



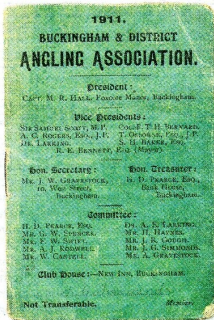
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THE HISTORY OF THE CLUB

Angling Times takes a look through the old minute books to find out some fascinating decisions taken by Buckingham DAA over the past century

1 In 1924 the committee took the decision to restock a club-controlled water - they gave the organisers of the project £10 to meet the demands and it was successfully completed within the budget.



2 Tench a plentiful in parts the Great Ouse, but their origins are unknown. In 1914 the club introduced a batch of the species and it is likely the current stock are descendants of those very fish.

3 In the early years of the club matchfishing played a big part, but things worked a little differently. All the fish were taken back to the pub for weighing after the event!

4 During the First World War the club had just 60 members and 22 of them were called up for service. Sadly, a large proportion of these never returned from duty.

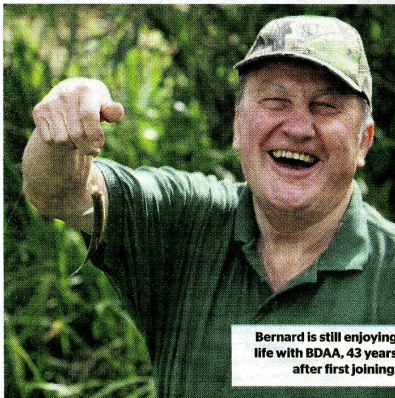
5 During the first two decades of the club's life anyone who caught a pike of over 10lb was treated to a supper paid for by the committee. Officials would attend to celebrate the capture and the local mayor was also invited.

GET A FREE DAY TICKET

Buckingham DAA is offering Angling Times readers the chance to get their hands on free day ticket to a number of stretches on the Great Ouse. Tickets are available for the following stretches on October 30 and 31: Roman Bridge, Morton Mill, Dick Walker's, Thornton Wood, Lenborough, The Coombs, Leckhampstead Bridge

A limited number are available for each stretch and those interested should email info@bdaafishing.org.uk with the date they want a ticket for, the stretch they would like to fish, their name and address. Successful applicants will have a free day ticket emailed back to them.

How to join Buckingham DAA: The club is currently on the hunt for new members of all ages. Adult permits are priced at £39 a year, OAPs, disabled and 16-18 year olds are £20 and junior tickets are £10 a year. For more details visit www.bdaafishing.org.uk



Bernard is still enjoying life with BDAA, 43 years after first joining.

100 years of the club Walker called home

It's one of the country's oldest fishing clubs and Buckingham and District AA has just celebrated its centenary. **Tony Grigorjevs** headed to the Great Ouse to find out the secret behind its success...

In 1910 the world was shaken by a number of key moments. King Edward VII and Florence Nightingale passed away, Ford announced they had sold 10,000 cars and famous crooks Bonny and Clyde were born. But it was also a landmark year for fishing - it was the year Buckingham and District Angling Association began.

One hundred years on and the club is still alive and kicking. Angling Times this week met up with Chairman Bernard Lewis and his deputy John Harris on the banks of the Great Ouse to find out more about the club that has stood the test of time.

This passionate duo have completed over 60 years of service to the club between them and are heralded as the heart and soul of the association. Bernard stepped on to the committee as treasurer back in 1967 and took the top job on offer in 1987, while John walked on to the committee in the early 1990s.

Throughout their tenure both men have come across various scenarios - both good and bad - and have even managed to build up useful links with some of the greatest figures angling has ever produced, including the legendary Dick Walker.

The club even shared the very stretch of river we were walking along today during the early 1970s with the great pioneer. Buckingham owned the rights to one side and Walker ran a syndicate on the opposite side.

The club - and Bernard in



Thornton Bridge is just one of the river stretches that makes BDAA special.

particular - were in regular contact with Dick and both parties worked side by side to make sure the Ouse was kept in tip top condition and that all users were left satisfied with the quality of fishing on offer.

"I exchanged letters with Dick on

several occasions and he helped us stop the authorities trying to tamper with the weir. He was full of advice and a great man to deal with," explained Bernard.

