

SDAA Ltd NEWSLETTER (Spring 2021)

Dear SDAA Ltd member,

It is now over a year since Coronavirus (Covid-19) started to impact on all our lives. Angling is one sport where social distancing was already the norm and fortunately this has resulted in relatively few restrictions on angling during the last year, unlike most sports. Whilst many anglers have fished a lot more frequently than usual during the last year, please spare a thought for those who were advised to 'shield' and some have not been able to fish. Provided anglers follow social distancing guidelines and good hygiene techniques, then angling should continue to remain an activity that offers minimal risk of transmitting the Covid-19 virus.

Hopefully this newsletter will help inform SDAA members of key events during the 2020/21 season and outline plans for next season. As this newsletter is being posted in a public environment, we cannot go into the same detail as a closed AGM that is restricted to just SDAA members. If you have any questions please email the Chairperson Richard Bell (info@shefforddaa.org.uk) quoting your full name and membership number in the email. He will endeavour to respond to you ASAP.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM due to be held on 24th March 2021 was cancelled because of the Covid-19 restrictions on face to face meetings. Please note that there is no legal requirement for SDAA Ltd to hold an AGM, but it is the most important event in the club's calendar so hopefully the AGM scheduled for March 2022 will go ahead.

Financial Report

To fulfil the club's legal obligation regarding the club's accounts, a copy of the financial statement for the 2019/20 season will be deposited on the 'Information' section of the club's website. Any member requiring a paper copy of the financial statement should contact the Club Secretary.

Annual Report

Membership - In early 2020 it soon became apparent that angling was going to enjoy a boost in popularity due to the restrictions imposed on many other sports and social activities because of Covid-19. Therefore, the committee took the decision to bring all membership sales in house and impose a limit on membership numbers to try and ensure our fisheries were not too busy or overfished. This also enabled the club to offer all existing members the opportunity to renew their membership, before opening up membership to new and lapsed members. Membership for the 2020/21 season consisted of 75% renewals and 25% new/lapsed members. A far higher proportion of members than usual opted for the night permits, which sold out for the first time since their introduction.

Despite capping membership, both The Airman and Broom Lake were busier than normal during the warmer weather as several members were fishing on a much more frequent basis. Several members expressed concern about the large amount of bait being introduced by some members, which impacted on everyone's

catches. Uneaten bait will simply rot and can lead to water quality issues. Several clubs had to close lakes during the 2020/21 season due to low dissolved oxygen levels, and in some cases fish deaths. Therefore, members were requested to introduce bait responsibly and take unused bait home. The committee decided not to offer half-year memberships to avoid increasing angling pressure on our waters.

Existing 2020/21 members will be contacted by the end of April and given details of how to renew their membership well ahead of the start of next season. There will be no increase in membership fees with prices for 2021/22 being £80 for Full, £60 for Concessionary and £25 for Junior. Night permits will be £60 for Full and Concessionary members, and £25 for Juniors. Once existing members have had an opportunity to renew their membership, any remaining places will be offered to new and lapsed members who have expressed an interest in joining SDAA.

Volunteers - Members are reminded that SDAA is run on a not for profit basis for the benefit of its members by volunteers, who all give up their time for free. Volunteers include the officers of the club, committee members, bailiffs and a range of volunteers who help to manage our fisheries. If you want to get involved in any volunteer activities please contact a member of the committee.

Fisheries - The social distancing guidelines have made it more challenging to manage the club with an inability to hold face to face meetings and the need to maintain 2m distance during any work parties. Recent flooding has also had an impact on many fisheries. Whilst it was pleasing to see water levels restored at The Airman and Stanford Pit, both Willington Lake and Broom Lake were impacted by a series of damaging flood events.

We continued our long term carp stocking programme with the introduction of 30 VS Fisheries C4 carp averaging 14lb during late October. 10 carp were stocked into each of our main lakes (The Airman, Broom Lake and Willington Lake).

Rule Changes - The following rule changes have been agreed by the committee and will take effect at the start of the 2021/22 season:

- angling sessions will be limited to 48h (up to 5 nights by prior arrangement) (*this rule is one of the current additional Covid-19 rules*)
- all anglers will be restricted to 2 rods at Broom Lake between 1st April and 30th September (*this rule change was proposed by several members*)
- all members must carry an unhooking mat (or cradle) appropriate for the species they are targeting
- magnet fishing is banned on all SDAA waters

Election of Officers and Committee

The club recently sought nominations for officer, committee and director positions. As there was only one candidate for any Officer position, voting was not required. The officers are Richard Bell (Chairperson and Treasurer), Colin Stitt (Club Secretary), David Baker (Head Bailiff, Coaching Coordinator and Welfare Officer) and Nigel Gilbert (Match Secretary). This leaves five officer positions vacant (Vice Chairperson, Membership Secretary, Minute Secretary, Publicity Officer and Fisheries Officer). John Leath remains as the Club President.

