

NEWBURY ANGLING ASSOCIATION



Founded 1878

PRESIDENT
Steve Pallett

CHAIRMAN
Dougie Hall

**VICE CHAIRMAN , SECRETARY
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All Currently vacant

FISHERY MANAGER
Paul Futcher

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
Dave Smith - retiring

HEAD BAILIFF
Rob Allen

**TREASURER &
NEWSLETTER EDITOR**
Martin Strike

THE NAAN SPRING 2024

Butter Fish Naan



Welcome to this, the 10th edition of the current generation of our quarterly newsletter.

We are delighted to confirm our support for Reading & District AA's Kennet Coarse Fish

Hatchery project geared to repopulating our river. Read all about it within. You'll also find a reminder of this newsletter's predecessor from its then editor, Keith Moores and contributions from some of our current members young and even younger. But inevitably much of this this issue will focus on the floods that have again affected much of the Kennet valley. The thoughts of the CRT and ARK are included, but first it's straight over to the chairman for the latest.

The club will continue to keep members abreast of developments on the flooding and other issues as they happen via email to the address you have provided to Clubmate. If you are not receiving these, please check your junk mail or contact us via www.newburyaa.org.uk

The Editor

FORCE MAJEURE

By Dougie Hull, chairman, NAA

Hopefully, by using the above title I have managed to grab your attention.

Definition: force majeure, refers to unforeseeable and extraordinary events or circumstances that are beyond the control of parties involved in an arrangement/ contract.

Trigger: These events can include natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, **floods**), pandemics, wars, or other unforeseen occurrences.

So, what has the above got to do with NAA you may ask. Well over the last six months we have had an unprecedented number (10 & counting) of named storms that have caused widespread flooding nationally as well as locally. The local flooding that has occurred has been the worst in living memory. The extent of the rain or the prolonged periods of down pours could not have been foreseen or anticipated.



Yes, NAA lakes have been flooded in the past (as they are situated on a flood plain), but not to this extent and not for such long periods of time. The ground is so saturated that even a normal amount of rain is causing water levels to rise again. Subsequently the water levels have not dropped at Bellwood & the Widmead Complex by any significant amount, and if they have, they have risen once again. The River Kennet & the Kennet & Avon Canal have both burst their banks in numerous places hence local flood plains are probably at maximum capacity.



The diagram shows multiple breaches of the River Kennet and the large mass of water flowing in the direction of the Widmead Complex.

The NAA fisheries and bailiff teams have been out on a regular basis assessing the situation. Even the experienced members of our teams are not allowed on the closed complexes unaccompanied due to safety concerns.

We are not the only organisations or fishing club locally to be so affected even local golf clubs have had to close their greens to prevent damage occurring due to the greens being saturated.

Unfortunately, due to the way our gravel pits/ lakes were created the margins drop down very quickly into 4 to 6ft on average, or deeper, of water under normal conditions. These depths have now increased by 3 to 4ft (so now 7 to 10ft). Subsequently it is too dangerous to allow angling to take place until such time as the banksides are safe to access. One slip and it would be very difficult to get back out of such cold and deep water.

What has NAA been doing in the meantime you are probably asking; plans are in place to get the lakes fishable once the water recedes. However, this will not be a quick fix. Also, committee members have been in touch with the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Team, the Environment Agency and the Canal & River Trust. But no positive feedback or in some cases any form of comment has been received at this point.

What can members do? When it is appropriate, please volunteer for work parties to assist in getting the fisheries back up and running. Many hands make light work.

Also, it must be pointed out that everyone involved with the management of the club from Trustees to Bailiffs and everyone in between does so voluntarily. If personnel were paid for the work they do the cost of Permits would be more than doubled.

Thanks for your continued support during these unprecedented times.

AROUND THE FISHERIES

Bellwood Protection

We are currently in discussion with the Canal and River Trust with regard to their proposed repairs of the canal bank which runs alongside the Bellwood bank. When this breeches, water flows directly onto our site and compounds the flooding issues that the lake has had in the last two years. We have asked CRT not only to fix the breeches but to raise the level of the canal bank to reduce the chances of overflow. We are waiting to hear if they intend to make proposals. In the meantime we are looking at the feasibility of digging a ditch on our land between the canal and Bellwood banks to keep a proportion of excess water out of the lake.

Talking Bellwood, the store has had an alarm upgrade with motion sensors and cameras soon to be added.

Prize Winning Trout from Town Stretch of K&A Canal



Regular readers of the NAAN may recall this picture of Joshua Golding with this fabulous trout. He submitted the picture to The Canal & River Trust and was voted runner up in their catch of the month competition for December.

According to the CRT's website, 'To enter this competition, an individual must comment with a photo on the catch of the month post on the Canal & River Trust Angling Facebook page.'

Well done again, Joshua.

Speen Moors

The club have recently held a constructive meeting with the landowners of our stretch of fishing rights at Speen. They are happy for us to come up with a management plan and have pledged the services of two river keepers for two weeks to help with any work that is agreed. Though there will be a restriction on bringing heavy machinery on to their land, we may at least be able to start addressing the worsening picture of fallen trees and breached banks. It's a start, and timing will depend on acceptance of our plans and observing the bird nesting season.



Temporary Extra Rod Allowances

Members are reminded that the winter allowance of a second rod at Marshalls (Willows) and a third rod at Collins is now over. Findings from these allowances will be discussed by the committee and a decision as to whether to reintroduce for next winter will be communicated nearer the time.

Work at Widmead

Much work is required around the lakes at Widmead (ie Collins/Knotts/Dobsons/Dixons). A visit was to be arranged with Natural England to establish if any of the planned work requires consent and to discuss the new Management Plan for the Widmead SSSI. Prior to this as we reported last newsletter, we will produce an outline plan of the work and stocking we are proposing to do. As you can imagine, this has been postponed by the flooding of the last few months. This means if you have a view as to what you would like to be included, there is still time contact us as the email address at the top of this newsletter. We received precisely no replies to our last invitation which is a shame, but it is your opportunity to chip in positively with how you would like your club to progress.

Regulation Changes

At two recent committee meetings the following regulation changes were discussed and voted in before being communicated to all members by email:

1 - No braid lines to be used (except for spodding/marking rods and when predator fishing).

Braided mainline and hooklengths have a very low diameter and has no stretch compared to using the same strain mono/fluoro which means braid can tuck itself behind and lift scales more easily and the force of the pull on the rod. Because there is not much give in the rod/line it can cause 'cheese-wire' damage to the fishes lips especially if the hook is well set. We have an unacceptable number of fish (of all species) with damaged mouths and this is seen as a positive action to reduce further fish damage. Requests to allow braid for purposes, such as feeder fishing for bream etc were considered by the committee, but the comparatively small size of all of our waters makes distance casting and bite detection perfectly acceptable via mono/fluoro which have less propensity to damage the mouths of all fish, not just carp.

2 - When targeting carp, a sling must be used to transfer any fish of over 20lbs when returning from net to water.

3 - The 'Magic Twig' spring-loaded hooking device (pictured here) and similar designs been banned from NAA waters. This follows a review and in line with many other club' policies,

Please observe these new regulations with immediate effect. Please also understand that they have each been brought in to increase fish welfare and not to spoil your fun. Should a bailiff find you in breach of these (or any existing regulations) they are within their rights to ask you to leave the fishery and report you for possible disciplinary action. The full rule book is available both on the Clubmate app and our own website.



Tree Survey

By the time this newsletter comes to publication we were due to have had a professional tree survey for the lands that we own at Rawlings, Widmead, Pallett's and Bellwood completed, but this has been delayed by the flooding. The purpose is so we can plan and prioritise any trees that could pose a danger to members. Of course we lost a few in the winter winds, but until works are completed please be particularly mindful when fishing near mature or dead trees, particularly in windy conditions.

River Close Season

A reminder to all that the river coarse fishing season is now closed, opening again on 16th June. A note that you CAN fish our Avington stretches of the canal all year round as this has no river sections. The dry fishing season for trout opened on April 1st and will close on 30th September. Under NAA regulations, only two rainbow trout may be taken away on any one day, and all brown trout returned unharmed to the water.

2024/2025 Season Tickets

The club have decided to use the services of Clubmate for the forthcoming season. Though there were teething problems, we feel that these have now been addressed. Thus:

EXISTING members {including Associates) should renew their membership for the season starting 16th June 2024 via either the Clubmate app, or by attending one of two membership sessions to be held at Bellwood on:

Saturday May 25th Time 09:30 to 14:00

Saturday June 1st Time 09:30 to 14:00

NEW members living WITHIN 12 miles from Newbury Town Hall MUST complete an application form from the NAA website and take it completed along with a passport-style photo and proof of address to Thatcham Angling, Sagecroft Road, Thatcham, (where they can pick up their venue key, if required) or attending either of the above membership sessions at Bellwood.

NEW members living OUTSIDE of 12 miles of Newbury, can apply to be considered as Associate members, though in order to give local anglers the best chance of having swims to fish on our most popular lakes numbers are limited. Should you wish to apply, please email us an application form taken from the website to mail@newburyanglingassociation.crmil.co.uk. We will quickly let you know if you have been successful and if so how to complete the opening process.

We appreciate that through no fault of the club, many of our lakes have been inaccessible for much of the season. The clubs running costs, like everyone's, has risen significantly, and who knows what work will be required once the banks are accessible. The committee have decided that membership fees will remain unchanged to reflect this. Thus membership cost is:

* Senior inc Ladies	£80.00
* Junior (aged 12 to 16 inclusive)	£10.00
* Junior (aged under 12)	FREE
* Pensioners (Concessionary rod licence)	£50.00
* Pensioners (over 75)	FREE
* Disabled (concessionary rod licence)	£45.00
* Associate	£105.00
*Associate Concessionary (Disabled and OAP)	£85.00

For seniors, pensioners, disabled and associate memberships there is an optional 2 rod (specimen) permit supplement of £40.

