



The Bintry Mill Trout Fishery

Minutes of the 34th Annual General Meeting

Held on the 24th November 2019 at Stower Grange Hotel

In Attendance: Hugh Berridge (chairman), Dave Pitchers (secretary), Andy Hunt (treasurer), Mike Rudd (committee member), Kevin Freezer (committee member), Jon Gallant (committee member), Kevin Pollard (committee member), Richard Nelson (committee member), Richard Fannon, Bill Emrich, Willie Dann, Tony Simmonds, Charles ffrench-Constant, Mike Rundle, Mark Williams, John Hadaway, Mike Gasson, Simon Spinney, Terry Lawton and Bill Green.

Apologies for absence: Bob Ames, Alex Baxter, Robin Bramall, Bernard Fearn, Martin Friend, Andrew Gibb, Peter Ham, Clewin Hughes, Mat Nicholson, Edward Stanford, Matthew Taylor, Steve Udberg, Tim Weston, Paul Whiddett and Roger James.

1. Minutes of the last AGM: The minutes of the 33rd AGM, held on the 25th November 2018 were approved and signed by the chairman after he had deleted a sentence in the Secretary's report which Terry Lawton told the meeting was untrue.

2. Chairman's opening remarks: Hugh Berridge, opened the meeting by thanking all those who were in attendance. He also thanked Richard Fannon for kindly agreeing to host the meeting once again.

He told the meeting that 2019 had been an eventful season. Electro-fishing had taken place on 24 June which revealed in the course of three separate sweeps, two on the Bintry Mill Beat and one on the Yarrow Farm Beat, twenty-five trout fry (none in the Yarrow Farm sweep), numerous minnows, some adult trout, and the presence of perch, dace, bullhead, stone loach and even one tench. The flow deflectors had been installed on the Yarrow Farm Beat at the end of September.

New licences had been negotiated for the Yarrow Farm and County School beats from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2029 with an option of the Bidewell Family to end the Licence by not less than 6 months' notice on 31 March 2024. The licence fee will be reviewed in April 2023. A new licence was agreed for a further six years for the Bintry Mill Beat from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2026 although the current licence still had one year to run. This will also be reviewed in April 2023. The chairman reminded members that these are licenses and not leases and therefore they do not bind successors in title so any new owner of either freehold could if they so wished terminate the club's licence.

The catch returns for the year had been most encouraging. The total catch for all beats was 514. By way of comparison the figures for the three preceding seasons starting 2016 were 214, 319

and 293 with stocking figures of 275, 400 and 460 respectively. The number of rod days fished was 405 compared with 283 in 2018. The average return per visit increased from 1.03 in 2018 to 1.25. It is believed that some fish ended the season with sore lips having been caught and returned several times. One member, Kevin Pollard, managed to catch 101 fish in the season in just 39 visits. This was an extraordinary achievement especially as 91 were caught on the dry fly. However, he was not the only successful fisher and other members had good seasons. Richard Nelson caught 76 fish from 30 visits. He noted that the change to stocking with triploid fish had altered the nature of the fishing in some respects. The committee had over the last few seasons spent a considerable time debating the best stocking options. Perhaps the results of this season suggested that it had got the balance about correct. 390 trout (against a target of 420) were put in the river in four stockings, the first taking place quite early on 10 April, the final one on 18 July.

Next season we will have a new river manager, Mark Williams, who has experience in managing and improving a trout fishery on the River Lyde in Hampshire. The chairman was sure that he will bring new ideas to improving the fishing for the benefit of all members.

The chairman confirmed that he would be standing down at the conclusion of the formal business. At that point the result of the ballot would be announced and he would hand over to the new chairman to introduce himself and chair the 'Open Discussion'. In 2015 when our previous chairman, Richard Gibbs, became ill and could no longer carry on he had taken on the position but had always made it clear that he would not occupy it indefinitely and he felt that it was a good time to make a change. He thanked all of those who had served on the committee during his time as chairman and for all the hard work that they had put into the well-being of the club. His particular thanks went to Mike Rudd who had served loyally on the committee for so long and to Dave Pitchers who during the time that he had been on the committee had served as treasurer, then as secretary and more recently as river manager as well. He had been a tireless organiser and doer. The chairman also thanked those members of the club who had assisted the committee and club in various ways, for example, with their working party work, developing the website and assisting with stocking. As ever the club is a joint enterprise.

