Once again it is a privilege to write the chairman’s report on the club goings on over the past year. Every year is always busy for the committee, trying to ensure the smooth running and future of the club. At the moment the club is in a sound financial position with a good portfolio of mixed fisheries, including our new water Slough House West. However with the continuing rising costs of our leases, materials etc. we find that we have to raise our fees for the first time in a number of years. Another reason for this slight rise is that after successfully trialing a port-a-loo at Slough House Farm we have decided to install one at Howells too. These will be available for the summer months until the end of October. Unfortunately these don’t come cheap but will hopefully meet with the approval of our membership.

Once again our bailiffs have done a tremendous job in covering our waters. A difficult task, sometimes confrontational, but essential never the less. Thanks must go to Shaun McGuinness for rallying these troops. Further thanks must go to Keith Leverett for another very successful year of concessionary matches. They are superbly run and are almost a victim of their own success with a lot of our waters becoming too small to hold the matches.

On the work party front we have covered some important work this year, especially at Totham Pit, removing fallen trees and generally tidying up swims. Unfortunately, on the subject of Totham Pit, some individual(s) have taken upon themselves(s) to do extensive changes in some swims. This is strictly against club rules (rule 5.4) and would result in expulsion from the club (rules 1.1 & 1.2). Please consult our fisheries manager Paul Kemp before doing ANY fishery work – YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED. Paul again has worked tirelessly for the club over the past year putting in many hours, often on his own, so thanks must go out to him and his understanding wife Denise.

On a very sad note, we were notified of the untimely death of David Cullen a keen and regular member for many years. Because of his love for Maldon Angling Society and in recognition for the many happy hours he spent fishing our waters he kindly left to the club £5,000 in his will.

After mulling over a few suggestions as to how we should suitably use this donation it was decided to match this sum from club funds and set up the “Dave Cullen Fund”. This fund will be added to, hopefully each year, with the aim of eventually purchasing our own water.

On a personal note, I have to admit to becoming a bit of a fair weather angler. With all the sporting activities over the past year, which I love, my fishing expeditions have been somewhat limited. Despite this I have enjoyed some good sport with the highlights being some nice sized roach (1lb to 1½lb) from 4 different lakes. For me these are really majestic fish to be treasured.

Signing off, I hope all of you have a great new year and some memorable catches next season.

Tight Lines,

Mal Gardiner
Chairman

Notice of AGM

The 2015 AGM is to be held at Great Totham Village Hall on Sunday 18th January 2015, starting at 10.00 am. As has been the norm over the last few years, the information will be presented in the form of a slide show. It’s your chance to see how the club has been run over the last year and vote in the committee members for the coming year. Most of the committee will be there, so it’s a good opportunity to ask any questions that you may have. You will be able to renew your membership on the day, so please bring your cards and membership fees along.

Two proposed rule changes have been received and will be discussed:

i) Keepnets to be banned, except during organised matches, during the summer months to help reduce the spread of waterborne diseases (especially KHV). Exact dates are to be agreed, but 1st June to 31st August is suggested as a starting point for discussion.

ii) Selection of anglers for all Angling Trust Team events and all Essex inter club matches and any team event representing MAS should be from full members who have attended at least 20% of club matches in the previous twelve months.
Secretary’s Report

My own fishing time has been less than I would have wished last year (though my wife probably wouldn’t agree), so I am more than ever dependent upon the feedback I’ve received from members about our waters. Where I’ve not covered a venue it means nobody has told me anything! Also included are details of the stocking carried out during 2014.

Heron Hall Lake
This water continues to develop as a mixed fishery. The idea stocked in 2012 have proved to be an excellent investment for us, with the largest now showing at almost 1lb. They provide great sport on light tackle and will take surface baits with enthusiasm. I’m thinking of digging out my ancient fly gear and giving them a chance to take a dry fly. The small carp I mentioned last year have grown on to provide good sport, together with the larger fish which have been present since we took the water on.

