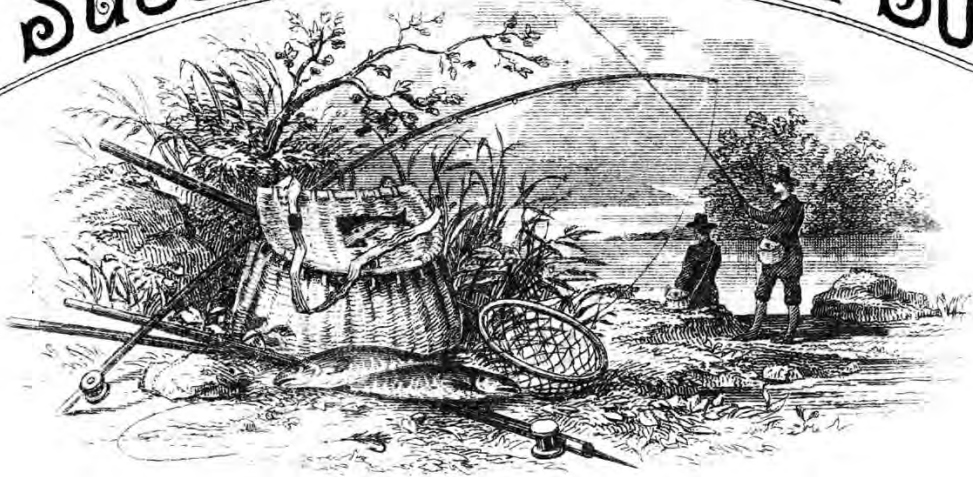


# The Sussex Piscatorial Society.



Founded 1891

# Sussex Piscator

Annual Magazine of  
Sussex Piscatorial Society Ltd.

Issue XII, Spring 2021



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

As noted in last year’s issue, John Harris has been conducting research completed in recent years at the East Sussex Record Office. The text of his work chronicling the SPS Meeting Minutes 1891-2012 is now available to any interested member. The hard-copy book version was on display at the 2019 Autumn Social and will be on display again next time we can all meet together.

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

## Welcome to Sussex Piscator 2021, Issue XII

Well, what a strange year that was. I'm just refreshing my memories of putting together Issue XI in late January 2020 and have clear memories of compiling it while glancing, with some trepidation, at the news from Wuhan. With luck, by the time you are reading this in Spring 2021, the vaccination programme will have made the difference we all expect, and life will have returned somewhat to normal.

A club with such a large membership can't help but have been affected by this event. We have many older male members, a particularly vulnerable category, and I'm sure many of us also have family and friends working in those occupations more exposed to risk – not least our wonderful NHS. Others, of course, will have suffered financially due to economic impact of lockdown, and we've all missed out on the social occasions we once took for granted. Whatever your circumstances I sincerely hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well, and that we're all now looking to a brighter future at last.

I'd like to thank all our Committee Members, Waterkeepers and other officers of the club who have kept things running over the last twelve months. A few hours by one of our waters has always been something to treasure just for the opportunity to escape the outside world and find that wonderful experience of

calm, with the potential bonus of interruption by a hungry trout or even some wildlife wandering by. This year, more than any, I've valued the moments spent in fresh air and solitude on our banks. Fish or no fish, it's been an absolute sanity saver.

As ever I'm always happy to receive articles so please feel free to send items by 1 Feb 2022. New members or experienced old hands, all are welcome. Whether it's reflections on membership, a memoir, a discussion of environmental issues, poetry, puzzles, angling tips, fishing diaries, tackle talk, an opinion piece, a guide to one of our waters – anything goes.

Now that we've gone digital rather than print it's easier to include pictures, too. Past or present, all are welcome, and they look great scattered through the various articles. So many thanks to Chris Coughtrey for introducing SPS's next generation of members, and Garry Christopher for some beautiful wildlife shots taken with a mobile phone. I was also sent a fantastic picture from days gone by of Donald Leney stocking Wiston with trout in the 1960s, which you'll see on the following page. All contributions welcome.

Tight lines!

Dr. Jon Stewart

[jonsleeper@btopenworld.com](mailto:jonsleeper@btopenworld.com)



Donald Leney from SPS Trout Section stocks Wiston Lake in the 1960s

## SPS in Trout & Salmon Magazine

Congratulations to SPS Trout Section who were featured in the April 2021 issue of *Trout & Salmon*. It's a brilliant article across nine whole pages and Lower Buddington looks stunning. Copies available from <https://www.greatmagazines.co.uk/trout-and-salmon-april-2021>



**S**OMEWHERE OFF A COUNTRY lane in deepest Sussex, there is a locked gate on the edge of a wood. You wouldn't give it a passing thought, until you see someone, dressed to conceal, opening the padlock. Someone discreet, with a secret to hide, who closed the gate behind them and drove on through the wood, out of sight.

The mysterious figure would be a member of the Sussex Piscatorial Society, a closely guarded, publicity-shy fishing club. He or she has probably taken the afternoon off and has a secluded lake all to themselves. They might take the punt out. They might not. They will be enjoying time, space and peace.

The Sussex Piscatorial Society was formed in 1851 in Brighton when the town was enjoying rapid growth, its population rising from 50,000 in 1841 to 123,000 in 1901 (it's now nearly 300,000). Twenty-two people attended the club's inauguration at the King's Road Archway on the seafront – Arch 106 would become its temporary headquarters – including the mayor of Brighton, alderman

Samuel H Soper, who was appointed chairman (as well as honorary treasurer), and the society's founder, William F Booth, a Brighton restaurateur, who became the first honorary secretary. Other attendees, most of whom were Brighton residents, included bankers, solicitors, hoteliers, tradesmen, shop owners and councillors. For years, the society operated an entry rule restricting membership to Sussex residents.

Early members complained coarse, trout and a few sea anglers, but there was no segregation of trout and coarse affairs until 1923 when the society was – as it is today – split by discipline. In its early years – before the internal combustion engine – members would travel to the fishing by train, followed by a horse-drawn carriage to the wateride. The society negotiated discounted railway tickets from The London, Brighton & South Coast Railway Company, also known as 'the Brighton line'. From as early as 1893, the society reared its own trout with the help of Surrey Trout Farm. Proprietor Mr Andrews supplied ova for hatching by the society in Brighton's public aquarium. The fish were then reared in the town's Queen's Park public lake.

Beautifully kept banks and simple benches help members enjoy the hours.







## **Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme (ANLRS)**

### **Introduction by Clive Hodges**

Fishing line recycling is very close to my heart having spent a lifetime re-spooling reels and disposing of my old line in the general rubbish. Around 30 years ago I read an article in a magazine suggesting that discarded fishing line would be less hazardous to nature if the line was cut into short lengths before going in the bin. I am pleased to say we have come a long way since then. I have been given kind permission to reproduce the following from the ANLRS web site where you can find more information about this ground breaking scheme ([www.anglers-nlrs.co.uk](http://www.anglers-nlrs.co.uk)).

### **Background**

Recycling is part of all our daily lives and the benefits of preventing line ending up in landfill or being incinerated are obvious. As anglers, we treasure the environments that we fish in and the wildlife found around them, so line recycling demonstrates the responsibility of the angling community towards the issue of unwanted or lost line to the public.

### **How Did the Scheme Start?**

The original scheme was the first line recycling project of its kind in the UK, founded in 2016 by a volunteer lead organisation, Local Independent Sea Anglers (LISA) and involved a few tackle shops in Sussex. LISA, working in conjunction with Global Ghost Gear Initiative, had identified a viable route for fishing line to be recycled. After the positive success of the local collections it became apparent that anglers, far and wide, along with the tackle industry were keen to get involved.

