

Sport

Have you got a sports story for us?

Contact sports editor Mark Pendred on 01280 827972 or email mark.pendred@jpress.co.uk



FLASHBACK: BDAA members pictured at the opening of Woodfields Lake, near Preston Bissett, in 1995. Club president Pete Williams (near left) is shown with Mick Cadd (fourth left), who co-ordinated the digging out of the BDAA-owned lake, and also in the group is oldest club member George Richardson (centre).

Local fishermen celebrate 100th birthday milestone

Angling

Mark Pendred profiles Buckingham & District Angling Association, one of the country's oldest fishing clubs

When a group of local anglers formed the Buckingham & District AA in September 1910, little did they know it would last for over 100 years.

Today the club is still going strong and although times may have changed and new challenges arisen, the 250 members still get the same enjoyment out of a day's fishing as their counterparts of yesteryear.

The club has a wide range of sites for fishing - their own two-and-a-half-acre lake at Woodfields near Preston Bissett, constructed by members and opened in 1995, Hyde Lane Lakes on the Deanshanger Road just outside Buckingham, and a five-mile stretch of the River Great Ouse and its tributaries.

Rent is paid to local farmers and Anglian Water for the use of their land.

The lakes are stocked with fish such as carp, tench, roach, rudd, perch and pike, while chubb, roach, perch and pike are common to the rivers. Members pay an annual subscription or people can purchase a day ticket for fishing.

The association's affairs are run by a small committee headed by chairman Bernard Lewis, a retired British Gas employee from Steeple Claydon, and deputy chairman John Harris, also retired, from Buckingham. They meet fortnightly at old school premises in Well Street, Buckingham. The committee looks after matters including admin, finance, site maintenance and fish stocks.

Bernard, aged 69, joined the committee in 1967, was treasurer for 10 years and stepped up to chairman in 1987. John has been on the committee since the early 1990s. The pair have devoted over 60 years' service to the club between them.

John met Bernard when he moved from his home town of Aylesbury to Steeple Claydon and joined the village angling club.

Both have seen plenty of change. Rent



STALWART: BDAA chairman Bernard Lewis enjoying a day's fishing at Woodfields Lake, above, and right, weighing fish

rates have gone up, membership dwindled over the years and match fishing has been on a gradual decline.

Bernard said: "Match fishing isn't as popular as it once was. You can count on one hand the amount of matches we stage these days."

"Membership tends to fluctuate, but there has been a downwards trend. Many people are keen anglers as youngsters, but then they discover motorbikes, girls, get married and disappear for a few years. The next time we see them they have children and bring them along to fish."

He said they were short of numbers on the committee. "We could do with some new blood. We should have 12 people looking after the club's affairs but we are making do with seven. People aren't prepared to give up their free time so much these days to help out."

To celebrate the club's centenary, a barbecue and fishing matches were held at Woodfields Lake in the summer.

The association was formed in September

1910 and the first meeting took place at the New Inn, Buckingham.

The Buckingham Advertiser and North Bucks Free Press reported 'the tone of the first meeting most encouraging and full of promise for a successful career.'

Capt M.R.Hall, of Foxcote Manor, was the inaugural president, local magistrate Mr.T. Osbourne chairman, Lloyds bank manager Mr H.D. Pearce treasurer and Mr James Gravestock honorary secretary.

The association started with 46 members and had access to over eight miles of the Upper Ouse and its tributaries. The main fish sought after at the time were pike and many catches were recorded in the local papers. Delving back into the minute books of the club's early years, John Harris discovered fishing was something of a social occasion for members.

The group would organise fishing picnics at weekends to Stowe Lakes, transporting members and their families, sometimes as many as 100 people, by coach from the White Hart in Buckingham to the Corin-



thian Arch.

Said John: "Only 12 people were allowed to fish and they would draw lots to decide who could take part."

"A picnic would be held by the lakes and it was obviously a great day out for everyone. Some of the entries are tinged with sadness as with the arrival of the First World War, many members volunteered to serve in the army or were called up. Many never returned, either being killed or listed as missing in action."

The club faces many challenges in the years ahead but club president Pete Williams and Bernard Lewis feel confident it can adapt to the changing environment and last well into this millennium and hopefully the next.