

AFA AGM 2026 Chairman's Report

Introduction and Thanks

Good evening every one and welcome to our AGM here at Heron Valley. Many thanks to Barney Green and Chris Peach for arranging the venue and thanks to you for attending perhaps the most important meeting of the Association's year. My thanks are also due to John Sanderson the Chair of the DAA who is our guest speaker tonight; welcome, John and we look forward to hearing you later this evening. There is a lot to talk about and a lot to discuss so, let's get on with things.

Catch Returns

Catch returns are entered on line for the simple reason that it is much easier to do than downloading the form, filling it in and posting it! Not only does it indicate the quality of our fishing but it predicts the number of members we lose and retain. I have to say that returns this year were not as high as I would have liked. There were 31 returns and so our 2025 records of fish caught were incomplete and not as accurate as I would have liked. The numbers you hear this evening are those collated from the 31 returns I received.

Salmon 1 (100% return)

Sea Trout 104 (100% Returned)

Brown Trout 1196 (100% Returned)

Salmon caught was the lowest on record. Sea Trout numbers were the highest in 12 years. Brown Trout numbers remain relatively high being nearly twice as high as the 22 year average of 660. Fish returned remain at 100%, of which much more later.

Year	Salmon	% Released	Sea Trout	% Released	Brown Trout	% Released
2025	1	100	104	100	1196	100
2024	3	100	45	100	1201	100
2023	2	100	18	88	1746	100
2022	6	100	21	86	2083	99.9
2021	4	75	32	82	712	99
2020	14	100	34	85	487	99.8
2019	6	100	28	86	485	99.6
2018	2	100	25	92	757	99
2017	8	100	21	81	470	100
2016	11	72	47	78	727	99.8
2015	7	70	34	88	886	99.9
2014	8	100	90	74	653	99
2013	10	70	229	83	768	100
2012	22	77	73	72	853	99
2011	39	84	56	72	1037	99
2010	52	78	62	56	855	99
2009	16	75	86	60	616	98
2008	19	68	40	75	779	99
2007	15	80	17	35	1007	99
2006	45	66	46	34	359	97
2005	29		96		436	
2004	31		78		446	
Total	344		1135		13342	
Average	15	90	58	75	660	99.5

Prizes

The Cedrick Potter Prize for the largest Salmon - Tom Pakes for a fish of 24 inches

The Jim Coombs Prize for the largest Sea Trout - Tom Pakes for a fish of 25 inches

The Bob Sadler Trophy for the largest brown - Ollie Yeoward for a fish of 20 inches

The Presidents Prize (Donated by Sir William Peek - Tom Pakes with 689 Browns

The Silveridge Conservation Award - Tom Pakes for returning all his 774 fish

Fish Catches and Fishing Effort

Collating the annual returns can tell one an awful lot. The outstanding fact this year (and last year) is how unfished the River Avon is! Some Stats based on 31 returns.

2 members not returning.

12 returns listed 0 days fished

9 returns spent 1 or more days fishing for salmon

19 returns spent 1 or more days fishing for Browns

5 returns spent 1 or more days fishing for Sea Trout

One member (who shall not be named spent 121 days fishing for all species)The old adage remains true: He who fishes the most, catches the most. Get fishing every one!

The Fishing Year

2024 was wet! 2025 was dry! Very dry in July and August with the WRT closing all of its fishing beats including the Rake beat for several days. A good decision reducing stress on already stressed fish especially sea trout and Browns. The last few years have shown just how variable the climate is becoming, witness the very warm and very wet winter we have just had with its likely effect on salmon spawning and reproductive success.

Website and Facebook

I hope members are using the website it contains much useful information especially for new members. Be careful what you post on Facebook especially photos of large fish you have caught there are still people out there willing to berate you leaving fish out of water for any length of time.

Ticket Sales

The AFA no longer sells weekly, fortnightly or monthly tickets to fish it's waters. The WRT offer tickets for the Rake Beat as part of it's passport scheme. These sales brought in £216 last year.

Social Events

The annual dinner was held again last year at Heron Valley. We owe Barney Green and his crew a great debt for organising what turned out to be a quite lovely evening. Thanks also to Chris Peach for overseeing the whole process. Our land owners were very appreciative and those members that attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I would like more members to attend as it is a perfect opportunity to meet other anglers, the committee and riparian owners.

South West Rivers Association

I attended only two of the meetings last year and as in 2024 the main area of concern remains the plight of salmon in the 20 or so rivers in the South West and also the noticeable decline in Sea Trout numbers. Projects to restore salmon habitat are underway as well as plans to restock major rivers. It seems clear to me that unless there is a massive investment in salmon survival then the future of salmon angling in the South West is very uncertain.

West Country Rivers Trust

I am very grateful to the WRT for sending me the data on trout and salmon fry numbers revealed by electro fishing. They provide good news regarding Salmon fry:

Site	Salmon Fry 2025	Salmon Fry 2024	Salmon Fry2023
DS Dam	0	0	0
DS Old Abstraction	0	15	0
Woodholes Bridge	0	0	0
DS Shipley Bridge	0	1	0
Goosepool Copse	0	10	0
Badworthy	0	2	1
DS Crackhill Weir	4	14	7
DS Lydia Bridge	14	9	9
Brent Island	24	7	4
US Curtisknowle Weir	42	3	1
DS Curtisknowle Weir	39	4	1
Avon Valley Wood E. Watkins	0	0	1
Total	123	63	24

Encouraging increases in fry numbers and an interesting shift in where these fry are found.

Gravel Replacement

Having contacted WRT I am told that this will continue "as long as it is the right tool". Fisheries monitoring alongside will also hopefully continue.

Local Groups

There has been a very encouraging rise in local groups keen to participate in citizen science projects and river monitoring groups. The Avon is well served by Louise Wainright and others on the Avon at South Brent and Loddiswell who are keen to ensure clean rivers are the norm in the South West and not the exception.

Cooperation with other Associations

Talks will take place this year with the Dart Angling Association with regard to an exchange of guest tickets. Members will be kept fully informed about progress on this issue.

Committee

I am very pleased to say that we now have a committee with all positions filled. Paul Hussell is our new Minutes Secretary, Jonathan Ducker will be taking care of safeguarding and we have a new committee member in Tom Pakes who is, as yet, without portfolio. Watch this space Tom. We also have a new Chairman in George Peck who will take over from me at the end of this meeting. George and I first met on a working party at the Flats and we have remained good friends ever since. George is a passionate angler and I know he will be an excellent Chair. Thank you, George, for accepting the challenge of Chairmanship of the AFA and I look forward to working closely with you this year.

Summary

This is, of course, my last AGM as Chair. I took over from the late Paul Kenyon in 2013 and many of the old committee are no longer present, only Chris and I remain! My thanks especially to Chris who has been an excellent President of this Association. His help and advice over the years has been of immense help to me and invaluable to the AFA. To all past members of the committee thank you; to the present committee my special thanks, it is as good a committee as I have chaired during my time and I know you will be as supportive of the new chair as you were to me.

As for the river, it is a slightly different Avon to the one I first fished in 1988 when my dear departed friend Malcolm Pickup first took me to Knapp Mill to fish for salmon, they were streaming into the corner pool on their way to the upper reaches to spawn. Sea trout fishing was the jewel in the crown, especially on the lower water and avidly sought after. The Avon was considered a fine brown trout fishery and had its passionate adherence. Of course things have changed but what remains is the remarkable allure of the Avon as place to spend a quiet afternoon in the hope of casting a fly to a rising fish. That, I hope, will always remain. Thank you.

