

Liskeard and District Angling Club

Annual General Meeting

2015

1. Call to Order

The meeting, held at Liskeard Constitutional Club, was called to order at 19.35hrs on 10th February 2015, with R Williams (in the Chair) and with A White (presiding).

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence received from Messrs Lyne, Evans, Churcher, Rowe, Mugridge, Todd, Smith, Leadsford and Janes.

3. Approval of 2015 AGM minutes

Following adoption by the Committee (15th April 2014) and their publication on the website in April 2014 no comments have been received. A motion was therefore made by R Williams to approve the minutes of the 11th February 2014 AGM meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Matters Arising from 2014 AGM Minutes

- Catch/return forms: Continue to be distributed with the LDAC December newsletter and are also available during the season on the website. This is deemed the most efficient way and ensures members receive a timely reminder to submit their catch return at the end of the season.
- Closed season: Date error corrected on catch return form.
- Lynher webcam: Remains down due to lack of any suitable host location.

5. Officers' Reports

Chairmans Report (R Williams)

Whilst the overall perception was that 2014 had been a poor season the counter figure numbers and early catch returns have shown that this was not necessarily the case

- Large early-season salmon were being taken on the Lynher (18lbs) and Fowey (>12lbs).
- Sea trout counter figures for the Fowey in 2014 were markedly higher than those for the 10-year average (9,710 versus 7,758).
- Overall counter figures (sea trout **plus** large seatrout/salmon [>50cms deflection]) showed that almost 11,500 fish had entered the system during the season; this is significantly up on the period from 1995-1998 inclusive when the average was 6,125.

However, against this positive backdrop low water levels during the summer led to difficult fishing conditions and many members struggled to catch fish. Summer grilse were rarely seen or taken.

However there were notable exceptions for those that fished at night and those that persevered with lighter tackle. Indeed one member had reported 3 summer grilse on the fly during the day.

Despite the early season optimism the autumn salmon runs failed to materialise. This was not just a local problem – autumn salmon runs were almost non-existent across the region and nationally the situation was no better. It was noted that the Arundell Arms (Tamar, Devon) had announced a 100% catch/release for 2015 after their worst salmon season since 1959.

Conservation work once again concentrated on improving the Draynes sea trout sanctuary. With the excellent runs of sea trout it is felt that this work is paying dividends and efforts will continue in 2015. Coppicing work in Lewarne was carried out utilising a generous grant from the FRA and this work will also continue into 2015. It is hoped that members will not only see an improvement in salmon numbers but will also find their fishing environment much

improved.

Salmon catch/release figures for 2013 were good. The Club reported over 80% for the Lynher and 66% for the Fowey. It is hoped that the Fowey number will increase as more members feel inclined to release their fish back into the river.

The Chairman thanked

- The Committee and Officers for all their efforts in 2014.
- Messrs. Grieve and Jordan for preparing the club newsletter.
- All the wardens for their efforts in maintaining the rivers – noting that 2 new wardens had been appointed on the Lynher (Messrs. Page and Todd).
- Mr B Pearn for his work in improving and maintaining access across many beats.

Q: Mr Lashbrook suggested that additional work on the Draynes be planned for September 2015 – ahead of the winter floods.

A: It was agreed that the Committee would support this.

ii) Secretary (P Jordan)

Club fishing saw a slight reduction during 2014, bank length dropping by a net 1,700m; the club now leasing or owning 35 kms (21.8 miles) of fishing rights spread over six local rivers.

The Secretary reported that access to one beat was lost in 2014. The Caradon Wood Beat (Lynher river; Beat 13; extending to 2200m) was no longer available following the death of the owner in 2013. The fishing rights and land have been passed to the Woodland Trust (WT) as an endowment. LDAC is in touch with the WT but there is no progress to report in accessing the water for our use yet.

The Coodes Beat (Ashford Mill, Beat 3) was extended approximately 500m northwards (on the LHB) as part of the new (2014) lease agreement. Clear signage marking the new *End of*

Beat has been placed in the woods.

Three Lynher beats (Wotton Farm; (Beat 17), Kingfisher (Beat 16A) and Parsons Meadow (extension of Beat 11)) have also been extended for a further 3-year period by the club (effective March 1st 2015).

The Club remains grateful to the many riparian owners that kindly support LDAC in providing sporting amenities to local anglers. Committee members visited over 90% of them personally during the year to help ensure key relationships are maintained. These visits are used to update the owners on improvements and maintenance carried out on their beat(s) and to discuss the general health of the river and the Club's long-term plans.

The Club remains an active member of the Fowey River Association (FRA), the Lynher River Association (LRA) and continues as a full member of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal. The Club remains insured through the Angling Trusts' partner-of-choice, Insure4Sport. Work party insurance is through them and all work parties **must ensure** they comply with their HSSE requirements during work party events. Risk assessment sheets are distributed at all work parties and must be signed by members participating. Failure to do so would void insurance cover not just for those individuals who do not sign but also for the other members of the same work party.

