



2015 Newsletter

Dear supporters, mink raft monitors and all those who love the Monnow river and all its tributaries,

I can't believe that over a year has passed since the 2014 Annual General Meeting was held at Kentchurch Court. Sadly, for a number of reasons we have not held an AGM in 2015, but I very much hope that we will revert to custom next year, if only for those attending to remind themselves of the delicious flavour of the sausage rolls provided by our hostess, Jan Lucas-Scudamore!

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you all up to date on the progress of work in and around the rivers of the Monnow catchment carried out by members of the MRA.

Invasive non-native Weeds

Patrick Lloyd and Rob Denny have spent many hours walking the banks of the Monnow and a number of its tributaries, assessing and dealing with our most prominent invaders, namely Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed. Over 100 man days were spent working on the river in 2015, bringing the total hours over the last 6 years to 11,000!! We remain committed to becoming the first significant catchment in the UK to be free of this plague.

The outcome is, mainly, positive, insofar as the incidence of HB is now very low and the river banks are recovering well with many native plant species returning. The dynamic duo have pulled a large number of plants and sprayed in a number of places where hand-pulling would not be practicable. Several previously unknown outlying areas of infestation were treated and they are confident that the weed is finally under control and that eradication is still a feasible goal. There is a caveat thougheach mature plant drops between 6 to 800 seeds per plant; just one plant could cause a considerable re-infestation if not caught in time, so we urge you to remain ever vigilant. HB can be eliminated if we can break the 2 year life viability of its seeds.

Giant Hogweed is still growing in the catchment, particularly on the Dore. Where we find an outbreak, spraying is effective in dealing with it, although, as with other invasive plants, revisits are often necessary in following years. Please be very careful if you think that you have Giant Hogweed as contact with it can burn your skin and leave traces that flare up every time that you go into the sun.

Finally Japanese Knotweed, probably the most difficult of the three with which to deal. Spraying over several years can kill it. Please do not slash or strim this plant; every little piece can create a new outbreak as it floats off downstream and hits a bank of gravel. This is the plant that can lift the concrete foundations of houses and needs to be dealt with at an early stage. Let us know if you find some on the local Monnow rivers; we may already know about it, but don't be put off from taking action.

American mink

2015 has been an unusual year for mink monitoring and trapping. I haven't managed to trap one mink myself, but our stalwart Peter Brundret at Tregate on the Monnow trapped a total of 5, mainly in the spring. Thank you, Peter. I have put out traps as usual across the Slough brook, Dore, Monnow, Cwm brook and a tributary of the Escley brook without success. Admittedly, 2 of those were purely speculative, based on possible mink sightings as opposed to my usual requirement for prints. However, if in doubt, put a trap out.

There has, again, been a small amount of vandalism to rafts; as usual, based on accessibility from road bridges. The plus side is that only 3 rafts were affected and all were clearly caused by children, rather than misguided adults.

There are currently 61 rafts out on the catchment and a total of 47 volunteers. Numbers of volunteers have fluctuated over the last year as a number have been unable, for various reasons, to continue monitoring rafts. I have always said that if a volunteer is unable to monitor their raft, there is no shame in letting me know as the rafts are of no use if not checked. Nothing stays the same forever in this life and we are just grateful for whatever help can be, and has been, given by volunteers over the years.

I was, until a couple of weeks ago, quite happy about the state of rafts on the catchment. However, as is usual when I get complacent, fate overtook events and we had a massive spate which, to date, has resulted in the loss of about 12 rafts and clay. As I finish typing this report, it is, again, pouring with rain from the residue of the huge US snowstorm, so, I expect to lose more rafts. A new raft building session will start soon, so all the missing ones can be replaced. For volunteers who haven't already let me know of missing rafts, please let me know of any losses.

On a final, more optimistic note, otter prints and spraints continue to be found all over the catchment; they may eat fish, but they may be one of the most effective mink deterrents as evidence shows that mink don't hang around when the otter is in town!

Please keep monitoring and let me know if you think that you have mink.

