

Founded 1891

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Many thanks to everyone involved. Please note that no preference is inferred by the running order. I've tried to do it in a way that makes sense for the page and picture layout, but otherwise it's pretty random. Every article is really worthwhile and there's goodness in every bite ... all the way to the last page!

Welcome

Thank you, as usual, to everyone who's contributed to this season's issue. It is a bumper year and I am particularly grateful to those members of the Coarse Section who have sent in articles. They're brilliant additions and it makes for a much more balanced read – my only problem was how to squeeze it all in.

This year we have another excellent memoir from a former SPS Trout Section officer, Julian Millerchip's tales from the 1990s. This is complimented by a brilliant piece of historical research by "Minute Man" who has been working on the SPS archive and collated a fascinating history of our wonderful Challenge Shield.

Another great reflection on the 1990s comes from "Growler" -- who remembers his time in Lewes Angling Society when that club ran the carp waters at Sheffield Park.

Terry Scragg has many years of experience as a stillwater dry fly angler and his article is a really useful guide for any SPS members seeking advice on how to start out in this most challenging and rewarding method. I'll never forget my first trout on a dry fly, it's an incredibly exciting experience. Just remember to give the fish time to turn down in the water -- I was taught to say "God Save the Queen" before striking, but I'm pretty sure any four-syllable chant will do the job

Another superb educational / discussion piece is Andy Payne's work on how fish perceive light and colour. I'm a big fan of this approach so thank you for contributing, Andy. Thanks, too, to the indefatigable Keith Russell, who also shares his years of experience in an educational article on fishery management. In addition, Jonathan Ford-Dunn, from Henfield & District AC, offers some really helpful insights borne of many years of experience treading the banks of the River Adur in search of sea trout.

We have some excellent fishing diaries this year. I loved my first season as an SPS member, it felt like some kind of spiritual awakening, so it is great to have two recollections of that experience as a new member -- one from Nick Fallowfield-Cooper of the Coarse Section and one from Rodger Hoad of the Trout Section. An old friend to the SPS who knows all our waters well, John Parsons, also presents his account of an attempt to fish as many SPS venues as possible alongside angling colleague John Cremer. I love these articles and hope to see more!

Keith Russell, once again, has another brilliant account of the last twelve months running SPS Coarse Section. Thank you, Keith and the SPS CS team, for all you do. It's a huge amount of work – as is clear from the diary – and I'm sure we would all like to extend our gratitude. The transparency you offer in these accounts is very informative and most welcome, I'm sure all SPS members enjoy reading it.

So, I hope you'll agree, this is possibly our best issue yet -- and I can't do enough to thank everyone who has put pen to paper to share their experience. As ever I'm always happy to receive articles so please feel free to send items in. New members or experienced old hands, all are welcome. You can reach me via email all year round at jonsleeper@btopenworld.com Final deadline, as usual, is Dec 31st 2019.

As always, whether it be reflections on fishing trips, a memoir, a discussion of environmental issues, poetry, puzzles, general fishing tips, tackle talk, an opinion piece, a guide to one of our waters, anything you like really -- particularly more coarse related articles -- I'll be delighted to include it in next year's *Sussex Piscator*.

Until then, tight lines! Dr. Jon Stewart (jonsleeper@btopenworld.com)

Park Life, 1990s; by "Growler"

"Don't whatever you do, fish at night", was the advice from Geoff. After being proposed as a new member I was finally accepted into Lewes Angling Society, and now was my first angling visit to Lower Woman's Way. Geoff was hardly a timid type, that said he was so scared from his ghostly experience that he ran into the lake to evade the ghostly aspiration! I didn't think to ask why he thought safety from the old White Lady could be achieved whilst waist high in water and silt!

Fishing was allowed on four of the five lakes within the park with the arrangements pretty much the same as they are now, but back in the day you could night fish (if you dared!)

I was well-briefed by Geoff on what to look out for in each of the lakes that were available. After a few visits I started to spot a few of the inhabitants. The two-tone common (why does there always seem to be one of those!) was a well-known fish to the carp anglers. It was often caught between 18–20lb. I never caught it, but it was always a good yard stick for speculating on what was seen alongside. In those days there were about half a dozen fish in Lower Woman's Way that were of a similar size. One of these fish was mirror and a little larger. It seemed to like me, as I caught on a couple of occasions -- both times it fought more like a barbel than a mirror carp, such was its speed across the shallows of the lawn area! There were another couple of

commons -- often seen but rarely caught, the biggest of which was the official lake record at the time, caught in the daylight hours by my ghost fearing friend!

Unofficial, though, was another ball game: info on what was caught was kept very much "hush hush wink wink" and say no more! There were one or two very good anglers fishing the lakes at the time, and one very notably so! Much talk surrounded the uncaught common (again there always seem to be one of those). I spent ages perched on the bridge looking out for it, often seeing the long slender Sussex 'cricket bat' commons that the lake held at the time, and ever so occasionally one of the bigger fish swimming into view. On one memorable evening I got a glimpse of the larger fish that were almost lined up together at the foot of the cascade. The two-tone fish was there, along with the friendly mirror. How big was the uncaught common? Well no less than 30lb would be my guess. It was the only occasion that I ever saw it, and I spent plenty of time looking!

At the top of the park lies the 10ft lake, to this day one of the picturesque lakes that I have ever fished. In difference to Lower Woman's Way, it didn't have any all-too-obliging cricket bat commons, but it held a few common carp of better proportions. One of which was my first ever winter caught carp, caught one day over the festive period when the park was shut to the public.



10 Foot Lake, 22lb 4oz



10 Foot Lake, 23lb 14oz



10 Foot Lake, 21lb

There were several mirror carp in the 10ft lake along with four very sought-after linear carp. These carp, although no push-overs, were a little easier to catch than the fish in the other lakes. During my time fishing in the park there was an interesting duo of anglers. They were the first truly instant carp anglers that I had encountered. They both each fished with four rods and pretty much selfishly covered the lake with this approach. If I ever noticed their car in the car park, I would check which lake they were bombarding and then chose another lake on-site just to keep out of their way. For the first time in my angling life I could plainly see why the more secretive members in the Society wished to keep their hard-earned info on-the-quiet.

The linear carp were very special, each of them were 'wood carvings' and much speculation surrounded their origins. Understandably the Leney word was often banded about, and to be honest it wasn't too hard to see why. My own discovery on this subject came whilst talking to one of the senior gardeners in the park early one morning. He told me that the linear carp simply came from a Sussex garden centre as unwanted fish! He had no reason to make this up, so I sort of believed the old boy, but it blew away the romantic Leney mystery somewhat.

I enjoyed myself at the park back then, had I not been granted another membership to a complex of gravel pits then I would have certainly spent more time fishing the lakes at Sheffield Park. It was a sad time when the lease was lost to

the Society and eventually handed over to the Syndicate. I was told I could be proposed as a member by one of the syndicate members, but I declined knowing that things would never have been the same. I had a little insight into what was going on; some of the fish were moved between the lakes within the park, and other fish were added by using the Storage Pond as a stock pond. Using the storage pond in this way was a very good idea, and many of the existing fish that are in Lower Woman's Way came from this Storage Pond enterprise by the syndicate. Some of these introductions were Leney/Sutton strains of carp, so eventually Leney fish of sorts eventually arrived at Sheffield Park!

As a footnote; these days it seemed to me that many of the older fish no longer seemed to exist. Maybe they were old fish and their time had elapsed at the lake for one reason or another? Just a few years ago I heard a story concerning a common carp caught by a SPS member during a previous season. To me his story sounded too good to be true. But on showing me his pictures it was true! A very old looking 19lb common, maybe it wouldn't be too much to write home about to a lot of carp anglers nowadays, but my delight was that it was the old common carp that I often used to spot (some 18-years previously) which had the two-tone configuration!

No doubt that old carp has seen a fair few comings and goings over the years, maybe even being spooked by the old White Lady on the bridge looking down over the cascade?!

Henfield Sea Trout; Jonathan Ford-Dunn, Henfield & District AC

Sea Trout in the Adur? Hardly a crystal clear chalk stream or foaming mountain torrent is it? Appearances are deceptive however as several of the Sussex “muddy ditches” have runs of large sea trout that put most game rivers to shame. There is also the added bonus that if the sea trout aren’t taking, several types of coarse fish may be persuaded to have a go at your lure such as specimen perch, pike and chub.

What can I expect?

The Adur fish have a remarkably high average weight (approx. 4.25lb) and range in size from 0.75lb fish known as whitling to multi sea winter fish running into the teens of pounds. A few examples of larger fish present: in 1998 I landed a cock fish of 12.75lb that was foul hooked in the tail that made a run of 140 metres against a fully braked reel.

A carp angler had a fish of 16.75lb in 1996 on a boillie. And also in ‘96 a fish in excess of 20lb (37.5” long) was landed and released after being foul hooked. A fish in excess of 15lb lost at Wineham after taking line through weed; and in the early 1990’s when the National River Authority (now the Environment Agency) used to electro fish the river in December for brood stock, it was not uncommon to get several in the 10-14lb range.

When to fish

The season for sea trout on the Adur runs from 1st May until 31st October inclusive.

Before the coarse fishing season opens on June 16th only artificial baits are allowed. There are no catch limits in force, although all anglers currently fishing exercise restraint.

Fish are in the river from the start of the season, but it isn’t usually until the end of May that a fish is banked. The spread of fish is dependant on the amount of water in the river, an early bank high spate will have them attempting the weir at Wineham in early June, but a dearth of water may keep them in the lower reaches (Streatham) until late on in the season.

During the season the water can become extremely murky, to the point it’s better to go and fish for bass down at Shoreham. Through years of disappointment we’ve found that if you can’t see a 2.5” white disc lowered into the water at more than 8” then don’t bother.

State of tide. This is quite important, as you can waste a lot of time if you get this wrong. You will not catch sea trout on the incoming tide. You will catch sea trout on the ebbing tide, also at the top of the tide and more specifically on the bottom of the tide. For the ten minutes or so at dead low tide, just before the fish have to leave their lies to turn round to face the new direction of flow is the deadliest time. There is also a smaller window of opportunity at slack water during high tide. (try and be over a known lie for these periods).

Adur fish are daylight taking fish. Don't waste your time fishing at night. They are not easily spooked by walking along the banks (due to poor water clarity they probably can't see you), and shadows on the water don't seem to cause undue distress. At the start of an electro fishing session, we had been up and down the bank putting equipment into the boat causing all sorts of noise and vibration. The outboard motor was started and the equipment switched on. A sea trout was captured within a few feet! What does seem to put them off is heavy rain. I've seen sea trout in panic when a heavy shower has churned the water surface to foam. A steady drizzle is no problem, but once the drops start bouncing make for the pub.

Where to fish

In terms of where on the river then the main areas are from Streatham up to the Fork, Mock Bridge to Clappers and Regulating weir to Wineham Bridge. Sea trout don't like weed, or a soft bottom. After a few visits you will have a mental map of where you've seen sea trout. Flattened grass and reeds give away as to where other anglers have fished.



Mock Bridge



Downstream from Wineham Bridge

How to Fish

Read all the books and guides on how to catch sea trout? Follow these and you won't catch many Adur sea trout. The Adur sea trout are large and appear to react in a way more reminiscent of salmon.

Most fish are taken using spinning lures, but tales abound every season of fish being taken by coarse anglers on bread paste, boilies, castors and maggot.

What sort of tackle do I need? Well, the rod needs to be comfortable to use for several hours of non-stop casting, and also flexible enough to impart some extra life into the lure. You need to be using about 10lb minimum breaking strain line. Carry a landing net with a long handle. As far as lures go the most popular are bar spoons--mepps aglia, comet etc. rublex, abu droppens and flying c's.

They need to be big, as an example mepps 3's and 4's are the most used, with the smaller sizes used as the water becomes clearer at season end.

How to spin

At the risk of teaching granny how to suck eggs, the rule for the Adur is as for Salmon- low and slow. If you're doing it right you should start picking mussels, both live and dead off the bottom. You need to "clock" the river. This involves standing on the bank and spinning the area from 9pm to 3pm as in a clock face. Sea trout usually need to see a spinner a few times until they will react, if at all. As an example cast across to the far bank (get your lure as close to the waters' edge

as you can), don't be too hasty to start the retrieve, as the lure needs to sink. Retrieve at a speed that keeps the lure working if casting upstream: or just off the bottom if casting downstream.

Bring the lure right up to your bank, takes can take place at any point on the retrieve, so keep it working right up to the edge. Now cast again but to a point a metre downstream (or upstream) of the previous cast, continue doing this until you've covered all the water from your casting point, both upstream and down. Then do it again, and if a known lie yet again. Walk on a few yards and repeat. In this way you make your way up or down the river.

If a sea trout jumps in the area you have spun, forget it, this is now a fish that is unlikely to take. On the other hand if a fish shows ahead of you, concentrate hard on this as it could take.

If you should have a take, or a follow from a sea trout that isn't successful, move on as it is extremely rare that a sea trout will, unlike salmon, make more than one attempt.

Fishing weirs.

At certain times of the season, dependent on water flow and water temperature it is possible to tempt fish in the weirs. It is not easy as they seem to lie in the deepest water up close to the structure, and also they seem to switch off. A method that some times works is to fish your lure at ever increasing depths. The first casts are made with the lure just sub surface, another set follow at about

half water depth, and the final set are cast right hard up against the structure, the lure allowed to sink to the bottom such that the line is slack, then the retrieve started. It is this last set of casts that will tempt a fish if anything will.

Playing a sea trout. Keep your rod high, so your line doesn't tangle in any vegetation. Put on a lot of pressure, but drop the rod point when a fish leaps. Follow if necessary, don't let it disappear around a bend, there are few obstacles on the banks to stop you following a fish, and lastly pray. When netting keep the net deep, getting the hook treble stuck in the net mesh loses too many fish. Always have a priest with you, karate chops or bludgeoning a fish with a hastily sort piece of rock are not the way. If you don't need the fish for your own use please return it!

In October the fish have started to pair up prior to their spawning run, so if you catch a fish during this month, do not walk away but continue to fish the locality and you may get its mate.

