

Founded 1891

# Sussex Piscator

Annual Magazine of  
Sussex Piscatorial Society Ltd.  
Issue XI, Spring 2020



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Thank you to everyone who's contributed to *Sussex Piscator* this year. It's another great issue that has been a privilege to prepare.

Massive gratitude to our authors Andy Payne, John Parsons, Keith Russell, Andy Smith and not least John Harris for his sterling work in the SPS archive\* (with apologies to anyone whose name I've omitted).

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## \* SPS Archive: Meeting Minutes 1891-2012

John Harris has been conducting research completed in recent years at the East Sussex Record Office, and the text of his work chronicling the SPS Meeting Minutes 1891-2012 is now available to any interested member. The hard-copy book version was on display at the 2019 Autumn Social and will be on display again at the 2020 AGM.

The text is a pdf file and very large so any member interested in a copy should email John at [johnandgeliharris@gmail.com](mailto:johnandgeliharris@gmail.com) in order to request a copy. Any member placing a request should be aware that the file is subject to copyright protection (©John Harris, 2020). Several members have already requested and received copies. Thank you, John for your amazing work here!

## Sussex Piscator 2020, Issue XI

Welcome to all our new members! If this is your first season, you're probably having a blast in the best fishing club in the world.

I hope everyone is well and enjoyed their fishing in 2019. Apologies for the over-full issue last year. I'm a big fan of keeping this in hard copy but if I don't have time to edit the issues down to a reasonable size they become too expensive to produce and mail out, as was the case in the 2019 edition. I've been so busy over the last twelve months I haven't been fishing once, so I'm quite happy not to have to do that again right now. It also means I can prep them later in the year as the turnaround time is shorter. So, I guess there are some advantages. (Older members may recall that the first three or four editions of *Sussex Piscator* were also emailed out as pdfs, and I only went to paper version after requests from the SPS Committee.)

I do think a hard copy *Sussex Piscator* makes for excellent toilet reading material, although the paper is too thick for the kind of emergency hygiene measures that used to be common practice in the age before super soft Andrex and moistened towelettes. Most advantageously, the consequences of accidentally dropping this humble little magazine down the bowl are far less dramatic than what happens if you're do the same with your mobile phone while relaxing for five minutes on the old porcelain throne -- as occurs thousands of times a year, apparently.

In fact, the latest research from digital media experts CNET found that one person in five has accidentally dunked their phone down the loo at some point. It happened to a work

colleague recently. £500 worth of digital gear and all his contact numbers literally went down the pan. Happy days. So, if you want something convenient to park on the cistern alongside your partner's choice of toilet reading, we're still happy to send out hard copies to people (like myself) who prefer more traditional formats. Just email me at the address below.

A note of thanks, as always to Keith Russell whose work is the heart of this magazine and incredibly informative to read. We should all be grateful for the efforts of Keith and every other SPS Committee member, water keeper and volunteer. It's a challenging, time-consuming and often thankless task to run a large fishing club and I'm constantly amazed at how they all do so well in such spectacularly good form. To then be so transparent about their decisions and difficulties in this magazine and elsewhere is something everyone should be thankful for.

As ever I'm always happy to receive articles so please feel free to send items by 1 Feb 2021. New members or experienced old hands, all are welcome. Whether it's reflections on membership, a memoir, a discussion of environmental issues, poetry, puzzles, angling tips, fishing diaries, tackle talk, an opinion piece, a guide to one of our waters -- anything goes. I have so little time for fishing currently that the *Sussex Piscator*, plus our email communications and website, are the only way I can keep informed about what's happening in SPS world. I'm sure readers with demanding jobs, young families, or accessibility and transport difficulties will feel the same. Tight lines!

Dr. Jon Stewart  
[jonsleeper@btopenworld.com](mailto:jonsleeper@btopenworld.com)

# Back to the Future: 2019 in the SPS Course Section

Keith Russell

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Our Coarse Section year started with a trip over the Scotney Castle to discuss an extension to our lease with the National Trust and Sheffield Park. All ended well with agreement reached. It was a pleasant surprise to have in our company at the meeting the head gardener from the Sheffield Park grounds. He was very complimentary about the society and the membership. Unfortunately the “No Naked Flame” stipulation within the lease agreement still remains so it’s just a flask or bottled cold drinks whenever we visit to fish.

Just before the river season comes to a close a good number of willow stakes were planted in the banks of the Adur at

Wineham. This project has been ongoing for a number of years and the proof of successful planting can be seen with the number of trees that are now very established. Also a couple of hundred trees were planted by the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust some years ago. Many have survived although not that many are close to the river banks, however some very colourful wooded areas for all to see in future years. Hopefully a good number of willow stakes planted by the river’s edge will survive and over the coming years provide overhang on “our bank” which fish can call home and will become resident. Some of the largest willow overhang is always a good starting point especially for the Chub.



PLASHETT. Over many months this year tree reduction work has been taking place around the top lake. Because the lake is so shallow with no immediate prospect of increasing the lake depth over any areas in the foreseeable future to give our fish a better chance of survival in hot summer conditions. We have endeavoured to allow as much wind as possible to ripple the lake surface. With no influx of fresh water in times on minimum rainfall the only option currently is wind action on water. This coupled with the society's splash aerators being switched on after sunset and off again after sunrise during the times of the highest temperatures helped reduce any prospect of fish loss. The tree reduction will continue on and around the island as time permits and possibly extend to the eastern arm of this lake.