2024 AGM

All current members are invited to attend our AGM at Thatcham Football Club, RG19 4PA on Thursday 11th April at 7:30pm. It would be good to see you there. Read more about this in the Chairman's report below



Vacancies remain for committee member positions. After a recent email plea we are delighted to have received a number of offers from members to join the committee. We warmly thank all who contacted us. These have all being given consideration. Our main need remains to fill the

number of vacancies you see at the header of this newsletter.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

by **Dougie Hull**

This particular section is going to be short and unfortunately not so sweet. Please read on.



By the time you will be reading this spring's NAAN we will be officially into spring so let us hope for plenty of sunshine and warm weather to dry up our venues.

As you will have read, the upcoming AGM is scheduled for the 11th of April at 7:30 pm at Thatcham Football Club, so hopefully we will see you there.

Unfortunately, over the last month or so a group or groups of so-called anglers have attempted to gain access to the Widmead Complex during the hours of darkness, on several occasions. The complex is closed for safety reasons as the banks are extremely dangerous at the moment. They are very slippery and submerged in water. If members or non-members are caught on NAA closed venues, they will immediately be banned for life. Also, the police will be contacted, and trespassing charges will be pressed. These people are breaking the law and putting themselves and others at risk should they fall in during the hours of darkness in treacherous conditions. This is not the sort of announcement NAA was anticipating or wanting to have to make.

As I said earlier let us hope for some dry and warm weather in the months ahead. Tightlines.

FISHERY MANAGER'S REPORT

by **Paul Futcher**

Hi All. Winter is the time to do most of our maintenance work – we can see what we are doing, the birds aren't nesting and there's less fire risk from burning. Of course this winter work has been pretty much impossible with the floods. We had several tons of aggregate delivered to start filling the wooden swims on the Widmead, but these now sit under water. We have tried to organise working groups on the few occasions that water levels have allowed, but these have had to be cancelled when more rain arrived. We have also tried



hard to keep you up to do that with regular emails to all members as well as the traditional method of the member's Facebook page. Please note that we are as keen as anyone to get everyone up and fishing again as soon as possible, so please refrain from walking the lakes while they are closed to minimise compaction.



Thanks to John Cox who has bravely continued his maintenance work as Speen Moors when he could, and to Joe Wilkins of Newbury Tree Services for removing an exceptionally large willow next to the gate at Pallets. this tree had progressively been leaning over due to its weight and was on the point of collapsing onto the gate and otter fence.

HEAD BAILIFF'S REPORT

by **Rob Allen**



We currently have a total of 15 official bailiffs and one on a 3 month trial period covering off and monitoring all of our venues. All bailiffs have been issued with bailiff warrant cards and report books. We have sufficient bailiff numbers for the remainder of this season but this will be reviewed in time for next June. Should you wish to be considered as a bailiff we would love to hear from you – please email us at the address on this newsletter.

Random rig checks are also being performed by our bailiffs and are being recorded in the notes section of the bailiff Clubmate App across all our venues.

A bailiff can check a members notes to see if they have been rig checked before or if the member has been reported for any previous issues. We also have eyes and ears on our venues all the time as many of our bailiffs are on the banks fishing or are just walking round. Unrecorded reports of who's out on our lakes are also posted in the bailiffs WhatsApp group on a regular basis. This allows us to monitor how busy the lakes are and report it back to our members on the club's Facebook page when it is requested.

The new regulation changes about the use of braided mainline, carp slings and the Magic Twig as already mentioned above will all form part of future bailiff checks.

I'd like to thank you all for your patience, understanding and loyalty during these tough times regarding the flooding and I shall look forward to catching up with some of you on the bank some time.

Tight lines and good luck to you all for the 2024 season.

CANALS & RIVERS TRUST UPDATE

By **Rob Coles, Area Operations Manager, East Kennet & Avon**

The South of the country had rain more or less for last three weeks on the lead up to Christmas and New Year. The last storm brought with it a deep low pressure system which affected everywhere south of the M4.



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

The East of the Kennet & Avon Canal is made up of 40% canal and 60% canalised river. This is fed at the summit initially by Wilton Water then the River Kennet. The last low system fell on saturated ground, with already ground water flooding.

We note a cause and affect with flooding. Firstly Wilton Water with huge concerns about flooding from the village of Wilton at the head of the lake had a huge increase of water, this then fed down through our system of canals to join the Kennet west of Newbury. The huge influx of water from the Kennet meant that Newbury suffered localised flooding. Our operations team with the assistance 3rd party sluice operators and the

Environment Agency held the water at various locations to minimise the damage downstream at Newbury and other locations downstream to Reading. Decisions had to be made about potential damage to assets vs damage to property.

The EA issued a number of flood warnings to the town of Marlborough, Newbury and from Sheffield Lock to Reading. Our operations team especially our on-call team worked relentlessly clearing by weirs, balancing sluices, liaising with other water control operators to pass as much water safety through our system often out till the early hours of the morning. Specialist knowledge on all the variables of water control was applied with a number of staff giving up their weekends to aid in the relief.



Water levels reached a new high in Newbury with flows reaching 36 cubic meters of water a second in the town (our red river level is set at anything higher than 10 cubic meters per second)

We now face the aftermath and assessment of the damage caused. Many properties have suffered flooding especially near Burghfield and South of Reading. In some locations water is flowing off the fields and lakes back into the river system.

There is damage to towpaths with a number of minor breaches however considering the volume of water damage to our assets remains minimal. Our banks have

remained resilient and our assets particularly our water control structures all performed admirably.

On 9th January, the local team wrestled with clearing a number of major sluices. Victoria sluice in the heart of Newbury had two large bins trapped in two of the four sluices. This took a team of four, three hours to remove. The result was almost instant with water levels dropping and towpaths not being inundated locally.

Water levels are generally dropping however all rivers remain extremely high and will be unnavigable for many weeks to come.

ACTION for the RIVER KENNET (ARK)

By Anna Forbes – ARK Senior Project Officer & Volunteer Co-ordinator



Hello! I am delighted to share with you details of a recent ARK project regarding Flooding and Nature Flood Management.

What's Re-wiggling?

Freeing rivers from the artificial constraints imposed on them in the past by humans brings multiple benefits, from reducing downstream flooding to wins for wildlife.



The River Og is a small tributary of the Kennet, it joins the Kennet on the east of Marlborough, about 19 miles from Newbury.

Our River Og Rewigging project is now complete and we are sharing why we and many other organisations are putting the bends back into rivers.

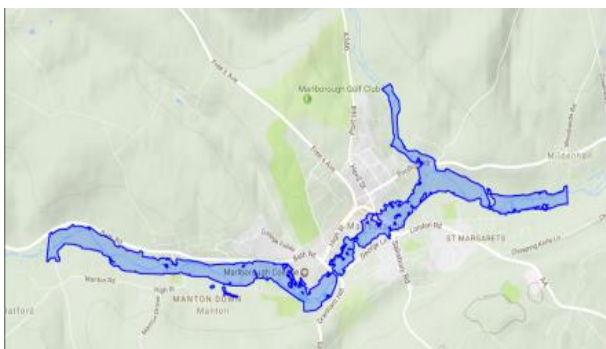
Natural wiggles in rivers are known as meanders, they create flow diversity which means within the river and the adjoining land there's more variety of habitats so more species can thrive. With permission from the landowner and the Environment Agency 1,000 metres of the Og upstream of Ogbourne St Andrew has been returned to its natural path in the floodplain known as the paleo channel, with

a small diversion about 440 m below Hallam Bridge and the main diversion about 700 m below the bridge.

Natural Flood Management (NFM)

Making space for water and storing it safely in the landscape is something that needs to be addressed across the country, as we face more extreme weather events.

One NFM measure is reconnecting rivers to their floodplain. Floodplains are spaces to hold water and reduce downstream flooding.



The Og joins the flooded Kennet from the north

The low sinuous riverbank associated with a natural chalk stream allows the river to spill into the surrounding meadows. These meadows act like giant sponges and are spaces to hold water back and store it. This reduces flooding for downstream villages in comparison to rivers that cannot breach their banks, where the water rushes straight down to the first point where it can escape its constraint.

For example, the flooding in Ogbourne St Andrew on 5th January 2024 would have been worse if some of the storm flow had not been stored on the water meadow.

Working with bold and progressive farmers and other landowners, we can together improve rivers and the wider landscape for people and for nature.

Changing weather patterns

The calendar year 2023 was the wettest on record with a total 1150mm rain, beating the previous wettest year 2002. Storm Henk the day before the flood brought 29.3mm. In a typical year we would expect rain at this magnitude to occur four or five times, yet it followed a series of depressions during December which produced 142.8mm rain (50.1mm above the average) and the second wettest December on record.

The intense rain of Storm Henk on 4th January 2024, coming on top of a series four other named storms that brought December's rainfall to 150% of the long-term average, landed on saturated ground and added to the already high groundwater levels to create exceptional flood levels for the River Kennet at Marlborough and the River Og at Poulton Farm. At both gauges, the river flows recorded were the highest since the gauge records started (1972 for Marlborough and 1980 for Poulton Farm).



The stretch of the Og we've been working on for our Og Rewigging project had in the past been rerouted by man into a straight channel at the edge of a meadow. This will have had a limited value for wildlife.

