

The South Staffordshire Waterworks Company



REVIEW

DECEMBER 1982

Monthly Newsletter



FISHING AT BLITHFIELD RESERVOIR

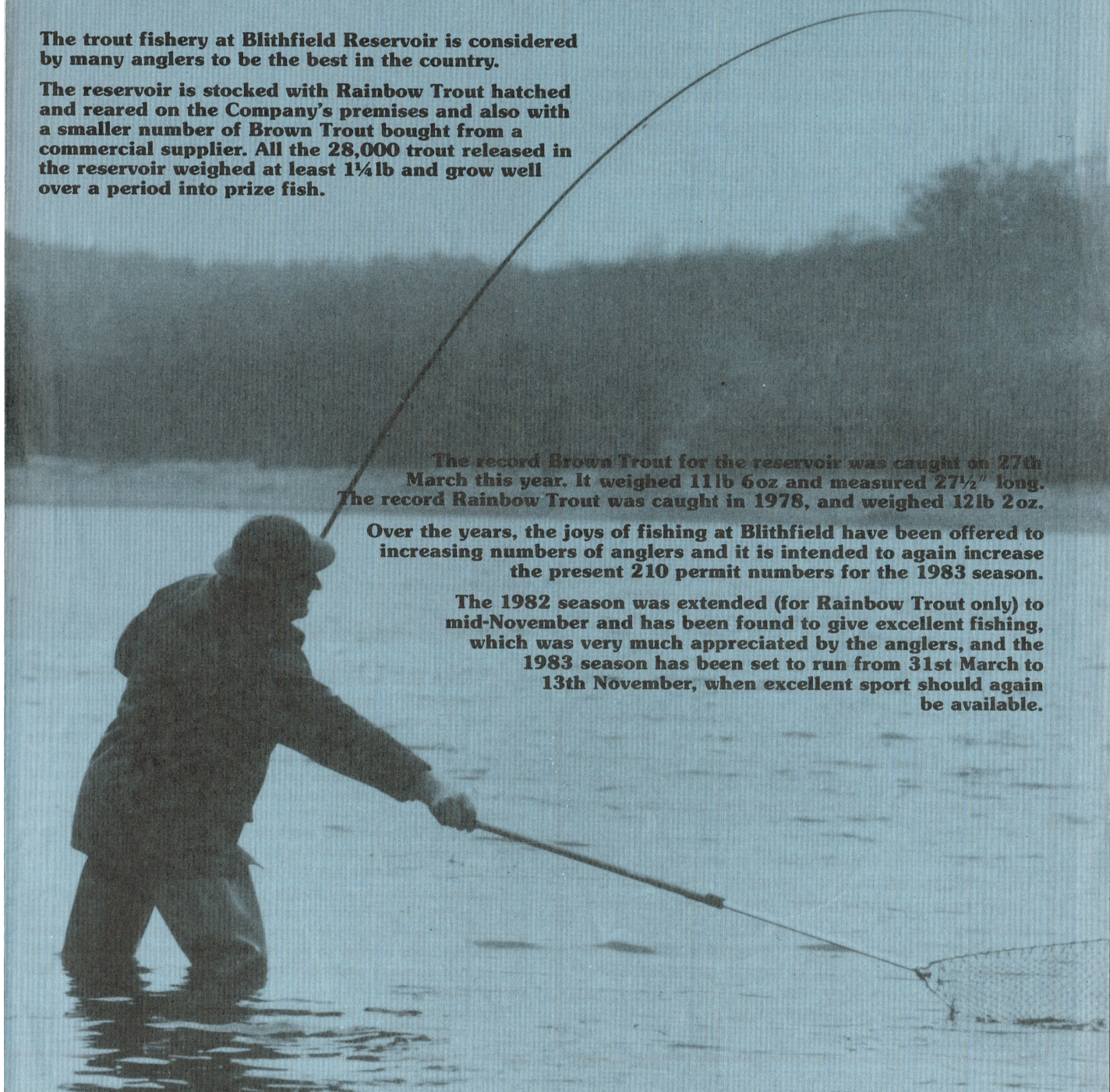
The trout fishery at Blithfield Reservoir is considered by many anglers to be the best in the country.