WELLINGHAM LAKE. A full day work party at the lake in early spring. A good number of small trees were removed especially those that were in clusters of four to eight trunks in various areas. There was also overhang clearance of pathways and swims. The vast areas of bramble reduced to near on nothing at the western end. All waste was burnt. The first grass cut of the year took place. A week or so later some blocks and large stones were placed in the stream which is adjacent to the lake to try and help reduce the erosion of the bank closest to the lake. Time will tell if this proves effective.

OTTERS. A report received of Otters at both Plashett and Sheffield Park lakes. The island at Plashett had extensive viewing with advice given to look out for the specific signs in particular areas of all inlets and the main outlet and areas of easy bank access to the islands. There was a full three lake survey at Plashett with wildlife cameras installed for a significant period. No evidence was ever found, only Fox and Mink caught on camera.

FIRLE. The first signs of algae appeared in the late winter and as soon as the daylight hours increased with water temperatures on the rise the algae multiplied faster than it could be removed. One major work day to clear as much as possible in early springtime but within a day or so the areas cleared were then covered again with algae as of a few days previously. Every opportunity to reduce the algae covering was taken on my visits as it was multiplying faster than could be removed with another full day's clearance taking place in the early summer. Eventually after many months the lake became more fishable by the day to a stage when hardly a patch of algae could be found. However I know it'll be back so will look for the tell-tale signs come autumn of this current year.

The society had also spoken to the Firle Estate over a number of years about the reclaim of a silted up pond. This to grow on some Carp fry. We were well on the way to putting a plan into place but

eventually had to shelve the idea due to the more important and essential expenditure at Pond Lye. However all is not lost. In the meantime a very small number of Carp will be introduced this winter along with some Tench although the total number is yet unknown. Some Tench will also be introduced to Pond Lye.

BURTON MILL POND. Finally and after many months of dialogue between the Society and WSCC an agreement on a new lease at BMP is agreed. The mistakes in the new lease written were numerous. They couldn't even get the fishing season dates correct. Finally lease extended to forty plus pages in length. Gone are the days of the annual handshake, minimal rent and a bottle of whisky at Christmas. Always now it appears an annual rent increase. We were however extremely pleased to have this extension of the lease. It is still a massive surprise to us of the vast numbers of members who have yet to experience a day's fishing at BMP.

POND LYE. The western boundary which runs from south to north close to the new society car park. This had to be raised to the same level as the existing dam / footpath. We had run out of time to achieve this upgrade in 2018 so our contractor was booked in to return September of this year. This upgrade and a few other tasks to be completed over a three week period. The pile of previously excavated clay from 2018 was used for the upgrade purpose and the remaining unused clay banked against the hedge and trees close to the Cuckfield Road. On Pond

Lye's east bank, there now stands a massive pile of root and tree by the dog-leg which hopefully will be disposed of in 2020 when it dries out sufficiently. This is a continuation of the encroachment reduction programme.

An ongoing situation with the society's storage containers. We were given notice in 2018 to either move off site or pay a massively increased rental on land. Trying to find a suitable site either on Plashett estate or on our own lakes sites proved a real headache. Finally after many months it was agreed to allow the containers to be sighted in the area of Plashett bottom car park. The parking area of course required an upgrade so although parking availability has been reduced a little the new area covering and improved access off the main A26 will be of benefit to all society members.

The destocking of Plashett bottom lake was put in progress in the autumn with the final dates set for early December. The aim to remove as many Bream, Pike and Carp that enter the bottom lake annually. Unfortunately this influx of fish cannot be avoided so this destock will continue over all future years if we wish to keep the bottom lake solely for Tench, Crucian, Perch, Roach and Rudd. In preparation undergrowth, tree overhang and extensive water weed was periodically removed over a few months. Success eventually in the removal of 20+ Pike which were released into Plashett top lake whereas the single Carp and numerous Bream were released into the middle lake.





The final task in December was to collect some Carp, all commons, plus Tench that had been pre-purchased earlier in the year. Tench numbers at the time were unknown as these would be the last that had been breed in stock ponds. Three Carp around 7lbs each were released into Firle and two Carp at around 11lb each into Pond Lye. Of the eighty Tench finally purchased these split equally between both Firle and Pond Lye.

Late December and the rains appears to be continuous. Flooding on all our Sussex rivers. Checks on a couple of our river sections revealed that the fields adjacent to the river had been under near on 3ft of water. Leaves clinging to the top strand of barbed wire and stock fencing. The vast number of plastic bottles that lay littering the fields after the rivers subsided was astounding. I can only assume that these plastics must be discarded into roadside ditches and eventually find their way into our rivers during excessive rainfall over a short period of time.





*A whopping 10lb 8oz Kennet barbel*

New venues are always extremely difficult to obtain. Throughout the year we always receive snippets of information about potential new waters which are followed up as soon as possible. The success rate as all members will note is extremely low. Two rivers that we took a chance on about five years ago by buying syndicate places for a year were the Avon in Hampshire and Kennet on the Wasing estate. Although both extremely difficult rivers to fish and by comparison completely different in character. Some of those members who do take out regular permits have achieved great success.

The Avon is daunting in size, both width and pace plus extensive weed growth whereas the Kennet more twists and turns with plenty of overhang. Both some distance to travel from Sussex. The Coarse section took permits on these rivers on to offer Barbel fishing to our members. These last couple of seasons our society Barbel record has been broken on numerous occasions on the Kennet. Originally the record Barbel was a fish of 4lb+ from the Ouse at Wellingham now a whopping Kennet Barbel at 16lb-3oz. The photo above is of a 10lb+ plus fish from the Kennet caught the next day by the same member. (More Avon pictures below.)