Now back in its historic channel, the river is more resilient to the changing and more extreme weather patterns we are all experiencing. The Og response to Storm Henk was more gradual and peaked a couple of hours earlier than the Kennet.

It is widely understood now that rewiggled rivers, slow the movement of water through the catchment. The river realignment and flood plain connection held water on the flood plain upstream of Ogbourne St Andrew, reducing the volume and rate of water that reached the village.

The ecological benefits are already evident as the river re-naturalises. The wet meadows are attracting more wildlife too! From insects to birdlife, already snipe and a huge flock of lapwing have been seen.

Wonderful winterbournes

Winterbournes (defined as a stream, typically on chalk or limestone, which flows only after wet weather) may not always look amazing, but they are! Even when dry for many months of the year the riverbed, the plants that remain and tiny hidden invertebrates are all integral to the winterbourne being a functioning ecosystem.

Some species have adapted specifically to life in this underrated part of the chalk stream.

The Og is a winterbourne upstream of Bay Meadows and naturally transitions between flowing, ponded, and dry states, creating an ever-changing mosaic of habitats. Our Rewiggling project will allow the winterbourne to function as it would have done before man modified and moved the channel in the past to suit the needs at that time.

The historic channel

Humans have a long history of modifying rivers and in the past our water meadows were a means to provide livestock with 'the early bite', by rerouting and straightening the river channel to the edges of a meadow farmers could 'drown' the meadow and bring on early fresh grasses for their sheep.

This would have been the case at Ogbourne St Andrew, but with traditions such as these no longer in practice it is better for the river and the wider landscape to be once again adapted by man but this time to return the Og to a route it would have taken before the water meadow 'drowner' system.



THATCHAM FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME – A BYSTANDER’S VIEW

By Martin Strike

You don't need me to tell you about the effect on our venues, particularly Bellwood and the Widmead Complex of flooding in the last two years. More experienced members will recall that these areas flooded regularly in years gone by, but this is of little comfort now when the lakes being shut confine your tackle to the shed and yourself to those long put off DIY jobs at home. (DIY should always stand for Don't Involve Yourself in my book).

Anyone who has taken a train ride from Newbury to Paddington in the last week or two can't fail to have noticed the massive residual flooding alongside the Kennet, K&C and Thames. It's little consolation – but it's not just us!

We hear that global warming means ever more rain and extreme weather, and feel the short-termism when more buildings go up in flood plains, but does this condemn us to more regular flooding in future? Who knows. Getting accurate information appears to be as tricky as catching Redeye Bass in the Kennet & Avon. I've contacted Thames Water, the Thatcham Flood Alleviation and the EA for their views on the future for our area, but none have been forthcoming. You can draw your own conclusions from that.

In the absence of direct answers, I have made a Google-search in order to provide you with some of the readily-available information about our local area if you do not already know it. I present this to you now. It may not survive close scrutiny and is certainly not a complete picture. Many members reading this will know a lot more than I do, I'm sure. If your work, knowledge or contacts can add to this picture, please contact us via mail@newburyanglingassociation.crmail.co.uk and I would be delighted to pass it on to readers of future issues. Here goes with what I can gather:

I – Newbury. creates a pinch point in the Kennet valley, with all water to the west having to flow under the bridge on the High Street next to the Lock Stock and Barrel. It's perhaps surprising that there has never been more serious flooding of the town but this must be down to careful river level management up stream, (see the Winter 2023 newsletter article by the CRT) but consequently results in the extensive flooding of the likes of Speen Moors and beyond. Other towns would have a relief channel to divert and regulate the flow. The river flow rates under the Newbury High Street bridge in times of flood are off the scale. Newbury is vulnerable to river flooding as its canal and river water levels are as much as 2.5 metres higher than the surrounding floodplain, so excess water will always be liable to tip over. The town flooded in 1947, 1960, 2000 and 2003. The prospect of even more flooding led to the EA creating a Newbury flood alleviation scheme, which began in October 2012. The Newbury scheme consisted of flood defence work at 5 locations in the town centre. Walls and embankments were reinforced with ground level raising and improved drainage in key locations. The £2M cost was funded through Grant in Aid and third-party contributions from West Berkshire Council, Newbury Town Council and the Canal & Rivers Trust, local businesses and residents. The belief was that the scheme would 'reduce the risk of river flooding to the town to a 1-in-100 (1%) chance of flooding in any 1 year' and the EA estimated it would 'avoid damages of £33.7 million over the lifetime of the flood defence.'



The work was delayed by high groundwater levels and high flows in the River Kennet during the winter of 2012 to 2013, but the construction phase was completed in November 2013 and was one of the first schemes to be delivered under the government's 2011 flood and coastal resilience partnership funding policy. It was formally opened 7 February 2014 by Richard Benyon, the then MP for Newbury.

The scheme was tested by extremely high flows in the River Kennet in January and February 2014 and was seen to perform well in protecting the town from fluvial flooding, though, a few areas were identified as needing some additional work such as some surface run-off realignments and the re-instatement of the Northcroft ditch.

2 – Thatcham. On 20 July 2007 parts of Thatcham were flooded during a period of sustained heavy rain, during which three times the average July monthly rainfall hit the town in just 24 hours. While the rivers did not flood, surface water rose to about 4ft (1.2m) and the quantity of water flowing down the hills from Cold Ash and Bucklebury made many roads impassable and stranded hundreds of pupils at Kennet School who tried to wade with rope across Stoney Lane.

About 1,100 properties were affected; with many residents forced to move out into mobile homes. Club legend Steve Todd was living close to the Discovery Centre at the time and remembers: 'When the floods arrived in July 2007, the street was turned into a river, entering our house and many more. We did not get back to normal until February the following year. It was later I was to discover that the Ashbourne runs in a culvert at the bottom of the garden and was an open water course in the past. The main problem in the July was not only the volume of water but the fact there were obstructions in the culvert restricting the flow. There had been over 25 mm over the day before followed by a further 50mm on the Friday.'



In 2010, the council, together with the Environment Agency and Thames Water, produced a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) for Thatcham to save Steve's house and many hundreds of others would not go through the same experience again. This involved looking at detail at the surface water flow routes in the rural catchments above Thatcham where the flood water of 2007 came from. The SWMP identified a series of defence schemes located around Thatcham that they believed would significantly reduce the risk of future flooding.

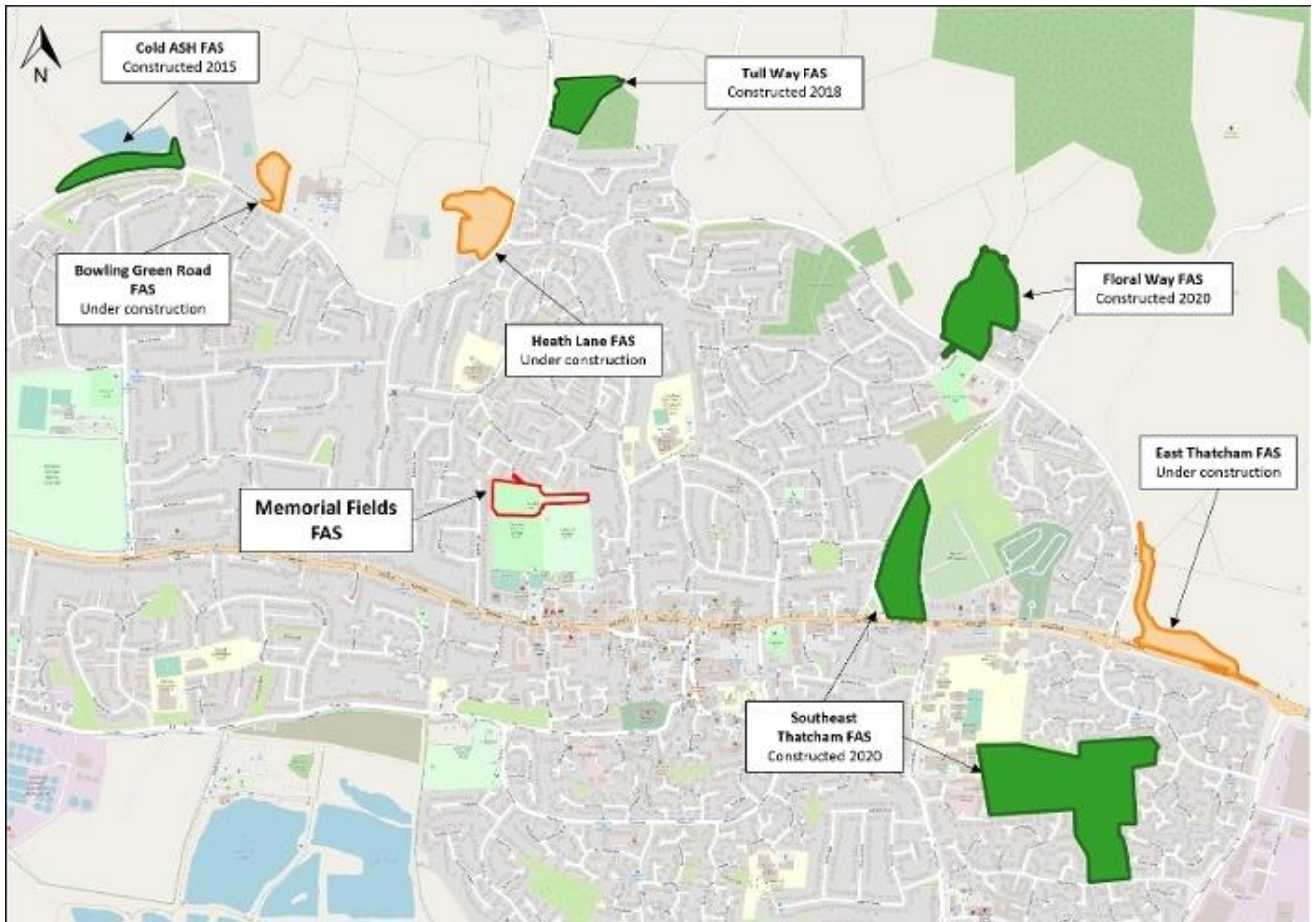
The schemes comprise of attenuation basins that will capture and store flood water during a severe storm and then release it at a controlled rate into existing underground sewers. This aimed to prevent the sewer inlets becoming overwhelmed and causing the water to spill over and flow above ground through Thatcham.

