

Association News Edition 6 November 2020

The 2020 season has been one like no other due, in no small part, to the many weeks we lost to the “Covid lockdown” and the powers that be now seem inclined to subject the country yet again to crippling restrictions. Here in the north-east though, with our salmon and sea trout rivers now closed until February 2021 we will not be affected to the same extent we were earlier this year, though our enjoyment of stillwater rainbow trout fishing could still be curtailed if travel restrictions were re-introduced. Let’s hope not!

A brief summary of the abbreviated 2020 season:

The Rivers

The Covid lockdown period coincided, as we know, with a long spell of hot, dry weather, ideal for sunbathing, but not for fishing, and although we could not fish anyway, that did have the effect of shrinking our river levels and hindering early runs of migratory fish. A slight rise in early June encouraged a few into the systems, but, apart from a short spell of rain in early July, the main summer period was another tale of low river levels when only an occasional summer salmon and grilse were landed by members who put in the hours on the river bank. Sea trout did make their customary appearance in the high summer months, and these mainly fell to rods fishing well into the dusk period.

In true “feast or famine” fashion, much of the last 5 weeks or so of the season were blessed or bedevilled, depending on one’s viewpoint, with several spates. One of these had SEPA gauges on the Don showing more than 8 feet above summer level. These had the effect of rendering some Don pools almost unfishable, even well after the peak height, especially with fly, although salmon and grilse were accounted for when the river had dropped back to a fishable level. The most notable of those was a well-conditioned fish of 25 pounds on Devon minnow to the rod of member John Burr. At the same time the conditions brought the Ythan, once the foremost sea trout river in the UK, into ply, yielding a number of sea trout, some of which had been in the river for some time, and good numbers of finnock of excellent quality, many well over the pound, which bodes well for coming seasons

As always, the Don brown trout can be relied on to provide sport to both dry and wet fly, and that was the case again this year with several weighty specimens landed, especially on nymph.

Our Dee beats had some success, especially during the main grilse run in July and August, although these very fresh fish did not linger for long in the lower river. A few were also taken from our Feugh beat once the river rose toward the end of September.

The Stillwater Scene

No doubt also due to the warm conditions over the summer, the Loch of Loirston was, at times, fairly badly affected by weed, as was Millpond later in the year, despite attention

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from our regular contractor and an outside organisation and this will be looked at over the winter months. Members will be kept informed on that score in due course.

Despite the restriction on fishable area both venues provided fairly steady sport over the summer months, and Parkhill fishery also came back on stream to augment our available fishing.

Our stillwaters are a valuable resource, providing fishing over the winter months for those of us who might otherwise suffer withdrawal symptoms after the rivers close! Tight lines to those members who avail themselves of these venues.

General Matters

1. Maintenance of our Fishings.

Some of you may have heard that we will not be renewing our existing contract with Stuart Fleming (SDF). Stuart has been our works contractor for the past 14 years and was a committee member for some years before that.

Stuart has served the ADAA very well over that period and has done a great deal to benefit our anglers with his work quality and knowledge of our fishings. Unfortunately, our river management costs are too high and your committee have had to look at ways to reduce those costs.

Your Association is well established and strong, with excellent fishings to manage but with the changes in the oil industry over recent years and the ongoing Covid 19 situation, your committee, in seeking to preserve the long term future of our club, has to be pro-active in endeavouring to reduce, as much as possible any major outlays. A major concern at this juncture is that, should increased unemployment result following the Coronavirus situation, we may suffer further loss of membership in the coming years.

Your committee is hopeful that SDF will agree a simplified grass cutting contract to cover the next few years, and while that would cover the main and most important part of fishery maintenance, it would allow us to make substantial savings on our annual costs. Incidental maintenance tasks are, of course, certain to occur during a fishing season, and the committee will be looking at ways to tackle those eventualities.

The aim of the founders of the ADAA, (of which Alastair Hume, our Honorary President is one), was to provide quality fishing at reasonable cost in our area. To continue that laudable principle, it is essential that our financial strength is maintained, by looking continually at ways to reduce our annual outlays, of which fishery maintenance is a prominent part.

2. Committee Work

The season's end does not herald a cessation of committee involvement and, besides regular meetings, (currently held on "Zoom" of course), members are always active in promoting the ADAA and beat conveners, as well as keeping tabs on their areas are often engaged in following up situations which have occurred during the year. An example of this

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was the site meeting George Clark arranged for Monday 16th November with Don Board superintendent Jim Kerr, Acting President Paul Adderton and myself, to assess the damage done by bank collapse at the Goval Burn on our Upper Parkhill beat, following the largest of the spates which affected the river during the last weeks of the season. Jim's river expertise is invaluable, the meeting was very positive and the area has now been earmarked for remedial work. That will take place as early next season as is feasible, consistent with water height and other factors.

Our Secretary, Paul Toseland can always be contacted via email at secretary@adaasales.co.uk if needed, to answer your queries or forward them for consideration and comment by the other committee members.

3. Junior Membership

It is well known and documented how difficult it can be to steer youngsters away from their "ipad" and computer screens and this problem, of course, afflicts many sports and hobbies, such as golf as well as angling. It is heartening therefore to see the increase this year in our Junior membership following the committee initiative to make the ADAA more easily accessible to young potential anglers. The committee is exploring ways to engage further with juniors and more on this will be featured in the next newsletter.

4. 2021 Annual General Meeting

As most of you will know, our AGM is normally held just a few weeks before the start of the salmon season. It will not come as a surprise I am sure, to learn that it may not be possible, due to possible continuing Covid restrictions on public gatherings, for that to happen in January 2021. That situation will be monitored between now and January and members will be kept informed of developments and the eventual outcome.

In Conclusion

On a personal note, November is the worst month of the year for me, heralding, as it does, the months when we cannot sally out, rod in hand, to Don, Ythan or Dee in the hope of tempting a fresh salmon or sea trout or one of our beautifully marked brownies. Fly tying and gear maintenance can, of course, help fill the gap left at the end of the river season, and, as noted above, we can access our stillwaters, should we need to keep fishing.

Whatever your own way of approaching these midwinter months I wish you all the best and trust everyone will stay safe and hope that together we can all look forward to a successful angling year free of onerous "Covid" restrictions.

John Stephen, Dyce