*5lb Avon chub, trotted maggots on the centrepin*

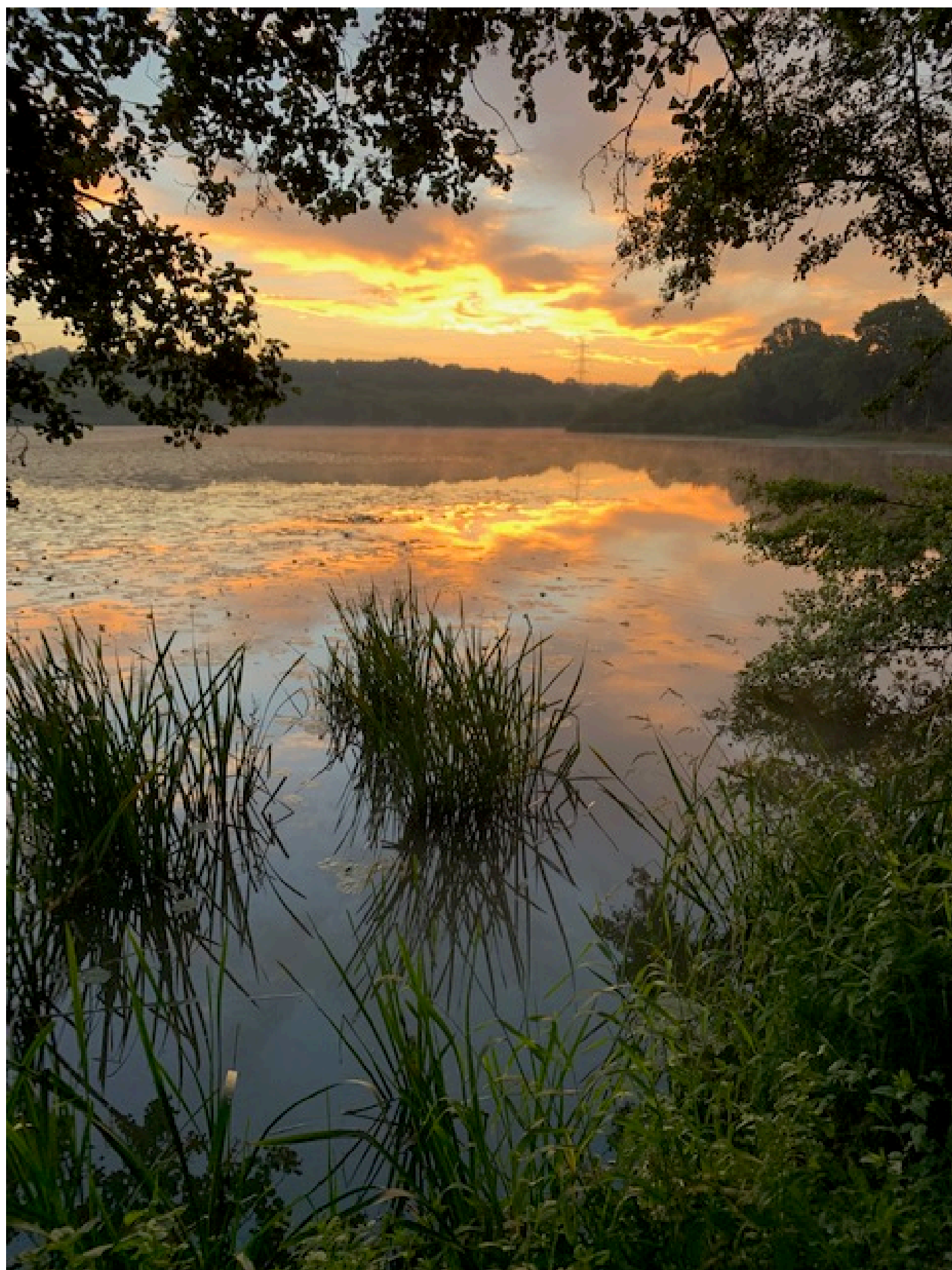


*Avon Pike*





Garry Christopher is a recent member of the SPS Course Section with a real talent for capturing nature's great beauty. Here are some of his excellent nature shots. Following page shows an early morning at Pond Lye. Thank you, Garry!





# Does your bait actually attract the fish you're trying to catch?

Andy Payne

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Like all living creatures, fish must obtain nutrition from their environment by feeding. As anglers we exploit their need to feed by introducing what we hope will be an attractive bait which will allow us to catch them.

I have been fortunate enough in the past to catch both many fish and fish of specimen size. Often when I have been observed doing so the first question that I am asked by fellow anglers is "What bait are you using mate?". The questions are never about watercraft, how the bait is applied or the techniques that I have used to hook the fish. The assumption being

that a bait that you can buy is more important than the skills that you must learn.

The search for the magic bait which will catch us more and bigger fish is as old as the sport of angling itself. As the canon of angling literature shows us many odd & exotic creations have been tried with varying degrees of "success" over the centuries. Some baits endure while others fall from fashion; I'm certain that I could catch a specimen on a par-boiled spud steeped in the rendered fat from a herons leg but I'm equally certain that the use of other more modern baits would result in a shorter wait for a bite..



The alchemy of bait creation continues today and has become part of a hugely lucrative industry which attempts to sell us the latest generation of flavours, colours, additives and miracle mixtures. Are any of them better than "... a smear of the grease rendered from the legs of herons"?

Much of the information that we have with regard to piscine nutrition has come from the fish farming industry where there is economic pressure to produce the biggest possible yield of edible fish in the shortest possible time and at the lowest cost. To this end fish farmers have investigated in detail the most efficient amounts of each nutrient that fish require and how best to deliver it to them. In turn this drive for maximum yield has led to the exploration of the potential of appetite stimulants and feeding triggers introduced into the diet of the crop fish. A fish that is chemically stimulated to avoid satiation will most probably put on mass more quickly than its non-drugged peer.