To develop the scheme further it was decided that a clear 'national identity' which covered all angling disciplines, was needed and the scheme slogan of “Something the whole of angling can agree on” was born. LISA members launched the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme (ANLRS) in early 2018. It remains a joint LISA/GGGI project which is run on the same, purely voluntary basis. Funding the scheme comes via donations from anglers, tackle shops, fisheries and manufacturers.

Within the first year of being launched over 200 tackle shops have signed up to the ANLRS along with over 50 fisheries, angling clubs, charter boats and some manufacturers have pledged their on-going support. Since its launch the scheme is also working with the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust to investigate collaborative projects that will expand the scheme and its impact.

Recently the scheme has been approached by organisations outside of angling that carry out beach cleans and litter collecting events around waterways to help with disposal of angling related litter and working partnerships are being developed to do this. A recent partnership was formed with the Torbay Cleaner Coasts Initiative to work together to ensure marine waste plastics and fishing lines they recover are recycled properly through the scheme.

### **How Can Fishing Line Be Collected for Recycling?**

The scheme offers this in several ways;

- Recycling Bins - tackle shops have a bin where anglers can deposit waste line
- Recycling Points - placed at fishing venues so anglers can deposit waste line whilst fishing
- Posted Returns – anglers return line to the ANLRS via postal / courier services

### **What Can Be Recycled and What Happens to It?**

There are many forms of lines used in angling disciplines and after discussing these with the recycling companies we can currently recycle the following;

Nylon Monofilament

Braided lines / Fly backing

Fly Lines

Empty Plastic Line Spools

The scheme has engaged with specialist recyclers in Europe and the UK to enable the recycling of the lines and plastic spools collected.

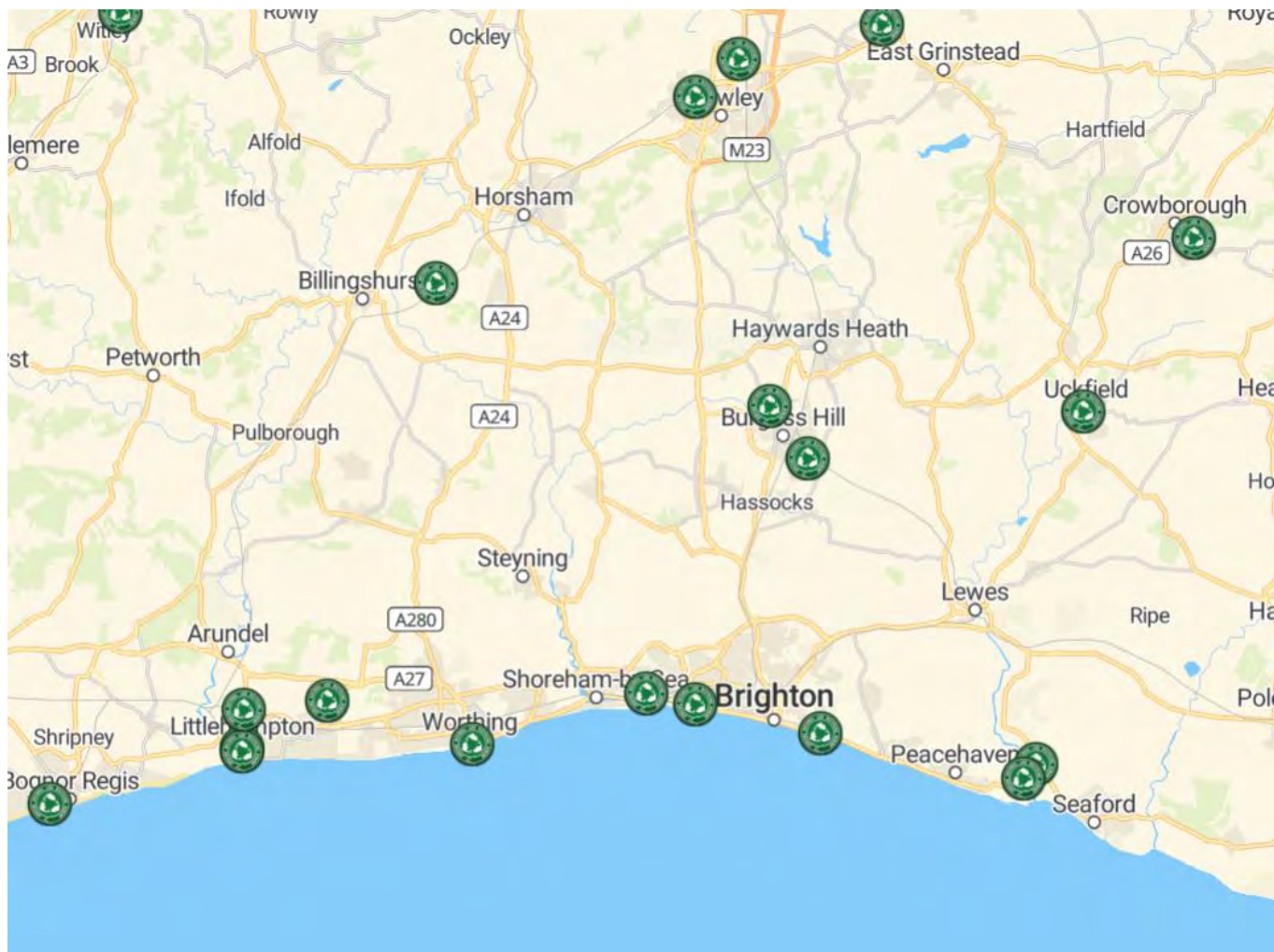


Once returned the line and spools are sent off to the UK recycler it is combined with other hard to recycle plastics to create a plastic board. This is then used to create various products such as recycling stations, rod stands and waste bins. . It is our aim to get the recycled material to be used in the production of angling related products such as polarised fishing glasses frames.

In what has become a natural step after various conversations with angler and the industry, the ANLRS is currently working on expanding the project to include the single use plastics, mixed beach clean plastics and discarded commercial fishing nets so commonly found on the UK coast line.

### Bin Locations

There are many participating tackle shops across the UK where bins are set aside which are dedicated to the collection of discarded line and now spools. Here is a map showing the coverage across the south of the country. If your local tackle shop isn't yet participating then please to encourage them to contacts ANLRS direct to become involved with the scheme. Contact details are available vis the web site mentioned above.



Line bins are now provided along Brighton seafront. This one is in Hove, at The Lawns Café.





## A Personal Perspective by Clive Hodges

I have been aware of the scheme for a few years now and it was the driving factor, together with their organised beach cleans behind my joining the LISA group in 2018.

I was keen to find out more about the scheme. As with many positive angling initiatives if you do a bit of digging you find passionate people who have both the vision and the drive to make things happen and ANLRS is no different.

The enthusiasm of this small group quickly rubs off and my angling shed now has bags of nylon, braid and empty line spools. A separate container holds the offcuts of nylon that are generated when rig tying which is simply added to the larger volume of discarded nylon line from respooling prior to my visits to my local tackle shop, Lagoon Bait and Tackle in Hove.

I have even helped out with assembling the impressive ANLRS stand at the Farnborough fishing tackle show in 2019. It was reassuring, on the day where other stands were being set up to see how well known the scheme was known throughout the tackle trade.

I would encourage any SPS member who is not yet recycling their old line to get involved. We all like to visit tackle shops so it is easy, with just a little thought ahead of your next visit, to take in your old line and empty line spools in order to help to keep it out of landfill sites so that it can be recycled into an ever-widening range of novel products.

## HOW MUCH WE HAVE COLLECTED





Heron at Pond Lye, by Garry Christopher



## **“Because of what you do...” Andy Payne**

### **Baiting strategies for bigger hits of fish.**

As an angling coach I'm often asked, “Why do some folks catch more than others, are they just more lucky?” A lucky angler, it is said catches occasional in-spite of what they do while a good angler catches often because of what they do.