Whitehouse Farm
I have had no reports about the quality of silver fishing at this venue during 2014. My attempts to find the idea which we introduced have proved completely unsuccessful. The carp anglers, though, have had their usual good catches with lots of doubles and one or two twenties showing.

Slough House Farm
Happily, reports for 2014 have confirmed the reappearance of the roach (probably due to the heavy stocking which took place during 2013). The carp have been forthcoming and I understand that the water has now produced a thirty.

Slough House Farm West
This is our latest acquisition. The lake covers around 1.5 acres, has a small island, surrounding trees and reed beds and has a pretty uniform depth of about 5 feet. There are about 20 swims. Some have platforms and please exercise care when using these as some of them have relatively narrow plank entrances. Fishing is allowed from 5 am to 10 pm. Access is down the track directly opposite our entrance to Slough House Farm, but on the other side of Scaley Road. Please be aware that you are entering a working farm – look out for chickens, dogs, tractors etc. Follow the track passing farm sheds on your left for 100 yards, or so, until you see a MAS notice on a building directly in front of you. Turn left between the farm sheds and then right at the end, where there is another MAS sign. The lake is then immediately in front of you. Turn left and park in the open area next to the lake. We are aware that the car park needs improvement and will be addressing this in 2015.

We negotiated the lease to include the fish stock, though the previous lessees were given the opportunity to remove the stock before we took over. Their netting efforts made little impression on the carp population, but did reduce the numbers of silver fish a little.

We have therefore stocked 200lbs of silvers of our own to replace them. Feedback from members indicate that there are roach to about 1lb, rudd, tench to about 3lbs, and a few crucians. There is also a good population of carp up to mid doubles.

Howell’s
Continues to be a very popular carp water, as witnessed by the speed with which the night permits are snapped up. Small carp are once again a nuisance and we have plans to thin their numbers during 2015.

London’s Reservoir
Last year’s heavy stocking has restored the quality of silver fishing, with the carp fishing remaining consistently good.

Beckingham Hall
A consistent and probably underrated water (rumoured to be one of the venues of our Chairman’s roach exploits, though they have eluded me). The water level continues to fluctuate considerably, but this seems to have no effect on the quality of the fishing.

Little Parks
Both lakes have been fished regularly and, though always a challenging water, the reports I have had have been pretty good. The owner has changed our entrance route again. It has now reverted to the gates on Maypole Road, which should be locked. The previous entrance via Red Lodge is no longer to be used.

Totham Pit and Bog Grove
Both fisheries have continued to be popular and productive. However, our primary focus this year has been to retain them as MAS waters under their new ownership. We have been in negotiation (and regular contact) with the new owner, who would like the waters to continue to be under our stewardship. This will depend, however, on the final outcome of the estate, which is still unclear. We have, however, secured an interim short term agreement which keeps both waters as our fisheries until July 2015.

Rook Hall
The tench fishing seems to have been poor during 2014 – I have only heard of one fish over 4lbs. The weed growth has been patchier (we repeated the application of weed inhibitor last year) though still a problem for some. The major news has been the extensive work undertaken to open new swims and to reduce bankside growth.

A further 200lbs of silver fish (mostly roach) was stocked in 2014.

River Blackwater (Wickham Bishops)
I have managed a few outings to the river and (unusually) have even come across one or two other anglers. Results have been down on previous years, with reports of otter predation adding to the cormorant menace, though I know of at least two 5lbs+ chub being taken.

David Spalding
Secretary
Another year has flown by and as I type this in late November we have just had our first proper frost of the winter straight after two of the most miserably wet Sunday’s that I can remember in a long time, when the heavens opened and my weekly winter fishing trip was shelved in favour of afternoon TV and hot buttered crumpets.

Anyway enough of me wimping out and let’s wind the clock back to New Years Day 2014 when I was feeling more adventurous in the rain, and in keeping with my previous articles I ventured down to Bog Grove. It rained the whole time I was there but was very mild for January and as a result very muddy too. In these conditions I would rather catch one decent fish than four small ones so my carpy prayers were answered when a 14lb 12oz Common made off with my hookbait. Now I can’t be absolutely certain but I think this might have been the same fish as my 15.01 from the previous winter so this year’s write-up will sound even more like deja vu to those of you who took the time to read my ramblings last year.