The reservoir is stocked with Rainbow Trout hatched and reared on the Company's premises and also with a smaller number of Brown Trout bought from a commercial supplier. All the 28,000 trout released in the reservoir weighed at least 1¼lb and grow well over a period into prize fish.

The record Brown Trout for the reservoir was caught on 27th March this year. It weighed 11lb 6oz and measured 27½" long. The record Rainbow Trout was caught in 1978, and weighed 12lb 2oz.

Over the years, the joys of fishing at Blithfield have been offered to increasing numbers of anglers and it is intended to again increase the present 210 permit numbers for the 1983 season.

The 1982 season was extended (for Rainbow Trout only) to mid-November and has been found to give excellent fishing, which was very much appreciated by the anglers, and the 1983 season has been set to run from 31st March to 13th November, when excellent sport should again be available.



Personnel Services Department Review

You will be aware that the organisation of the Personnel Services Department has recently been reviewed. Full details have been sent out on general circulation and are on all notice boards.

DENNIS CHAPMAN and CLIFF BATEMAN now have different roles, and ALAN LANDER will be a new face in the department.

Cliff will be developing a comprehensive Welfare/Counselling programme, and you can approach him at any time for confidential discussions on personal problems.

Dennis has taken over Cliff's old job, and with his staff will provide general personnel services to the department and Company.

In turn, Alan Lander has been appointed to Dennis's old job, but with a more general personnel involvement, and is in Dennis's group as a Senior Personnel Assistant.

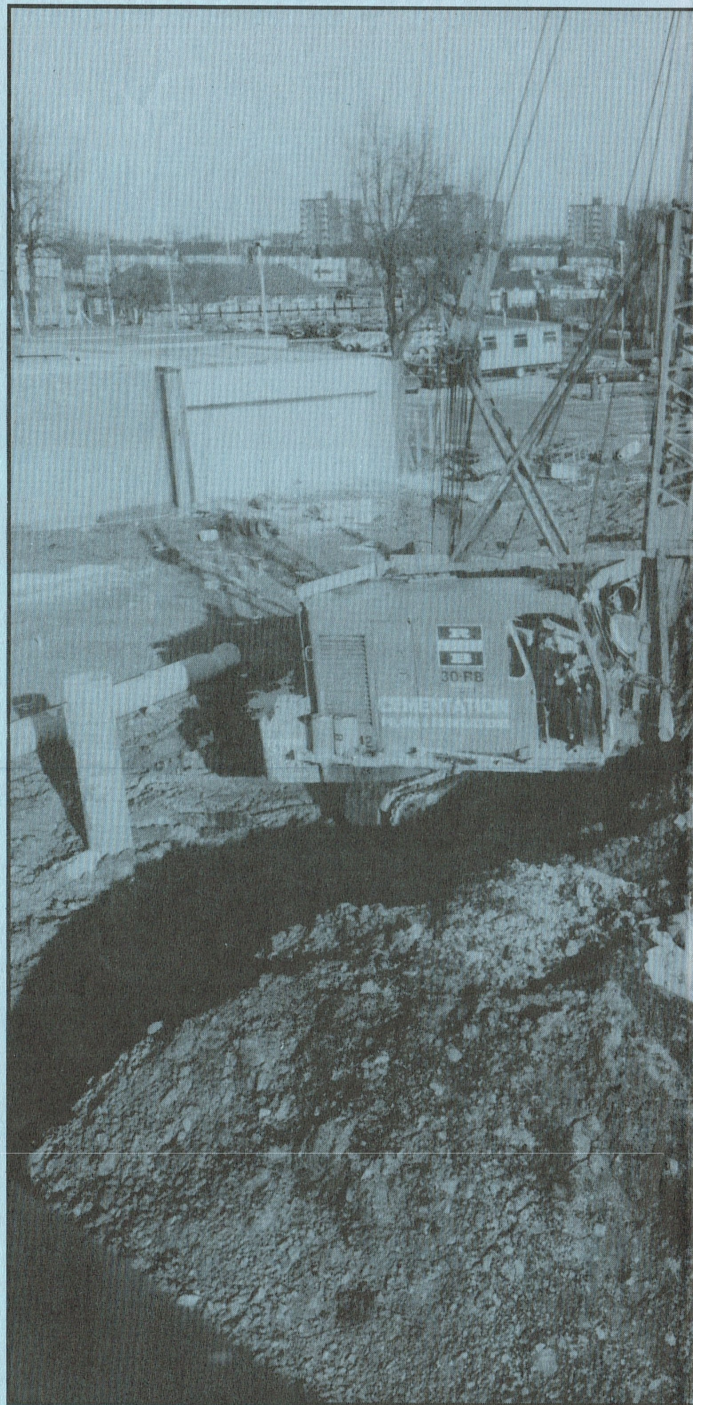
BILL HAZELTON is continuing as the Employee Relations Officer and will ensure with line managers, that matters relating to employee changes, discipline, agreements, etc, are properly conducted. He is particularly concerned in ensuring that the Trade Unions are kept fully informed and/or consulted on such matters.