Can, or even should we anglers use feeding stimulants in our baits? It could certainly improve our catch rates if we did, that's why many of us do or at least believe that we do.

I intend here to pass on some of the useful knowledge gleaned from my studies of the latest fish farming methods employed by the Chinese, the world's most effective pisciculturists.

I think that it is useful for us to have the best possible understanding of how fish detect a bait so that we can be confident that our wait for a bite is most likely to be both as short and as fruitful as possible. I would also like to ensure that we are not needlessly contributing to the bank balance of a "Bait Baron" when paying for products which do little or nothing to enhance our catches.

Omnivorous fish like tench, bream, roach and carp detect the presence of potential food in their watery environment through a combination of the three distinct senses of sight, "smell" and taste. Fish will also test items once they are in their mouths to assess the nature of each morsel. Is it dietary or detritus?

As a predominantly warm water, bottom feeder tench, bream and carps' sight is probably not a particularly important sense in its naturally turbid feeding environment, this is reflected in the evolution of such small eyes and relatively small ocular region of the brain when compared to predators such as pike or zander. Good eyesight could potentially be a significant asset in a clear gravel pit environment but while the eye remains small its effectiveness as a means of food detection remains limited. The choice of bait colour that you make in pursuit of tench might well be irrelevant therefore, with well camouflaged casters or small particles & dead gentles being of equal effectiveness to bright, to us "hi-viz" baits.

The second aspect of sight beyond colour detection is that of movement detection. Movement can be detected in much lower light conditions and higher turbidity than can colour. I would suggest then that the addition of a moving element to a baiting scenario could be useful. The use of live maggots or worms would facilitate this; I add live maggots to the hook when hair rigging an immobile bait and feel confident that it adds to my success. I know that some anglers use so called "active" groundbait mixes which release a flow of particles into the water column while others use Alka-Seltzer tablets in their mix. Both of these baiting strategies are designed to add movement and disperse attractants in order to attract fish to feed.

A cyprinid's sense of "smell" is probably the most significant sense as far as anglers are concerned, it is also the one about which I have most often seen and heard the greatest confusion. Fish do not detect odours (volatile chemicals in the air) as do air breathing creatures, rather they can detect the presence of chemicals which are dissolved (in solution) in the water in which they live. This sense is highly

developed in tench as would be expected by anglers.

A fish investigates its scent environment by drawing water into its nares, these nostril-like structures consist of two U shaped tubes which have flaps at the entrance. These flaps allow the fish to regulate the flow of water through each nare and across the chemoreceptors which are located on the epithelial lining of the nare. Water flowing through the nare does not enter the fish's body, it simply exits at the open end of the tube. The senses of taste and smell are very closely linked in humans, this is not the case in fish.

The chemoreceptors, called rosettes within each nare are capable of detecting charged particles (here  $H^+$  ions) which are dissolved in the water. So great is the degree of sensitivity to the dissolved chemicals in the water that it is proposed that fish can home in on a food source over a huge distance by detecting tiny concentration differences across a diffusion path. That's how they can pinpoint your tiny bait in an ocean like reservoir in the dead of night.





*A tench's nare showing pH sensitive rosette*

It is important here to understand which chemicals our target species has a need to detect and how this will have affected the evolutionary development of their chemoreceptors.

Fish have no need to consume carbohydrates, their energy system is set-up to use other foods, predominantly fatty acids, to generate the energy that they need. This would infer that their olfactory sense would not be particularly highly tuned to detect sugars dissolved in the water and this is indeed the case. If sugars are in solution in the water though, those

added in bait and groundbait by anglers for instance, and these come into contact with its mouth taste pads a tench will become aware of the presence of a potential food source in its environment. For this reason it is worth adding molasses to your crumb feed for instance.

Fish farmers use carbohydrate based, minimum protein feed pellets as a way of saving money, protein is costly. This practice of Protein Saving in a feeding protocol helps to ensure maximum growth for minimum cost. The oil content of the

feed is governed by water temperature, less is fed in cold conditions.

At this point please answer (not out loud) the question "Do oil and water mix?", thank you, back to that later.

The most valuable of the major nutrients for a fish are the proteins. Proteins are each made up of a distinct profile of amino acids, these are water soluble molecules comprising various combinations of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. It is these amino acids which have been repeatedly proven to be a major feeding trigger for cyprinids, they are emitted by all living or once living organisms. Amino acids can also be produced artificially for industrial use and those created both naturally and in factories are both readily detected and consumed by fish of many species.

As an amino acid is dissolved in water it will dissociate into its constituent ions one of which is a positively charged Hydrogen ( $H^+$ ) ion. The result of the charged ion falling into solution is a drop in the pH of the surrounding water, it is this increase in acidity which is detected by the rosettes in

a fish's nares. This signal of the presence of food becomes a feeding trigger if the fish is hungry.

Probably the most well-known fish feeding stimulant is n-Butyric Acid, this chemical is easily detected as it dissociates into  $H^+$  ions even in cold conditions. It is commercially available in a purified form as a bait additive. If you intend to use this product in your bait making be prepared for the foul stench which it emits and bear in mind that it is found naturally in body odour, rancid butter and sour milk; it might best be used only out of doors!

Could it be that the mouth-watering fruity esters that attract us to certain baits are less attractive to a hungry tench than BO and cheesy socks?

