

Mid-Northants Trout Fishers Association

A History Summary

The Mid-Northants Trout Fishers Association was formed on 9th January 1952 when 100 anglers held an inaugural meeting at the Angel Hotel in Northampton. Colonel S W Miller was elected Chairman of a temporary committee including Tom Ivens (Secretary), Cyril Inwood, Mr E Nutt, Mr C C Robinson, Mr R P Swannell and Mr W Izzard. The prime reason for the Association was to negotiate on behalf of anglers for improved fishing at both Hollowell and Ravensthorpe with the Mid Northants Water Board. Key topics of the day included, increase rods from 6 per day to 9, weed cutting to allow more room, re-stocking and fishing through till one hour after sunset.

Once the permanent committee was approved and meeting once a month they quite quickly took action and appointed a bailiff duty rota for Ravensthorpe and paid the Hollowell bailiff extra to stay later in the evenings. They also formulated proposals for the Water Board on netting, stocking and rule changes. Subscriptions were 3s.6d in the first year and quickly rose to 10s in the second to help with bailiff's costs. In November 1952 they managed to get 5,500 brown trout stocked into Hollowell and the first 2,500 rainbows stocked at Ravensthorpe.

The first netting of Ravensthorpe was in March 1953 where they moved 15,000 Rudd to other areas in Northampton and then another 40,000 in May. Ravensthorpe and Hollowell were struggling to fish well with catch returns in 1953 being 164 fish from 796 rods and at Hollowell 275 fish for 955 rods. A little better these days! For this a days boat fishing would have cost you 12/6 if you lived in Water Board catchments area, 25s if not.

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FLY-FISHERS FORM AN ASSOCIATION

More than 100 local and visiting fly-fishing enthusiasts attended the inaugural meeting of the Mid-Northants Trout Fishers' Association, at the Angel Hotel, last night. Mr K. Waite presided.

The chairman outlined some of the aims of the association.

Mr. W. Izzard moved that the Association be formed. The proposal was carried unanimously. The rules were then read and adopted.

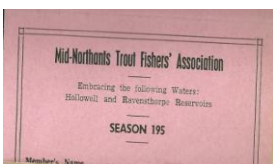
Canon J. Trevor Lewis then stressed the delicate nature of the negotiations with the water board who were the riparian owners, and suggested that the rules should be acceptable to them. Replying, the acting secretary laid emphasis on the fact that the proposed rules sought to support the water board, and he stated that no prescriptive rights over the water were sought.

Mr. Izzard then proposed that in order to save valuable time at the meeting the rules be thrashed out in committee, and for that purpose a temporary committee be formed. This was agreed to.

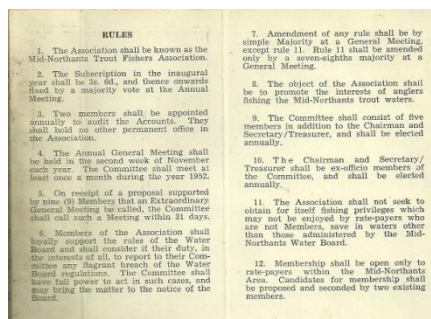
Colonel S. Miller was elected chairman. Mr. F. C. Ivens was appointed secretary, with Mr. C. C. Robinson as his deputy.

Members for the temporary committee were then elected as follows: Messrs. C. Inwood, E. Nutt, C. C. Robinson, R. P. Swannell and W. Izzard. were elected, the chairman and secretary being adopted ex-officio.

The chairman then asked that the committee be given a mandate to formulate rules for submission to a general meeting, and to approach the water board for help.



The first Club card



Tom Iven's our first secretary in action

Early in 1956 there was a new Chairman Mr R J Bell and new secretary Mr B J Rowe. At this time a decision was made to open Pitsford as a coarse fishery so the Club's emphasis turned to turning Cransley Reservoir into a Trout fishery and also spending some of their own money to better stock Hollowell and Ravensthorpe.

By the AGM of 1957 there were a number of members lobbying for Pitsford as a trout fishery and Mr Snelson read out a letter that advised that Nene Angling Club has suggested how this could come about. This then focussed the club's attention to join forces with the Nene AC.

During the next few years the association put forward a whole host of suggestions and advise to the Water Board including: developing stocking, waterside management, on site tickets, fishing limits, price changes, coarse fish management, Pitsford as a trout fishery and predator management. There were many issues on which they did not agree with the board and this caused constant frictions. This was a time when the club were keen to get back to previous good relations while helping to improve the fishing. If they could not make this happen then they made plans to ask for a lease to run the fishing themselves.

PITSFORD: TROUT OR COARSE FISH?

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE fishermen have started a new campaign in the battle for Pitsford Reservoir.

The latest development, which has sparked off anew the coarse fish-trout controversy, is a letter to the Mid Northamptonshire Water Board from the Nene Angling Club.

Trout and coarse-fishermen it seems have now reached agreement, and the letter, in effect, reverses the club's original recommendations that the reservoir should be used for coarse fishing.

