

The Sussex Angler



Spring 2010
Issue 3

News

Articles

Information

Join

The Petworth and Bognor Angling Club Magazine

www.sussexangling.co.uk

Welcome to The Sussex Angler

Well hasn't time flown by, it seems that I was writing this page for our second issue only last week. But actually when I look back quite a lot has happened. Here are a few of my highlights from the last six months;

AGM

We had a really successful AGM with a record turnout. It was good to meet so many members and exchange views. I think that those that came particularly enjoyed the buffet and slideshow as well as the important business of the evening. It was quite interesting and sometimes amusing to hear people trying to identify some of the locations and characters in the pictures.

Fishing

Over the Christmas period I was pretty much persuaded by Martin our Vice Chairman to go and give Coultershaw a go for a couple of hours the result a lovely double figure barbel. You can read more about this trip on our website - it was certainly one of my highlights of the last few months.

A Bag of Tares

Having read Steve's article on Hemp & Tares my good friend John Wilson presented me with a big bag of Tares to pass onto Steve. I finally managed to pass them over rather late in the season, with Steve muttering something along the lines of 'they'll do for next year'. It will be interesting to hear how he gets on!



This Issue

We have lots lined up for you in this issue including;

Colin Bridger tells us the story behind his Rother record barbel.

Terry Scragg gives us his regular guide to the birds you are likely to see and hear on your travels around our waters in the next few months.

Ray Stewart recalls some natural baits that he discovered back in the 1970's and how he got on with them.

I get to talk to John Wilson who has recently achieved one of his angling goals and he tells us about it.

Peter Foster reflects on his barbellng exploits.

Coming Up

Unfortunately we are going to lose our Hardham stretch of the River Arun for the next season while Southern Water construct an abstraction scheme. It is hoped that we will be able to get back onto Hardham next season further details are on the next page.

I will probably give my rods a rest for the next few months but I look forward to the 16th June when I can get back on the rivers again.



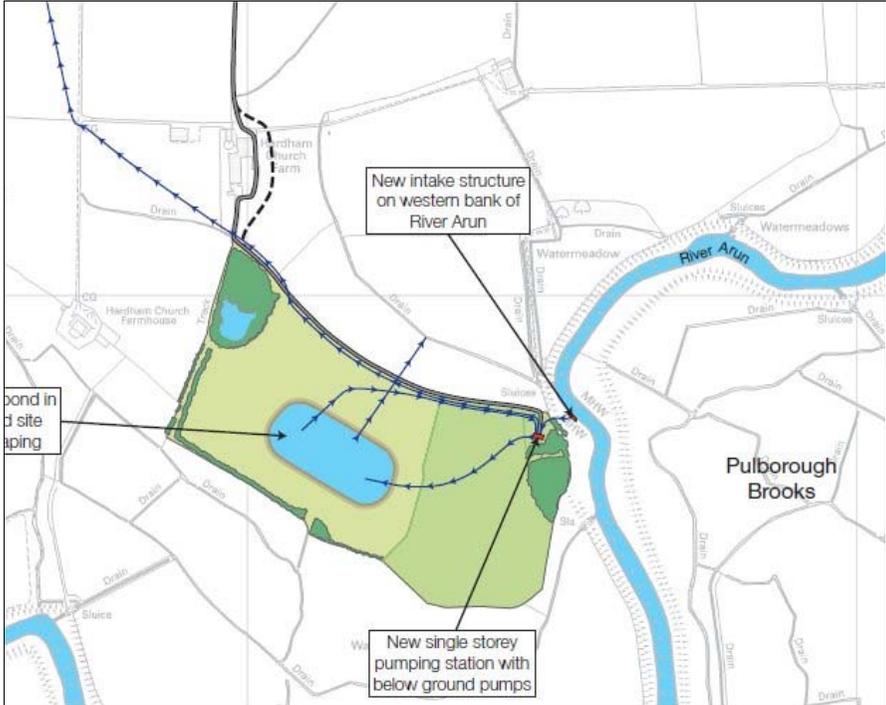
Good Luck for the new season .

Nigel Chapman
Chairman

Notices

Temporary Closure of the Hardham Fishery

Due to construction work being carried out by Southern Water to create a water feed from the River Arun to their Hardham treatment works we have been asked to close the fishery until the project completes. The map below is from the Southern Water website and hopefully gives you an idea of exactly where the work is taking place and why it would not be feasible for us to keep the fishery open during this time.