I finished last season with trips to Beckingham Hall and Rook Hall in late March. At Beckingham I had one take an hour, on the half hour, from 1.30pm to 3.30pm landing Commons of 8lb 12oz and 10lb on the nose and a very nice heavily scaled 9lb 10oz Mirror. All of the takes were one toners out of the blue, without so much as a bleep of forewarning. Needless to say I was full of confidence at 4.30pm but my alarms remained silent. At Rook Hall I again arrived with the intention of fishing either the front or middle lake, but as usual ended up fishing down the far end where I bagged a Common which was just 3oz off my venue best at 14lb exactly.

Into the 2014-15 season and April saw me at Heron Hall where the water level was very high and I was caught completely off guard by a group of five carp that appeared in my swim as I was setting up. They were on the surface swimming around with their mouths open literally hoovering the surface. My floaters were back in the car as I just wasn’t expecting to need them, and by the time I returned the chance (all five chances actually) had vanished from sight. Fortunately my first ever Heron Hall double figure Common of 12lb 10oz saved the day late on when it tore off with my bottom bait, this after a recast when a baby tench (good to see they are breeding) had taken a shine to my halved mega-spice boilie.

In mid April a black cat crossed my path as I made my way down the Bog Grove track and an 11lb Common proved that this was indeed a good omen. The lively low double picked up half a tutti frutti special boilie and gave me the run around in peg ten on the wooded bank. On Good Friday I landed six carp from Beckingham Hall, they were all under 7lb and I did hook one decent sized fish but the hook fell out of that one. With the weather now starting to warm up I started my evening trips to Little Park. I didn’t fare as well as last year with only two doubles out of ten carp from the main lake between April and August; the largest weighed 16lb 13oz and was successfully extracted from a bed of lilies where it had become snagged. I slackened off my line and thrashed the lilies with my landing net causing the Common to swim back out into open water – guaranteed entertainment for everyone else there. One visit reminded me of the ‘good old days’ fishing the plantation on the Speeney when as darkness falls one rod signals a bleep, then a little later a few bleeps. The line bites then start to alternate between the two rods, which are fished quite close together, before a belting take (which even then catches me unawares) punctuates the stillness. On this occasion it was a 4lb 4oz heavily scaled Mirror but they can’t all be monsters.

I also managed doubles from Whitehouse Farm, Beckingham Hall and Slough House Farm but it was a smaller fish from Brick Kiln pond that literally lit up my season. On previous visits I had watched as two orange fish swam in and out of the lily beds and had always assumed that these were orange koi carp.
On arrival there was a pole angler fishing the main swim by the car park so rather than jump in next to him I made my way around to the far bank. The swims on the opposite bank are quite cosy but as I use eleven foot rods I am able to squeeze into some tight swims that others only fish when stalking. What I hadn’t realised was how weedy these swims were and my attempts to find a clear spot on the bottom failed, so I decided to fish zig rigs with foam as hookbait. I wasn’t really expecting this tactic to work but I upped my venue best carp with a pretty 6lb Mirror on the first cast. All went quiet for over an hour and then the same rod tore off at an alarming speed. I feared the worst as my swim was surrounded with thick Canadian pondweed and lilies but when I struck the fish came to the surface and I simply wound it in. As soon as it hit the surface with a flash of bright orange I knew what it was, or at least I though I did, but the fish in my net was not a koi carp but a golden orfe, the first one I have ever caught in over thirty years of angling. On the scales it weighed 5lb 8oz. I’m not sure if this was the smaller or larger of the pair but I was pleased it didn’t put up a struggle. The whole experience was quite surreal as the fish seemed to go rigid as soon as I struck and remained so on the bank, only returning to normal when I returned it to the water and it swam off beneath a bush. I later recalled something I had read years earlier regarding clubs that had decided to stock more exotic species into their fisheries and some had chosen golden orfe. Apparently the novelty had soon worn off as while they look fantastic, and grow well, they don’t fight and come in like a wet cucumber (the other down side is that cormorants can see them from outer space!). I would be interested to hear from any other members who have experience of hooking golden orfe as I found the whole experience quite bizarre.