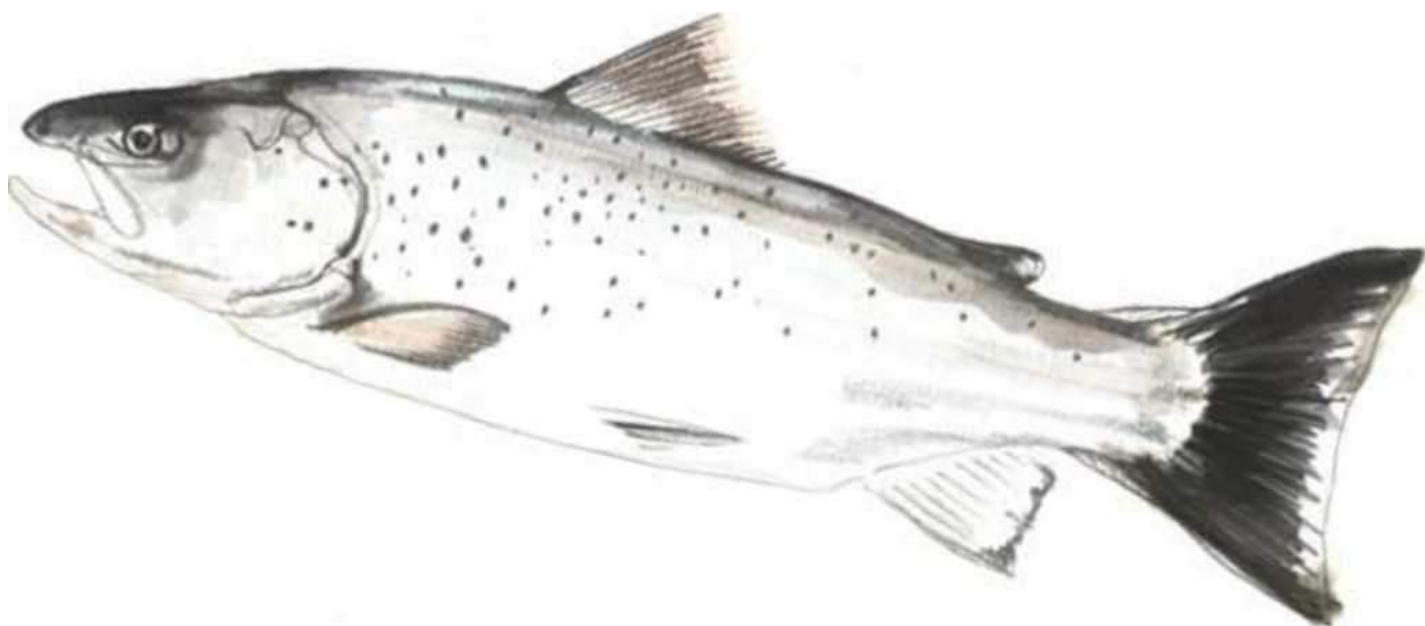
Fly Fishing

I have never managed to catch an Adur sea trout on fly although I have put in a lot of effort trying to. Anecdotal evidence says they need a big fly with plenty of yellow in it. The most likely area to be successful is the Wineham stretch as this is non-tidal usually has a reasonable flow to work the fly and suffers less with water clarity problems. I suspect a fast sinking line or sink tip is needed to get the fly down deep.

The most useful tip I can give is to have the confidence and belief you are casting over fish, you may have many blanks before you catch your first sea trout, but you won't catch fish with a dry line!

Tight Lines!

Please be aware that these are my observations over 15 years of fishing for sea trout on the Adur. Don't blame me if the sea trout don't always follow the rules, experiment and prove me wrong.



Fishing new waters in my first SPS season, by Nick Fallowfield-Cooper

I've lived in London since 1993 but Sussex is in my blood. It has a hold on me and it won't let go. Visiting family takes me home but so does fishing, a passion that began on the Sussex Ouse in Ardingly back in 1982. Soon after, I joined the Haywards Heath and District Angling Society where I spent time fishing at Balcombe Lake, Slaugham Mill Pond and a little pond near Ansty.

One of the HHDAS waters that I became obsessed with was on the Cuckfield Road, a five-mile bike ride from Lindfield where I lived. It was a pond of half an acre with a feeder stream that had a head of small carp around the 2-5lb mark, but among them was one distinctly larger than the others. After seeing that carp I thought I could break the long-standing record set in 1952 by Harry Haskell of 12lb from Harlands Pit (now sadly filled in). Eventually I did catch the 'monster' on a piece of floating crust discreetly placed between the branches of a fallen tree. Sadly it was shy of the record by a quarter of a pound.

For two years I cycled back up the long steep hill where a sign saying "Private Fishing—no trespassing" was nailed to a tree, I may have been mistaken but I'm sure the tin sign was peppered with gunshot. Often, I would catch my breath and stop and peer through the thicket of trees and shrubs that lined the lane, and from that vantage point I could see a large expanse of reed-lined water. The signs were clearly positioned for any inquisitive anglers to see, high above the padlocked gate.

Thirty years later I find myself pulling into the small car park at Pond Lye. The sign has been replaced and in my pocket I have a key to access the same padlocked gate. I arrived with a dozen or so new members taking the SPS tour with coarse section leader Keith Russell. This was to be the first of many SPS waters we saw on that fine day in June, beguiling places that evoked huge excitement. The old estate lakes generated the most enthusiasm, ancient waters lost in the folds and undulations of the Sussex Weald. We were mesmerised, grown men reduced to excited boys, and when the day closed we were left with a head full of dreams because in less than six days we would all be allowed to fish the SPS waters.

Restricted by time, and having to travel from London, I decided to concentrate on two waters, Pond Lye and Sheffield Park. I thought about summer tench fishing on Pond Lye and would see what else might come along. I arrived there early one July morning. I was tempted to take out a punt but with little experience pushing scaffold poles through four feet of silt and tying off the punt, I opted for the bank. I was impatient and I wanted to make the most of the dawn light. My theory of catching a tench first thing was in vain, the swim taking an hour or two to warm up. Methodically throwing in bait, I eventually caught some roach, rudd, skimmer bream, then bigger bream and finally by around 11.00am a warmly received tench.



Fishing a new water always offer mixed emotions. There is of course the excitement of the unknown which can often be immediately superseded by the loss of confidence brought on by the unknown refusing to reveal themselves. Am I using the right bait? Are there any fish in here? Pond Lye was majestic that day and gave up a modest bounty, but I wanted to catch a good bag of tench. Sadly my plan was put on hold when work on the new reinforced dam wall was put into action, so I would have to move onto Sheffield Park.

To be honest, I became distracted for a month catching river carp on the Lea near my home in London so it wasn't until September that I made it to Sheffield Park. My first foray took place over two days: fish the first afternoon and evening; lay out some bait for a potential carp cruising the margins; drop in to see my parents, have dinner, neck a few whiskies; rise early for a late summer's dawn. The first afternoon and evening was pleasant, a mixed bag of fish came along but nothing of note. I laid out two patches of bait for the carp and hoped that by morning there may be signs of larger fish moving in the margins.



The following morning looked perfect, a mist lay across the pond as I returned to the same baited swim and watched for any signs of movement or bubbles. I fished a carp rod close in and a feeder rod further out, but not a single fish showed despite the promising scene that was set before me. By 7.00am I saw a single fish roll out in the middle of the lake, and with nothing to lose I cast my feeder rod out accurately and two minutes later the quiver swung round and a 3lb bream graced the net. The fishing continued throughout the morning but my first bream was the largest.

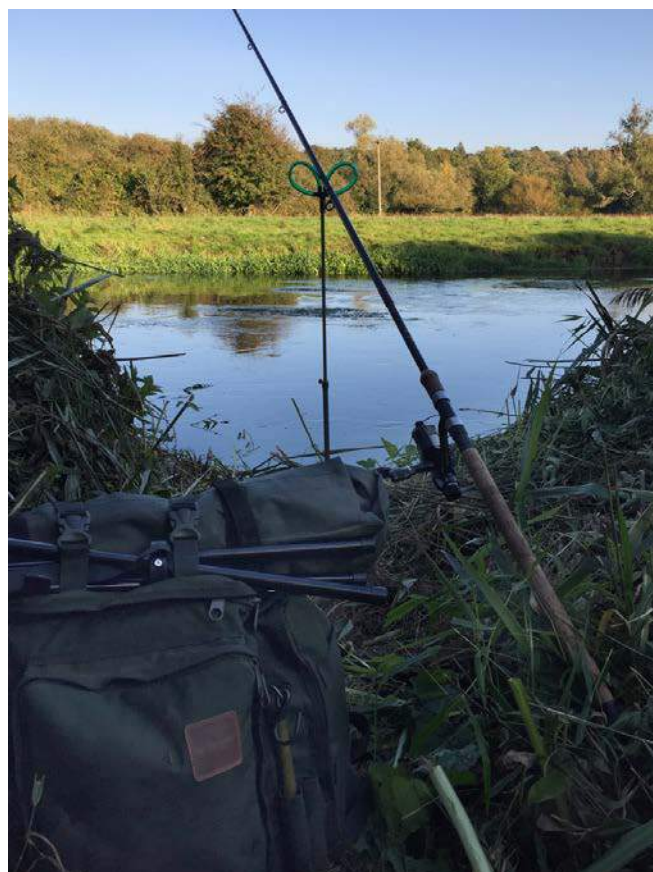


It had been a hot summer and it was now the start of autumn, the grass was parched but Sussex still looked quite lush and green, and I wanted to return to Sheffield Park one more time. The days were still warm and the carp would be feeding but work got in the way. Luckily one of my freelance jobs was taking me to Romsey in Hampshire. I noted that SPS had some fishing on the Hampshire Avon. A quick scan of the map showed me it was just twenty minutes' drive away and I could spare the afternoon.

I'm more comfortable fishing a new river than a still water. Features are more obvious as slack areas, creases, fallen trees, deep spots, overhangs and undercuts all hold fish, and with a single rod and a mobile approach I could fish many of these features in a couple of hours. When I arrived, I was encouraged as the river looked in great condition despite the long summer. I bounced a bait using some Plasticine as ballast through fast, slow, shallow and then deep water, but nothing! It was late September and like most of the weather that year it was not very seasonal. It was such a hot afternoon that I had to stop fishing at one point and sit under the shade of a tree.

Still confident, I thought that if I waited until dusk a lowly chub or barbel might emerge from their lair and feed, so I continued to walk the entire stretch until the path took me onto an island with water either side. I could move from the main river to the back water, and it looked idyllic. I trod carefully but saw nothing even with Poloroids, then I started to question myself again, where do they hide? Am I using the

right bait? Are there any fish in the river? I fished until dark certain that I would take a fish at dusk but nothing came my way. I put it down to the heat but it was a glorious evening and yet again I had experienced another beautiful water.



So how was my first season with SPS? I fished three stunning waters in less than three days with some success. Time, I guess, is the essence, as is confidence. I need to familiarise myself with these waters and catch a few more fish. In my mind I am already fishing the new season, and that is part of the joy of angling. I am filled with anticipation, not just the dip of a float, or the twitch of a rod tip, but the anticipation of knowing that soon I can and will be fishing these waters once again, because, as I said at the beginning, it's in the blood.



Around the SPS Trout Section in 80 Days, by “Jules Verne”

It was August; the long hot summer of 2018 that followed the 2018 stormy spring. Two Johns; John Cremer (JC) and John Parsons (JP) decided it would be fun to see how many Trout Section SPS waters they could fish in the remainder of the year. It could, quite possibly, be their ‘Great Quest’. It would, with certainty, be ‘a quest’ of sorts. Definitely it would be closer to 180 days rather than the 80 they’d have preferred; but there you have it. JC is a busy man and JP profoundly lazy. Still, exclusively for the readership of *The Piscator*, here is how they got on:

Possingworth: August. The day had been hot; far too extreme to venture out in the day and first casts were deferred to somewhere after 6.00pm. JC had an immaculate seventeen-inch rainbow on a damsel while JP was still setting up. JC is a bit keen. Some would say competitive. Still, that was arguably a good sign and the perfect start. Or not, as the next two hours were fishless. Far into the evening, the two Js were cooking in unfiltered ultra-violet.

JC persisted with his ‘distressed’ damsel. JP was touting for business with a buzzer/diawl bach combo. Both were using 3-weight rods (posers) and making short casts from an unanchored punt.

The last of the breeze had gone, the sun was on the tree-line and it began to feel fishy. At least so the two Js thought. Then drama! JP connected. There followed belting runs, a crash on the surface and a

mighty leap throwing the fly. It remained one-nil to JC. Competitive? JP thought so.

During the last thirty minutes trout finally started to rise. JP was ‘in again’ for about four seconds. And again. And again. And again. All fell off. Still one-nil JC said, as he furtively switched to buzzers – he can be something of a slow learner and prone to repetitive casting of the wrong fly. “Persistence Pays” is JC’s motto. “Match the Hatch” is more JP’s style.

Down to the last 15 minutes and yet another chance for JP. This one almost emptied the (tiny) reel then charged back towards the boat. JP started to report another loss but reeling all the line back in, he discovered the fish was still on and virtually under the boat. Eventually it was in the landing net. Twenty-five inches. It’s massive head, long teeth and paddle of a tail testified to it being a long-term resident. They quickly took a photo and released the beast unharmed, if slightly confused (the fish, not the anglers). One all and a point each, JC said.



Not pretty...

L Buddington Part 1: Still August. JP and JC arrived in bright sunshine at 8.30 in the morning. That was a mistake and they left a couple of hours later without a pull. Tony Fox later told JP he'd fished the late evening and had four including a twenty-six-inch brown. (Not a typo). So the two Js resolved to return at a more suitable hour.

L Buddington Part 2: Five days later. Still August. Still unrelenting sunshine and little cloud cover. But this time the first casts were made at 6.30pm. "Blessed evening", JP said, "for soon that sun shall sink". Nothing happened for an hour but then JC and JP struck simultaneously. Two at once. Double header. The JC rainbow took a 'super realist', dry grasshopper pattern, JP's brown wolfed a diawl bach. Knocks, pulls and dropped fish followed. Then, with becoming modesty, JP had another sixteen-inch brown and an eighteen-inch

rainbow: both played hard and carefully released over the weed. "Long handled landing nets can be useful on LB in the summer time", JC observed. "Three to one", JP said.

Colin Godman's Farm: Early September. JP arrived first and chatted to a brace of Scraggs – father and son. They went on to share five fish in their short session, all on dries, with the best a brown of over five pounds. JC eventually turned up (navigation issues) with guest for the day – Nartan (JC's girlfriend).

Both J's struggled in vain to get Nartan a fish. Eventually she settled down with a book and 'The Great Quest' continued. JC had lots of action on a variety of methods. Four hooked and one landed, JC reported; a good rainbow before lunch. This was initially on Bella and then Bircham. JP had one on Bircham in the afternoon on a dry hopper.



Size isn't everything

Luncheon over, they strolled companionably over to Starton and witnessed some of the Scragg action. JP had a modest brown on a dry before a forced early departure.

JC stayed on a while and found fish on Starton taking damsels: His final tally - browns and rainbows; two of each: An excellent day on a gorgeous fishery. Four to Two, JC said modestly.

JC enjoyed his day so much that he returned to Colin Godman's days later, without JP and in contempt of the spirit of "The Quest" (JP thought). On that occasion he landed a fabulous fish. It was 27 1/2 inches long, in superb condition and estimated by JC and Tony Camilleri

(who took the photo) to be in excess of ten pounds. The fish was carefully laid on wet grass or a few seconds, in exchange for eternal fame. It swam off strongly.

Was it an SPS record? Dear reader, please write to the editor if you know better...



27 ½ inches, Colin Godman's Farm

Itchen Grayling: October 17th and a sentimental day of sorts. JC took a 3-weight rod presented to him by a late friend who taught him to fly fish. JP took a 4-weight cane rod hand-built by Bert Bedford; the man who introduced him to the SPS 34 years earlier. JP had purchased it from Dr John Baker – a huge figure in terms of the history of the SPS.

The day was warm (still). There was far too much weed. And it rained all day. They enjoyed some sport although it was mostly out of season trout that came out to play. Both Js caught on their respective 'historic' rods. JP had eight good trout landed but found the grayling harder.

He hooked only 4 four and lost two of those. Good fish though!



*Typical size that day.
Just not many of them.*

The highlight was a joint effort. JC spotted a grayling and directed. JP cast and on JC's signal lifted into a cracker. JC had a tougher session but caught a beautiful grayling around the pound and a half mark. That would be ten to one, JP said, and left - which meant he did not witness the cracking brown tempted by JC from close up to a bank by a floating grasshopper pattern.