We are hopeful that the work will not take much more than a year to complete, this could mean that we will have access to the fishery again for the 2011 - 2012 season. We apologise for the temporary loss of this popular fishery and hope that you understand the situation. We will maintain regular contact with the project and our riparian owner and assure you that as soon as angling becomes available we will let our membership know. If you would like further details of the project you can visit the relevant page on the Southern Water website at;

<http://www.southernwater.co.uk/Environment/inYourArea/sussex/riverArun.asp>



In Depth

In each issue of our magazine we will focus on one of our waters 'In Depth'. Here Steve Simmonds takes us round the popular Cart Pond on the Walberton Fishery

First of all one of the questions I have always had about Cart Pond was answered only the other day by Les Heath when he gave me a sneak preview of an article about the digging of this pond. My question was; 'How did the pond get its name?' Look out for Les's article on the website.

Those that have been in the club some years will perhaps remember the old sequence of peg numbers on Cart when peg 16 was the first peg you came to as you walked from Stemps. I think it would have been five or six years ago that we renumbered with peg 16 on the far end of the island. Being a conventional sort of guy I will start at peg 16 and work round.

So peg 16 offers you three main options a heavy pole line round to your right as this is where the carp hang out. A slightly lighter pole line to the island can also find carp and a light pole or whip line to 4 metres or so can produce plenty of roach.



Fish here for carp on Peg 16

Working round the island through pegs 17 to 19 on the corner fish a light pole or whip line down the middle for roach or a heavier line to the island. As we get into the straight from peg 20 to 23 you can find skimmers down the middle over a little bit of groundbait or a few pellets and roach on an inside line over hemp. If you have a pole that is long enough (17 metres) you can reach the island and find carp.



Try halfway across for skimmers on Peg 21

Most regulars will fish tight to the end of the island on peg 24 and you can pick up just about anything from here including carp, skimmers and big roach. You need about 15 metres of pole and it is best to fish a short line because the water is shallow and the fish do charge off.. The water immediately in front of you is quite shallow although there is a deep hole (I know I have been in it!) slightly to the right and about 8 metres out. You do find that some of the better roach sit in this so try corn or hemp and tares here.



With Steve Simmonds



Fish tight to the island on Peg 24

I can only tell you a little about the next couple of pegs. Peg 25 an alternative route to the end of the island if no one is fishing on 24 and although quite shallow peg 26 has an enticing patch of lilies close to the outlet. These are bound to hold a carp or two.

Peg 27 is one of the notable pegs unfortunately having gone through all my photographs I can't find one picture of it. There is a lily pad that comes off the island slightly to your left and the closer you can get to where the lilies meet the island the better. It is at the extreme range for 17 metres of pole but can be done with a long rig. Some will fish a waggler here but it is difficult to keep it close to the island. The waggler can be used on the next 3 pegs 28 - 30 as the island is just a little too far to reach with the pole. These swims are also good fishing straight down the middle (about 8 - 10 metres) on the pole for skimmers. Various baits and methods work. I know some like using paste others use

chopped worm and caster and some will fish pellet. Whatever the method if you can get the bigger skimmers going you could be in for a net full of fish, particularly if only a few pegs are taken. Alternatives are to get as close to the island as possible in the hope of a carp or an inside line for roach and small skimmers



Try the middle for skimmers on Peg 28

The final peg round the back of the island is 31 and this gets bad press but I actually think it can produce some good fish. It is probably less worthwhile fishing if someone is in peg 16 but worth a go if 16 is empty. Fish the bushes to the left for carp, with careful feeding you can bring them into your swim. You can fish the point of the island for carp, actually this was one of the swims that the chub used to consistently come from but we don't see them now as they probably came to the end of their natural life and didn't appear to breed. Also try a short line to your right for some good roach. **Give Cart a go and let us know how you get on.**



A Record Barbel

Colin Bridger describes the capture of his first Rother barbel which turned out to be a new record fish.

When I was into match fishing 35 years ago I used to fish the Rother a lot. This was with the old Petworth Club when Bill Pugh and Mick Sadler were Secretary and Match Secretary. In those days I knew the river like the back of my hand.

Over the intervening years I became involved in other branches of angling, and in 1993 caught my first barbel at 7 lb 3 oz from the Throop. Since that day I have only wanted to catch more barbel, and started to fish the Avon and Stour with the occasional trip to Old Mill on the Kennet. In 1998 I moved to East Anglia for work, and fished Adams Mill on the Great Ouse and Fishers Green on the Lea. While at Adams Mill in September 2001 I caught a personal best of 15lb 5oz and thought at the time that this is it I will die happy as I will never get a better fish.

While I was in Norfolk I had read of the exploits of a certain Peter Foster in the Southern Angler who seemed to be catching a fair number of good barbel from the Rother. In 2007 I moved back to Sussex to live in Selsey which was a bit like coming home as I lived in Sidlesham for years and went to school in Chichester. So on my return I had to rejoin my old club, which had now joined with Bognor, to try and make contact with a Rother Barbel.