A far friendlier and equally effective additive is Betaine, this amino acid derivative is very low odour and dissociates well into  $H^+$  ions once in solution in water. Betaine is easily detectable by tench and is recognised as a feeding trigger among cyprinoids, it too is easily available from bait suppliers at very low cost.



*A juicy lob worm will give off a steady stream of amino acids*

It is my recommendation therefore that your bait contains a source of amino acids be that a simple lob worm or a sophisticated commercial bait ingredient.

The next macronutrients to consider are the lipids (fats and oils), I have noticed that there is more misinformation and misunderstanding around the use of oils than just about any other aspect of bait application.

As you know from the answer you gave to my question above, oil and water don't mix.

Oil is immiscible in water; even if an emulsifier is used the oil has not gone into solution in the water it is simply suspended as micro globules. For this reason fish cannot "smell" the oils which we are often directed to add as attractants to our baits.

I read an article today in "Britain's most popular angling monthly" which encouraged readers to add fish oil to their groundbait so that it is released to form a flat on the surface and spread its attraction further across the water. This I fear is folklore getting in the way of factual observations. Believe your eyes... The oil



floats to the surface to create the flat spot, taking any flavours that it contains with it. Our piscine adversaries have no means of detecting the presence of the oil or the flavours it holds. The flavours stay locked up in the oil as it spreads across the water surface and remain there to either evaporate into the air or go rancid and pollute the fishery. I contend therefore that the addition of oils to a bait as scent attractants is a waste of time and money, I don't do it and won't bother to until I see fish sipping the oil from the surface film. Oil that floats away from a bait is wasted oil.

The third way in which fish can detect that a bait is a food source is by taste, once a potential food item is in a fish's mouth it can come into contact with a further set of chemoreceptors, if the item is in direct contact with these taste pads the fish can detect the presence of amino acids, lipids and/or sugars which are of potential nutritional benefit. This is the point at which the oils and sugars (or sweeteners) which we add to a bait to increase its attractiveness come into play. Cyprinids are renowned for having a liking for a sweet bait and all fish need the essential fatty acids found in lipids; once fish have detected the presence of valuable nutrients on their taste pads they will eagerly consume them.

If these nutrients are detected the fish will swallow the food, if they are not present the item will be ejected from either the mouth or via the gills.

The actions associated with a fish sorting, sometimes microscopic food items from lake bed detritus and shell fragments are complex and sophisticated, we can exploit them as anglers though by hair rigging a bait such that the hook takes hold as it is ejected from the mouth of the fish.

The barbules at the edges of the mouths of many fish are also covered in taste pads which can be used to investigate the lake bed for potential food items, this means that a tench can detect worms and other food sources otherwise hidden in the silt and under stones.

Again this food seeking sense is most acutely tuned to the detection of amino acids dissolved in the water, in the silt of the lake bed or on the foliage of aquatic plants.

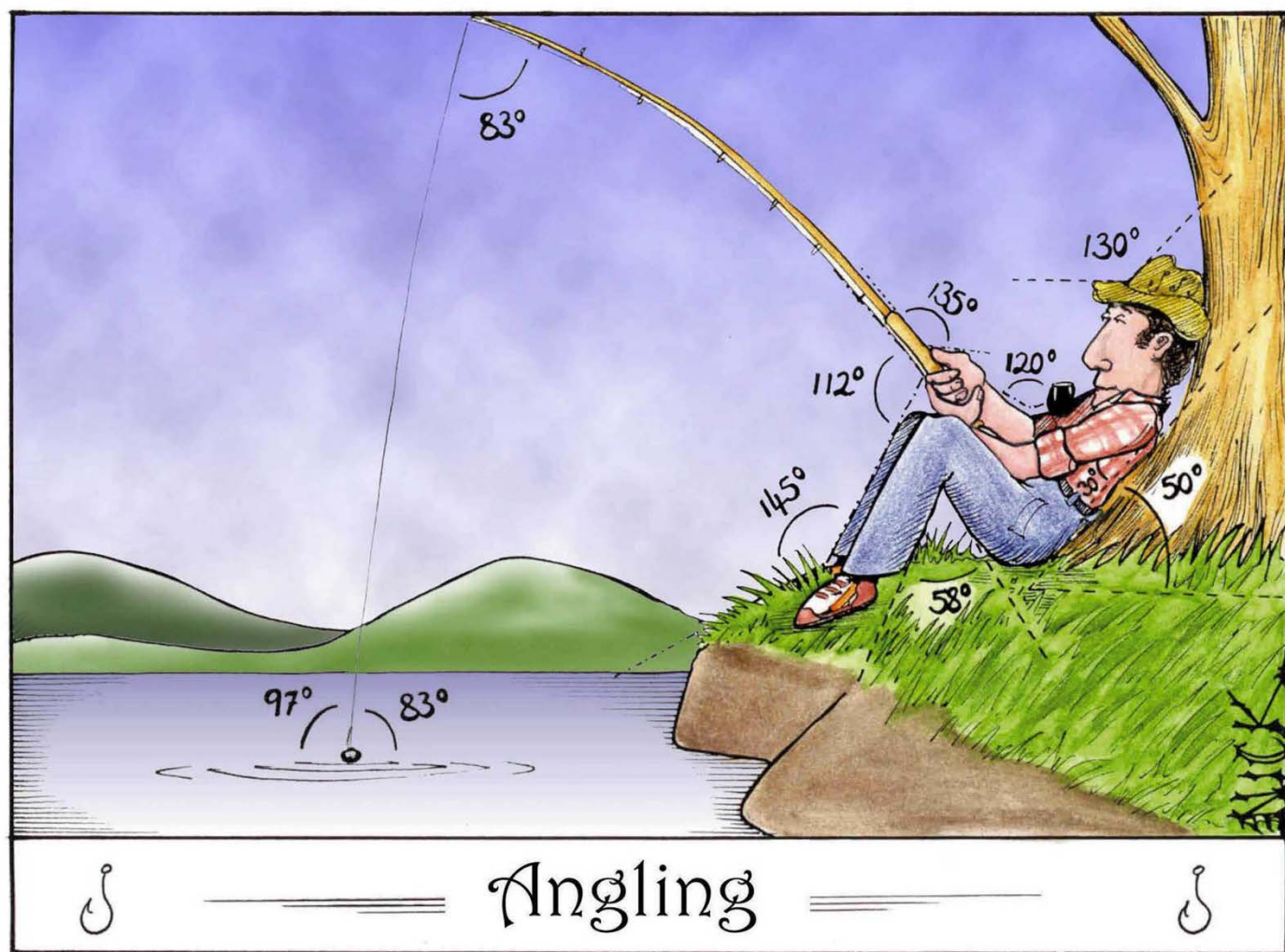
Fish will often continue to search and sort the silt even after a food item has gone because a trace of amino acids remains to stimulate their food detection system. The amino acid food signal emitted by a water snail or swan mussel must be very stimulating indeed to a tench who goes on to munch through its shell in order to get to the fleshy treat inside. Because the high quality nutrients contained within the molluscs match exactly to the metabolic needs of our quarry that the effort involved in sorting the flesh from the shell before swallowing is, I am certain worthwhile.