I guess that all of us would like to be the best angler that we can and catch our target as often as possible. We cannot completely eliminate the element of luck of course but we can do much to turn things in our favour.

In the following I will begin to outline the most worthwhile and smartest efforts which all of us can make in an attempt to become “good anglers” who catch by design.

Whether it's the romantic tradition of a red tipped quill fished next to the marginal lilies or matching, multiple rods cast clinically to the top of a bar at exactly 97.52m that draws us to fishing on a particular day I think that we would all prefer to catch six sparkling specimens rather than just one before we wander happily home for a well-earned supper.

The notion of multiple catches or “big-hits” of fish is attractive to the hunter in all of us; we all seem to remember our red-letter days and our fish of a lifetime moments with great fondness and it is these that we reminisce about with fellow anglers and anyone else willing to listen.

While we can do little to predict when the fish of our dreams will cross the landing net cord we can do much to enhance our chances of catching bigger numbers of fish on a particular day. To achieve this we must do our utmost to ensure that many factors are accounted for and controlled; once this complex flock of ducks is in a tidy row we can be more confident of better catches.

The single most important factor that we must consider is that the fish must be present in sufficient numbers in a venue to make a big hit possible. Once you have established that they are there to be caught it is time to develop your strategy, this begins with consideration of the following variables:

Time of year

Weather conditions

Size and nature of venue

Stock density

Angling pressure

Your available time

Your available budget

Once these considerations have been made we can get going on the things which, I for one enjoy almost as much as the capture itself.

Learn as much as you can about your chosen water from catch records, fellow anglers and the weekly press.

If you can gain access to the water prior to fishing and you are not disturbing other anglers I would recommend that you begin with a survey of the venue, for this I would employ every possible strategy at my disposal including Google Earth, sonar "fish finder" and a marker rod. If I can gain access to a boat so much the better. Once I feel that I know the water my first (educated) guesses can be made with regard to fish location.

Look out for depth changes, both gullies and bars. Find the silt pockets in hard bottomed waters and the hard patches in silty waters, get your bait on these. Don't neglect the margins or obvious, visible features like weed beds, lily pads and reed lines; all fish love these habitats and will feed among them.

Nothing beats seeing fish so be at the water with polarizing glasses and a pair of binoculars at the classic dawn & dusk feeding times as often as you can.

Don't neglect to talk to anglers who are on the water about their catches and don't be shy about watching folks fishing, especially if they are blanking or catching consistently.

Once you have established where and when you are going to fish it is time to decide which angling approach to adopt. It is time now to make this decision in terms of catching efficiency rather than aesthetic or romantic notions.

The factors to consider should come as the answers to the following questions:

At which time/s of day will the fish feed?

How best can I attract the fish to feed?

How best can I hook a feeding fish?

How best can I land a hooked fish?

The answers to these questions will determine your choice of tackle and technique, be it feeders at range or a float at your feet.

Now that you have made decisions about where and how to fish it is time to devise your baiting strategy. Put simply what we want to do is to get the fish feeding & keep them on the feed for as long as we want to catch them.

The best way to do this is probably the application of "Match Angling Techniques" adapted to our chosen fishing style and specie. We are not subject to the same constraints as our competitive brethren; we are not competing with others and we can choose the time & place that we fish.



We can draw much from their expertise though particularly in the realm of “keeping fish on the munch”. Truly big hits of fish can come when an angler sets up a competitive feeding environment, it is then that more fish are more likely to make the mistake of taking our baited hook.

I will attempt now to revisit an old baiting analogy that once featured schoolboys and sweets, I have adapted it for a 21st century audience:

Imagine that I visit the zoo taking with me a couple of kilos of peanuts. Upon arrival at the monkey house I have choice of how to feed the caged inhabitants. I could throw all of the food into the cage in one go & enjoy ten minutes of monkey mayhem followed by the sound of satiated simians snoozing OR I could throw the nuts in five at a time and gradually build up and maintain a competitive feeding situation where the bigger, stronger beasts would begin to dominate. Imagine the situation I could engineer if I threw the next 5 nuts in just as 4 of the last 5 had been consumed, I could keep these creatures scrabbling for scraps until I had none left to give.

While fish are more fickle than monkeys and the number in your swim will decrease as you catch them I think that this model holds true. I recommend therefore that in pursuit of a bigger bag of fish that you establish a suitable bed of feed which you supplement little & often, moderating your feed rate in terms of your bite rate.

I still tend to follow the sage advice given to me many years ago. "Put six balls of ground bait in before you set up, once fishing add a handful after every bite, the balls need to be marbles in January and tennis balls in June".

I will leave you to consider the advice I have given so far and hope that it leaves you eager to read the next chapter in a future Piscator, in the meantime fish with thought & be lucky.



## Lockdown Flies. Terry Scragg

Lockdown has meant I have been shielding due to health issues and have had very little fishing opportunities over the last year, although I did make a few trips to our stillwaters following lockdown and tested the flies I tied during the period of enforced isolation. Although lockdown was frustrating it turned into an opportunity to spend time doing the next best thing to fishing which was to browse fishing books and magazines and read about other anglers exploits and the flies they use. This led to the idea of tying some new flies that I could use once I was able to get back on the water. Although I have tied far too many flies during lockdown, I have chosen three examples for this article. A dry, the Black Sedgehog, an emerger, the Deer Hair Emerger and the ever-popular Damsel nymph, albeit a more imitative marabou pattern. All flies are tied on debarbed Kamasan hooks.

### Black Sedgehog

The Sedgehog which had its origins as a wet fly in Orkney and was popularised by Stan Headley, a well-known loch angler who writes regularly in *Trout and Salmon*. It seems to be an all-purpose fly used either wet or dry, and particularly as a dropper fly on a wet fly cast. I have used the Sedgehog as a dry in the past on Lower Buddington and found it particularly effective in the evenings when the sedges were hatching and also cast under trees to tempt trout feeding on terrestrials. The Black Sedgehog is a simpler variant with a dense deer hair body and dubbed seal fur tied over the roots of the hair as it is tied along the hook shank in sections. I got the idea of the fly from Rob Denson whose 'Trout Fly of the Month' column in *Trout and Salmon* featured a Black Hog and is pictured on his website which describes his flies and how he fishes them ([www.robdenson.co.uk](http://www.robdenson.co.uk)). I tied this fly in a range of sizes as the larger ones can imitate terrestrials and the smaller size midges. There are lots of examples of variants of this fly being tied on YouTube. A bit of judicious clipping of the deer hair if it gets out of control may be necessary, although I can assure you that a badly tied fly doesn't affect its ability to catch trout!

Hook: B170 or B175, 12-16.

Thread: Black

Body: Black seal fur,

Wing: Black deer hair

## **Deer Hair Emerger (DHE)**

The DHE is the brainchild of Bob Wyatt who fishes in New Zealand with his flies described in his book *What Trout Want*. A book full of interesting ideas and well worth a look. Various dressings are used for this fly with hare's ear and seal fur as examples in a range of colours related to particular waters and seasonal changes. The profile of the fly with the hook hanging below the surface tempts the trout into believing they are taking a pupa ready to hatch - what Bob Wyatt calls a 'prey image'. The weight of the hook and the amount of deer hair is important in order that the fly easily penetrates the surface to imitate the emerging natural but does not totally submerge. A smear of Gink on the deer hair helps keep it on the surface if necessary. As most of the fly activity in winter is small dark midges then a black or sooty olive colour works well for the body of the fly. I tied the fly on a grub hook as this provides the ideal shape for the emerging buzzer. There is a YouTube video of this fly being tied which is worth watching - just search for 'Bob Wyatt Deer Hair Emerger'.