The designs were made to provide a level of protection to what was considered up to a 1 in 100 year storm, and a further 40% allowance added to take into account future climate change. The construction of the schemes was to be funded from grants awarded to West Berkshire Council by the Environment Agency and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. The soil excavated to create the basins will be used to form earth bunds to increase the amount of stored water and remainder set aside on highway verges to reduce costs and the carbon footprint of the construction works.



The first works at Cold Ash Hill were completed in 2014. This involves a 1.7 hectare basin with raised earth embankments which acts as a reservoir. With a storage capacity of 25,000 cubic metres (5.5 million gallons), it's job is control the flow of water entering the existing storm water sewer under Thatcham. The reservoir is normally dry apart from one corner which is permanently marshy and planted to provide wildlife habitats.

Once further constructions were completed at Tull Way, Floral Way and South East Thatcham, 913 properties were protected from the impact of surface water flooding. Construction is still underway to protect more. The detention basin at Bowling Green Road, with an area of 0.2 hectares, will provide approximately 2,750 metres cubed of flood storage while the basin at Heath Lane will have an area of 0.35 hectares and with a maximum embankment height of 0.6m will provide approximately 5,300 metres cubed of flood storage.

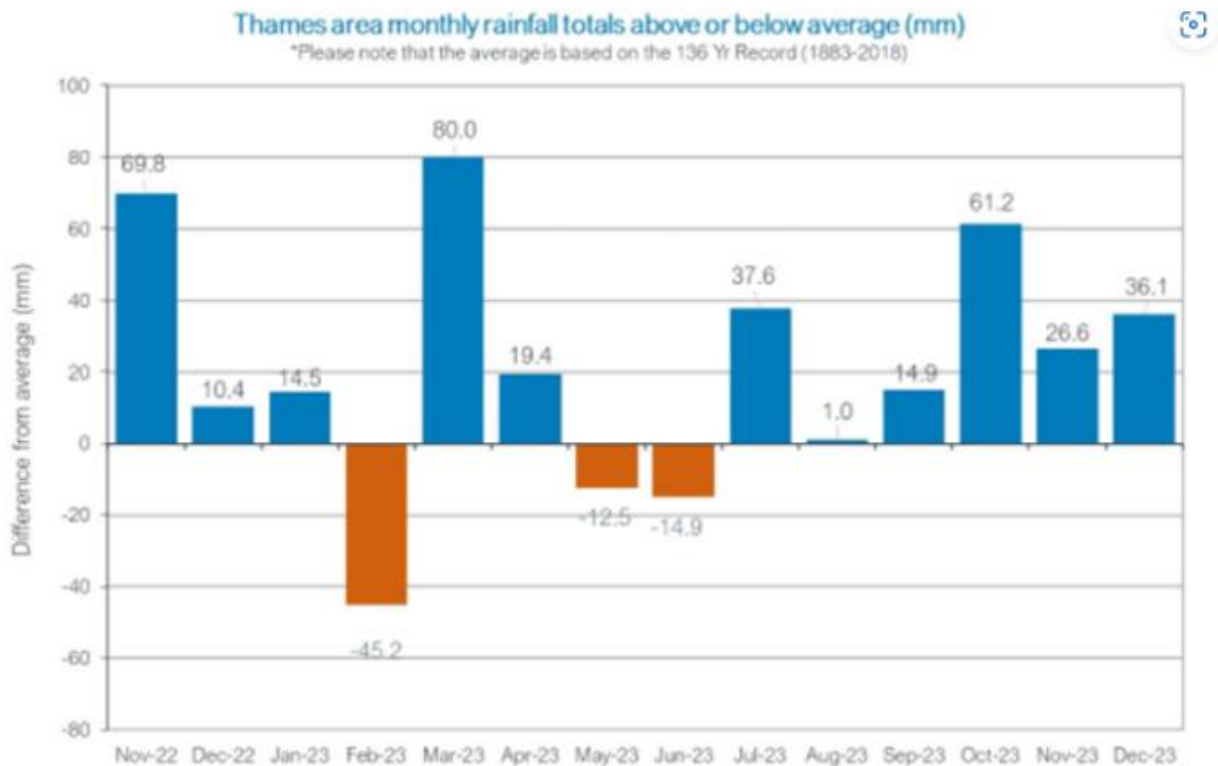


Despite the proposed benefits, the plans have not been met with universal approval. For example the aim of the Memorial Fields Scheme is to protect the remaining Thatcham properties which do not currently benefit from the other schemes in the area by 2024/25. Upon completion, a minimum of 73 properties would be at a lower risk of flooding through a 0.85-hectare flood detention basin and a 120m long swale. But the plans were met with objections in January 2024 due to lack of information and loss of playing field area at Thatcham Cricket Club – which shares the site. In the grand scheme of things, protecting houses will always be given priority over the protection of fishing venues, but it's the whole environment that is at risk. So where does that leave us on the river and lakes away from the majority of houses? One concern is that the Ash Bourne, the bourne that runs between the Discovery Centre and Marshalls (previously Willows) has overflowed the Discovery lake many times in recent years. Its source is in the Cold Ash area and is made up of numerous minor streams and ditches. These converge to create the bourne, dry in summer but very wet in winter and periods of heavy rain. It is served by the Cold Ash Hill sink, but just spills water to keep them empty and ready for any serious flooding. Most of the Ash Bourne's course runs underground until it reappears at the entrance to Muddy Lane and the Discovery car park. There are pipes which channel water into the Discovery lake at times of heavy rain. The excess, so far at least, has avoided Marshalls and crossed the track at the entrance to Rawlings and into Warwick lake, each time removing and damaging the road surface at the fishery entrance. The hope is that

much of the excess surface water that will now be captured once the alleviation scheme is fully operational. Thatcham Reed Beds themselves are part of the issue. Though categorised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (for more details see the Spring 2023 issue of the NAAN [here](#)) the reeds themselves add to the overall problem. I'm told a fixed dam to hold the water back was erected by the EA to keep water levels for the reed beds high. This replaced a previous hatched dam which could be opened to allow excess water out through Middle Ditch (the flowing water that runs between Knotts and Dobsons). This is no longer the case so any built up water now finds its way into Collins as well as the silting-up of Middle Ditch below this point. Being a SSSI, decisions on the management of the site is wholly in the hands of the EA, irrespective of our thoughts and desires as land owners. The situation is made even tougher with the railways owning land either side of the tracks. As mentioned in the news section above, a meeting is planned with the EA and we hope that they take into account our own wishes and thoughts about the land as well as their own. Of course, what rain we get in future is anyone's guess. As I inferred at the start, the object of this article is to present some of the information readily available. Please get in touch if you can correct this article or add any facts. Maybe the outlook is not so bleak, to use a little fish pun. One cup of comfort in the bathtub of worry is that as shown in the graph, in the Thames Valley, rainfall exceeded the long term average in 11 of the 14 months up to and including December 2023, so given the drought of the previous summer, perhaps this will turn out to be the exception rather than the rule.

If you believe you have anything constructive to add about what the club can realistically do to protect our fishing from flooding then please contact us.

Still, it could be worse. If you visit Oxford you will find the flooding situation deeper than ours, and further west, on the River Wye near Hereford, Steve Todd was fishing 'with the river 18 feet above normal level with trees and dead sheep passing down the middle.' And as Steve added, 'Anyway, we need water to survive and better floods than the fisheries drying out as in 1976'.



NEWS AND UPDATE

Remaining matches for the 23/24 season

DATE	VENUE	MATCH TIME	COMPETITION	TROPHY
April 2024				
Wed 18 th	Avington	10:00 – 15:00	Over 60's	
Sat 13/Sun 14 th	Knotts	12:00 – 12:00	24 Hr Carp Pairs Match	
May 2024				
Sat 11/Sun 12 th	Bellwood	12:00 – 12:00	24 hr Carp Match	

The Over 70's league finished for the season before winter and was won by Bill Bowsher for retaining his title. At the time of writing, the Over 60's League had one leg still to fish, with Dave Smith holding a pretty secure lead. Sadly, the floods meant that our popular Christmas Match (where anglers choose whether to fish Bellwood, the canal was postponed. The season's pike matches weren't a huge success. Well done to Nathan Wheeler for the largest fish of 7lb 2 with Archie Keep and Dougie Hull the other two anglers to score. No fish were caught on the leg at Speen nor the rearranged one at Enborne - where bright sun and frost conditions were always going to make it tricky. but then that's piking!