However I did not start fishing for them seriously until last year, and then not until late autumn. I had some nice Carp and Chub, but no barbel. This year I spent the summer on the Stour and the Avon with again only carp and bream to show for my efforts, not a single barbel bite. The fishing down there has been absolutely dire the last year or so.

From mid October I have turned my attention to the Rother more and have been determined to catch one of these mythical beasts. On the Saturday before the big freeze in early December I was at Coultershaw when Mick Mills had two and another angler had one of 11lb + just down stream from me and I remember thinking that at last I was getting closer.

On Boxing day we had a lot of rain come in from the west and the forecast was for it to turn cold again as the week went on. From experience I have learnt that warm rain after a cold spell may be enough to raise the temperature of the water to trigger a feeding spell for barbel, therefore on Sunday 27th I decided to go to Coultershaw for the last couple of hours.

The river was about 3 ft up on normal winter levels and quite coloured, conditions that I felt would be perfect. For this session I used a Shimano Hyperloop 1.75 lb test curve rod with a Young's



by Colin Bridger

Purist centre pin reel loaded with 10 lb Maxima line. Terminal tackle was very simply a 3 oz flat lead and a size 2 hook. The bait was a large lump of meat about a 6th of a tin. I started in the first swim in the riffles but was pestered by eels, who seemed to find the bait wherever I cast it. I never thought I would ever be grateful to an eel but it made me decide to move to the first swim above the riffles. I cast out to mid-stream and the lead held quite well, most of the rubbish had gone through with the previous floods. At 16:40 The rod top gave a couple of taps

before wrapping round in true barbel fashion, and I knew it was a good fish by the slow, powerful, unstoppable runs. Eventually it started to see my side of the argument and began to tire. It was not until I had it in the net that I realised that this was something special, my first Rother barbel was a new personal best at 15 lb 8 oz. All of the blanks and fruitless hours spent on the banks were now a distant memory, and as with my first barbel all I want to do is catch another one.

Did I drive home a happy man!!



So here I am with what I have now been told is a new Rother record barbel which makes it even more special. By the way to take the picture I had to get the tripod out and crank up the self-timer as by then no one else was on the river.



Natural Baits

Ray Stewart takes us back to the seventies and writes about some of his experiments with natural baits, some successful other not!

I remember an occasion when having stocked our garden pond with weed we found some caddis larvae / grubs and decided it would be worthwhile trying them as a bait.

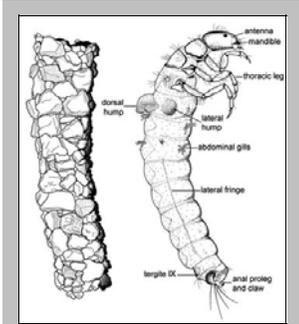
The following morning found us on the banks of the Rother I quickly had my tackle set up and in the water, using maggots in front of a swan shot link leger swung under a canopy of overhanging trees. Father in the next swim had a similar set up. After a while he decided to give the grub a go, once removed from its shell the grub looked like a very large maggot and is quite tough, it was hooked in a similar manner, lightly nicked at the top end then cast out to the edge of some streamer weed. After a couple of minutes I turned to see father's rod bent into a very decent fish, After few hairy moments in the weed I netted a

beautiful chub for him a nicely conditioned fish probably pushing 3 lbs. Surprisingly enough after unhooking the fish father's bait was still completely intact, durable enough for another cast. A few minutes later I heard "I'm in again", this time something smaller, but a nice sized dace which he netted himself. My maggots were not working so I reeled in for a change of bait. Father had unhooked his second fish and the bait was still intact and lively enough for a third cast. Two fish on the same bait and still going strong, we were on

to something here! I took one of the grubs back to my swim and cast it into the depths. It was not too long before father was into another dace, indeed it was not long before I was sitting behind a rod top which suddenly hooped over with

no warning or preliminary 'knock knock'. My first fish was a chub too but smaller at just around the pound mark. We fished up to lunchtime before our customary visit to 'The Racehorse' pub, for a pie and a pint.

We fished the morning out with just four grubs, which were just about on their last legs so as to speak by the time we packed up. We caught more dace, a small chub and a gudgeon which was the only fish to chew up the grub completely leaving a bare



Caddis grub and case

The grubs are surprisingly tough and if you can find them they make a useful addition to the river baitbox.

hook to re-bait.

We had stumbled across a very good and 'free' bait here. Also it's durability meant that you didn't need to collect too many for a morning's fishing.