Nick Longman

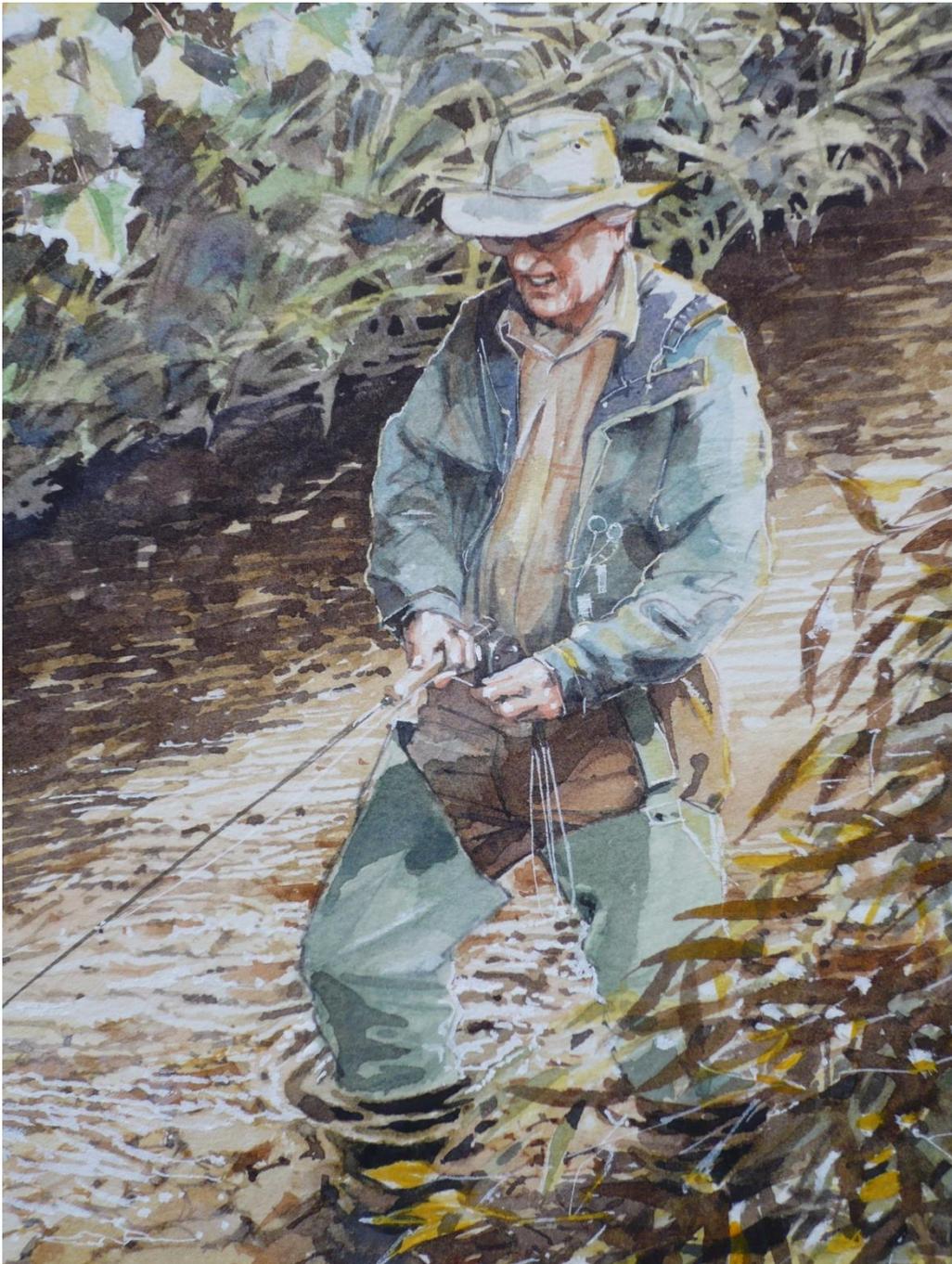
Auction

The annual MRA fundraising auction will go live on <http://www.flyfishing.co.uk/river-monnow/> in mid-February. This is our main fundraiser and vital if we are to continue our efforts to eradicate the invaders. Anyone who would like to donate a lot (fishing, tackle, art, books, bottles, etc) should please get in touch with Patrick at treasurer@monnow.org, who will also handle your commission bids if you don't wish to register on the Flyfishing.co.uk site.

Tony Carter RIP

I am sad to report the passing of Tony Carter, who died in November after a short illness. He was 89. Tony was a great friend to the Monnow - his sage counsel and unwavering enthusiasm were invaluable to the founding of the MRA (then MFA) and he was part of the original “Gang of Four” (+ Ian Lindsay, Robert Denny & Patrick Lloyd) that designed and implemented the ground-breaking River Monnow Project.