It was during this session that JC realized the truth behind the words attributed to Socrates "The only true wisdom is in knowing that you know nothing" Part of JC's motivation for undertaking the SPS quest was to enjoy the company of JP and also learn from his 34 years as an SPS member. This was a humbling day in terms of JC realizing how little he knew of watercraft, observation, stalking individual fish and using tiny buzzers. He came away far wiser in knowing he knew almost nothing compared to JP.

Wiston: They'd been putting this one off. Wiston has suffered problems of one sort or another for years. The last few have been dire. However, recent efforts led by Tony Fox and Dr Dave Hole appear to be making a mark on the key indicators that tell on the viability of a trout water.

When the J's fished in late November, they weren't even sure that any trout had survived. But Wiston was open and the water was dark but clear enough to give sporting a chance. Still it was something of a shock when JP caught a fit 16-inch rainbow third cast. In the short afternoon session JC caught another the same size

and JP lost a third. A score draw to finish. JP had lowered JC expectations to the point where he was essentially there for casting practice and a bit of "Wind in the Willows" style messing about in boats. The fish were truly an unexpected bonus.

Too early to celebrate? Probably. But dedicated restorative endeavors continue apace. A spring 2019 stocking is planned. Could things be about to turn for the better? Watch this space.

Duncton Mill: A few days before Christmas the Js turned their attention to Duncton Mill. JC presented a note from mother excusing him and so JP went alone and enjoyed great sport. Seven hooked although only one landed; a cracking grilse-like brownie.

The Js decided however to put Duncton on the list for part 2 of "The Great Quest" next year. The reality is that they far exceeded their 80-day goal and covered only the more obvious venues.

Next year they hope to fish Test and Teise and Summertime Itchen. They are musing about a sea trout from the Ouse (and of course a Test Salmon). They've heard there's a bit of Hampshire Avon and Berkshire Kennet to make casts on, (courtesy of the Coarse Section) as well as upper Ouse, Adur and Cuckmere.

The SPS has a seemingly inexhaustible store of treasures to cast over. JP and JC hope to let you know how all that goes in a year's time.

Back to the Future: 2018 in the Coarse Section, by Keith Russell

Over many years we have been talking to the Firle estate about a silted-up pond that would hopefully be a prime stock pond. It would require excavation and landscaping. Approval in principal had been received from the estate but still a lot to discuss as it will not be simply dig a hole and let it fill with water.

Work at Pond Lye has been continuous and again the year started with a week-long hire of an excavator which we used to remove cut tree branches and some roots in preparation for the dam crest works and secondary spillway. It was amazing the impact this preparation work had made and photographs taken before and after proved the point.

The digester waste pipe that ran across our field at Wellingham was still a cause for concern. After several attempts to rectify the situation amicably that had failed an ultimatum of an excavation date was presented to our close neighbour. Upon the said date excavator exposed the digester waste pipe. Our worst fears came true as several sections of pipe were broken and joints not connected. We did not remove the pipe at this stage wanting our neighbour and the authorities to see the pipe damage.

It had been arranged to have the rabbit burrows on the rear face of the dam at Pond Lye to be back filled with a compound that was mixed on site and pumped in the warrens under high pressure. On the pre-arranged date in question, vehicles and trailers with

equipment arrived. Work started on a nice cold and crispy morning. Ground was rock hard. By midday the overnight frost had melted and the dam crest had become rather soft. It became impossible to move the vehicles and trailer due to the soft ground. Wheel spinning at the slightest touch of the accelerator and vehicles inching towards the lake edge. All came to a halt with the hope that the next morning would see a frost, hard ground and the contractors able to remove their vehicles, trailer and other equipment. Next day ground conditions were unchanged so a recovery operation now came into full swing. Finally by late afternoon both vehicles and trailer had been literally inch by inch moved from Pond Lye's eastern boundary to the main entrance. The rabbit burrow filling had not been completed so a date would have to be arranged during the dryer summer months.

Further encroachment work was arranged and more cut trees removed by an excavator plus man power over another week long period. Bonfires every day disposed of the vast amount of waste.



Unfortunately, with in-line lakes such as Plashett Park some fish will always find their way into the lake lowest in the chain. We endeavour to remove as many “unwanted” Bream, Carp and Pike from the bottom lake as possible in near-on biannual netting operations. Carp are the hardest to catch and remove and again this proved to be the case. Around 25 Pike and 80 Bream moved back to the middle lake, the Carp evading capture again.

Back to Wellingham Lake again and a final ultimatum to our close neighbour reference his digester waste pipe. He would have to find an alternative method of waste disposal as we would be removing the remains of the pipe on a specific date. Several committee and water-keepers arrived late afternoon and within a few hours of intense hard graft the offending waste pipe had been removed and handed back to our

neighbour for him to dispose of at his convenience. The waste pipe ran under our entrance track near the gate. We did not wish to excavate the pipe from here, nor under the trees by the car park, so this was left intact but blocked with concrete.

It's not unusual for Firle Lake to have a mass expanse of weed throughout the summer but this year weed and algae started to appear really early. It became a continuous battle to remove as much as possible and as often as possible. As the water warmed so the weed and algae became impossible to control. The long hot summer and no rain meant that my usual means of weed disposal failed miserably. A couple of full day work parties with many member volunteers clearing every swim of tons of floating algae. Within days, our labour was in vain as the algae had reproduced two-fold and totally covered all the clear areas again.



The surface algae covering Firle... Then it got worse

A good number of current members have attended the pre-season annual venues tour. This year no different where about two thirds of new members make the effort to see first-hand the waters the established membership may take for granted. One new member set his phone so that the number of steps taken on that day is calculated. Upon his return home he informed me that 20,000 steps were recorded. An amazing number. No wonder some were looking rather worn out by the tour end. Thankfully for some not all waters are included as they are too far west in Sussex to see within a single day outing.

The first stages of the Pond Lye dam work started in late May. Thirty two trees had been marked up for total removal. Some of the large oaks were set aside for milling at a later date. Surprisingly this tree removal only took a few days so some of the excavation work began earlier than anticipated. We moved on to the main entrance improving the access for the many eight wheel lorry's that would be delivering the materials for the new car park surface and dam crest raising.

Juniors' Day at Plashett Park this year coincided with the official start of the new rivers season, 16th June. Slightly fewer attendees which was a shame, so perhaps more effort to sell the event next time?

Unfortunately again Plashett top lake suffered some fish deaths due to very low water levels and an algae bloom leading to oxygen depletion. Aerators and splash

pumps were in place and working prior to the fish losses but could have been far worse without the hindsight to ensure as much as possible could be done before a real tragedy had occurred. Plashett top lake was closed to angling for a short time to allow the remaining fish to recover The R. Ouse at Barcombe was also closed for a short period again due to an algae bloom.



The first stages of the Pond Lye works had been completed. The new secondary overflow completed plus an extended area of free flow of water sighted in front of this. The original overflow remained intact with the rear face retaining wall having an extra crushed concrete barrier packed in to further secure the brickwork. An additional unknown culvert had been exposed. This was surveyed, found to not leak so this was then piped into the outlet stream and covered with clay reinforcing the dams rear face. An extra few trees were removed lake side as it was felt if a draw off point was still intact it would be better to ensure no damage could occur if trees fell into the lake. Everything moving along very smoothly so far.



A rare capture from Pond Lye, 6lb Koi

The next stages of Pond Lye reservoir work took a bit of a hit. Previously ordered timbers became unavailable in the timescale scheduled. Our contractors had to pull off site until the timbers became available again and they could fit the scheduled work in again. Coupled with some additional tasks it looked as though October's end would see the work completed and members able to fish again. One aspect that was working in our favour was the still lack of rain. Pond Lye levels now down by at least ten inches. This applying to many of our lakes with the rivers barely moving in flow. Even the final rabbit warren infills at Pond Lye went without a hitch.

A couple of the large oak trees that had to be removed from the dam's rear face and stored were cut into usable lengths. I had never seen a Woodmizer in operation before. Well worth the day out to see it slice through the girth and length of the oak trunks like a hot knife through butter. A vast number of 3 x 3 oak posts cut plus addition timber from left over sections and even managed to move on some unwanted timber to a close neighbour.

Another major weed and algae clearance at Firle took place. Again tons of the sloppy algae removed and piled as far away from the edge as possible. Unfortunately the same outcome as a previous early year clearance, algae took over again within just a few days.

After the recent fish deaths at Plashett it was decided to ensure as much wind as possible could ripple the water surface. This involved the removal of many trees from the south side and around the island of the top lake. Increasing the depth of water would have been a better option but currently the Society and the Estate are not permitted to follow this route. This will have to be a continuous process of removing unwanted self-seeded trees. Several work days over a couple of months had seen vast improvement to the wind accessing the top lake. It never helps that this lake is totally reliant on land run off from any rain falling and the vast number of trees that surround the lake and woodland continuously sucking up their required quota to keep them alive.

Finally Pond Lye reservoir works are completed and given a pass certificate with just a couple of additional tasks /

works that can be addressed in 2019. The long hot summer worked in our favour so perhaps not ideal fishing conditions fantastic from the works point of view. A wet summer could have seen an extra four weeks or more added to the scheduled timescale and final re-opening date.

In November we received the much awaited rain. Within a couple of weeks our lakes were all full and overflowing. Rivers had been bank high in flood a couple of times.

The year has ended considerably quietly. This very welcome. Nothing to announce or prepare for the rest of 2018. Looking back it has been perhaps the most eventful year in the Society's history. To achieve what the coarse section has done these past twelve months at Pond Lye is truly astounding. Thanks must go to all of those members who gave their time voluntary. A real team effort.



Photo courtesy of SPS Junior member Cameron Luxford, taken whilst fishing Sheffield Park

My first year as an SPS TS Member: the highs, the lows and the in-betweens; Rodger Hoad

During January of 2018, having spent many years in the pursuit of still water trout at commercial fisheries, I decided that a new direction was in order. Having given it some thought I decided to investigate becoming a member of SPS as I had heard a bit about it so visited their website in search of further information. This led to me contact Dave Hole who invited me to meet with him at Possingworth Park early in February. The previous few days had been very cold with some snow, and on arrival at the lake it was partially frozen. I could only imagine how much better it would look with a bright sky and water that wasn't solid. Following our meeting my only concern was whether my back problem would prove to be too much when negotiating the steep climb back to the car park at Possingworth and Colin Godman's Farm (CGF).

A few days later I received my membership invitation so decided to 'give it a go', it was then what seemed like an age waiting for the start of the new season. Unfortunately we had torrential rain in late March which resulted in my first visit to CGF being a complete waste of time as the water was chocolate coloured so I decided to try Possingworth the following week. On the 10th of April I made my first trip to Possingworth Park and ended the day with two superb Browns both caught on Diawl Bach's.

These fish were in super condition and boded well for the rest of the season, the first one fought so hard that it was towing my punt round in circles.

A week later saw me on the River Teise, however it was still very high and coloured so I decided to spend my time finding access points etc. which proved very useful as the season progressed. Back to CGF on the 24th with my younger Son. The water level had dropped and the lakes were now fishable. We both caught a couple of small fish in the morning and then in the afternoon my Son caught a fantastic Brownie around 5-6lb on a Zulu from Bircheham Lake.





Not to be outdone a short while later I caught a slightly bigger one on a Klinkhammer from Bellapool. Beautiful fish with very different markings (see above). I fished CGF many times before

the season ended at the end of November and enjoyed some really good days. The Browns were incredible. The real climax came on the 25th of September when I once again went to CGF, this time with my older Son, the water in Bellapool and Bircheham was very coloured and unproductive so we fished Starton. The fish weren't very cooperative and despite several takes we were both fishless by Midday. When moving round to the shallow end of the lake it was possible to see several big Browns static in the water, I cast a dry Daddy to one of them and he rose to it but I was too quick and missed him. Well they say it's an ill wind ... and as I missed the first fish an even larger one appeared!



I dropped my fly just to one side of it and the take was instantaneous. The fight that ensued was epic, not helped by the farm dog getting between me and the landing net.

Eventually my Son netted the fish for me, it wasn't until it was in the net that we realised just how big it was, 26.5" long and approximately 9-10lb in weight. My best ever Brown! And just look at that tail.

A quick photo and then returned safely, this fish took about 20 minutes of very careful handling before it swam away. Fortunately I know that it survived as I saw it again when I next visited 4 weeks later.

I've really enjoyed the variety of fishing that's available through SPS. I've never had much opportunity to River fish with a fly so have loved fishing the little River Teise.

I caught my first ever Grayling (2 on the 11th of May both on dry fly) and have had a few others also. A 3lb Rainbow in fast running water on a 7'0" #3 Glass rod is a very different fish to those caught in Stillwater.

I've caught Grayling, Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, Chub, Perch, Minnows and Roach on fly from this diminutive river.

The highlight was a 3lb Brown from the sluice on Beat 7 and catching my first ever Grayling. Only downside was when I forgot

to change my felt soled wading boots when it rained resulting in me slipping on the bank which gave way and deposited me on my back in the river. A very unpleasant experience which I will not be repeating!

I also fished the Itchen at Easton and Cheriton in May which was the first time that I've ever fished a Chalkstream. I met up with Ian Mortimer at Easton but unfortunately the weather was not in our favour. I ended up with four Browns and Iain three Browns -- and a beautiful Grayling pushing the 3lb mark.

I fished Cheriton the following day and had one small Brown. A beautiful stretch of water but probably would have little appeal to many members.

So, a very enjoyable first season. I've enjoyed some varied fishing and often the solitude being the only angler present. I've caught some fantastic fish, achieved a few firsts, avoided the dreaded blank even during the very hot weather -- although on one occasion a minnow helped out (how do they manage to take a size 16 Goldhead)?

When I joined I said that I would give it a season to see how I got on with the different waters and my back and walking problems. My decision? See you next year if you'll have me.

My first fish

On a fine summer's day was the first time I went.
From dawn to dusk fishing, the whole day was spent.
So excited I sat keenly by our front garden gate.
Imagining what wonderful catch lay in wait.

With his tackle and bait, came my old Uncle Fred.
"You caught any worms for the fish yet?" he said.
"I've got some in here" I said, showing my pot.
"A fine job done well boy, you've found quite a lot."

I jumped into his car and away off we sped.
To a pond in a park with my old Uncle Fred.
We talked all the way about what we might catch.
And whilst fishing, how anglers should be exact.

