



Mid Northants Trout Fishers' Association

Newsletter Summer 2026

Introduction

Dear reader, here is the summer 2026 edition of the MNTFA Newsletter.

I start by apologising for not issuing a spring newsletter. I had a plan and ideas for content but unfortunately the timings to finalise these did not work out and then I found myself completely engrossed with trying to evolve my garden. The result was that I completely missed the window to create the newsletter and did not have the bandwidth to do both. So, I hope this newsletter goes some way to correcting the situation and I will endeavour not to let it happen again. That said, if any member wishes to take over the creation of the newsletter, or send me articles for it, they would be most welcome to do so. I enjoy the challenge of creating content, but as I'm sure you've noticed my knowledge of fly fishing is limited, so my aim is to get you to consider wider aspects whilst you fish.

The Weather

Spring seemed to come late this year but then suddenly bang everything took off at pace. I don't know how you all determine the changes of season but for me there are some clear indicators I look out for. Firstly, hearing the first ChiffChaff call is a clear indicator that spring is on its way. Secondly the tree blossom gives the short days a burst of colour and the bees some early nourishment. Northamptonshire is blessed with 3 great spring trees, Cherry Plum, Blackthorn and Hawthorn and they flower in that order. By the time the Hawthorn is in flower I'm clear that spring has arrived. The last key indicator I look out for is the arrival of the Swifts, House Martins and Swallows at Pitsford to feed on the buzzer hatch. This year they were a week or so later than last year but are always a mesmerising sight.

A period of windy cool days during April and early May preceded what is now a record dry spell with hose pipe bans, rock hard ground, water levels dropping at a frightening pace and everything covered in dust. I never thought I would say it, but boy do I miss rain! I have a feeling that this is a trend that will become the norm and we will have to adapt our lives and fishing to suit. Perhaps our close season should be in July rather than February? Just a thought.

Ravensthorpe

In previous newsletters I have highlighted uncommon birds that have appeared at Ravensthorpe Reservoir and this winter was no exception. Two scarce birds of note were present those being a Red Throated Diver and a Slavonian Grebe. The other interesting sighting at Ravo, was to see Carp spawning. The Carp were in the small piece of water making a lot of commotion as the males wrestled with the spawning females. Some were nearly coming out of the water and were just a couple of feet from the bank, completely oblivious of anything else around them. An amazing sight to witness and one I posted on our Facebook page.

Angler of the Year

I know this is now old news, but it was certainly something worthy to highlight. At long last the continual efforts of Seumas Halliday to promote fly fishing were finally recognised and rewarded by Anglian Water Fisheries. Let's look to promote other MNTFA members who are also deserving of such recognition.



Anglian Water Fisheries

It has just come to light that from the 1st September, boat anglers will need to use AWF supplied life jackets and will not be allowed to use their own unless there are very specific reasons. Now I have seen some disagreement and negative views about not being able to use your own jacket as well as doubts about the thoroughness of how the AWF Jackets will be checked, hygiene and leaks. I can understand such concerns as there hasn't been much time for discussions and information to be queried, digested and fully understood. However, I personally believe the safety benefits of this change outweigh these concerns. For example, the new jackets include self-righting buoyancy which is a key life saving feature when someone has fallen in unexpectedly and could be unconscious. Don't forget if you have a genuine reason that prohibits you from wearing an AWF jacket, they will consider your case on an individual basis.

Given what happened at Draycote, the investigation that followed, the fact that several anglers have gone into the water again this season and that anglers have been found to be knowingly wearing their own jacket in a defective state, this has to be a sensible change. It removes many variables, puts in a control factor and single point of responsibility for a key item of safety and in doing so simplifies its management. Personally, rather than trying to put obstacles in the way of AWF, I would like to see MNTFA as a club, actively supporting this change and helping them bed it in.

However, I also urge AWF to go one step further on water safety and that is to improve how boat anglers get in and out of the boat. Whilst we don't have the amount of kit Carp anglers have, we still turn up with boat seats, boxes, rods and spare rods, wet bags, fish coolers and a host of other things. So, the physical act of getting into and out of a boat that moves and to my knowledge with only Pitsford having a handrail to help, this is probably the largest risk the angler undertakes every fishing trip. I realise this may incur a cost to AWF but they do have a duty of care to their customers and I'm not sure their current set up would support them if a serious incident were to happen on the pontoon. Just a thought of something that MNTFA should/could be championing.

Annual Barbeque

Last year this event was a great success with a good number attending both the friendly fishing session and the BBQ itself. This year's BBQ is to be held on 5th September, all are welcome and it would be great to see many members there. Please notify Dave Anderson in advance.