He represented the S&TA on the RMP committee and his tireless work as treasurer over the three year duration of this massive project was vital when dealing with the convoluted rules and regulations imposed by DEFRA. His efforts alone represented some 20% of the match funding required.



That same group rented several of the Monnow tributary beats together prior to releasing them to the Passport scheme. With his often antiquated equipment, Tony usually caught the largest trout!

He also served as a trustee of the Wye & Usk Foundation, representing the Monnow, and was a long term supporter of the WTT.

News of Trout and Salmon in 2015

The NRW electric fishing team did their annual survey of the Monnow system in late September: (these results are from short riffle surveys and are not quantitative)

“Salmon found at 3 of 7 sites. Just one 0+ parr and one 1+ parr at 2 sites upstream of Monnow Cap, but good numbers of 0+ parr at Tregate.”

“Good numbers of 3 year classes of bullhead throughout.”

“Overall – in my view the number of fish is far lower than I would expect. Maybe some habitat issues here and there – including lack of in-channel cover in places.”

“There was a fair bit of algae on the river bed in most places, notably Kentchurch and upstream. I haven't looked at any data, but I will flag it up to the EA!”

Contrary to these observations, according to the catch records of the two main fishing clubs on the Monnow, there was very healthy number of wild trout this season (although it didn't always feel like it!) There was though a marked increase in the proportion of those fish that were below 10". We will continue to monitor these trends and decide what (if any) actions are needed to address them.

The fish pass at Osbaston weir showed some interesting results this year with more than 300 trout of over 10ins moving upstream in June and early July – 85 of these were 14"-16" and a further 50 were 16"+. It is thought unlikely that these fish are “recycling” i.e. going up the fish pass and back over the old weir, so this appears to be a genuine migration into the main Monnow. Given the summer timing, I immediately thought that these fish were likely to be sea-trout but having viewed video footage from the camera at the top of the fish pass I can confirm that they were definitely brown trout. What they are doing migrating upstream remains a mystery.

Five fish, assumed salmon, (including one of 32"!!) were recorded in May(1) and June(4). This is unusually early for salmon to run the Monnow - they usually come in on the first high water at the end of October. Five more salmon have so far ascended the fish pass in mid November, when we did finally get some rain. Please keep your eyes peeled for any redds.

Patrick Lloyd. November 2015.

Please find last year's accounts on the next page.

As you will see we are rapidly using up our reserves on our [Going Native](#) project and, in the almost total absence of grants, we are now relying entirely on our own fundraising efforts. The annual auction (see above for details) is the most important event. We have already received offers of over 50 lots. Your support, either as a donor or a bidder, will be much appreciated and will allow our efforts to control mink, balsam, etc. to continue.

MONNOW RIVERS ASSOCIATION

ACCOUNTS

for the year: 1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

	2014/15		
	£	£	
INCOME			
Subscriptions		945	
Sponsorship		508	
Owner Donations "Unrestricted"		2,000	(2)
Grants/Donations		6	correct input 2013
Fundraising			
Social 2015	3,760.00	gross	
Auction 2015	4,536.00		
	0.00		
<i>total fundraising</i>		<i>8,296</i>	
		<hr/>	
Total "unrestricted income"		11,755	
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Grants "restricted" to specific projects		6,500	
		<hr/>	
TOTAL INCOME		18,255	
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LESS: EXPENSES			
Admin	0.00		
Marketing & Comms	0.00		
Event Costs (inc Social)	1,809.31		
Materials & Equip't	see equipment list	0.00	
Membership & Licenses (insurance)		0.00	
Website		0.00	
Bank Charges		0.00	
		<hr/>	
		1,809	
		<hr/>	
PROJECTS (restricted funds used)			
WVP/SITA	9,591		
Wye & Usk Foundation	335		
Donations Paid	accrued 13/14	-2,307	
		<hr/>	
		7,619	
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Independent Project Works			
<i>Going Native</i>	24,577		
		<hr/>	
		24,577	
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OPERATING SURPLUS	-15,750
Bank Interest Received	1
Net surplus for the year	<u>-15,749</u>

BALANCE SHEET

at 30 June 2015

	2014/15	
	£	£
Current assets		
Bank deposit accounts	5	
Bank current accounts	4,300	
		4,305
Committments	"Restricted" grants unused at year end	1,119
Net current assets		<u>5,424</u>
Represented by:		
General Fund		
At 1st July 2014	20,054	
Surplus for year	-15,749	
accrual (balance of "restricted funds")	1,119	
At 30 June 2015		<u>5,424</u>