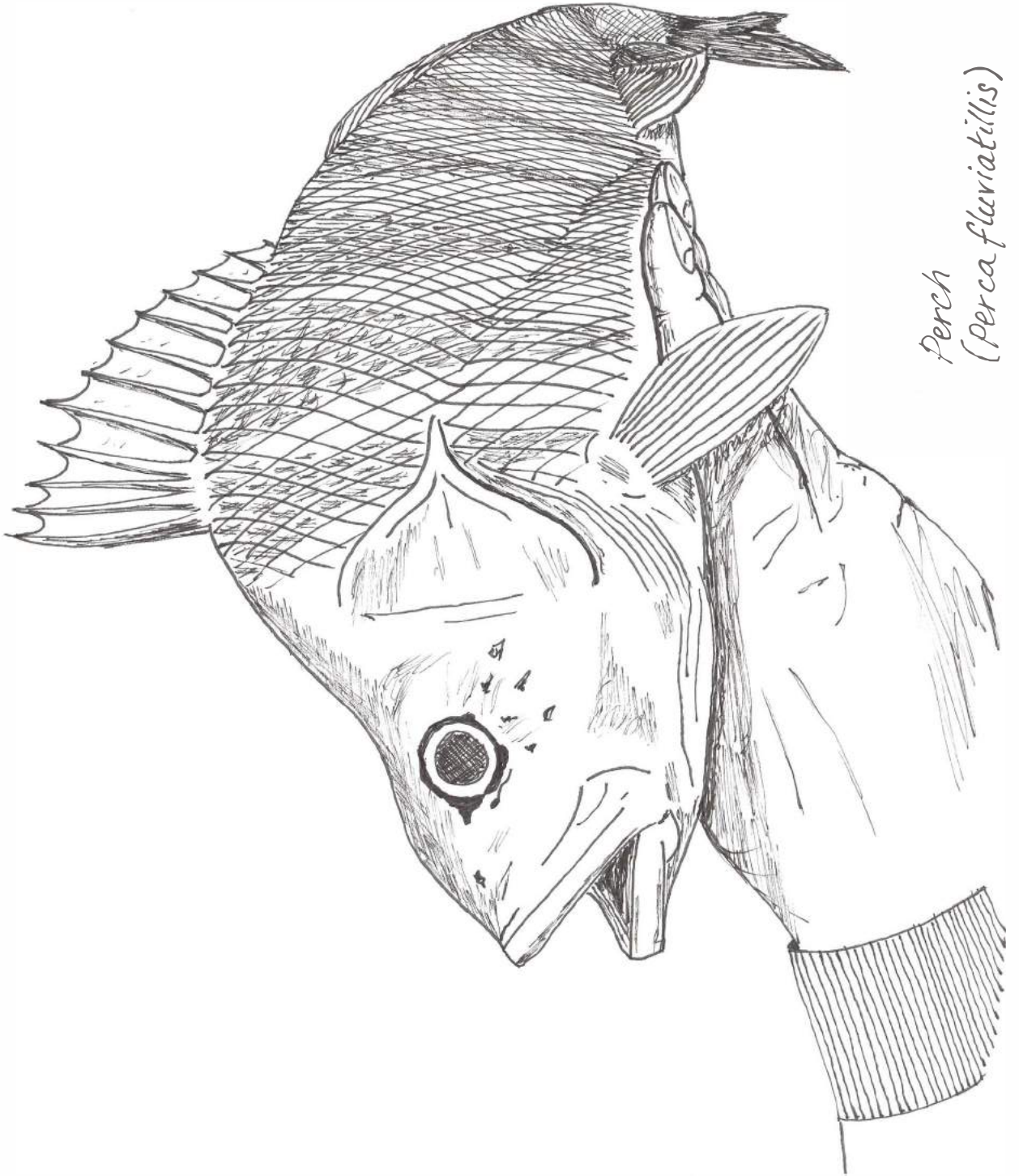
As we crept up slowly through the park to the pond.
I knew at that time fishing and I would bond.
I could now see the water, all it's mysteries still hiding.
Neath the dark mirrored surface, what would be lurking?

So I baited my hook then made my first cast.
And I watched my float settle, I was fishing at last.
"Now sit on your hands!" said Fred, and he shot me a look.
"If you strike too early you'll not set the hook."

"When you're fishing you've got to be patient and wait."
"Never strike too early, but don't strike too late."
And as he spoke those last words my float went right under.
"Strike now! " yelled Fred the fish tore off like thunder.

Taking line off my reel and bending my rod.
"Fish on. " said Fred and he winked with a nod.
Playing the fish was the next part to learn.
Fred showed me how to give line then take it in turn.

"Now when the fish tires and it's ready to land,
reach for the landing net or swing it to hand."
We netted my prize Fred said "Now make a wish."
A Battersea Park perch, was my very first fish.



Perch
(*Perca fluviatilis*)

D.H.L.
2012

More Tales from the SPS Trout Section; by Julian Millerchip

I am sure we all enjoyed John Baker's memoirs about the Trout Section in recent issues of Sussex Piscator magazine. John mentioned I followed on from him as Secretary towards the latter part of the 1990s. This prompted me to relate some of my own recollections of my time at the helm – many fond memories, but also mishaps and challenges that stick in the memory...

Fire!

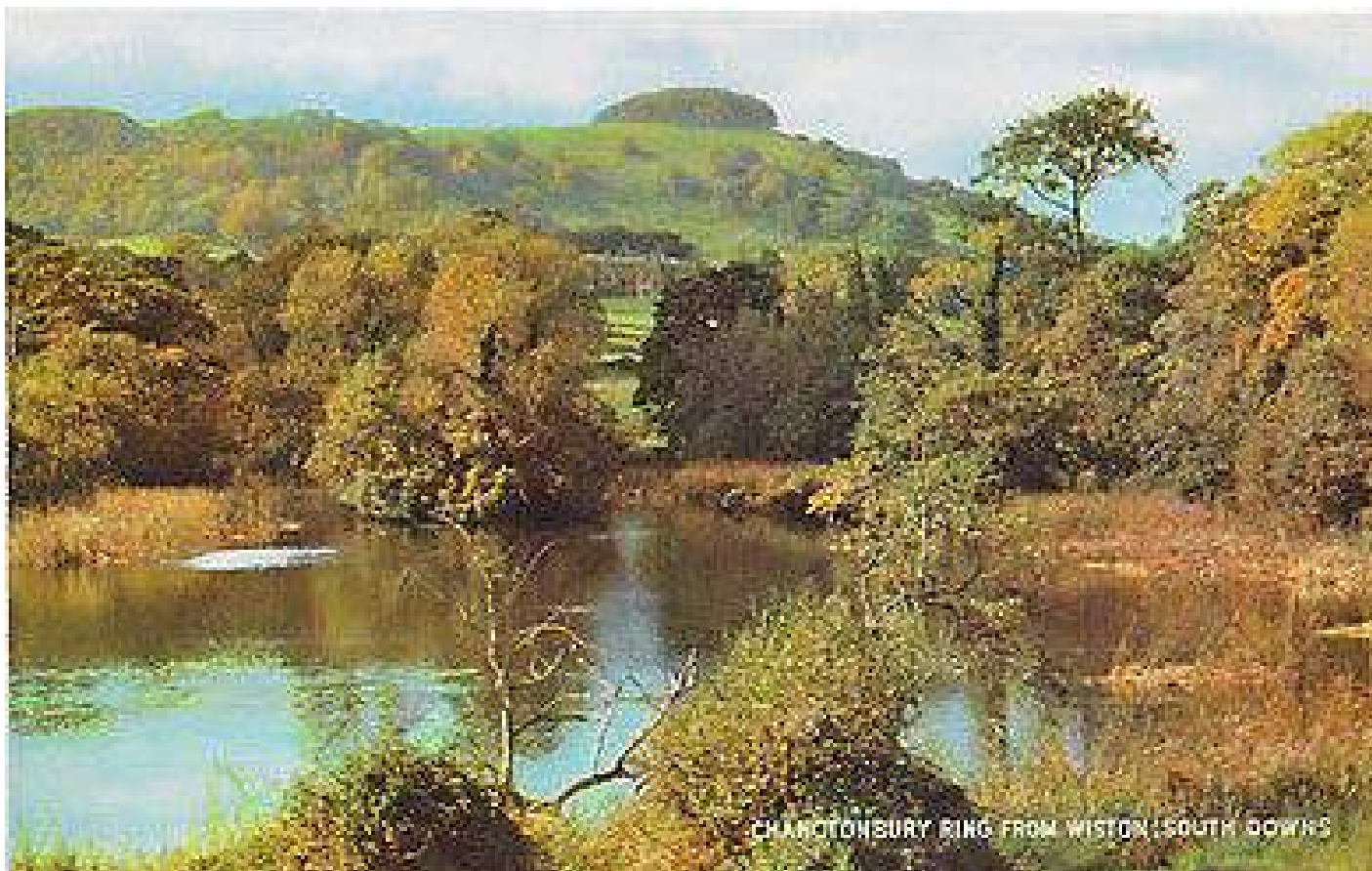
Driving homeward past Wiston Pond one evening, I think in 1997, I was surprised to see the flashing blue lights of a fire engine in the region of the parking area by the dam. It transpired that our wooden fishing hut was on fire and the brigade had been summoned. Apparently it was pretty much completely gone when they had arrived and so they were mainly engaged on damping down. The senior officer could not establish the cause with certainty. The assumption was vandalism, or a mishap befalling somebody who had broken in – for whatever purpose.

The Society decided to replace the hut with something more substantial and I was tasked with organising a replacement. The Wiston Estate took an interest in the style of building this should be, in such a remote location, which is how we ended up with a concrete block structure pretty much akin to a cattle shelter! They advised us to use a local architect who drew up plans and he succeeded in getting planning permission from the Local Authority on our behalf. We were also

very fortunate in having a keen and active member in the building trade, who volunteered to complete the job for just the cost of materials. Throughout my period as Secretary I was constantly encouraged by the range of skills and expertise we had, willingly available, amongst the membership.

De-silting Wiston Pond

The Lower Buddington project was regarded by the Wiston Estate as a success. To this day the pond adds greatly to the attractiveness of the landscape here. We were pleased therefore that Harry Goring soon gave permission to proceed with the temporary draining and de-silting of Wiston Pond. This was a major undertaking and, as with the Lower Buddington scheme, required the co-operation of various interested persons and organisations. The area was a designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest within West Sussex. This meant we had to consult widely, and prepare a suitable project plan showing how we would comply with numerous regulations and manage the area subsequently. The Local Authority regarded it as a “development” which required planning permission. There were various legalities and technicalities to this. Fortunately a Member of the Trout Section was able to source sound legal advice for us. Indeed many Members freely contributed their own knowledge and skills towards a successful outcome, but not without incident...



Wiston Pond, Wiston House and Chanctonbury Ring ... a picture-postcard view



Ice Skating on Wiston Pond, Boxing Day 1914

Where to put it

Amongst the preparatory tasks was the need to minimise the impact of depositing removed silt on the field to the south of Wiston Pond. Members with surveying expertise mapped out, with great accuracy, the lie of the land. The contractor who would carry out the work, Brian Richardson (who had created Lower Buddington) advised on the technique he would use to retain the silt behind a series of low 'bunds' as he extracted it with a bulldozer. This would be left to drain and dry out for several months before the field was returned to pasture. Amongst our Members was an Industrial Chemist. Together, he and I ventured out on one of the Wiston Pond punts and with a drain-rodding set up, measured as accurately as we could the depth of the silt accumulation at points around the pond. He took samples back to his laboratory, analysed the content and reported to me on the volume of solid material after evaporation. Using pretty basic arithmetic (as the size of the field and the area of pond subject to de-silting were, roughly, the same) I calculated that the dry mass would raise the surface of the entire field by just a few centimetres. Job done - it passed the scrutiny of the planning authorities anyway!

Beware leaping fish

Wiston Pond has a pipework arrangement at the dam end that provides an effective means of carefully controlling the lowering of depth. The Environment Agency fisheries team had been primed to help, by netting any remaining stock when we

were down to the next-to-last level and just a small pool of water remained by the dam. On the day of the netting a small group of our members gathered to help. The trout were to go into Lower Buddington and any coarse fish were to be transferred as appropriate to SPS Coarse waters. There were a few, by now rather elderly, Grass Carp in the mix. These were left over from an earlier attempt by John Baker and colleagues (on the advice of the NRA – predecessors to the Environment Agency) to control weed growth, but this had never really worked as well as it might. These Grass Carp had grown BIG.

As the net was drawn in and the fish became more and more confined, they got quite agitated. This was the point at which we became aware of the sheer size of the Grass Carp. A young lad on the EA team was engaged in hauling together both ends of the net, sitting, legs wide apart, on the bank whilst some of us guided its progress in the water and others began to dip landing nets into the shoal. I should mention that the EA team on that occasion included a young lady (an intern on work-experience I think) whom the chap was clearly out to impress. Suddenly, and without warning, a sharp-snouted beast of a fish weighing probably well in excess of 20lb shot out of the water, up the bank, and scored a direct hit between the legs of the unfortunate EA chap! I do not know if the EA's Health and Safety assessment for its team had included that risk -probably not! History does not record the lady's reaction, nor the direction of their relationship thereafter...

Danger – UXB!

The lake drained, Brian commenced work with his big earth-moving machines. A seriously messy business, this took many weeks. At one point an SPS Committee member, during his occasional visits to check on progress, noticed small makeshift marker flags at various places around the muddy site. Upon enquiring as to what these meant, Brian casually mentioned these were where he had noticed suspicious items during the operation -- possible WWII ordnance! Our committee member did the sensible thing and persuaded Brian to cease work whilst the Police (and subsequently Bomb Disposal) were summoned. Wiston House had been a Canadian forces base during WW2. Perhaps the pond was in their exercise patch? Maybe it was the local Dad's Army?

Nothing to see here

Harry Goring and his Estate team were meanwhile fielding enquiries from various members of the public who, having seen the drained pond and extensive earthworks, expressed concern about what was going on. Wiston Pond is visible from the main road. Indeed the view towards Chanctonbury Hill, with the pond in the foreground is regarded as a local beauty spot. It features on postcards and the work of various landscape artists. This pretty view was seriously compromised. I was persuaded that there was a need for some positive PR and so got in touch with local press to do a small feature explaining what was happening and why, and how it would all eventually return to normal. This

was mildly embarrassing as we were trying to keep a low profile, but when comments like “environmental disaster” start to be bandied about, you have to do something. Fortunately this was well before the days of social media. The piece seemed to have the desired effect. Sure enough our predictions proved correct and it is now impossible to detect the scale of the groundworks upon looking at the site.

Fencing Cheriton Mill – mind your head!

Finally, John Baker mentioned the work we did upon taking on the Tichborne chalk-stream beat. One work party was engaged, under the direction of Tim Duffield, erecting a fence to protect the stream and its margins from cattle damage. An essential tool for driving in the posts manually is a heavy tube-shaped article with handles either side. It beats a sledge-hammer because it works by sliding up and down the post and I suppose does less damage to the top of the post. One of our members was getting really stuck in to this work when the thing bounced up and struck him on the forehead, inflicting a wound similar to the sort of cut that boxers sometimes get around the eyebrow. Tim had his first aid kit to hand and did his best to treat it, but it was obvious the cut would need professional attention. Our brave colleague opted to get himself to A&E, where he apparently had an interesting conversation with the triage nurse:

“How did you do this, sir?”

“Well, I was fencing.”

“Gosh!”

“Ah, not THAT sort of fencing...”

Is this what Piscators need to know about *light* and *colour*?

Andy Payne

I recently became involved in a forum chat about how best to dye sweet corn red. The consensus was, I think, that it's a lot of hassle for very poor results and best left to the professionals. This caused me to wonder if there is any point at all in using red sweet corn whether it be dyed by ourselves or purchased ready coloured and at great expense from one of the bait companies.

I've been fishing and reading about angling for as long as I've been able to do either, in that half century I have repeatedly been advised by authors both modern and classic to "add a tag of red wool to your spoon to attract a perch", "employ gentles doused in cochineal and aniseed to attract the better stamp of roach", "tie tinsel into the body of the fly, red is the best colour if your quarry is the Chavinder".

