

NEWBURY ANGLING ASSOCIATION



Founded 1878

CHAIRMAN - David Marshall

SECRETARY – Currently vacant

FISHERY MANAGER – David Prictor

EDITOR – Martin Strike

See permit for contact details

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Website

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NAA NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2022

Welcome to this, our third newsletter. We decided to amalgamate the Spring and Summer issues in order that it be available to all members with their new season permits. We hope you enjoy it

If you are reading a newsletter for the first time, please note that previous issues are available on the NAA website.

Did you know, the NAA spent well over £2,800 on postage and printing last year? We would very much rather spend this money on improving our fisheries, but hold very few email addresses for our members. Please help us to help you by emailing us with permission to write to you at enquiries@newburyangling.org.uk We will still post you your permit each year, but it does mean essential communications as well as future copies of this newsletter can be sent to you on publication and at no extra expense to the Association. It's a win-win, so please send that email now.

We like to think these are YOUR newsletters, so for future issues please send in ideas for content, brags about your catches and photos/stories old and new to us at the same address.

Martin

BARBEL-TASTIC

Longer standing members may recall the days when the Kennet was considered one of the finest barbel rivers in the land. Since then, water abstraction, pollution and increased predation from the unholy trinity of crayfish, otters and cormorants has made barbel much harder to find, though we can report that large fish can still be found. The following were both entered into this year's Specimen Award for best fish caught.



Jane Sayer's barbel came with her first cast as a NAA member at Aldermaston and came in at a splendid 12lb 5, with the same venue also being the home of Gary Morse's 15lb 10 beastie.

Gary has been a NAA member for some 8 or 9 years and told us that despite, "rumours to the contrary, there are barbel in the Kennet, though it does take a lot of hard work to catch them. I've never fished Speen Moors and do all my barbel fishing at Aldermaston. In 2021 I also had fish of 14lb, 13lb and a couple of 6-pounders, but that 15lb 10 one was something – it was off like it was on the express train to Reading when I hooked it, and I lost what I think was an even bigger one two days later! I also had 23 swim-destroying trout across the year, but strangely perhaps, not a single chub. That's an ambition for next season." Gary says he tends to fish for carp in the summer before returning to the rivers in July, having been introduced



to the challenge of barbel fishing by a good friend a few years ago. We asked him to share some secrets. "You've got to know where the fish are. I've spent hours and hours studying the water, and have got every swim mapped out in my mind. I only get to fish short sessions, maybe 3 hours or so at a time, usually before or after work, so I've got to make it count. When I arrive, I pre-bait 3 or 4 swims with loose-fed pellet and boilies – not too much or else the crays move in – and I travel light so I can fish each in turn. Curiously, I've always found the

crays more of a nuisance in swims leading into a bend than those coming out of them. If I haven't caught after half an hour or so, I move on to the next swim. Meat is a great barbel bait, though sometimes I use dumbbell-shaped boilies which I find present better than round ones.

"It's a fallacy that barbel need fast water, some of my favourite swims are slower, but always with a gravelly bottom. As I don't get time for long sessions, I tend to walk past the straighter sections nearer the carpark as they are full of streamer weed which take longer to bait up properly and get good presentation. I always think the best chance of a catch is on a warm overcast day, where the water is coloured a few days after rain. I rarely see anyone else fishing and think they might be missing a trick – but only if they are prepared to put the work in!"

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Firstly, I would like to thank you for either renewing your membership or joining us as a new member. As a new member I am sure you will soon appreciate the vast range of waters we have and the scope for all types of coarse fishing.

After two of the most difficult years in our history, thankfully angling with a huge contribution by the Angling Trust has come out very strong. Our membership increased substantially during this period, so much so that we are this year capping the number of Associate members (ie those living outside the Newbury area) to 70.

NAA is run by a dedicated band of volunteers and we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to assist with the running of the Association. We currently have vacancies for Secretary and Health & Safety officer as well as a number



David Marshall

of general committee places. Whilst we appreciate everyone's free time is precious, but without volunteers it makes the association difficult to run and puts pressure on the rest of the committee. This is YOUR chance to help move your club in the direction you'd like it to, so if you would wish to be considered for one of the roles, or would like more information, please contact us at the email address at the top of this newsletter.

Whilst we have been unable to hold an AGM for 2 years, we have remained busy, and much work has taken place around the fishery to maintain and improve our waters. We have also stocked a large number of fish into Willows, Alders & Warwick's and moved some of the larger carp from Willows to Bellwood.


There is still plenty to do including otter fencing Pallett's Pool, repairs to swims (we have just been awarded a grant from the EA to improve our existing disabled swims), as well as clearance work at Widmead & general maintenance on the rivers & canals. If you are able to help us via the Fishery Management teams, or our regular Tuesday Clubs, please contact us. Your help in maintaining the fisheries to the standard you would like to see will be most welcome.

We are planning to hold an open forum meeting for members later in the year where you will have the opportunity to find out in more detail the work we are planning, and you will have the opportunity to ask the committee questions and voice any ideas you may have for ways to improve the association. We will advise you of the date of this in due course via website, Facebook, newsletter and, if you have provided us with your address, by email.

Finally, I hope you all have an enjoyable and successful season fishing in an association which I believe offers some of the best variety of fishing in the south of England.

COMMUNICATIONS UPGRADE


As well as introducing newsletters, we are currently upgrading the communication with have with members. You may already have seen that the website contents are being reviewed and updated where required.



NEWBURY ANGLING ASSOCIATION
The best fishing in West Berkshire since 1878

Rawlings retreat complex - Willows

Willows is the largest of the three lakes in the Rawlings Retreat complex. It has 35 pegs - of which 3 are wheelchair platforms - on its 2.5 acres, and is approximately triangular in shape. It is a shallow lake, mostly around 3-4ft in depth.



This includes printable PDFs, like this one, for each of our venues. Geared to giving an introduction and access details to new members along with ideas of possible techniques. We are grateful to an anonymous member (you know who you are!) for the templates.

These introductions will also be pinned on the new noticeboards that are currently being erected in the main car parks around the

lakes at Rawlings Retreat, the Widmead complex and Bellwood. We aim to add more fishery news along with contact details in case of emergency, any matches due and the main regulations relating to that area. It will be an expectation that all anglers will acquaint themselves with the contents of the board when fishing the relevant areas.