By way of conclusion I am not going to be so bold as to recommend certain baits to you; you know at least as well as I what baits work for the fishing that you do. What I will do however is ask that you give consideration to the things that I've outlined above when you next select a favourite bait or experiment with a new one. Ask yourself the question "What

makes this bait effective, is it the best bait that I could use and could I improve it?"

Right, I'm off to smear my bunch of hair rigged maggots in amino acid gel before I cast, expectantly into my sweetened, betaine supplemented groundbait patch.

Tight lines.



# Bernard Venables and the SPS

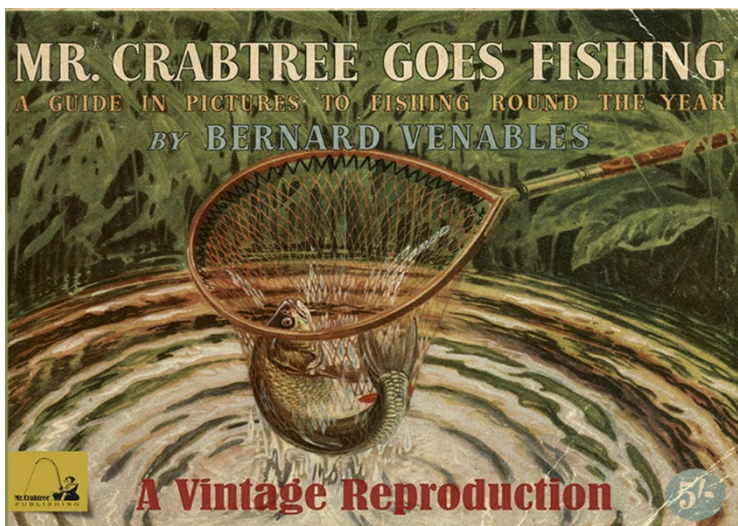
John Harris

The Society's cash book of January 18<sup>th</sup> 1947 records a new member of great renown. Bernard Venables was 39 when he joined the Society and living at 8 Palmeira Avenue, Hove. He was a gifted artist, angler, journalist and author. Six years later he co-founded the *Angling Times*, was founder editor of *Creel* magazine in 1963 and would go on to write over twenty books, largely on angling. He was an early environmentalist and his love of the natural world inspired many of today's British anglers.

Venables was a member of 1950s Carp Catchers Club, which included Richard Walker. He is fondly remembered as one of the great, influential anglers of the 20th Century. Interestingly, in the very same year of joining the Society he launched his fictional character Mr Crabtree in the *Daily*

*Mirror*. This was a hugely popular angling cartoon-strip and resulted in books based on Crabtree that went on to sell in the millions. He also featured in many TV angling programmes, including *A Passion for Angling*.

Unsurprisingly, on joining the Society Bernard was immediately elected onto the Society's Committee but unfortunately the Committee minutes covering his service are almost entirely missing. Bernard's membership ceased in 1952. In 1995 he received the M.B.E. and died in April 2001 at the age of 94. (Incidentally, the "C.A. Ticket" item in the cash book refers to courtesy angling tickets which the C.A.L.P.A.C. angling club supplied to the Society, granting access to a stretch of the R. Arun at Pulborough)



**Bernard Venables, MBE (1907 – 2001)**, one of the most renowned and best loved figures in angling, introduced a generation of young people to the pastime through his *Mr Crabtree Goes Fishing* book and cartoon strip. It's tempting to imagine how some of the stories that inspired so many anglers might have drawn on his experiences fishing our own beautiful waters.