Bank Clearance

During the winter period a more targeted bank clearance programme took place lead by Ian Parker and Dave McSeveney. Sessions were generally well attended with the incentive of a boat voucher for every fourth attendance and bacon rolls afterwards. This year's plan is now being developed, and I know there is a recognition for the need of chainsaw assistance during the sessions.

Out on the Water

Some reflections and thoughts, from recent sessions out on the water

Being in the moment

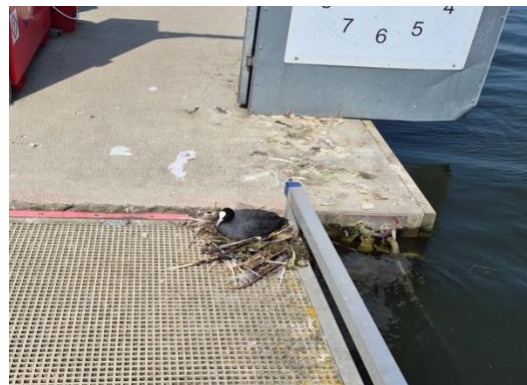
As a keen sportsman this is a term I've heard and used over and over, but in recent times its meaning something slightly different to me. Concentration when fishing is important as it's so easy to miss a take or the chance to cast to a passing fish. However, I now find it very satisfying and feel privileged to just be able to soak in the moment of time and enjoy simply being where I am. What do I mean?

Well, it's about being out in the countryside, away from a phone, traffic, constant chatter, away from the general hustle and bustle and drivel of social media. When fishing, my phone is to take a photo or call a fellow angler for an update but it's in my box, I wish that were the case with all anglers.

The joy of listening to the wildfowl or even a passing Spitfire, wow how lucky we are to see one almost daily! The freshness and tingle of the wind in my face, the chill of the water on my hands, the smells and scents in the air (sweet or foul) as well as the smell of slime from a fish. Not to forget witnessing the mass of insect life, swimming, hatching out from the water and morphing into the next phase of their short lives. These things and more just add layers of interest and enjoyment to my fishing. There are not many activities where just being there, allows you enough time to truly be out amongst nature. Yes, I go fishing to catch fish, but I get so much more pleasure in having an awareness of being immersed in my surroundings.

Watch out, there's a Coot about your Foot!

Whilst walking onto the pontoon at Draycote in July I was surprised to see that a Coot had decided to make a nest right next to the entrance gate. Why it chose to make a nest where multiple anglers pass within 2 feet pulling their boxes and making the pontoon move is bewildering. However, at the time of taking this photo in mid July she was sitting on 5 eggs. I hope she now has chicks and they are all doing well.



Tuesday Night Boat League

Unfortunately, this wasn't supported at Pitsford this season although the MNTFA WhatsApp group did have some Tuesday sessions. A shame but it did seem difficult to arrange and get consistent numbers. Thanks go to Ian Parker for trying.

A Numbers Game?

We all like to catch fish, I don't think anyone goes fishing trying not to catch a fish, but let's face it, for many nowadays it's a numbers game. Eighteen, Twenty Five, Thirty Seven, Sixty plus to the boat, seems more and more to be the measure of a good day, how well a venue is fishing, and this is instantly posted on social media as the key information of a day's fishing. How sad is that? We all like to catch fish but come on surely after catching a few what is the point of just doing the same thing over and over?

There also seems to be an expectation that we can go out onto a massive expanse of water/reservoir and within minutes be into fish. Surely this isn't what fishing has come to, or has it?

I'll put my hand up if I catch one I want to catch another. A few members know that for several visits to Draycote, I was banging on about the fact that I could never catch more than four fish. I would catch four in the first few hours and it was if the fish knew to then avoid me. Well after much perseverance I caught Five and the next time Eight, so that monkey is off my back. Reflecting on the "being in the moment" piece above, I had several great days at Draycote with different boat partners and only caught four fish, so why did the number of fish matter? The issue wasn't the number it was that I would get to midday and then not catch after that when anglers around me were. The simple answer is, it shouldn't matter and it doesn't matter. Easy for me to say now!

Where I first started trout fishing which was a small lake, as soon as you had caught 5 fish that was it, your day was over. How do we stop someone hammering out freshly stocked fish, 20, 30 or even 100, rather than catching 5 or 10 and then moving on?

I don't know all the answers, but I certainly wouldn't publicise the stocking date or location. I wish AWF had stocking boats, allowing them to spread the introduction of fish. Maybe no fishing zones should be created for a week or two when stocking happens, but of course some anglers would moan about that. I would also stock fewer but bigger fish, of a size that Cormorants leave alone.

There is a straightforward answer, except some will find it very difficult to look in a mirror and tell themselves that fishing isn't simply about numbers and endlessly bashing stockies. Enough said for now but I would welcome your views on this matter.