Should you have any suggestions for how we can further improve the website, Facebook page or the new noticeboards please contact us at the usual address.



FISHERY MANAGER (LAKES) REPORT



Dave Pricor

Much has been taking place on the lakes in recent months both by the fortnightly Sunday work groups and the Tuesday Club. Of course winter brought the usual problems of fallen trees and snapped branches. Many thanks to those members who turned up often at short notice, to clear trees and restore fences. Fortune shone on us that many trees had been cut down or pollarded the week before Storm Eunice crashed through.

Many of our lakes form part of Thatcham Reed Beds which is recognised as a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This means that without prior approval from Natural England we are limited to the amount of tree

work we can undertake to only the removal of dead and dying trees. This can be frustrating, but is a legal requirement. Much of the work we can do is seasonal to ensure we don't compromise the bird nesting season, so most of our management beyond grass trimming and vegetation taming is generally completed in winter.

This said, we plan to repair many of the broken swims around the lakes this year. This is time consuming work, and as the NAA relies largely on voluntary work, will be carried out on a priority basis. Other aims for the year ahead include the otter proofing with permanent fencing of Pallets Pool and building up some sections of the banks at Collins. There is also tree removal work planned here and also at Dobsons, where we be looking to stock Tench and potentially Crucians in 2023.

Predation is an ever present problem. In recent years we have hired a crayfish trapper at the worse affected lakes and the committee will consider this again based on how populations are looking in the key summer months. We have a mink trapping programme, there being no restriction on the numbers that can be



Paul Futcher

caught. You will probably know that with reports of otters at Thatcham AA's side of the fencing at Willows, that we immediately installed temporary electric fencing as a quick fix. There also seem to be even more cormorants than ever. We hold a licence to shoot a maximum of 12 per year. Thanks to Paul Futcher of the Fishery management team for ensuring we take up our full allowance. You may also see Paul around the lakes completing vital oxygen checks of the lakes. often 3 or 4 times each week in the warmer weather.

We also plan to upgrade the portable pumps, which in the event of oxygen depletion, will increase the running time between refuelling from 2 hours to 24, thus saving the need for generously-spirited members to man the pumps all night.

Such oxygen crashes can happen quickly, so if you see any signs, such as fish in distress, or a change in water colour, please contact me via the number of your permit.

In the meantime, please keep an eye on our Facebook site for upcoming work parties – they really make a difference. Cheers, and good fishing.



Storm Eunice swept through

MATCH NEWS & UPDATE

For many seasons until Covid struck a couple of years ago, NAA ran a series of matches contesting the Club Championship. Up to 12 matches would take place on our lakes and stretches of river and canal. Points were awarded at each match, with no individual allowed to score in more than 9 matches to determine a final points score. However, in recent years, the enthusiasm from members to attend these matches receded to a point where it was not viable to close a venue on a Sunday for the half a dozen or so anglers taking part. While the over-60s and over-70s leagues remain well-supported, for one reason or another the match scene petered out with younger anglers. With an upsurge in angling during the pandemic new members have asked "why if I'm not over 60 are there no matches I can fish?"



To cater for this new found enthusiasm, while the Over-60's and 70's fixtures will be run as per normal, a series of 21 matches has been drawn up to meet ALL angler's requirements and preferences and are listed as follows:

MATCHES OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS (ie no age restrictions)
5 matches will be held in the new season to reinstate the NAA Club Championship
During the season we fish matches against other clubs, and we would welcome all members to participate and represent NAA
Our annual Help for Heroes match in October and the popular Christmas and New Year matches
4 winter pike matches
Plus 24-hour Carp matches

It is hoped that the Club Championship, and other matches, will be well supported by the membership – we'd love to build a thriving match scene, and so if you've not fished one before – please come along! Times and dates will be advertised in your permits and in future newsletters. Those taking place early in the forthcoming season are shown below. Those marked in Green are open to all members.

DATE	VENUE	CATEGORY	MEET TIME	MATCH TIME	COMPETITION
JUNE					
WED 29-June	Bellwood	Over 70's Rover	9:30am	10.00 – 15.00	Over-70s
WED 29-June	Enborne Canal (up)	VENUE CLOSED	Booked by Army AA	NA	NA
JULY					
WED 6-July	Dobsons	Over 60's	09:30	10:00 – 15:00	Field & Stream Cup Col Maxwell Trophy
SAT 9/10 July	Knotts	24-hour pairs Carp Match	11:30	12:00 – 12:00	
SUN 10-July	Alders	NAA Club Championship	09:30	10:00 – 15:00	NAA Club Championship
Note: to register your entry in the NAA Club Championship please call match Secretary Henry Sadler in advance on 01635 46984					

WED 13- July	Willows	Over 70's Rover	09:30	10:00 – 15:00	Over 70's
WED 20- July	Alders	Over 60's	09:30	10:00 - 15:00	Over 60's
WED 27- July	Willows	Over 60's	09:30	10:00 – 15:00	Field & Stream Cup

Tying up a loose end from the last newsletter, we can confirm that DOUGIE HULL won the final two pike matches of the season with fish of 13lb 10 and this stonker of 22lb 2.

These earned Dougie the awards for both the Buckingham Cup plus Ben Smith and Vicky Prater Trophies for the best overall weight across the four matches and biggest fish. Well done, Dougie!

The first 24-hour carp match of the year took place at Dobsons on 19/20 March. Eight pairs entered, and being still early in the year it was a struggle for everyone, so well done to everyone who took part !! First place with fish of 24lb 2oz, 8lb 2oz, 7lb 1oz, 8lb 15oz and a tench were the pair of Paul Futcher and David Pictor, Second came David Driscoll and Glynn Swain with a carp of 8lb 12oz and four bream.



NEW HEAD BAILIFF

We are pleased to appoint well-respected member Rob Allen as Head Bailiff who succeeds Chris Fox who we thank for his past work. Rob is a passionate life-long angler dedicated to fish welfare. Rob has pb's including pike to 17lb, perch to 4lb, carp to 43lb 12oz's and is the current Collins Lake record holder with Swirly at 40lb 10oz (see the Winter 2021 issue for details).

With only 5 active bailiffs at present, Rob is very keen to bring numbers up to a team of 15 to 20.



Rob Allen

Can you help?