Bernard Venables

Jan 18 <sup>th</sup>	S. Hodgkinson	- subs.	1	1	.				
"	J. Phillips	- subs	1	1	.				
"	G. Porter	- subs	1	1	.				
"	R. Sterry	- subs	1	1	.				
"	Mrs Sterry	- subs	1	1	.				
"	A.L. Cox	subs	1	1	.				
"	A.C. Ayton	- subs	1	1	.				
"	W. Barfoot	- subs	1	1	.				
"	H. Wood	- subs	1	1	.				
"	B. Venables	Ent. fee	2	2	.				
"		subs	1	1	.				
"		Key	2	6					
"		C.A. Ticket	1	6					
"		Trap - Guide	6	✓12		16	6		
Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>	G.S. Myles	- subs.	1	1	.				
	C. Dennis	- Ent. fee	2	2	.				
	Carried forward.		3	419	18	9			

Sussex Piscatorial Society cash book, January 18<sup>th</sup> 1947

# Observations of a New Member

**Andy Smith**

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I had wanted to join the SPS for a number of years but not knowing a member and therefore not having a recommendation prevented me from applying for membership. A chance communication with a senior member of the fly fishing section alerted me to the possibility that an application a recommendation may not be a waste of time, so I applied and was “rewarded” with an interview.

A few years previously I was told by a member of a syndicate to which I belonged, who happened to be applying to join the SPS, that the interview was tough and that any black marks during the applicant’s fishing career would be known about and that they would be the “kiss of death”.

Fortunately I had no such misdemeanours, however it was with some trepidation that I went along to the interview, fully prepared for a grilling, ready with a typical example of one of my running rigs in my pocket. I felt the interview went well, but as ever with these occasions one never knows.

I was ecstatic to receive an email from the coarse section secretary a few days later informing me that my application had been successful.

I was unable to attend the new members tour because I was on holiday

with my wife in Scotland, but was very keen to have a look at the waters upon my return. I decided to have a look at the waters nearest to home, Decoy Pond, Plashett Park and if time allowed Sheffield Park.

When I arrived at Decoy Pond I was totally impressed, not only with the lake (despite an extensive covering of weed), but with the obvious organisation associated with the SPS, such as directions to the water, reassuring security as well as the natural beauty of the lake.

Satisfied (in fact glowing with anticipation), I drove over to Plashett Park, again I was “blown away”. After a walk around all three lakes I met Ed Randall who was preparing to fish on the bottom lake. He was kind enough to let me sit and watch as he proceeded to catch tench after tench. I ended up talking with Ed for well over an hour chatting about the Society, the waters and life in general, a perfect start to my SPS membership. I didn’t it make to Sheffield Park!

Next day I decided that Plashett Park was to be my first SPS day. Four bream, a tench and a lost carp from the middle lake was a great start.

Since that day in June I have attempted as many of the waters as I could, in fact Nyewood is the only stillwater I have yet to cast a line into. I have fished both

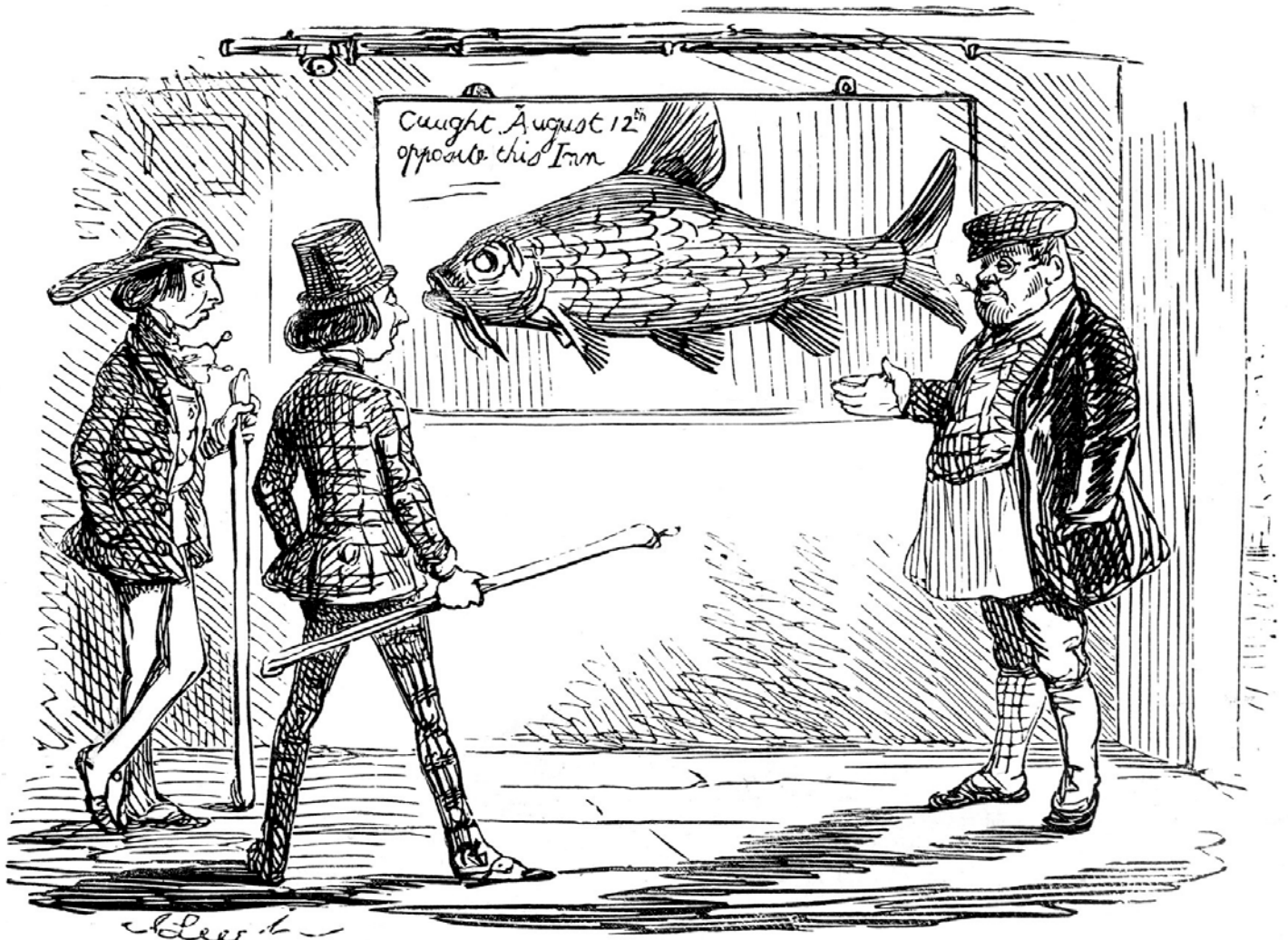
stretches of the Ouse (typically with no success), and the Kennet.