As at 1st April 2024, the current standings for the Over 60's and Over 70's leagues were:



Dave Smith

Over 60's League	points	Over 70's League	points
1 st - Dave Smith	70	1 st – Bill Bowsher	40
2 nd – Bill Bowsher	64	2 nd – Richard Wiggins	27
3 rd – Henry Sadler	54	3 rd = Henry Sadler	24
4 th – Richard Wiggins	49	3 rd = Brian Pallet	24
5 th – Mervyn Burrows	44	5 th = Tim Wirth	23
6 th – Tim Wirth	36	5 th = Mervyn Burrows	23



Bill Bowsher

At time of press the fixtures for the 2024/25 season Over 60's, Over 70's, carp, pike and matches are being agreed and will be published to all by email, website and future newsletters. The first fixtures of the new season follow below to whet your appetites. A lack of interest means that there is to be no Club Championship again this year, though you youngster match anglers are most welcome to participate in our charity, Christmas and New Year events. If you need further information on any match speak to me, Dave Smith on 01635 46285.

DATE	VENUE	MATCH TIME	COMPETITION	TROPHY
June 2024				
Wed 26 th	Alders	10:00 – 15:00	Over 60's	Field & Stream Cup Col Maxwell Trophy
July 2024				
Wed 3 rd	Marshalls	10:00 – 15:00	Over 70's Rover	
Sat 6 th /Sun 7 th	Knotts	12:00 – 12:00	24 Hour Carp Pairs	
Sat 13 th	Enborne canal (Up)	10:00 - 15:00	NAA v Shipston AA	(08:30 draw)
Wed 17 th	Bellwood	10:00 – 15:00	Over 60's	Field & Stream Cup
Wed 24 th	Dobsons	10:00 – 15:00	Over 60's	Field & Stream Cup C R Sutton Cup
Wed 31 st	Bellwood	10:00 – 15:00	Over 70's Rover	

KENNET COARSE FISH HATCHERY

Those anglers lucky enough to fish the River Kennet below Newbury in 1970s and 80s will remember a swift flowing, crystal clear chalk stream with abundant shoals of chub, barbel, roach and dace drifting over golden gravels between gently swaying beds of ranunculus (Water Crowfoot). Whilst the river still holds a much reduced population of bigger fish it is a far cry from the abundant fishery it once was. The re-opening of the canal in 1990 saw a dramatic rise in sediment loads leading to increased turbidity, the siltation of vital gravel spawning beds and a huge decline in ranunculus - an important habitat for invertebrates.

And then came the Signal Crayfish! The decision to allow the importation of signal crayfish from 1976 has been nothing short of disastrous and has created predation of plague proportions as they spread into many river systems including the Kennet. Despite regular trapping their numbers remain unsustainably high with the one crayfish trapper working for Reading & District Angling Association (RDAA) removing an estimated 100 tonnes from the Kennet in the last ten years. Crayfish average 25 to the kilo equating to 2,500,000 crayfish eating their way through invertebrates, fish spawn and displacing vast quantities of silt as they burrow into the river banks. It is little wonder that coarse fish recruitment of gravel spawners such as chub, barbel and dace, is now so poor.



What, if anything, to be done? The successful introduction of grayling by the Reading & District Angling Association (RDAA) and the Environment Agency into the Kennet in Padworth demonstrated that the water quality remains good enough to allow these most delicate of fish to survive and grow. The presence of mature grayling in the lower river gave confidence to believe that a coarse fish hatchery would be a viable project to help repopulate this wonderful river to something like its former glory. And so, on February 16th 2024, DEFRA Minister Richard Benyon officially opened a groundbreaking new coarse fish hatchery which local anglers hope will help to replenish stocks of coarse fish in the river Kennet.

The Berkshire hatchery, situated close to the river on land donated by the Englefield Estate, is a collaborative project led by the RDAA with support from the angling clubs and fisheries along the Kennet Valley including Newbury AA, Civil Service AS, Red Spinners AS, CALPAC and Action for the River Kennet. The Environment Agency's National Coarse Fish Farm near Calverton, Nottinghamshire, provided technical advice and support, and as a result have created a unique, not for profit coarse fish hatchery, dedicated solely to supplying the whole of the Lower River Kennet, from Newbury to Reading, with fish such as chub, barbel, dace and roach. The aim will be to grow juvenile fish, large enough to escape crayfish predation and in sufficient numbers to reestablish a critical spawning mass.



From an empty plot to the first fully functioning coarse fish hatchery on the Kennet

How will the Hatchery work?

The goal is not to artificially increase the number of fish in the river with farm bred fish as only brood fish from the Kennet will be used and removed from the Kennet to the hatchery, just as they are at the point of spawning naturally. Before returning the mature 'borrowed' fish, the eggs will be harvested, mixed with the milt from the males and then nurtured within the hatchery until such a time that they can stand the maximum chance of survival in the wild. After this, 70% of the free swimming fry - now able to escape the crayfish - will all be released into appropriate locations below Newbury as do so anywhere nearer Reading would effectively be re-stocking the Thames! The remaining 30% will be kept at the hatchery for longer, to be released later, as mature 'two summer plus' fish, but to ensure successful spawning and to make the first few days/weeks of their lives easier when they are most at risk from crayfish predation. The Hatchery begins operation in March 2024 and will start production each year, initially with dace, followed by roach, then chub and barbel - just as happens in the wild.

The hatchery, will be run as a not-for-profit enterprise with a project group chaired by longtime Kennet angler, RDAA president and Angling Trust founder, Martin Salter. It will be managed by the Association's fisheries manager, Del Shackelford, with advice and support from experienced coarse fish specialist Viv Shears together with the Environment Agency and the Institute of Fisheries Management. The project group board will include representatives from Kennet Valley Fisheries Association (KVFA) who will provide the vice chairman and treasurer, and will include space for the EA, CRT, ARK and other environmental interests. Clubs and fisheries who hold fishing rights between Reading and Newbury have been asked to provide local input, feedback and help with funding. Local volunteers will assist with the day to day running.



The project has been built and paid for by RDAA from its own funds and through a combination of donations and grants. The facilities will remain the property of RDAA but the benefits will be delivered to the river as a whole and to those clubs and fisheries who hold fishing rights between Reading and Newbury. Progress will be reviewed on an annual basis and separate and transparent accounts will be maintained. However, with running costs expected to exceed £5k per annum the project will be heavily reliant on financial contributions from those clubs, fisheries and individual anglers who will either benefit from this work or who retain a long standing affection for this beautiful river. The NAA committee recently voted to support the project with a contribution of £1,500. Should you wish to make a personal contribution you can do so as follows:

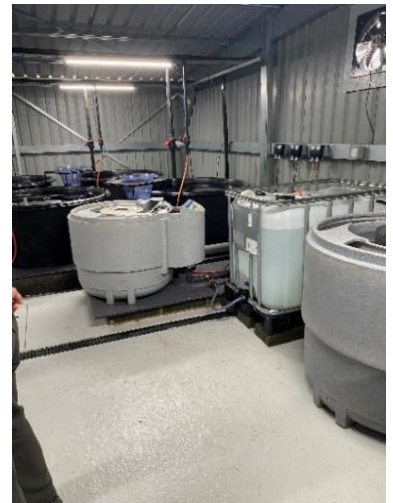
TSB	Sort code: 30-94-46	Account number: 07062216
Account name: Kennet Valley Fishery Association		Ref : Hatchery

A You Tube video is also available here: [The Development of the Kennet Hatchery - YouTube](#)

Speaking at the Hatchery opening Martin Salter said: "Those anglers lucky enough to fish the River Kennet below Newbury in 1970s and 80s will remember a swift flowing, crystal clear chalk stream with abundant shoals of chub, barbel, roach and dace drifting over golden gravels between gently swaying beds of ranunculus. It was as close to a 'fishing heaven as a river could be'. Whilst the Kennet still holds a much reduced population of bigger fish it is a far cry from the abundant fishery it once was. The re-opening of the canal in 1990 saw a

dramatic rise in sediment loads leading to increased turbidity, the siltation of vital gravel spawning beds and a huge decline in ranunculus - an important habitat for invertebrates. Added to this has been the signal crayfish plague so it's little wonder our hard pressed coarse fish need a helping hand to restore them to sustainable levels of recruitment."

RDA Fisheries Manager, Del Shackelford, who visited the EA's Calverton facility to gain valuable insights into how the Kennet hatchery could operate effectively, said: "The presence of mature grayling in the lower river gave us the confidence to believe that a coarse fish hatchery like this would be a viable project to help restore this wonderful river to something like its former glory. This is just one small part of a 15 year plus project to try and revive our beloved Kennet - a river that



has suffered for many years from the effects of urban run-off, siltation and invasive species predation. Without our intervention to address such things as water quality, in-stream habitat and fish recruitment we fear, as the science tells us, that our river will continue to decline."

David Marshall and Chris Fox visited the hatchery on behalf of NAA. David added, "This is an exciting project, the first of its kind in the UK. We are proud to have been involved with this from the start and we are also part of the steering group ongoing. This is a bold move to attempt to redress the balance in the Kennet which has come under pressure in recent years from Crayfish, the effects of the canal and pollution. Chalk streams are a unique water course in this country and any help we can give to increase fish stocks can only be a good move forward. A lot of hard work has gone into setting up this hatchery and this will continue until hopefully one day fish stocks and water quality will return to the levels we remember in the 70s & 80s. We have all watched the decline, it is now our opportunity to try and do something about it."

Important though this project is, fish do, of course, face many the other challenges, such as predation by cormorants and mink. The successful re-introduction of grayling has been positive, but Angling clubs have also worked with the Environment Agency, Action for the River Kennet (ARK) and other partners on a number of initiatives to improve the river environment for fish. This includes the creation of juvenile fish shelters, adding gravel to the riverbed and installing areas of woody debris. NAA's stretch of the Kennet at Brimpton was afforded such work in 2023 and an article from the project manager Rupert Kelton is planned for appearance in the Summer newsletter.