Rob confirms that the responsibilities of a bailiff are:

- 1) Check members permits, recording all checks in the supplied bailiff report book.
- 2) Report any rule breaks or issues to the head bailiff who will report back to the committee.
- 3) Be able to assist and respond to any fishery emergencies such as an oxygen crash for example.

Why not be a bailiff?

- You can choose the venue(s) you cover – so if you are a canal angler, say, annoyed at the number of non-members, you can pick to bailiff the water(s) that are important to you.
- You'll get to hear what is being caught to improve your own fishing.
- You can pick and choose the number of visits you make and at what times.

Rob will support all bailiffs who will initially be taken on a 3 month trial and will be asked to make at least 8 separate permit checks within the trial period. Once permanent, a bailiff is tasked with making a minimum of 24 separate permit checks per year.

So please, don't leave it to everyone else - as an almost exclusively voluntarily run club, we rely on members like you to be part of the team to maintain and improve the standards to that which we'd all like to see. For more details, Rob would welcome your call on 07938 023237.

With the venues liable to start getting busier in the summer months, Rob has asked to use this newsletter to make members aware of some of the key rules which are most often transgressed, all in place to support fish welfare:

- Maximum of 2 rods per lake swim with the exception of Willows and Alders which are single-rod waters.
- No double swims on any NAA waters, members may fish together in a swim but must only fish with one rod each.
- All leaders are banned (to reduce chances of fish being snagged in the event of a line-break).
- No rods to be left unattended (for example while popping to car or loo etc).
- All gates must be closed and locked at all times.

Rob would also like to encourage all anglers to carry a carp care kit to treat any species of fish should it be required and would like to wish you all the very tightest of lines.

Don't forget: your association needs you. If you can do your bit, please make that call.

TENCHING DOWN YOUR WAY

When we asked Martin Salter - Angling Trust dignitary, ex MP and supporter and member of Newbury AA since the 1980's, to write a piece for the Newsletter, we were delighted to hear of his love for the tench. Martin is an all-round angler who enjoys fishing and travelling for a wide range of fish. He has landed monster mahseer in India, big golden dorado in Argentina, barramundi, marlin and kingfish in Australia to name but a few. However, his roots are in coarse fishing in his native Thames Valley where he likes to target tench in the Spring and early Summer before moving onto the rivers in search of chub, barbel, perch and roach. He has landed all species to specimen sizes. Martin was formerly a match angler and learned to fish in the Thames and its tributaries west of London. After 25 years in public life including 12 as a Reading Borough Councillor and 13 as MP for Reading West Martin retired to 'spend more time with his fish'. He now works part time as Chief Policy Advisor to the Angling Trust. He has been a member and supporter of Newbury AA since the 1980s. Take it away, Martin...

I guess most anglers can look back to the moment when their fishing became more than a passing interest or occasional pastime and turned into a lifelong obsession. It's that single fish, or catch of fish, that lit the fire. That 'wow moment' that set you on the road and made you the angler you are today.

For me it was probably a tench that did the damage, although there was gorgeous river roach around the same time that runs it a close second. Not a big tench I grant you but at a pound and a half it was the first fish



I had ever caught that pulled back and actually required a landing net. I even got to watch it take my bait in the eighteen inches of weedy water that was the only swim left to a kid on a crowded club lake on an opening morning sometime in the 1960s. That chunky green 'bar of soap', in a long-disappeared lake on the London fringe, has a lot to answer for but I wouldn't change a moment of the journey that begun that misty morning.

Parklands and Ponds

When I was fourteen my family moved from to Egham, a small town on the Thames just downstream from Windsor. My fishing opportunities expanded overnight and whilst the big gravel pits in the area were still beyond my capabilities there were plenty of smaller waters to keep a budding young angler happy and inspired. Not least among them were the fish filled lakes and ponds of Windsor Great Park - sometime home of the Royal Family and my playground for the next four years. Sadly, the place is now a £1000 a year carp syndicate but back then a few quid bought you a ticket to three rhododendron lined lakes in a beautiful setting and all just a ten-minute bike ride from my new home.



Slowly, I learnt my craft. Partly by watching older and better anglers who knew how to present their tackle and bait in a manner that would attract the bigger tench and bream. The local club had a thriving junior membership and every Saturday morning a lovely chap called Eddie Batley, a local gardener who is sadly long departed, would take up to a dozen of us kids out on our bicycles to fish a friendly match on nearby waters. These included the Thames and its tributaries, the Bourne, Colne and Colnbrook along with a number of local club lakes. Our fishing improved along with the size and number of fish that we caught. My parents had no interest in fishing and it was thanks to the selflessness of people like Eddie that my interest was sustained and nurtured.

Luckily for me Eddie liked to fish Windsor Great Park and would happily let my friend Ian and I accompany him after work to pursue the tench in Virginia Water and Johnson's Pond. We seldom legered for them in those days but became pretty proficient at catching tench between three and five pounds under an antenna float. The bait was invariably bread, maggots or sweetcorn as boilies, pellets and hair rigs had yet to make an appearance. Groundbait was either bread mash stiffened with bran or, if funds allowed, some brown crumb. We learned the value of pre-baiting for tench and watching the water for rolling fish in order to select a likely spot - tactics that are as every bit as relevant today as they were half a century ago. As with all estate lakes the action tended to be early or late and 4am starts were not unusual in the summer months with up to half a dozen fish between us on a good morning.

Both Ian and I did well in both the junior and senior club matches and I was fortunate to strike up a friendship with Steve Clausen, a butcher from Fulham and a fine angler, who liked fishing down our way. Steve was a few years older than me and had that most important of fishing accessories - a car. That old Austin A35 was to later take us to the barbel, chub and roach heaven that was the Kennet in those days - usually around Newbury and Thatcham. Years later I was to become a member of both of these clubs and to realise my dream of living right beside this wonderful river.