Matches

With six of our club matches completed so far, this season's competitions have seen up to 24 participants taking part. I don't have any match reports but there are generally details posted on our Facebook page following the event. There are still 3 matches remaining which start again in September. Members can view the results and data on fish caught etc on our website.

Fly Dressers Guild Match – Elinor

One match worthy of mentioning was that the Fly Dressers Guild (FDG) held a FDG team match at Elinor Fishery. I'm pleased to say our team won a clean sweep, most fish, largest fish and team prize. What a day and I mean it was a brutally windy day to bank fish with only the dam end having the wind behind. Only 17 fish were caught and our team caught 9 of them!

MNTFA had a social day at Elinor a week or so later and the wind was cruel then as well. Members needed to be like Popeye to be able to row against the breeze! There is another FDG match at the end of August, but this time at Draycote. I'm sure our team will put in a strong performance.

Coaching Update – August 2026

Boat Tuition

Ed (pictured) on a 1:1 boat session, learned a lot about fishing from a drifting boat on what turned out to be a hard afternoon. It was subsidised by Anglian Water and we still have some vouchers left.

If you're interested in a 1:1 session, please email coaching@mntfa.co.uk



How has 2026 been so far?

- We were awarded a grant of £750 from the Angling Trust / Environment Agency to help with the cost of replacing the reels and lines used for coaching. The fund comes from some of the rod licence fees. MNTFA has also made a contribution.
- Congratulations to John Mills for passing his Level 2 Lead Coach qualification in March. He also drove from his final assessment to help at the Northampton Fly Dressers' stand at the Tempsford Roadshow on the same day.
- Bookings for coaching sessions have been lower than 2025 overall, but are now picking up.
- We have also enjoyed giving extra tuition for members who want it (casting, tackle advice etc.) – if you'd like this, please ask!
- It's been encouraging to see a steady number of new members / attendees getting involved in club fishing days as well as fly tying.
- "What fly should I use and when?" is a frequent question asked by newcomers. We have now written a brief handout.

Upcoming Dates

- Pitsford sessions: 19th September and 17th October. Free with members' password.
- Elinor: Autumn bank course 24th October. £10 plus £18 half day permit.

Book any of these on <https://www.ticketsource.com/mntf>

Seumas Halliday coaching@mntfa.co.uk

Meet the member

Well, our meet the Member this time needs little introduction. He is one of the longest serving MNTFA members and if you have been to any of our events, matches or meetings, I'm sure you will have met this chap.

So, without further ado here is a summary of our recent chat. My questions are in **black** with his responses in **blue**. Here we go:

Please introduce yourself, tell us about yourself, are you a Northamptonshire Boy born and bred?

Hello I am Philip (Pip) Jeffs. I was actually born in Lincolnshire but have lived in Northamptonshire all my life. One of 5 children, I am 79 years of age and grew up in Kislingbury. My grandparents were farmers and my Mother was very much a country woman so being outside is in my blood.

I have been a member of Mid Northants since 1976 so have clocked up some miles around our reservoirs and caught a few fish along the way!

Whilst I take it you are now retired, tell us a bit about your working career?

I only worked for 3 employers all my life and two of them were Councils doing the same job. I was a Drainage Engineer, enjoyed my work and am fortunate that a group of past work colleagues still meetup regularly to reminisce about old times.

At what age did you start fishing and who got you into fishing?

It was my Mum that got me into fishing at a very young age, as she fished at the local river for Pike or just about any fish she could catch. My mum also taught me how to swim in the same stretch of river!

Do you have any other sports/hobbies/ interests you enjoy being involved in, or a spectator of?

My passion outside of fishing is Vintage/Classic Motorbikes and Cars. I have seven bikes of various vintages and a Bubble Car. I take my car and bikes to shows but also use them to tour around. I have done the Scottish Highlands 500 and also John of Groats to Land's End, but not in the car!



My bubble car is a hangover from my youth, as I had one to get around in. Whilst not being the flashiest motor at the time, it kept me dry unlike riding a bike. It also meant that I could drive it on a provisional licence with "L" plates on and importantly I could take a passenger. Now I'm not sure how many girls were impressed when I said I have my motor around the corner and they actually saw it, but it did get them home dry and cosy! Later I saw this one for sale for renovation and couldn't resist. My son borrowed a van and we managed to get it home and it's now been with us for 30 years, going to shows and attracting a lot of attention.

