



Wantage and Grove AC

News Letter

December 2021

A warm “Hello” to all our members. This is the first in a possibly intermittent series of news letters bringing you up to date with the club, its achievements and its plans.

I'll start with a run through of the events for the year 2021 and a lot has been done this year to improve the facilities and fishing.

Netting

Firstly, in February the pond was netted to allow us to establish the stock levels and do a quick health check. The club is indebted to Moore and Moore for carrying out the work and to Bill Hailey for organising it. A full report is available on the website but in brief, the pond contains an estimated 1,800lb (800Kg) of fish. This is considerably more than would be expected from a balanced fishery. To help maintain the health of the fish the club supplements the feed going into the pond and runs aerators to keep the oxygen levels up.

Aeration

In order to ensure that the aerators are run when necessary the club has invested in a dissolved oxygen meter. This is a portable device and the costs have been shared with The Plough AC who also use it on their pond. Our thanks go to Les Teale for taking the readings and providing reports. The use of the meter not only helps us predict oxygen crashes but shows the value of the aerators (oxygen levels are increased after they have been run).

Access - pond

This has not, I'm afraid, been a good year for unhindered access to the pond. The club lost 6 weeks of access due to the unannounced work by Thames Water when they repeatedly dug up Station Road (by which we access the pond).

This occurred on 3 occasions (each lasting 2 weeks), there was no notice given to the club for any of these and other than complain there was nothing we could do. I have to ask you to believe me when I say we did all we reasonably could, but TW had their plans and weren't going to change them.

Access – Swift ditch

Following a familial falling-out between the land owners at Swift ditch (Colmoor Farm) there were a few access issues. Hopefully all are now resolved but members are asked to park at the top of the lane not in the car park by the river, and don't park so as to obstruct farm vehicles.

Bank shoring

The bank between pegs 5 and 10 had become considerably undercut and the club undertook a major piece of hard-landscaping to drive steel “I” beams, with untreated oak sleepers between them, to shore up the bank. To soften the effect and provide cover for the fish, 2 floating islands have been installed and planted, these are designed to ensure there is no risk of snagging or losing fish on the supports.

The hard-landscaping was carried out by contractors and club is extremely grateful to the Environment Agency who granted the club £4,600 to cover the majority of the cost of this work.

Disabled platforms

The club also obtained a grant from the British Disabled Anglers Association who installed 3 platforms (pegs 3, 4 & 5) for use by disabled anglers. These are available for all to fish but please relinquish one if requested by a disabled angler (assuming all other disabled pegs are occupied). Peg 5 has a concrete access slope installed and the club is looking at access solutions for other pegs.

Match fishing

I know it's not everyone's cup-of-tea but the club does have an active group of match anglers. The aggregate trophy was won by Jim Routledge, Tony Brooker was second and last year's winner, Vicky Knowlson, was third. Our congratulations to them all.

Following the series of matches cancelled in 2020 (due to covid restrictions) the majority of matches were held on the pond, the notable exception being the annual social and friendly in the New Forest in July.

Sadly lost

Regrettably, a long standing member (and committee member) Tony Dawson died suddenly and unexpectedly in October. The club was represented at his funeral, our thoughts and best wishes go to his family.

That, I think, covers all major points for the club in 2021 – and so onwards and ever upwards to 2022.....

Disabled access

As mentioned above, only peg 5 of the three disabled swims has proper sloped access, action will be taken in 2022 to provide wheel-chair friendly access to more swims

Bank shoring

Following the work on the west bank (pegs 5-10) there is considerable work needed to stabilise the bank on the south side of the pond (pegs 11-14). The cost will run onto many thousands of pounds and whilst the club will pursue all possible avenues for obtaining a grant it is unlikely any will be available.

Membership fees

The club is going to have to spend a considerable amount of money to shore up the bank and prevent the access road sliding into the water (with a consequent loss of the fishery). Consequently an increase in adult membership to £35 a year has been agreed. This is less than 70p a week.

5 year membership

In order to obtain funds for capital projects the club is considering offering a (limited number) of 5 year memberships, this will allow us to bring funds forwards whilst providing security of membership to those involved. This will also be discussed at the AGM

AGM

Due to covid restrictions there was no formal AGM in 2021, it is hoped that 2022 can go ahead. Covid permitting this will be held on Monday 7 February at the Old Mill Hall in Grove, starting at 8pm.

Electricity supply

A number of years ago the club applied for permission to install a mains electricity supply at the pond, our landlord (Network Rail) declined to give us permission to proceed but there is a possibility

that a different approach will be successful. If so, then the aerators can be run more efficiently and cheaply than at present.

Netting and fish removal

As reported for 2021, the netting indicated that the pond is heavily overstocked, in February the club is to net out 300lb (135Kg) of small roach and bream. This will allow the existing stocks room to grow.

A few weeks ago a sample of fish were sent for testing and came back with a clean bill of health, this means the fish will not be lost to landfill but will go to The Plough to help stock their pond. Once again, our thanks to Bill Hailey for organising the testing.

Match Secretary

Our long-standing match organisation team of Bob Steele and Vicky Knowlson (match sec and assistant match sec, respectively), have indicated that they wish to stand down from their roles. The club thanks them for their hard work but now seeks replacements. Please let the club know via the usual channels (web contact page, WhatsApp, Facebook) if you would like to apply for either position.

The club wishes all members, families and friends a very merry Christmas, and a happy and healthy new year.