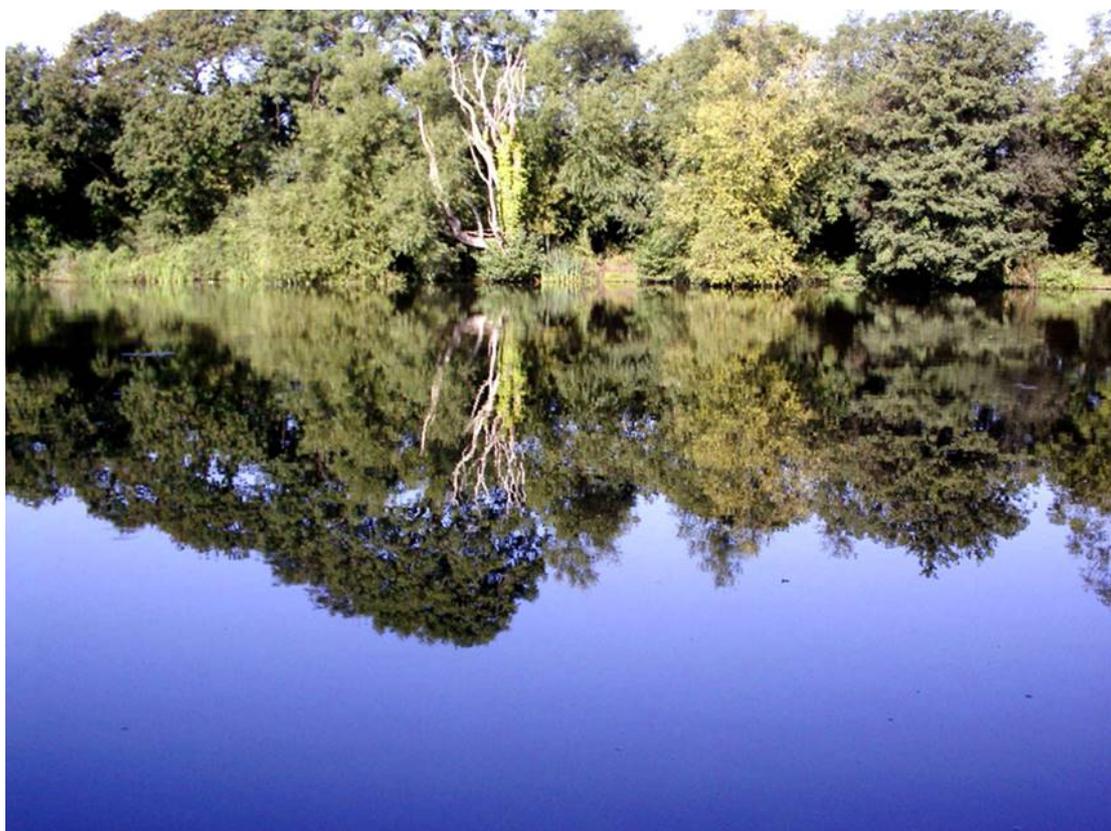


# Fishery Plan for Brownwich Pond, Titchfield, Hants.



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by

Roy Adams, Pond Warden

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## Description of Brownwich Pond

Brownwich Pond sits on Hampshire County Council land in Titchfield, which is primarily farmland and nature walks. Although the farms are tenant farmers who lease the farms, there is also a private house, which neighbours the lake.

Brownwich Pond is stream fed and of around 4 acres, which was initially dug for irrigation purposes of the surrounding farmers fields and crops. The watercourse, which feeds the lake originates from the Segensworth area and runs through Titchfield and some private properties, where a few have ponds utilising this watercourse. It then runs into Brownwich Pond and out to sea via a small lower stream.

The water level in the pond increases dramatically with heavy rain, but a brick built dam maintains the level. There is a valve fitted in the dam to enable the lake to be drained for water management purposes. This is locked at all times by a chain and padlocks.

Hampshire County Council must be informed of any intention of draining the lake and permission must be obtained prior. The lake will not be lowered between April and September, as this is when it is used by the farmers for irrigation purposes.

Portsmouth & District Angling Society manages the water as a specimen carp water, and it is my intention to retain this status with the blessing of the committee.

## Stocking Levels & History

Brownwich Pond is recognised as the only true specimen carp water with the PDAS, although we have other waters with large king carp.

In 1999, it was thought that the majority of the carp were nearing the end of their life, so a decision was made to move as many of the existing stock to make way for around 40 small king carp to be introduced. These fish were only between 3lb and 8lb, so there was a few years when the fishing would not meet specimen carp status, but the long-term future would hopefully be very promising and rewarding.

The water was netted and the carp, that were caught, were transferred to Fort Brockhurst in Gosport. Many of these fish that were moved were upper 20's and some even 30lb plus.

However, it is thought that around 10 of the original fish managed to escape capture and they were left to grow on alongside the new stocking. Unfortunately we have lost 2 of these originals over the last few years.

The stocked carp were a mixture of Sutton and Priory strains, which were recognised for their fast growing qualities. This stocking brought the total number of king carp to around 50, which is considered to be a good number of carp for a 4 acre lake, yet still allows them to grow on quickly and not compete for food.