As for my bikes, I think I'm from a generation where a motorcycle was the main form of transport for the working man. It allowed me to get around and get to work easily. I had given up bikes whilst raising a family, but one day whilst working in a cellar, I came across a bike all in bits. Talking to the owner, who owned it from new, I discovered it was a 1935 New Imperial, that the owner had hoped to restore, but knew he wouldn't. I bought it for £20, and that was the start of the renovating bug getting to me. Luckily, I finished it before the original owner died and showed it to him. I still have it, and I doubt if it will ever be sold. I then worked my way through Triumphs, BSA's, Ariels, AJSs, and

currently have three Panthers, (1930 to 1950), an Ariel Square Four (my current renovation project) and a 1970's Honda salvaged from my nephews shed. They all get ridden, but of course, I have a modern Enfield for those longer journeys and when a bit more comfort and reliability is required!

Outside of this all embracing hobby, I'm not overly interested in Football or Rugby which has a positive result for me as Saturday afternoon is one of my favoured times to spend a few hours down at the water's edge.

Why fly fishing, how did you get interested in it?

As being a country boy, I simply like being out in the countryside and being amongst wildlife.

Do you tie your own flies?

Yes I tie all my own flies and I like scruffy looking flies. Mine might not look like a well tied catalogue specimen but for me, the scruffier the better, and they catch fish!

What is it about Fly fishing that you enjoy, and do you take any of your family fishing?

I have always had a competitive nature and I like the challenge of being able to catch fish in a competitive environment. Whilst those instincts are inbred in me and as I am now slightly older, the most important thing now is to have an enjoyable time, whatever that maybe.

What is your "go to" favourite method and do you have a favourite fly for reservoirs?

Well it used to be a set up with wet flies, clarets etc, but they simply don't seem to be as effective nowadays. So now I generally start on a floater with 3 flies (Buzzers and Nymphs) but am not adverse to quickly moving to the dark side and sticking a Snake on!

I use Bloke Rods and like my rods to be like stiff stick broom handles so they are 10 foot 7/8 wt with 9 wt lines with some exceptions.

Have you ever won any big competitions?

The MNTFA used to enter a lot of external competitions in the 90's and in 1990 I won the Benson & Hedges team competition with both the biggest and most fish. The Club even won £100 due to that, which was a fair amount of money in those days.

I have also qualified for 4 England team Selection finals, but unfortunately have never managed to get selected to fish for England.

If there were venue/river/lake you could fly fish whenever you wanted, where would that be?

It would be Pitsford or Grafham. I have fished them for many years and still enjoy a Saturday Afternoon on the bank at Pitsford.

What is your most memorable fish caught or lost?

This was at an unusual place that springs to mind where I caught a Salmon inland. This was an acre still water fishery (now closed) in Greetham Valley near Rutland. The owner bred his own fish, and for £100 a day you could try and catch a salmon, in beautiful countryside, and if you were lucky, take up to five fish home. It may have upset the salmon angling purists, but it gave a chance for those who may not have had the money, resources or opportunity to go salmon fishing in Scotland.

You could have a good day, with feisty, hard fighting fish that certainly tested your skills, which gave your general trout fisherman a different experience from fishing normal trout stocked reservoirs.

Is there a memorable day session of fishing that springs to mind?

There have been many over the years, but thinking of here and now, the ingredients of a good day is one that isn't too windy, where I catch a few fish and have a pleasant time. What more does anyone need?

Boat or bank which do you prefer and why?

It has to be Bank. It means you can go when you like, come away when you like, it doesn't incur any additional cost over and above what is now an expensive season ticket. Being on the bank allows me to enjoy a couple of hours on a Saturday afternoon whilst others are watching football or rugby.

In most seasons you win a competition sometimes more than one. Is there anything specific you put that down to?

When I go fishing I actively fish the water in front of me. I will change flies, lines and read the water in order to find the fish. I am consistent in this, I don't stop and will keep plodding away and I think this perseverance pays dividends. Many years of fishing does help me read the water which helps.

Looking forward what would you like to see change or evolve in Fly fishing at the Northants waters?

I would like stocking to change such that AWF do what others do and have a stocking boat. This allows the stocking of fish to be spread out rather than for example at Pitsford, where all the fish go in at one of two places and are then prone to "stockie bashers" for the next few days.

Looking back at the young Pip, what advice about fishing would you give him?

If you want to be a good fisherman and compete, you need to practice. By practice I mean go and fish the venue to learn about the water, how the conditions affect the water and what the fish are taking. However, I would also emphasise that the most important aspect is to have an enjoyable time in whatever you do.

Pip, thank you so much for letting us get to know more about yourself, your fishing exploits and your love of a Bubble car and restoring bikes. It's been an absolute pleasure hearing your story first hand and a fascinating read for the club members.

Well, that is all the news for this time. I welcome any feedback and please if you think you have content for the next newsletter, contact me.

Stay safe and enjoy your fishing everyone.

Cliff Hoare on behalf of Mid Northants Trout Fishers Association