I call myself a carp angler (not everyone else calls me that) so I must relate my first trip back to Totham Pit which happened to fall in late May. I wasn’t expecting lightning to strike twice as I caught a twenty early into my campaign last year, but if I exclude the Presidents trophy float fishing trip I made it two twenties in two visits. This time I tried my single hookbait tactics in the point swim (the bush on the left is growing back now) and I was thankful for the extra leverage that the trimmed back vegetation allowed me to apply as early into my session a powerful fish picked up my left hand hookbait, fished over the back of a weedbed, and headed for the barge in the little bay. Thankfully my 12lb hooklink held out and a very lightly scaled 22lb 7oz Mirror was soon in the folds of my landing net. As I packed away (swingers removed) a 15lb Common also obliged making this another memorable day at Totham Pit. Unfortunately this was also the day when the remote control on my nearinantequianaloguecamerafailedtofirefortheumpteenthandfinaltimeandIretireditfrommyrucksack. I thought replacing it with a compact digital camera and remote would be a simple task but so far I’m yet to track one down, so if anyone can recommend a suitable compact replacement I will be pleased to hear from them. I will consider a compact with a programmable timer so I can preset the number of photos and the delay between each, but the camera shops keep trying to sell me an SLR or a bridge camera, both of which just seem too bulky. I’m not after anything that flash, if you will excuse the pun.

In July we had a new water to fish, Slough House West. This attractive lake is behind the farm opposite our main Slough House Farm lake and once I’d got over just how shallow it is I started to catch a few. On one occasion a carp picked up my bait just feet from the bank and bolted into a reedbed in the next swim where it shed the hook. I just walked out to the spot in my wellies, extracted my rig from the reeds, and carried on fishing. I went on to land four Commons to 9lb 11oz and a bream. I still haven’t landed a double from Slough House West so this lake is on my winter radar.
In August and September I enjoyed some good sessions at Heron Hall, where I landed two different 13lb+ Mirrors, and Whitehouse Farm where I upped my venue best Common to 18lb 3oz. It was at Whitehouse Farm that I got chatting to long-time member Nicholas and he was kind enough to compliment me on my articles for the newsletter (not my fishing skills you will note, but that is hardly surprising as I was blanking again). It was during this enjoyable bankside chat that I threatened to finish up with a tale of three eels, so as not to disappoint here goes. I hadn’t caught an eel for five seasons (I think the EA stat is that their numbers have reduced by something like 80% in recent years) so I felt safe to use cockles as bait. As dusk fell at Whitehouse Farm my cockle rod signalled a twitchy take and a 1lb 2oz eel was duly landed.

Kyff learns to be more careful with his cockles

The hook fell out in the net, which has to be an eel first for me. Having survived this encounter with little trauma (you will be starting to sense that I am not an eel enthusiast) I took my cockles to Slough House Farm two days later where I even used rig foam to enhance my presentation. I don’t think the 1lb 4oz eel that wolfed them down after dark though was that fussy to be honest and I’d doubled my five year eel tally in two days. The hatrick came up at Rook Hall far lake four days later when considering it safe to use cockles in bright sunshine at 3.45pm in the afternoon a 1lb 3oz eel grabbed them (admittedly they were starting to hum by this stage) and I took the long overdue decision to revert to fishing boilies. I’m still convinced that the same eel is following me around as I’m sure I saw it in Tesco last week. Anguilla fans called Alan apart, I wish you an eel free end to the season and until next time ‘get out there and get lucky’.