It was in similar circumstances that I stumbled across another natural bait, although one with very much mixed success angling wise. The swim that I had chosen had a few small patches of weed close in that would have been an inconvenience in playing a hooked fish, and it was as I was dragging these patches out that my rake head also dragged up from the silt some large swan



With Ray Stewart

mussels, in fact by the time I had cleared the swim I had nearly a dozen of these freshwater mussels I had discarded many more empty open shells back to the water. I had heard of swan mussels being used as bait, but it was something I had not heard much of, for instance how would one go about hooking them? It was this that prompted me to open one up with my pen knife, once opened the shell revealed a considerable amount of flesh much of which was a greyish brown colour and far too soft for a hook to take hold of. There was a bright orange section that was much tougher and quite solid, this would surely be the area to place the hook in leaving the rest of the meat trailing beneath. I had planned to do an overnight session that evening and decided to fish the mussels on one rod as an experiment, fishing my usual bread flake on the other rod. It was a very warm and humid evening and remained so well into the night, runs were never too forthcoming on this lake and the silver foil

further along the margin. It's progress was slow and purposeful but it was very slowly making it's way in the direction of my swim. I very carefully reeled in my bread flake bait and broke a nice section of crust from my loaf The bread flake removed this was carefully replaced by the crust and lowered down into the margins. I sat back to watch and wait as the dorsal fin weaved in and out of the margins, out of the water the whole time, it slowly but steadily seeming to take an age, made it's way to in front of me. When to my amazement upon nearing my piece of bread crust bait floating on the surface, promptly gave it a wide berth swimming around it in an arc only to continue it's foray along the margins in the same slow and purposeful manner as before. Indeed this fish had not taken fright upon seeing my bait but was showing a good measure of caution upon coming across it's presence.

I settled back in my chair pondering the situation giving it considerable thought.

This was the moment when the indicator on the other rod rustled along the ground and lifted and stopped only to move off again shortly afterwards then stop again. My hand was on the rod butt and upon the next movement of the line I lifted the rod and was met with the resistance of something quite large and very much

alive on the other end. This was not the usual affair that you have upon hooking into one of the water's many carp, most would scream off at high speed



Swan mussel (*Anodonta Cygnea*)

indicators rolled around the line remained motionless well into the night. Then I saw a huge dorsal fin above the surface



Natural Baits

embarking on an athletic marathon. This was a different battle altogether, the unseen quarry had taken no more than a few yards of line off the reel and wanted to stay very deep, it was apparent that this battle was going to have to be fought vertically.

The very nature of this pit and it's abundance of water lilies dictated substantial tackle and I was using Bruce and Walker stepped up 2½ lb test curve carp rods and Mitchell 410s loaded with Platil Strong 17 lb breaking strain, but I found my hand reaching for the nut at the front of the reel to apply maximum drag, in an attempt to gain back some line on my unseen adversary.

These stepped up rods had plenty of backbone and were well capable of dealing with most carp likely to be encountered at the time, but my rod was now describing a full ninety degree bend, maximum pressure being applied in an attempt to get some line back on the spool.

As I pumped the rod against the fish it fought back with a jig jaggging motion appearing to being able to swim backwards countering every pull of the rod. It was when the fish was nearing the surface that the very last pull of the rod revealed it's identity as it's head broke surface, the rest of it's body swirling under the surface. An eel, and this epic battle had dragged him up from the silty depths and into the moonlight. As I reached around for the landing net I had

a very uneasy feeling about netting the creature and thoughts were running through my mind as to what sort of surprises the unhooking would

present and how easy it would be to manoeuvre into the carp sack. It was while pondering these thoughts and with the landing net ready at arms length that the true size of the fish sank home, not as a comparison against the size of the landing net arms, but more it's girth and the size of the fin along the eel's back. It was as the fish was being pulled along the surface to the submerged net it's head clear of the water that the heart sinking moment occurred the rod suddenly swept straight back against the moonlit sky and the beast slipped away quietly back to the depths, it was also a moment of great relief.

As I sat back in the chair and inspected the line before tying another hook I could see that it had been frayed to breaking point by the eel's sharp teeth, an aspect I had not given a second thought to during the affray.

I have never caught a carp on swan mussel, but I have never used swan mussel as a bait since! If you know anybody that wants to catch specimen size eels you might just like to pass this story on!

The weight of that particular eel? Well it would be purely conjecture, but having seen one or two specimens it may have been a trick of the light or the heat of the night but I have never seen one larger.....

Ray Stewart

Editor's Note

It was interesting to find quite a few references to swan mussels and caddis grubs from bait companies and the barbel fishing fraternity both of whom have obviously recognised the worth of these natural baits!