Hayes and Wilson both recommend the use of red maggots and chopped Red Worm and proprietary red groundbait when in pursuit of our own beloved specimens. I too fish with exclusively red ones when I employ maggots in pursuit of specimen fish, this means that I have caught more big fish on reds than on any other maggot. (Would I have caught fewer if I had not used red maggots? I will never know.)

So, what's so special about the colour red and does it make a bait more attractive to

a tench? I'm going to tackle this question by answering two sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of light and colour and their effect under water?
2. Do the fish we pursue see colour as we see colour?

In answering these questions I hope to leave you in a position to draw your own conclusions about your bait colour choices.

Visible light is a form of energy which comprises the middle of the Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS). Like all energy in the EMS it travels in waves, it is the wavelength of light (400 to 700nm) which makes it both visible and coloured.

We find Ultraviolet light at the shortest wavelength end of this part of the EMS (the human eye cannot detect UV) and Infrared at the longest wave length end (this we feel as heat). Red light, as you will notice is at the longer wavelength end of the visible spectrum, in the region of 650-680nm. The importance of this will become evident later.

We perceive a mixture of all of these visible colours of light as White Light, we perceive an absence of all light as Absolute Black.

Sunlight, the most significant light source for us to consider here is White Light, we can observe that it is made up of the many colours of visible light when we see it split up into a rainbow.

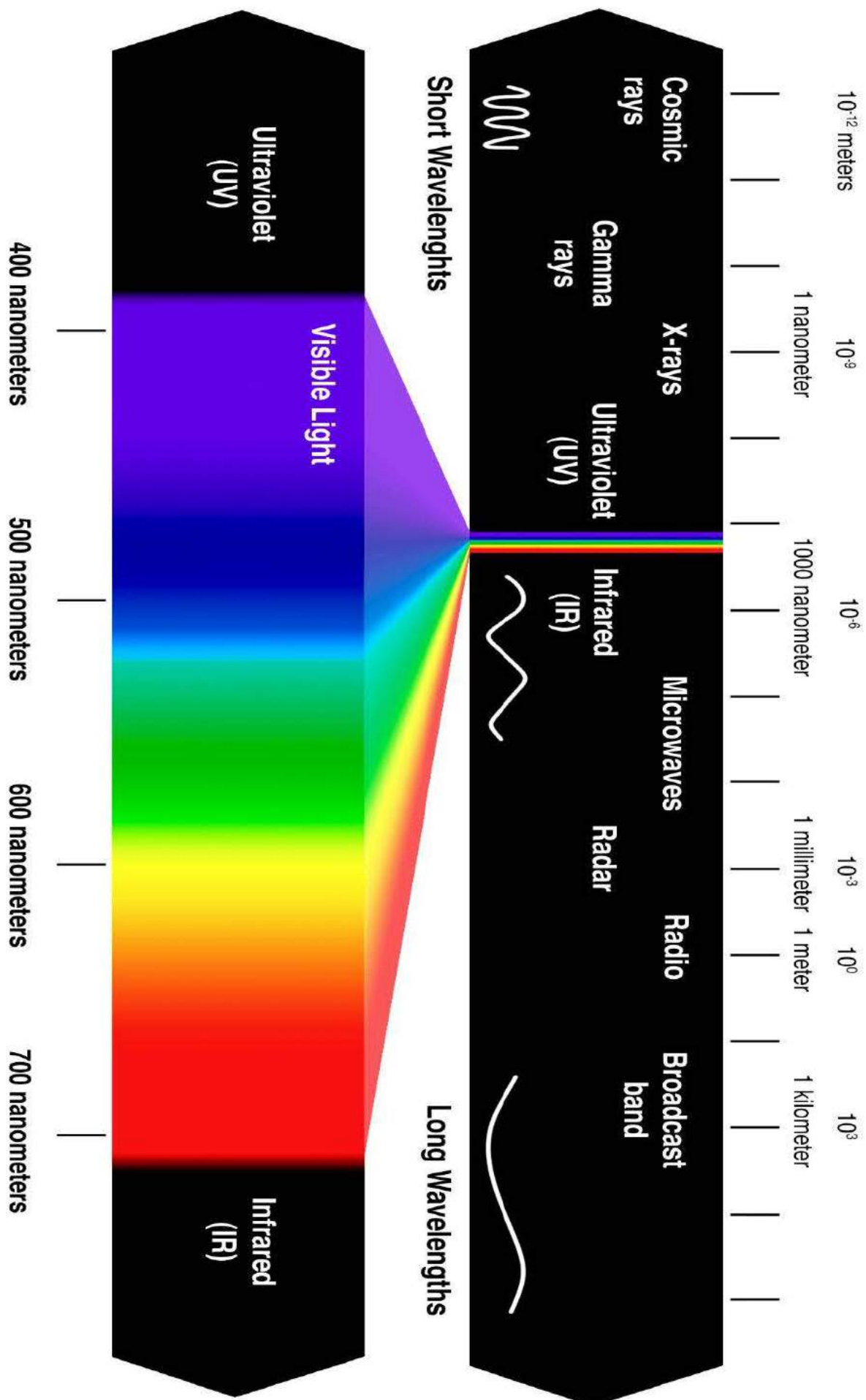


Fig. 1: Electro Magnetic Spectrum Diagram

A rainbow occurs when white sunlight passes through water droplets. As the light passes through the water the different wavelengths making up the white light are refracted to different degrees and exit the water at different angles dividing the light to its component colours. This can better be achieved by passing the white light through a glass prism. (Folks of a certain age, think Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon album cover.)

We can see objects only when they either emit reflect light into our eyes. If something appears white it is reflecting or emitting all colours of visible light simultaneously. If something appears black it is not reflecting any light, this can be because either no light is available for it to reflect, or the object is absorbing all of the available light.

We see things as red (sweet corn, maggots, bait flags, etc) when they absorb all colours of light except red, which they reflect into our eyes. In the same way water weed appears green because it absorbs all colours of light except green.

Coloured lenses work in a similar fashion, a green lens for instance absorbs all colours of light apart from green which it allows to pass through and into our eye.

An important inference to draw from the above is that something red observed through a green lens would appear black because there would be no red light for it to reflect into an observer's eye. Again the importance of this will become evident later.

Light behaves differently in water than in air. Water absorbs light in the longer wavelengths leaving less of these to enter the eye so these appear less vibrant once submerged. Water scatters light in the shorter wavelengths so these appear more vibrant, indeed this is what makes pure water appear blue. Think back now to the position of red light on the EMS and consider how submersion in water might affect the appearance of red objects.

The fact that water eventually absorbs all shades of light with increasing depth explains the darkness at the bottom of deep oceans. The fact that water absorbs the longer wavelengths of light more readily means that they will "disappear" sooner as we move to increasing depths. Red light is the first colour of visible light to be filtered out by water, indeed no usable red light is present beyond depths of around 3m (10ft) and at shallower depths red light is less vibrant. At 2m (6ft) your red sweet corn will appear a dull brown and at 3m and beyond it will appear black -- not invisible as inferred by the purveyors of certain red fishing line!

So in answer to my first sub question, water has an effect upon light which in turn affects the appearance of coloured objects submersed in it. Our angling conclusion from this would be that it is pointless going to the extra trouble and expense of using red baits at water depths beyond a few feet. It is also worth noting that the cheapest "out of can" yellow sweet corn would remain more visible at far greater depths than would red dyed grains.

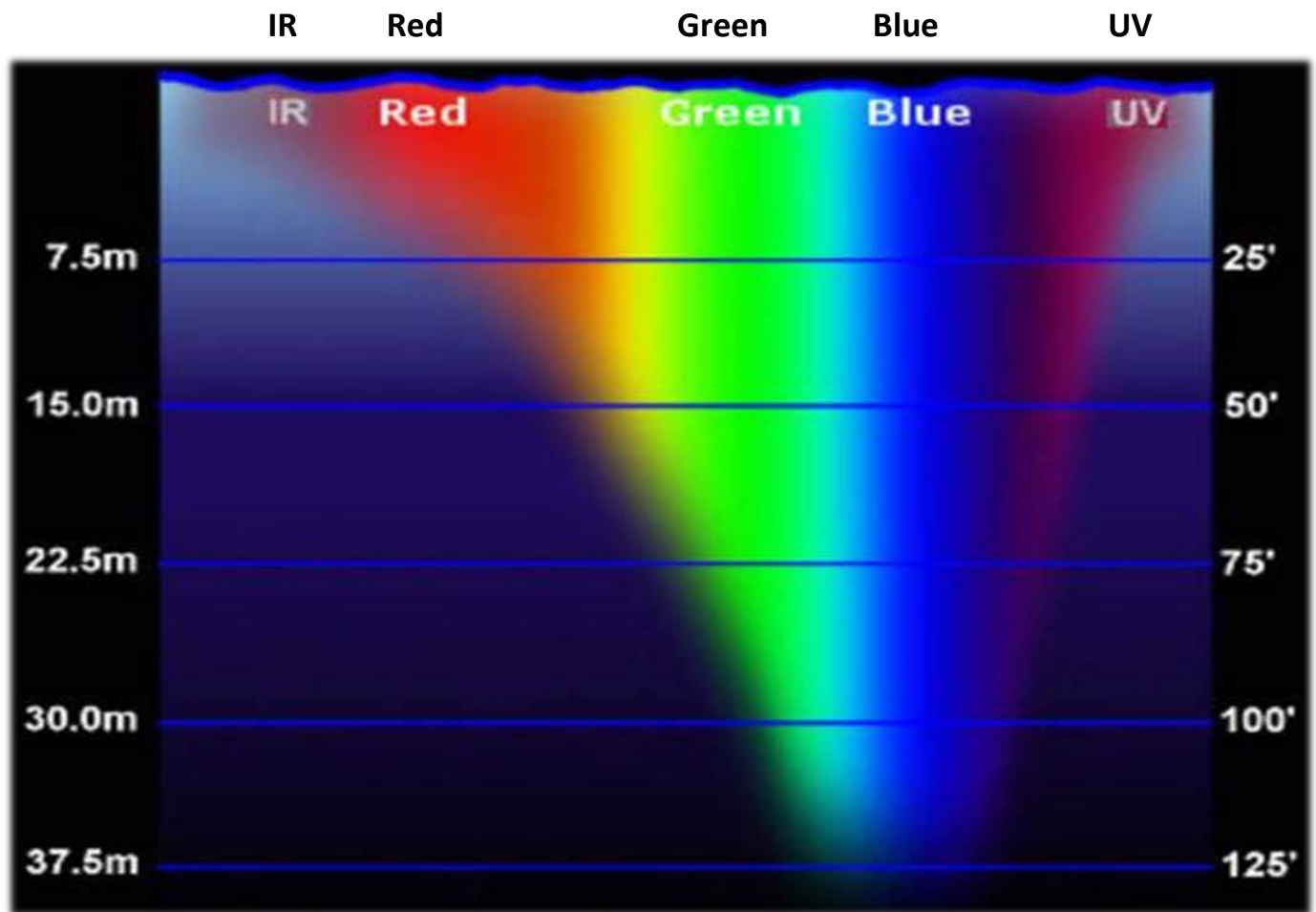


Fig. 2: Light Absorption Diagram

All of the above is based around the behaviour of light in pure, clear, clean water and does not consider the affects of turbidity, shade or ambient light intensity.

On to the second sub question, do tench and humans see colour in the same way?

Most of the research around fishes colour perception has been completed on goldfish, this is great for us because they are cyprinids and closely related to the fish that we wish to catch. The research has been conducted in two strands:

1. Behavioural experiments involving food rewards earned by colour recognition
2. Anatomical microdissection of the retina of cyprinid eyes

The behavioural experiments revealed that the fish could indeed discern between

colours and that they were quick to learn by association. The fish demonstrated rates of Operant Conditioning similar to that of corvids (Crows) the most intelligent of birds. I guess that's why pre-baiting works so well.

The fish in the experiments did not show any preference for any particular colour when observed responding but once they had been conditioned to a particular colour they responded vigorously to it and demonstrated a feeding response even when food was not present (the Pavlovian response). A similar response, I guess, to fish coming to the splash of a feeder or spod because they associate it with the arrival of food.

These experiments were all completed in well lit shallow water, our question would be further and better answered by

research conducted in low or filtered light conditions to replicate water of various depths; I still feel however that this information is useful to us in our pursuit of understanding.

The dissection and examination under a microscope of cyprinid retina revealed that like us primates they possess both Rods and Cones. The Rods detect movement and light intensity while the Cones detect colour. The Cones in the goldfish were highly developed and noted to have high levels of acuity in wavelength discrimination, colour contrast and colour perception. This gives them colour vision much like our own. It is worth noting that Cyprinids have a colour vision "Super sense" that puts them at a possible advantage over us, their tetrachromatic vision means that they can see ultraviolet "light" (UV) which we cannot. This means that their view of the underwater world may well be vastly different from our own and that they will be able to see things that we cannot and that they will see the things that we can see differently to us. As a matter of interest please note from the diagram above that UV penetrates to far greater depths than most human visible wavelengths of light -- should/does that fact influence our choice of bait colour?

A word now about fluorescence.

Fluorescent objects absorb EMS radiation and immediately re-emit it at a longer wavelength with less energy, we observe this most noticeably when our float tip absorbs UV which we cannot see and re-emits it as visible light making it appear to us to glow in low light conditions.

I notice that fluorescent pop-ups are commonly for sale, particularly for use in winter, clear water conditions. We are told that they will be easier for the fish to see and home in on BUT if the fish can

already see UV is fluorescence an advantage or is it once again us and not the fish who are being caught?

Aside: There are plenty of videos on YouTube which show how animals with tetrachromatic vision and the ability to see UV perceive their world, if you want some idea of a tench-eye-view have a watch of a few of them. I find the ones about bees fascinating: "How Bees Can See the Invisible"

(<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=N1TUDFCOwjY>)

Some conclusions arising from all of this....

It is likely that our quarry can see colour at least as well as us humans.

Cyprinids can see UV which we cannot.

Water filters out red light at relatively shallow depths making red bait appear less intense at depths beyond a couple of meters and black at depths greater than about three meters.

If the colour red does illicit a feeding response in our quarry this can only occur in relatively shallow water on bright days.

A conundrum arising from all of this...

Maybe red bait does work better? Not because it is a more vibrant colour under water but because it is less vibrant colour at depth. Is subtly the key? And if so, would I be best to use black baits?

So, is red sweet corn worth the extra trouble and expense?

I think that it is not especially if you are fishing at depths greater than 1 metre (39 inches).

But ... confidence is crucial when angling, particularly when in pursuit of specimens. So, if you think that red baits will catch you more and better tench they probably will even if only because you have them in the water longer and more often. Further research required here. Over to you!

Tales from the SPS Archives, by "Minute Man"

From the foundation of the Society in 1891 up to 1904 the Society awarded a variety of different annual trophies, including the Holland Silver Cup, donated by founder-member W. J. Holland, for the best 'specimen' fish captured by a member from any (Society or otherwise) water. An early winner was Mr A P Keeley for a 8lb 8oz Thames trout in 1892. Nowadays one hears very little of anglers seeking Thames trout but for many years they were a highly prized target. The greatest Thames trout angler was A. E. Hobbs who in 1901 was invited to the Society clubroom to deliver a presentation. To decide the Holland Cup winner, the Society had asked Robert Marston, the esteemed editor of the Fishing Gazette to adjudicate, both Marston and the Gazette being hugely prominent icons of Victorian angling, with Marston editor for 49 years.