My fishing with Steve taught me some useful lessons that saw a few more tench hitting the net. By now swimfeeders were starting to have an impact on the rivers and we began to use them in situations where long casting was required. There was one particular Windsor Great Park Lake that was strictly out of bounds but which held some fine tench. I won't name it for fear of being prosecuted for treason or something similar but suffice to say that the current heir to the throne has been known to go duck shooting

there on occasion. The margins were very shallow and the tench tended to patrol a deeper gully some fifty yards out. Conventional running swimfeeder rigs with bunches of maggots on the hook often seemed to tangle, especially if casting into a facing wind, so we came up with the idea of using a hook link shorter than bomb trace on a paternoster set up, much as one might do when sea fishing. The tangles disappeared and the bites became total screamers with the Fairy Liquid bottle top hitting the butt ring and the reel churning like a dervish if we didn't get to the rods in time. As far as I was aware the helicopter rig had yet to be 'invented', or if it had been it certainly

wasn't part of the tench angler's armory. I claim no originality for our feeder rigs other than we happened upon a set up that worked for us and which, by chance, isn't a million miles from those in common use by tench specialists today.



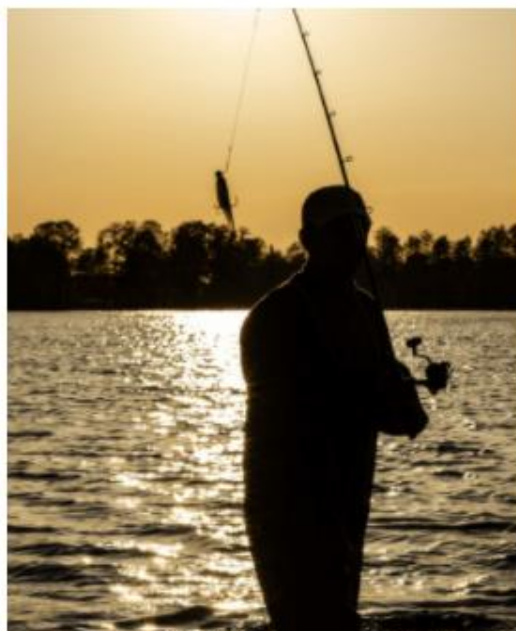
However, on most of our waters the tench were usually well within float fishing range, except for one memorable morning. Ian and I had got up early and arrived at first light on the A30 bank of Virginia Water to witness the tench rolling consistently at around twenty-five yards out. We had planned to float fish close in and so had no feeder or heavier float gear with us. Luckily Steve had showed me a float ledger rig that he had used to good effect on the Staines gravel pits. A 3/8 oz bomb on a short link enabled us to hit the spot with ease and small antenna float was allowed to slide up the line to a stop knot some twenty feet away from the hook in eight-foot of water. The line angled up nicely over the marginal weed positioning the float a few feet from the rod tip. The bites, when they came, were confident and virtually unmissable. I think I had nine tench that morning which was exceptional for the lake at the time, particularly for a schoolboy angler.

The late 70s and early 80s were dominated by barbel in the summer and autumn and roach in the winter. I even bought my first house on the banks of the Kennet in Reading so I could catch both species from my back garden. I still enjoyed the occasional tench session mainly in the Newbury AA lakes with Collins and Knotts being my favourites. I can't recall anything over six pounds coming my way and as I was still match fishing and had just been elected to the local council I really didn't have time for a serious specimen campaign.

...For part 2 of Martin's tench-fest, please look out for the Summer issue of the newsletter.

Please support the Angling Trust – become an individual member

It's great that your club is a member of the Angling Trust but you can do so much more for fish and fishing by becoming an individual member, too. It costs just £29 per annum (£25 for seniors) and in addition to supporting our campaigns to protect our waters and introduce more people into fishing, you will receive discounts on a range of goods – including some fabulous savings on tackle and bait.



NAA encourage all members to their bit for our sport and join via the Angling Trust website

Fishery Management – Willows

In March, as part of our Fishery Management plan, Willows was netted with a view to transferring 50 of its above-10lb carp to Bellwood and Pallet's. This was never going to be a universally-approved decision, but was made for the following reasons:

(1) The adjacent Discovery Centre and Long Lake have been subject to fish-killing algal blooms in recent years, and longer-term members will recall that Bellwood, Warwicks and Alders have all suffered catastrophic fish-losses. Willows is our shallowest lake and thus has the greatest potential for an algal bloom with its associated oxygen-loss to take place, particularly when taking into account its large biomass of fish and the amount of bait that gets thrown in.

We believe it is in the interest of the fish welfare to periodically move the larger carp to bigger, deeper lakes, in this case Bellwood and Pallets.

Previously, in 2017, 49 carp weighing 596lbs, the largest being 20lb, were moved from Willows to Bellwood. These were replaced with 320 Common Carp totalling 550lbs. In 2019, a similar exercise saw 59 carp moved and replaced with 50 carp up to 5lbs in 2021.

We believe this demonstrates that this strategy serves the best interests of NAA and its members: ie we stock Willows with smaller, cheaper to purchase fish, which provide great sport and grow fast to enhance our stocks as high-value fish into our larger lakes.

(2) Willows is also one of our designated 'mixed' fisheries, where we wish to encourage anglers looking to catch carp but also roach, bream, crucians and tench which, generally speaking, require lighter tackle than waters with large carp. The inevitable snap-ups that will occur when large fish are hooked on light tackle is not fair on the fish.

In the end, the netting process in March 2022 caught 'only' 29 of its larger carp (18 Commons and 11 Mirrors) and moved all of them to



a similar exercise was carried out in 2017



and again in 2019



Bellwood. There were a few issues with sticks in the net on the day which made the netting tough and thus less effective than anticipated. Released back into the water were some really big bream and loads of small skimmers which proves they are breeding in there, as does the occasional Common/Crucian hybrid that turns up. There were also tench, some decent sized crucians as well as small roach and perch. There were no larger perch nor any pike netted. The netting process can never be 100% effective, so the end result was always that some larger carp would remain. This was proven the next day, when even the editor landed a fine 12lb 4oz Mirror!



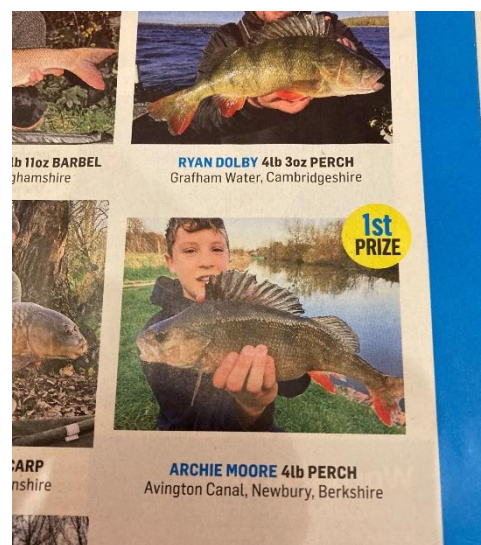
ARCHIE

Reading 'Improve Your Coarse Fishing' magazine recently, we were delighted to see that one of our top junior members was not only mentioned, but won a substantial prize for a catch on a NAA venue. We could not let this pass without asking Archie Moore for his angling story. Mark the name: Archie Moore has a big future ahead of him in angling, and if he shows the same dedication and commitment he has with his fishing, whatever else he wants in life. The floor's all yours, Archie...