The Club benefited tremendously from a good turn-out of members to assist in working parties in 2014. A total of 87 half-days were contributed, slightly down on 2013 levels (-16%). This is an important element of our work as the efforts ensure good access and maintenance of our riverbanks.

Those members who had turned out were thanked and the Secretary unashamedly requested that there be as good, if not better turnout for 2015. Dates for all the working parties are published in our Annual Newsletter. Several members availed themselves of the LDAC Work Part Reward Scheme that issues free guest tickets for two or more work party sessions.

We were also helped by a substantial grant of £2,000.00 from the FRA in 2014, which provided significant additional professional labour (> 35 days) to carry out recommended coppicing works in

Lewarne Combe. This work is also carrying on in 2015, supported once again by the FRA.

Members were reminded to take a regular look at the up-dated Club website – to find out latest news, any beat changes, get forms, maps and see benefits.

Members were also reminded to let the Secretary know if their contact details or email addresses changed during the year. Without this club correspondence would inevitably be sent out to the wrong addresses.

Q: Mr Selby asked whether any progress had been made in leasing Pillaton water lost in 2011.

A: The Secretary advised that the new owner (Mr Morton) had been contacted but he had shown no interest in leasing the fishing to LDAC.

The Secretary also noted that no fishing had been put up for sale in 2014 – but the Club had a policy of bidding for good fishing if it became available. However with the rise in value of fishing rights it was likely that quality fishing would attract high bids and this might prove a challenge to the clubs finances.

iii) Treasurer (T Sobey)

The Treasurer reviewed the 2014 profit/loss account for the club.

He illustrated that the finances were in good order and that the Club had shown a slight surplus (£3,000) for 2015. This was particularly gratifying when seen against the pressure on maintaining membership numbers during 2014.

2014 membership levels were slightly up on 2013 levels. For the 2014 season the club had eleven (11) life members, fourteen (14) junior members and one hundred and ninety (190) full paying members (adults/over 65/disabled). This latter figure compares favourably with the 2013 membership level of 185 full paying members.

Total club membership stood at a total of two hundred and twenty-five (225) for 2014. An additional 24 beat and complimentary

season tickets were also issued to riparian owners as part of their lease agreements.

2015 fishing rental increases were up by 3.4% (over 2013 levels) and subscription rates for most members are being raised by less than this (+2.3%). Visitor ticket rates were raised to more fully reflect the quality and quantity of fishing on offer and OAP membership rates were finally raised to be in line with other adult members rates. Junior and Disabled rates were however maintained at 2013 levels.

Up-dated ticket prices and membership details are available on the club website at www.ldac.org.uk

iv) Auditor (J Shearsmith)

The Club auditor recommended the 2014 accounts for approval and commended the Treasurer for his work.

Approval of the 2014 Accounts: proposed by C Pinnel and seconded by N White. Approved unanimously.

6. Other Reports

i) Lynher Hatchery (A White)

Fortunately the Lynher hatchery operation has been spared the flooding that characterised the winter of 2013.

However a consequence of the milder winter has been higher water temperatures. This has had a direct impact on the ability for stripping of fish and it was only recently that the necessary low (cold) water temperatures (<10 deg c) had been reached.

By this time a number of hen fish had been returned to the river in the hope that they could spawn naturally.

The remaining hen-fish (2) and the few cock fish available resulted in 11,000 viable eggs being produced. The quality of the eggs is unclear but the lateness in stripping is of concern.

In 2016 the hatchery will, for the first time, attempt to return fry to the river in the swim-up stage instead of holding them back until

Autumn stocking. This change is predicated on the need to reduce operating costs (currently at £2,000 pa) and to allow volunteers time off from their duties at the hatchery.

Q: R Furniss expressed his reservations that introducing swim-up fry to the river would be a positive move. In his experience the fatality rates would be so high it would all but negate the aims of the hatchery.

ii) FRA (R Furniss FFRG):

The FRA had been carrying out fish counts in both the main river and the tributaries of the Fowey. Now in its fifth year, the data (collected by WRT) was beginning to show trends that might explain the pattern of catches emerging.

Generally the studies were illustrating a fall off in the number of juvenile salmon across the catchment – both in number and distribution. Sea trout parr were showing the reverse trend – with improving numbers and wider distribution evident.

Areas highlighted included

- Ladyvale bridge (Cardinham Water) which was thought to be acting as a blockage to salmon migration.
- The Draynes where sea trout populations were higher than elsewhere.
- The Warleggan was of concern as it was underperforming in terms of juvenile salmon numbers.
- St Neot where juvenile salmon were absent throughout the catchment. This was a direct result of the impounding of water at Colliford Dam by South West water (SWW).