In 1894 Mr Holland donated a further trophy, this time to be awarded for the best specimen from solely Sussex waters. Its first winner, in January 1895, provided a poignant family moment when the cup was awarded to Mr Holland's own son. However, another member was in less than congratulatory mood. Mr Ernest J. Ash, a committee member and dentist to trade, had also been a submitter, for a 5lb 4oz carp. Master Holland junior had won the trophy for a sea trout of 5lb 4oz from the Ouse and, on being pipped for the

trophy, Ash, of Grand Parade, Brighton decided to contest the award to the utmost degree.

The basis of Ash's case was that it had come to his knowledge that the sea trout had been "caught by an angler unlicensed under the Salmon Fisheries Acts". After the Society ignored his plea, he brought a case in Brighton County Court in 1896 against the chairman and secretary of the Society for seven guineas (£7 7s), the prize fund that accompanied the trophy.

The court case centred on the moment when the sea trout, in a glass case, was called as evidence, and informed witnesses "testified that it was a brown trout", which confused matters still further. The judge concluded that the fish "was indeed a brown trout" and importantly, that therefore the prize had been "properly awarded". The Society minutes hold a *Brighton Gazette* cutting covering the case, which featured in the minutes for all of nine months!

Yet another trophy was soon obtained by member-subscription, becoming the 'Subscription Cup' and in 1894 it was awarded to Hon. Sec. William F. Booth for a gillaroo trout of 3lb 8oz caught in Ireland. The gillaroo (*Salmo stomachicus*) is historically included in *Salmo trutta*, a variety of trout which eats primarily snails and is only proven to inhabit Lough Melvin in Ireland (according to *Wikipedia*).

The Challenge Shield

In September 1903 designs for a “carved oak shield” were discussed by Committee for a new ‘Challenge Trophy’ with a budget set of £6. This cost was eventually met by subscription when it was delivered in April 1904. The Shield soon became the Society’s most important specimen trophy. Its qualifying entry-period was initially January-December. This period remained until 1993, when it altered to April-March as the Society had amended its fishing ‘year’ to coincide with the statutory end of coarse-fishing every March 14. Currently the entry period is based on the timing of the Society's autumn social meeting (November to October).

The Shield was first won by Mr Gordon-Dill for a large Pond Lye pike, Dill also being president of the Burgess Hill angling club. Once again the adjudicator was Mr Marston. This was to be first in a long line of hefty Pond Lye pike captures. No less than 14 of the first 19 winners would win th pike, frequently over 20lbs. Foremost among the Society’s pikers was Fred Mascall, an active Committee man, although sadly two of his Shield awards were mysteriously never actually inscribed. Fred passed away in 1920 and it is possible he was connected with the prominent Sussex family of Mascall based for centuries at Plumpton Place.

Among the few to win the Shield without a pike capture was Walter Waterfall for a trout from Horsted Keynes lake in 1912. From 1895 to 1917 the Society toiled

laboriously to establish this water as its premier trout fishery, with a lease from Rear-Admiral Thomas Brand of Glynde. Today the lake is known as Broadhurst Lake (a coarse water operated by Isfield & DAS) but when the S.P.S. operated it, the lake formed the focus of a Horsted Keynes complex containing up to eight ponds spread out along the entire valley, including stew/rearing ponds. In time, however, a combination of inroads of coarse fish, severe flooding and predation overwhelmed the Committee’s efforts and the water was given up.

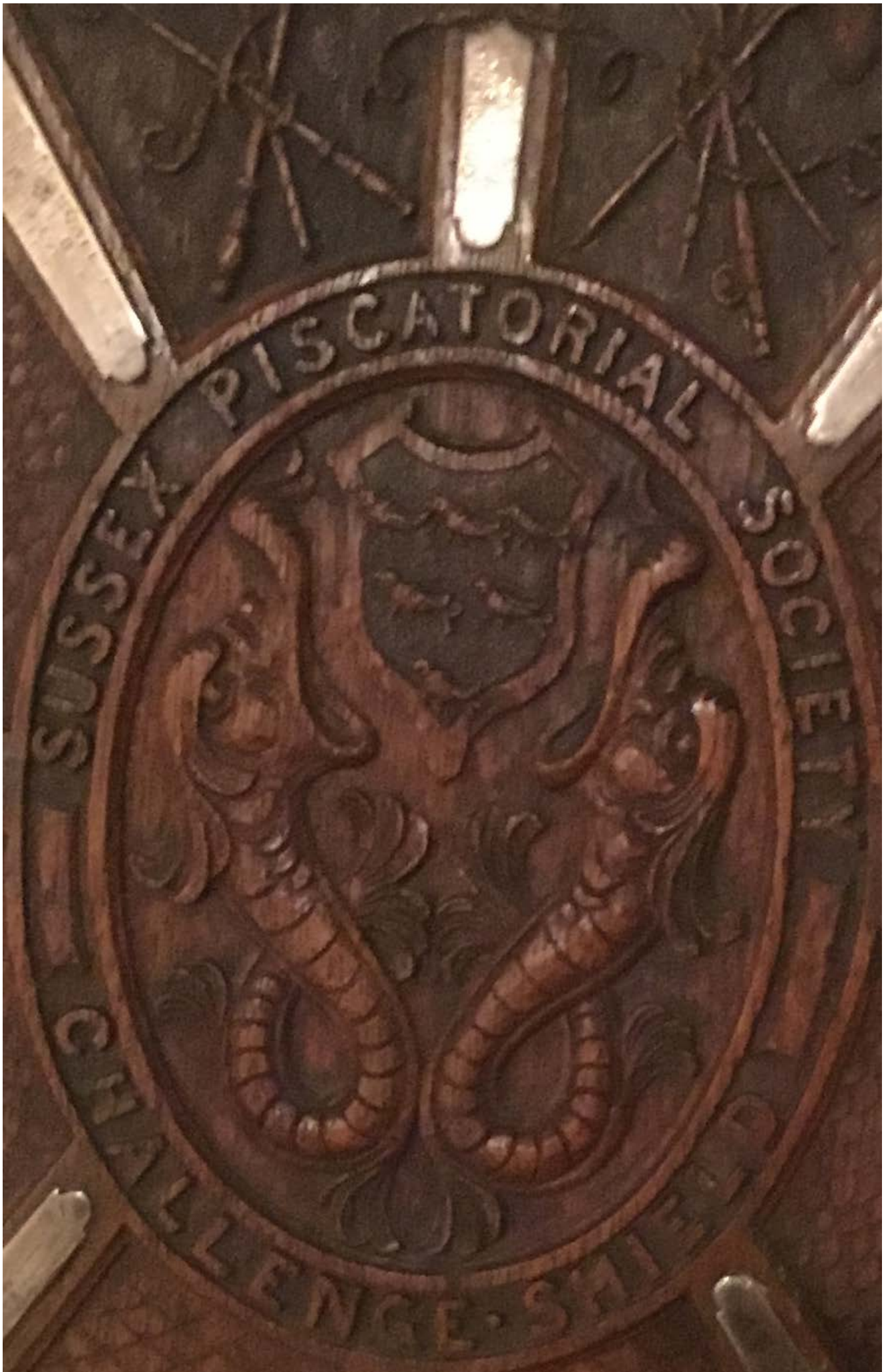
Tragically, within less than two years of winning the Shield, Waterfall would lose his son, 2nd Lieut. Vincent Waterfall, when, in the very first days of World War One, his Royal Flying Corps aircraft was shot down over Belgium. Lieutenant Waterfall was the first Burgess Hill casualty of the War and his aircraft was in fact the first British aircraft to be downed in the conflict.

Several interesting venues feature in the early years. The Society briefly operated Old River, courtesy of Lord Hampden; a still-water, half-mile of stretch of the River Ouse that had become detached from the main course of the river. Lord Hampden was Thomas Brand of Glynde (uncle to the Thomas Seymour Brand who controlled Horsted Keynes lake); today the Old River is operated by Seaford A.C. In 1925 the Shield was won for a fish from Old Wheel pond in Maresfield which today is known as Boringwheel trout fishery. In 1933 and 1935 Ridden’s Farm pond features on the

trophy. Ridden's Farm is located just north of Pond Lye and in the 1930s the Society's initial landlord was farmer Henry Upton (the Upton family name was prominent

among Burgess Hill farmers) who rented two very small ponds. The Society enjoyed the rights here in two periods; 1902-04 and 1923-46.

Year	Species	lb.	oz.	Water	Winner
1904	Pike	19	2	Pond Lye	G F Gordon Dill
1905	Pike	21	8	Pond Lye	F Mascall
1906	Pike	19	4	Pond Lye	A Hellings
1907	Pike	9	8	Plashett Park	W Tunks
1908	Pike	16	0	Pond Lye	V Fleet
1909	Pike	9	8	Plashett Park	F Mascall
1911	Pike	19	12	Pond Lye	J Tunks
1912	Trout	2	14	Horsted Keynes lake	W F Waterfall
1913	Trout	2	12	Horsted Keynes lake	A R Trafford
1914	Pike	15	0	Plashett Park	F Mascall
1918	Pike	20	12	Plashett Park	J Tunks
1919	Pike	14	8	Pond Lye	F Kemp
1920	Pike	22	8	Pond Lye	W H Reeves
1921	Pike	24	0	Pond Lye	W J Cunningham
1922	Tench	3	7	Old River, Newhaven	H W Stenning
1923	Rudd	1	6	Plashett Park	C A C Jeffcock
1924	Tench	3	2	Old River, Newhaven	J Howard
1925	Pike	14	8	Old Wheel Mill Pond, Maresfield	Mrs C A C Jeffcock
1926	Pike	22	8	Plashett Park (Upper lake)	A D Broadbridge
1927	Roach	1	2	Plashett Park (Upper lake)	D Carden
1928	Tench	4	4	Bolney Mill ponds	A D Broadbridge
1929	Perch	1	12	Newick Park lake	B Jukes
1930	Pike	20	0	Pond Lye	A D Broadbridge
1931	Pike	22	12	Pond Lye	G C Newman
1932	Carp	8	12	Pond Lye	G C Newman
1933	Carp	4	5	Riddens Farm pond	J Hyde
1934	Roach	1	10	Bolney Mill ponds	C C Woodland
1935	Carp	8	2	Riddens Farm pond	A C Ayton





Sussex Piscatorial Society, Challenge Shield: front, back and detail. It's difficult to imagine the size of this item if you've never seen it, but (from memory) it's about 2 ½ feet tall. A very substantial piece.



After pike captures dominated the Shield in its early years, the award for the Society's best pike captures went towards the Hasted trophy. Mr W.A. Hasted had served Committee for many years and upon his death in 1928, the Society chose to buy a memorial trophy, a silver salver, from Roberts & Dore (silversmiths) for £12. The Hasted took a while to get underway as a competition, which explains the Shield being won with a pike in 1931.

In 1937 the Shield was won with a carp that was a record for the Society. Nowadays, anglers have grown used to carp of huge sizes but for decades, the carp anglers of the Society struggled to find fish of double-figures. In the years immediately following the Second World War, roach featured often on the Shield and it was twice won by a young Aubrey Ayton. In fact Aubrey still holds the record for the most Shield awards, with four. In addition to undertaking sterling for Committee, Ayton for many years operated The Preston Aquarium, a tackle-shop in Beaconsfield Road, Brighton. Some current members still recall his shop, which also sold guest tickets for Society members and posted Society notices. In 1938 a pond at Pain's (sometimes Payne's) Place farm featured among the winning fish with a 5lb tench by Arthur Leslie Cox, another long-serving Committee man. The farm water in question, Rushy Wood pit, is sited just east of Pond Lye.

In 1956 the Shield was won for a tench from Decoy pond in Angmering. The Society held the rights to this water from 1925 for nearly fifty years. Landlord was initially John Uridge of Old Place farm but the Society had a long-standing battle to keep the water fishable due to high levels of poaching and vandalism. The problem persisted even while the Duke of Arundel was landlord for ten years. In 1967 the Shield was shared for the first time by two long-serving Committee men, F. N. Brunskill and Cliff Eydmann, though the engraver of that year seems to have confused their initials.

As we enter the 1960s the first awards for chub and bream appear and in 1969 carp begin to dominate matters, in keeping with a national trend. In 1957 the Stambridge Trout Fisheries of Rochford, Essex were contacted for a supply of 100 King carp (8") which were put into the Society Pond at Twineham Grange, also known as Grovelands Farm. They seem to have prospered as carp from this water won the Shield in five years shortly afterwards.

The capture of the Shield in 1972 by Stanley Mahood deserves special mention. Not only is it, to date, the only award in 114 years for a barbel, but it went to a renowned servant of the Society. S. R. Mahood was Coarse Section curator for 37 years and the minutes display numerous examples of his shrewd counsel and prompt response to urgent issues covering nettings, fish-stocking, poaching incidents and work-parties. In particular, Stan had a

keen eye for any fisheries that would potentially add to the Society's portfolio.

In 1977 a momentous point was reached with the Society's first recorded capture of a carp over twenty pounds, eclipsing the carp record of 40 years earlier. Neil Watts was the history maker, landing a Plashett fish on float-fished flake and 6lb b.s. line.

The following year this carp was then eclipsed by Richard Pippard with a 23lb 8oz fish from the same water.

Unfortunately, the minutes began to lament that members were beginning to become too coy about captures of several large fish, as a national specimen-hunting fever began to affect anglers' willingness to divulge details of large fish.

1936	Roach	1	5	R. Ouse, Wellingham Farm	W. Palmer
1937	Carp	14	8	Bolney Mill ponds	C H Playford
1938	Tench	5	0	Pain's Place Farm	A L Cox
1946	Rudd	1	2	Pond Lye	A C Ayton
1947	Roach	1	12	Pond Lye	A C Ayton
1948	Perch	2	0	Plashett Park	J C Woodfield
1949	Roach	1	10	Pond Lye	W L Elkington
1950	Roach	1	12	Pond Lye	A C Hicks
1951	Roach	1	11	Pond Lye	M E Bower
1954	Roach	1	9	Pond Lye	E G Denman
1956	Tench	3	10	Decoy Pond, Angmering	C G Spratt
1962	Tench	3	10	Plashett Park (Lower lake)	F Davies
1963	Tench	4	1	Plashett Park	Mrs E Arrow
1964	Chub	3	8	R. Ouse, Wellingham Farm	A S Miller
1965	Rudd	2	4.5	Pond Lye	R J Pippard
1966	Bream	4	8	Pond Lye	J H Woolfe
1967	Roach	1	8	Pond Lye	F N Brunskill
(shared)	Roach	1	8	Newick Park lake	C J Eydmann
1968	Carp	12	12	Pond Lye	R Faulkner
1969	Carp (mirror)	8	4	Twineham Grange pond	P Miller
1970	Carp (mirror)	11	4	Decoy Pond, Angmering	J V Manser
1971	Carp (mirror)	10	8	Twineham Grange pond	F T Bishop
1972	Barbel	4	8	R. Ouse, Wellingham Farm	S R Mahood
1973	Carp (leather)	10	0	Twineham Grange pond	F T Bishop
1974	Carp (mirror)	9	0	Twineham Grange pond	M P Ford
1975	Carp (common)	12	0	Pond Lye	A T Martin
1976	Carp	11	8	Twineham Grange pond	J A Smith
1977	Carp (mirror)	20	13	Plashett Park (Middle lake)	N Watts
1978	Carp (mirror)	23	8	Plashett Park (Middle lake)	R J Pippard
1979	Crucian	2	7	Twineham Grange pond	P W Hazeldine
1980	Rudd	2	4	Bolney Mill (South lake)	F N Brunskill
1981	Brown trout	3	1	Wiston Park lake	J A Baker

As the Shield captures reached the 1980s, the tench of Bolney Mill ponds featured often. Interestingly, the Society had operated the north and south waters here as early as 1891, its first adopted still-water, the first landlord being a Mr Richard Hamskar. In the 1980s the landlord was David Sandeman, a member of the renowned port-making family. David was a keen hunter and the water had to operate under strict wildfowl and shooting limitations. In later years the Society briefly operated two other trout ponds from Mr Sandeman. Today, the north and south ponds operate as a carp syndicate.