Since this stocking, most of the stocked fish have reached 20lb plus in weight, with a few even heavier and still showing signs of continued growth.

We have also added 10 fish from Frontfish in 2012 and these were heavily scaled mirrors of exceptional quality and very pretty fish. Just prior to this stocking was a small head of very small mirror carp and a few larger commons from Lowerberryfield fisheries. Although I have seen the small mirrors grouped and swimming as a small shoal, I still haven't heard of any being caught.

I consider there to be around 60 to 65 carp in Brownwich Pond at this time, and most are growing well with just a few slower growing ones.

The water also has a large head of rudd that need to be carefully monitored and periodically reduce their numbers, as they can compete for the carp anglers baits which will threaten the future growth rates which I expect and hope for.

Even though there is a small head of pike up to double figures, which provides the predatory aspect to the rudd, it still seems that the head of rudd was growing. To this end the Club purchased a small stocking of perch, which should not only thrive in such surroundings, but also have a natural effect of reducing the numbers of rudd.

Over the last 5 years or so, we have seen the small head of tench, which were not stocked in the lake by PDAS, become larger and a nuisance to the carp angler.

Therefore, a removal programme has been agreed with the Environment Agency and the Clubs Fishery Officer. This consists of placing any tench, which are caught into a keep-net, and removing them to other Club waters that need them. This has had a limited effect to date, but I feel it is important that this practice continues.

Carp anglers regularly catch the tench so it is obvious that their existence may have a damaging effect on the continued growth of the carp as they are eating the food designed to catch the carp.

## Current Status

Brownwich Pond is currently a very established carp fishery, which offers the Club members a very safe and secure environment in which to fish.

To fish the pond, you have to book a swim with Rovers Tackle shop, and this can be done up to a week in advance. This booking system not only controls the numbers of anglers attending the water, but it also gives the bailiffing team some sort of traceability when confronted with problems such as litter or excrement being left on the water.

For the above reasons, there is a maximum limit of 24hrs allowed on the lake, as this reduces the need for personal hygiene requirements. This shorter stay has massively reduced the problem to the extent where consideration could be given to increasing the maximum stay back to 48hr. Obviously it would need to be monitored very carefully and reintroduced if necessary.

The lake at present boasts 14 swims, although we only allow a maximum of 10 anglers. This gives the last angler a choice of 5 swims should it be fully booked.

One of these swims, which is known as Dugout, is showing signs of badger activity, which is threatening its future use. We as a Club are very mindful of the protection of badgers, and we always ensure a safe environment for their existence when fencing or swim

building. For this reason, consideration must be given to losing this swim for the well being of the badgers.

The car park has been enlarged and dramatically improved to take around 14 cars if parked carefully and with thought and consideration for others.

Within the car park area is a small metal shipping container where we keep our tools and some materials for swim building. This is always locked and most bailiffs have a key.

We also have a locked compound at the far end of the lake on the north side, where we house our boat for managing and working on the water.

Vehicle access to the lake for members is only on the north bank where they can park their vehicles.

If members want to fish the south bank, they can walk their gear around the lake via the locked gate on the dam wall.

We have permission to take vehicles to the other side for fishery management purposes only, but the gate on the dam wall must be locked at ALL times.

All swims are covered in a dressing of scalpings, which ensures a dry area for fishing throughout the year. I found that wood chippings were creating a mess in the wetter months, so I decided not to use them again and this appears to be very successful. Most swims benefit from a timber surround, which guides the water away from the swim.

## Identified Problems

Brownwich Pond is an established lake with very little in the way of major problems. However, there are a few smaller problems, which need addressing before they become a major issue and have an adverse effect on the lakes future.

- Excessive weed growth limiting fishing
- Nuisance species which challenge future growth of king carp
- Security of the lake threatened by poor boundary fencing
- Numbers of carp slowly dwindling

### Weed Growth

The 2014/15 season saw a massive bloom of weed across the whole lake, and although many efforts were made to remove and reduce it, the weed was a massive issue to anglers wishing to fish the lake.

Black dye was introduced during this period but it seemed to have a limited effect, which I feel was due to the fact it was being constantly diluted by the water coming into the lake.

We also had a very mild winter with hardly any frosts previous to this period, so the weed didn't really ever die off as it normally would in a colder winter.

It must be remembered that although the weed was a nuisance factor for the angler, and nearly closed the lake, the fish loved it and grew well on the natural food that could be found in it.

It is my intention to try the dye method again, but use a blue dye, which is reportedly more effective than the black. I will also use a higher dose, and regularly top up the initial dose, especially after heavy rain.

At the time of writing, we have just experienced a prolonged cold spell this winter with some heavy frosts which has visibly killed off the weed.

Combining the application of the dye and the colder months we have experienced, it is hoped that this will not be such a large problem as in the 2014/15 season.

### Nuisance species which challenge future growth of king carp

As reported above, there is a large head of rudd and a smaller head of tench, which need to be continually monitored and removed so they do not restrict the future growth of the king carp.