Notices

Membership Fees for 2010 - 2011

Membership Type	Full Season	Half Season
Full Adult	£80	£48
Family (2 adults & 2 children)	£120	£70
Senior Citizen	£40	£25
Student	£40	£25
Registered Disabled	£40	£25
Junior (aged 12 - 16 inclusive)	£20	£10
Juvenile (aged below 12)	Free	Free
Associate (non fishing)	£2	£2

Work parties

We have started our work for this season at Hurston and the venue continues to benefit from the hard work that has been put in by our members. Over the next few months as well as Hurston we will be looking at some of our other waters and we would really appreciate as many hands as possible. We will be out and about as below;

Date	When	Venue
Sun 11th April	Morning	Coultershaw
Sun 9th May	Morning	Bethwins
Wed 2nd June	Afternoon	Hurston
Sun 6th June	Morning	Walberton
Wed 28th July	Afternoon	Hurston
Sun 15th August	Morning	Hurston

I look forward to seeing you.

Nelson



Some Reflections on Barbel Fishing

I suppose it's probably true to say that since rediscovering the delights of fishing running water some 15 years ago, I've been pretty much a barbel fisherman, although it's equally true that I wasn't new to barbel fishing, for it all began for me some fifty years ago.

Early beginnings

I loved fishing as a kid, especially the rivers, which is really the way I learned to fish, particularly trotting a float on the Thames. Mostly I used to go fishing with my dad who was a London cabbie and belonged to the Mocatra club (Motor Cab trade), so it was a bit of an education in more ways than one for a youngster going on those coach trips with all those men of the world. Occasionally my dad would go fishing with a couple of his best mates, another cabbie called Les Cronk (always referred to as Cronkie) and a bus-driver named Alec, who was my fishing hero and an absolute expert at catching Thames roach 'on the rubber', using a tiny bit of black or brown rubber on a size 18 or 20 hook to mimic the hempseed that was fed every cast. On one of these occasions I went along too, but this time it was to the River Kennet, not the Thames. It was shortly after this visit that I began to develop a fascination for barbel, and although I had never even so much as seen one in real life, I became determined to catch one, reasoning that Burghfield, where I'd fished the Kennet with my dad and his mates, was the place to realise my dream.

And so one day I made the long trek alone from my home in Brixton all the way to far-off Berkshire via a combination of London bus, underground, southern region train and yet another bus, eventually ending up God knows how much later on the stretch of the Kennet behind the Cunning Man pub. How many kids today would make such a journey? Well, this eleven year old did, and not only that, but he did realise his dream. Not a big one by today's standards, but at that time the biggest fish he had ever caught, dwarfing all the roach, dace and bleak that made up his usual catch. That three and a half pound barbel fell to a lump of legered cheese (Edam I think it was) and was caught on my freshly purchased pride and joy of a reel, a brand new Young's Trudex, which I'm sure must have cost me quite a bit of pocket money! I don't have any photos of that first barbel, but I do have the memories.

Many years later in September 2004 I went back to the Kennet and the Cunning Man, and I must say I was a little disappointed to see that the part of the river I had fished all those years ago was more like a canal



by Peter Foster - part 1

(it hadn't seemed that way at the time), so I chose not to fish that particular stretch but to try a few hundred yards upstream, where much to my delight I caught a jet-propelled two pounder that went all over the river, followed a few hours later by a plodding eleven that hugged the bottom and never took more than a yard or two of line.



The swim above the Cunning Man that I fished on my return to the Kennet and the 'plodding' 11 pounder. Apologies for the quality of these pictures but they have been scanned from prints. Oh! the days before digital cameras when you had to wait until you got that envelope from the chemist before you knew how your pictures would turn out. I think that if I had known I would have tried to look less serious!

Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself – all that came later. Suffice to say now that I only ever caught one other barbel as a kid, and that was a small one from the Thames, foul-hooked while float-fishing, so it doesn't really count.



Some Reflections on Barbel Fishing

Returning to fishing

Many years were to pass until my next barbel. Around about my mid-teens I stopped fishing, and apart from one or two occasions I didn't fish again until I moved to West Sussex in 1987, when I flirted for a season or two with spinning for pike with not much success, it has to be said.

It was the persistence of my younger son, Tom, that led to a more serious return to fishing in the early nineties. I think he was about ten when he started asking to go fishing. Tom was well known for his many sudden enthusiasms; a couple of rabbits in a hutch in the garden were just one example of how he could become obsessed with something he had to have or do. Eventually I capitulated and we started off our fishing together on the canal in Chichester, but were singularly unsuccessful with the exception of the occasional small roach, so after a few disappointing sessions, I took him to a commercial where he had a great time putting a regular bend in his rod. Time went by; we joined a club, fished its waters, both improved our skills and began to catch bigger and better fish. Eventually though, I began to tire of fishing still waters and yearned to return to running water. It was after a conversation with a young fellow member who talked enthusiastically of his journeys to the Dorset Stour in search of barbel, that I decided to have a go myself. I treated myself to a few days off and booked a room in a lovely little B&B in Holdenhurst that backed on to the Throop estate.