Hook: B100, 12-16

Thread: Black or brown, leave a strand at the bend and wind back to the thorax as a rib

Body: Black, dark olive, fiery brown seal fur, or hare's fur

Wing: Roe deer hair

## **Marabou Damsel**

Although I prefer to use dry flies and emergers as often as possible throughout the year I also enjoy using nymphs when surface activity is slow, particularly in the colder months. There are many versions of the damsel nymph in books and magazines as well as demonstrations on YouTube, but the version I have chosen is by Peter Gathercole from his book *Fly-tying Bible* which is a more imitative fly than some of the large colourful creations such as the Blue Flash Damsel. I have followed his tying demonstrations in many publications and have tied a variant (a word with a completely new meaning since COVID-19!) that includes elements from several examples he featured in the now sadly defunct *Trout Fisherman*.

Trout in catch and release waters quickly become accustomed to feeding naturally and a smaller more subtle coloured fly can often attract the trout when more colourful flies are rejected so it's worth carrying a few in your fly box if your regular damsel fails to attract takes.

My example is a damsel nymph for winter in dark olive marabou with a body and tail just over an inch or so in length which is closer to the size of the natural nymph. The tail is approximately hook length and is still sufficient to show the wriggling motion that is so important in this fly. In attempt to more accurately imitate the natural I also added some trigger points such as prominent eyes and feather fibre legs. As the season progresses the natural goes through several colour changes so it's worth having the nymph in range of colours and I have tied a dark green version as well. You can also tie a brighter colour on a lighter hook in summer and fish it high in the water and twitch it across the surface to mimic the behaviour of the nymph as it heads for vegetation to climb out of the water and transpose into a fly.

Hook: B830, 12. B400 for a lighter nymph in the summer.

Thread: Dark brown

Tail and body: Dark olive marabou plumes. Tie as slim as possible

Rib: Fine gold wire. If you want to weight the fly you could continue the wire under the thorax for several turns to enable a sink and draw style retrieve

Wing case: PT fibres or olive brown feather fibre

Wings: Brown partridge fibres divided by the wing case

Eyes: Tiny beads held in place by melted sea fishing mono and tied figure of eight on the shank of the hook. Alternatively melt the ends of the sea fishing mono into eyes.

### **Tying these flies**

I don't get too obsessed about absolute accuracy, or exact materials when it comes to tying flies and often use the examples in books and online as a starting point with whatever materials I have available. The main thing to aim for is broadly overall colour, shape and size and how the fly sits on or in the water based on whatever natural you are trying to imitate. This is often sufficient to attract the trout's attention. If you fish throughout the winter then subtle colours reflect insects at this time of the year so I tend to tie flies for this period of the season around black, dark olive brown or dark green. Probably just as important is a light outfit with delicate casts and a stealthy approach so that you don't scare the fish before it's had a chance to inspect your fly!



## **The results**

I am pleased to report that these flies have all produced results during a few trips to Colin Godmans Farm with my son Terence taking both browns and rainbows. The dry flies have typically attracted browns whilst the nymphs have drawn interest from rainbows. My first outing with Black Sedgehog resulted in one of my best brownie's from Bircheham lake in early November. I carefully fan cast a couple of rod lengths from the bank with only a light ripple on the water and within minutes the brown had risen and taken the fly in the scissors. We both took browns on the DHE in the same session cast further out and left to drift on the stiff breeze requiring little more than a brief tightening of the line to hold the fish as the fly was engulfed. We used the damsel nymph on Starton, where delicate short casts around the vegetation which abounds on this lake, and is the natural home of damsel nymphs, attracted several rainbows. As this nymph is only lightly weighted by the hook it is often taken on the drop. Also, don't ignore short casts along the margins as damsel nymphs inhabit this type of habitat where there is thick vegetation.

## **Postscript**

The opportunity to visit our stillwaters turned out to be a brief interlude as we are now in another national lockdown so I'm back shielding and await the vaccine and hopefully some kind of normality. All those myriad flies I have tied will have to wait to be tested, but to end on a positive note at least it will be warmer when I do get back on the bank and fly life will be more in evidence which is worth waiting for!

Tight lines and a better 2021!

Terry Scragg

## Family fun on SPS waters



Toby Coughtrey (aged 6) with a handsome Wellingham tench



Charlie Coughtrey (aged 10) with a Wellingham perch



Dad, Chris, with a pair of 8lb tench

## **Return to the Beginning. Sam Moor**

*Suddenly, the stillness broke. First with a muffled 'Whomph!' from below the surface of the lake and then a split second later with the sweet unmistakable sound of a singing clutch. From my peaceful gaze across the lake I was pulled into a new state of pure readiness. My rod, previously lifeless, was now violently arched with line streaming urgently from the reel. I had been resting my mind on the water but now it was time for action; for from stillness always comes movement eventually. I lunged for the rod and leaned into whatever creature was responsible for this most welcome breaching of the peace.*

*It was a Carp of course, as yet unseen but certainly not unfelt. Through the conduit of my rod I could sense little subtlety as the fish simply steamed off in a relentless bid for a large bed of lilies off to my right. Clamping down on the spool I applied some serious side strain and with the line singing its eerie song in the warm September breeze I managed to turn the depth-dwelling antagonist just as it started to plough into the outermost fronds; the water boiled. Thus dissuaded the fish now began to charter a new course kiting round toward a gnarly old sunken tree out to my left. A wood pigeon with a somewhat bemused look on its face watched on from a perch that protruded from the end of the submerged canopy and as the fish drew steadily closer he took flight in a clumsy flap of feathers to escape the ensuing watery drama.*

*Again, but with a little less pressure than before, the fish's plan was arm-achingly foiled just shy of his sanctuary and for a few brief moments there seemed to be a juddering stalemate of sorts, then everything ground to a halt. For a while time seemed to stand still and whispers of doubt stole into my mind: Was he snagged? Would the hook hold? Were my knots sound? I took a deep deliberate breath and slowly exhaled. Now more relaxed I changed the angle of pull and applied just a touch more pressure: the fish kicked out a welcome reply.*

*Slowly but surely I began to gain some line and I knew that the tables had just turned in my favour. The fish seemed to sense this too and began to plod about most belligerently. I continued to gain ground, guiding him painstakingly into the reed-fringed margins and then eventually into the arms of the waiting net. A mixture of relief and elation washed over me. It was just then that I heard a noise behind me and I turned to see a little boy from the farm on the other side of the lake scrambling down rather hurriedly into my swim.*

*'What have you caught?!' he exclaimed, visibly excited.*

*'It's a Carp,' I replied, 'come and have a look at him.' Carefully lifting the net out the water I turned and gently lowered my prize on to the mat. Peeling back the sodden folds of mesh revealed something that I hadn't seen for a long time.*

*'It's massive!' the boy shouted as he looked down wide eyed with wonder, 'I didn't know fish grew that big!' he added.*



*'This is just a small one!' said I and the boy's eyes grew wider. We both gazed at the beautiful long bar of gold in front of us. It was a splendid Wildie of about 11lbs. A lean, mean, fighting machine and pristine in every way; my first carp in many years and a most welcome sight indeed. After removing the hook with the utmost care, I gently slipped the carp back into the lake allowing the boy one last good look before the fish disappeared into the depths with an effortless flick of its tail. Finally, I was fishing again and it was good to back!*

Like so many of us, I have loved fishing since I was knee high to a grass hopper. Back in the day, well over twenty years ago, I had evolved into a 'Serious Carp Angler'. Being at University at the time meant I had long holiday periods and as such this allowed me to make frequent extended fishing pilgrimages back to the lakes of my native Essex. To have so much time was a luxury and even though I had hardly any money (I used my student loans to buy fishing gear), a long list of text books to read and essays to write, the lure of big carp was too powerful to ignore. Indeed, it took precedence.

Those were halcyon days and I met some great people on the handful of small syndicates I was fortunate to be a member of. A few of those anglers went on to notch up some great achievements in the fishing world. I managed to do OK and ended up becoming a field-tester for Nash Tackle for a time. During this period I learned a valuable lesson about fishing, that being to innovate, not imitate. Like many things in life however this is much easier said than done.