Other angling heroes to grace the membership list in the past include John Wilson and Martin Bowler, together with lots of other relatively unsung, yet equally talented fishermen, such as Tony Miles.

The chance to rub shoulders with such iconic figures was enough of a draw for most people in the past

but if anyone needed another factor to convince them into signing up then the quality of fishing on offer would usually seal the deal. Perch to 5lb, pike to over 25lb and carp to high thirties were, and still are, all a distinct possibility on club-controlled waters and it proved too tempting to resist for most locals, especially in the glory years of the late 1980s.

But as with virtually every club in the country Buckingham has been presented with more than its fair share of issues. One of the most worrying has taken place in recent years, with venue rent rates shooting up at a time when the amount of members joining has dropped drastically. In comparison to 20 years ago, membership is down by almost 50 per cent.

As we trekked down the Thornton Bridge stretch of the waterway it was hard to imagine how any angler could turn their back on such a venue. All that could be heard was the rushing water thundering through the weir and the occasional plop as a small chub rose for a surface-dwelling fly.

Add to this the chance to land fish of monstrous proportions and it should be classed as one of the most attractive propositions angling has to offer. "The commercial scene has hit us hard. People want everything instantly. They want to step out of their car straight on to the peg and then land 100lb regardless of the weather conditions. That isn't what we are about," said Bernard.

Unfortunately, the modern day demands of anglers are a far cry from what was expected a century ago. The club waters were crowded every day during the 1970s and 1980s and participants were more than willing to walk miles of the

river in an effort to reach the most attractive pegs. Even the match scene was booming, with sell-out attendances on show every weekend at the popular club-controlled Hyde Lane lakes.

"In the late 1980s we staged matches on the lakes and I could have sold them out four times over - that's over 250 people fighting for fewer than 70 pegs every weekend. The match scene has really died off over the years," explained John.

Lower membership numbers and match turnouts have hit the club hard in the pocket and it has been forced to endure a number of periods where proceedings almost came to an end but on each occasion the hard-working committee members kept the success story on the rails.

"In the early 1990s we staged a

“ In the 1980s we had over 250 people fighting for fewer than 70 match pegs **”**
John Harris

special general meeting due to our increasing financial woes and decided that we would turn one of the carp waters into a syndicate. The money raised from that helped us stay afloat at the time," explained Bernard.

"Our membership also used to be limited to just those living within the local area but we were forced to welcome people from all over to raise funds," he added.

After spending an hour wrinkling out chublets on a setup that involved a classic Mitchell reel



Bernard and John are heralded as the heart and soul of the association.

What does Keith Arthur think?
Read his views on the news
Turn to P12

Looking for some bargain tackle?
We've got four pages of great deals
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Discover who the best anglers in your
area are. Check out County Champs
Turn to P54



Dick Walker would be proud of the club's achievements.

The famous fishing hut on the Chase at Beachampton - Dick (centre) with Pete Thomas, Pete Stone and the Taylor Brothers. Sadly the hut no longer exists.

and a porcupine quill float, Bernard pulled out an envelope which was bursting with Buckingham DAA memorabilia. Club permits from as early as 1911, minute books from some of the first-ever meetings and old newspaper clippings were all present and in immaculate condition.

"The first committee members paid 10 shillings and sixpence (53p), while general members paid just two shillings and sixpence (23p) for

a year's fishing. We've had to put our prices up a little since then!" joked Bernard.

One of the newspaper cuttings was written just days after the first AGM in 1911 took place and commented: "It was a most excellent report and he (the Chairman Mr T. Osbourne J.P) was delighted to see the progress the Association had made in a short time - and that the members had taken a deep interest in the matter

and, as long as that was the case, the Association would prosper".

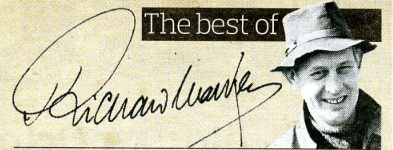
That single statement couldn't have been more correct. But despite the enthusiasm that permeates through the club, Bernard was less than optimistic when I asked the big question: "Will Angling Times be back in 100 years' time to celebrate your second centenary?"

"Fishing is changing a lot," said Bernard before he paused in deep thought for a moment.