Because of the driving distance involved I decided fish for two days staying overnight in a B+B nearby. This trip was unbelievably successful with three barbel to 16lb 3ozs! Needless to say, a personal best by some way.

Since October I have concentrated on dead-baiting for pike, again I have been lucky enough to tempt a 20lb pike twice

(a re-catch) as well as a few others. I have met quite a few fellow members all of whom have been excellent companions on the bank side.

In conclusion, joining the SPS has been easily the best angling decision I have ever made and I look forward to enjoying the society for many years (subject to completing my probationary period), in fact I can't ever imagine wanting to leave.



### ANGLERS HEAR STRANGE THINGS.

*Piscator.* "ARE THERE ANY BARBEL ABOUT HERE, GOV'NOR?"

*Host.* "ANY BARBEL ABOUT HERE!! I SHOULD RAYTHER THINK THERE WAS A FEW ; HERE'S THE P:CTUR O' WUN MY LITTLE BOY KETCHED JUST HOPPOSIT."



# Plashett Lower Lake works, 2019

John Harris

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## Plashett Lower Lake: preparations begin

The Society's Coarse Section decided to give this water something of a makeover in November-December 2019, in preparation for a netting. The lake is about one and a half acres and reaches a depth of seven feet or so in the centre channel. However, this depth figure excludes the deep silt deposits of up to three feet in places, as well as thick, sticky clay beds under the entire lake.

The makeover focussed on tree surgery (actioned by the land agents), timber/foilage removal to avoid fouling during netting, lily/weed/rush removal and most importantly, a siphoning-down of the water level. In previous years nettings had been less than fully successful due to fish escaping capture by using the bank-overhangs, nets snagging on rotten branches on the lake-bed and fish evading

the nets by using the island back-channel. The goal this year was to lower the water by three feet or more using three siphons and a pump.

Siphoning began on December 4 and continued into early December 7. As the previous month had seen very heavy rainfall, the flow in the stream joining all three lakes had been exceptionally high but, luckily, just before siphoning the weather relented and frosts formed, briefly freezing the lakes.

The purpose of the netting was threefold:

1. To relocate any pike, in order to protect the lake's precious crucian stock
2. To relocate a small number of carp which had evaded capture in earlier nettings
3. To inspect the full extent of the crucian stock





*North-east corner (with work underway on the Coarse Section storage facility in background).*



*View of the island with deep silt in foreground.  
Tree surgery on the island made access much easier.*





*Middle lake spillway following temporary close-down.  
The surrounding area required extensive strimming.*





*A simple piece of pond-liner sufficed as barrier fixed in place with cable-ties/wire/sand-bags*



*Middle lake dam downstream-face after clearance by member Ed Randle.  
Ed demolished the chest-high bracken/brambles blanketing this entire area.*





*View of the entire south bank.*



*View of the secondary spillway.*



## The Netting

Following weeks of preparations, often involving wading through several feet of clay and silt, December 7th saw a team of about a dozen volunteers pitching up early to conduct the eagerly awaited netting.

The Coarse Section had purchased a new 78 metre net for the job, which ensured sweeps could comfortably be made from one bank of the lake to the other.

Weather-wise there had been, thankfully, a lull in the rain and there was no icing of the lake either. The E.A. had suggested they might attend but ultimately failed to do so.

Before netting could begin, several small teams were formed to rake out several thick areas of weed. The first phase of netting was to install a weed-net to block off the east end of the lake, which was the shallowest.

During the netting, 23 pike and a single carp (a common) were relocated. The carp has a distinctive scaleless patch so should be readily recognisable if caught again.

The crucian stock, which is very low, appeared in the nets and these were temporarily held, along with tench, in tanks so as to avoid further stress on them from later sweeps of the net.

Following netting, the temporary closure of the middle lake outfall was opened up,

very soon refilling the lower lake.

Importantly, the nets themselves were finally hung out to dry before storage.

## Summary

It was felt that the capture of the pike was a success, as well as the single carp, but that many tench must have evaded capture by squirming through the silt under the leads of the net.

The one or two remaining carp had also cleverly evaded the net and perhaps the best approach for the future will be to angle for these.

One or two very small tench were netted which suggests that this species is propagating itself successfully.







Several areas of weed needed clearing before netting could start. This was done using the 'swizzle-stick' method of collection. Here Paul Spiers is well immersed, despite the water-lowering...











*The much sought after Plashett crucians*



*'The stranger'*





*A carp is captured at last!*



*Typical tench for the water*

# Pond Lye Pike

John Harris

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This splendid photo of a large Pond Lye pike was pasted into the Society's weights book but sadly, there are no other details. Do any older readers recognise the young lad or his companion? Judging from the photo-size it possibly dates from the 1960s or 1970s. Please let us know via email to the editor. Thank you, John Harris, for this discovery!