

MKAA Executive Committee Report – December 6, 2006

1) Starting with some good news. **Roach seem to be coming back into fashion in our rivers.** Before the floods catches to 40 lb were being made – and even I had more than 17 lb in one sitting back of Emberton Park (opposite bank to Olney & Clifton).

The latest Environment Agency survey figures show most species present in growing quantities with the exception of chub which, in terms of numbers at least, are down...though a recent interclub saw one man take 8 for around 28 lb on Brush Mill.

It's certainly too soon to say whether roach stocks are back to what we think of as normal – especially as their apparent decline has lasted for the best part of 10 years. The EA have been running a research project to try and find out what caused the shortage, and are about to start another looking into the shortage of dace in so many areas. If the next survey shows continuing poor recruitment of chub, that will be investigated too.

2) The promised **final stages of bank improvement at Dimmocks** – latterly delayed by the sad death of our contractor – are almost complete. We now have 14 really solid pegs (with steps where necessary) plus an embanked area providing room for another two or three anglers.

Outstanding is a small amount of JCB work plus surfacing of the path linking all the pegs. A gate, from Jubilee, has been fitted to prevent car access from the car park to the waterside. Bankside trees have been lopped and gaps in the fence fixed.

All in, especially given the state of the site when we took over, Dimmocks is really beginning to look like something we can be proud of.

And the bulk of the work has been paid for with grants from our friends at the Environment Agency.

3) **We have had to relinquish our lease on Jubilee Pit** as land-owners George Wimpey Construction are building a road right across our access track prior to building a small town on the former brickworks site.

Following some 'who blinks first' type negotiations we agreed to forego our six months' notice (which means we don't have to pay rent during the winter period when very few people would have used the water anyway) in return for written confirmation that MKAA owns the fish in the pit and that when building is finished – probably in a couple of years time – we will be offered a new lease on the fishing.

4) Following persistent **juvenile nuisance on the paddocks bank at Lodge** we have finally got the REAL names and addresses of two youths who are now going through the disciplinary process. Their father was adamant that his sons were being wrongly persecuted...until we proved to him that one of their mates was using HIS MKAA card, presumably acquired from HIS shed, to pass as an adult so that all three could night fish. Dad has been very quiet since that point.

A man who refused to move for a booked match at Lodge has, in effect been given an ASBO – and will automatically suffer a five-year ban if he re-offends.

Another angler, who brought the association into disrepute by riding a motorbike on the banks three times in different places on the same day – and then behaving inappropriately towards both a Parks Trust ranger and our bailiff when challenged over fishing out of bounds on Willen North – has been banned for three years.

more follows....

5) Efforts to overturn the Emberton Park night fishing ban – which has hurt our ticket sales – will be vigorously renewed after Christmas. But many anglers are their own worst enemy in this. Our campaign to gain evidence of general unhappiness with the ban by getting anglers to fill in a very short form hasn't brought a huge response.

It has been publicised: at these meetings, in our Newline, on our website, in tackleshops and in the MK Citizen. And the response numbers are sad, certainly a lot, lot less than the numbers who have been in touch to moan. In some cases I have approached individuals to get them to take part...but I'm damned if I will BEG people to help themselves by making the effort to fill in a simple form. If the ban stays through lack of angler response, so be it.

6) Ticket sales via, or because of, our website continue to climb and this year's total is now well over 200 sold that way.

Again **I reiterate the offer to clubs and groups**: if you have a web site of your own please send a link to Bob Final at info@mkaa.co.uk, and he will arrange for a link to your site from ours in return for one in the opposite direction.

It can only be good for your club, can't do it any harm...and costs nowt. There can't be a better offer than that.

7) We seem to be caught up in the middle of a crayfish-trappers war. A strange net spotted in the Ouse at Brush Mill recently was investigated by our water quality officer Ray House and reported to the EA which sent a bailiff to collect it. It turned out to be some 17 conventional cray traps linked in a line with lengths of seine netting and strung down the river. Such a combination is known as a fyke net.

It turned out to belong to a commercial company...the head of which was very vague about where his men had set the nets when approached by the EA. (That company was, by the way, fined £900 in 2002 for using illegal nets).

For reasons too numerous to detail, there are grounds to believe that his company had had more than 150 pots – said to be worth £3,500 – stolen by another trapper who then illegally put at least some of them in Brush Mill.

A reward may be negotiable for the finder and the nets still missing would, the owner tells us, cover a distance approaching **half a mile** when stung out down the river.

Now they have found out that fyke nets – traditionally used for eel fishing on deep rivers – are being used, both the EA and the Parks Trust have banned their use on the Ouse in the belief that they can catch and kill all sorts of fish, otters and water birds. They can also catch anglers' tackle and anybody wading in the river.