Paul Kyffin

**Concessionary Report**

Another year has gone by with plenty of things going on and numbers again increasing. So far the figure has reached 24, an all-time high, and that was with 4 members on holiday. We have had some good results on away matches and also on our own waters. Slough house farm has produced very good silver fish weights. Tench were taken to 4lbs 12ozs and also some good carp; they may be only 4 and 5 pounders, but they make for exciting catches. Roach and ide have been knocking the pound mark. We have not seen many bream this year so far, either skimmers or proper ones. Maybe the cormorants have been active. We’ve seen good catches of fish from Papermill Lock and providing the rain stays away for the rest of the season we should have some good results from our other stretches.

The new fixture list is nearly completed with the inclusion of our new Slough House West water which will be used for our pairs matches linked with Little London and Whitehouse Farm. Neither of these are big enough to hold a match on their own but 12 on Slough West and 12 on London Reservoir, with 12 on Whitehouse and again the same on Slough West should be exciting. With the improvement at Rook Hall there are now a few more swims. If we can keep up with the weed growth, then it should not be a problem. This is our jewel lake for tench but it needs our help so you should be prepared to give it a rake or two. Bog Grove, Slough House, Totham Pit and Little Park (both lakes) can accommodate our present numbers. The river sections are no problem nor is Heybridge Basin, Tesco’s stretch can hold 26 pegs. That means 3 fish per peg (a joke). There will be several away matches which we have fished this year and have been very successful, which we find helps with the bad days that we have had - not so many, thank goodness. There will be several small fish exercises to catch and take away small nuisance fish from Howell’s lake. These will be moved to Little Park. The matches will be held on some Thursday’s in August and September or as advised.

A big vote of thanks goes to Richard Seabright who collects the monies on each of the matches and on the occasions when I am not there. We have a great group of members whose enjoyment makes my task worthwhile. I keep getting requests to take on more people but unfortunately there are just not waters around to accommodate them. There are many clubs around that struggle with only 12 or so members. So we must be doing something right. Best wishes and tight lines for 2015/16.

Keith Leverett
Concessionary Match Secretary
**Membership & Night Permits**

With the budget meeting behind us I can break the news early that the fees are going up for the coming season to help cover the cost of the new lake, two portaloos and the increased rental for Totham Pit and Bog Grove. Due to space limitations in the newsletter I will hold back the actual fees at this stage but look out for the renewal forms which are due to be sent out to you in February. If you want any information on the 2015/16 fees a quick look at our website will reveal what they are.

If you have received this newsletter by email then you will also be emailed your renewal form, otherwise it will arrive through the post. If you do have an email address please take the time to put this on your application form as it is a great help in keeping our printing and postage costs to a minimum.

Assuming no one else volunteers I’ll be on hand at the annual general meeting on Sunday 18th Jan at Great Totham village hall to renew memberships and night permits.

The existing 50 Howells night permits run until the 31st March 2015 and the renewal rate is expected to be high, meaning that members wanting to upgrade cannot do so at the AGM. A waiting list is in operation for Howells night tickets and the membership secretary will contact each member on the waiting list as places become available. The number of standard night permits issued will increase slightly next season to 110 to incorporate Little London which will be added to the night ticket from 1st April 2015. If you have a standard night permit and want to hang onto it for the 2015-16 season please can I urge you to renew early as these are sold on a first come first serve basis.

Finally, if you know anyone who is not a member and wants to join please let them know that new members can join now and fish the end of this season free of charge.

**Paul Kyffin**
Membership Secretary

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**Head Bailiff Report**

Hi to all of our members, just a note to say we have had very few problems this year reported to our bailiffs which is a very good sign. I would like to thank all the bailiffs for their hard work including work done on the lakes. If anyone would like to become a bailiff then please contact me, Shaun, on 07842941281 for more information. Hope to see you on the banks some time.

**Shaun McGuinness**
Head Bailiff

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If you’ve had a good catch (something else as well as carp would be nice) and have a photo please take the time out to submit it for inclusion on the website www.maldonas.co.uk (see the submit photo link under gallery). It’s a great way of creating some publicity and attracting new members to the club.