The Manpower Development and Training Officer post is still under advert, but will be filled shortly.

Last, but by not means least—since he is responsible for paying you—is JOHN MORRALL, the Salaries and Wages Officer. His group will be extremely busy over the next year or so, since they are being required to implement a new Personnel/Payroll system called *Q-Pac*, and cope with the introduction of the new statutory sick pay scheme from April 1983. More details of this will be published in the New Year.

HAROLD HATFIELD, who has been your Salaries' man since the aeons of time, is leaving at the end of December, and this is another area of work John is taking over. I am sure we all wish Harold the very best for the future.

Finally, two overriding principles have been adopted in the review; first, that the Staff can be rotated in their jobs for both their own and the Company's benefit and, secondly, that each person, especially at the Section Leader level, is being given greater delegated authority. This should speed up decision-making and enable matters to be resolved more readily.



Central Office Development

The preparatory work for the construction of the new offices at Green Lane were completed by the first week in December, ahead of programme and within the budget, under the site supervision of Jeff Bishop and Erine Horobin. The firm of *Cementation Limited* have carried out the grouting of the old mineworkings and piling for the foundations with considerable expertise, demonstrating the teamwork one would expect from a group of men who had worked together for up to 25 years with the crane driver travelling by car from Doncaster every day and still being on site for 7-30am!

The tender documents for the construction of the new office building have now been prepared and despatched to six local and national contractors for pricing. The tenders will be returned in January with a view to the Board awarding the contract at the end of January and construction commencing by the end of February.

The construction period is 15 months' and so the best estimate for completion of the new building is May 1984 but,



in the meantime, the design of the permanent car park on the old floor slabs of the *T1* site proceeds apace with a view to construction commencing as soon as practicable. Consideration is being given to the optimum development of the rest of the old *T1* site.

At the same time, outside environmental consultants have been invited by the Company to investigate the open plan office. The work of the consultants will involve carrying out surveys of heating levels, humidity, acoustics and lighting as well as interviewing members of staff. The intention is to complete any approved modifications by the time the new office is completed.

With the new development about to take shape, the Staff Liaison Committee is to be reconstituted, involving staff both from Sheepcote Street and Green Lane, to enable further consultation to take place about the interior arrangement, furnishing and use of the accommodation.

● The above photograph shows the drilling rig with auger about the drill the next pile. The mound of earth is the ground which has been taken out to construct earlier piles. 130 piles have been constructed to support the new Head Office.