After reaching a conclusion at their annual meeting that "the obstacles to coarse fishing are insuperable," members now want the board to stock Pitsford with trout.

Engineer and manager of the water board, Mr. L. H. Brown, said today: "At the moment the board is standing by its original decision to stock Pitsford with coarse fish."

"This latest letter has yet to be considered by the committee and I cannot comment on it."

STARTED TWO YEARS AGO

Secretary of the Nene Angling Club, Mr. G. V. Day, said:

"This controversy started two years ago when the club asked the water board to allow coarse fishing at Pitsford."

"In November last year, we pointed out in a letter to the board that nothing seemed to have been done to make the reservoir available for coarse fishing."

"The members, by this time, had had an opportunity to consider the facilities at Pitsford and decided that both coarse and

trout fishing should be made available at the reservoir."

At that time the water board decided to adhere to a previous resolution that the reservoir would eventually be made available for coarse fishing.

The club's latest recommendation is supported by Mr. B. J. Rowe, secretary of Northampton Trout Fishers' Association, who points out that within a 12-mile radius of Northampton there are about 240 miles of canals and rivers available for the coarse fisherman.

Trout fishers on the other hand, have only Ravensthorpe and Hollowell reservoirs in which to fish.

"In any case, only 26 people are allowed to fish for trout in this area on any one day," said Mr. Rowe.

£10,000 A YEAR

He estimated that with a capital outlay now of about £1,500 to stock Pitsford reservoir with trout, in two or three years the water would be producing an annual revenue in the region of £10,000.

The cost could be further cut, he said, if the water board would re-open their trout hatchery at Ravensthorpe. Originally very productive, the hatchery had been allowed to fall into disuse, he said.

He added that the wire expanse of water at Pitsford would allow between 75 and 100 trout fishermen to fish there on one day.

"If the reservoir were stocked with both types of fish there would always be the possibility that coarse fishermen would catch trout."

"Trout is a game fish and we believe should be fished for as such."

RESERVOIR'S
ANGLING:
NEW PLANS

BOARD'S PITSFORD
RULES DECISION

NEW PLANS for allowing fishing in the reservoirs under their control came before the Mid-Northamptonshire Water Board yesterday. A special sub-committee, it was reported, gave full consideration to points raised by deputations from Northampton Nene Angling Club and the Mid-Northamptonshire Trout Fishers' Association.

The sub-committee also bore in mind that Hollowell and Ravensthorpe reservoirs are stocked with trout, and that a part of the water feeding Pitsford reservoir would be obtained by abstraction from the Nene, which already contains coarse fish.

TROUT FISHING

The board yesterday decided to permit coarse fishing in Pitsford reservoir and trout fishing in the Cransley, Hollowell and Ravensthorpe reservoirs.

It was agreed that coarse fish in Cransley Reservoir should be netted and put in Pitsford reservoir.

Rules and regulations regarding fishing in Pitsford are to be drawn up in consultation with Northampton Nene Angling Club. Similar action, in consultation with the sailing club is to be taken with regard to sailing which, as reported yesterday, is to be permitted in Pitsford reservoir.

Consideration will also be given by the board to additional stocking with trout fish of the Cransley, Hollowell and Ravensthorpe reservoirs.

In the early 1960's it had been agreed that Pitsford would be a trout fishery and the club helped in the formation of the rules prior to it's opening and when it did there was a list of improvements that were then put forward including the provision of toilets, car parks, general facilities and the first stocking of trout were too small and not enough.

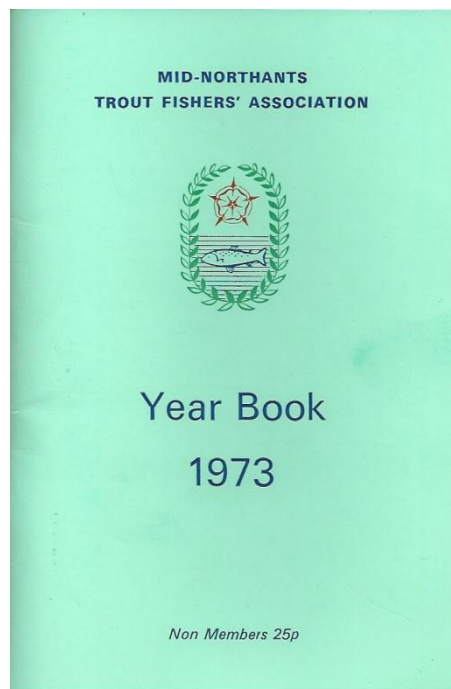
In the late 60's the club continued with it's social evenings and film nights as well as arranging trips to Blagdon and Draycote. Many more fisheries were expanding now and letters and correspondence were sent to encourage these rather than direct action. The waters included Diddington (Grafham today), Draycote and Empingham (Rutland). Negotiations with the Water Board continued especially around costs, car parks and stocking for Pitsford and Ravensthorpe. Much effort was put into keeping Ravensthorpe as an open fishery rather than for local residents as had already happened with Hollowell.