Unfortunately, all good things come an end. Just as I was preparing for my finals at University and planning to take on a couple of serious new lakes post-graduation, my Mum died of cancer. I was still quite young at the time and the loss shook me to the core. Subsequently, my desire to go fishing vanished.

One day soon after I was suddenly taken by a desperate urge to find more meaning in life and rather rashly sold all of the fancy fishing gear I had so painstakingly accrued over the years. With this money I would fund a trip to China and throw myself wholeheartedly into my martial arts training, another life-long passion of mine.

The rest as they say is history but during all the years that followed that peculiar fishing feeling, that uncanny piscatorial sentiment that had been present for my whole life, never left me completely. Instead it subsided to a quiet whisper and just as the tiniest trickle of a stream given enough time will wear its way through the hardest rock, this whisper steered my course most discretely back to the water without my knowing. I often travelled to either teach or train and wherever I was in the world I would have the most vivid, intricately detailed dreams about ancient carp in heavenly lakes; lakes full of depth and mystery. After such dreams I would always awake to feel that some crucial element was missing from my life. The pang in my heart made me hope that some day, some how, I would get back to the water and wet a line.

Things have a funny way of turning out. About seven years ago I was inadvertently led back into fishing while exploring the lush Sussex countryside a few miles north of the little village where we live. I love walking and prior to setting off on a particular route on a particular day I had noticed on the OS map that I would pass a long, dammed lake of about 5 acres that looked to be immersed in woodland. Seeing this ignited something within me and my skin tingled; a feeling of excitement that I hadn't felt for years, apart from in the best of my dreams. This peculiar feeling only grew when about half way through said walk I came upon a long rolling field surrounded by ancient, gnarled oaks; the formidable trees standing motionless like stoic guardians of some secret treasure that lay beyond.

Reaching the bottom of the field the view opened out to reveal an overgrown dam wall with an old farm track running along it. To my great pleasure I discovered that this was preceded by a long lush estate lake, wooded on either side and resplendent with big sets of lilies and myriad fallen trees, their stray branches poking up out of the water like so many skeletal fingers reaching for the sky.

I was awestruck, for here right in front of me was the lake of my dreams. Consumed with a heady intrigue I picked my way along one of the overgrown banks and after just a few minutes of peering about I noticed a small group of carp lazily nosing along some marginal reeds that were overshadowed by a huge bramble bush. They were not monsters but the sight of them clicked something deep inside of me back into place.

I raced home that day and started to make enquiries. It didn't take long before I had discovered the details for the small syndicate that controlled the water and applied to become a member. Fortunately, they had one place left and I signed up for the remainder of the season with boyish eagerness.

The next hurdle was the significant matter of having absolutely no fishing tackle to speak of. This was rapidly remedied and after a few days of perusing an online second-hand tackle retailer, I managed to pick up a pair of half decent rods, some old-school Shimano Baitrunners and all the basic sundries that I would need for some short day-sessions. As for bait, I simply sourced some good quality Tiger nuts and hemp seed which in the past had been firm favourites of mine.

This process of tackle reacquisition tickled me immensely. Back in the day I had owned the whole gamut of high-tech, high-spec gear, of which quite naively I was very proud. It was a wonderful juxtaposition to trudge along the lane on that first trip (which I described for you above) with only the essential essentials and barely a brand name in sight. It was very liberating in fact.

I fished that beautiful little lake on a regular basis for a couple of years and it served as the most delightful entry point back into fishing. It turned out that the lake used to be fished by Chris Yates and one which he fondly remembers in his book 'Casting at the Sun'. I used to relish this when creeping about the water; I was following in the footsteps of one of my favourite anglers.

To my delight the lake was rarely fished and most of the time I had it to myself, especially since my flexible working life saw me fishing mostly mid-week. This luxury allowed me lots of opportunity to experiment with different approaches around the water without bothering anybody else, whether that be spombing a bed of particles to the inaccessible far margins (I hadn't even seen a Spomb before this), stalking fish 2 feet out from the dam wall or wading my bait out to some inconspicuous spot, feeling the lake bed for minute discrepancies with my bare feet. Over time it dawned on me that I now felt much more relaxed about my fishing than I ever did in the old days. This gave me the freedom of mind to be more experimental and most importantly, the freedom just to sit back, enjoy the angling process and simply let things unfold naturally whilst I immersed myself in nature's endless bounty. And do you know something? The less I tried, the more I enjoyed myself.

One thing that I noticed was that with all of my martial arts training my angling skills had improved in a number of key ways; latent learning is a powerful thing. With better body mechanics and a much calmer and focused mind I found that my casting was infinitely better than before. Indeed, I found that I now loved casting as if it were some kind of beautiful art form. There's nothing so satisfying as putting your mind onto some tricky spot and being able to hit it consistently. Sometimes just for fun, I would practise my under-arm casts and spend an hour aiming for different leaves as they floated by cajoled across the surface of the water by the meandering wind.

I also noticed that my perception and observational skills were much better; my meditation training allowing me to see the lake and its environs clearly and without wishful bias. In angling (and life) we often see things as we want them to be rather than as they actually are and this can cause all kinds of problems. By being objective and relaxed I was able to enjoy my fishing in a profound way. It really doesn't matter what you read or see in videos, it is from your own direct experience that true learning is formed and so during this period I revelled in my fishing and had the greatest of times, like some kind of middle-aged Huckleberry Finn with a penchant for carp.

It didn't take long of course before I progressed to doing overnight sessions. With no brolly, bivvy or bedchair to speak of, I used to sleep hovering over my rods in a hammock strung up between two trees or hunkered down on the bank in my old sleeping bag. I did eventually invest in some bite alarms but it took quite some time however to give up my home-made bobbins that consisted of two very special and perfectly weighted bent twigs. On one particular night I had tucked myself up in my old Nash sleeping bag (of all my original gear the only item I actually hung on to – it's still brilliant) just under a large bush to the side of my swim. I was very cosy. Sometime during the night something stirred me and I slowly opened my eyes to find that a small herd of deer had made their way down to the lake for a drink and were poised just beyond arm's length. Being so close it was a remarkable sight and for a time I watched them until eventually I made the smallest of movements which immediately sent them galloping, sure-footed and as silent as shadows, back into the dark fields beyond.

I ended up catching a plethora of pristine carp from that beautiful lake; hard-fighting, torpedo-like commons up to the mid-twenty mark with the odd chunky mirror thrown in for good measure. As the water was well off the beaten track I also enjoyed observing and studying the wonderful wildlife that lived there, something that for me is inseparable from the fishing process.

In life things do not stay the same for long. In fact if you spend a lot of time observing nature after a while you realise that everything constantly changes, including you yourself. And so it came to pass that despite having plenty of fishing fun a new seed of inspiration eventually germinated and took firm hold in my mind. I began to wish for a greater challenge and the prospect of something more substantial in the net. One question hung over me: would it even be possible to find such waters where there were few people, little disturbance, and the abundant wildlife that I was now accustomed to but with the prospect of big old carp? Surely, I wanted to have my cake and eat it too?

People say that you have to be careful what you wish for because you just might get it and this is certainly true. For along with having a wish fulfilled always comes the chattels of counter balance, all those pesky challenges you couldn't have possibly known about in advance that have to converge to make a dream a reality. Therefore little did I know as I wished that wish that many new angling adventures were only just around the corner...



## **The First Salmon stays with you. Colin Duffy.**

“You have it!”

“Have what?”

Guido sat down in the grass and put his head in his hands.

The salmon had chased my fly, put it in its mouth shaken its head from side to side and spat it out. I hadn't seen or felt a thing.