The introduction of the perch in 2008 has seen a drop in the numbers of nuisance size rudd, and a few of these perch have been caught at over 1lb plus. This can be seen as a successful decision, but we may have to introduce more perch of suitable sizes, as this species always seem to live in cycles of around 7 years.

Therefore I recommend that consideration be given to a future regular stocking of perch, and after careful

monitoring, to continue this stocking process if natural recruitment isn't adequate, so the ponds balance of fish is maintained naturally through predation by pike and perch.

The tench need to be removed completely as they feed on the same food as the carp, and if they are allowed to stay, this could have a dramatic effect on the carp's growth. A keep-net will be sited on each side of the lake and any tench caught should be placed in the keep-net. These fish will be removed with the EA and the FMO's approval to other Club waters, which need them.

### Security of the lake threatened by poor boundary fencing

The boundary fencing on both sides of the lake has become threatened over the last few years, and although we have carried out some minor repair work, we have still experienced members of the public and dogs gaining access to the lake and its surrounds.

Not only does this put a threat on the angler and his fishing equipment, I am also concerned about the ease of access to the great many badger setts, not only by humans but the small dogs who like to tunnel their way down in the sett.

In the ideal world, the fence on the far south bank should be replaced professionally, and hopefully our landlords would help towards the cost, or by giving us a reduced rent for a period of time. However, in the

meantime we will continue to maintain the fence the best we can, and hopefully deter this threat.

The farmer who resides in the house on the north bank has informed me that he may be repairing or removing the fence which borders the lake and his property.

This will need to be monitored to ensure our members do not trespass on his farmland, and the farmer's livestock (horses) do not gain access to the lake.

I feel that this boundary fence is the responsibility of our landlords and every effort must be made to reach an agreement or a compromise where the lakes boundary is maintained efficiently.

#### Numbers of carp slowly dwindling.

It is readily accepted that the present head of carp at Brownwich is ideal, and suited to the acreage of the lake for continued growth to occur. This is supported in the fact that the fish are doing well and we have upwards of eight 30lb plus carp at this present time.

However, we must also accept the fact that we lose carp through natural causes throughout the year, and especially during and after spawning. This has been the case over the last 3 years where we have lost about 4 carp.

To this end, I recommend that consideration be given to a small stocking of double figure carp to maintain the numbers of carp. This will also have the effect of introducing another strain of carp and another year

class, which will hopefully prolong and extend the success of the water as a carp water for the PDAS.

This is not a priority but something which we need to consider when funds are available and the time is right for the lake.

## Long Term Plan

The long-term plan of the water is to continue to manage Brownwich Pond as the Clubs specimen carp water, and to undertake all duties to allow the continued growth of carp. This will mean a continuation of the programme of rudd removal, and the addition of more predators such as additional or larger perch, which will allow this to be achieved naturally rather than manually.

To continue maintaining this head of fish per acre until growth rates slow to the extent where the fish do not achieve their full potential. It is vital that records are kept about fish weights and condition for this to happen.

The weed must be managed so fishing is not affected too much. Although the weed has more natural food for the carp, there is a drop in anglers baits being introduced and this may affect the carp weights.

To continually monitor and consider the closure or moving of any swim which may affect the survival or lives of the badgers and any other wildlife.

The erection of bat and bird boxes will continue to continue the natural wildlife that we are blessed with at Brownwich Pond.

Additional water lilies are still needed to be introduced along the centre of the lake as this will create a natural boundary for each swim, and an additional place for the fish to be safe from capture. It goes without

saying that more lilies will only add to the natural beauty of the lake, and be more inviting for other species of dragonflies etc.

The close season has been halved as from 2015 and it is hoped that the work needed to be done will be carried out in this time. I also accept that it may be necessary to close the lake occasionally throughout the year if certain tasks need doing. This decision may need to be changed or adjusted should it have an adverse effect on the lake or fish.

However, this reduced close season will not only allow an extra six weeks fishing for the members, but the fish will also get the extra feed they need leading up to spawning time.

## Requirements for successful instigation of plan

For this water to continue being a successful specimen carp water for PDAS, the following points have been listed below:

- Weed growth to be managed and controlled
- Rudd and tench to be removed regularly
- Consideration of future stocking of perch
- Consideration of future stocking of carp
- Planting of lilies to be continued on lake
- Boundary fence to be replaced or repaired
- New close season to be monitored
- Consider the re-introduction of 48hr stay
- Consider any new rules to allow the above to work

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Brownwich Pond is a very successful specimen carp fishery that continues to grow despite the growing demands of the modern carp angler.

It is also seen as a very picturesque venue, which actively encourages wildlife, and protect their environment.

The future of the pond looks very positive, and with our last plan proposing to hold 20lb carp, we have far exceeded that expectation by 10lb. This is down to the hard work and efforts of a small group of bailiffs and helpers, but nothing could be achieved without the continued support of the Fishery Management Officer.

Portsmouth & District Angling Society should be very proud of Brownwich Pond as a successful fishery and a safe haven for anglers and wildlife alike.

It is seen by many as the Clubs jewel in the crown and I am very proud to be part of it. Long may this be the case.