

COCKERMOUTH ANGLING ASSOCIATION A.G.M. 2024 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

ERIC BROWN

Most members will know that Eric Brown died on 27th June this year. Eric had been a very enthusiastic member of Cockermonth Angling Association and managed the Cogra Moss fishery for many years. The Committee wanted to do something to commemorate Eric and, after discussion with his family, it was decided to plant up a copse with a variety of native broad leaf trees and mark that with a memorial plaque at Cogra Moss. The trees were planted earlier today and the plaque is already in place. Thanks to everyone involved in the procurement and planting of the trees and the building and installation of the plaque. Margaret Brown is absolutely delighted with what has been done.

We are also replacing the notice board and returns box, which will also be marked in tribute to Eric. The new items will be made of stainless steel, courtesy of the Sellafeld Supply Chain.

ANGLING REPORT

- In the past season, on Cockermonth Angling Association Waters 60 salmon were caught on the Derwent, all of these were returned to the water. There were 33 sea trout caught on the Derwent and all of these were also returned. Both salmon and sea trout figures were an improvement on last year's figures.
- For comparison figures for Cockermonth Angling Association for earlier years are as follows:

Season	Derwent Total Salmon	Derwent Salmon Returned	Derwent Sea Trout	Cocker Total Salmon
2002	58	?	?	3
2003	20	?	?	0
2004	93	30	26	8
2005	55	33	10	6
2006	61	27	17	7
2007	121	53	4	22
2008	64	23	1	25
2009	82	44	14	11
2010	72	38	27	11
2011	55	19	13	13

2012	44	22	10	5
2013	34	17	6	15
2014	24	20	46	15
2015	31	25	28	0
2016	34	31	35	0
2017	79	69	22	0
2018	17	17	23	3
2019	37	37	30	30
2020	54	54	8	8
2021	14	14	6	6
2022	26	26	21	NA
2023	32	32	33	NA

- Mark Hastings has taken over as Chairman of Derwent Owners' Association and is in the process of collecting returns for the river as a whole. So far, he has had reports of 209 salmon (266 last year) and 254 sea trout (114 last year) but there are a few significant beats yet to report to him.
- For interest the other figures I have for other Derwent beats so far is as follows (with last year's figures in brackets) are Workington AA 12 (70 in 2023), Castle Rods 116 (82), Keswick 12 (5), Redmain 10 (10), Broughton 8 (11), and the Cradles 9 (7).
- The figure reported from Workington AA is highly surprising. They have lost members this year and their lease with Castle Fisheries expires this month and is therefore due for renegotiation.

CASTLE FISHERIES LEASE

Once again Castle Fisheries have agreed to a "rent rebate" on the amount that we should be paying according to the formal lease. In effect we pay them the amount that we get from the sale of Derwent permits. Last year we were able to sell all 40 of the local Derwent permits at £180 each but we also sold all of the 15 outside rods which are available at £300. So we will be offering Castle Fisheries £11,700 for the rental next year, representing an increase of £1,200 on 2023, because of the additional 4 outside rods we were able to sell. At the end of the 2024 season we actually had a short waiting list for our outside rods, for the first time for many years.

Just for the record, our Agreement with Castle Fisheries will formally need to be renewed again from January 2026, so we have just 1 more season under the present Agreement.

DERWENT BYE-LAWS

The new local bye-laws covering the Derwent fishery came into force at the start of last season. These make it mandatory to return all salmon caught but allow the voluntary 100% catch and release to continue for sea trout. They also impose restrictions on fishing tackle and fishing methods, including a complete ban on worm fishing. Our members have abided by the new rules and membership has not been affected.

CONTROL OF FISH EATING BIRDS IN THE DERWENT SYSTEM

Yet again the Area Based Bird Control Licence for 2024 /2025 was not issued on time by the Natural England Wildlife Licensing Unit for the start of the control period on 1st September. However, when it arrived it was confirmed that we had been given a slight increase in the numbers of goosanders, from 17 up to 25. David Magrath has taken over as the Primary Contact for the Licence and has allocated the numbers of birds to the Specific Sites.

We have a separate Licence for control of the cormorants at Cogra Moss which Adrian Mills manages superbly.

RIVER BANK MAINTENANCE

I would like to record the Association's thanks to members who have helped with river bank maintenance work throughout the year, particularly John Smith, Robert Parks, Neil Barcock, Michael Cleeland and Paul Cass. Parts of the Cocker fishing are very overgrown in some places and Terry Barnes and John Smith are liaising with Mike Farrell with a view to getting a trusted contractor in to do some of this work. Separately, Robert Parks and Mark Hastings are in contact with Peter Kerr to see what limited work he will allow us to do at Stanger.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT WORK ON THE RIVER DERWENT

We continue to give an annual donation to the DOA and actively support habitat improvement work on the Derwent system, mainly through our involvement with the River Derwent Rivers Corridor Group (RCG). The RCG is supported by donations from DOA members and grants from EA, mainly from Fisheries Improvement Project funding which comes directly from licence sales.