I'd entered this pool over an hour ago and was now about 25 metres from its lip as it crashed into the falls below. Guido my Argentinian guide was 4 meters above me hiding in a bush. He was looking into a pool containing a group of 4 fresh run grilse of about 7lbs.

I was in water just three inches below the top of my waders getting my elbows wet and casting at the limit of my range, swinging my fly around and in front of their noses – I hoped. I couldn't see the fish but Guido could and his excitement and frustration was reaching dangerous proportions. He was the spotter and I was his incompetent gunner.

Another by now standard instruction set went along these lines.

“Cast at that rock again ... ok try again ...again, 1 metre to the left ... wait, wait, wait ... strip, strip, STRIP! STOP! F\*\*k. OK try again.”

These episodes were interrupted intermittently by removing my fly from the tree that had reached into the river almost perfectly in line with any back-caster attempting to do what I was now doing.

“Let's try this fly” was another frequently spoken phrase. Almost every fly had had a follow but none had really meant it. Strip slower, strip faster, new fly, different angle. Nothing.

Then it started to rain and the disturbance on the surface made it impossible for Guido to see the fish. I carried on anyway and on my second cast felt a fish take. It was immediately aerial and headed off downstream over the falls. I couldn't follow without filling up my waders, my only way out was back so I had to listen to my real screaming in a very satisfactory way.

I'm a trout fisher so I've never really heard this sound before. I've had the odd run of course, Possingworth has some big fish, but nothing like this, it was heading back to sea. Guido my guide is now cursing in Spanish and shouting; “don't touch that f\*\*\*\*\*g reel!”. So I didn't, I just watched my 9'6”, #7 rod bend just like in the adverts under the weight of a very fresh, very angry running salmon, and an increasing amount of line with the added pressure of fast running water.

I was well into my backing now but before I'd worked out what to do if the fish never stopped, there was a crack like a whip, the rod straightened and I staggered backwards into the water with the recoil of the parting line. All that effort and gone in a blink ...

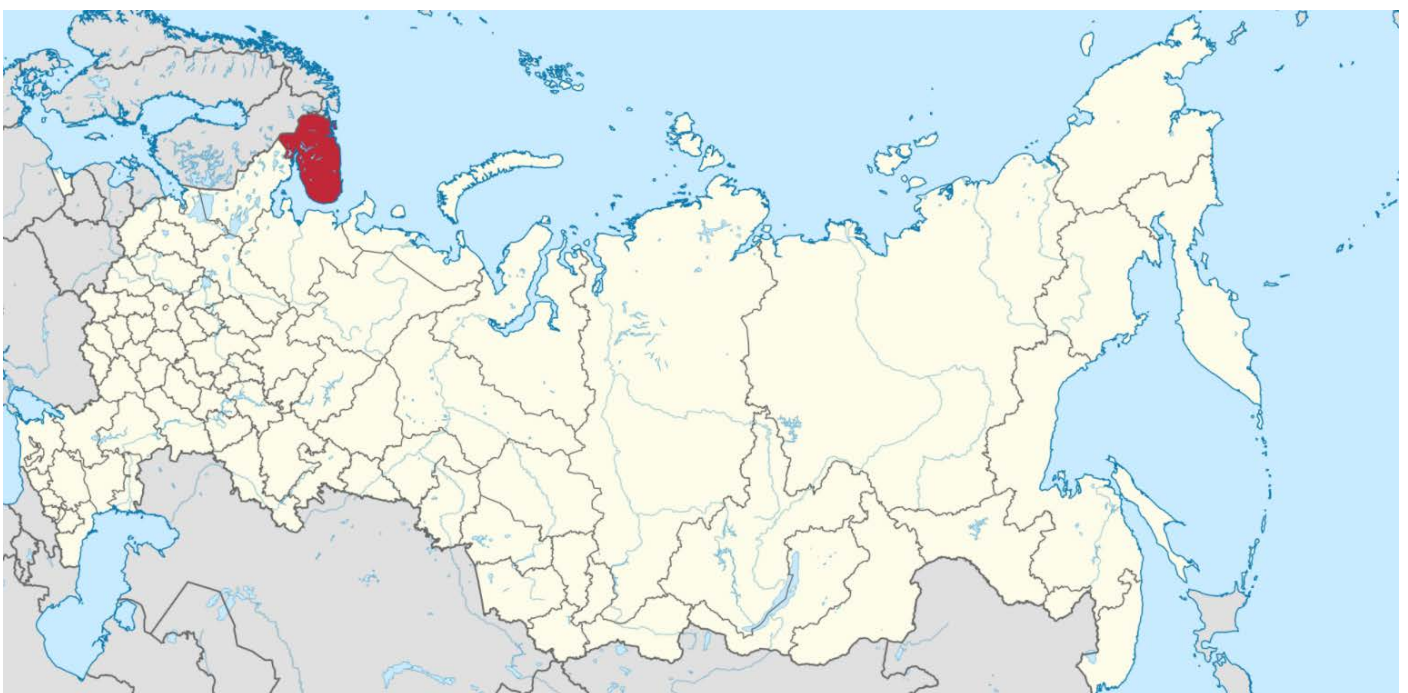
But then something rather different from the norm of losing a fish happened, Guido ran down the bank and leapt into the river, crashing and stumbling down it, grabbing at something. It was the fly line and the fish was still attached to it. He waded back to the bank pulling in line and fish as he went, finally beaching the poor fish onto the shingle.

It took me a while to get back up river, out of the water and down to the fish, but Guido was grinning holding the fish in the current for long enough for the obligatory photo. And here it is, my very first Atlantic Salmon. We agreed that it was at least a 50:50 fish, but I'm claiming it as my own.

The post-mortem revealed that the fly line had parted at the backing – the knot had failed. No names no pack drill, but that had been a cassette, backing and line deal from a well-known supplier who tied it on themselves. Moral, check every knot.

So my first day's salmon fishing ended in several memorable ways. It's going to be hard to follow it.

*SPS Treasurer John Parsons has negotiated a discount on visits to the Kola Peninsula for club members. In the past six years there have been in excess of 30 SPS/Rod weeks taken. To his knowledge everyone managed at least one salmon. Some superstars caught a dozen or more. Contact John if you are interested in knowing more [john@centercom.co.uk](mailto:john@centercom.co.uk)*





Colin Duffy with his first salmon



A beautiful fish for Tony Camilleri, caught with a 6wt single handed rod



The mighty Veronya River; double handers and very big fish here



Cabin at sunset



Guido the guide celebrates another fish



## The 1965 Hasted Trophy and other historic Sussex pike, by Bob Hill

---

*I've been in correspondence with Bob Hill, a retired gentleman who lives near Chepstow, for a couple of years now. Bob's a keen fish taxidermist who has purchased and restored several pike and has become something of an expert in the field – although he's way too modest to admit that himself.*

*Bob searches websites, databases, and old newspapers to research historic pike records ... and picks up his fish from far afield. One of his largest was a monster caught on the river Somme in France in 1915, probably by a British or German soldier serving in WW1 at the time. Every now and then, when looking online for fish to restore, Bob sees mention of Sussex Piscatorial Society.*

*Then, one day he happened across an old pike on Ebay which also, it transpired, came with a Sussex Piscatorial Society shield. This is J. W. Whiting's 1965 Hasted Trophy pike, which sold for quite a price but was poorly restored and then re-listed much more cheaply. Bob snapped it up the second time around, and spent many hours lovingly nursing it back to display condition.*

*He contacted me to let me know about what he'd done, so I sent him some copies of our magazine in return. What follows is my transcription of Bob's handwritten correspondence, and my scans of the photographs he sent, which I thought might interest Sussex Piscator readers.*

*This story begins with Bob's discovery of the J.W. Whiting's 1965 Hasted Trophy pike and his efforts to restore it. Then it turns to Bob's research into older Sussex pike heads, including one specimen dating back to 1830, the "Furnace Pond Pike", which became a subject of debate when it featured in the letters page of the Fishing Gazette in 1918. This discussion features correspondence between two former SPS Officers (W.F. Booth and W.C.F. Gillam) and the magazine's then-famous editor Robert Bright Marston.*

*I called Bob last week to say hello and request permission to reprint these letters. I'm please to say that he's in good health and he would be happy to hear more from us. If any members or SPS Officers want to get in touch email me and I'll put you in contact.*

*Thanks also to SPS historian John Harris for his help researching individuals named in this story.*

*Jon Stewart (Ed.)*



find enclosed pictures as I promised the fish  
now is the one on its own. In the one with the  
massive head it was taken a good bit before. If you see

Dear Jon

Find enclosed pictures as I promised the fish is the one on its own. In the one with the massive head it was taken a good bit before. I have made the spots on the belly (white) line better, I think. I've also done the fins more differently and, once again, I think better.