OUR BEST SESSIONS

By Harry Louch & Archie Moore

HARRY - I had one of my best sessions down at Bellwood. Firstly, I walked the lake and noticed a couple of fish bosh, which was an initial indicator of where Archie and me should set up. My session didn't start well as I found my bite alarm batteries had died, then went from bad to worse as I had two hook pulls which I was devastated about. After this I changed my rigs and did not have a bite in 24 hours after this! I knew there was low air pressure coming in the night so I put a lot of bait out which I knew could be a mistake, but I took the chance. After putting the bait out, I rested the swim for at two hours. I got the rods back out and after just 20 minutes I landed my first fish of the session - a 15lb common which was a start. As soon as I started eating my dinner, I got a run which also resulted in a 19lb common. The action did not stop as the light faded and my margin rod when off at 11, the bait taken by a fish known as "the no dorsal common" which was 20lb. I knew after this it was going to be a good night. After I put the margin rod back out, I started to drift off while the rain was hacking down on the bivvy. I had a slow take, and when the bobbin when back down straight away I knew it was a bream. Not my target fish but they all count! After the bream I decided to reel in my rods until it was light as it was tipping down. When I woke up, I cast one my margin rod out and left the other out the water. I was wondering if I should move it again when it rodded off! I thought it was another bream as it was not fighting, though it was heavy. It was plodding straight into the bank and then it suddenly shot off and was holding deep. At this point I thought it was still small. But I was wrong. After beasting me up for over 20 minutes it finally went into the net, and weighed a whopping 27lb which was a new pb for me. Before releasing the fish, I got the rod back out and I had another run but unfortunately this time it came off.

The tactics I used throughout the session was a Ronnie claw rig with a yellow pop up, critically balanced.

The loose bait I used was Mirage pellet with sweetcorn over the top of this so then the pop up would blend in with the sweetcorn so the fish would not be suspicious about my bait among the feed.

I've also found that Zig fishing can be effective in both winter and in summer trying to find where the fish are in the water columns. Archie and I only started zig fishing last summer and have had great results.

We had a day at Willows with a 2ft zig and had a lot of success using used yellow zig foam which was dipped in Pacific Tuna glug.



ARCHIE - I had one of my best sessions in late September fishing on Knotts with a quick overnighter, I started off by walking the lake seeing what swims were available and found out the whole of the canal bank was free. I seem to find the canal bank is the best bet for a bite as it has a lot of features including snaggy margins and the island. Things got off to a good start as I found a spot just off the island and very quickly had a bite from a common of around 12lb. I quickly got the rod back out as I knew there would be more fish out there, but did not have a bite for around 2 hours. By then it was then getting dark so I redone both rods and realised the rod to the island had been crayed and had not even half a pop up left, so I made a rig change and switched both rods to plastics. I cast a rod to the island on a slid D-rig with double fake corn. Things went quite overnight though I had a take just before 11 which unfortunately came off with a hook pull. Gutted! In the morning I got the island rod back out and this is when things started to liven up. Within the first 10 minutes of getting the

rod back out I had one in the net. This action carried on throughout the morning which resulted in 11 fish landed! Three of them were 20+lb including a new PB which weighed in at 26lb on the nose. The tactics were kept quite simple with just that double corn as the crayfish were bad with little handful of sweetcorn and hemp doing the trick.



CRAYFISH GIN, DARLING?

Crayfish Gin? Yeah, you heard right! The Kennet Crayfish Company are pleased to announce the first batch of their locally-caught Cray Cray gin is now available on their website - kennetcrayfish.com. A truly one of a kind small-batch premium artisan gin, made using the finest crayfish in the UK, our wonderful chalk stream Kennet Crayfish.

Flavoured with dill, watercress and lemon to boot it really is truly unique, and something Kennet Crayfish Company are very proud of. Their first batch is on introductory offer and selling fast, so if you fancy a totally new experience head on over to their website and get yourself some of The Original Crayfish Gin™. Friend of the newsletter Andrew Leech of the Kennet Crayfish company told the Naan 'the gin started off as a bit of



a gimmick until we tried it. It's a Marmite situation. Some want to try it because it's whacky, others say they wouldn't touch it with a barge pole! The cool thing is that crayfish are sweet in flavour so it's not fishy at all – they just give a smooth aftertaste. It has flavours of pepper from watercress, lemon, dill and of course, the crayfish. It is completely different from anything out there apparently – I hate gin to be honest and if it isn't anything related to apples I don't want to know!! Our gin is distilled for us in Huddersfield by R2 Distillers. We supply them the crayfish and they do the rest. An initial gimmick has turned into a unique artisan gin that we feel looks great on our local pub shelf. Even though we only use the claws, about five medium-sized crayfish are used to produce a 70cl bottle. The government take £15 for each bottle so by the time we have supplied bottles, stops, labels, packaging, the distilling, bottling, wax and couriers there is barely anything in it for us!

We can't think of a better use for the critters and hope you support this local company. Please check their [website](http://kennetcrayfish.com) for more details and to see their range of Cray Cray oils and other products.

SUPREME BREAM

By Barry Murrer

Another in my occasional series about fish which are not carp- and this one will really annoy the carpie boys – it's all about bream! I really enjoy catching bream (and can't really be bothered with carp nowadays). I hope to show they can be caught using a variety of methods and from sometimes surprising places. As Isaac Walton says 'The Bream being at a full growth is a large and stately Fish; he will breed both in Rivers and ponds: but loves best to live in ponds, and where, if he likes the water and Air, he will grow not only to be very large, but as fat as a Hog.' All true, although most of my best bream fishing is in rivers but a big fat bream really does cheer up a cold and dull winter's day fishing. Here are a few of the types of bream fishing you might enjoy.

The snotty lake

This is an old gravel pit I used to fish which was full of skimmer bream ('snotties' for obvious reasons). I don't think I ever caught anything else there but it was an extremely relaxing form of fishing- a float rod with an antenna float and maggots for bait with a bit of loose feed now and again. Bites were characteristic- a slow rise of the float until it tipped over then sinking away. Peaceful, slow fishing and you could build an impressive net over a few hours. I haven't found an equivalent lake in NAA waters, but if you are a member of the Thatcham club then the pond at Bucklebury holds a very good head of skimmers with the bonus of some good roach and occasional tench. Easy fishing throughout the year, I usually use a 7m elasticated whip and a pinch of bread for bait.

The mysterious bream of Alders Lake

I nearly always find Alders a challenging water, but now and again the fishing is ridiculously easy with big catches of bream and tench on the cards. I find it best in the Spring when perhaps the fish are getting ready for spawning and tend to be very close to the bank in the deeper swims. A float fished lobworm in the margins, no more than a couple of rod lengths out in 10 feet or more of water is how I have had best results, adding a bit of fishmeal groundbait and a few pellets as feed. When the fish are there it can be hectic with ten or more fish in a short session and of quite a good size- I think my biggest was 6.5 lb. Just when you think you have cracked it however, the fish vanish for the rest of the season...



Weir pool Bream.



Bream love weirpools. They are generally thought of a slow-moving fish of slow-moving waters but they thrive in a deep weirpool with a gravel bottom. I suspect that the water flow near the bottom is nowhere near as turbulent as at the surface and the constant movement brings them a constant source of food. They are certainly active feeders and if they are there you rarely have to wait very long for a bite. I have caught plenty of bream from Kennet weirpools and often still fish Colthrop Weir, but this is no longer NAA. I did think about where else in our waters might be suitable and came up with trying the pool at Speen Moors. I had never fished it for bream before but was fairly sure that some would be there. When putting this article together in

late January I gave it a try. I only had a couple of hours available so made the long walk carrying a quivertip rod, mat and net and some liquidised and sliced bread. The river was ridiculously high, as it has been all winter, and the weir pool was churning around. I set up with a 50g cage feeder filled with liquidised bread, a size 12 barbless hook baited with breadflake about the size of a pound coin and cast into the swirl. I thought I would get a quick photo of the swim for the article and as I was taking it the tip pulled round and the first bream of around 4 lb was on. Not bad for within a minute of casting out! Another slightly bigger bream followed, then a bonus 3lb chub and then an inevitable trout. By this time my feet were really cold as I had to stand in water to fish, so I gave up. Another visit required when the bank is more accessible, I think. As I hope you can see from the picture, weirpool bream are really lovely fish- golden-brown, not at all slimy and fight really well, do seek them out.



Clear river bream

During the Summer when the river is clear you can sometimes spot a shoal of big bream slowly moving upstream. One good place to look is along Parliament Draft on the Speen Moors fishery- there are often some nice fish there and they can be caught. The trick is not to spook them by throwing loads of groundbait in but, whilst keeping out of sight, to manoeuvre a bait into their path quietly and they will often snaffle it up. A nice visible chunk of breadflake works well and you can use a float or ledger. It's exciting stuff when it works!

Big River Thames shoals

The Thames holds some excellent bream and often the shoals are enormous. I used to fish the Promenade in Reading for them and had some memorable catches. The fishing there is still free although you have to pay for parking. I don't fish it nowadays as I'm not sure about my safety- the thing about these bream is that they only feed at night- although I have tried I have never caught one during the day. As soon as it gets dark however, they are on the feed and I have had several catches of over 100lb within a couple of hours. Big fish too- I had many over 9lb but annoyingly never one over 10lb, but I'm sure that they are there. I used the trusty liquidised bread/breadflake combination, but my fishing friend Keith used a stinky cheesepaste based on very old blue cheese and caught well. A picture from the days before phone cameras shows that he was pretty pleased with his success.