We have also worked with the Cumbria Coastal Community Forest Project, RAISE Cumbria, which has funding available for the planting and maintenance of trees. And the Derwent Owners' Association is in the process of obtaining £35,000 from the EA Water Environment Improvement Fund for specific projects on the marron and Derwent catchments. These additional funds only become available to us because of the independent funding donations from CAA and other DOA members.

Mike Farrell is the EA Project Manager who plays a very significant part in getting habitat improvement works organized and completed on the Derwent system.

COCKER FISHING

I reported last year that CAA has regained the right to fish Mick Beebe on the River Cocker. We have all the necessary documentation which records the sale of these fishing rights from Mary and Willy Wallace to the Trout Hotel and the subsequent sale by the

Trout to Mr. Peter Naylor from Yorkshire, who set up a 6 man syndicate. One of that syndicate, Mr. A . P Weatherhead passed on his right to fish Mick Beebe to CAA. However, despite being shown all this documentation, the landowner, Mr Bateson, claims that he bought the fishing rights from the Trout Hotel and is therefore disputing our right to fish it. His land deeds, registered with the Land Registry do show that Mr Robert Bateson does own half of the river bed at Mick Beebe, and we believe that he mistakenly thinks that includes the fishing rights. We know for a fact that he is wrong in his claim to have bought the fishing rights from the Trout Hotel and Steve Moore is following thi matter up with the Land Registry.

AVAILABILITY OF FISHING ON THE DERWENT

The Committee was contacted by a representative of Mr. Edmund Jackson, who owns the fishing on the left bank of the Derwent from Whinnah Dub right down through Soddart Pot and Redkirk. We were told that Mr. Jackson was willing to lease this fishing for 3 years for a sum of £15,000 i.e. £5,000 per year and he wanted to know if we were interested. We replied that we simply could not afford to pay £5,000 per year as this would necessitate a very significant increase in Derwent permit fees.

POACHING / ILLEGAL FISHING

There have again been a number of reports of poaching / illegal fishing on the Derwent throughout the year. All such incidents should be reported to the EA hotline on 0800 807060 and to the Rural and Wildlife Crime Officer on the Cumbria Police Non-Emergency Number of 101.

EA have appointed Chris Bishop as the new Head of Fisheries Operations and Enforcement. He seems to be making a difference and we have been told that a number of poaching / illegal fishing cases on the Derwent are now going through the Court system.

RESTRICTED POOLS ON THE DERWENT

At our AGM last year, we relaxed the rules on fishing the restricted pools on the Derwent and removed the 1 pm and 5 pm time limits, so that members could fish a restricted pool throughout the day if they so wished. However, other rules on numbers of anglers fishing at any time, you could only fish one restricted pool per day, and then you could not fish that same pool the next day, remained in place. Unfortunately, there seem to have been a little confusion by a very small number of anglers who thought that it was permissible to fish Stoddart Pot and then continue to right down and to fish Iron Bridge in the same session. This is clearly not the case and we will be mphasing this when permits are issued for 2025.

COGRA MOSS

Cogra Moss has fished well for most of the season and the plan to open Cogra Moss earlier in 2024 and to amend the stocking programme to cut out a mid-summer stocking seems to have been well received. Terry Barnes will be presenting a report later in the meeting. Anglers seem to be well satisfied with the quality of the fish stocked at Cogra.

The on-line booking system, devised by John Smith has worked well and has allows day and week tickets to be ordered and paid for easily and at times when the Inglenook

Caravan site office is not open. The combination lock has been a success, in spite of a few people failing to grasp the instructions printed on notices displayed on both sides of the gate!

Our thanks are also due to Terry Barnes, John Smith and other helpers for all the work done in organising and carrying out stocking and the general management, maintenance etc. carried out at Cogra Moss.

WEB-SITE

John Smith has continued to maintain the Cockermouth Angling Society web-site and I would encourage members to visit it at cockermouthanglingassociation.co.uk

FINALLY, THANKS ARE DUE TO

- Our Secretary Steve Moore and our Treasurer John Smith.
- Terry Barnes, together with Steven Black and John Smith and others for their excellent work at Cogra Moss.
- John Smith and colleagues for organising and carrying out river bank maintenance work and grass cutting throughout the season.
- The wardens at Ingle Nook Caravan Park for selling day permits for Cogra Moss on our behalf.
- David Coulthard and Michael Cleeland for running the guest schemes.
- The whole of the Committee which has worked very well as a team, not only in meetings but also when it comes to getting things done on the river bank.
- All our members, for generally fishing in a sporting manner, looking after new comers and giving the committee very few problems!

STAY SAFE AND TIGHT LINES IN 2025.

Jack Abernethy
Chairman, Cockermouth Angling Association
9th December 2024