"It's getting harder and harder to compete with the commercials and I don't think Buckingham DAA will exist in another 100 years' time."

I couldn't agree with him. Clubs across the country will continue to collapse but as long as the hard working and passionate ethos of club remains then there will always be a demand to join such a historic and well-run establishment.

Long live Buckingham DAA.



⊕ Dick Walker was widely regarded as one of the finest angling writers of his generation. To mark the launch of the latest book celebrating his work, **Be My Guest** (see p14), we will be running a series of his columns. This one, entitled 'There are much bigger fish to catch' was published in June 1954...

I've just been discussing with a friend which kind of fish is most likely to produce the next record-breaker. I voted for 'the tench, but the whole discussion made me recall the big fish of various kinds that I have seen or heard about from anglers whose honesty and ability to judge the size of fish in the water is beyond question.

I have never set out to break records, because I don't consider them important. The chap who has caught the biggest fish ever of any species is not necessarily the best angler and that was never more clearly demonstrated than in 1952.

In June that year Pete Thomas and I were carp fishing, with our baits only a few yards apart. Pete caught a carp of 28lb 10oz, a much bigger fish than I had ever caught at the time. That September our baits again lay within a few yards of one another. Mine was taken by a 44-pounder. Now only a fool will think that Pete was a better carp-fisher than I between June and September in 1952. Actually, he's better than I am at any time!

No, the mark of a good angler for any kind of fish is that he can catch consistently fish above the average weight for their species in the various differing waters in which they are found. Successful anglers spend a lot of time searching for and observing fish. Those that I fish with have seen some fish a lot bigger than we have ever succeeded in landing. I would say that there are few species of which there are not much bigger examples swimming about than have ever been landed.

The species of which I have seen most potential record-breakers is the tench. I've seen fish upwards of 10lb on at least four different waters and I think some of them were more than 12lb. I've seen quite a lot of big chub upwards of 6lb and caught one or two, but only twice have I seen chub that would top the record of 8lb 8oz. One was very dead and I couldn't weight it. It lay in a cow-drink and measured 27 inches. The other was alive and I hope one day to be able to tell you exactly what it weighs.

Everyone has heard of Arlesey perch, and there I have seen fish that I am sure are over 6lb and may easily top 7lb. But I am told, and I believe it, that double-figure perch exist. There are, without doubt record-breaking barbel - certainly in the Hampshire Avon, where Ray Beddington caught one over 16lb while spinning for salmon. Unfortunately, it was in the close season and didn't count. Otters have also produced certain evidence of barbel bigger than have ever been caught by anglers, and 20lb isn't by any means impossible.

Despite the jump taken in the carp record to 44lb, there are yet bigger carp swimming about. The carp is a fish that my friends and I always underestimate when we see them in the water. We have seen, and some of us have hooked and lost, carp that we all guessed at well over 40lb - and on more than one water. Of them all, one that Pete Thomas and I spotted together stands out in my memory, for it made every other carp we have seen look no more than medium-sized.

When people ask us just how big we think carp can grow in Britain, we say 'Perhaps 60lb' - and then we remember that fantastic monster we saw, and look at one another, and wonder.

Only once have I seen a pike that might top 40lb. It seized a 3lb 8oz bream and not even a tail showed outside its mouth. But speculating on the weight of pike is such dangerous ground that I had better keep off it. I have never seen a bream or a rudd that looked like a record-breaker, but I don't doubt that they exist.

Once I saw a roach that looked every ounce of 4lb and only once. More anglers fish for roach than any other fish, so if there are many about over the 3lb 14oz record, it ought not be long before one is caught.

Lastly, there's the eel and there are eels in Britain whose size is terrific. The present record of something over 8lb is certainly less than half of what is possible, and probably eels of 20lb or more exist. The eel isn't regarded as seriously as it deserves, but any angler who decided to specialise in big eels has an exciting career ahead of him. No, not me! I'm just plain scared!

Now buy the book
To buy **Be My Guest**, priced £25.95 plus £2.75 p&p, send a cheque, postal order or banker's draft, made payable to Peter Maskell Publishing Services to: Peter Maskell Publishing Services, PO Box 1163, Stamford, PE2 2HJ.