I remember my first session at Throop vividly, walking along the bank past all these barbel experts, with their rods in rests, tips pointing skywards. Eventually I found a quiet, likely looking swim and set up my one specialist rod and, ignoring the trend, dropped my bait in just a few feet out a couple of yards downstream.

I'd decided to fish a cocktail of bread on a hair (well my early version of it, with the bread moulded round a shot pinched on to the tag end of the hooklength) and luncheon meat on the hook – where I'd got this idea from, I haven't a clue, but surprise, surprise, it worked. After only about an hour the rod top pulled round and I was into a fish – a big one. I didn't have to wait long before establishing that the fish on the end of my line was indeed a barbel for it quickly headed out to the middle of the river where I could see it in the clear water between the streamer weed. As I applied pressure to halt its run, I experienced for the first time that sickening feeling when a big fish comes off. The line went slack, I wound in. The hooklink came back unbroken, but the hook had pulled out. I remember staring at the place where the barbel had been, trying to



Part 1 Continued

recall its shape and size, cursing my luck that I'd lost the fish of my dreams. Now I can look back and reflect how fortunate I was to have even hooked a barbel so soon in my quest, but back then I felt very distinctly sorry for myself. Walking back to the B&B I tried to console myself with the thoughts that at least I'd had one on, I'd seen a barbel, I knew they were there and that I was sufficiently competent to at least hook one, and finally that I had a couple of days more to realise my ambition.



The Throop fishery in Autumn - by this time I had invested in a digital camera!

Well I'm afraid it was to be a bit longer than a couple of days, longer than a couple of months even. Despite several more trips down the A27 to Throop that season, I proved unsuccessful. I did catch a few decent chub, however, and got to know the river much better, but as for a barbel, not a sniff. I had to wait for the next season before at last achieving my goal - more of that in part two.



Part two of this article will appear in the next issue of The Sussex Angler

Spotlight on Winter Fishing

Following on from their discussions on trotting for Autumn chub we managed to get Nigel and John together again this time to talk about winter fishing.

John, I know that you really enjoy winter fishing. Why is that, and what are your preparations before you venture out on a trip?

With the right clothing and a good umbrella I can fish in almost any conditions. When it's very cold I wear layers of clothing under a fleece jacket to insulate me from the cold and top this off with a waterproof outer layer of jacket and trousers. A good pair of insulated boots, along with a fleece hat and gloves complete the outfit. Don't ignore an umbrella which apart from the rain can protect you from those biting winds that sap the warmth and enthusiasm out of anyone. The cold can often have you turning for home before the fish start feeding

So you are now sure that you will be relatively warm and dry, lets talk about real winter fishing.

I think the best way to do this is to talk about my fishing over the last Christmas and New Year holiday.

Day One. I decided to fish a local lake that would perhaps give me the chance of a few nice roach. It had been raining heavily, the water was very coloured and I set up my 12ft feeder rod with the lightest 1oz tip fitted. The lightest tip will

indicate the very gentle bites I often get at this time of year. The end tackle was a small black top Kamasan feeder, 3.2 lb hooklink and size 18 Drennan hook. Bait was simply white maggots.

I had arrived late in the morning and nothing happened for the first hour or so, no bites at all, but I repeatedly recast to the same area and built up a little bait in the swim. Around midday I had my first fish, a tench of all things in December and a very nice fish as well. This proved to be the signal to start what turned out to be a very busy afternoon. I think that the rain had warmed the water enough to get the fish feeding confidently in the baited area. I had no idea that the fish would continue feeding or that I would end the day with seven tench to 5lbs 12ozs a rudd of 1lbs 14 ozs (a personal best for me) and roach of well over a 1lb. Almost unbelievable for this time of year but the warmer rain must have got the fish moving and feeding confidently for a few hours. We tend think of tench and rudd as traditional summer species but these are sometimes caught in early winter and they are in truly superb condition.

Day Two. On the Rother. With the river level up a little and coloured by the recent rain I set up with exactly the same tackle as on my last trip. This time it was chub that I was expecting but nothing happened for some time my rod tip sat there motionless. Suddenly the rod tip



Our John Wilson is interviewed by Chairman Nigel

slammed around but the result was not the anticipated chub but a winter 'silver tourist' or sea trout, and a nice fish of perhaps 4lbs+. I quickly released the fish and sat back to wait for a chub to come along. The next bite was not from a chub but a giant roach just as the light had begun to fade. The quiver tip pulled slowly around and I struck into what was my largest ever roach in a lifetime of fishing. On my scales the fish weighed 2lbs 6ozs, sadly I was alone on the bank and all I could do was quickly photograph the fish laying in the landing net and then release it as darkness began to fall. My biggest ever roach, I was so excited that I could hardly sleep that night!