In 1985 Plashett middle lake produced another large carp which went on to acquire considerable notoriety. So obliging was this fish that a succession of anglers caught it, often winning the Shield. In 1988 and 1989 the winners were lady anglers, including Val Miller, wife of the coarse section curator. The minutes showed some sympathy for the carp, suggesting that if it was caught again, that it should be “pensioned off” to Plashett upper lake or to another fishery altogether.

In the 1990s Pond Lye began to yield captures of exceptionally large crucians, including at least one that was over the, then, national record. A couple of these captures won the Shield but a highly qualified fish biologist later advised that in all probability the “crucians” were, instead, uncoloured goldfish. Exactly how

these had entered Pond Lye is not clear, although fish had been introduced from an ornamental pond at Plumpton Green.

Probably the most important fishery acquisition of these years was Firle decoy pond. Although a comparatively small water, it soon began producing tench much larger than the Society had witnessed before. By 2008 Firle had lifted the Society’s best tench to over nine pounds and its carp, all of the common variety, took over the mantle of the Society’s record. Keith Russell was soon to capture the Shield with two hefty specimens of 33 and 39 pounds.

Several other milestones were reached in the most recent years. The Society’s trout anglers took the Shield for the first time in 2014 with a rainbow trout and followed up with some superb grayling captures from Hampshire’s River Itchen. Burton Mill Pond has produced the Society’s first double-figure bream and, finally, after numerous submissions for roach and rudd down the years, the Shield saw captures submitted over the magic two-pound figure.

Today, the Shield continues to be highly prized award, especially as the Society’s membership contains such a enviably high calibre of angler and has several waters containing fish to good specimen standard. For those yet to win the trophy, take the chance at the ‘Social’ each November to inspect this unique, amazing piece of carving at close-quarters.

Year	Species	lb	oz.	Water	Winner
		.			
1983	Tench	5	0	Bolney Mill (South lake)	A R Grimby
1984	Crucian	3	8	Pond Lye	D L Waller
1985	Carp (mirror)	19	0	Plashett Park	M P Ford
1986	Tench	5	0	Bolney Mill (South lake)	S R Mahood
1987	Tench	4	7	Bolney Mill (South lake)	A C Ayton
1988	Carp (mirror)	17	8	Plashett Park (Middle lake)	Mrs V F Miller
1989	Carp (mirror)	18	8	Plashett Park (Middle lake)	Mrs B Waghorn
1990	Crucian	4	2	Pond Lye	G R Jolley
1991	Carp (mirror)	20	6	Plashett Park	P A Miller
1992	Tench	5	0	Bolney Mill (South lake)	S R Mahood
1993	Crucian	4	13	Pond Lye	P Weight
1994-95	Crucian	5	10	Pond Lye	J S Parsons
1995-96	Tench	7	12	Firle	J Best
1996-97	Chub	4	6	R. Ouse, Wellingham Farm	R Brown
1997-98	Carp (common)	33	0	Firle	K Russell
1998-99	Bream	6	0	Plashett Park	C M Diplock
1999-2000	Tench	8	8	Firle	M C Wyndham
2002-03	Carp (common)	39	0	Firle	K Russell
2003-04	Chub	3	8	R. Cuckmere	S Spiers
2004-05	Roach	2	3	Twineham Grange pond	J Clark
2008-09	Tench	9	5	Firle	P Browning
2009-10	Carp (mirror)	31	0	Plashett Park (Upper lake)	S Brooker
2010-11	Grayling	3	0	R. Itchen (Easton)	R Aspinall
2012-13	Grayling	3	8	R. Itchen	R J Burbidge
2013-14	Bream	10	8	Burton Mill pond	P Ellis
2014-15	Trout (rainbow)	6	0	Wiston Park lake	R Hardin
2015-16	Roach	2	6	Pond Lye	K Russell
2016-17	Rudd	2	6	Pond Lye	V Kingsley



Challenge Shield, lower plaque reads "WJ Cunningham 24lbs Pike Pond Lye 1921"

Fishery management, fish recruitment & migration, by Keith Russell

In 1979 I became aware of a small syndicate in Sussex and close to home. The fact it was a Carp syndicate was lost on me at that time as I had no real interest in Carp fishing as most know it today. To me it was a lake I felt a home with after just the one guest fishing trip. The lake was perhaps one third complete in the dredging operations. This lake had become silted up and neglected over many years and was fast returning to dry land with a stream running through it. The excavated area of around an acre gave somewhere for the syndicate members to fish whilst additional funds were accumulated to start the next stages. Three additional excavations over a good number of years brought the lake back to a size of about 3 acres. The stock of fish were small in weight in 1979, all Carp perhaps 2lb – 3lbs maximum with just one surprise fish within the fishery that a member had donated. We never found out what the surprise fish was in weight as no member ever caught anything more than the average size of fish as they slowly progressed. Perhaps the syndicate lease holder gave us all false hope with a story. Like many now say lake X holds a 50lb fish. I had to sell some premium bonds I held at the time to get together the £30 first year's subscription payment. Funds were very tight. Mortgage, young family, wife stayed at home to look after our two boys while I departed for work leaving at 6-30am every morning not getting back home until after 7pm, sometimes not

seeing the boys awake for three or four days at a time. However our finances did improve a couple of years later as a job opportunity arose closer to home so less traveling time and most importantly more pay and I could then just about afford the subscription fee.

This is the time that I first really became interested in fishery management. With all syndicates, clubs, societies, trying to get assistance to help maintain a fishery is the most difficult part. Every fishery manager will state that about 5% of the membership will do 95% of the work. I remember at one of the first syndicate AGMs I attended it was proposed to the members that we make a regulation for each member to completed 36hrs per year with voluntary assistance to improve and move the fishery on. It was suggested that the first Sunday of each month was a work party date where the tasks to improve the fishery could be addressed. Members could just arrive on any of those first Sunday dates that fitted in with their plans with a log kept of the hours participated. This proposal was passed by those present but then near half the members departed that year so it was left to those who supported the proposal and really wanted the fishery to progress and move forward into something special. Over the next couple of year's recruitment was the key word. I was asked to take on the position of FMO. Fishery Maintenance Officer. This was rewarded with a small honorarium of £10 per year.

Some fishery management courses started in Brighton. Evening classes really in various rooms of colleges in the town, whatever was available? The late Tony Barnard of Isfield AC fame was at the forefront of these courses. Perhaps some SPS members past and present attended these courses, maybe organising as well. I considered Tony at the time to be a very clever man who no doubt had his part to play in where many of Isfields waters were acquired with some purchased. The evening class locations moved very frequently. We went out on site visits some weekends all different locations to put into practice the information acquired in the evening classes. I remember one where we had to do some net dipping to see which water insects were present along with identifying bankside vegetation. All those clubs who wanted their water to be selected handed over the lake location name. When it came to the draw, several pieces of paper were placed in the hat. Fortunately the lake closest to Brighton came out first. Our lake I'll call it. Fantastic. Not too much traveling. Good parking arrangements. A club lodge (hut) where fresh tea could be made and to sit and eat our lunch in comfort. We had running water and electricity, a table and chairs, a cooker, cutlery, cups and plates. Even a port-a-loo in those early days. I later found out that although several pieces of paper were placed in the hat they all had the same lake location written on them.

We took part in a netting operation at a lake near to Hickstead. From memory I

think it was previously an old chicken farm that had a pond or maybe a lagoon for waste. A lake was then excavated, later stocked with fish. This netting was to calculate the numbers of Bream present in the lake. The Bream first netted were marked with a dye, released and an hour or so later a net was pulled through the lake again. Additional unmarked Bream were counted, dyed, released and the process repeated. Can't now remember the formula of calculation now but it gave us an idea of the lake's Bream stock. This is where I first meet Binny Buckley of the E.A. or whatever it was called in the early 1980s along with a number of her colleagues. Bernice (Slater) as some will know is now an SPS life member.

"Our lake" as previously stated only had Carp stocked. It became very weedy after a few years. We spent numerous Sunday's clearing weed throughout the summer months with some really wild and wonderfully homemade equipment. One such weed clearing machine was set on a raft about 8ft square. We had a bicycle in part fixed to the raft. No wheels or handle bars, just a frame, saddle and peddles. Via peddle power and chain this operated three rotating arms. These arms were lowered into the water and had washing machine parts at the end that rotated. The weed was then ripped out by the root, then lifted onto the raft and cut off. Once enough weed was removed and piled on the raft and the raft was looking like it might sink, we returned to the bank to dispose and then start the process all over again. Members who have been present

on SPS waters where we have used what is known to us as “Twiddle Sticks” will realise how this operation works. However weed clearance is extremely hard work. We became aware of Grass Carp. They eat weed. We were advised “Our Lake” would require a stocking of 300 fish. We could not afford this many, so purchased just 100. Three died in transit and 97 were stocked. From memory I think they weighted 1lb-2lb each. Nothing happened for the first few months after stocking in January but when the water temperature hit a certain figure in late May they just ate everything. A once weedy lake now had nothing -- including all our cultivated lilies. Totally destroyed. Any leaves from the trees touching the water, disappeared. Any soft bankside vegetation close to the water’s edge, fully harvested.

Not too many years after, somehow, Rudd entered the lake from the inlet feeder stream. Eventually I found that a small pond upstream, slightly off of the main inlet flow, had had work undertaken during which resident Rudd had escaped. They became established in our lake very quickly -- a nuisance, especially, to those of us who spent hours surface fishing in the summer. It was decided to purchase some Pike after obtaining advice from a then well-known Pike angler and writer. This stocking of Pike was to help establish a fishery balance. He stated that for every 1,000lb of prey fish there should be 100lb of predatory fish. In effect if your largest Pike could swallow a 4lb fish that would be within your 1,000lb of prey fish. Of

course, the small predatory fish also became prey in these calculations. I have never been able to find anything to back these calculations up but can see that even if the figures are incorrect the balance aspect will work. We were fortunate that the E.A. (whatever the name back then) were removing Pike from a river somewhere so we acquired just 6 fish. The largest at 14lbs, the rest all under 6lbs. We had been informed that you can guarantee a double figure Pike is female. The “jacks” (males) rarely grow larger than 6lbs, so potentially offered breeding stock. This proved correct as the first spring following the stocking some extremely small Pike were seen in the margins.

Something else I could not quite understand at the time was that however hard we tried we could never stop some of our Carp stock from escaping over the main outfall. We had made a grill that fitted in front of this outfall that, of course, had to be cleared daily through the autumn and early winter due to the amount of leaf fall and small branches that would collect in the front rungs. Clearance was essential otherwise the footpaths would be permanently under water. If we had seriously heavy rain the secondary overflow came into play. This also had a substantial grill that required constant cleaning. The pool behind the rear of the main dam bank always had small Carp and Rudd in residence. Never found anything really large, but no doubt it was a good stocking source for the river Adur, where our outfall stream eventually reached.

This leads me on to the SPS lakes, those present and past that I know. Those lakes where the outfall feeds the River Adur. Currently this is Pond Lye – but in the recent past add Bolney Mill Ponds, Whitelands Reservoir, Wineham Grange as well as Knepp Castle on the Adur's western arm. There may well be many other lakes the Society rented in years past. Viewing my ordnance survey map numerous spots of blue, large and small litter the pages that cover Sussex many with traces of faint blue lines that eventually meet the main Adur river. These must all at some time either continuously or after periods of heavy rain have some outflow allowing either spawned eggs on loose weed, fry or adult

fish to eventually enter the main river system giving a healthy annual recruitment of new fish to the river. The only species that will not benefit from this recruitment will be natural river fish like Chub and Dace or Barbel if they are present in the river system. Those anglers who regularly fish the rivers will no doubt welcome the regular stocking our main river systems obtain. Of course, the Ouse benefits from Plashett lakes and Sheffield Park, perhaps a few browns and rainbows from the Trout Section's Possingworth Park into the Cuckmere and of course Burton Mill Pond supplies the western Rother that after a few miles connects with the Arun.



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On numerous occasions I watched unidentified small fry wash over the Firle outfall. I obtained a small meshed pond net and caught a few before they ended up in the pool below. Turned out they were Perch. The newly excavated stew ponds at Firle in 2013 had in just seven days after completion small Rudd in pond 1. Within a further ten days the Rudd were in pond 5 surviving the falls onto concrete or stone blocks. These would have all come from the house lake on the Firle Estate. Those members who have assisted SPS with netting and returning Pike, Bream and Carp to Plashett's Middle lake from the Bottom lake will know it's going to be a biannual process at Plashett. I'm therefore now convinced that every river up and down the country benefits annually from this recruitment. It must be millions of fish from a few millimetres in length to fully grown adults in just our own Sussex rivers. Nature has a fantastic way of ensuring new stock is always there. I have watched the Avon Roach project a number of times and have to congratulate those who put in the vast amount of time to ensure regular stocks of Roach are returned to the Avon. I've often thought about fixing some spawning boards in the Adur on the SPS sections to see in the resident fish use them. Time will be the greatest factor to actually be present when spawning occurs. There would be no intention of removing the spawn and growing on the fry but just to add additional spawning sites that perhaps Roach and maybe other species would use to assist future years recruitment.

Back to the syndicate lake. In 2010 unfortunately a change in direction by the lease holder to which he wished the syndicate to take meant that after near on 32 years I resigned my membership along with 7 others. Most had been members 20+ years. Two others followed a year or so later. I really enjoyed my time there and made very many friends some of whom I still see every month, sometimes more. It was a fabulous learning curve with all that was achieved from stocking, electro fishing, excavations with a Dragline or Hi-mac, building a boat, a lodge, constructing a car park, tree surgery, fencing, plumbing in a water supply and an electricity supply all legal and consented. We did almost everything with the member's skills and help. If we did not have the skills or knowledge someone knew another who did. So if you were a Sparky, Chippie, Brickie or a Spread amongst many other trades there was a role for you. A pure team effort. Work parties were extremely enjoyable, more like fun days out. That way you get the best from your volunteers. A happy workforce is the most productive. I know some SPS members who had joined the syndicate after our departure but they will never understand the camaraderie that existed within. Doubt some stayed more than one or two seasons, perhaps caught what they wanted and moved on. Back then we always stated that we would stay even if the lake lost all of its stock of fish and to build it back to what it had become. The change of direction blew it all apart. Sadly no more.