I started fishing when I was 7 years old. My dad brought my first rod with an enclosed reel and he and I would go down to the river Lambourn catching lots of brown trout and grayling using bread and maggots on a simple float rig.

This carried on for 3 years, but I wanted more of a challenge having seen many people carp fishing. So, at the age of 10, I got my first carp rod and started fishing local day ticket lakes like Forbury Farm and Bishops Green Farm. I managed to catch plenty of carp up to 10lb and from that moment on I had a passion for carp fishing as well as coarse fishing.

I then joined Newbury Angling Association and started fishing Willows, quickly landing several mirrors and commons from 4 to 10lb. I then managed to catch the 'brute' coming in at 21lb 6oz and more doubles up to 17lb. My method for catching these carp might have been the simplest approach with a piece of luncheon meat on a hair rig in the margins, but it sure did work. I had the brute again the year after, using the same method. When the winter came, I started fishing the Enborne Canal with worms and maggots. I had some lovely perch from Guyer's Lock and Egypt Point. I also started fishing the Avington Water at Kintbury. My approach was just a worm and maggot ledger tight to the bridge as this worked at Guyer's Lock. I managed a couple out of that spot but kept seeing activity out in the open



water, so I flicked a worm out, and it didn't take them long to find it. I returned there a couple of weeks later knowing that they were feeding in open water. I cast my rig out and within a few minutes the rod bent and that's when I hooked into my PB Perch at 4lb, I was absolutely buzzing. I entered this fish into the 'Improve Your Coarse Fishing' magazine's Daiwa competition and won the top prize in January this year. My prize was over £600 of Daiwa Carp Fishing equipment. I had previously entered 'Brute' in the competition the year before. I did not win but got my picture in the magazine.

I mainly do carp fishing now but still enjoy a visit to the Enborne Canal or the stretch at Aldermaston. I recently tried lure fishing for perch on a ned rig and now lure fishing has become one of my favourite ways to catch perch with another nice one coming in over 3lb from Enborne.

When I am not fishing, I have been volunteering for my Duke of Edinburgh award at school and have been litter collecting around all the NAA Lakes. 21lb 6oz is still my PB, so my target this year is trying to get one out of Bellwood.

You heard the name here first – We're sure there's many, many big fish ahead for Archie.

A mention for superhero dad, Andy, whose own catches we understand, though magnificent in their own right, pale into insignificance when compared to his son's. Keep going, Andy, we'd all have loved a dad like you.



ON THE BANKSIDE

This quarter, the editor had the pleasure of meeting Colin, a new member while fishing at Willows. He'd had a couple of nice bream, and lost a couple too when we approached him:

How long have you been a member? - *Since January this year.*

What made you join NAA? - *I'd moved into the area from Reading and wanted somewhere more local to fish.*



How did you choose NAA? - *I Googled local clubs, and Thatcham AA kept coming up. I wanted to have a look at the river at Brimpton and saw the NAA private fishing sign. I found the website and had a look. At only £75 per year, I thought NAA was great value - it's less than half price of my previous club, which only had two waters.*

What do you think of the website when you were researching? *It's OK, I suppose. It could be better, but I know it takes a lot of money to run a decent one.*

How have you got on at NAA so far? *I had a few sessions maggot trotting at Brimpton, and as well as a load of trout - a fish I've not caught many of in the past, I managed two 3lb chub, a grayling and an 8lb barbel, and what with it being winter, I only brought in one crayfish. Then at Warwicks, with ice on the water, I caught six perch on worm, the biggest being 3lb 2, but none under a pound. I've had plenty of carp, good bream and crucians at Willows since.*



What tips do you have for members? - *Try to use a bait that other anglers might not be using. Today, for example, I've used worm and I imagine most people will be using pellet or boilies.*

Favourite fish? - *I used to go for big carp, but now I'm happy to catch anything. My absolute favourite is the tench - there's something about them. As a boy I had access to a gravel pit through my family which had just been stocked with tench. These days it's a private lake, but it was my start in fishing.*

Any suggestions to the committee improve the NAA? - *How about a fly-fishing ticket so we can fish the river out of the coarse season? - The good news is that fly fishermen can fly fish for trout (using artificial dry fly only) on our river sections from 1st April to 30th September (up to two Rainbow Trout can be taken away on any one day, while all Brown Trout must be returned unharmed).*

THE CRAYS – PART III

Regular readers of this newsletter may recall that the effect that the crayfish are having on the life and actual bank profile of our waters has been investigated. To this end, we contacted the Angling Trust and received the following, and received the following reply:

Thanks for getting in touch.

I echo your concern for Signal crayfish and the impact that they can have on our freshwater environments. We have been working for a number of years on this issue and calling for advancements in the methods available to manage this species.

Trapping presents one of the only ways of managing crayfish at present, however, due to its design it is biased towards catching larger individual. This results in the larger crayfish being removed which also exert a predation pressure on the smaller juveniles. This is less of a problem if trapping continues, but it stops for any reason this can result in greater population as the juvenile population grows in the absence of those large males.

To improve the efficiency of traps, the Angling Trust did a piece of work with Cefas a few years ago exploring ways of improving their efficiency at capturing smaller individuals, and we have been supporting some work recently that is looking at male sterilisation as an alternative technique to management.

The use of male sterilisation would allow some larger sterilised males to be returned to the water, allowing them to continue to predate on the younger juveniles. At present, these techniques are all focused on controlling the population rather than eradication. There have been some recent discussions around the use of gene drives which will could be used to make the entire male population sterile (I have attached a link to a talk below if you are interested), but this is very early days and will likely not be an option for 5-10 years.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_V0bLPIgnw

The Trust are currently calling for a national strategy to be developed which outlines steps to manage crayfish populations. We feel that only through looking at a river at a catchment scale can we develop an approach that will be effective at controlling populations. We have been successful in calling for a similar strategy for Floating Pennywort, so we hope that by showcasing the benefits of that new approach we can showcase why we need one for crayfish as well.