Restormel counter figures were discussed in light of these observations. A significant peak of large(r) fish was seen in May/June and a second large(r) fish peak was observed in Oct/Nov. The latter peak had historically been interpreted as autumn salmon but the current view was that many of these were now late run sea trout.

It was suggested that the Fowey was now becoming a sea-trout river with some salmon in it. This observation underlines the importance of establishing a successful hatchery to support future salmon stocks in the river.

The angling methods utilised by members may need to change to reflect the current dominance of sea trout in the river – with more night fishing and fly fishing rather than daylight spinning in spates. This would provide a challenge to the Club in improving access to beats and safe entry into/out of river.

In light of the fact that the St Neot was now considered void of salmon (see above) the FRA had been discussing specific remediation methods with SWW.

When Colliford was impounded in the 1980's, the South West Water Authority (SWW) was required to undertake and pay for mitigation for lost sea trout spawning areas upstream of the dam site. This was initially achieved through a hatchery and later by buying out estuary nets for a 5-year period. The buy-out comes to an end this season.

The Fowey Fisheries and Resources Group (FFRG) was established at that time and it now comprises representatives of SWW, the Environment Agency (EA) and the Fowey Rivers Association (FRA).

Last year SWW applied (to OFWAT) for funding for various projects on the Fowey in the 2015-2020 period. These projects, pre-agreed with FFRG, include

- St Neot salmon population replacement by a new hatchery operation. SWW advised FFRG (in January 2015) that they have received full funding approval of £85,000 (for capex) and £30,000 pa (opex). Work is now underway to select a definitive site from a shortlist of two (Colliford Dam and Park Pit). The final decision will be made in April 2015 following the results of ongoing water quality studies and discussions with the EA. The provisional plan is for construction of a new hatchery to commence this summer and to be operational in time to collect brood-stock by September 2016. Brood-stock will be trapped at the entrance to the St Neot river.

- Habitat improvements at two in-stream sites downstream of Colliford.
- A hydro-ecological investigation to consider ways of optimising the salmonid production within the St Neot through the use of fisheries water bank releases and the potential use of a pipeline for some of the water supply releases. A further option being considered is “banking” of compensation flow water from Colliford when water supply releases are being made. This cooler “bank” of water could then be used at a different time of year for releases to further benefit Fowey fisheries. SWW are waiting to hear from the EA whether this last option is feasible.

Q: Mr Eliot enquired whether the hatchery output would be introduced across the catchment or just into the St Neot.

A: The hatchery output is all to be released into the St Neot. However it would be important to improve the St Neot water flows both in terms of water temperature management and timings/size of flows to increase survival rates. SWW would monitor the juvenile populations over time to ensure the effectiveness of the programme.

7. Election of Officers

A White (presiding) commended the current Committee for their efforts in 2014 and stated that all the serving officers (R Williams, Chair; N White, Vice Chair; T Sobey, Treasurer and P Jordan, Secretary) would stand for re-election. No other nominations were forthcoming from the floor.

Proposal: To re-elect the 4 officers; proposed by C Pinnel and seconded by J White. Unanimously approved.

All officers duly elected.

8. Election of Committee Members

The Chairman (R Williams) advised that one Committee vacancy had arisen. Nominations were sought from the floor. None were forthcoming.

Proposal: Re-election of existing committee members, proposed by G Tucker seconded by D Johns. Unanimously approved.

New Committee duly elected.

9. Presentation of trophies

The Committee received the following nominations for trophies during 2013 season.

- Salmon Cup: J White for a 14lb Fowey salmon caught on 26th August 2014 at Golitha. The Committee awarded the Salmon trophy to J White.
- Glencross Sea Trout Cup: J Hake for a 5lb Fowey sea trout caught on 10th June 2014 at Doublebois. The Committee awarded the Sea Trout trophy to J Hake.
- Brown Trout Trophy: T Sobey for a 1lb 8oz Lynher brown trout caught on 27th June 2014 at Frogwell. The Committee awarded the Brown Trout trophy to T Sobey.
- The Lynher Contribution trophy was awarded to R Lashbrook (RL) in recognition of his continued support for LDAC. RL has worked tirelessly over many years to promote LDAC, he has been key in maintaining membership levels and has supported many of our working parties.

No nominations were received for the Junior Achievement Trophy in 2013.

Keepsake trophies were given to all 2014 trophy winners'.

10. Any Other Business

- Mr R Grieve: How do catch returns and the catch /release figures for the Club compare with wider statistics?
- Mr R Williams: A review of the catch returns provided by the EA shows that catch levels in 2013 were lower than the

previous year but that this was in line with both regional and national trends. Catch/release figures were high across the region.