In 1970 there was a move in the club to depart from "militancy" to developing as a social club. James Bell who had been Chairman for 16 years was defeated at the AGM and Mr P Draper took over with a new committee including Terry Broughton as secretary and Dick Shrive the only committee member to continue. In recognition of his services Mr Bell was invited to be the clubs 3rd president after Sir John Pascoe and Alderman Strickland.

In the following years the club went from strength to strength as they introduced a new logo, a year book, boat competitions at Pitsford and Ravensthorpe with best fish prizes, a club tie, a newsletter, a summer outing to Chew, Fly Tying evening and a winter social evening. The club was on the up and had increased from 60 to 120 paid members in 3 years.

Early in 1970 the Federation of Midland Fly Fishers was formed between Kettering & District, East Midlands, Peterborough and Mid Northants and initially the prime objective was to try and secure Rutland Water as a Trout Fishery. Over the years many committee members put an enormous amount of effort to this body.

With the additional Waters available the fishing numbers had increased but sadly the catch returns hadn't. The catch returns for 1971 were Ravensthorpe 4289 tickets for 3787 fish and Pitsford 5230 tickets for 3406 fish. Pitsford fishing was in the small half only and had not fulfilled the expectations for a premier UK fishery. This prompted a letter from Richard Walker to the EMTFA and then passed onto the Water Board and negotiated by the club. It seemed to do the job as stocking rose from 8000 to 24000 the following year.

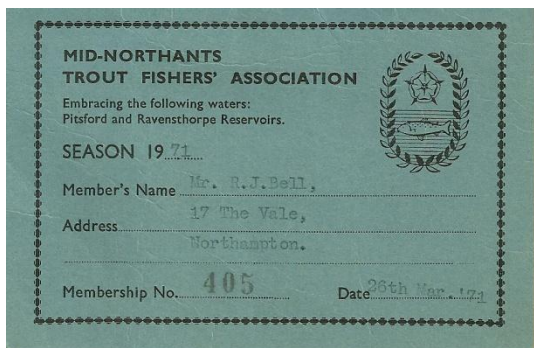


Launching a boat from Pitsford's Boat jetty.

The first club trophy was presented at Pitsford to Mr D Allen by Rex Bryan & Son purchased from donations of friends and work colleagues of Stanley Harrison who died after illness in 1974. It was intended to be for the best catch of the day and to be a more social than competitive event.

During 1974 there were many discussions on the best way to organise International events and the CEFF was created. In the first year the club was asked to put forward 2 fishermen to represent England in Ireland for 1975 and they were Mr W V Church, reserve Mr P Dobbs and Mr C A Bigalos, reserve Mr C Rowe. The following year the club created its first eliminator on Ravensthorpe in April and after elimination 5 members qualified for England, Bob Draper, Tom Bilson, Bev Perkins, Don Fulcher and John Snelson.

During 1977 Mr P Draper resigned as Chairman and was succeeded by Mr W V Church who stated it would only be for 2 years. His first action was to agree with the sailing club that fishing could be allowed in the big half on certain days and paved the way for an extension to this.



A revised club card

The club continued in the same vein in the early 1980's with Tom Bilson succeeding Viv Church as Chairman and Jim Collins taking over in 1982. The secretaries role also changed to Herbie Cave. The competitions had increased now including the Bruce Richardson Rose bowl, Eric Goodman Trophy, the first Pitsford bank match and a Midland Final in the eliminators. Malcolm Eade as Competition secretary also helped to draw up our competition rules.



A superb 4lb 2oz rainbow caught by Jim Collins on a Black Chenille Lure at Blagdon Lake.

In the late 1980's Terry Broughton and Hector Woolnough took on the Chairman's role with Sam Clarke as secretary. During this time the Pitsford users panel was set up and the small half was lost to fishing when it became a SSSI without any consultation. The club were in communication with the House of commons and retained some fishing in the small half and an extension to the fishing times in the large half. Beginners courses at Pitsford were also founded and run by Hector Woolnough and planning permission for chalets around the water were defeated.

Early 1990's the Chairmen were Hector Woolnough and Herbie Cave. The competition scene was rising towards it's height and there was conflict with the social members but also with other clubs as the Benson and Hedges event increased the need for smaller clubs to compete as teams of 6. This was also the time of Blue Green algae and the resulting effect on fly life.



Grant Gibson and Julian Davies

In the late 1990's Julian Davies and Grant Gibson were the chairmen and Malcolm Eade and Kevin Rowley as secretary. With the competition scene and the need to be members of large clubs reducing the club decided to build on the social side of the club and introduced a new rule where your two best fish are weighed in, a fur and feather competition, food introduced at the winter programmes, other club members invited to functions and the newsletters were expanded. The cycle track was built around Pitsford and Hector Woolnough consulted on behalf of anglers to ensure it did not cause too much disruption.