This Year's Financial Performance and Next Year's Budget

The Company's Accounts for the first half of the current financial year confirm earlier estimates of the continuing decline in income for water supplied to trade and industry; the impending closure of the *Round Oak Steelworks* alone will lose this Company £140,000 of revenue income per year. There is now some optimism that things will not continue to decline, but an improvement in the economy of the West Midlands has yet to be seen and will be a long, slow process when it does start.

The recent lower level of interest rates has helped the Company to raise money on the *Stock Exchange* at a reasonable price. This and the continuing emphasis of maintaining or reducing revenue expenditure and improving efficiency, has helped to keep the Company's outgoings below the level used to set the water charges.

However, the need for more expenditure on renewal or reconditioning of old mains, service reservoirs and pumping plant is a pressing urgency. It is hoped to continue scraping and relining of water mains throughout next year at an accelerated pace.

Work has now started on the Revenue Budget for 1983-84. Estimates of likely expenditure are made, as the first stage, based on to-day's prices. Having gathered this information from every section of the Company, Management Accountancy Department summarise all of the individual submissions, make due allowances for inflation between now and the start of the next financial year in April, and also for inflation during the four quarters up to April 1984. The final outcome will be compared with the 'charges base' (a mix of the rateable values of unmeasured properties supplied, the volume of water supplied to trade and industry, bulk supplies to other Authorities, etc), and the charges for the Company's services for 1983-84 will be set by the Board to recover the predicted expenditure, plus a small surplus (perhaps 1%) to provide a cushion against unforeseen events or price rises. Naturally, if the anticipated rise in our charges is too high (bearing in mind that we must strive to minimise or eliminate increases in the interests of stimulating local industry and protecting consumers, particularly those on low incomes) it would be necessary to re-examine estimated expenditure to see if any further economies could be made.

The Secretary of State for the Environment, Mr Michael Heseltine, has said again this year that he expects the charges imposed by Water Companies in April 1983 to be "materially less than" the then estimated rate of inflation. Any Company which does not achieve this target will be liable to be called to account by Government and probably have its activities and finances closely examined.

The budgeting process can be lengthy and complicated, but it must be finished by early January so that the Board can formally agree the charges before 1st February, when the new rates for metered water are implemented (unmeasured domestic charges apply from 1st April).

Budgeting started as soon as the September half-yearly accounts were published, and will end with the charges being set which stay in force until April 1984, 18 months later. A charge of only 1% in expenditure results in £¼ million, so it is perhaps not surprising that the final outcome is not always exactly as planned!

The Harvest of Shrimps

The word 'Shrimp' conjures a euphemistic image for a rather unpleasant crustacea whose correct biological name is *Asellus Aquaticus*, and which lives and thrives in pure water mains. Their presence is not at all uncommon in the water industry and the problem is a legacy of a former situation which, fortunately, has long disappeared.

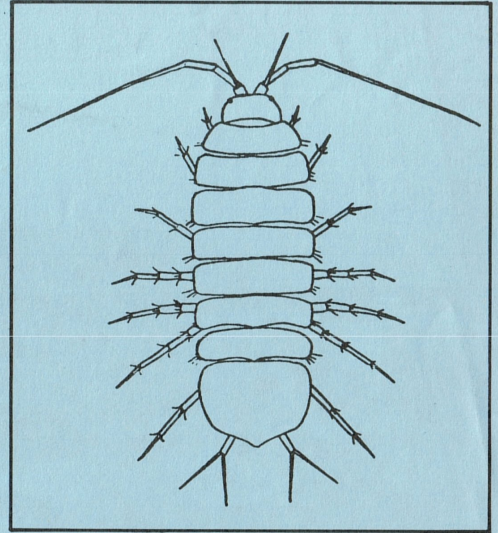
The Company's efforts to remove these creatures in the past had been limited to low key nocturnal activities on Friday nights, which were difficult to explain to any interested bystander. These efforts had only limited success as, due to the prolific breeding capabilities of any survivors, the population in the Company's mains was re-established in a very short period of time.

The Chief Chemist, Dr Richards, was not satisfied with the Company's traditional approach to the problem and in conjunction with the former Distribution Department developed a programme of large scale on-line treatment during 1981 in the Cannock and Walsall areas.