Emily Smith
Environment Manager
Angling Trust

I'd recommend that all members view the video – it's very informative, though the timescales seem such that it will be our Junior members of today who may ultimately benefit.



THE CLOSE SEASON REASON

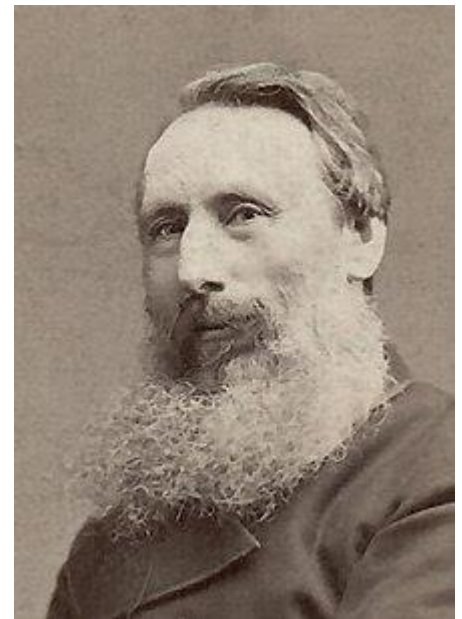
Ever wondered how the coarse fishing close season started? For this we've got Liberal MP and member of William Gladstone's cabinet, Anthony Mundella to thank, at least in part. Though lampooned by the Victorian press for his beard, he was respected on both sides of the house for his impetus behind a number of socially important issues of the day, playing a big part in giving trade unions legal status and a major influence behind the Elementary Education and Child Cruelty Acts, as well as supporting the rise of the age of consent to 16. With regards to fishing, he denounced the obsolete Game Laws, such as the Night Poaching Act, 1826, whose punishments for poachers had jailed many thousands of men over the decades, and brought about a close season.

The movement for a close season began in his Sheffield constituency in the 1870's, when around 7,000 anglers, concerned about the 'wanton and mischievous waste of the piscine resources of our freshwater lakes, river, ponds, canals and streams," urged him to fight for close season. In reality, it was not about allowing the fish to spawn naturally, but to protect coarse fish from the illegal netting, poaching and existing rules and regulations that favoured salmon and trout.

The suggestion immediately won the vigorous support of the Thames Angling Preservation Society, whose Chairman, Philip Geen, headed north to meet Mundella and the Sheffield anglers who wanted the months of March, April and May 'fenced off', to protect different species of fish according to their spawning time. However, the London anglers wanted a closed season of April, May and June. After much argument and negotiation, it was agreed to split the difference, and make it 15 March to 15 June. Not a very scientific approach for such an important piece of angling and conservation legislation.



Philip Geen



Anthony Mundella

Thus, the Freshwater Fishes Act, known colloquially amongst anglers as the Mundella Act, was proposed. Within it, Geen went to great lengths to obtain assurances that Sunday angling would not be prohibited in any bill put to the house, for Sunday was the only day when the working man had the opportunity to go fishing. The Act became law in 1878, coincidentally the year that the NAA was founded, and there is evidence to suggest that two of its members may have been sent to the House of Commons to give evidence in its support. Thus, a legal close season was established, forbidding everyone, be they poachers, illegal netters, wrongdoers and of course club members and honest anglers were legally prohibited from angling from sunset on 14 March until sunrise on 16 June.

These days, much more is known about the life cycles of coarse fish, with dace for example, spawning as early as February and other species, such as tench, may still be getting their nuptials as late as August.

The Environment Agency removed the close season from most still waters in 1995 and from most canals in 2000, retaining it on rivers. At NAA in 2002, 47% of members voting chose to keep close season (42% for, 11% undecided), but



year-round fishing in its lakes was voted in for the 2004/05 after 347 members voted for compared to 273 against.

Species	Common name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	European eel				Spawns at sea					
<i>Abramis brama</i>	Common bream				2	1	1	2		
<i>Alburnus alburnus</i>	Bleak					1	1	2		
<i>Barbus barbus</i>	Barbel			2	1	1	2	2		
<i>Blicca bjoerkna</i>	Silver bream					1	1	2		
<i>Carassius carassius</i>	Crucian carp				2	1	1	2		
<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	Common carp					1	1	2		
<i>Esox lucius</i>	Pike		2	1	1	2				
<i>Gobio gobio</i>	Gudgeon				2	1	1	2		
<i>Gymnocephalus cernua</i>	Ruffe			2	1	1	2	3		
<i>Leuciscus leuciscus</i>	Dace		2	1	1	2				
<i>Perca fluviatilis</i>	Perch		3	2	1	1	2	3		
<i>Rutilus rutilus</i>	Roach			2	1	1	2			
<i>Sander lucioperca</i>	Zander			2	1	1	2			
<i>Scardinius erythrophthalmus</i>	Rudd			2	1	1	2			
<i>Squalius cephalus</i>	Chub			2	1	1	1	2		
<i>Tinca tinca</i>	Tench				2	1	1	1	2	
<i>Thymallus thymallus</i>	Grayling			1	1	1	2			

Key	1	Peak spawning	Data source – spawning tables from fishbase.org
	2	Occasionally spawns	
	3	Rarely spawns	

Close season 15 March to 15 June	
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During 2015 to 2017, the EA worked with the Angling Trust, the Institute of Fisheries Management and fishery managers to understand the evidence around the close season. This study was inconclusive. Overall, evidence of the impact of angling on spawning/recently spawned coarse fish remained incomplete. There was no reported evidence of detrimental impacts on fish or fisheries where the close season has been removed or shortened. Regardless of whether angling during the close season impacts on coarse fish, the level of impact in most rivers was unlikely to be detectable against wider environmental factors, such as predation and water abstraction.

The current close season limits angling opportunities in spring/early summer which many coarse anglers report as a period of optimal river fishing conditions and includes Easter and the two May bank holidays.

