



DAWLEY ANGLING SOCIETY

The History of Dawley Angling Society as told by
Noah Ball

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Short History of the Society

In trying to give a short history of our Society I have delved as far back as possible according to the records in my possession.

Apparently this Society was formed during the year of 1923, as I have in my possession a fixture card for that year which is reputed by some of the founders to be the first card printed.

The officials at that time were:

President - R.A. Rhodes, C.C.,

Vice President - R.L. Price,

Chairman - S Machin,

Vice-Chairman - C. Preece

and the committee consisted of

W.H. Powell (Hon. Treasurer),

R.J. Tong (Hon. Secretary)

and Messrs. T. Rufus, J. Davies, J. Tong, W. Tart and S. Price.

The second card printed in 1924 shows:

President - R.L. Price,
Vice-President - E. Picken,
Chairman - S.Perry
Vice-Chairman - F. Bradburn,
with the committee being formed of
W.H. Powell (Hon. Treasurer),
J.G. Preece (Hon. Secretary),
A. Preece, (Asst. Hon. Secretary)
and Messrs. S. Preece, T. Rufus, J. Davies, H. Lane and R. Tong.

The strength of the Club during the early days was from eighteen to twenty-five members, and it was in 1926 that they decided to purchase a trophy for annual competition, the same trophy being competed for today on the same basis as in those days. At a later date, the Ranslett Cup was donated by J.T. Stone, Esq., for the runner-up of the Challenge Cup.

I have traced back the winners of the Challenge Cup as far as possible but unfortunately there is no record of the winners of the Ranslett Cup until my coming into office in 1945.

It must be recorded that this society won the County Team Championship in 1927 and 1936, which was a great performance from so small a society, and goes to prove that it took sheer keenness to achieve something in those days of drum reels and silk lines.

The society was dormant from 1939 to 1945 during the war, but in August 1945 it was re-started, and, although late in the year, we completed our eight contests for the Challenge Cup and Ranslett Cup, with 29 members.

In 1948 we negotiated with the Willey Estates for the tenancy of the stretch of river at Ironbridge which we were successful in obtaining, and still retain this day. This stretch of water has been a great asset to our society, not only for accommodating visiting clubs, but for knitting together our own members by the fact that they have water to fish at all times.

It was in 1949 that we obtained the fishing rights of the Withy Pool, which was later to give so much publicity to the piscatorial world.

In 1951, having noticed an advert that the Duke of Bedford had some carp and catfish to give away, I brought this matter before our society and it was decided to ask for some of these fish. The result was that on the 29th April, 1951, Mr. N. Blakemore, Chairman; Mr. N. Ball, Secretary, Mr. P. Jones, and G. Phillips, set off from Dawley with a lorry carrying a 500 gallon and a 200 gallon tank. We were met at Woburn Abbey by the Duke of Bedford and six keepers who helped to catch and load the fish, 36 catfish and 100 large carp. The weight of the twelve largest catfish was approximately 168 lbs. and the 24 smaller ones about 144 lbs., the largest was 3 ft. long and weight 20 lbs. The 100 carp were mixed, golden and mirror, with an overall average of 7 lbs. each, the largest topping the 10 lb. mark and the total weight of fish was approximately half ton.

We returned from Woburn without incident, and turned all fish into the Withy Pool. It is of great interest to note that there are only two clubs in the country with catfish in their pools, Leighton Buzzard and Dawley, and though some critics regard the catfish as an experiment in the exotic, let them remember that the carp was originally an import: from continental waters, but is now regarded as a native fish.

In the year 1952 we obtained the fishing rights of the Stirchley Pools, and after hard work by members, these pools were cleaned and made ready for stocking. On 5th May, 1952, the Severn River Board re-stocked Stirchley Pool with 6,000 roach and perch netted from Lord Bradford's Estate, at Shifnal. This cost our society the sum of £25, but was money well spent, as it is now a favourite venue, not only for our own members, but for the public in general.

1955 was another year of progress when our society obtained the fishing rights of Randlay Pool. Much time and labour has been spent of clearing the undergrowth and approach to this wonderland pool, but the task still remaining is to clear the pool of its intense growth of weed, which is exceptionally thick due to many years of negligence.

Still advancing, it was in 1956 that we decided to create a trout pool at Stirchley. The pool adjoining the reservoir was cleaned and on the 22nd July, 1956, 250 trout from the Chirk Fisheries were put in this pool. This cost the society £63, but the ulterior motive was that members would be able to fish this pool during the coarse fishing close season.

Unfortunately this pool was polluted early in 1957 and approximately 137 trout were netted and put into the reservoir, the only means of saving them.

We now pass on to 1957, in which year we were able to acquire the rights of Horsehay Pool, and on looking over these assets I think that there are few clubs in the county so well off the water as we are. There is no doubt that we have made real progress, not only as regards obtaining water, but our membership has increased colossally over the early days, 1957 figures were full members 76, Honorary members 63, juveniles 65, showing a total of 204; this in real progress.

Honour was brought to our society in 1956 by the winning of the County Individual Championship by Mr. S. Shepherd, and again in 1957 the same championship was gained by Mr. A. Prichford, two truly magnificent efforts. of which we are justly proud.

The foregoing was written in 1958, and I would add to this that the number of members and trophies has increased very considerably. We now have 84 full members (restricted), 616 honorary members and 331 juniors from the age of five to sixteen, making a total of over 1,000.

As regards trophies, the individual trophy was introduced in 1948, the W. Jones trophy in 1954, the Norman Stewart trophy in 1957, the Albert Rhodes trophy in 1958, the Clarke and Hall trophy in 1962, the D. Hartshorne shield in 1962, the S. Williams trophy in 1963, the Jack Ashley trophy in 1965, the J. Aveley trophy in 1967, the C. Bullock trophy in 1971, the J. Webb and Son trophy in 1972 and the Arthur Clarke rose howl in 1975.

You will see that great progress has been made during my thirty years as secretary and treasurer of the society.

Concerning the juniors, they too, have been very well cared for and they have quite a few trophies. The first one was donated by Mr. Bill Yates, M.P. in 1958 and a runner up cup to this was presented in 1970. The Marg Buttery trophy was presented in 1974 and a runner up trophy to this was presented by Mr. A. Buttery in 1974.