Days Three and Four. After my success on the last couple of trips I was really looking forward to getting back on the Rother, but the weather changed dramatically! The Rother valley was now a landscape locked in frost and ice as the temperature plummeted. The water level was lower and the countryside had become a very different, beautiful yet bleak place. In times like this I fish swims that I know normally hold fish, the slightly deeper swims or snaggy areas where chub are found. For two days I tried everything, had perhaps one or two tiny bites but despite my best efforts I caught absolutely nothing! It was as if the fish had vanished. That really sums up how difficult it can be for anglers when the cold really sets in.

So John some really nice fish and the inevitable blanks show that the winter can produce great fishing or become almost impossible.

Yes, that sums things up nicely. I think that anything that raises the temperature slightly, maybe just a couple of degrees or so, rain or a mild spell, can get the fish feeding again very quickly. If you keep a close watch on the weather you might be surprised how good, and indeed rewarding fishing can be at this time of year. Remember to always keep warm and dry and you will enjoy yourself.

Finally John I think you have forgotten to mention the 12lbs 12oz Rother barbel that you kindly photographed for me during this period. This, as you know was in a bank high flooded Rother. In fact the day after you caught that huge roach.

I wasn't even going to mention that!



Only room for a picture of John's roach and as he mentioned not taken in ideal conditions.
Ed'



Our Rivers

River Arun

We have two sections of the River Arun totaling 2.5 miles of bank. The Arun is particularly renowned for some massive bream catches over the years but some serious barbel have been caught in the last couple of years.

Hardham - Note due to work being carried out by Southern Water Hardham will be closed from 15th March 2010.



Our northernmost stretch of the Arun and with reasonably civilised banks. The Hardham stretch starts in pasture land before entering a section with trees on the far bank. Eventually we move into a section with trees on both sides of the water and final section is reed lined on both banks. There are a number of noted bream pegs along the Hardham stretch and the fish seem to frequent the same areas year after year. The roach and dace can be found virtually

anywhere and a big stick or Avon float fished on a long rod is the most enjoyable way to find them. For those more interested in specimen fish there are carp, barbel, chub and of course some big pike. Hardham has plenty to offer any river angler and the results are well worth the walk.

Watersfield

Whereas Hardham can be described as civilised the river shows its wild side at Watersfield. Depth and flow can vary greatly from swim to swim. In general terms the top section starts relatively shallow gets deeper and then shallows up again. The mid section is very difficult to fish due to a combination of reeds and low lying ground, although there are a few really interesting swims to be found. The lower section



tends to dry out on the inside in places as the tide falls but find the deeper glides and you will be in to some serious fish. Virtually at the end of our stretch there is a gem of an inside line gravel run. Roach, dace, perch, and small chub can be caught all through with bream liable to show virtually anywhere.



Our Rivers

River Rother

We now have 4 sections of the Rother giving us almost uninterrupted access from Colutershaw Mill in the west through to the bottom end of the Fittleworth fishery which is a couple of miles above the confluence with the Arun



Colutershaw Mill - The original barbel stretch but they are being caught more and more on the other stretches.



Shopham - Shopham has two sections above the bridge is immediately below the Colutershaw stretch and below the bridge is opposite the top end of Coates.



Fittleworth - Just over a mile of both north and south banks. Favoured for trotting.



Coates - Our longest stretch almost two miles of the south bank from Shopham to just above Fittleworth.



Our stillwaters

We have 9 individual waters on 5 stillwater fisheries ranging from the beautiful Estate Lake at Petworth Park to tranquil farm ponds at Bethwins just in Surrey and Stemps & Cart near Fontwell. Our own 3 lake complex at Hurston Lane offers a range of sport from a match-style lake, a tench and crucian pond to a carp pond with some sizeable specimens. The Chichester Canal provides a good alternative particularly during the winter months.



Bethwins Farm

Situated in the north of our region near Chiddingfold, Bethwins Farm offers two attractive ponds in a tranquil setting surrounded by woods and farmland. The Lower Pond contains good sized carp to 15lbs. Together with a lot of perch The Upper Pond can provide a good day's sport to the float angler with a good stock of small tench and a smaller number of decent sized carp.

This is a great spot for a day "away from it all" in beautiful unspoilt surroundings .