Stillwater Dry Fly Fishing, by Terry Scragg

My preferred approach to fishing our stillwaters is to use the dry fly as frequently as possible throughout the year. I also fish regularly with my son Terence and from March through to November we both use dry flies most days and find that, although they may not always outfish nymphs and other sub-surface patterns, they give us much greater satisfaction and provide opportunities to fish in a more traditional way, using flies that are imitative and attractive to trout that have learnt to feed naturally. Trout have their eyes near the top of their head and in relatively shallow lakes will constantly see flies on the surface and therefore in principle we should be able to catch trout on dries at most times of the year. Dry flies also tend to bring up the bigger fish, particularly browns and a high percentage of my catches have been brown trout.

When I began fishing stillwaters in the 1970's I took the usual route of using nymphs and other sub-surface flies but over time gradually moved to using dries. In those days using dry flies was seen as a minor tactic on stillwaters usually reserved for sedge and terrestrial time, with the occasional suggestion of traditional river patterns when olives were hatching. Change began to take place in the 1980's when innovative anglers fishing reservoirs began to develop a range of patterns that mainly represented the chironomid midge, sitting low in the surface of the water

imitating insects at the emerger stage. The new patterns included Bobs Bits, Shipman's Buzzers, Shuttlecocks and Hoppers. Similarly, the introduction of the Klinkhammer, originally tied to represent the emerging caddis on rivers was found to be equally successful on small stillwaters alongside a range of similar parachute patterns and the adoption of CdC feathers, deer and elk hair in many dry flies has revolutionised dry fly fishing. Using dries is no longer seen as a marginal activity particularly on reservoirs, but one approach among many other well-established tactics.

With this in mind modern dry flies can be divided into three main types. Flies that use surface tension to sit on the surface (Elk Hair Caddis). Flies that sit in the surface tension (Shipman's Buzzer) and finally flies that use a "parachute" to sit on or in the surface but allow the body to penetrate the water (Klinkhammer). These patterns with their different profiles cover the stages of fly life from the emerging nymph through to adult flies.

There are a range of naturals to look out for on our stillwaters and for convenience I have divided these into six main groups: midges, upwinged flies, sedges, terrestrials, corixa and damsel. These are not hard and fast categories but are helpful when you are starting out using dries and can help you narrow the choices to a limited range of dry fly patterns that imitate the natural flies likely to be hatching at a particular time of the year.

Midges

Because chironomids are so prolific and hatch throughout the year many of the newer dry and emerger patterns have been developed specifically to imitate the different stages of the life cycle of the midge and are the cornerstone of dry fly fishing on large stillwaters and reservoirs and fortunately work equally effectively on small stillwaters.

Although the buzzer is the mainstay of sub-surface fishing, the dry fly approach relies on the emerging buzzer and adult midge. Here flies such as the Shuttlecock, Shipman's Buzzers and Hatching Midge are the flies to try. Several other flies are also effective when midges are hatching including the Hopper, Klinkhammer and F-fly. As the colours of buzzers change throughout the season it is worth having your patterns in a range of colours and sizes. The main colour changes are: early spring – black, April/May – red and claret, mid-summer – olive and hares' ear and autumn and winter– black again but much smaller. Hatches take place throughout the year, mainly in the morning and evening. In the winter hatches tend to occur around mid-day as the temperature rises and the sun puts in a brief appearance. Size of flies when imitating midges:14 to 18.

Upwinged flies

Second to the midge as the season progresses are the ephemerals such as the pond and lake olives. Stillwaters have few ephemeral species so this category of flies

will be limited with the main hatch season from April through to late summer, particularly from mid-day to mid-afternoon. The range of flies that cover the main olive hatches include flies such as the CdC Hares Ear, Olive Emerger and Olive Klinkhammer. A small parachute Adams is also worth trying. Size of flies when imitating olives: 14-18

Sedges

The third group are the sedges in their different forms, with a dark sedge early in the season on some waters but the main hatch is in the summer with the large brown and black sedges through to autumn. Sedge fishing is particularly effective on summer evenings when the natural is attempting to get airborne. The range of flies include, Elk Hair Caddis, G and H Sedge and Stimulator. Size of flies when imitating sedges: 12-16

Terrestrials

The fourth large group of flies are the terrestrials including various hawthorns and gnats early in the season and beetles, caterpillars, moths and ants, either blown onto the water from surrounding fields and hedgerows or dropping from waterside trees, at any time and the daddy long legs from late summer through autumn. The heavily wooded middle lake at Colin Godmans is ideal for trying terrestrials. Size of flies range from 12s for DLL's and 14-18 for hawthorns, beetles and ants.



A selection of stillwater dry flies

Corixa

The lesser water boatman is found all year in stillwaters but is particularly active in summer and is mainly found in shallow water near weeds when surfacing to renew their oxygen supply before diving down again. There are numerous artificials including several nymphs, but for our purposes the Foam Corixa is worth trying in size 14 and 16.

Damsel

I have occasionally seen trout leap clear of the water trying to snatch a damsel flying low over the water. Whenever you see damsels skimming the surface it is worth trying the Dry Damsel as I have caught a few trout at Lower Buddington using this method so it's always worth carrying one or two in your fly box. I use this in size 10 and 12.

When the natural flies are active varies considerably with local water conditions and weather patterns and should be seen as a rough guide rather than a definitive statement. Similarly, the artificial patterns suggested are my personal choices and have worked successfully for me but no doubt other members who fish dries regularly will have their own selection of successful patterns.

Tackle

My tackle consists of a 4-weight rod with a middle to tip action that is more forgiving than fast action rods when getting takes from heavy fish, and a corresponding weight forward floating line

with a tapered poly leader and tippet with a combined length of around 12 to 14 feet usually with a single fly, although a dropper with contrasting patterns can be useful for searching the water when no rises are seen. As I mainly use small flies ranging from size 14 to 18 a fine tippet is needed if the fly is to fish naturally so I aim for a tippet diameter of between 0.14 and 0.18 giving a breaking strain in the range of 5 to 8lbs. I find fluorocarbon lines tend to sink flies too quickly for my style of fishing so I rely on low diameter mono or copolymer tippets.

Presentation

It is often said that presentation in dry fly fishing is more important than fly choice. When dry fly fishing it is essential to use some form of leadersink on the last foot or so of the leader to thoroughly degrease it as this is one of the main reasons fish will reject a fly if they see a prominent leader on the surface. If using flies that need Gink always apply the floatant first followed by leadersink as it is so easy to get some floatant on to the leader. I also use Mucillin on the last couple of feet of my fly line as this helps with lift off particularly if you want to quickly recast to rising fish.

To increase your chances of success when dry fly fishing it is helpful to try and match the pattern to the natural so that the trout will see it as food. If you attended one of the days on the Test you will remember from the kick samples that the majority of nymphs were very small.

Similarly, if you have inspected the stomach of a trout you will often see very small insects, mainly midges, that again suggest we need to use smaller flies if we are to be consistently successful. So, think about size 14's and smaller if you are to match your artificial to the average size of insects consumed by trout. I tend to use size 16 and 18 regularly as this covers a large proportion of the food items found in trout. The exception is with flies that imitate sedges, damselfly and some terrestrials where a larger hook size reflects the size of the natural.

Another important part of presentation is to ensure you adopt a stealthy approach

and keep off the skyline and avoid continually casting to one particular area. This way you are less likely to scare fish and drive them into deeper water. Stillwater trout can swim in any direction and are therefore likely to see the angler who is visible on the bank. As dry fly fishing is most successful when it is carried out at short range a quiet approach can help avoid scaring fish and driving them out of comfortable casting range. At times you will need to put out a longer cast when you see rises further out but here there can be problems at times with actually seeing subtle takes at distance with hook ups more difficult.



A brownie caught on dry fly

General approach

When bank fishing a useful tactic is to initially cast a short line as fish often patrol the margins as much of their food is found in shallow water. I've witnessed this at both Lower Buddington and Colin Godmans and caught fish a few feet from the bank. If you are quiet it is possible to see fish rising barely a rod's length from the bank, so standing well back and casting across the bank if the grass is short means that little of your fly line is on the water. Once you have cast a short line slowly extend your casts to cover more water, looking all the time for surface activity. Again, fan cast leaving the fly on the water for a minute or so and then recast. Slowly cover the water all the time looking for fish movement and be ready to cover fish rising further out. If there are no fish rising my 'go to' flies are Hoppers, Bobs Bits and Klinkhammers in size 14 or 16, tied in black, claret or fiery brown depending on the season. Concentrate hard as fish can rise to these flies when nothing appears to be moving and it is easy to miss a take, although I've often found that fish can take these flies so confidently that they can hook themselves.

When you see rises

When there are only occasional rises and you are not sure what is hatching use a general search pattern and fan cast in the area where the rises took place as it's possible you can interest the fish in your fly.

Resist the temptation to start retrieving the fly and leave it on the water for a few minutes or so before recasting. The smallest twitch is as much as you should attempt to give the impression of a fly trying to break the surface. You'll be surprised how often you can bring a fish up to inspect your fly if you leave them on the water. If you get a fish to rise but it turns away consider changing the fly, remember it's either size or colour or your leader visible on the surface. The old adage when in doubt try a smaller darker fly can make the difference. As the dry fly can bring up the larger rainbows and browns you need to be ready for strong takes and deal with heavy fish on light tippets.

If a fish rises and takes your fly don't strike – tightening is sufficient. If the trout is taking flies confidently in the surface then it is sufficient to just tighten. On the other hand, if the trout slashes at the fly, probably trying to drown it in order to take it subsurface, then you need to give it time to turn down and the hook to penetrate. Over-enthusiastic striking is one of the main reasons for missing takes. One of the advantages of dry fly fishing is the reduced risk of deep hooking. Most trout taking dries will be hooked in the scissors as the fish turns down on the fly, leading to easier unhooking so long as you have completely flattened the hook barb or tie your own flies on barbless hooks.

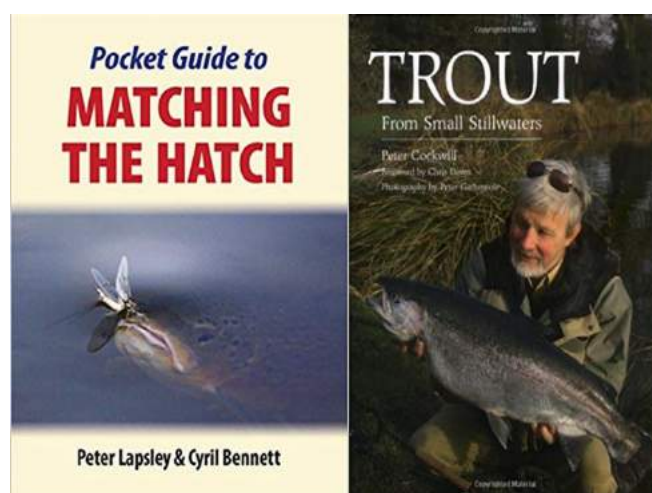
Although leaving the fly static on the water is my main approach this is not an exact science and there are other options

which I use at times. If I see fish moving in the vicinity of my fly gently drawing it across the surface can elicit a response, or a very slow figure of eight retrieve can bring results with fish following the fly and then trying to grab the fly as it reaches the bank. If there is strong wind disturbing the surface stripping a deer hair pattern, such as Muddled Hopper or Daddy, through wavelets can also bring a response. In calmer water when using a CdC pattern a short pull can sink the fly and then as it pops up again it can attract the fish's attention. When sedges are on the water later in the evening here a series of short twitches and even skating a fly over the top of the water can lead to slashing takes as the trout tries to catch the fly before it leaves the water.

Alternatively, if fish are rising regularly try to work out what they are taking (refer to the main naturals and hatch times) and tie on an imitative pattern. Here a knowledge of the rise forms can be a great help. This will give you an advantage as you can adapt your methods to suit the conditions. If you see a fish rising and it's in your casting range cast and drop the fly in front of the last rise form. Don't cast at the actual rise as the fish will have moved on. If you can observe the direction of fish movement this can help you place your fly in the right place. Fish often move against the breeze which can give you an idea where to place your fly. Again, don't immediately start retrieving, give the fish time to find your fly with the occasional twitch to attract their attention. If you fail to get interest consider changing the fly as

it may be colour, size or how it is sitting in the water that results in lack of interest.

It can also help if you are able to identify what sort of rises are taking place. Are they gentle sips, barely susceptible at the surface which suggests the fish are taking emergers caught in the surface tension or are there positive head and tail rises to nymphs heading for the surface. Or in the evening slashing rises which means sedges are hatching. To help understand rise forms it's worth purchasing a small book *Matching the Hatch* by Peter Lapsley and Cyril Bennett which is very helpful if you are learning to understand the different rise forms and the range of flies that may work at different times of the season. Another book worth dipping into is Peter Cockwill's *Trout From Small Stillwaters* which although an introductory book has some helpful short sections on dry fly fishing. Also keep an eye open for articles on dry fly fishing in the game fishing magazines.



I carry a small pair of binoculars which are useful for scanning larger waters for fish movement. It is surprising how often fish are sipping flies on the surface that barely register on the water and are easily

missed at distance. Similarly bulges in the water or flattening of the surface indicate that fish are feeding near the surface and can be difficult to spot particularly on larger waters.

Flat calms

One area that can cause problems is when there is no wind on cloudless warm days and the water is a flat calm. Flat calms can be challenging and here the small emerger reigns supreme as naturals will have difficulty breaking through the surface tension. A fly that sits in the surface film such as the CdC Shuttlecock, Shipman's Buzzer, Klinkhammer or Midge Emerger can make the difference. Flat calms also mean delicate casting with a longer leader and light tippets and the smallest flies. When retrieving avoid creating a wake on the surface which alerts the trout and ideally lift off cleanly and recast to reduce disturbance. It is also essential to thoroughly degrease the tippet so that it avoids looking like a large piece of rope on the glassy surface.

Another area where flat calms can cause problems is when you need to cast across it to reach fish rising in rippled water. The action of wind can concentrate food in particular areas of a stillwater and where trout are likely to be found moving upwind to intercept food that is brought to them. If there is a flat calm between you and the rising fish you risk alerting them as your leader and fly line land in clear water. Try to find a location where you can cast directly into rippled water where the fish will be less wary. If you can also cast

across the wind your fly will also be more visible to fish as they move upwind and have a better chance of successful hooking. The one thing to try and avoid is your fly dragging when the wind puts a bow in your line as this will put the fish off taking your fly.

Dries in winter

Although dry fly fishing is my main tactic from spring through to late autumn, I also take every opportunity to use it in the colder months too. Midges hatch throughout the year and although rises may be fewer in the day due to lower temperatures, when the sun is at its height around midday it is not unusual to experience a rise to buzzers. Here a Shuttlecock, Shipman's Buzzer or Hatching Midge size 16 or 18 can be successful and adds to the variety and enjoyment of fishing stillwaters throughout the year.

If you haven't fished dry fly before it's a skill worth developing as it will lead to great satisfaction knowing that you are deceiving the trout with an artificial the fish recognises as a food source and in turn leads to a greater understanding of the behaviour of fish, natural flies and different rise forms. I hope this article is a helpful introduction to dry fly fishing and will encourage you to have a few dries in your fly box and provide another option when you see fish rising.

I'm sure if you catch on the dry fly you will want to use it again whenever conditions are favourable. Maybe it's time to leave the nymphs at home!