

# The Flydressers Guild Sussex Branch



## Newsletter

**October 2025**

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Flydressers Guild**

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## **Trophy Day Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October**

Have you booked your place for the Trophy Day competition being held at Brick Farm Trout Fishery, Herstmonceux. We have the 4 Lake Challenge, Biggest fish, Biggest Brown and Biggest bag to go for.

I have been reassured by Keith who fished it recently that things are improving and Lorraine at the fishery, that water levels (it

should get a boost this weekend) are rising and stocking is returning to weekly intervals. I have attached the details form again as we have some new members who may be interested in joining us. I was asked by someone **if we need payment in advance**. We do ask for this as it allows us to keep a record of numbers which can prove useful in trying to leverage discounts and bonus items such as prizes from fisheries. If subsequently you are unable to attend we can reimburse you.

To clarify the procedure for new and existing members:

1. Check the attachment for details of the event and the person organising it, with the date by which payment should preferably be made. You do not have to fill in the form it's just a hangover from days when the majority paid by cheque.
2. Make your payment -**preferably by Bacs** details on form. (It is possible still to pay by cheque or by card on a tying night)
3. Email Andy Wood at [fdgsussexmembership@gmail.com](mailto:fdgsussexmembership@gmail.com) to let him know you have sent the payment and Cc the organiser so we can update the booking sheet.

I hope that helps people and let's try to have a good turnout from new and long term members.

Timings are meet around 8.30 for bacon rolls and tea/coffee. Fish from 9.00 am till lunch at 1.00. Weigh in at 4.30

Just a reminder you will need to bring your own lunch, but tea/coffee will be available.

### **Fishing report on Gillhams Resort, Thailand, January 2025**

While on one of my Canadian Salmon fishing trips back in 2023, Phil Axel of Brick Farm fame, asked me if I would be interested in filling a vacant slot on a trip to Gillhams fishery,

Thailand in January 2025. I knew of the venue from watching a couple of TV programs filmed there, including one by John Wilson himself and another that was an episode of the ITV4 TV series 'Monster Carp'. At £1,500 for 7 days guided fishing, including gear, bait and accommodation for two at the resort, it sounded like pretty good value for money to me. A weeks Salmon fishing in Canada would cost more than twice that figure and a trip to the French Carp Lake I fished last year cost me over a £1,000 - where accommodation for two was a lakeside bivvy! Phil explained that it was a lake exclusive trip organised by the Catfishing Against Cancer group in support of the Teenage Cancer Trust. Gillhams, supporting the charity themselves, had provided a generous discount. With such a worthy cause, I couldn't help but sign up. The only thing I needed to do was convince my wife! However, it was one of my easier pitches; we both love Thailand and a tour of the rest of South East Asia had long been on our to-do list. Gillhams would make a great jumping off location for onward travel to Vietnam & Cambodia, so she agreed and I secured my place. She then set about booking other elements of what would become a very enjoyable month-long trip. To manage Jet-lag, we travelled to Thailand a week before the fishing and spent it relaxing at the popular nearby beach resort of Ao Nang, near Karabi. Fully rested and with eager anticipation, we were collected by Gillhams from our hotel the following week at 06:00 and were dropped off at the fishery within the hour. There wasn't much time to take in the beauty of the lake and the surrounding gardens that resembled a highly manicured tropical show garden. I was in my allocated swim shortly after attending to the formalities of booking into the resort and collecting the week's bait allocation of pellet and boilies. The supplied fishing gear consisted of a pair of 6lb Test Curve Catfish rods and oversize fixed spool bait runner type reels loaded with 80lb braid. Buzzers and a rod-pod shackled to a large block of concrete

completed the set up. I soon learned that it was all too easy to have your rods dragged in and many had suffered that fate over the years. The concrete blocks made this a little more difficult but it was still the angler's responsibility to ensure that bait runners were engaged and correctly tensioned whenever baits were in the water. My guide for day one turned out to be an ex British Army Paratrooper who had moved to Thailand and got a job with Gillhams. With my own military background, we forged an immediate bond and happily swapped stories of our time in the services.



Looking down the lake from the restaurant area

After a couple of hours swapping 'war stories', one of my buzzers went into overdrive as a fish tore off towards the middle of the lake. Bending into whatever was on the end, to say I was quite shocked by the power of the fish is an understatement – it's real physical stuff. I soon realised that the fish had its own agenda and all I could do was try to wear it down with the excellent clutch on the heavy-duty fixed spool reel. After what seemed an age of repeated run – pump in – fish spooks - run again, the fish was finally ready for the net, a huge Siamese Carp. At this point, the guide jumped into the lake with his oversize circular net and gave me final instructions on what to do next. Soon, what was quite clearly the largest fish I had ever caught was safely in the net. Now, it will come as no surprise that the fishery is very precious about their stock. Only under very rare circumstances e.g. a potential record fish, do the fish ever leave the water

and then they are quite literally suspended in a sling on the end of a crane, quickly measured, weighed and returned. Once I had gained my composure – I felt pretty exhausted – I jumped into the water with guide and we measured the monster. The formula based on length and girth, indicated a weight of 124lb, beating my previous largest capture, just shy of 50lb, by a ‘country mile’. After a few trophy shots the fish was safely returned to the lake. What a start to the week I thought, and still another 6 days to go.