A survey run by the EA and Angling Trust From a 2018 survey of anglers' opinions showed:

- 43% of anglers support retaining the current close season
- 17% support retaining a close season, but changing the dates
- 33% support removing the close season River fishery owners would be able to impose and enforce their own fishery rules to retain the current or a different close season on their waters.



- the remainder were undecided

Many anglers still observe the close season irrespective, citing a break for fish, the water and angler alike, with bankside vegetation allowed to regrow. Others say that this is an unnecessary and outdated concept, with the drop in bait being thrown in counterproductive to fish welfare where stocks are high, and that the absence of anglers encourages predators such as cormorants, otters etc.

Probably there is no definitive correct answer, it is down to the individual angler to make up his or her mind

NAA allows year-round fishing in all of its lakes, and the Avington section of the canal as it has no river section. All river and other canal stretches remain subject to close season regulations.

THE RIVER KENNET – THE DOG RIVER

Welcome to the latest trip around our venues with NAA stalwart and angling guru, Chris Plumb...



an award-winning portrait taken by the late Paul Goulbourn

The River Kennet is one of the UK's most important chalk streams and at 45 miles long it is the largest tributary of the Thames to which it sometimes contributes up to half its flow in the summer.

Like many chalk streams pinpointing the source of the Kennet is problematical - and changes from year to year depending on the height of the aquifer in the chalk of the Marlborough downs. In a good year a spring rises near the hamlet of Uffcott and heads south across the downs sometimes being joined by lesser Bournes before it skirts around the village of Avebury. It then takes a left near Silbury Hill (the largest man-made Neolithic mound in Europe) and starts the river's Eastward journey. The more traditional source however is

where this water course takes its Eastward turn - legend has it that the river rises on New Year's day from Swallowhead Springs close to Silbury Hill. In drought years, however, the watercourse may still be dry for some miles until it gets below East Kennet and might still be little more than a trickle down to Marlborough.

What is undeniable is that the river has its source in a landscape simply stuffed with Neolithic monuments from Man's prehistoric past, taking in as does, Avebury, Silbury Hill and West Kennet Long Barrow within the first few miles of its young life. Also, The Ridgeway, a 5000+ year old route crosses the fledgling river at East Kennet. However, and somewhat strangely you might think, the river's designation as an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) starts at the college town of Marlborough (and continues as an SSSI all the way downstream to the village of Woolhampton on the lower reaches). This designation is an attempt to protect the diverse and fragile ecosystems that are unique to chalk-stream habitat.

Marlborough College offers (amongst many others) Fly Fishing courses in the summer which is very apt as the Kennet here is at the start of some fantastic trout fishing. Marlborough also sees a minor tributary, the River Og, join the Kennet. The first of 6 tributaries the river will 'collect' on route to Reading. Next village downstream is the settlement which probably gave the river its name. Mildenhall is the site of the Roman town of Cunetio from which the word Cunnit - an earlier name for the river is probably derived. The name itself is one the Romans likely 'borrowed' – and is probably of Celtic British origin. The Celtic stem 'cun' means hound – and could give us another name for the Kennet – the River of Hounds! And one can probably discount an etymology suggested by local historian Michael Dames - who has published books on Silbury Hill and Avebury. He claims this earlier name for the river is related to the word c*nt!



Continuing on our journey downstream we come to the village of Axford. This was the controversial site for a Thames Water borehole - pumping out drinking water to be piped over the downs to Swindon. Many claimed this served up a double whammy on the Kennet - in lowering the aquifer and hence flow rates on

the river - and by pumping the water out of the catchment area it was lost forever from the Kennet 'system'. More recently Thames Water has built a new pipeline from Farmoor reservoir to serve the needs of Swindon and the only water now pumped from Axford is for communities such as Hungerford, in the Kennet valley.

We are down in prime brown trout and grayling territory as we head for Ramsbury who's famous old oak died and had to be replaced in the 1980's. Chilton Foliat and Littlecote House are next on our itinerary as we make our way to Eddington Bridge at Hungerford. Eddington Bridge marks a somewhat artificial division in the river. The Environment Agency divide the Kennet into Upper/Middle/Lower (imaginative nomenclature, eh?) The upper reach is the source to Eddington Bridge, middle reach is from here to the A34 Newbury bypass near Speen, and lower from there until it enters the Thames at Reading.

Man has always had a significant impact in trying to control and harness the Kennet. Ramsbury alone had 3 mills and its water used to be used for the brewing and tanning industries in Marlborough, Ramsbury and Newbury. Today much of the Kennet in its upper and middle reaches is remodelled to suit the needs of the game fisher. Many of these large estates on the Kennet have dug carriers and streams off the main river to magnify the amount of fishing on offer. The middle reach is characterised by a whole series of such estates with some famous beats like Avington, The Wilderness and Barton Court offering excellent fly fishing. The Kennet is joined by the lovely River Dun at Hungerford, whilst Kintbury sees the start of another, less welcome (to many), intervention. The Kennet and Avon canal first tangles with the river here.

The river from now on can never shake off the canal's influence and since it was reopened to leisure-boat traffic in the early 1990's it has been blamed for increasing turbidity in the river and hence decreasing weed growth - particularly that of the chalk stream staple - the characteristic ranunculus. Today it is certainly true that the Kennet downstream of Kintbury is often clearer in the winter when there is little boat traffic than in the height of summer - when there is lots.

Coarse fish are now more prevalent in the middle reaches - and are thankfully encouraged by many of the river keepers who look after these beats. Any angler lucky enough to get access to fish for them (almost always in the winter) may get the chance to fish for specimen, Roach, Dace, Chub, Perch and Pike. Another more recent interference to the river has been the construction of salmon ladders all the way upstream from Reading - with the last one at Marsh Benham. The river upstream of here has been identified as being potentially suitable ground for Salmon redds. The EA have been stocking Salmon parr - and more recently smolts - for a number of years though have yet to see much evidence of Salmon successfully returning to the river. The ladders have had an unexpected consequence however - barbel appear to be using them to travel upstream and they are now turning up in the middle river for the first time.



We are now at Newbury and coarse fish prevail in the eyes of most anglers. The river was made navigable from the Thames up to Newbury as early as 1723. The canal between Reading and Newbury - whilst referred to today as the Kennet and Avon, should still strictly speaking be called the Kennet Navigation as the Kennet & Avon canal proper, linking Newbury to Bath wasn't started until 1794 and completed 16 years later. The Kennet & Avon had a brief heyday before falling into disuse due to competition from the Great Western Railway which opened up the rail link from London to Bristol a little over 30 years after the canal's completion.