- Mr A White: Noted that catch/release figures might be artificially raised as many of the fish caught in 2014 were stale and returned of necessity.
- Mr D Johns: Noted that seals were seen in the Fowey at Lostwithiel and were also reported (T Coleman) in the Lynher at Notter Bridge. No doubt this was a reflection of low water levels with concentrations of salmon and sea trout trapped in the estuaries.

11. Guest Speakers

i) R Furniss (SWRA)

The South West Rivers Association (SWRA) provides a centre of expertise and support for local River Associations across the southwest. It provides an added level of insurance to Associations and clubs in the face of continued pressure on the sport and the health of our rivers. Examples of recent successful activities that the SWRA were highlighted

- River Lynn – fighting the introduction of a hydroelectric scheme.
- River Yealm – fighting the placement of a land fill site close to the river.
- River Teign – excessive land clearance proximal to the river course.
- The cancellation of a rainbow farm in an open pen marine environment offshore east Cornwall. However it was noted that this aquaculture project had now re-surfaced off the north coast of Devon. This could severely impact the River Camel.

Ongoing areas of work include

- Canoeing Trespass. The SWRA is supporting Fish Legal and the Angling Trust in a legal action against Canoe England (CE). This requires CE to desist from advertising that the law of access is unclear and that canoeists therefore have the right to navigate all English waters.
- Water Flow Directive (WFD) strategy for next 5-year period.
- Netting: Whilst netting is not a growing problem in the southwest it is considered indefensible that any commercial estuary netting should be allowed in the face of the obvious decline of salmonids in the region. It was noted that the Camel continues to have seven nets in operation and that the current Fowey NLO will expire in 2017 – possibly resulting in a single net returning to the river at that time.
- The initial position of the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) in Cornwall as being the sole UK Authority to contest the DEFRA/EA policy of trying to reduce salmonid by-catch in estuary nets by setting them low enough in the water (-3m) to allow safe passage. It is understood that IFCA Cornwall are now conforming to the policy.
- The Environment agency (EA) review of fisheries by-laws in the next 10-year period. The SWRA position is that these could be significantly relaxed if River Associations (and by inference local clubs) provided a robust self-regulatory framework for anglers. LDAC was noted as having done so with their requirement for all members to meet catch/release levels or face being expelled from the Club.
- Identifying and supporting ways to stop the decline of salmon numbers in southwest rivers. Whilst perceived wisdom is that this is due directly to low(er) marine survival rates positive moves made to remove netting in a number of key areas (Irish Sea, Faroes and Greenland) have not had the desired effect. Climate change was clearly a factor in driving stocks further north and by-

catch remains a critical issue. However the SWRA felt that maximizing the number of smolts going to sea was the most effective way of ensuring the survival of the species. However it was noted that the UK Government had little appetite to address the issue. This was being further exacerbated by continued downward pressure on EA funding.

- Finally the SWRA remain concerned that the number of youngsters entering the sport was a significant threat to the future of the fishing and to fishery management and river conservation. Work to maintain rivers, to provide direct investment for river improvements and to conserve and manage the rivers themselves is falling increasingly to Associations and club members - groups whose memberships appear to be in terminal decline as the average age of members increases. There is an urgent need to increase the number of junior participants before it is too late.

ii) Tam Sneddon (EA Enforcement Officer)

The EA remains under financial pressure as a direct result of central government cuts to budgets. It was noted that since mid 2014 the number of enforcement officers in Devon and Cornwall had been reduced by 33%, down from 12 to 8.

As a direct result the EA *modus operandi* was necessarily changing to focus on intelligence gathering rather than on patrolling riverbanks.

Wider collaboration with police and other agencies means the EA is now more able to target known individuals and increased co-operation has identified additional reasons for prosecution. Wide-ranging teams will intercept poaching teams across the region. It was noted that known poachers were now being reported as far afield as Brighton, Isle of Wight and South Wales. The EA marine inshore boat is no longer moored and will be trailered to areas of interest on an as needed basis.

It is hoped that the change of approach will have a significant positive impact in the region. However, it remains vitally important

that all Club members remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity directly to the EA on their 24-hour hotline (0800 80 70 60).

The Chairman thanked Messrs. Furniss and Sneddon for their interesting and informative talks. He also thanked Club members for their attendance and involvement in the AGM and club matters.

The AGM was followed by a successful club raffle organised by V Lamb. All proceeds raised (£122) will go towards the purchase of a new Brown Trout Trophy.

Roger Lashbrook's and Fishing Mayhem were both thanked by the Chairman for their generous donations to the club raffle this year and for their efforts in selling visitor tickets on behalf of the Club.

The 2015 AGM of the LDAC was brought to a close at 22.00 hrs.