His penultimate point as departing chairman was a heartfelt plea that a small and privileged club should have no no place within it for the distrust and intense bad feeling that had been displayed frequently over the last two years. Members should try to be civil to each other both on and off the river.

Finally, he wished his successor all the best in the role. He will remain as a member and so will continue to meet and greet fellow members at the riverside. He hoped he may even find more time to fish.

3. Treasurer's report:

A copy of the treasurer's report and the accounts were made available to the meeting.

In explanation the treasurer Andy Hunt confirmed we were going in the right direction. The re-introduced joining fee of £100 had brought in £1800 and a reduction in the Five Rivers invoice for installing the flow deflectors had saved the club £2000.

AH projected that we should show an increased surplus of £3000 for 2020 and it was essential to maintain a healthy balance to offset any unforeseen circumstances that might effect the finances of the BMTF. The Rod fee will be kept at £295. The working party levy had been abandoned. The chairman proposed and it was agreed that the accounts be accepted as a true record.

4. Secretary's report:

The secretary told the meeting that he would be standing down as club secretary at the end of the meeting. He had been a member of the Club for twenty-two years, treasurer for seventeen and secretary for two years. Dave acknowledged the difficulties and differences of opinion that had beset the club committee in recent seasons.

Membership: This year the committee agreed that the membership should be increased from fifty to sixty members. Last year eight members resigned and this year we had recruited eighteen new members. There were forty-two names on the waiting list.

River management: DP apologised for the state of the banks during the first part of the season as he had been let down by our regular bank cutter and had had to arrange another contractor to do the work. This took time and meant that the banks were difficult to access until July. The response from members to help with weed cutting was poor. A small group cut the weed by hand in the areas that were wadable at a time when the river level was low so they managed to cut much more than first anticipated.

He was still carrying out riverfly sampling on a regular basis. As usual there were seasonal variations in all seven invertebrate species sampled. Overall there was a reduction in number of all species, with the drop in shrimp numbers of particular concern. However one species seemed to be bucking the trend and that was the stonefly which saw an increase in numbers.

5. Election of officers

The result of the postal vote for the position of chairman was announced. There were two candidates: Dave Pitchers and Terry Lawton. A total of forty-eight votes were received with twenty-eight in Terry's favour and twenty for Dave. Terry was duly elected as the new chairman of BMTF. HB thanked Mike Rudd and Richard Fannon for carrying out the count. HB congratulated Terry on his election. Terry then thanked Hugh for his services as chairman and his stewardship of the BMTF and Dave for his years as treasurer and secretary.

6. General discussion chaired by Terry Lawton

Terry opened the general discussion by asking the floor for their opinions on stocking trout into the fishery.

Mike Rudd thought that it was important to supplement the wild stock as it is important to offer members a well-stocked fishery.

Hugh Berridge said that he could see the attraction of catching a wild trout and also have the opportunity to concentrate on fishing for the stocked fish to avoid harming the indigenous trout.

Bill Emrich suggested, as far as possible, there ought to be two strategies: one to retain our stock fish and one to protect the wild ones. He had questions about the hatchery box that used to be

employed on the river. TL explained that as the eggs purchased to load the box would have to be triploid to comply with EA rules there was no point continuing to use it.

Charles ffrench-Constant suggested an experimental stocking of all the introduced fish into the Bintry mill pool and monitoring the downstream spread. Mike Rudd, Mark Williams and Kevin Freezer thought this approach would be detrimental to wild trout and fry that were more abundant in the mill stretch.

MW prompted a vote to maintain the stocking level next season to an equivalent level to this season. Andy Hunt asked for a show of hands and all members present on the floor of the meeting voted to maintain current stocking policy.

HB requested that the committee publish their stocking plan to the membership as soon as it is finalised.

On more general matters:

Charles ffrench-Constant would like to see information on the catch returns recording where on the beat the trout were caught. MW thought that as the fish move around with stock fluctuating over various holding points it might not provide useful information.

Dave Pitchers pointed out that increases in the wild population depended on spawning areas being available. Silt and restricted river bed gradient reduced these areas. Investment money for improvement was hard to access.

TL indicated that as a fishery we had had our share of EA investment and that self-funded improvements would necessarily be in manageable increments.

MW thought with an improvement plan in place we could do a lot for ourselves.

TL called the meeting to a close at 12.45 pm

Signed
Chairman

Date