8) One thing to emerge from the Stony Stratford incident, thanks to assistant match secretary Bob Valentine being in the right place at the right time (for us), is that while the EA has outlawed the returning of signal crayfish to the water by anglers...it has been doing just that itself.

When its bailiffs find crays in illegal nets, or fishery survey teams catch them, they have been tipping the wretched things back on the basis that they don't have a suitable method of disposing of them.

To us that is a total hypocrisy – and your president, Ken Ball has since embarrassed the people responsible in a number of forums...with the result that the Agency is now desperately trying to come up with a way of dealing with crays in bulk on the bank.

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9) Big beds of nettles and the like have long been a barrier to summer fishing on the Ouse and Ouzel. Some of you may have noticed that **this summer large areas of river bankside in the parks have been 'flailed' clear of such vegetation.**

The Parks Trust had decided to do the work to create better views across the parks and allow people to look into the river.

We have expressed our appreciation and early next year will be pointing out areas where just a bit of clearance would open up swims for angling.

10) We have finally **persuaded the Parks Trust to let us net the pond out front of their Campbell Park offices**, stocking the tench into Bradwell. A condition is that we provide some mini-tench to restock the pond with a view to growing them on for future cropping...but the snag is the current difficulty in finding a reputable source of small tench.

11) There has been little angler-feedback one way or the other on introduction of **pay-parking at Willen Lake**. But the Parks trust report that this summer, presumably due to the associated CCTV and security, car crime in the car park areas has been down by MORE than 90 per-cent compared to the previous year.

12) **We have at last found a firm to install some more fish-refuge cages at Bradwell Lake.** Aquascience has been contracted to do the job which, if it doesn't start in the next week or two, will happen in early April.

Some 75% of the bill is being paid with an EA grant, and the deal is for 20 cages spread along the roadside bank and the adjacent half of the bank running parallel to the canal embankment

Unlike the existing cages (paid for in full by the EA) these won't be floating off-shore. **Placed between pegs** they will be semicircular 'fences' of staked wire-mesh extending out approx three metres into the lake and enclosing a length of five or six metres of bank. Each one will be 'seeded' with half a dozen hessian bags of earth planted with native white lilies.

The idea is to create a chain of bankside fish refuge areas which cormorants can't get into, and which will provide fish breeding/fry-survival areas as well as new varieties of fish-food. On the canal bank side they should also help reduce erosion caused by the prevailing winds.

Native white lilies are being used, rather than the yellow kind, because we are told they are less likely to get out of control and take over the lake. The estimate is that it will take three years or so to produce decent lilly beds.

Some of the floating cages will be repositioned and the two or three which failed to develop reed tops will be replanted as part of the work.

13) Our day-ticket (with reductions for MKAA members) **Wappenham Water lake has produced some nice catches since we took over in August.** During our first four months we have recouped almost a third of the annual rent.

more follows....

Obviously it is going through a quietish spell at the moment but it apparently fishes well for barbel, chub and roach during the winter. With eight months of the rental period to go, there is every reason to believe we will at least recoup our outlay in full.

Please spread the word, give it a try, and if you want to book a match there – up to 20 pegs – give me a call.

14) Whether the notion was right or wrong, the idea of keeping Bradwell Lake relatively 'carp-free' has been overtaken by events and a degree of **illegal stocking – the latter probably with fish stolen from Willen and risking transfer of disease.**

So 200 or so of the same strain of fast-growing carp as those stocked at Willen are due for delivery before Christmas. At an average of 1.5 pounds each they should easily make 4 lbs or more by late summer next year.

Rather than immediately commit to adding more year on year, the plan is to see how these do, and what difference they make to catches and angler attendance rates before deciding whether or not, and when, to add more.

As a point of note, this has probably been Bradwell's best year for some time in terms of consistency of small fish catches, tench fishing, sustained algal colour in the water and angler attendances. Only the bream shoals have refused to figure regularly in catches.

15) **Trying to talk to British Waterways is currently more difficult than usual...**as, having had its funding cut yet again, there is hardly anyone there. Having already down-sized in the not too distant past it is now in the process of shedding around half of its remaining staff. Where there used to be three fisheries officers, John Ellis is set to become the only one for the country's entire canal network.

Prior to that, through the regional canal consultative GUSAC, it had been proposing development of fishery action plans to master-mind canal fishery improvement. Several people worked hard to co-operate, including Ken Ball (thank you Ken) and will continue to try and progress their end of the bargain, but it is bitterly disappointing that the whole concept now appears to be on the back burner if not shelved for the foreseeable future.

Thank you for your interest.

Trevor Johnson

chairman, MKAA 01908 270000 angling@intermediauk.com

See a poaching or fish stealing incident in progress?

Call the EA on 0800 80 70 60 – 24 hr line

Do it quick! (and please let us know, promptly, too)