Stemps and Cart



Stemps Pond (left) is stocked with common carp, crucians, tench, rudd and bream.

Cart Pond (right) is stocked with carp, roach, skimmer bream and even the occasional chub providing good year-round sport!



Chichester Canal

We enjoy several miles of fishing on Chichester Canal with year round fishing. Good mixed bags of roach, rudd, perch, tench and skimmers can be supplemented by the occasional large bream or carp. In winter the Canal Basin becomes one of the prime spots with pike often making an appearance.



Our stillwaters

Petworth Park

This glorious 7 acre lake set in the picturesque grounds of the Petworth Park Estate holds a good stock of tench, bream, crucian carp, perch, roach and rudd.



Pole, waggler or feeder tactics all prove productive and with light but regular feeding mixed bags exceeding 70 lbs are not uncommon.

Bream are in the 4lbs to 6lbs bracket with some fish approaching double figures, the tench go to 5lbs and crucians to 3lbs!



The tench and crucian pond with tench to 6 lb and crucian carp in excess of 2 lb.

Hurston Lane

Our Hurston Lane fishery has 3 distinct waters.



The carp pond with carp to 20 lb and perch to at least 2 lb



The match pond with silver fish and small carp



Bird Life

Club member and keen local ornithologist Terry Scragg gives his regular update

Winter weather and its consequences for birds

Let us hope by the time you read this article the extreme cold winter weather will be just a memory. As far as birdlife is concerned though the consequences are likely to be much longer term. Severe winter weather will have had a significant impact on birds, with higher than usual number of casualties, particularly among small vulnerable birds. The RSPB reports that the severe winter weather is the greatest killer of birds and can result in dramatic mortality rates with losses of 50% for some species. In freezing conditions birds struggle to find the food they need to survive the

winter in a healthy condition which is critical to breeding success in the spring. The extreme weather means that more birds are attracted to gardens, particularly where there are feeders and bird tables. Feeding birds in gardens plays a vital role in providing supplementary food for birds, especially in the winter when food is locked in due to ice and snow. The RSPB website provides tips on feeding birds see below for details



Adult Starling
Sturnus vulgaris

The sounds of spring and mating

Turning to thoughts of spring and warmer weather. If you are out on the rivers or stillwaters between sunrise and mid-morning in spring you will hear birds singing from every hedgerow and patch of woodland. This is the dawn chorus where male birds sing to attract a mate. There will be so many birds singing that it can be difficult to distinguish the song of one species from another. The complex bird song you hear at the dawn chorus is largely restricted to the more highly evolved passerines or perching birds, for example, warblers and finches, whereas the non-perching birds such as waders rely more on display to attract a mate rather than song.



Bird Life



Male Chaffinch
Fringilla coelebs

When the male bird sings he is communicating that he wants to attract a mate. The bird with the strongest and most complex song is communicating that he is fit and has staked his claim to a productive

territory. A weaker bird will not have such a strong and varied song and is less likely to attract a female. The other purpose of the dawn chorus is to warn off competing males that a particular territory is occupied. Male birds claim their territory by singing in it which tells other males to stay away. So when you hear the dawn chorus you will be witnessing the way that evolution works by favouring the stronger birds who are likely to be more successful in attracting a mate and in a better position to breed successfully thereby ensuring the future of

the species. The BBC natural history unit has a useful website where you can listen to the songs of eight common birds with an explanation of their songs and behaviour



Male Great Tit
Parus major

Websites mentioned in this article

Our illustrations again come from the excellent RSPB website:
www.rspb.org.uk

Advice about feeding wild birds can be found on their site at:
www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/feeding

The BBC natural history unit bird songs can be found at:
www.bbc.co.uk/nature/programmes/radio/dawn_chorus

Terry Scragg



Interested in joining the Club?

You can join the club or renew your membership on the spot at the following Tackle Shops

Aldwick Angling, Bognor 01243 829054

Arun Angling, Angmering 01903 770099

Havant Angling, Havant 02392 450700

Tidal Angling, Pulborough 01798 873790

Tropikoi Angling, Bognor 01243 842660

A Membership Application Form and further details may be found with this magazine. You can also apply by post to our Membership Secretary (see form). Membership packs are sent by return of post . Give Tim a ring on 01903 770099 if you have any questions or need assistance.

Don't forget your photo's

Pay your Membership Fee by Instalments

We will again offer the facility for you to spread the cost and pay your membership fee in two instalments. This facility is only open to those paying by cheque. See the Application Form for further details

New members join early for next season

If you wish to start fishing before the start of our membership year then new members can take the opportunity to fish from 1st March 2010 once they have joined. Your membership will still run to 31st March 2011.

This gives you **13 months** fishing for our normal annual fee.