I'm still debating whether to arrange head spots and colour a bit. The problem I sprayed a transparent "bleed" dark green colour by mistake and couldn't shade it properly.

I'll need to remove all paint on the head as it has a plastic base and is a bugger to get off once on. The base coat is always a clear anti fungicidal sealer and then paint. (Never flakes off for sure.)



The photo with the large head is not done to in any way devalue this big fish only to show you in comparison of its size also as the head is 13½".

You can see the sloping body and the slight drop in the top of it. It still comes at 24½" girth.

The shield it's on is touching the wall, and the head is below it so to speak. It dwarfs all the heads except one.

I have enclosed a close up of the shield also, most of the writing can be seen except maybe all the date which is 9-10-65 the "silvered" coating has come off parts of this area as you can see.  
The photo of the body with foam all on stitch join

I have enclosed a close up of the Hasted Trophy shield also, and most of the writing can be seen except maybe all the date which is 9 – 10 – 65. The "silvered" coating has come off parts of this area you can see.



THE SUSSEX  
PISCATORIAL SOCIETY  
HASTED TROPHY  
J.W. WHITING  
BEST SPECIMEN PIKE  
POND LYE  
9 – 10 -65 26 ½ POUNDS

The photo of the body with foam all on stitch join was done in 2012 (see below). The front side face down was the same colour, blotchy brown to grey, and the only colour on the tail and dorsal fin is a reddish orange.



The length of the fish to long ragged end was 44", however was more probably maybe 45" when caught. The head from jaw tip to further half circular gill cover (operculum) is 12" long and the body depth is 7½". The diameter of the clock is 10".

You can see this is a very big fish. I'm sure this she could've easily been 32lbs - 35lbs for sure. The fish is well proportioned for that time of the year so feed fish must have been good as well.

I hope you can see why I get a lot of interest in what I try to do.

Your phone call was a real boost to me and I enjoyed your conversation especially the age of your club and keeping records of things and when you mentioned Pond Lye and your involvement there I felt really good.

I'm not sentimental (maybe a bit). I think it is important not to forget the past and where you come from. If I can help in any way to, with your members interest I will.

Cheerio for now,

Bob Hill.

... my work for old heads & are they still around? I found an interesting couple of incidents where the Sussex Piscatorial Society was intimately involved & I thought this may interest you. This reference quotes of a 38 lb pike caught trolling a 1½" spoon for salmon on Lough Conn by a friend of Mr Booth. The fight lasted ¾ hour & landed on a Castle Connelle rod

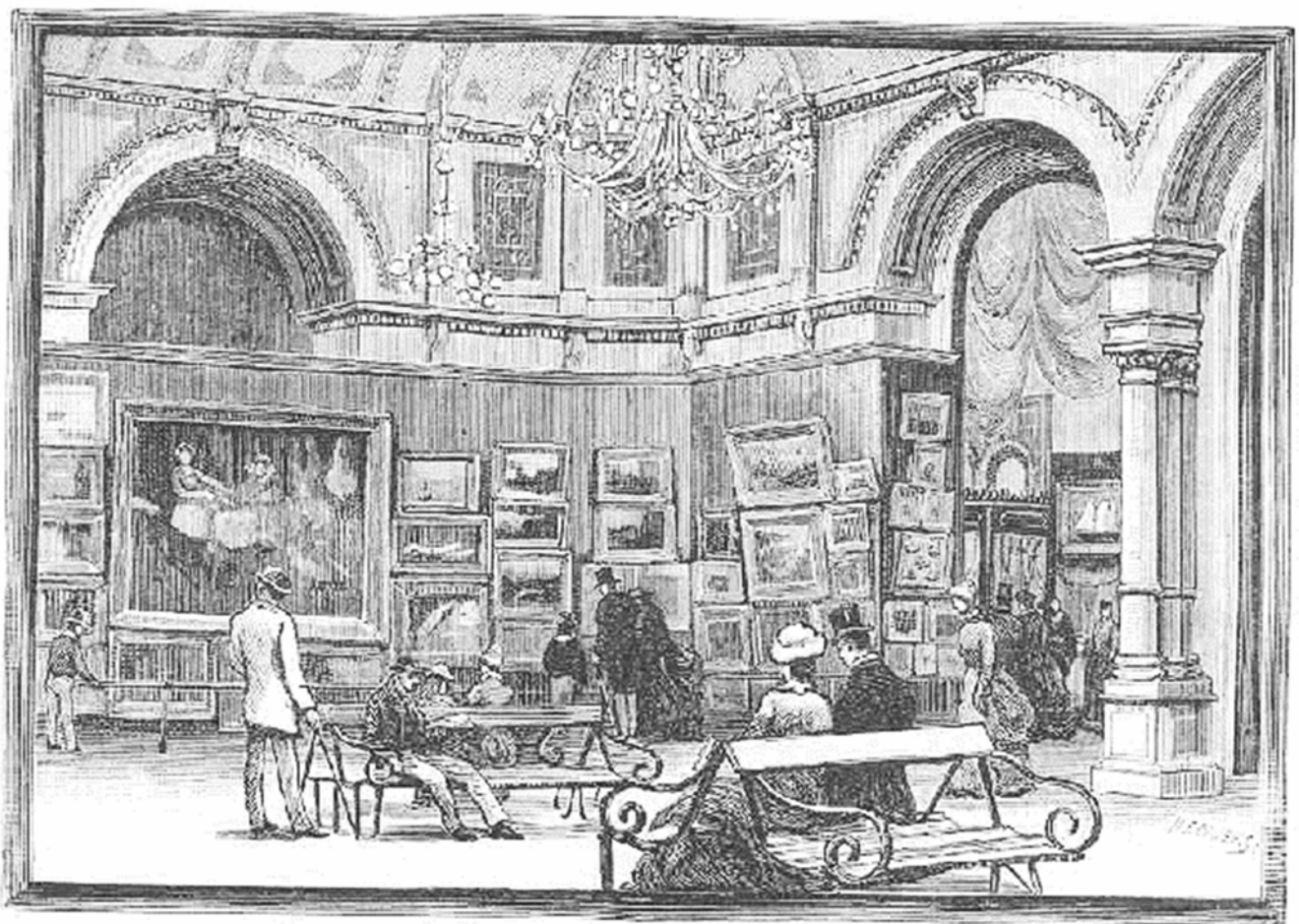
Dear Jon,

In my “look for old heads” and are they still around? I found an interesting couple of incidents where the Sussex Piscatorial Society was intimately involved, and I thought this may interest you.

One reference quoted a 38lb pike caught trolling a 1½” spoon for salmon on Lough Conn by a friend of Mr. Booth. The fight lasted ¾ of an hour, landed on a Castle Connelle rod: “W.F. Booth, Hon Secretary in address to Sussex Piscatorial Society, 1920”.