The neglected silver bream



This is a different species to our common bream, smaller and often overlooked. I rather like them though and we in NAA are lucky enough to have them in our canal water at Avington. I don't know how to target them specifically, but they often turn up when fishing for roach and skimmers using maggots. You have to get your eye in to identify them but look out for a strikingly silvery fish with a bigger eye than an equivalent sized roach or bream. The photo doesn't help much but if you get one amongst roach and skimmers, they are obvious.

I would really love to catch a specimen silver bream of over a pound but no success yet. I'm also still looking for that elusive double figure river bream and my little experiment at the Speen Moors weirpool has got me thinking of a late season campaign...

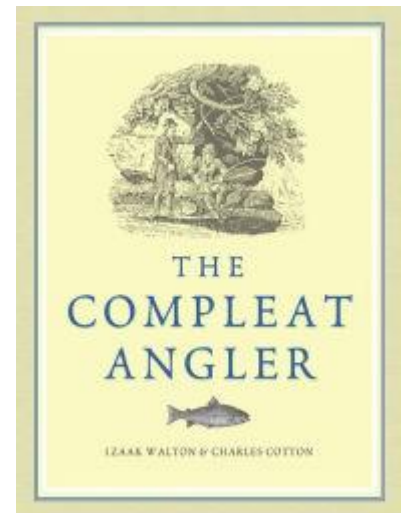
NOTHING NEW!

By Chris Plumb

Walk into any tackle shop or browse any bait catalogue and the variety of baits and flavours for sale can be bewildering to the novice (and the more experienced) angler. The Hinders online store, for example, offers over 500 different choices of pellet, particle, boilie, wafter, flavour or slug with the promise of more 'in store'. What to buy when they are all so reassuringly expensive? How is one to decide when they all promise so much - the amount of choice is quite simply, overwhelming!

Some might hark back to simpler times when bait preparation meant digging in the back garden for a supply of worms or putting a few slices of bread in your bait box as you walked out the door. However, I doubt those days ever existed. Bernard Venables writing in *Mr Crabtree Goes Fishing*, for example, lists 16 different baits for chub including, 'the pith from the spinal cord of a bullock'. Try asking your local butcher for that today! Even as a youngster – when gentles were beyond the means of my meagre pocket money I used to raid my mother's kitchen for food dye and custard powder to make paste. And I once made up some parmesan boilies which I was convinced the local chub would find irresistible – alas, they didn't!

One unusual bait I did try very successfully was suggested to me by a 500 year old book - the very first printed book on angling (in English) no less. If Izaak Walton is the Father of Angling then Dame Juliana Berners can be said to be the Mother. Who? Well over 150 years before *The Compleat Angler* was published, Dame Juliana is credited by many with writing *A Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, which was published as part of the second edition of *The Boke of St. Albans* (a book on hunting) in 1496. Whilst some scholars dispute Berners very existence there's little doubting these are the earliest printed words on Angling, having been produced by William Caxton's apprentice, Wynkyn de Worde. What evidence there is for Berners (or Barnes or Bernes - there are numerous spellings!) existence points to her being The Lady Prioress of Sopwell, a Nunnery near St. Albans. Whatever the truth of the matter, the *Treatise* stood for over a century, as the definitive 'how to' manual for the Tudor angler. The work was also, undoubtedly, 'source material' for ol' Izaak who plagiarised much of it for the *Compleat Angler* a century and a half later.



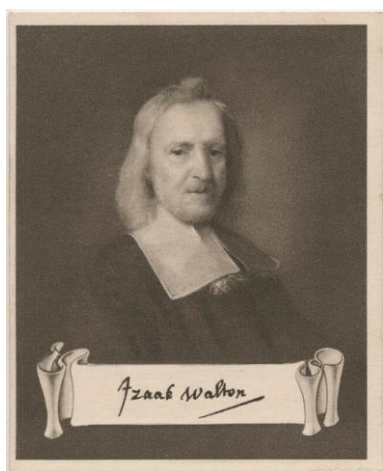
At the end of the 15th Century you couldn't just pop down the local tackle shop if you wanted to take up angling, so the slim volume covers everything from building your own rod, twisting and dyeing your own lines, advice on making your own hooks and floats, shotting patterns, bait recipes, tactics for each different species, even 12 fly patterns for trout. All this described in under 9,000 words. When it comes to baits in the book there are descriptions of various bugs, grubs, worms and snails etc and where to find them at what time of year – there's a lot of looking under 'cow turds'!

Many years ago, when I first read the *Treatise*, one line in the paragraph on tench, piqued my curiosity, viz: 'And for the best bait take the black blood from a sheep's heart and flour and honey; moisten them with water until a little softer than paste.' When I read that I thought that sounded an awful lot like black pudding and vowed to give it ago on my next tench trip.

Black pudding (least the stuff I bought!) needed a bit of preparation – I sliced and fried it to give it a tough enough skin to stay on the hook. It made its debut on an early June morning in 2003. The result was instant success – my first tench on it was a 7lb 10oz specimen – still a PB over 20 years later – that’s one way to get instant confidence in a bait! As a consequence I used black pudding a LOT for my lake fishing for the next 3 or 4 seasons. I found it very discriminating in that I would catch plenty of tench and very little else – apart from the odd carp. One fantastic June morning in 2005 I caught 12 tench on it with half of those being over 6lb – my biggest that morning was 7lb 8oz – the closest I’ve come to bettering that PB of a couple of years earlier.



I even tried it on the river a few times – thinking the Kennet barbel would like it, alas not – I didn’t catch a single one on it – I didn’t even get many chub either. It appeared that whilst *Tinca tinca* loved black pudding other species were not so keen and I never caught a crucian on it either despite fishing waters with an abundance of them! Seems the Tudor’s knew a thing or two about tench baits!



The proliferation in the variety of baits for the angler must have escalated further by the 17th century as Izaak Walton himself commented "*as for pastes, there are almost as many sorts as there are medicines for the toothache*". The Compleat Angler is said to be the 2nd most published book in the English Language (the first is the bible!). Initially published in 1653 it was added to and re-issued several times in Izaak’s own lifetime (the 5th edition was published in 1676) and has never been out of print since. Yet how many of today’s anglers have actually read it? I must admit the early chapters are a bit ‘flowery’ and off-putting but if you turn to the species specific chapters there is still much to intrigue the modern angler. None more so than the bait recipes!

There are numerous paste recipes in the book – with honey featuring quite a bit as an additive. Cheese is also recommended frequently for example strips of toasted cheese attached to the hook with silk thread is advocated for barbel, which also suggests an early form of bait band or even hair-rig.

It is no surprise that, just like it would today, a lot of the chapter on carp is taken up with a discussion on baits and flavours and this recipe for making your own paste for the species always raises a smile with me!

"And your paste must be thus made: take the flesh of a rabbit, or cat, cut small; and bean-flour; and if that may not be easily got, get other flour; and then, mix these together, and put to them either sugar, or honey, which I think better: and then beat these together in a mortar, or sometimes work them in your hands, your hands being very clean; and then make it into a ball, or two, or three, as you like best, for your use: but you must work or pound it so long in the mortar, as to make it so tough as to hang upon your hook without washing from it, yet not too hard: or, that you may the better keep it on your hook, you may knead with your paste a little, and not too much, white or yellowish wool. And if you would have this paste keep all the year, for any other fish, then mix with it virgin-wax and clarified honey, and work them together with your hands, before the fire; then make these into balls, and they will keep all the year."

At last a use for your cat and if not boilies perhaps they would have been called bakies!

To finish I’d like to return to The Treatise which itself ends on two very ‘modern’ themes, proposing an early countryside code...

"Also, I charge you, that you break no man's hedges in going about your sports: nor open any man's gates but that you shut them again."

And making a plea for conservation of fish stocks...

"Also, you must not be too greedy in catching your said game as taking too much at one time... Which could easily be the occasion of destroying your own sport and other men's also."

Some things never change!



The Treatise and the Compleat Angler are both available to read online for free. Finding a modern English translation of the Treatise can be a little tricky – though you can read it here (but without the woodcut illustrations): <https://vault.si.com/vault/1957/05/20/the-treatise-of-fishing-with-an-angle> . A facsimile of the original with illustrations (but in the old English) can be read here: <https://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/berners/berners.html> (Folks who know me from Anglersnet may recognise the woodcut on the frontispiece – I use it for my avatar!).

The Compleat Angler is easy to find online – the 5th impression can be read here for example: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/683/pg683-images.html> and a facsimile with the additional chapters on fly fishing by Charles Cotton here:

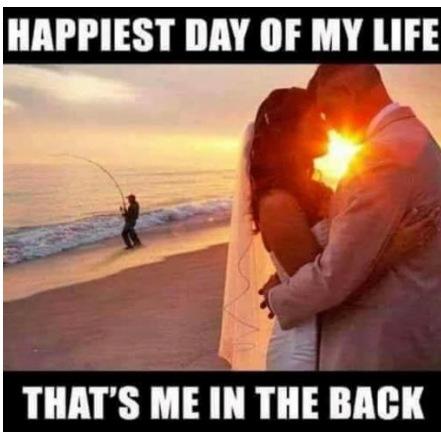
<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/773/angler.pdf>



Incidentally, I made a fishing trip* to the river Frome in February and had to smile when I saw this sign on Wool Bridge, a Grade II bridge that features prominently in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. I wonder how many were 'fooked off' and actually sent to Australia or 'injuring' the bridge! I looked up that four people with the name Fooks emigrated from England at various times in the 1800's. T Fook's way to rid himself of unwanted relatives? Who knows.