This year the Company have embarked upon an even more extensive programme and during the period 9th November to 7th December, the mains supplying approximately 180,000 consumers had been treated and several millions of aselli have been removed after extensive washing out. The programme involved operational personnel in a considerable amount of adjustment to the trunk mains network and many long and tedious hours were worked by the water treatment section in controlling the injection of the treatment chemicals. The chemical used was permethrin, which stuns and eventually kills these very tenacious creatures thus enabling them to be washed out by the Company's watermen. The whole operation was supervised by the Company's biologists who were frequently called upon by members of the public for advice.

The treatment, although perfectly safe to humans, is harmful to aquatic life, and the public have been kept informed by local radio and notices in the press. These notices were translated into the language of a number of ethnic minorities and circulated to shops, business premises and schools. The public have responded to these announcements and we have received only a few complaints of 'terrapins' in the water!

The current programmes of treatment, which are a tremendous step forward from the early single small diameter main type operation, to areas which include many miles of trunk mains will be repeated at 18-month intervals until, eventually, the shrimp boat will no longer be required.



An isopod, *Asellus* sp. 8 mm long

SCRAPING THE BARREL

A regular feature of the Company's activities since the early 1970's has been the reconditioning of old cast iron mains by scraping and relining with cement mortar in-situ. Since 1970 approximately 780 kilometres of service mains have been thus treated at an estimated total cost of £4,000,000—i.e.: 19% of the total length of small diameter mains.

As part of the the future development of the River Severn Scheme and to extend the Cannock low pressure zone it was decided to examine a number of the Company's older trunk mains to see whether their original carrying capacity could be restored by scraping and relining. The evidence obtained from these old mains proved to be positive. The metal was in superb condition and the investigation also revealed that certain mains were breeding grounds for *Asellus Aquaticus*.

A programme of trunk main reconditioning started in 1981 in Walsall, and in November of this year the final stage of the first phase was completed and we now have an 'as new' main of 20" and 24" diameter from Leabrook Road, Wednesbury to Moors Gorse near Rugeley, approximately 30 kilometers long.

This work will also considerably increase the flexibility of the distribution network as hitherto it was not possible to reverse the direction of flow in these mains without the risk of extensive discolouration and all the problems of complaints of dirty washing.

It is the Company's policy to continue this work and in November, the Board gave authority for further work to be carried out during this financial year to advance the low pressure area further North and facilitate next year's programme. We have maintained our position in the forefront of the industry in this field and have, as a result of our experience, made a major contribution to the new Code of Practice.

The Company's systematic approach to the problem has been adopted by many water authorities in this country and the advice of our personnel is sought by various organisations throughout the world.

WELCOME...

● CENTRAL OFFICE

R. J. CHAPMAN (Stores), Miss J. ARTHUR (Water Quality), P. C. EDWARDS (Workshop).

● HEAD OFFICE

ELAINE EVANS (Personnel), Mrs B. MARSHALL (Management Services), P. J. ROBSON (Accounts).

GOODBYE...

● SANDFIELDS

D. W. BRISTON (Plant Attendant), who has completed 16 years service with the Company.

● TIPTON

E. J. ASHCROFT (Water Service Operator), who has completed 22 years service with the Company.

Also to P. DOWNES (Hampton Loade) and J. HIGGINS (Northern Area Office).

NO SMOKING...

Discussion at a Joint Health, Safety and Welfare meeting recently resulted in a recommendation that Company Conference Rooms be considered as No Smoking Areas. The matter was subsequently approved by the Principal Officers of the Company. To comply with this, notices have been placed outside all Conference Rooms and a reminder that smoking during meetings is discouraged will generally be added to meeting agendas.

The recommendation was accepted on the basis that persons attending meetings who were non-smokers were then discomforted by the smell of stale smoke on their clothing and they may experience discomfort with their eyes and most importantly their health may be affected.