The number of nominations for additional members of the general committee was less than ten, so there was no requirement for a vote and the seven nominees

were appointed; namely Mick Burley, Matt Dale, Sid Fuller, Rob Laidlaw, Steve Richards, Andrew Riley and Paul Williams.

We urge anyone interested in joining the committee to contact Richard Bell, Colin Stitt or any other member of the committee ASAP. The committee has the power to co-opt members outside of the AGM.

SPECIMEN FISH 2020/21

The specimen fish competition was cancelled as there was no sensible way to witness fish weights whilst maintaining 2m social distancing. Here are just a few specimens that appeared in 'News from the Bank' during the last season:



Paul Welsher 31-0 Little Paxton common



Paul Burton 6-11 Broom River chub



Alfie Youd (Jnr) Airman 68-8 Airman catfish



Toby Moore (Jnr) 18-8 Airman pike

MATCH FISHING 2020/21

The 24h match series went ahead taking special measures to ensure all weighings conformed to social distancing guidelines. 50lb+ was needed to win the first two legs at Willington Lake and The Airman, with 115lb required to win the third leg at Broom Lake. Going into the final leg at The Airman, junior Alfie Youd and Nigel Gilbert were tied on 8 points. Junior Alfie Youd pinned his faith in carp and managed two carp of 14lb 8oz and 13lb 3oz, but he also hooked and landed a specimen catfish of 68lb 8oz (the largest fish ever landed in SDAA match fishing history) that boosted his total weight to 96lb 3oz. Meanwhile Nigel Gilbert concentrate on catching bream and his feeder tactics saw a steady stream of 16

bream to 5lb 13oz come to the net. Nigel added a further 12lb 7oz of silvers and a 15lb catfish for a total weight of 96lb 4oz. This meant Nigel had pipped Alfie for first place in the match by just one ounce, which also meant Nigel ran out overall winner of the 24h series with 13 points, compared to Alfie's 12 points.

FISHERIES UPDATES

The Airman - during 2018 and 2019 contractors completely rebuilt all 20 pegs at The Airman using oak boards within a scaffold pole frame at a time when water levels were some 3 feet below normal. With water level now restored to normal some swims will require minor modifications. The heavy winter rains also revealed some drainage issues at the north end of the lake that will require a long term solution. Some areas of thick bramble have been cleared and will be replanted with trees. All swims have been regularly topped up with wood chippings.

Broom Lake - all the swims at Broom Lake were rebuilt in 2019 using a Nicospan membrane and scaffold poles to retain the bank, and topped with a 3m wide oak board. Some remedial work was required to prevent erosion to the sides of the swims and backfilling is still ongoing as the disturbed banks slowly settle. The track around the lake was closed in October when it became waterlogged. Work to repair recent flood damage to a few swims has been initiated and contractors will be engaged to repair the flood damaged track around the lake once the ground has dried out, which will require a venue closure during the works.

Willington Lake - work was limited to maintaining access to the swims and repairing fencing to keep grazing animals out of the wooded areas. Weed was quite prolific last summer, but those raking swims and/or fishing the margins still enjoyed some excellent catches (although very few were ever published!).

Stanford Pit - a group of dedicated publicity shy volunteers have continued their work on the trees around the edge of the lake. The lake dried out completely in 2019, with water levels slowly recovering during 2020. The recent wet winter has completely replenished the lake and the committee has assigned funds to begin stocking during 2021, initially with tench, crucian carp and rudd.

Crucian Ark - the club has an ongoing conservation project to breed genetically pure crucians that can eventually be transferred to other lakes. We have received 3 batches of genetically pure crucians from the EA (750 in July 2018, 300 in December 2019 and 500 in December 2020). This is a long term project that ultimately depends upon the stocked crucians successfully breeding.

River venues - the current social distancing rules have made it difficult to carry out any meaningful volunteer work parties on our river venues. During the close season we will try and assess the impact of recent flooding on our river venues. However, when rivers eventually reopen on 16th June 2021 you will again find paths and swims more overgrown than in previous years.

It is often difficult to assess how well our waters are fishing as many anglers are reluctant to report their catches through News from the Bank. If you spot any problems at a club water please report the issue ASAP so that we can try and deal with it; e.g. if a lock is playing up don't assume it has already been reported.