My first Gillhams fish, a Siamese well over 100lbs

Gillhams is definitely not a ‘runs water’. From what I experienced throughout the week, an average of one or two fish a day is a reasonable expectation. For my own part, this was very much the case. I did blank one day, but more than made up for it on day seven when I landed five. Most of the waiting time is spent chatting with the Guide and other anglers and keeping out of the intense sunlight. They have little Pagoda shaped shelters that provide some shade and are fitted with electric fans and cool boxes full of water. A very friendly chap on a moped circles the lake throughout the day, taking orders for breakfast, lunch and, of course, cold beer, all delivered direct to your swim! As the week wore on, I started to take a break from the fishing for an hour or two during the hottest part of the day. It was nice to cool off in the pool and catch up with how other anglers had got on that morning. One such day, as I was getting dried off after a swim,

one of the trip organisers, Jon, shouted up from the lake for help. With a few others, I ran down to the lake and discovered Jon and his Guide in the water. They were holding one of the bigger rectangular nets that are needed for especially long fish. It soon became clear that they had bagged a Stingray. No chances are taken with these magnificent but dangerous creatures, so there is a well-rehearsed protocol involving six or more Guides and anglers in the water managing the fish. Standing in the lake, cradling the beast, estimated at 200lb, felt a little bizarre – where else in the world would you be called from relaxing at the pool to do such a thing?



It's 'all hands to the pump' when a Stingray is caught – note the towel keeping the barb safe!

The system in operation for fishing was one Guide to two anglers, who fished as a pair. My own buddy was Peter, who I'd never met before. A really nice guy who turned out to be a veteran of international big game fishing, mostly on the fly. He had recently returned from fly fishing trip to the Amazon, where he had caught all manner of exotic beasts, including Arapaima, which run to some 450lb at Gillhams. Every day you rotate swims in your pairs and work with a new Guide. This is a nice touch as, while there don't seem to be any hot spots as such, it means that you get to fish most of the lake. Some swims are better for certain types of species though. The

Guides themselves are excellent. You tell them what species you want to target and they will do their utmost to make sure you catch. Some have worked there for years and know everything there is to know about the fishery. I gave up trying to cast my own rods when I realised how accurate they were and let them do it. They work on a one-meter square box up to 80 meters out into open water. They consistently drop every single baited rig into that box, as well as each spod of pellets and boilies. They'll also go the extra mile for their clients. One particular day, my buddy Pete hooked into what was thought to be an Amazon Redtail, a species he was desperate to catch. Unfortunately, the fish went straight for a snag on the far bank and Pete was powerless to stop it. 'No problem' said the Guide, Yut, 'I'll sort it out'. He proceeded to take off his Tee-shirt and dive into the lake. He then swam out some 60 meters across to the snagged fish and successfully freed it. Ten minutes later I was photographing Pete with a lovely Redtail estimated at 60lb!



Not the biggest fish of the trip, but probably the prettiest. An Amazon Red Tail Cat of around 70lb



A Gillhams Siamese 'tiddler' of around 80lb. So small, I was allowed to cradle it on my own!

After a really enjoyable week, completely different to any other angling experience I have ever had, my final tally was 8 Siamese Carp, with 5 over the 100 lb mark, 2 Amazon Redtails to 70lb and an Asian Redtail Cat of around 10lb (actually a good fish for this species) I'm not entirely sure how I got through the final day when I had Siamese of 127lb, 142lb and 146lb in the space of about two hours. My body had been abused and it felt like it. My arms were numb and I was roasting in the 30C + temperatures. Had I hooked another fish that day, I might well have been forced to hand the rod to the guide.



The biggest fish of the trip, and a 3-man lift, a 146lb Siamese Carp

The fishery is pitched as a holiday resort and it fully lives up to this description. There are a number of options for accommodation, all of which are excellent. From a luxury 4 bedroomed villa with private pool to one of eight lakeside duplex bungalows. A communal swimming pool, a very good on-site restaurant and bar, massage services and a Thai cookery

school are just some of the facilities available at the resort. My wife and other non-fishing partners were kept entertained during the fishing hours of 7AM to 7PM, taking full advantage of the on-site options, supplemented with trips out to a local Elephant sanctuary, market and several nearby beach resorts.

Shortly after returning, I was invited to take part in another lake exclusive Teenage Cancer Trust charity trip in October 2027.

Needless to say, I have taken up the offer and I'll be targeting Mekong Catfish and Arapaima next time. Watch out for the sponsorship requests from me nearer the time!

**Andy Wood**