Newbury also sees another addition to the water-course, the delightful River Lambourn joins the Kennet a mile or so downstream of the town centre. Not only does it empty lovely clear chalk stream water into a now often turbid river - but also gives up some of its grayling. The Kennet at Hambridge is probably the 'lowest' downstream that you can still realistically expect to catch the lady of the stream from the river.

Three further tributaries join the Kennet before the river reaches the Thames. The River Enbourne joins forces at Aldermaston and the much smaller Foudry & Clayhill Brook's empty into the river just south of Reading. (Incidentally - I often hear the stream mistakenly called FouNdry Brook.) None of these 3 tributaries are chalk streams in their own right – they could be classified as clay streams – and as such rise and fall quickly during times of rain and add significant turbidity to the lower Kennet in times of heavy rainfall.

The lower river is the domain of the coarse angler and still offers some excellent angling. To get good access however one needs to join one of the numerous clubs with rights to the fishing. Aldermaston Mill is the only Day Ticket venue on the lower river. There are many clubs with excellent river beats however and the two clubs with the most fishing are probably Newbury AA (NAA) and Reading and District AA (RDAA). NAA's influence starts at Speen (though they have quite a bit of K&A canal further upstream too) down to the top of Padworth Mill where RDAA take over and have a substantial mileage of bank under their control down to Reading. Other clubs with excellent fishing include Red Spinners and Wasing Estate (for those with deeper pockets), Thatcham AA, Civil Service AS, British Airways, CALPAC, Feltham Piscatorials, and one or two small syndicates.



We're nearly at the end of our journey down the Kennet - but before we get to Reading the river splits off into 2 streams which had a big impact on my angling. The first starts at the bottom of Lower Benyons at Theale. Part of the river runs off into a delightful little weir and the stream makes off across the fields in the direction of Theale station. On maps this stream is called the Osier Bed Stream - though as teenagers living in Theale at the time, we called it Cumbers Meadow - after the local farmer. The weir-pool I called The Little Penlocks - a name passed down to me from my Great Grandfather - to distinguish it no doubt

from the much larger weir at the top of the Lower Benyons beat which he called - of course, The Big Penlocks!

The Little Penlocks was my childhood Mecca - it was the part of the river I made for as soon as I was allowed out on my own. I caught my first barbel in it, my first ever decent perch (over 1b), my first ever 3lb+ chub. The place was a bit of an aquarium - you'd never know quite what would turn up next - I even had a 1lb 6oz grayling from it once - a fish that would appear to have been a long way from home! For many years - and by the end just for nostalgic reasons - I always used to start my season there.

A second stream splits off the river shortly after the Osier Bed Stream rejoins it. The Holybrook leaves the Kennet at The Arrowhead - just below Theale (now very close to the M4). It is so named as it fed 2 mills owned by Reading Abbey - Calcot Mill (in Calcot, unsurprisingly!) & Abbey Mill in Reading itself. For 15 years I lived within sight of the Holybrook and for much of that time I could see the swim from my bedroom window where I caught my first ever 2lb roach. The Holybrook was (and probably still is) an excellent chub fishery but my most unusual capture from it was a huge brown trout of 4¼lb from Calcot Mill weir pool. Not particularly unusual you might think except this fish was almost completely jet black in colour! An old warrior no doubt, it stood as a PB for a number of years. Even today, I miss not having the Holybrook within 100m of my front door!

The Kennet ends its journey at Reading - a town that owes its very existence to the Kennet as it was formed around an ancient crossing point on the river. In fact one of the suggested (all be it less likely) etymologies for the town's name comes from Rhydd-Inge, Celtic for a 'Ford on the River'. So, 45 miles in length and 5000 years in time the Kennet connects the ancient with the modern and whilst its source is still revered today its end point couldn't be more inconspicuous. After it passes under Brunel's magnificent brick arch that supports the railway to this day, the river then empties into the Thames just east of Kings Meadow - behind a Tesco's car park!

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

Paul Hobbs endured blanks in all three of his first sessions at Collins. But what a way for the carp gods to reward his perseverance. His fourth trip found the carp hungry for his Hinders 12mm pop-ups, and he landed fish of 18lb, 26lb 12 and a 31lb pb to leave him 'buzzing'.



It was a Saturday morning in May and Derek May was hoping to get on Collins, 'but had no chance as it was bivvies city, so I made my way down to Knotts. When I made a quick walk of the lake and saw a swim with lots of fizzing and tell-tale signs of fish, I knew there was a good chance for a fish or two. I didn't have a good start. Firstly, my spomb cracked off when baiting up, and then I lost four fish on left hand rod. I put on a bigger hook, thinking this might make the difference, but the bites slowed down and I thought I must be jinxed. Later in the day my good friend Craig turned up for a visit then decided he going to stay and fish. And it was him who landed the first fish, a 21lb common. He was buzzing and I thought right, my turn next. It was 3.30 in the morning when I was woken up by a screaming bite alarm and the left hand rod was bent right over. I was into a fish which felt like a lump and gave me a great fight until I lost it in the snags. Still feeling gutted, I put a new rig inside my solid PVA bag of crushed up boilies and a scattering of hemp and tigers and chucked the rod out. With my line tight and the clutch on the reel locked up. nothing was getting away this time. Trap set, I put my head down. Half an hour later the left hand rod ripped off again. I fall out of my bivvy and am on my back as I hit into the rod. This time its fish on and I wasn't going to lose this one, and when I managed to get it out from the snag I relaxed a bit more, kept my cool and played the fish for 10 minutes before finally landing it the net. 'Get in!' I said to myself seeing it was a good fish, as I put it in the sling to let it recover from that battle. Time to wake Craig up, we put it on the scales: a 29lb 10oz common I'm buzzing from a new pb. After that fish I landed 20lb, 17lb 8oz, 27lb 8oz, 19lb 6oz and a 24lb 4oz. I'd hooked twelve fish and caught six. What a session, best so far in my three seasons as a member now. I hope next season will bring more good times.'



THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

Don't forget to send us your email address to receive the next issue. We'd also love to receive your pictures and stories.

All correspondence via the usual address: enquiries@newburyangling.org.uk

