves the Police; The Association of Chief Police Officers; National Wildlife Crime Unit and others.

Being a voluntary Club bailiff is very different to being a “Volunteer Bailiff” working within the Angling Trust system. Firstly you have to be a member of the Angling Trust and will have passed a Criminal Records Bureau check before you would be allowed to join the Voluntary Bailiff service. Within the SE there are 70 Voluntary bailiffs acting as the “Eyes and Ears” of the Trust. The SE area are proposing to “warrant” 8 of their Volunteers, as EA / VBS bailiffs.

“Successful applicants are trained by the Environment Agency and Angling Trust during a mandatory one day induction. During this important day volunteers receive presentations on the Voluntary Bailiff Service's organization and structure, and Agency procedures, intelligence gathering, reporting and expectations. Volunteers have the opportunity to meet existing Volunteer Bailiffs, Area Co-ordinators, and both Trust and Agency staff. Upon successful conclusion of this training, new Volunteer Bailiffs are issued a photo identity card, Volunteers' Handbook, and a Voluntary Bailiff Service pocket notebook.”

Phase One

Law enforcement today is driven by intelligence. This is especially relevant to the Environment Agency which is not, it must be remembered, resourced to respond immediately to every reported fisheries incident. Information and incident reports are analyzed to identify problems, to which resources are deployed to resolve. For this reason it is absolutely imperative that all anglers report information and incidents to the Agency on 0800 80 70 60. It is intelligence gathering and incident reporting that Volunteer Bailiffs are involved with during Phase One. During this initial probationary period, Volunteer Bailiffs

have no powers and are not expected to identify themselves to or approach anglers on the bank; their role is to submit essential intelligence and report incidents, in the same way Neighborhood Watch works throughout the wider community.

Phase Two

In the proposed Phase Two, selected Volunteer Bailiffs will be given further training in angling law, the Police & Criminal Evidence Act, Criminal Justice System and conflict resolution - becoming partially warranted and thereby empowered to inspect rod licenses and deal with certain bylaw offences. At that stage Volunteer Bailiffs will be governed by the Environment Agency's Codes of Conduct and line managed by Agency Fishery Team Leaders.

Phase

Three

Ultimately it may be decided to give selected partially warranted Volunteer Bailiffs all the training necessary to achieve a full warrant, including enhanced conflict resolution and issue of full personal protection equipment. Again, fully warranted Volunteer Bailiffs will be line managed by Agency Fishery Team Leaders. Indeed, in Phases Two and Three, a more accurate term for our Volunteer Bailiffs would actually be 'Volunteer Fishery Enforcement Officer'.

Club bailiffs have been advised about these changes outside the Wessex area and this presentation from the E/A at Sparshot has served to remind us that we have little coverage from the E/A enforcement officers in our area and that we may well look for volunteers from our own club bailiffs to join this necessary method of policing our waters.

Fisheries Enforcement workshops will be delivered in all English regions Surry & Kent in Nov / Dec 2014 the NE & NW in 2015.

Our bailiffs will continue to police our waters and make themselves known to our anglers checking their membership and requesting to see the anglers EA rod license as without a valid license for Coarse; Trout or migratory Trout and Salmon the angler cannot fish our waters.

I hope you have made good use of your fishing opportunities this season and visited our fisheries as often as you are able and perhaps met one or more of our club bailiffs.



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