* Chris is (probably!) too modest to say that in appalling conditions he landed 11 grayling including 7 over 1lb. You can read about this and his many other fishing adventures

in his blog at <https://www.anglersnet.co.uk/forums/index.php?/blogs/entry/2272-6-february/> - Editor



FINS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

By Keith Moores

Those of you who were members between 1991 and 2016 will remember FINS, the predecessor and inspiration for the NAAN. This was a glossy, high quality publication that ran to 24 issues over those years. We caught up with its first editor, Keith Moores who remains a NAA member to this day to ask him of his memories of putting FINS together. Take it away, Keith.

Fins went through quite a metaphoric change since the first copy hit the mat in the early 1990s and I was delighted to see Martin Strike (rather an apt name for fishing) take on the resurrection of what was my beloved Fins Magazine.

The first copy of the original FINS magazine began its planning stage whilst I working as Group Sales Manager at The Newbury Weekly News. I had the opportunity for type setting and printing, so why not work on a club magazine I thought. The name FINS was rather random but seemed to suit the publication so I went ahead with it. The matter was discussed at committee and costings put together. In my opinion It was a breath of fresh air for the club and gave a great new platform to keep the membership informed.



Keith with a Specimen Cup winning 3lb 8oz crucian at Willows in 2014

At the time of the first issue the club was excited to have prepared the new fishing lake Bell Wood. What an opportunity to inform the members and all began to take shape.

Bob Warwick (Club Treasurer and Trustee) offered his artistic skills and talent and between us we put together the first issue. I took on the role of Editor and put the layout together.

Material was in short supply but we managed to cobble together the first issue. Bob had a wealth of club knowledge to dip into and we worked together as a very good team.

The first copy was posted to all the members and was well received. It was expensive to print and post however and over the years had a rocky ride in committee.

Like most club magazines material is always hard to come by and not receiving pictures or articles can be somewhat demoralizing for the Editor so make sure Martin gets plenty of information please!

Further down the line the magazine took on some new input from Ken Hunt as well as Bob and I believe this improved the magazine beyond belief. Bob, Ken, and I had some great nights in the pub mostly the Cock Inn whilst compiling all the pics, and in the early days many of the pics were prints and not digital.

The new editions edited by Martin Strike in my opinion are excellent and have never been better. I very much hope Martin continues to keep up the good work even though he is living with the sheep in Wales.

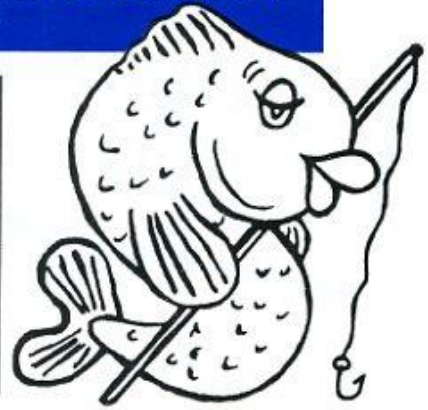


Bob Warwick R.I.P

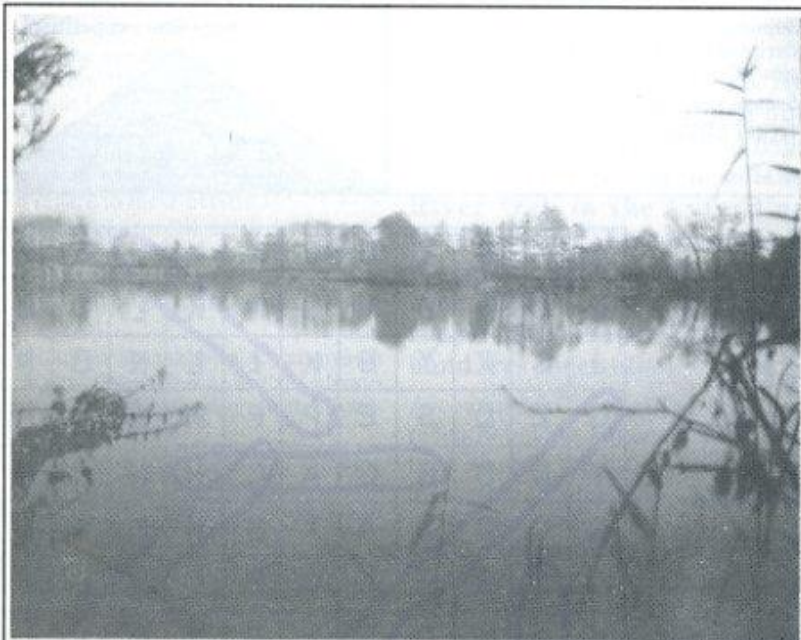
Tight Lines

FIN

THE NEWBURY ANGLING ASSOCIATION
NEWS. ISSUE No. 1



WELCOME TO BELL WOOD



Bell Wood available for fishing from June 16th

NEW CLUB STORE BUILT

It's new and its open, our new club facility.

For many years the storage of our club equipment has proved to be quite troublesome. The committee has, during this time, tried to obtain Planning Permission from Newbury District Council, to build our own premises on our own land, but without any luck. However, all the hard work has now come to fruition and a new storehouse has been built at Bell Wood.



The new club storehouse situated at Bell Wood Fishery

Welcome to Bell Wood, Newbury Angling Association's latest coarse fishery.

After almost three long years of hard work, including tree clearance, landscaping, fencing and dredging, this new fishery will be open from the start of the season. Your fisheries manager Jim Knott and his team of volunteers have worked long and hard, and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them on behalf of the club, for all their effort and I'm sure you will all agree it looks magnificent. Situated just off Hambridge Road and approximately 100 yards from the A4 traffic lights, it is situated in an ideal setting. It has been stocked with Carp, Roach and Bream and we hope that it lives up to our expectation.

Please look after this new Fishery and ensure you only fish at the allotted pegs.

*Good Fishing
F.I.N.S.*



BEWARE - electricity can kill YOU!

An number of anglers have killed in the past few years by electricity arcing from power lines to their carbon rods or poles. Several others have been injured.

IN very few cases did the rod or pole actually touch the cable. It simply came close enough for the power to LEAP THE GAP and inflict horrific burns.

The distance high voltages can jump, especially in damp or wet weather, is probably a lot further than you would imagine.

So be safe rather than sorry. Don't fish closer than 25 metres to an overhead cable. And don't cast towards them either.

YOU have been WARNED. Don't fish anywhere where any part of your rod - be it carbon or glass - can get any closer than 25 metres to any cable.

REMEMBER - It's better to be biteless than lifeless!

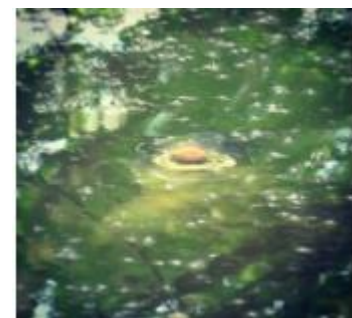
THE WATER MARGINS

By Chris Smith



Margin surface fishing. Exciting, dramatic, and effective are the adjectives I'd use to describe this unique technique for catching carp. All you need is a rod, strong line, a big hook, and dog biscuits. It starts with strolling around the lake, chucking in a handful of biscuits in likely-looking

margin snags, such as fallen trees, bankside bushes, lily pads, and beds of rushes. Keep your eyes peeled, and your ears open, while constantly circling the lake. You will eventually stumble upon a snag knocking or hear a distinctive slurp of a carp enjoying a free snack in their favorite snag. A huge secret of mine is what dog biscuit to use as the hook bait.



You can buy from most supermarkets a product by

Bakers called "Might Meals Adult Beef". Amazingly these are hookable and soft straight from the bag! Boasting a huge size, nearly as big as a £2 coin, hiding a big sharp size 6 hook is easy work. Experience tells me that small carp struggle to eat these, and after swelling up, even big carp have to overly gulp to eat them, giving you plenty of time to set the hook. Now that you're on the carp it's time to draw them away from the snag. Constantly feed the carp, inching the free offerings

further away from the snag. Check the wind direction, if it's blowing into the snag reduce the amount of bait to entice the carp out of it. Sit on your hands and enjoy the show, carp will start to feed vigorously yards or sometimes even inches from the bank. The fun starts you get to pick out the one you want to catch, whether it's the biggest, say, or the scaliest. The crucial part of this tactic is selecting where to cast. You need to select a thin branch, more a twig, to cast your line over, like a washing line. Very importantly for fish welfare, it needs to be a safe location to hook a carp, meaning the snag should be at its sparsest. Doesn't matter that your line is 12lb+ plus because no line will be touching the water, so the carp won't spook. With the hook hidden, you have no reason to be subtle, it is crucial to up your end tackle to make sure you are fishing safely. With the hook bait discreetly dangling from the twig, slightly pull on your line to raise it out of the water. Feed underneath, keeping your eye out for the target banger. Once the target starts feeding near your hook bait, lower it and get ready for a bite. 90% of the time carp will have no reason to be wary and you will witness a big set of lips engulf your hook bait. You're in! Instantly drag the dazzled carp away from the snag. Bail arm closed and clutch hard down are essential. A hook and hold sort of battle will unfold. Don't panic, with free lining it is hard for you to get snagged. Land your prize, bask in the achievement that you caught the carp you wanted with only a hook and line just like they did in the old days.



Beauty to keep an eye on in Bellwood



Even Crayfish can't resist

THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

A big thank you to all who have contributed so well to this issue.

Remember to order your crayfish gin before registering your interest in seeing how being a committee member will help your club.

Let's hope for a drying Spring, and see you in June for the summer NAAN and a glorious new season ahead. Ahhh.

Martin Strike

Editor

mail@newburyanglingassociation.crmil.co.uk



NAA's very best wishes to our local princess for a full and speedy recovery.