The second one is very interesting as well. In the *Fishing Gazette* 10<sup>th</sup> May Mr. Gillam asked for information of the “Furnace Pike” -- a pike’s head exhibited at The International Fisheries Exhibition [held in the Royal Horticultural Society grounds, South Kensington] in 1883 by a Mr. E.G. Holt, East Sheen, that was described thus in the catalogue:

The Champion Pike’s head of England – the fish was caught at Turner’s Pond [also known as “Furnace Pond”] near St Leonard’s Forest fifty years ago and till within the last ten years was in the possession of the late Mr. Borrer of Henfield Sussex. The fish caught weighed 48lbs ...



The picture gallery, International Fisheries Exhibition, 1883



Robert Bright Marston



No. 17. FRIDAY, AUGUST 17th, 1877. TWOPENCE.

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 A Fly Book, 9/6. free by post 11s. 6d. fitted with  
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 114, MERLINS PLACE, E.C.)

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6 each of 14 sets of Spring Flies and 1 doz. 42 0s. 6d.  
 6 each of 14 sets of Summer Flies 42 0s. 6d.  
 and 1 doz. Flies, 1 doz. Green  
 Dabber, half doz. Liver Dabber, and  
 half doz. Dark Mackerel 1 11 6  
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 PRINCE and PRINCESS OF WALES,  
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 of the FRENCH; and KING of the BELGIANS,  
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The Fishing Gazette

More information came up with W.F. Booth's involvement in this particular specimen, too. Booth must have been a friend of Robert Bright Marston editor of the magazine *Fishing Gazette*:

Fish caught when Furnace Pond, Leonard's Lee, Horsham was drained about 1830. From the collection of the late William Borrer. Presented to Brighton Museum by his nephew the Rev. F.W. Tracy September, 1918. My friend Mr. W.F. Booth kindly sent me these particulars and the photo. R.B.M. [Robert Bright Marston]

[Sadly, John Harris and I have been unable to locate Booth's photograph of the Furnace Pike as there's no online archive of *The Fishing Gazette* from 1918-19. "Furnace Pond" is now a carp syndicate called Bracken Lake. William Borrer (1781-1862) was very famous in his day, arguably Britain's foremost botanist.]

Marston at the time often queried pike head lengths, and whether they were males and females, and asked for more details. He alluded to this head not being long enough. This brought a letter to *The Fishing Gazette* from Borrer's nephew, Rev. F.W. Tracy, which was published in August 1919. It read:

Dear Mr. Marston,

The head of the big Sussex pike probably measured over 11" when fresh. When retrieved from a garret in which stored away with other natural objects some forty five years ago it was distorted, flattened remnant rather like an old shoe. It was with difficulty relaxed and restored by a taxidermist. It had been roughly dried, probably dipped in alum solution. Having myself since preserved several heads of pike observed some shrinkage in spite of careful treatment.

I'm inclined to think this head was much longer when fresh and have little doubt the weight was correctly stated. It was probably a thick built fish, as pond and reservoir fish often are where food abounds, and quite likely quite heavy in spawn. My late uncle, a well-known ornithologist and life-long observer of the facts of zoology, told me it was the weight.

In those days there was not the excitement over the weight of large fish which now obtains. He had merely regarded it was about as big as he was ever likely to see, and had dried the head as a memento, not attaching much value to it as a specimen.

Yours, etc.

F.W.T. [Rev. F. W. Tracey]

The "Furnace Pond" and "Turner's Pond" are the same place, for sure. It's very interesting the involvement of Mr W.F. Booth in both the Loch Conn 38lbs pike, and the Furnace Pond story of head and details. He must have been for sure one of the earliest secretaries of the Society in 1918-1920. [W.F. Booth does indeed feature in one of the Society's most important early photographs, see below. JS]

I wonder if the head is still around? I presume Brighton Museum is still going and not closed like many many more are now. The one thing after his death 190 years ago and its going to the museum 100 years ago ... it must have been restored by a taxidermist.

It could still be there! If so I wonder if they realise its place in Mr. W.F. Booth and the Society's history?

I think myself it's possible it was a "broad head type" (shovel-like and blunt). They are short and broad; I have several and the profile is so different from narrow and ordinary. For sure all 11", 12", 13" heads are female and not male.

Yours Sincerely,

Bob Hill.



J. F. Gilling. J. S. Lee. G. F. Attree. Rev. A. D. Spong. C. H. Morris. Capt. the Hon. Brand, R.N. H. Norman. W. J. Holland.  
 W. F. Booth. H. Carr. W. C. F. Gillam. C. Dusart. F. Mascall. A. J. Freeman. C. Gostling. A. W. Stenning.  
 W. W. Andrews. P. E. Tickle. G. A. Goord. W. H. Reeves. W. F. Goodwin. T. Pickard.

THE SUSSEX PISCATORIAL SOCIETY.

A young W.F. Booth and W.C.F. Gillam seated left and second left in the middle row, Sussex Piscatorial Society, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, March 1897.



9-10-1965 caught by J.W. Whiting & was  
recognized by your trophy the HASTED TROPHY

Dear Jon,

I read your magazine with a lot of interest both in its content and I can registrar your history of the club. It is so relevant that to me the pike I restored from 9-10-1965 caught by J.W. Whiting was recognized by your trophy the Hasted Trophy and was from Pond Lye, as I note quite recently you actually bought this water.

I have tried in vain to contact Brighton Museum about the Furnace Pond pike head which, according to the *Fishing Gazette*, was donated to them in Sept 1918 by Rev F.W. Tracy, the nephew of William Borrer. The head came from the drained lake at Horsham around 1830.

I also wonder if the Mr. Whiting is still alive as he'd be a super person to add to your proposed story in next year's article.

I'm pleased you are thinking of a "trip in the past" and the fact you are adding a bit of what I find interesting in fishing history. Usually in my experience with nearly all the heads and bodies I have the only proof of their existence is "themselves", there's *no* way of knowing anything about them.

It sometimes poses as many questions as it answers. My largest head, for example, has a girth of 23 1/2" ... and knowing the 1979 Swiss record pike's girth was 21 5/8" this could well have been a 70 pounder.

Cheers,

Bob Hill



*Did anyone know Mr. J. W. Whiting, the former owner of the 1965 Hasted Trophy? Please feel free to contact me, if so.*

*I sent this correspondence to noted Sussex Piscatorial Society historian John Harris, and he unearthed some interesting background information on the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News portrait from March 1897:*

*The location is almost certainly Horsted Keynes lake (today named Broadhurst Lake), as the Society celebrated a long lease on the water granted in 1897 by Mr Brand (see photo, top row), one of the famed Glynde family.*

*For the next 20 years this was the Society's premier trout water. Mr Carr (bottom left, holding the fish) was keeper for the water. Mr George A. Goord (front, middle) was the Society's caretaker at the Society's clubroom in Brighton, later to be Honorary Secretary. Mr W. J. Holland (back, right) was the controversial winner of the Society's specimen prize of 1894 for a 5lb 4oz sea trout from the R. Ouse.*



*It is tempting to imagine that W. F. Booth might be a descendent of Edward Booth, founder of Brighton's famous Booth's Museum of Natural History. If so this would*

*round off the story nicely given that he was also such a noted taxidermy enthusiast. Looking at this picture of Edward, there might even be some family resemblance ... or maybe that's just wishful thinking on my part.*



*John Harris has been unable to prove any connection between Edward Booth and W. F. Booth (who was a Brighton restaurateur). He did, however, obtain circumstantial evidence that many SPS mounted fish may well have ended up in Booth's Museum. This occurred when the SPS clubhouse was being relocated and also during various temporary exhibitions.*

*Is it possible that the 1830 Furnace Pond pike donated to "Brighton Museum" in 1918 by Rev. F. W. Tracy might actually have ended up in the Booth Museum instead? Both venues are currently closed due to the pandemic, of course, so I've been unable to visit and find out...*